

Film takes 'long' look at porn stars

By Mike Schmierbach
Oregon Daily Emerald

In honor of Mark Wahlberg's character in "Boogie Nights," this review is 13 inches long.

Like Wahlberg's 13-inch prosthetic penis, which he dons for his role as porn star Dirk Diggler, "Boogie Nights" is just too long for anyone's good.

There are some wonderful moments in the film that are humorous, honest and even thought provoking. The film functions as a critique of the fast-paced pornography industry and lifestyle of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

In the course of almost three hours, the film was bound to make a good point or two. The problem is that between those moments, the writers often seem confused about how to string it all together.

"Boogie Nights" tries to do what a lot of films have done lately: mix comedy and drama. At times, both of these elements surface and work effectively. Unfortunately, they don't really mingle.

The film opens with Wahlberg being recruited into the porn industry. After passing the requisite exam — receiving oral sex from Rollergirl (Heather Graham) — Wahlberg's character is plunged into a world of parties, drugs and

MOVIE REVIEW

Boogie Nights

A dramatic look at the 1970s porn industry

Directed by Paul Thomas Anderson

STARRING: Mark Wahlberg, Burt Reynolds.

RATED: R

SCORE: ★★☆☆☆

ejaculation on demand.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Wahlberg (formerly known as Marky Mark, in case you didn't know) does a good job playing a stupid person whose ignorance helps him be swept along into fame and wealth. Along with his cohort-in-confusion, Reed Rothchild (John Reilly), Diggler takes on roles in which he extracts information from women by using forceful sex while insisting his character is really helping couples with their sex lives.

This is funny. (Well, it's a little too true, but the pace and tone of the movie at this point is funny.) Then, along come the 1980s and

video and cocaine addiction.

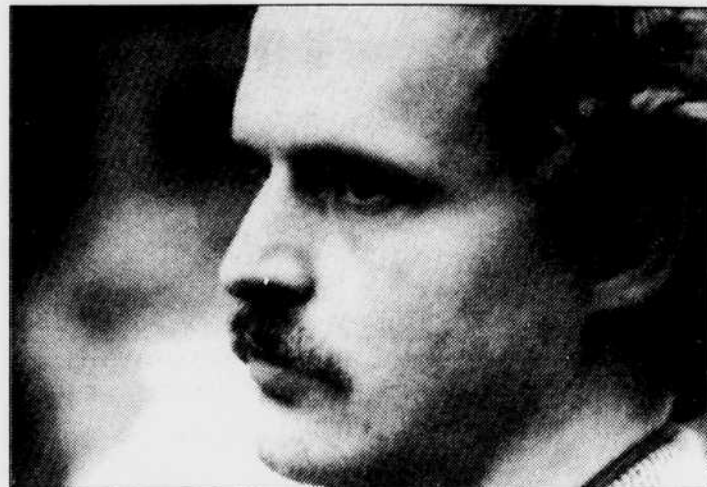
Things start to feel very confused. Movie patrons begin checking their watches and wondering just how long it will be before Diggler finally drops his shorts. Blood splatters against suits, oozes out of cocaine-dilated noses and gushes from roller-skate-inflicted wounds.

This isn't funny.

There's nothing wrong with having parts of a movie be funny and others be painfully serious. Throughout the film, humor and drama are used to indict the excesses of the characters, making the people endearing but their faults saddening.

But something about the last hour of the film, in which humor is almost wholly absent and the horrors are piled on, doesn't work well with the way the movie appears at the beginning. This is a film that wants so badly to make its point and to pound that point into our skulls that it surrenders cohesiveness.

"Boogie Nights," especially the first half, is worth watching. If you have something else to do that evening, however, go ahead and leave before the end. You'll leave with a different impression and no bad memories of Diggler's penis.



COURTESY PHOTO

Curtis expanded 'Mala Noche' to keep his past experiences alive.

Curtis: Novella expanded

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with a natural honesty that is as commendable as it is enlightening."

Curtis said he expanded and re-released "Mala Noche" from his original 1977 novella to keep his past experiences alive.

"I wrote 'Mala Noche' for the Mexican kids themselves," Curtis said. "I realized that if I didn't write about what had happened, the relationships would be lost. I wrote the book for them. If writers don't put things on paper, those things get lost forever."

Gus Van Sant wrote the introduction to "Mala Noche." Van Sant, a moviemaker, was inspired by Curtis and used "Mala Noche" to create a movie version of the book.

"When the reviews for the movie came out I flipped out," Curtis said. "Reviews were calling Gus 'the saint of street-poets.' [But] I wanted people to know that it happened to me."

Curtis' work can be observed in the Special Collections section at the Knight Library.

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