

Twisted cartoons to invade the Bijou

By Elizabeth Hertling
Freelance Reporter

Like to squirm in your seat at movies? Faithfully follow all the antics of Beavis and Butt-head?

If this sounds like your idea of heaven, Spike and Mike's Sick and Twisted Festival of Animation is coming to Eugene, bringing with it everything from a spoof on Jerry Garcia to the mascot Scotty the Shredding Wonder Dog.

"It's one and a half hours full of wacky cartoons," said Victoria Schwerin, creative director for the festival.

Not for the faint of heart, the animated films are designed to make the audience squirm — and laugh. For example, the film *Butt Cheese Platter* is about an inbred character who mutilates himself, Schwerin said. Mellow Manor Productions, producers of the festival, describe the show as a "razor-filled caramel apple for your mind."

The cartoons are not limited to traditional pencil — the animators' techniques include ink crayon, puppet, stop motion and both clay and computer animation.

Featured in the festival are a plethora of what Schwerin describes as "creatively depraved animated short films." *Tye Dye Dick* by Dave Smith involves creative artwork and a spoof on Jerry Garcia. *Hutsluts* by Miles Thompson revolves



COURTESY PHOTO

Bill Plympton's grotesque short film is one of several that are scheduled to play at the festival of animation beginning next week.

around Summer and Tiffany, a "female dynamic duo" that Mellow Manor compares to Beavis and Butt-head. Summer and Tiffany are two girlfriends who have many adventures, including a trip into the L.A. club scene in their latest film.

Also along for the ride is the festival's mascot, Scotty the Shredding Wonder Dog, who shreds balloons and other objects for the crowd before the show starts. He lost a leg last year, but Schwerin said he is still going strong.

"He thinks he's a pit bull," Schwerin said.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the festival. It began in 1977 when Craig "Spike" Decker and Mike Grib-

ble formed Mellow Manor Productions, Inc. They named the company after a Victorian mansion in California where they brainstormed up their ideas.

Originally, their mission was to promote underground bands along with animated short films, but the popularity of the short films outgrew that of the bands. Out of these short films, famous 'toons Beavis and Butt-head got their start. The festival now tours 30 cities in the United States and Canada.

The Sick and Twisted Festival of Animation will play at the Bijou May 23 to June 5. Tickets are \$6 Thursday through Saturday and \$4.50 Sunday through Wednesday. Attendees must be 18 or over.

Play: Choreography compensates for acting

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Along the way he is teamed with some extraordinary creatures and comes into contact with many more interesting characters. Jerry (read Luke Skywalker) first meets an old, hunched-over blind woman (read Yoda) who tells him he must travel to the mountain of Ban Zhao to find the truth.

To protect him, three fabulously costumed musical ghosts (read R2D2 & C3PO) accompany Jerry. These three characters offer comic relief and are supposed to warn Jerry of danger.

Along the way he meets up with bandits and thieves (read Darth Vader and storm troopers) but gets help from a young woman warrior named Mei Lei (read Princess Leia). Jerry and Mei Lei fall in love while the boy is in search of the truth.

Ever the Dragon is spectacularly costumed, and the set design is simple but effective. Because the play is rooted in visual and musical themes, the story is justifiably symbolic and easy to grasp.

The playwright, Dorothy Velasco from Springfield, does a good job creating a mythic landscape

populated by easy-to-understand archetypes. The plot is simple, but it does not make for great opportunities for realistic acting.

An ensemble cast that rotates each night does a good job in portraying the many colorful characters in this magical land. Jerry's part demands a great deal of gymnastic movement and a careful sense of timing.

Toni Pimble, the artistic director of the Eugene Ballet, does a superb job choreographing many athletic dance sequences. Along with the other artistic elements, the choreography is the flesh and bones of this opera.

The costumes and set design only add to the richness of the look while the lighting makes the fantastic come to life. Every piece of shiny fabric in Eugene must have gone into making the dragons, fish, butterflies, birds and octopi.

As this play is a stylized opera, you should not go to *Ever the Dragon* expecting great acting or singing. The true mastery of this play is its great costumes, engaging story, stimulating music and choreography.

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