

Friends display identities through Web community

By Helen Schumacher
Pulse Columnist

It all starts innocently enough. An e-mail sent by an acquaintance that reads: "Invitation to Join Friendster." But it is only a week or two before that innocuous-sounding subject line has you hooked on the best fad to come out of the Internet since the pairing of the colon and end parenthesis. As Spin magazine recently put it, "Friendster is more addictive than crack."

For those of you who have been living in a black hole the past few months, Friendster is a Web site. Its home page describes it as "an online community that connects people through networks of friends for dating or making new friends. Create your own personal and private community, where you can interact with people who are connected to you through networks of mutual friends."

Yes, I realize it sounds like a cheesy dating service, and I suppose it could be for most people. Friendster is part message board, part popularity contest. It's like fantasy football, except it's for hipsters. To join, you are either invited by a friend or sign yourself up. Then you fill out a profile, consisting of your age, location, occupation, interests, favorite books, movies, music, whether you're interested in meeting people for dating, looking for activity partners or "just here to help." Then, you begin collecting

friends and writing testimonials.

When I joined last July I had no idea what to make of the whole thing. At first, it felt like I was part of some secret cult. Then, I discovered that half of the people I knew were already members.



Helen Schumacher

Notes from the underground

They all had the witty profiles filled with obscure rock references, self-deprecating humor and listings of "Donnie Darko" as their favorite movie.

Oh, the hours I spent perfecting my profile. I labored over every word, asking myself "Does my liking Joy Division make me more attractive?" and "Will people think I'm a hippie if I say that 'On the Road' is my favorite book?" A big part of Friendster is proving, through the profile or testimonials, just how clever you are to everyone else.

Every time I got on the Internet I was tempted to check my account. My heart would leap every time I got an e-mail announcing that my friend request had been accepted or that I had a new testimonial to approve.

Even though I haven't met anyone new because of Friendster, I have been able to view my old friends in a different light. I now know that some of them are really bad spellers, and that I'm not alone in my love of the movie "Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai."

In the beginning, I thought Friendster was the kind of thing that couldn't be talked about in public places — that it was only meant to be discussed in hushed tones with no one around. However, the addiction soon got the best of everyone, and by September I couldn't get through a conversation without someone bringing it up.

The power of Friendster became so great that a whole new way of communication between us developed. As people scrambled to outdo each other, a hybrid language, based on who could use the least vowels and who would be the first to quote OutKast, was created.

The buzz surrounding Friendster has died down since the school year began. I'm already friendstering with most people I know, and I've run out of ways to tell them, in testimonial form, how great I think they are. However, I still check my account almost daily, just in case there's a party I need to know about, to see if someone new joined and, also, because despite its shallow exterior, I <3 Friendster.

Contact the Pulse columnist at helenschumacher@dailyemerald.com. Her opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

Visual brilliance of 'Dark City' underlines quest for humanity

Filmmaker Alex Proyas creates a masterpiece that is being hailed as one of the best films of the 1990s

By Ryan Nyburg
Senior Pulse Reporter

Of all the dark, disturbed visions of urban decay, Alex Proyas' "Dark City" has to stand as one of the greatest. With its sad, mysterious streets and rotting structures, it could stand as a monument to art direction for its twisted distillation of German expressionism and every crime film of the 1950s. Much like "Blade Runner," "Dark City" creates an entire world out of abandonment and decay — an urban society ruled by fear and distrust.

When the film came out in 1998, it got some critical acclaim but was passed over by audiences and quickly

forgotten. It has since gained some popularity on video and DVD, and a few critics, notably Chicago Sun-Times critic Roger Ebert, have called it one of the best films of the 1990s.

The film could certainly defend that title. The story concerns John Murdoch (Rufus Sewell), who wakes up one night in a bathtub with no memory of his past. He also finds he is suspected of multiple murders and is being hunted down by police. After numerous close calls, he ends up wandering the streets.

All of this is merely a pretext to the film's true plot, which concerns a grand experiment being performed on the denizens of the city by a race called The Strangers. They control the city — move buildings, change the memories of the people and refine the entire system — while trying to find what makes humans the way they are. Images of the black-clad Strangers wandering the streets are some of the most memorable in the film, not to mention one incredible set of special effects. As Murdoch comes to realize what is really going

on and who he really is (or is supposed to be), the film really takes off, with the Strangers chasing him through the city as it reorganizes itself like a living entity.

This story, while compelling, is almost buried under the visual appeal of the film. The movie's tone and intensity are set entirely by the visual style, with the acting serving only as a functional piece of the whole. This style is so ingrained into the film that it's often easy to miss some of things the director does.

For instance, notice how there are very few tracking shots. Instead, the camera stays in place for a moment, then cuts to a new angle of the same image, moving forward in a subtle but awkward fashion, like pieces of a puzzle being put together but never quite fitting. That this style plays into the themes of the film is a wonderfully sly example of technical and artistic ability being combined.

The film also works as a combination of styles, mixing dark visions of

Turn to **DARK**, page 12

Adv Tix Online Only

FRI NOV 14

RUBBERNECK

WED NOV 19

VINYL

Tickets at Wild Duck TicketsWest & Online NOW!

Tickets at Wild Duck TicketsWest & Online NOW!

THURS NOV 20

GARAJ MAHAL

WILD DUCK MUSIC HALL

Tickets and info at www.wildduckbrewery.com

MCDONALD THEATRE **TRUE B MUSIC**

www.mcdonaldtheatre.com

THUR NOV 13 7 PM DOORS ALL AGES **GUSTER** Limited Seating

THURS NOV 20 6 PM DOORS - All Ages Tix at door only **TGR HIGH LIFE**

SAT NOV 22 7 PM DOORS - All Ages Tix at door only **GRATEFUL DEAD VAULT PARTY** CLOSING OF WINTERLAND 12/31/78

BENEFIT FOR EMERALD LEAGUE SKI TEAMS

HAMSA LILA **FRI DEC 5** 8 PM DOORS - 21+ THEATRE LOUNGE ONLY

KEN KESEY MEMORIAL CONCERT featuring the **STRING CHEESE INCIDENT** **WED DEC 10** 7:15 DOOR 8:15 SHOW

Tickets at all TicketsWest outlets (800) 992-TIXX Service charges may apply

www.dailyemerald.com
your place for

news ←

→ classifieds

reader polls ←

→ archives

and more ←

*"Hey fancy lady!
Where did you get
those jewels???"*

CHEAP JEWELRY SALE!

Thursday November 13th • 9-5pm
Lawrence Hall Lobby, University of Oregon

kegs to go

Neighbors

Offers Eugene's Widest Selection Of Draft Beer To-Go!

Pumps, Cups, & Ice Available

Call Today To Reserve Your Party In A Barrel

1417 Villard, Just 2 Blocks East Of Campus—541.338.0334