

Mike Judge creates office hell

By Lauren Howry
for the Emerald

"Office Space" magnifies every college student's worst fears about life after college. It should have every graduate this spring running from the job market in order to avoid the frustrating monotony of a career in a cubicle.

Mike Judge, creator of television's "Beavis and Butthead" and "King of the Hill," ingeniously directs the movie, using his own work experience as material.

The film starts out following computer programmer Peter Gibbons (Ron Livingston of "Swingers") through his humdrum morning routine. He gets stuck in traffic; shocked by the door handle at INITECH, where he works; hounded for making a simple mistake; and reminded constantly about getting the memo that would have prevented the mistake. He hates his job.

The last straw comes when Peter's evil boss (Gary Cole of "The Brady Bunch Movie") asks him to come in not only on Saturday but on Sunday, too. Peter goes to an occupational hypnotherapist and has a breakthrough as the therapist dies of a heart attack while hypnotizing Peter in a relaxation exercise. The next morning, Peter

Office Space

DIRECTED BY: Mike Judge

STARRING:

Ron Livingston, Gary Cole,
Jennifer Aniston

RATING:

★★★★★

sleeps in and ultimately plays hooky the entire weekend. He is rested, relaxed and de-stressed.

Meanwhile, his boss has brought in efficiency experts to fire anyone not essential to INITECH's success. One of the funniest sequences in the film is when Peter brings his laid-back new lifestyle to the office. His small acts of rebellion are put to the song "Damn it Feels Good to be a Gangster" by the Geto Boys.

The soundtrack is one of the running gags throughout the movie. It is hilarious to see computer programmers taking on the tough persona of a street gang as they destroy the always troublesome copy machine with a baseball bat.

As Peter starts to feel better about his life, he finds the courage to ask out waitress Joanna (Jennifer Aniston), whose job is equally confining. Aniston, despite her beauty, does a good job of playing the ordinary girl next door. And Livingston is convincing as the conventional suffering office worker. His

nonexpressive face makes Peter's internal transformation all the more comical.

Peter's office friends at INITECH, Samir (Ajay Naidu) and Michael Bolton (another running gag, personified by David Herman), also provide moments of levity, whether it's their frustration with their own names or with the copy machine.

"Office Space" is based on Judge's animated shorts by the same title. The shorts involve a nebbish, peculiar character named Milton, who is also a character in the film (Stephen Root of "News Radio's"). Milton is key to the movie's plot, and Root does a good job of making Milton a mumbling, sympathetic corporate peon but at the same time not exactly likable.

Cinematographer Tim Suhrstedt creates a claustrophobic atmosphere at INITECH through the use of tight close-ups and the internal framing of characters in small spaces.

Judge does a great job of capturing the anxieties and frustrations that many people in the workforce can relate to, and it is this common pool of office stress that Judge draws on to create the film's humor. "Office Space" is a fun romp through the corporate world for those who can sympathize and a hilarious caricature of office stress for those who can empathize.



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