

'Kill Bill' baddie a softy at heart

By LISA ARCELLA

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

In Quentin Tarantino's "Reservoir Dogs," Michael Madsen's Mr. Blonde danced to "Stuck in the Middle With You" as he sliced off a cop's ear.

Now in Tarantino's "Kill Bill: Vol. 2," Madsen's character, Budd, gets his kicks by burying Uma Thurman alive.

But the 45-year-old actor still can't understand why no one wants to invite him to dinner.

"They should be scared of Quentin, not me," Madsen tells the Daily News. "I'm just an actor."

"Besides, I see [Mr. Blonde and Budd] as different guys. They both are nefarious, but Mr. Blonde was a cold-blooded psychopath.

"Budd is a lot more complicated. He does what he does out of love for his brother Bill [David Carradine]. So it's all about brotherly love!"

In real life, Madsen is hardly the tough guy.

He's the soft-spoken father of five sons, who admits to being freaked out by the deadly black mamba snake he had to work with in the martial arts blockbuster.

"Those reptiles have their own agenda," he says.

"You really have to get them aggravated for them to strike up like that, and we were doing it with real snakes.

"Of course, they only used the black mamba for closeups, but the other snakes were in close proximity to me. I tried hard to keep my cool, but I have to admit it was tough."

To the surprise of many he has terrified onscreen, Madsen — who lives in Malibu with his third wife, Deana — is also an accomplished poet.

His fourth book of poetry, "46 Down"



GOOD AT BEING BUDD: Michael Madsen in Tarantino's film

(named after his position as an answer in a crossword puzzle), will be published in June.

"Being an actor can be a lonely life, and I just started to write stuff down on matchbooks and napkins — just for myself," Madsen says.

"One day I had the box [of poems] next to the fireplace and was going to use it as kindling, but I was encouraged by someone to send it to a publisher."

WANTS A ROMANTIC LEAD ROLE

In his 20-year Hollywood career, Madsen hasn't always played the bad guy.

He was a good-natured dad in "Free Willy" and "Free Willy 2," and played Susan Sarandon's sympathetic boyfriend in "Thelma and Louise."

But what he really wants is to "play the

romantic lead that rides off into the sunset.

"I think I now have exorcised that [villain] part of me, and would like to have a shot at something like a 'Dirty Harry' kind of thing. Son of Dirty Harry!"

Madsen is the brother of actress Virginia Madsen, best known for movies like "The Hot Spot" and "Candyman," and a stint on the sitcom "Frasier."

He says that watching her get her start in their hometown of Chicago made him realize he might also have a career in front of the camera.

"I was always one to wander off in my imagination," he says.

"I had an idea that I would like to make pictures because I liked Humphrey Bogart and Robert Mitchum and those kinds of guys. She made me realize it was possible."