

'Matrix' drowns plot in overdone effects

Movie review

Ryan Nyburg
Pulse columnist

I find it interesting that two of the top grossing films in America are "Down with Love" and "The Matrix Reloaded." These two films are so far apart, both ideologically and emotionally, that anyone who saw both in one weekend would risk cranial implosion. But as it is my job to measure the pulse of our culture, I saw it as a risk worth taking in order to compare two contrasting movements in cinema.

The first of these movements is the rise of nostalgia. "Down with Love" is a film for old souls. It is a throwback to the Technicolor romances of the early 1960s, the kind that starred Rock Hudson

and Doris Day and usually took place in Manhattan.

The story feels lifted right out of those films, having to do with a book that teaches women how to look at romance the same way that men do in order to take control of their lives. The author of this book is played by Renée Zellweger with a sophisticated earnestness. Her romantic rival is played by Ewan McGregor, as a men's magazine columnist trying to write an exposé proving that all a woman really wants is love and marriage.

While the lead performers are both about as perfect for their roles as we're likely to get in this day in age, the supporting cast really carries the film. David Hyde Pierce in particular, as McGregor's neurotic editor, steals most of his

scenes with a twitchy kind of glee. His nervous clumsiness is the perfect offset to McGregor's suave ladies' man.

While the period details could never be accused of being accurate, they certainly capture the idea of the early 1960s, if not the reality. But nothing in the film is real. It exists in its own little cinema comedy universe where romances can end with the couple doing musical numbers together during the closing credits. It's a simple universe and a nice one to visit.

Existing in a wholly different kind of universe is "The Matrix Reloaded." The fact that this was one of the most anticipated films of the year makes its faults all the more disappointing. You could forgive the first film's bland acting, stilted dialogue and new age pseudo philoso-



Romantic comedy 'Down with Love' provides a look back to the early 1960s, while 'The Matrix Reloaded' uses digital effects to bring viewers into the future. Courtesy

phy because the presentation gave it a certain sense of wonder. It was like "Star Wars," only with cooler gun fights and kung fu.

But while the first "Star Wars" sequel took the original and developed upon it, "Reloaded" seems satisfied with maintaining the same level. Unfortunately, it doesn't succeed.

This film seems like a detailed list of what is wrong with the use of digital effects in live action films. While the fight scenes in the original felt like real fights enhanced by digital effects, the sequel's fights are more like video game bouts. The action is so computer generated that it detaches you from what is going on. The film tries to do so much with its effects that it overextends itself, and eventually the seams begin to show in the animation.

But while the effects are overdone, they are at least well done to

a point. The acting, on the other hand, is only marginal at best. Laurence Fishburne, easily the best actor of the bunch, is loaded with the most inane dialogue.

Keanu Reeves and Carrie-Anne Moss exude a kind of functional blandness, which would be fine if we weren't expected to believe that they are lovers. They have no chemistry — the only thing they seem to have in common is their lack of personality.

Is the film entertaining? Yes, in a visceral sense. But it's not something you want to think too heavily about. Like "Down With Love," it's the cinematic version of popcorn. Fun to eat, but sometimes you need something with some substance.

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Tympanic musicians prepare to expand options, repertoire

The Eugene-based band has experienced West Coast success and is about to start a busy summer tour

Tom Adams
Freelance Reporter

Improvisational jamming is a necessary part of most bands' evolution — a time when a group of musicians gets in touch with its own voice. However, jamming is also a stopping place for many bands. The few who go beyond this point set their sights on the next stage of musical development.

Eugene band Tympanic has achieved this rite of passage.

One of the band members recently graduated from the University, and the other three will receive their degrees on June 14. The four said they are determined to follow their hearts and expand the edges of their musical boundaries, saying they are no longer comfortable being labeled as a "jam band."

"We started what we were doing because we were at ease on our instruments," drummer Ryan Dobrowski said. "We would jam and play on the energy of the crowd at our shows, but we didn't have a long list of songs. We still have a strong attachment to on-stage improvisation, but now we're finding our own voice and we're writing a

lot of new material."

Guitarist and vocalist Austin Jones echoed Dubrowski's remarks.

"Our songs are taking on more structure and focus," he said.

While all the band members are musically inspired, bass guitarist and lead vocalist John Craig writes most of Tympanic's material.

"We're at a stage of development where we're trying to create songs with more meaning and emotion," Craig said. "I'm trying to focus my lyrics on things I believe are really important — life, death and politics, for example."

Craig was quick to point out that while he writes the bulk of the band's material, the whole group breathes life into the songs.

"I do most of the core writing, but I come to the band with ideas to make them ours, not mine," he said.

Although 2-year-old Tympanic is still quite young, it has already performed in upscale venues including the Roxy Theatre in Los Angeles and Eugene's McDonald Theatre.

"We continue to enjoy touring and playing shows," guitarist, keyboardist and vocalist Harvey Rogers said. "But we are now able to be a little more selective in where we play."

A busy tour schedule awaits Tympanic this summer, beginning with a graduation bash on June 7 at Taylor's Bar and Grill, followed by

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