

'Strange Days' futuristic violence overwhelms viewers

By Kristina Rudinskas
Freelance Reporter

Strange Days, set in Los Angeles in the year 1999, is a futuristic techno-thriller, which reveals a future world of racial violence, poverty, police brutality and virtual drug abuse.

Lenny Nero (Ralph Fiennes) is a corrupt ex-cop, who sells "clips" on the black market to "wire trippers" — people addicted to reliving other people's experiences via virtual reality.

Lenny's life takes a turn when he is dealt a "blackjack" clip of his friend's death. This catapults Lenny and his limousine-driving martial arts friend, Mace

CINEMA REVIEW

Strange Days

★★

(Angela Bassett), into a dangerous whirl of police corruption and betrayal.

Lenny and Mace discover a police cover-up of an influential rap star's murder, which — if leaked to the public — would incite a race war in an already chaotic Los Angeles.

At the same time, Lenny attempts to save his ungrateful ex-girlfriend, Faith (Juliette Lewis), from her controlling

manager-boyfriend, Philo Gant.

Altogether, these interwoven conflicts produce a suspenseful story full of action, violence and intrigue. Gratuitous sex and violence, which normally is capable of selling movies, overwhelms and disgusts the viewer in *Strange Days*.

Director Kathryn Bigelow overdoses her audiences with disturbing images of the future. Even Santa Claus gets mugged on the streets of Los Angeles.

Bassett does an excellent job of portraying a strong female character, who displays the only sensibility and social responsibility in a dismal Los Angeles.

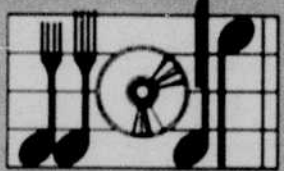
What is not strange about *Strange Days*

is all of the components — such as violence, racial issues and drugs — of this depraved future have a perfect foundation in today's society.

Strange Days shows how these issues can escalate into the extremes depicted in Nero's world, which may one day be our reality.

The action never stops, but only frequent doses of sex and violence create the transition for the viewer.

The huge sets and unique point-of-view cinematography add twists to this film, but they are not enough to save it from an apocalyptic bust in the box office.



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Newly released 'Belle' difficult film to watch

By Lynn Hadley
Freelance Reporter

If you are looking for an evening of undisturbing entertainment, this is not your flick. We are talking about magnificently filmed brutality whose storyline is reminiscent of a cheap beer commercial.

Would it not be divine for all of us to have finances suitable to re-release all the most beloved films of our formative years? Yes and no. *The Trouble with Angels* and *Soylent Green* may not have the same effect on today's audiences.

And this may explain the response to Martin Scorsese's re-release of *Belle de Jour* (Beauty of the Day).

For audiences to understand this film, it must be made clear this is a fairly succinct, surrealistic film from the creator of *Un Chien Andalou*.

Bunuel does not do mild delivery. He keeps everything enthrallingly artistic. In a trance, the viewer is dragged through this boldly aggressive imagery.

In the opening scene to *Belle de Jour*, as Severine Serizy (Deneuve) is being violently raked over the French countryside to be whipped and sodomized only to smile at the caress of her aggressor, the audience member realizes there are some seriously surrealistic qualities thinly veiling a classic heterosexual fantasy.

The story is not complicated; it does not need to be. Only a slight framework is necessary for a character who cannot control her situation as she rolls into each scene as if only fol-

CINEMA REVIEW

Belle de Jour

Bijou Art Cinenas

Directed by: Luis Bunuel

Starring Catherine Deneuve, Jean Sorel,
Michel Piccoli and Pierre Clementi

★★★★★

lowing gravity.

Severine is married to Pierre (Sorel). Sev does not feel sexual with her strapping young doctor, Pierre, but does have bizarre, abusive sex "dreams."

The couple's friends interject two transporters to the story: a female acquaintance is working as a prostitute; the address of a brothel is introduced by the occasional user, Husson (Piccoli).

With the same curiosity that led Richard Dreyfuss to Devil's Tower, Severine finds herself not only locating the brothel, but signing on to the day shift. She can only work afternoons and has to be home by five.

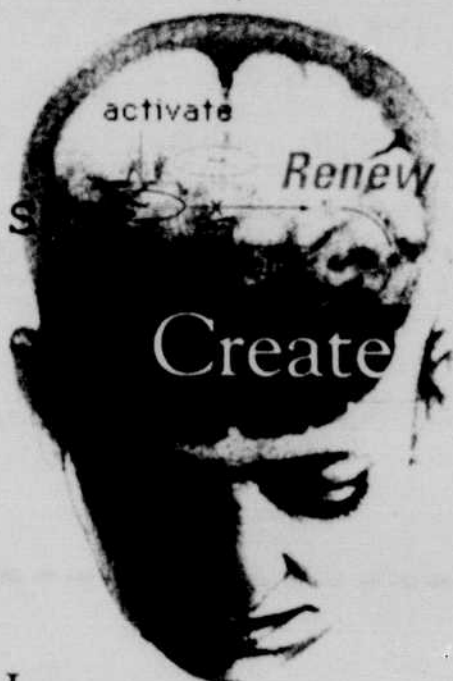
Thus, she secretly becomes "Belle de Jour."

With some hesitation she finally fills the tartly niche, and soon becomes the favorite of scumbag Marcel (Clementi).

Wanting her both day and night, he pursues her during off-hours. Severine, distraught that Husson has found her out, shuns psycho-Marcel. He then decides to take alternative measures to bring them together.

Bunuel succeeds in pulling us painfully into this meticulously filmed tale of abuse, in matching visual intensity with content.

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