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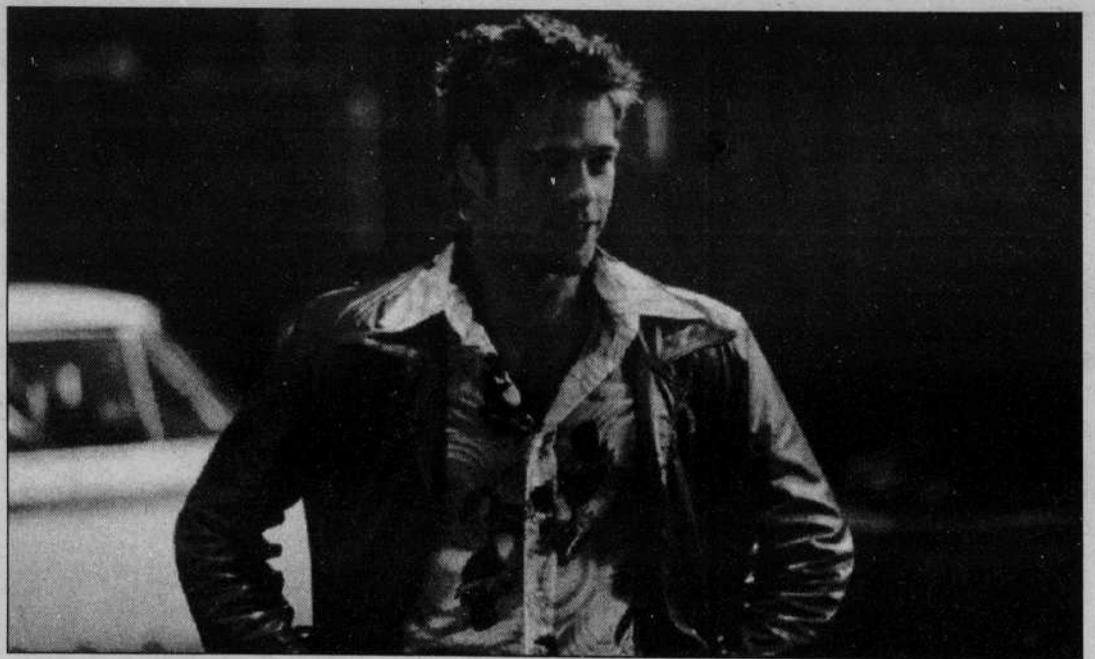
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Brad Pitt stars as Tyler Durden in "Fight Club" and his pretty-boy face gets punched, pummelled and pounded. courtesy of 20th-Century Fox Films

'Fight Club' worth every punch

■ It's not your typical 'man hates society' movie and it's not as violent as it may seem



Fight Club
Starring Brad Pitt, Ed Norton and Helena Bonham Carter. Directed by David Fincher.
★★★★☆

By Jack Clifford
Oregon Daily Emerald

Upon initially leaving the theater after "Fight Club," a person can certainly reduce what he or she has just seen to a few simple thoughts.

Man hates life — attends several support groups each week to find meaning in said life.

Man hates self — allows another man to pummel said self.

Man hates society — devises way to blow up said society.

Yeah, that would be the Film Critique 101 version of a "Fight Club" review. But director David Fincher and screenwriter Jim Uhls don't intend for their movie to be categorized in any obvious way.

In fact, in an interview with Entertainment Weekly, Fincher said that he thinks "Fight Club" is funny, which it is, but not in a "ha-

ha" way, instead more in a "Whoa, I can't believe they just did that" way.

Some critics have lambasted Fincher's movie, calling it ultra-violent. OK, so some blood spurts out of the underground fighters' faces during several scenes. Sure, the scene with Tyler Durden (Brad Pitt) and Jack (Ed Norton) robbing a liposuction clinic for soap-making material is a bit overboard.

"Fight Club" producer Art Linson responded in the same EW article with, "The fact is, there's more violence in the first five minutes of (Steven Spielberg's) 'Saving Private Ryan' than you'd see watching 'Fight Club' four times." And Linson's right.

Trying to pigeonhole this movie is like attempting to typecast Helena Bonham Carter, who plays Marla Singer, Jack's muse with a twist — they first meet at a support group for cancer patients, which neither one is — and Tyler's sex partner. Carter came to Fincher's flick straight from the cinema art houses of North America and England, where it's highly unlikely she ever delivered her most wicked and soon-to-be famous line in "Fight Club."

Meat Loaf, the rocker, also chews up some sizable screen

time as Bob, one of Jack's support group buddies. Jared Leto, who is recognizable to running and University fans as Steve Prefontaine in the movie "Prefontaine," stars here as Angel Face, albeit a face that looks like a slice of sausage pizza after a particularly brutal encounter with Jack's angry side.

So, what is "Fight Club" about and is it any good?

Simplifying its meaning in 500 words or less is a joke and can't be done. Consumerism and the social elite are the bad guys, no doubt. The blue-collar joes who show up night after night to participate in the human cockfights are the good guys, at least in Fincher's vision.

Perhaps author Chuck Palahniuk, who wrote the book on which the film is based, said it best in the movie's press guide.

"We are a nation of physical animals who have forgotten how much we enjoy being that. We are cushioned by this kind of make-believe, unreal world and we have no idea what we can survive because we are never challenged or tested."

Viewers will definitely feel challenged and tested by "Fight Club." Maybe even a little bruised and battered. But, it's worth every punch.

Let the gore flow Halloween night

■ When the night beckons for horror, check out one of the great gory classics

By Jack Clifford
Oregon Daily Emerald

Michael Myers and The Great Pumpkin.

The former is a psycho, always on a murderous rampage in the "Halloween" movie series, while the latter is literally a fruit, famed for torturing poor Linus — Charlie Brown's buddy — with a no-show in the pumpkin patch.

The cinema sadists are renowned, to be certain, and rack up plenty of free publicity around Oct. 31, All Hallow's Eve. Don't be afraid, however, to dig beneath the surface a little bit when searching for a truly blood-filled movie to spice up your Halloween night. You might just unearth one of these lesser-known, but positively ghoulish bodies of work.

"Near Dark" (four corpses out of five) — Many filmgoers were enamored with "The Lost Boys" when it came out in 1987. Yet this other 1987 release sucked the blood right out of Keifer

Sutherland's MTV-influenced version. "Near Dark" is an edgy, teeth-thrashing dive into the vampire genre, with enough laughs to offset the heavy gore. Director Kathryn Bigelow of "Strange Days" fame somehow extracted a truly vicious acting job out of the normally-calm Bill Paxton. "Near Dark" is bloody, bloody, bloody — bloody good.

"Freaks" (no corpses) — OK, so this hour-long flick is not gory in the least, but it's good for a watch. "Freaks" was released in 1932 to quite an uproar, as Tod Browning — who directed the original 1931 version of "Dracula" starring Bela Lugosi — turns his camera toward the circus world. The basic story involves a trapeze artist, her strongman lover and their attempt to swindle a midget out of his money. His buddies from the sideshow arena come to his rescue in an ending that was more horrifying 67 years ago than it is now. Only slightly exploitative as the film winds down to its end, "Freaks" is spellbinding due to Browning's overall compassionate portrayal of the circus people.

"The Re-Animator" (four corpses) — A black humor cult classic, no doubt. A medical student takes life-and-death matters into his own hands, and begins to re-animate the morgue's lifeless residents. Contains some very graphic scenes, including an alleged real look at a craniotomy, performed on a corpse. By the way, the medical student's actions create havoc and lots of the living are killed, in case you couldn't figure that out.

"Dead Alive" (five corpses) — There is no other film that compares to this 1993 offering. Outrageously over-the-top, "Dead Alive" will make you bust a gut, thereby reenacting several movie passages. Blood spurts to all four corners of the screen and body parts take on lives of their own. (At least one hand, however, does a better acting job than any of Keanu Reeves' attempts.) The plot in "Dead Alive" involves an exotic monkey biting a young, nerdy man's mother, and the hysterics literally ooze out from there. Do not, repeat, do not watch this if the sight of human innards bothers you.