

'Days' mixes style, traditional zombie motifs

By Ryan Nyburg
Freelance Reporter

As painful as it is for me to say it, I think the heyday of zombie films is over. The latest film from "Trainspotting" director Danny Boyle, "28 Days Later," is a last gasp of life for the particular subgenre of horror cinema, but a worthy one at that. It takes the format of the George Romero-style zombie film and retools it into a faster-paced, more visually excessive monster.

The film's setup is simple. A virus is accidentally unleashed in England, turning all who are infected into mindless, feral, zombie-like creatures. A few

survivors band together and try to escape the devastation. This premise is used to remarkable advantage through much of the film, with its scenes of an abandoned London and the leftovers of a civilization gone wild.

The characters are essentially cardboard cutouts, bland personality types that could be anybody. This is a standard effect used in horror cinema to make it easier to see yourself in the place of the people on the screen. Most films get it wrong, making the characters so shallow and uninteresting that their inevitable deaths have no effect on the audience. "Days," however, gets it right for most of the film, making it easy for the audience to connect with the characters.

The visual style of the film is also effective. Filmed on video, it has a

grainy, documentary feel to it that adds a sense of immediacy to the horror. It often feels like you're watching front line war coverage on CNN. In the later scenes, set in the rain-soaked countryside, the speed of the camera movements and the darkness create a brilliant sense of disorientation, while never leaving the viewer confused.

None of this is new, and many aspects of the film can be found in horror films of the past. The scenes of the virus spreading through a population and sending the infected into a violent rage is reminiscent of David Cronenberg's "Rabid." And the film seems to borrow something from each installment of the "Night of the Living Dead" trilogy. But I've never been one to criticize a little postmodern recycling, and nothing here feels

blatantly derivative.

So what's wrong with the film? What's keeping it from becoming one of the classics of horror? Two things. One is that many of the film's set pieces don't come off right. For example, a scene where the group of survivors escape London by driving through wreckage-clogged tunnel could have been effective, but the timing is off. It all happens so quickly and so pointlessly that no suspense is ever built.

The other problem with the film is an ideological one. There are a few intimations throughout pointing to the idea that we are no different than those infected by the disease. It's all just "people killing people," as one of the characters puts it.

The film can also work as a politi-

cal allegory of modern day Great Britain, but I think that's reading a little too much into it. The problem is that it never follows through with its ideas, and ends on a lighter note than what seems natural, given what's taken place.

The truth is that in its heart of hearts, the film doesn't contain the dark, cynical nihilism of films like "Night of the Living Dead." While much of the film wallows in the kind of despondency and terror it belongs in, it doesn't go through with it into the logical conclusion. This leaves "28 Days Later" as a generally well-done — but still flawed — exercise in horror cinema.

Ryan Nyburg is a freelance reporter for the Emerald

MOVIE REVIEW



Courtesy

Violinist Boyd Tinsley releases his first album without the Dave Matthews Band.

Albums

continued from page 5

while, and this one carries on the tradition proudly. There is not an original lyric or musical passage in the entire album. This is not to say the album is bad. It's just not that good.

Tinsley is a competent vocalist and his violin passages, of which there are surprisingly few, are as good as anything he's done in the DMB. But that's the problem. Tinsley never surpasses anything he's done before in his regular gig. This leaves the album with no point of interest, and hence no reason for it to exist.

Now for you sorry saps who hark back to the glory days of the DMB, there's O.A.R., which stands for "Of a Revolution," for those who don't know. The band has been a college circuit favorite for the past few years now, and has been likened to the Dave Matthews Band so often it's practically become a cliché. What often gets missed is that they are a tight, well-organized group with solid arrangements who make engaging pop rock.

Their new album, "In Between Now and Then," is a good mix of reggae-influenced beats and melodies straight out of traditional American folk music. All of it is placed in the context of a college jam band, and it all works wonderfully. The only problem is a tendency for repetitiveness, and after awhile the songs start to sound more and more alike. A little variety would have helped, but overall not a bad effort.

Last and least we have Switchfoot and their ungodly collection of "Dawson's Creek"-ready homogenized conformity, entitled "The Beautiful Letdown." As a band, Switchfoot rises to new levels of competence, repeating bland riffs and angst-filled lyrics as if any move away from the norm would result in complete commercial disaster. They are the poor man's Creed, and I mean that in the worst possible way.

So tormented was I by the unending assault of gutless, conformist rock that I had to console myself by reading Richard Meltzer's "A Whore Just Like the Rest," a source of all wisdom



Courtesy

Switchfoot has a new album, "The Beautiful Letdown."

for the thoughtful rock critic. It reminds me that there has always been awful music, and our duty is to sift the good out of the bad, and hope someone will release something worth listening to. I'm still waiting.

Ryan Nyburg is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

Nyburg

continued from page 5

rarely offers opinions on the films, only information. How refreshing.

"Zombie," by Joyce Carol Oates. One of the most disturbing books by the master of modern American

gothic. The story is of paroled sex offender Quentin P., a cold, calculating serial killer. Not a typical story for Oates, but a good way for horror fans to access her work. A good companion to the film "Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer."

"The Moviegoer," by Walker Percy.

A classic of American literature, this book tells the story of a New Orleans stockbroker looking for meaning and authenticity in his life during Mardi Gras. Has the spiritual power of Dostoevsky mixed with the wit and irony of a great Southern writer. Great for those interested in Southern literature.

"Madness and Civilization," by Michel Foucault. You get bonus points on any college paper if you can mention Foucault at least once, and this would be a good work to reference. Apart from that, it's an engaging and thoughtful history of civilization's perception of insanity, and a

great study of power and control in our society.

Happy reading, bibliophiles.

Ryan Nyburg is a freelance reporter for the Emerald. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

Smart Student Deal
\$20 tickets
(with ID) for major concerts.
Purchase in person through Hult Center Bach's Office.

Suite Steps

Choreographer Toni Pimble and the Eugene Ballet add beautiful visuals to the flowing and lilting dance rhythms of J.S. Bach's Concerto for Three Violins and first Orchestral Suite.

Great Things Happen

OREGON BACH FESTIVAL

■ JUNE 27-JULY 13 O UNIVERSITY OF OREGON ■

KeyBank
Activate anything. 682-5000
oregonbachfestival.com

Media Sponsor
Weekly

World premiere
ballets with live orchestra
8 pm, Friday, July 11
Hult Center, Eugene

Bach

AND BALLET