

High speed connection

The Matrix succeeds in spite of science fiction clichés

BY KARAN SHETTY

The new Wachowski Brothers' film, *The Matrix*, is the latest in a long list of films in which the hero is left wondering: "Where do you draw the line between fiction and reality?"

Total Recall, *Twelve Monkeys*, *Dark City* and even *The Truman Show* are just a few of the films on this list. No, *The Matrix* mines no new territory here, the storyline is peppered with the usual Hollywood clichés and there are lines which

only actors like Laurence Fishburne could get away with.

Taking all that into consideration, *The Matrix* is still an amazing film.

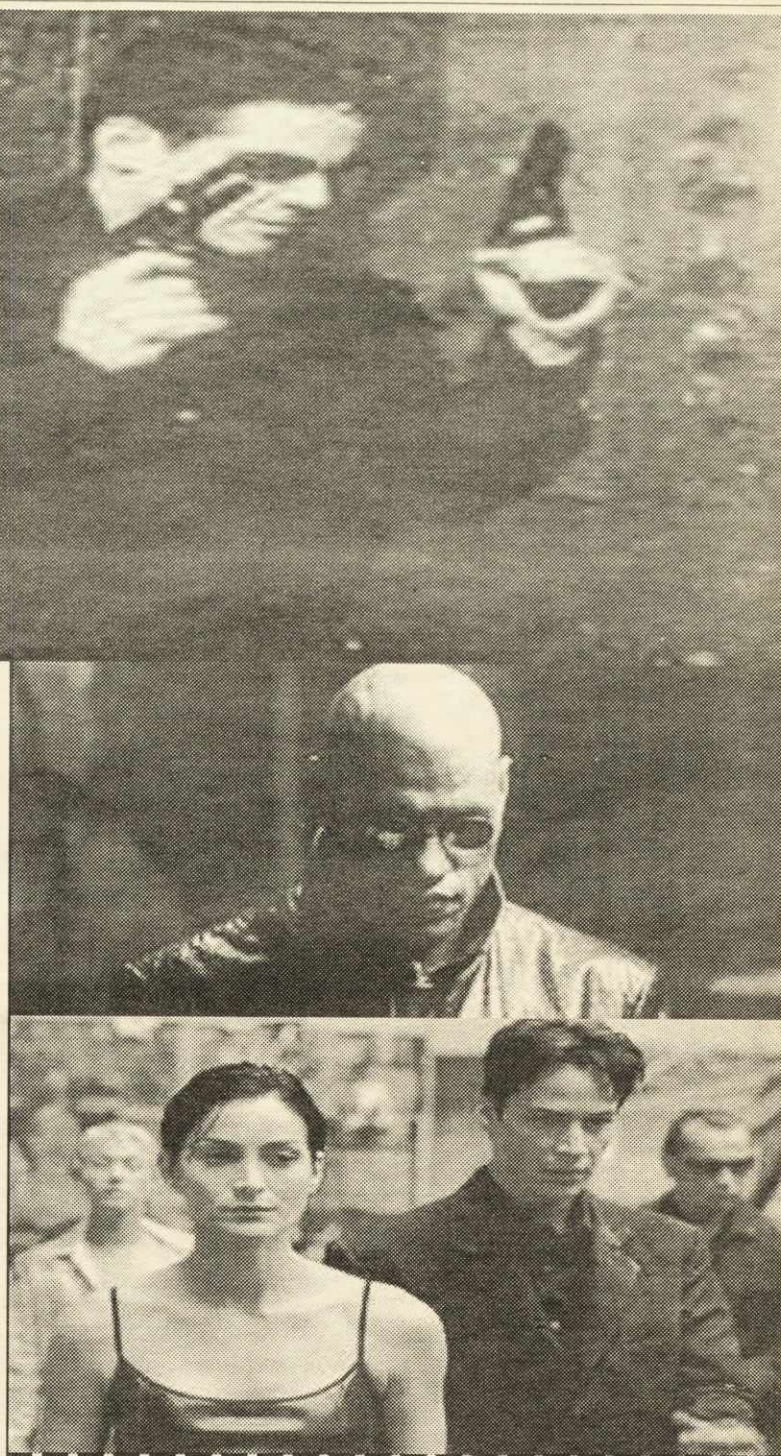
Visually stunning, with special effects and camera pyrotechnics that will blow you away, the film is a testament to the Wachowski Brothers' strong directing ability and the genius of the computer graphics designers who worked on the movie.

The Wachowski Brothers' last film, *Bound*, a critical and commercial success, kept the audience glued to their seats in spite of the fact that most of the film was set only in two adjacent apartments. Hitchcock had the same success with *Rear Window*, in which Jimmy Stewart played an injured photographer who never left his apartment during the film.

Without ruining the movie, the plot goes something like this: Neo (Keanu Reeves) is a software designer/hacker who finds out that his entire life, along with everyone else's, is actually a virtual reality program fed into his brain by malevolent computers who have taken over the world. Awakened from his virtual reality slumber by Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne), Neo begins a quest to alert others to the realities of their existence.

On his "gallant" quest, Neo battles evil computer generated agents, jumps off tall buildings and escapes squid-shaped robots.

Although, for most science fiction fans the movie will rehash some of the old formulae, there are enough interesting, ingenious details to keep this film buoyant, and allow it to appeal to all audiences.



Summerteeth
Wilco
Reprise



Summerteeth is the latest release from Wilco, one of roots music's most prolific bands — but strangely enough the group turns more towards pop on the disc.

The follow-up to the breakthrough double-disc *Being There*, *Summerteeth* realizes the pop potential that was evident in gems like "Outtasite (Outtamind)" and "Monday". Here, tracks like "Shot in the Arm" and "ELT" are pop candy, possibly meant to appeal to a larger audience, but great all the same.

The band's hiatus between recordings was actually not much of one at all. They ganged up with Billy Bragg to record *Mermaid Avenue*, a disc of lost songs written by late pre-hippie Woody Guthrie. And band members can be found on several discs, including Golden Smog's *Weird Tales* (released last fall on Rykodisc). Their work with these artists has obviously enhanced and broadened their musical skills and influences, and a tighter sound shows itself in *Summerteeth*.

Some songs on *Being There*, like "The Lonely 1" and "Someone

Else's Song", drip into pretention faster than the first chords come out. While the problem exists in "We're Just Friends" (and you wouldn't know they were friends at all by vocalist Jeff Tweedy's dog-just-died droning), the rest of the new disc is polished and sharp, avoiding the too-easy roots pitfall of being sentimental to the point where nobody really thinks the singer believes what he's singing.

But there isn't much to disparage on *Summerteeth*. While

roots purists may lament the relative exclusion of the country/folk influence apparent in earlier songs like "Far Far Away" and "At My Window Sad and Lonely", the CD marks definite growth and a somewhat different sound, possibly closer to what bands like the Jayhawks are known to have put out. Regardless, fans of both pop and roots will find something to take away from *Summerteeth*, and for that we should all be grateful.

GREG MCFARLANE

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