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Brad Schmidt
Of chief concern

'Animal' Zeitgeist embodies goodness

"Fat, drunk and stupid" may indeed be no way to go through life, but it certainly isn't a bad way to go through college.

These aren't words to live by, nor are they a mantra for others to follow. It's simply the truth, the reality that I've been so fortunate to discover here at the University, home of the beloved "National Lampoon's Animal House."

To me, the University is a place where I learn, and for that I am grateful. But much more apparent in my mind is that the University was, for a brief moment in time, Faber College — a place where the booze is free, the women are easy and the teachers are heady.

Faber College has so much more to offer than this University of ours. Back in 1977, when the film was shot on campus, Universal Studios gave the University the paltry sum of \$20,000 to record a movie about binge drinking. Today, the University has become one of the first in the nation to ban alcohol from all Greek houses. There's something terribly wrong with this picture, and I don't want any part of it. Give me Dean Vernon Wormer and "double-secret probation" over University President Dave Frohnmayer and a dry system. Take the Pioneer statue in front of Johnson Hall. I'd rather have the likeness of Emil Faber, and his insightful words, "Knowledge is good."

Maybe I'm a little lost, more like the sick fraternity buddies in the movie, out of touch with the realities of today. But with the release of the 25th anniversary edition of the movie Aug. 26, I'm OK with my dementia.

"Animal House" is a place where a fatty like Kent "Flounder" Dorfman can get accepted into the party house on campus, Delta Tau Chi. "Animal House" is the place where a man like "Flounder" can have a girlfriend — a hot blonde that rivals the movie's other, equally hot cheerleaders.

"Animal House" is a place where you can sit down and socialize with your professor over some grass. It's the place where you can talk about the microcosm in your fingernail, and have a frank discussion about the irrelevance of Milton.

"Animal House" is a place where you can walk into a room and hear the words we all long for: "Grab a brew, it don't cost nothin'." It's a place where grown men can dress up in bed sheets. A place where homecoming parades don't suck.

It's a place where John Belushi can drink a fifth of Jack Daniel's because he's an alcoholic, and it's funny. It's a place where sorority girls have topless pillow fights and — as wonderful as just the thought of that is — it's OK for peeping Tom's to have a look-see. It's a place where Sam Cooke music is always on, where white people can dance, where grades don't matter and where there are no repercussions.

A place that only gets better with age. "Is this really what you're going to do for the rest of your life?" asks Katie, the wide-eyed girl most befriended by the Deltas.

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Peter Utsey for the Emerald

It's not gonna be an orgy; it's a toga party

Cottage Grove will play host to a 25th anniversary Animal House jubilee, which coincides with the movie's DVD re-release

By Ryan Nyburg
Freelance Reporter

The city of Cottage Grove is holding what it hopes will be the world's largest toga party on Aug. 30.

The 25th Anniversary Animal House Celebration, part of Universal Studios' "Animal House Celebration Week," is timed to coin-

cide with a new DVD re-release of "National Lampoon's Animal House."

The event will feature concerts, a parade and a day long toga and look-alike contest. There will also be two showings of the film, one at 2 p.m. and another at 5 p.m., at the Cottage Grove High School auditorium, which seats 500.

The toga party itself will begin at noon with live music beginning at 2:30 p.m. Among the bands scheduled to perform are The Power Pep Band, The Patty McCulla & Dave Clark Band,

The Blue Light Special, The Blues Brothers and the party band who performed in the film, Otis Day and the Knights. The climax of the evening will be an 8:30 p.m. performance by the Kingsmen, whose version of "Louie, Louie" was featured prominently in "Animal House."

The toga party will be the largest on record if all goes according to plan, and the paperwork has already been filed with The Guinness Book of World Records, according to event coordinator Tim Flowerday. There is no

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'Animal House' serves up timeless comedy

By Ryan Nyburg
Freelance Reporter

Has "National Lampoon's Animal House" ever really been forgotten? I doubt it. When it was released in 1978, it struck like a lightning bolt. There had never been anything quite like it, and though many have tried, there has never been anything quite like it since. Is it one of the funniest movies ever? Debatable, but it is impossible to deny the film's worth, both in and of itself, and as a cultural influence.

Who doesn't know the plot? Who needs to? "Animal House" isn't about plot, it's about character, set-up and punchline. It is all one good, well-crafted joke, and like all good jokes it uses broad characterizations to stand in for real people. The characters aren't believable, but they don't need to be. There is the party animal, the ladies' man, the stuffy dean of students, etc. The characters are written as cardboard cutouts and it's up to the actors to make them work.

In many films of this kind, that's what goes wrong. But not here. The actors were mostly unknowns, with the exception of a few older greats

like John Vernon and Donald Sutherland, but they filled out the characters so well as to turn these cutouts into near brilliant comic caricatures. It says a lot that you can't help thinking of Tim Matheson without thinking of the egotistical, sex-obsessed grifter "Otter" (this is assuming you ever spend time thinking of Tim Matheson, which would be very sad state of affairs).

And then of course there is John Belushi. As "Bluto" Blutarisky, he is a force of nature unto himself. He is wild, destructive, drunk, hedonistic, gluttonous and vulgar, yet never unlikable. It is easy to say there has never been a character quite like him in the history of cinema. Belushi embodies Bluto so well that it's possible to believe a bottle of Jack Daniel's you see him consume was not just a prop.

Another area where the film excels is in the soundtrack, which is full of the soul, pop and rock that filled the airwaves of the early 1960s. And the Kingsmen's version of "Louie, Louie" — the anthem of beer-soaked partygoers — is used in all its three-chord glory. It's also an interesting bit of trivia that blues artist Robert Cray makes an uncredited appearance as a member of soul band Otis Day and the Knights.

One of the major problems with comedies is

they have a tendency to become dated pretty quickly, with only the best being worth remembering. "Animal House" avoids this pitfall by taking place in the past, in this case circa 1962. But the film would probably survive the advance of age, anyway. Unlike many comedies today, the film does not depend on references to modern pop culture or on satire of current trends. Instead the humor has an almost timeless feel to it, capturing a few aspects of American college life that never seem to really change. College students drink, party, worry about dates, worry about tests and worry about whether or not the person they spent the night with last night really was 18.

The film takes these things and finds the humor in them. It's not funny when a man crushes a beer can against his head, it's funny that other people find it funny. A scene where a group of students experiment with pot for the first time isn't funny because the students act absurdly while stoned, but because they act generally like anyone would act. The film exaggerates college life, but it exaggerates in the same way your memory exaggerates. You laugh because deep down inside this is what you see college as being like.

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