

performances by Nicole Bamzai, Wall-Ofed Machine, Womyn at Play

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'Bebop' movie shallow, but music, action save it

Movie review

Aaron Shakra
 Pulse Reporter

Let's get one thing out of the way: "Cowboy Bebop" isn't about deep ideas. The 24-episode television series, which aired in 1998, has spawned "Cowboy Bebop: The Movie" which opens this Friday at the Bijou Art Cinemas.

The original subtitle of the film was "Knockin' on Heaven's Door," but could not be retained due to copyright issues with the Bob Dylan song of the same name. Because the film was released in 2001, many fans have viewed illegal copies circulating around the Internet.

The film operates much like an extended episode of the series, which is a good thing. Anyone not familiar with the show can view see "The Movie" without confusion, but for those who know the show, the film only adds meaning to the story. The general premise is this: The movie revolves around a futuristic bounty hunter and a crew of others, who spend most of their time aboard a spaceship called the Bebop, waiting for work. The 116-minute film opens in the middle of a bounty hunt, but quickly shifts to a terrorist truck bombing that releases a deadly virus.

As expected, the animation in "Cowboy Bebop: The Movie" is astounding. It is animated in the same style as the series,

only it is more detailed for the big screen. The fight sequences are especially notable and intricate—these aren't big battle sequences, but rather up close and personal. And composer Yoko Kanno's music, in keeping with the series, is stellar.

These both point toward a general Cowboy Bebop sensibility: While still a Japanese anime, it's a decidedly American one, through its appeals to music, visuals, busty women and Hollywood-esque moments of action. Perhaps the film genres aren't far apart anymore. There is nothing of particular depth here, but that doesn't quite mean it's a stupid film. Recommended.

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Lime Tree

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The curtain rises at 8 p.m. in the Arena Theatre, located at 104 Villard Hall.

Director Eric Michael MacCionnaith, a Ph.D. theater arts student focusing on Irish drama, sets the play in an Irish pub. With the help of set designer Lara Shimasaki, he has transformed the intimate Arena Theatre into a veritable brew house. The set is complete with a bar boasting working taps. In addition to the 40 remaining traditional theater seats, audience members may also sit at the pub tables placed in the acting space or in the balcony and are offered pints (of root beer), bowls of pretzels and a rousing game of darts.

Actors mingle through the entire space throughout the play, take seats at tables amidst the audience, chat with and tell their stories directly to the virtual pub-goers. MacCionnaith said he wants to shatter typical theater conventions in order to involve the audience in the story.

"One of the things I'm really inter-

ested in is dissolving this barrier between audience and actors," he said. "It's a very interactive thing and the actors are right there; right next to your table, sitting at your table, standing next to your table," he said. "And if you want to give some feedback, you're right there for it. The audience is encouraged to interact."

MacCionnaith said more adventurous theater-goers will love the style but said he realizes other audience members might be unaccustomed to being involved.

Audience interaction is just one of many challenges the five actors face. The cast has spent the past seven weeks tackling the nuances of Irish dialect. The script also proves difficult because it is devoid of any stage directions or clues as to how to approach the play, which is written as lengthy, uninterrupted monologues spanning four to nine pages. MacCionnaith devised the two additional characters of Seamus and Morgan, who interject throughout the stories, in order to aid the actors and contribute to his naturalistic vision.

Even with the additions to the script and the innovative design, actors caution that this is not a play containing lots of action. However, actor Kris Santoro said audience members who want to experience the art of Irish story-telling will be engrossed in the production.

"It's a great story and there's these really human moments," he said. "It's three guys and they're not any of them angels, but they're all human and they're people that you personally could know. You'll see elements of your friends and your family and yourself in all the characters on stage whether you're a guy or a girl, and I think that reflection will have a lot to offer."

Tickets are \$6 for the general public, \$5 for senior citizens, University faculty and staff and \$4 for University students. Tickets are on sale at the UO Ticket Office in the EMU and at the University Theatre Box Office in Villard Hall on performance evenings.

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Avery Bell

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"I think the stuff we're singing about is a little bit deeper and political," she said. "It kind of goes hand in hand—I'm pretty mellow and quiet."

Besides writing its own lyrics, the band also produced its own album, from recording the music in Wilbrecht's basement to creating the hand-drawn CD insert.

"We're very D.I.Y.," Lawhon said.

Jake Houck added that he is proud of the album's quality.

"It feels good to hand somebody a record we've made and one that sounds so good," he said.

Avery Bell also produced local artist DJ Guevo's (a.k.a. University alumnus Esteban Mendez) first album, "Estebonics."

"(Avery Bell) kind of influenced me to go underground with my music,"

Mendez said. "We're music snobs."

Mendez added that he attends Avery Bell's concerts and enjoys listening to the band.

"They're really good," he said. "It's loud and it's melodic."

While Avery Bell members focus intensely on production and music, each member also has a separate job. Jake Houck and Lawhon will graduate in June, Lucas Houck manages Hammy's Diner and Pizanos Pizzeria on campus, and Wilbrecht works at a group home for mentally disabled adults. But when the band gets together, it's never all about business—the Houck brothers climb trees and pummel each other in true sibling fashion, and the jokes never stop.

"I love my bandmates," Wilbrecht said. "They're like my best friends. We're almost a family."

Lawhon, Jake Houck and Lucas

Houck said they plan to join Wilbrecht in Portland after graduation, where they will continue to pursue both their personal and music careers.

"We'll take it as far as it will go," Jake Houck said. "I would love to be famous."

Wilbrecht said the band's biggest challenge will be acquiring a devoted fan base in Portland. However, the band says once it accomplishes this goal, the sky is the limit.

As Lukas Houck put it, "We have the explosives, you provide the fuse."

The band will play with Drumattica and Deflower at WOW Hall on Saturday. The show starts at 9:30 p.m., and WOW Hall is located at 291 W. Eight Ave. Tickets are \$7 at the door, and Avery Bell will offer its album for purchase at the performance.

Contact the Pulse editor at jacquelynlewis@dailyemerald.com.

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