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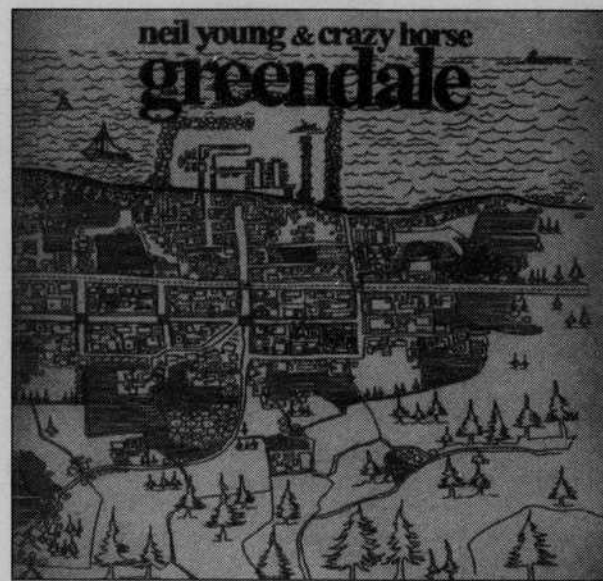
'Greendale' tackles big issues, yet often fails to resolve them

Musician-turned-director Neil Young's first film debuts today at the Bijou

By Ryan Nyburg
 Senior Pulse Reporter

Neil Young is an artist whom people either love or hate. His career is full of so many twists and turns that it would be a challenge to find someone who likes all of his work. But of all the artists to emerge from the 1960s and 1970s, Young is one of the few who has continued to make new and compelling music. While many of his contemporaries have fallen into the trap of living off their past glories, he has remained relevant.

Now Young has recently taken a new path into the world of cinema with his film "Greendale." The film is a dramatization of Young's concept album of the same name, which was released last year. It deals with three generations of a family struck by a series of tragedies in a small coastal town. The movie was shot with a digital camera and has the cheap, grainy quality of a home movie. The entire story is told through the music of the album, with the actors lip-syncing the dialog.



Neil Young's new movie 'Greendale' is a film adaption of his concept album with the same name.

Courtesy

The primitive quality of the film works in its favor, easily complementing the distorted blues jams that comprise the soundtrack. The music is so well integrated that it easily tells the story, although the lip-syncing often becomes distracting and hokey. In fact, the film's flaws often outweigh the many things it has going for it, particularly in the area of its narrative structure. The film contains scenes that the music does not describe, leaving the audience to guess at the meanings behind the characters' actions. This lack of exposition leaves some of the more meaningful gestures and symbols hanging.

What the film does have on its side is a strong political direction. While many filmmakers tend to avoid addressing modern political issues directly, Young takes on post-Sept. 11 America by examining issues of political activism, the invasion of privacy and gun violence. All of these issues are discussed within a modern context, with the occasional news broadcast bringing home the immediacy of each topic. The film's conclusion involves some especially relevant ideas, particularly in how the family's youngest member finds

a way to combine her grandfather's fierce individualism with her parent's idealism to create her own form of activist ideology.

The payoff of "Greendale" is muddled by the same kind of language that caused 1960s counter-culture to slowly slip into irrelevance. The activist ideas become too vague, and the film simply fades away without anything resembling a satisfactory conclusion. This is a shame, since there were enough good ideas floating around to make a powerful statement about modern political commitment. If only they were condensed into a more concrete statement.

As it stands, the film is still worth seeing for what it does right. When everything is working together, it's a piece of powerful filmmaking. Anyone who is a fan of the album, or just Young's work in general will probably appreciate it more than the average filmgoer. Either way, "Greendale" is definitely not a complete loss.

"Greendale" opens today at the Bijou Art Cinemas, located at 492 E. 13th Ave.

Contact the senior pulse reporter at ryannyburg@dailyemerald.com.

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- Women in Sports Business Symposium themed "Motivate, Inspire, Elevate: The Future of Women in Sports Business," Room 282, Lillis Hall, Friday, 1-5:30 p.m.
- Administrative Rule Public Hearing, EMU Aelsea/Coquille Rooms, Friday, 2:30 p.m.
- Student Conduct Code hearings, EMU River Rooms, Friday, 2:30-4 p.m.
- First-ever African Culture Night, EMU Ballroom, Friday, 7 p.m.
- Oregon Ballroom Dance, Room 220, Gerlinger Hall, Friday, 7:30-11:30 p.m.
- Welcome Back Swifts event. See thousands of Yaux's Swifts entering the Agate Hall chimney to roost for the night. For more information, call 485-BIRD, Agate Hall, Friday, 7:30 p.m.
- "Women: The Longest Revolution," a performance documentary created and performed by Bethroot Gwynn, Jane Mara and Jennifer Council, Willamette 100, Friday, 7:30 p.m.
- Romance Languages Film Festival, Agate Hall Auditorium, Friday-Saturday evenings
- CODAC Conference, Room 162, Lillis Hall, Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
- On the Rocks (a cappella) concert, Beall Concert Hall, Saturday, 8:15 p.m. Advance ticket purchases are advised at the EMU Ticket Office, 346-4363. Any remaining tickets will be sold at the door.
- Author Neal Bascomb will discuss his book, "The Perfect Mile: Three Athletes, One Goal and Less Than Four Minutes to Achieve It," UO Bookstore, Sunday, 2 p.m.
- Spring Spinning Bee, EMU Ben Linder Room, Sunday, 2-4 p.m. Free CD spindles, lessons and wool will be provided.

Oregon Daily Emerald

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