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Home decor contest

Whether it's decked out with lava lamps, Christmas lights or incense, if you or someone you know has an apartment, residence hall or room that is simply the best, let the Pulse desk know. Submit a brief description about your environmentally friendly room or cost effective, unique furnishings by e-mailing us at ode@oregon.uoregon.edu.

Thursday, January 10, 2002



Adam Amato Emerald

Above: Players around the world are learning to perform new dance moves in virtual space with the video game 'Dance Dance Revolution,' and it has become a high-revenue game at locations in Eugene and Springfield.

Right: Sophomore theater major Cate Wolfenbarger shows her moves on DDR. 'When there's no one here, it's just fun,' she said. 'And it's a workout, too.'



Adam Amato Emerald

SUPER-dance-FREAK

A newly popular video game gets enthusiasts off the couch and on their feet — and dancing

By Mason West
Oregon Daily Emerald

When mom told the kids to stop playing video games and go get some exercise, game maker Konami took the advice to heart and put gaming and exercise together.

"Dance Dance Revolution" is a video game that gets players moving to the beat with dance music ranging from techno to reggae. Many of the songs may be unfamiliar to players, but a few familiar songs pop up such as Chumbawamba's "Tubthumping" and The Specials' "Little Bitch." This international sensation has found its way to Eugene with three machines in the area.

The game concept is "a breath of fresh air," according to California DDR gamer Ross Tirona. The 26-year-old is the "Ambassador" for www.ddrfreak.com, one of the larger English sites devoted to DDR. The site has machine locations, chat rooms, links to buy home versions, step charts of songs and even videos of choreographed performances.

When stripped to the basics, game play revolves around touch sensors on a foot pad (though not just for feet) to the beat of the selected song. Arrows scrolling up the screen during the song determine which pad must be touched.

This basic format has been reproduced in many different versions of DDR with different songs, foot pads and multiple player options. Though the concept may sound simple, Tirona said he "failed horribly" his first time playing nearly two years ago.

But instead of being discouraged and giving up, Tirona said he had enough fun to warrant another try, and "the rest is history."

Serious players put time into routines and even outfits for tournaments held across the country. Tirona said a DDR competition can be anything from local get-togethers to 100-person events with big prizes on the line.

"I have been to tourneys where the first place prize is a DDR machine. Take it from me, if you are giving away a machine or maybe a few hundred dollars,

then you will see people practicing whatever they are good at," Tirona said.

Though most large tournaments generally take place in California, Florida and New York (where DDR machines are more accessible), rumors of an Oregon tournament are floating around the Web site www.ddrinfinit.com, managed by DDR enthusiast Mike Puls. The Oregon Web site lists 14 DDR machines in the state, three of which are in the Eugene/Springfield area — at Putters, Electric Castle's Wonderland and Tilt.

Nick Trapalis, the president and CEO of Umpqua Amusement, provides the arcade games at Putters. Among them is a DDR 3rd Mix Plus machine. Trapalis said the game was a gamble when he bought it; new machines start at \$10,000 — and that doesn't include the almost constant maintenance for such a physical game. Still, the gamble worked out in Trapalis' favor. At the moment, the DDR machine is the top earning game in the arcade, and Trapalis is working on acquiring more machines for other locations.

Although DDR has proved to be a cash cow for Trapalis, he only charges a quarter for one game.

"The game should be going for considerably more per play, but we try to create value," he said.

The strategy seems to be working. Last Thursday, a group of 10 players kept Putters open past closing time. By 8 p.m. Friday, more than 20 people crowded around to watch and play.

Among them was Churchill High School senior Travis Lambert, who showed off his impressive footwork by tackling some of the most difficult songs in the game. He and a friend are working on a choreographed routine to have ready for when an Oregon tournament takes place. Lambert started playing DDR at home in August when the game was relatively new to Eugene.

"I'm glad other people around are playing," he said. "In August, people thought I was crazy."

Tirona and Lambert said some DDR players can make fun of people just learn-

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Twin film festivals explore international culture

Rare and contemporary foreign films will be featured on campus this quarter

By Jen West
Oregon Daily Emerald

Audiences will have several opportunities this month to escape the daily grind of work, classes and rain by exploring faraway lands, thanks to two international film festivals.

The Yamada Language Center began its International Film Festival series for winter 2002 on Tuesday and will continue showcasing films, including works from Turkey, Australia, Iran and Japan, through March 12.

The theme for this term's film

lineup is "Road Trip," festival organizer Chris O'Connor said.

"It offers students an opportunity to hear films in the original language," he said, and organizers went out of their way to hunt down films that are not widely available in the United States.

ONLINE
A complete film schedule is linked from this story on our Web site www.dailymerald.com

The International Film Festival will also present three French films as a "warm-up" to the UO Cultural Forum's French Film Festival, running Jan. 25-27, O'Connor said.

The French Film Festival organizer, Yann Doignon, said the five contemporary films selected for

the festival deal with culture clashes in France today.

The films "are an exploration of the aspects of French society," he said.

Cultural Forum Film Coordinator Toussaint Rerrault said the University received all the films from the Society for French American Cultural Services and Educational Aid, whose mission is to promote French film and culture in the United States.

"It's the cutting edge of French film," he said.

French Film Festival tickets to the Friday and Saturday shows include two films and are \$4 for students and \$5 for the general public. Sunday shows are \$2 for students and \$3 for the general

public and only include one film. Weekend passes are available for \$10 for students and \$12 for general admission. For more information, call the Arts and Administration Office at 346-2078.

Films in the International Film Festival are shown at 7 p.m. Tuesdays in the Yamada Language Center's Shelley L. Keithan Student Lounge, 122 Pacific. Admission to the International Film Festival is free of charge.

All films will be shown in their original languages with English subtitles. For more information, call the Yamada Language Center at 346-4011.

E-mail Pulse reporter Jen West at jenwest@dailymerald.com.

'Amélie' witty, charming

With photo booth romance, suicidal goldfish and a world-traveling gnome, the French comedy "Amélie" is sure to tickle even the most cynical of funny bones.

Amélie (played by Audrey Tautou) is a young woman whose solitary life has prevented her from forming relationships with the people around her. But with her unique vision of life, she sets herself on a quest to help improve the lives of others. In the process, she finds love with a man whose life is as quirky as her own.

Guillaume Laurant and Jean-Pierre Jeunet have written a script that is full of wit, charm and odd idiosyncrasies that make the characters decidedly human.

Amélie is now playing at the Bijou Art Cinemas.

—Jen West