



Henry Weintraub directs *Melvin*

# Revenge of the Nerds

The local undead rise in *Melvin*

**T**hough it's the middle of summer blockbuster season, let's ignore those bloated Hollywood flicks with huge casts and multi-million dollar budgets for a little while. "I think Hollywood movies cost way more than they need to. Fifty million dollars for *The Happening*? Let's get movies down to a more realistic level!" says local filmmaker Henry Weintraub, whose latest film is the product of \$4,000 and the work of about 50 people. For more than seven years, Weintraub has been making short films that range from the sci-fi comedy *MindSlime* (which should see national release from Troma Entertainment this year) to music videos for The Sawyer

Family. This weekend, he premieres *Melvin*, his first feature length film. It's the story of a picked-on high school kid, Melvin (Leif Fuller, who also serves as cinematographer), who enlists an unwilling and equally put-upon college student to help him have his revenge on a trio of bullies. If Norton Pincus (Patrick O'Driscoll) gets the girl in the end, hey, even better.

Did I mention that Melvin has been dead for three years when he recruits — which is to say bites — Norton?

Like many good genre films, *Melvin* takes a not-unrealistic basic scenario and twists it, using the elements of the genre to up the stakes, the drama and, in this case, a

particular kind of bloody humor that comes not from straightforward jokes but from the creative ways the film's undead find to kill people. Weintraub's last non-music-video film, the 26-minute *Depraved*, also focused on a person getting violently back at her tormenters, but it was a much darker affair. Weintraub notes that it was written by Ryan Nyburg (an executive producer on *Melvin*), who has a different style. But he also says *Melvin* wasn't meant to be quite as humorous as it turned out to be. "It seems when I write something (like one of our last flicks, *MindSlime*), I usually shoot for something way more serious, but when the cast gets a hold of it and puts their spin on it, it turns out way funnier than intended," he says. "I think that's part of the charm of our movies, though: Everyone has a bit of input, especially with their characters."

The DVD version of *Melvin* includes a generous selection of bonus material from the film's shoot, much of which involves Weintraub and company cheerily putting together scenes involving, say, a Mortal Kombat-style spine removal. But as entertained — and entertaining — as they are, they're not messing around when it comes to their work. Weintraub says of his cast and crew, many of whom have become friends and worked on several of his films, "We have a lot of fun kidding with each other on set, but we take our films and jobs very serious, which I hope shows in our finished product."

And it does. While *Melvin* is clearly a movie with a small budget, it's equally clear

that time and care was taken to stretch every dollar. Scenes in *Melvin*'s timeline have a vivid glare that makes them look a little eerie. The effects can be over the top, but at times they're downright stomach-churning, particularly Norton's nasty thigh wound and the copious amounts of red vomit that follow his bloody nighttime excursions. Some images in *Melvin* have an off-kilter grace that nicely contrasts with the unpleasantness they're depicting, and the Eugene locations are well-chosen, from the dim alleys of downtown to the red walls of Wandering Goat. "I think Eugene's a great place to make movies," says Weintraub, who shot *Melvin* entirely in Oregon. "I really hope some of the other filmmakers around come together and start helping each other out. I've recently come in contact with Mr. Ooh La La, who made the local horror film *Earth Day*, and I'm glad to be in touch with someone locally doing similar things to me."

After this weekend's premiere, Weintraub has a handful of screenings planned all over Oregon. Beyond that, he's hoping to get *Melvin* into places like Hollywood Video and Netflix, and to distribute the 1,000 DVDs he's made. But his plans are already reaching beyond this release: "I have an idea for our next movie, but it's going to take more money than this one. It's another feature called *Midnight Movies*. We made *Melvin* for under \$4,000, and I hope to get 10 times that for our next one!" **EW**

*Melvin premieres at 9 pm Friday, May 22, at the Bijou, and also shows at 10:25 pm May 22 and 11:15 pm May 23. For future screenings, see www.531productions.com*

## movie clips

### OPENING OR RETURNING:

**Archaeology Channel International Film & Video Festival:** The annual festival features a broad lineup of films from around the world that exhibit "the wonderful diversity of human cultures past and present." Films include *Secrets of the Parthenon* and *The Mummy Who Came In From the Cold*, among many others. May 19-23, Hult Center. See full schedule at [www.archaeologychannel.org](http://www.archaeologychannel.org)

**Dance Flick:** How many genres are left for Hollywood to make spoof flicks of? I hope we're running out. PG13. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

**Fired Up!** Two football players think they're sooooo clever when they realize that if they go to cheer camp, they'll be surrounded by girls. And hey, they can make the crappy cheerleading squad better, too! PG13. Movies 12.

**Great Directors Seminar:** DIVA screens two

films by Howard Hawks (*His Girl Friday*, 1 pm, and *The Big Sleep*, 4 pm), followed by discussion led by Thomas Blank. Sunday, May 24, DIVA. \$7.

**Haunting in Connecticut, The:** This horror flick about a haunted house is "based on a chilling true story" and stars the slightly odd (to a pop culture buff) trio of Princess Irulan from *Dune*, Casey Jones from *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and Beaver Casablanco from *Veronica Mars*. PG13. Movies 12.

**Heckler's Night:** Mock loudly as the Goat screens the wonderful yet absurd *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. 7 pm Wednesday, May 27, Wandering Goat. Free.

**I Love You, Man:** Some people are calling this one a dick flick: Paul Rudd proposes to his girlfriend (Rashida Jones), but then desperately needs to find a male best friend to be his best man. So he goes on a bunch of "man-dates."

With Andy Samberg and the delightful Jason Segel. R. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (3/26)

**Lymelife:** Two Culkins (Kieran and Rory) are among the strong ensemble cast in this story of suburban Long Island life in the late '70s. With Alec Baldwin, Emma Roberts and Timothy Hutton. R. Bijou.

**Melvin:** Local filmmaker Henry Weintraub premieres his latest work, a feature-length film about the titular kid (Leif Fuller), who rises from the grave to enlist a nerdy college kid (Patrick O'Driscoll) to take out the bullies who killed him. Bloody, funny and entirely Oregon-made. Bijou. See story this issue.

**My Bloody Valentine 3D:** The lone survivor of a coal-mine accident keeps waking up from his coma to kill people; the guy who caused the accident returns, in an obvious moment of brilliance, to the small town where it all went

wrong — on the same day the terrible things all happened! *No way!* R. 101 min. David Minor Theater.

**Night at the Museum 2: Battle for the Smithsonian:** Ben Stiller returns to the museum in which everything — Amelia Earhart (Amy Adams), tiny statues, Lincoln — comes alive at night. PG13. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

**Race to Witch Mountain:** Disney heads back to Witch Mountain with the Rock, er, Dwayne Johnson, who plays the taxi driver who gets caught up with two kids (AnnaSophia Robb and Alexander Ludwig) who are actually aliens. PG. Movies 12.

**Sugar:** The latest film from the creators of *Half Nelson* follows a young baseball player as he moves from the Dominican Republic to the American minor leagues. *Sugar* trips over a few clichés, but becomes extraordinary in the end.

R. 96 min. Bijou. See review this issue.

**Taking Root:** Documentary about Kenyan Wangari Maathai, for whom planting trees was the first step toward forming a movement that eventually earned her the Nobel Peace Prize. 7 pm Tuesday, May 26, Room 307, Building 17, LCC. \$5 donation supports the Makindu Children's Fund.

**Terminator: Salvation:** Christian Bale takes on the role of John Connor, the hopeful savior of humankind. Sam Worthington is Marcus Wright, whose memories don't match up with his body; Bryce Dallas Howard and *Star Trek's* Anton Yelchin also costar. PG13. 115 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Films open the Friday following EW publication date unless otherwise noted. See archived reviews at [www.eugeneweekly.com](http://www.eugeneweekly.com)

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