

ARTS WEEK



an interview with morgan j. freeman, director of "desert blues" a-bunch of cds are yet again reviewed for your pleasure. john fiske reviews "the matrix" "the out-of-towners."



text / sam keshvarezi

Micko Westmoreland isn't a DJ. He's not a

techno superstar

Micko is a musician of the highest caliber. Micko is The Bowling Green and his life brings back

See GREEN, p.4A

the pigeon will sweat to death

JOHN FISKE

To say that "The Matrix" is inexplicable is maybe saying too much. However, it would take an infinite amount of space to get it right.

In the making since before 1994, "The Matrix" is a wonderful and exciting film that shows that the promise of Andy and Larry Wachowski's previous film, 1996's "Bound," was no lie. But walking out of the film I couldn't help wishing I didn't know as much as I did about the plot of the film, so for the time being, I'll forego a full plot description.

After an exciting opening, we are introduced to Neo (Keanu Reeves), a hacker-by-night, mild-mannered-office-worker-by-day everyman mysteriously contacted by Morpheus (Larry Fishburne). Neo is also contacted by some pseudo-FBI agents who are interested in capturing him. Morpheus, it appears, is a world-renowned hacker who wishes to answer the question that's been plaguing Neo for some time: What is the Matrix? Now this makes up maybe the first 25-30 minutes; the rest you'll have to see for yourself because I'd be doing a huge disservice divulging the turn the plot takes from here. All I can say is "The Matrix" is an experience not to be missed, especially by the campus' film majors.

First and foremost, "The Matrix" is a cyberpunk fantasy, complete with the requisite amounts of paranoia, cyber-jargon, mythology, spirituality and violence that anyone could ask for. Yet there is also an engaging intellectual level that few films on this genre attempt (Remember Keanu's last attempt in "Johnny Mnemonic"?). With its roots in Cartesian philosophy, the plot of "The Matrix" actually poses and answers questions of humanity and technology that only the best cyber literature uses.

The Wachowski brothers began their career writing for Marvel Comics, and, after selling "The Matrix," moved on to some script doctoring, and eventually "Bound." Their depth of knowledge in the realms of cinema, fantasy and sci-fi is so full and extensive that "The Matrix" is a virtual index of film styles, genres, conventions and clichés. The Wachowskis pull from so many sources, including the work of William Gibson, Geof Darrow, film noir, goth, Tsui Hark, John Woo, Fritz Lang and even some Orson Welles. The best moment is when Neo sells pirated programs that he hides in a hollowed copy of Baudrillard's "Simulacra and Simulation," open to the chapter "On Nihilism." Coincidence? Never.

At this point it is important to mention their director of photography, Bill Pope. His lighting owes much to the high lighting from comics (a style D.P. Theo Van De Sande exploited to full effect in last year's "Blade") and expressive angles and shadows from film noir. Pope creates a wonderful and paranoid atmosphere that I haven't seen in quite some time, and after his work on "Bound," "Zero Effect" (another great and little-seen film) and "The Matrix," I think it's safe to say that he belongs on a list of near-perfect cinematographers that can do just about anything, with Michael Ballhaus, Roger Deakins, Dante Spinotti, John Toll and Janusz Kaminski.

Now, some are going to bitch and moan about Keanu. He's fine. In fact, this is his best work. Fishburne's presence is wonderful as always. However, the best work comes from the film's two newcomers, Carrie-Anne Moss and Hugo Weaving, as the mysterious Agent Smith. Moss' Trinity is actually quite wise and very athletic, and considering that she began as a model, you wouldn't expect that she would have so much charm and freedom. Weaving, as a veteran Australian actor, is perfectly menacing as the leader of the Agents.

The lesser points of "The Matrix" spring from its overwritten script. While it is well-structured, the dialogue in too many places sounds like it belongs on a children's afternoon cartoon. In fact, it totally destroys the normally great character work from Joe Pantoliano,



who in one scene (you'll know which one when you see it) is reduced to pure scenery chewing. But these missteps are more than forgivable.

It may be falling into hyperbole, but "The Matrix" also offers the best special effects I've ever seen. Using computer graphics, the F/X team have created an effect that allows the film to slow down to the equivalent of 12,000 frames per second (standard is 24 FPS) and see bullets flying through the air. It's quite amazing, and better yet, it actually fits the film's narrative needs and style, so it's not just BS eye candy.

It's hard to say this early in the year what the best films will be, but "The Matrix" is a great film for this year or any year. My recommendation is to ignore any conversations on the film, TV spots and radio commercials and just see the film. Trust me.

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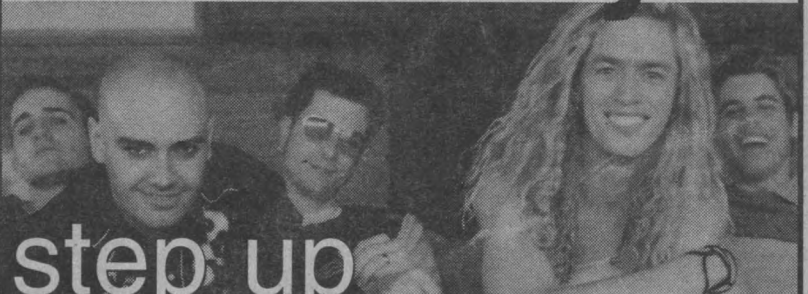
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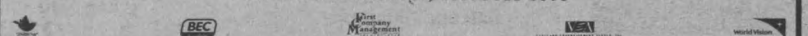
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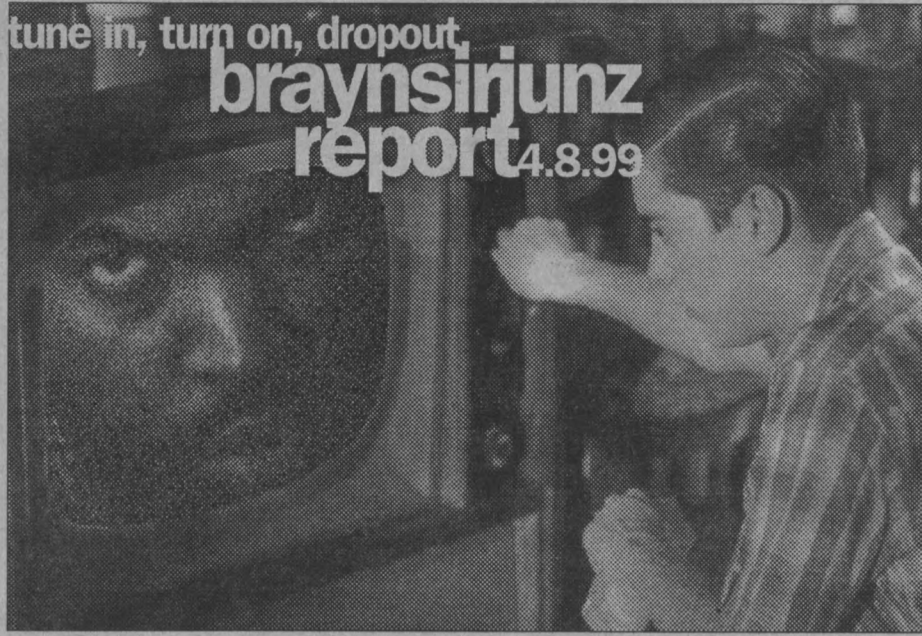
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— Esoterik's answering machine

"What the fuck?"

— My boy Ken commenting on when he heard Necro's sensuous ode to women titled "S.T.D."

"Whoaaa. I know Kuuung Fuuuuuu."

— Bill ... I mean, Keanu Reeves in "The Matrix"

Goddamn, I just recently went to a show, and it was off the HEEZY. Opening the evening was Timbaland, and boy, am I glad I didn't miss it. Rockin' straight off the DAT, Timbaland's live flavor was accompanied by four of the bombest singers I've ever heard at a live show, Playa. Honestly, it's unknown to me why people clown him, because his intricately weaved rhymes and poetic sensibility speak to my angst as a man of color. He ended his set with a monologue, telling everybody to "keep the peace and unite under one banner."

For the second set, the booming thump of hardcore R&B almost sonically demolished the venue as Divine hit the stage, resulting in some of the most progressive songs I've ever heard. However, the highlight was when the rap supergroup Murder Inc., consisting of Jay-Z, Ja-Rule and DMX, closed with a mindblowing show. Toward the end of their show, they were joined by Foxy Brown for a quick, yet lethally seductive cameo.

As they performed their future hits from the upcoming album, I remained enthralled by the amount of perspiration, energy and enthusiasm I was consumed in. This is what it meant to be alive! This is what it meant to love commercial hip-hop! From that point on, I refuted everything that I stood for: the concepts of art over money, creativity over formulaic tendencies and originality over biting was rendered useless in the gamut of glory I was immersed in.

Therefore, I now hereby announce the complete exorcism of my allegiance to underground hip-hop, and I will make this my final installment of the Sirjunz Report. I thank all the readers, supporters and detractors alike, and wish to bid you good luck in seeking happiness. The next chance I get to buy tickets for anything Master P-related, I'm jumping on it even if it means buying

them shits for 50 bucks on e-bay. Company Flow and Aceyalone suck, fuck them.

April Fool's muthafuckers. Ooops, I forgot; April Fool's was last week.

Speaking of which, sometimes I wish it was April Fool's every day when I'm reminded of the following innately mundane facts ...

1) The new Isla Vistan soundtrack for the weekends is going to be Eminem's *Slim Shady* album.

2) Eminem is currently positioned at the No. 2 slot on the Billboard Charts ...

3) ... and Britney Spears is at the No. 1 slot ...

4) ... and some of my boys think her shit is tight ...

5) ... although we all agree that she looks bomb ...

6) NO I.D.'s new group, *Infamous Syndicate*, solidify a new genre in hip-hop untread upon by female emcees: the lyrical underground chickenhead. Blegh.

7) *Krazyie Bone's* new album, which looks as phat as a vitamin-deficient Fiona Apple, has a cut called "Revolution" that features an anonymous collective of artists known as "The Marley Brothers." Hmmm ...

8) Speaking of new albums, how much of a hole did Nas want to dig by releasing a song with Puff Daddy, the appropriately titled "Hate Me Now?" Sure, I'll take you up on your offer.

9) Ever since Puffy and Jimmy Page hooked up, I knew that ridiculously random team ups were inevitable. (Think *Mobb Deep with Blondie*.) However, nothing in the world prepared me for a collaboration by *Coolio and Kenny Rogers*.

10) ... nor am I prepared to witness the upcoming collaboration between *Korn, Eminem and U-God*.

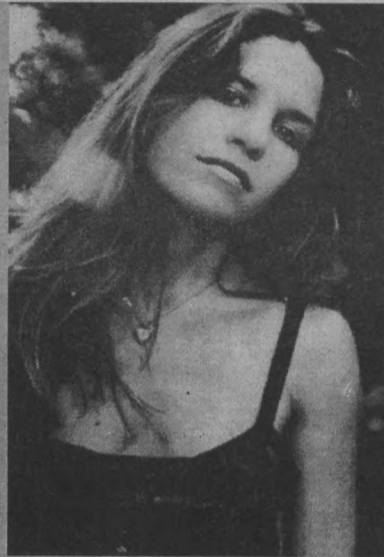
11) ... nor the fact that I enjoy watching WWF's *Konnar and Rey Mysterio Jr.* in music videos rather than *Marc Cohn* on VH1's "Divas Live." Then again the question is: what the phukk was Marc Cohn doing on "Divas Live"?!!!! Oooh, they called you a bitch, Marc! Oh shit, and your name is "MARK"?

See SIRJUNZ, p.5A



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not our demographic, but funny

a sweet and short look at "the out-of-towners."

JENNIFER RAUB

One would assume, when seeing the trailers for "The Out-of-Towners," that with four immensely funny actors taking the leading roles in an update of a work by Neil Simon, Hollywood had finally demonstrated its ability to make a stellar lighthearted comedy. With the proven talents of Steve Martin, Goldie Hawn, Mark McKinney and John Cleese to make audiences laugh, combined with an already funny script, it would appear Hollywood could do no wrong.

Or could it? Despite the strong performances by the four leading characters, this is one of the first times I can remember seeing a film and becoming consciously put off by the background music. I know that "The Out-of-Towners" is seen as belonging to a demographic to which I do not, but even other flicks aimed at appealing to the middle-aged don't necessarily tread the schmaltzy waters of lite rock, elevator jazz and wailing violins used to cue up the tears that the actors are apparently incapable of shedding. Quite frankly, I find such dramatic scores insulting, unless it's a great battle scene in "Braveheart" — if it's meant to be an emotionally compelling scene, let the actors, not the composer, do the convincing.

But aside from an almost-moot point (the soundtrack), "The Out-of-Towners" is a

funny film, even if it is an offbeat, screwball romantic comedy. (What romantic comedy isn't billed as this?) Straight-laced Henry Clark (Steve Martin) and his sad (yet kooky) wife Nancy

"an offbeat screwball romantic comedy"

(Goldie Hawn) have just sent their last child off to college and are facing "the rest of their lives." The couple takes off for New York City for a job interview Henry has with an advertising agency, and, as luck (or predictability) would have it, everything that could possibly go wrong, does. And everything that goes wrong, of course, is an enormous

punchline (that is, I suppose, the whole "screwball" part). The actors, however, are all adept at comedy and manage to keep the audience laughing through a bunch of smaller moments via expression and delivery alone.

The only real flaw with "The Out-of-Towners" (despite the schmaltzy soundtrack) is that one would think with such talent in script, acting and directing, this film would go above and beyond all standards, making it one of the best comedies of the year. Unfortunately, "The Out-of-Towners" makes a decent, laughable flick, but doesn't transcend the expectations one could have for it. However, considering the rest of the schmaltzy stuff Hollywood releases ("Forces of Nature" or "Picture Perfect," anyone?), "The Out-of-Towners" is a comedy worth viewing, even if its soundtrack has as much substance as Velveta lite.



the first place winners, our own hanson + jennifer raub @ the california intercollegiate press association awards / hanson, raub + assistant tami mnoian / hanson + raub celebrate more.

GREEN

Continued from p.1A

the meaning of a musician trying to communicate everything deep within without saying a word. His album *One Pound Note* gives us a sight into what electronic music should be. A constantly changing album going from house, breakbeat, drumnbass and even experimental artforms. Having the opportunity to talk to Micko gave me new insight on where he sees his vision of Bowling Green going.

Artsweek: So Micko, how have things been with you as of recent?

Micko Westmoreland: Simply hectic, but I have to admit I love it. I've been working on the new album and it's coming on across very well.

The new album? Tell us a little about how it will compare to the last album?

Well, I'm not much a fan of comparing my art, but I have to say it's more of a vocal expression than anything else.

So you mean there will be vocals involved in the new album?

Well, in a way, I will be doing some vocals myself and I have some extra people involved. I think people will like. Let's hope they do, hah.

The newest album One Pound Note has been getting a really good response. Give us a little insight on how you were able to get the album to vary so much.

Well, the first album for me is always a collage of everything I've done in the past and I made the whole album sort of an experience of everything that's influenced me. You can expect the next release to definitely have a more stable feel. The way I feel about

the music is that I'm constantly moving up and if I'm not then I'm not doing the right thing.

I understand that you also are an actor besides being a musician?

Yes, I was in a movie that is on its way to being a cult classic. "Velvet Goldmine" was a very challenging movie. It's a great movie and everyone should see it. Most of the parts I have in the picture are silent, but it's a representation of the character in itself. There's a lot of symbolism involved in the picture.

So have you had experience with acting in the past?

Most of my experience has come from art college. It was during this point where I conquered a lot of what I found to be my obstacles.

Could you explain a little further?

I didn't know how to draw and I had no self-esteem. One day a friend of mine told me that it was beyond knowing to draw. Once I got control over drawing everything else would be easy from there. He was right, the imagination takes over at that point and there really aren't any limits as to what I can do. One thing led to another and I became involved in the scene.

I also understand that a lot of the music you do is big in the gay community?

It wasn't originally the plan, but something about it moves people and that's what makes me feel good. Sometimes I lose total confidence in myself and the only way I can

prove to myself that my music is good is to play it to other people and it bloody works, hah.

So, Micko, anything else in the works from you?



Some secret things going on with my future as an artist, but that will wait. Let's just say my influence as an artist will definitely expand.

[He told me later what the secret is, but you, dear readers, will have to wait and find out.]

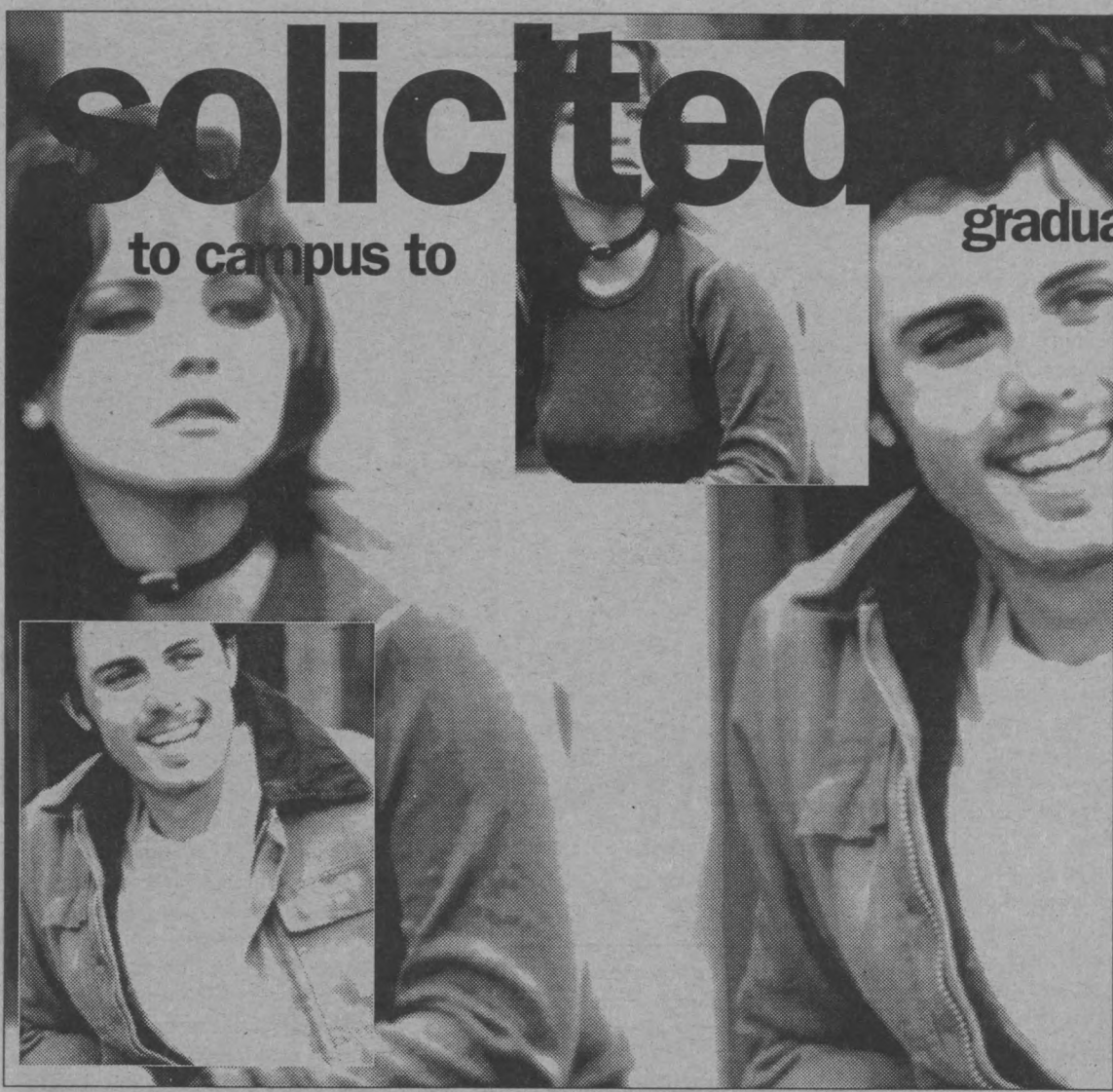
Another big issue that is more of a problem here in the states is the label "sellout," which anybody gets if they're on radio. What are your feelings about that?

I personally would love to hear my music on radio. It's the way for the artist to be able to expand. It's difficult for people to understand that an artist needs that promotion to survive. Of course, if my music was on a TV commercial for something I didn't feel good about then I would never let that happen.

Thanks for your time, Micko. Please leave us with a final word.

Never stop fighting for something you believe in. It takes me a long time to believe in myself, but I do and it takes a lot of hard work to make something of yourself in the scene, but it can be done.

Micko Westmoreland, an artist, an actor, a future legend. For those of you not familiar with The Bowling Green, make sure to check it out. It's the next wave of music. It's so different that anyone can get into it. Moving from every single category in the electronic genre, The Bowling Green will change the way you view music for once and all. Micko is a brilliant and not to mention very down-to-earth guy. The best wishes to this brilliant artist and hopes to see you in the states soon.



solicited press. ucsb graduate morgan j. freeman returns to campus to premiere his new flick. dig.

TAMI MNOIAN

Filmmaker, UCSB alumnus and former Nexite Morgan J. Freeman is in the last stages of preparation for the screening of his second major film, "Desert Blue," showing in Campbell Hall this Friday. "Desert Blue" follows on the heels of "Hurricane Streets," Freeman's debut feature about the coming of age of a young boy and his friends after they accidentally shoot the abusive father of a friend.

Whereas "Hurricane Streets" offers a look into the lives of metropolitan American youth, "Desert Blue" serves up a slice of small-town Americana, and it is set in the desert, an often-forgotten area. The idea for this film was actually conceived a few years back when Freeman was a student here at UCSB. We at *Artsweek* had a few moments to chat with Freeman via cell phone about his latest film, and why returning to Santa Barbara will be a kind of homecoming and reunion for this young filmmaker.

Artsweek: Can you give us a bit of background or perhaps your inspiration for this particular film?

Freeman: Money, girls, and fame, as a joke. The inspiration basically came from when I was a student around 1991 at UCSB and as a [Film Studies] 106 project I made a film with a few other students called "Miles

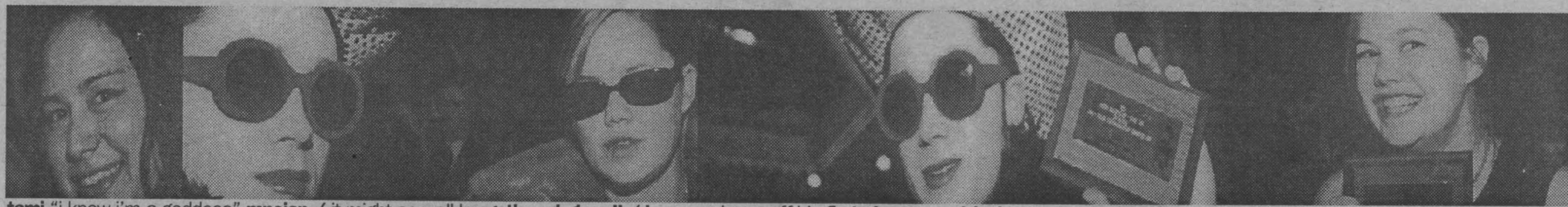
"... i am friends with sara gilbert, brendan sexton and christina ricci ..."

Between Matchbox." We shot in the Mojave Desert in a town known as the hubcap capital of the world. This story unfolded in a small desert town that most people pass on by. For "Desert Blue," I wanted to explore life in a town like this first docudrama, but on a more structured scale.

At *Artsweek*, we know what it feels like to win. So does Morgan J. Freeman, a UCSB alumnus (and, coincidentally, a former editor of the current best arts and entertainment section in the state of California), whose debut feature film, "Hurricane Streets" was the first ever dramatic film to take home three 1997 Sundance Film Festival awards, including Best Director, the Audience Award and the award for Best Cinematography. *Artsweek*, winners ... coincidence? We think not.

Artsweek also knows what it's like to be harassed in the comfort of our own homes when we're doing other things — studying, writing, vacationing, etc. So does Morgan. Given his cell phone number, we haphazardly (and so journalistically) waited until the last minute to give him a ring to conduct a brief — but ultimately highly informative — interview with, well, one of our own kind. The Best. (For the highly sought after interview, see right.)

Morgan J. Freeman was born and raised in Long Beach, Calif., and, according to press releases that deluged the tiny hovel of an *Artsweek* office, he caught the filmmaking bug at an early age. His hobby — shooting and editing his own episodes of "Miami Vice" — became his major here at our very own UCSB, and he received his B.A. in film studies in 1992.



tami "i know i'm a goddess" mnoian / it might as well be goth and glam II / hanson shows off his first place award for best arts + entertainment section / raub shows it off, too. love us.

To make a long — although somewhat interesting — story short, Freeman returns to the UCSB campus this Friday for a special screening of a new film, "Desert Blue."

"Desert Blue," of course, is packed with all sorts of celebrities, including "now-I've-got-indie-cred" actors Christina "No, They're Real" Ricci, Brendan "Yes, I Played the Rapist in 'Welcome to the Dollhouse'" Sexton III and Casey "More Than Ben's Brother" Affleck. Set in the offbeat, barely populated California town of Baxter, it follows the lives of Blue (Sexton) and his innocently rebellious friends, who constantly try to relieve their boredom and find a sense of purpose in a place devoid of opportunities. (Kind of like the innocently rebellious avant garde here at *Artsweek*, but we digress.) Pete (Affleck) has his eye on defending his All Terrain Vehicle extreme racing championship, while his girlfriend, Ely (Ricci) hones her art of explosives. Blue's best buddy, Cale (Ethan Suplee) dreams of becoming the town deputy, while Sandy (remember Sara Gilbert?) sells soft-serve ice cream cones from the roadside attraction.

But all changes when a truck carrying a secret ingredient to the local soda factory crashes, spilling its contents and resulting in the mysterious death of the truck's owner. The FBI quarantines the town until it can determine the exact contents of the tanker. A toxic-chemical scare is in full effect.

Enter Skye (Kate Hudson), a beautiful young television star passing through on a road trip with her father (John Heard). Trapped in Baxter due to the spill, Skye is troubled more by the huge audition she will miss in L.A. than by the actual prospect of fatal contamination. With nothing better to do, she finds herself hanging out with Blue and his posse. Discussions of doom, mutual disinterest and skepticism turn into a budding romance as Blue and Skye discover they have more in common than either originally suspected. (The press release doesn't tell us what, however. We here at *Artsweek* guess that's why you should go see the film!)

With a backdrop of explosions, a desperate attempt to break the quarantine and secrets from beyond the grave, "Desert Blue" chronicles a lost weekend where the oddest dreams find fulfillment in the strangest of ways. (Heck, with all that "mutual disinterest" and "skepticism" crap, Freeman might as well start scripting and directing "*Artsweek: The Movie*." Arts & Lectures would be sure to get better press *that way*.)

Of course, Freeman has been interviewed by *Artsweek* before, and our own dear Nick Robertson conducted a much more excellent (and surely more mature) discussion with Freeman than we'd ever be truly capable of. (If interested, refer to this *Artsweek* that came out, like, uh, two years ago or something.) But we bit the bullet and had a discussion with Freeman that's fit to print.

This film headlines a star-studded cast with the likes of Christina Ricci, Casey Affleck, Sara Gilbert and John Heard, to name a few. How was it like to work with these actors?

It was a pretty amazing experience. I am friends with Sara Gilbert, Brendan Sexton and Christina Ricci, so I wrote this script with them in mind. When I was writing a character I wanted to include everything: their sensibilities, morality. I tried to adapt characters to personality other than just physical appearance.

It sounds like an extensive process.

Yes, I spent about a year rewriting it.

But the bottom line is, why should people go see this film?

People should see this film because it's a showcase of younger, amazing talent. It's an independent, spirited film, not made to be commercial. It's a unique view of Americana, but in a desert scape.

And one last question, as a former student here, any comments about your time as a film major or former Nexite employee?

Well, overall I came out of Santa Barbara with a sense of independence, and that you can do it on your own. It dispelled the myth of how difficult it is to make a film. I left thinking I can do it, and it became easier to get more stuff made. I knew what to expect, and that was crucial. This film actually gave me a chance to work with a lot of other people that graduated from UCSB. It'll be a kind of reunion for some of us.

"Desert Blue" screens this Friday, April 9, at Campbell Hall, 7 p.m. Tickets are \$5 for students and \$6 for the general public. For more information, call 893-3535.

SIRJUNZ

Continued from p.3A

12) Freaky Tah of The Lost Boys was shot dead last week. This is getting pathetic ... after all, many country artists share similar backgrounds in the lower diaspora of the economic pyramid, yet you don't see Willie Nelson whoridin' on Clint Black? Imagine this: Country music fans player hatin' on their favorite artist. Better yet, imagine this: A player hater that smokes Yanni. Loss to

humanity indeed, although the same can't be said about his music.

(Random) Special announcement: I would like to hereby announce plans to hold the first hip-hop parachuting rhyme battle. Witness the amazing spectacles of virtuoso feats, as your favorite emcees battle each other while parachuting from a plane. Soon to be held at Hearst Castle, this event aims to raise money and consciousness about the pending issues of the Y2K crisis. Oh yeah,

also to get Ken Starr's ass a new job as well.

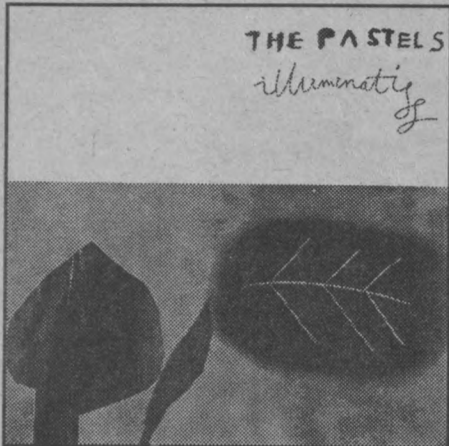
Be there, as emcees from all over the nation risk their life battling for rhyme supremacy as they throttle through the air at a velocity of 150 mph. Announcements concerning specific dates and participants shall be announced, but so far confirmed are Diamond D, MC Shan, Howie Tee, Harvey Wallbanger, Loon of Harlem World, Saafir and Bushwick Bill ...

This week is merely a reintroduction to a gallery of underground hip-hop-related information, jokes and social criticisms that is

sure to follow in the next couple months. Supporters remain at ease, haters please embrace me. I'm out for now like Kevin Costner movies, but be on the lookout next week for an interview with Luke Sick and Vrse Murphy of Sacred Hoop. Prepare for the invasion of the sickle cell gerbils ...

A-Twice hosts a hip-hop show, "Subway Tales," on KCSB 91.9 FM on Sunday nights from 10 to midnight.

sound- soundstyle



The Pastels / *Illuminating* / Up

All right. As much as I have a penchant for the blips and blurps of electronica, these remix albums are getting to be a bit much. A few years ago, the remix album was mostly relegated to dance numbers and hip-hop — it was the perfect way to fill B-sides of dance 12-inches. But lately it seems that the remix has become the all-important new way of establishing more hipster credibility in the “indie rock” scene.

I admit it — I snatched up the DJ Dynamo D and DJ Scientific remixes on the 764-Hero and Modest Mouse “Whenever You See Fit” 12-inch. Takako Minekawa’s *Recubed* EP had remixes by Land of the Loops and Portastatic (along with other delights of the hi-fi and lo-fi electronica world) — and I bought it. And, yes, I bought the High Llamas’s *Lollo Rosso*, chock full of remixes by famed folks like Jim O’Rourke, Mouse on Mars and Cornelius.

Not surprisingly, Thrill Jockey’s man of the hour, Jim O’Rourke, Japanese pop guru

Cornelius and Mouse on Mars make appearances on The Pastels’ remix album, *Illuminating*, suggesting that there seem to be a few key players in this new remix scene. Stereolab, for example, appears frequently in this remix terrain, along with Kid Loco. Granted, *Illuminating* features some remixes by The Make-Up and My Bloody Valentine, but despite the creative efforts of all these people, the album reads far more as a “who’s who” in the underground than it breaks down any new boundaries in music. By track seven, much of the remixed material begins to have the same blipping, blurping feel; I figure, if you’re going to do a remix album, why not go all the way and have the happy house remix, the jungle mix, the dub version, the Puff Daddy party take ... you know, tweak and mess with the sounds of The Pastels in at least a humorous way.

However, *Illuminating* isn’t a bad album. It’s quite pleasant and pretty throughout the 16 tracks. My only question is, if you really like The Pastels, are remixes really necessary? For when seen in the context of the many other remix albums out there (Pizzicato Five, Dece-Lite, etc.), it just comes across as more of an attempt to establish “cool” than it does to really make interesting music.

— Jenne “what’s a meglomaniac?” Raub

Honky Toast / *Whatcha Gonna Do Honky?* / Sony

Occasionally at this job you get a CD that you would rather eat rat poison than listen to. *Whatcha Gonna Do Honky?* is one of those wonderful CDs that makes me wonder if

Opinion still has any openings. However, I guess that it is good that Sony signed these guys as opposed to yanking another bad punk band and making them stars.

At any rate, I am kind of at loss for describing Honky Toast. As fair as it is to label bands, I guess I should call them rockabilly or hillbilly. They also dip into a little country



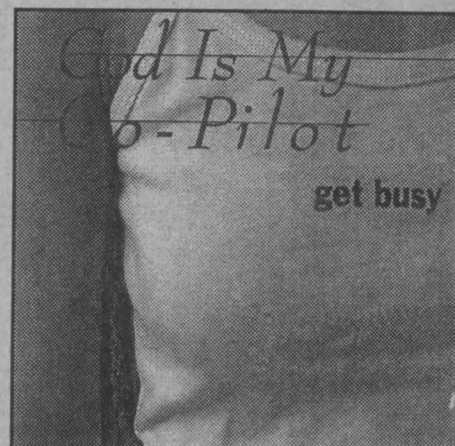
(surprise) and, of course, explore the realm of slow songs about masturbation. So basically Honky Toast is just one big inbred orgy of bad music.

The five-piece Honky Toast might be a good band for you to check out if you are into country rock and bad lyrics. Honestly, these guys are probably pretty good compared to other groups who sing about masturbation and have song titles like “I wanna be on welfare.”

— Dan “I want a punk CD” Villain

God is My Co-pilot / *Get Busy* / Atavistic

Well, what exactly can I say about this one, seeing as how Godco is one of my favo-



rite bands and all, but just looking at the cover of this one made me wonder — I mean, only 14 songs? Their eight or nine other albums all have at least 20. If indeed this was a full-length album, all the songs must be more than a minute or two long! I was aghast. But, as I soon found out, it’s true — after almost a decade of almost exclusively short songs, Godco is finally playing some “normal”-length ones. Do they work? For the most part. Somehow this album, which by most standards is still pretty darn good, isn’t as exciting as some of their previous efforts. I mean, there’s still some great no-wave tunes, performed in the same reckless-but-tight fashion we’ve come to expect. There’s still their great arrangements of Scandinavian and Eastern European traditional songs and that fantastic combination of noise and a charming cuteness; don’t get me wrong, I like this CD, and any other fans out there probably will, too. It’s just not their best.

— Josh “doesn’t actually expect every CD to be the best one ever” Miller

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DJ Krush & Toshinori Kondo / KI-OKU / Instinct Records

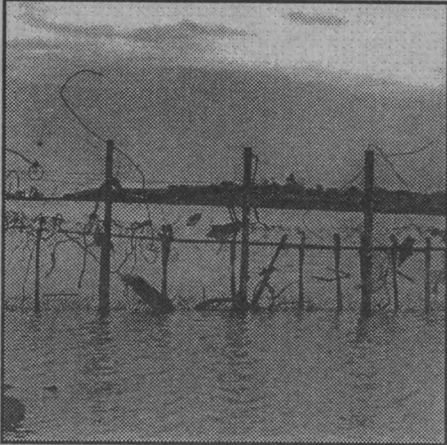
Tokyo City is possibly one of the quintessential visiting places to experience urbanity, as proved by the bad air, the closed spaces surrounded by concrete monoliths, and an atmosphere sauteed in a soup of human emotion. When standing in the center of a Shibuya cross section, look up and you will see a panoramic view of an industrial city that is not unlike the world of "Bladerunner." Tokyo is a city that pulsates with life filtered through the medium of a mechanized urbanity, as intensified versions of the human experience dwell in a paradoxical post-modernist industrial world. In this world, various colors of personalities collide, occasionally mesh and create new webs of expression.

Having taken the above-mentioned into consideration, it is no wonder that this album is the perfect soundtrack for nocturnal urban life. As a well-respected architect of his craft, Japanese producer/turmbalist DJ Krush breathes refreshing life into this work of avant-garde hip-hop. Collaborating with trumpet player Toshinori Kondo, *KI-OKU* is Krush's side project he released in Japan before the critically acclaimed *Mei-so*. It also proves to be his most enticing work yet.

Where various hip-hop collaborations with jazz artists have failed, this album succeeds with a beautiful interaction between the two musicians. Without any excessive showcasing of their individual talents, Krush and Kondo create the soundtrack for the urban night life that can be best described by the slow, droning sounds of "HA-DOH" and "SHOH-KA." They also "go there" by doing a cover of Bob Marley's "Sun is Shining," which becomes transformed from the common stoners' anthem into an avant-garde piece of melodic hip-hop. Overall, imagine this album as being something that Miles Davis would've been proud of. In fact, Miles' legacy has found its incarnation in this project. Need music for your cocktail parties or philosophical talks of pre-millennium tension? Check this out and go

on a head trip.

—A—"loves Britney Spears' ... uhm ... not her talent that's for sure" Twice



Various Artists / *Asphodelic* / Asphodel

Leave it to a bunch of DJs trying to push the envelope to kill a vibe. Peep da situation. I was chillin' like a villain at my homie Magoo's pad. He was throwin' this phat party and I was gettin' my little drink on, y'nahmsayin'? So I'm sittin' there parlayin', you know, just tryin' to show off my profile and all that. Let the ladies come to me, ya heard? Before long this fine honey with a big ol' booty comes up to me, and she wants to get her dance on with me. I walked over to the DJ and told him to play one of my songs. Ah yeah, that fool put on my classic joint "Pony" and I was in there! This girl started freakin' me, and pretty soon I'm feelin' like Next gettin' "Too Close." A simple whisper in her ear and we were off to the bedroom.

I threw open the door to one of the guest rooms and I was ready to go. Unfortunately there was some kid with a shirt that said "Trey" on it listening to the stereo in there. I faked like I was gonna hit 'im, and he ran out real quick. Finally I was ready to break this chick off! It had been a while, 'cause ever since I came out with "Same Ol' G" I been gettin' dissed by the hos! I guess they thought I had the same lack of "testicular stamina" that I had before I had a video out. They don't realize that I can afford that Viagra stuff now, and I represent in the bedroom!

So anyway I push play on the five-disc player and put it on "random." My boy Magoo keeps the stereos stacked with that smooth shit, so I know the mood is gonna be right. A couple of songs in and everything was fine, when all of a sudden some crazy stuff started playing. It was real fast and edgy, and it was messin' up the flow! The ho that I bagged got pissed and left, talkin' 'bout how she don't wanna bone no one listening to some crazy shit like that.

After getting some emotional control over myself, I got up and looked through the CDs

in the stereo.

"*Asphodelic*? What the hell is that?"

I soon realized that the kid who was in there earlier must have put it there. I decided to give it a listen.

From the start I was entranced. This fool named Topsy on there is comin' with some crazy different styles. Another guy called Mix Master Mike has three songs on there. He does this crazy scratching that I ain't never heard my homie Timbaland do. The two X-Men cuts provide the only lyrical action on the album, but it would probably be better if they just emphasized the DJs. The craziest stuff came from this kid DJ Spooky, who on "Synaptic Dissonance" starts off with a hip-hop beat, and then flips it to some crazy-ass trip-hop/jungle shit and then back again.

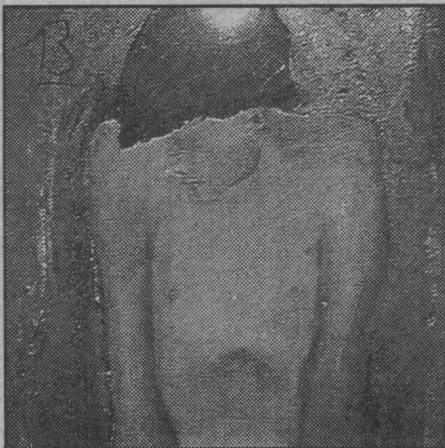
Now beside the fact that this is a dope compilation, I got beef with Asphodel and everyone who contributed to that album. I understand that they gotta try and be cutting-edge and all, but there is a time and place for that! Not when I'm trying to hit a honey off! If I see any of those fools, I'm gonna have my girl Missy do a belly flop on 'em.

Love,
Ginuwine

—Trey "i'd like to let the ladies know that i'm still the 'same ol' g' except that now my 'pony' is in much better shape" Clark

Blur / *13* / Virgin

The best Pavement album they never made.



If you didn't like Blur before, you probably won't like them now, and in fact if you used to like Blur, you might not after this album. What Blur is and has always been is a work in progress; *13* is an unquestionable continuation of this process. Blur have continued to deconstruct their sound while re-

imagining their scope and image, all, however, within greater confines of pop music. What *13* achieves is a near-break with radio-friendly or even club-friendly pop music and an embracement of the same type of subdued, dissonant arrangements that put Pavement and Sonic Youth on the map.

The most striking aspect of *13* is the lack of emphasis on Damon's vocals, which by any measure are an absolute "no-no" in the world of multiplatinum album sales. The emphasis of *13* is rather on the music itself. Blur have always exploited the studio, and here that exploitation comes more to the surface. Everything from the more-classic studio tricks of alternative tunings and fuzz-box vocals to those of digital effects and Pro Tools edits are brought together, creating a dense and challenging soundscape. Only the most basic vestiges of pop music manage to survive this process, acting as a glue of sorts between what would otherwise be nothing more than dirty, dissonant progressions.

13 can most accurately be summed up in one word ... sparse. This should in no way be taken with a negative connotation, because Blur have, in a sense, taken a real chance as artists and put their fans to a test. The most likely outcome, however, will be that *13* is to Blur what "Adore" was to the Smashing Pumpkins: a great album that no one will ever hear.

—Robert "i've decided to resume my cocaine habit in an attempt to meet and seduce more strippers because if you're going to date psychos anyway why not go all the way!" Hanson

Club 69 / *Re-Styled* / (TWISTED)

Remix albums are often approached with trepidation, even by fans of the band in question. How to alleviate any worries? Employ a lineup of masterful producers with big names and slick styles to remix your worries away. Club 69's music is like the scary part of a ride at Disneyland — intentionally intimidating but ultimately amusing — with, of course, a sexy twist.

On *Re-Styled*, the Austrian dance act unites the nine hits from its albums *Adults Only* and *Style* to be revamped by the likes of Junior Vasquez, Victor Calderone, Razor n Guido, et. al. Who can resist "I Like Good" with its singular refrain repeated for seven catwalking minutes? Ditto the disco-pumped mix of "Much Better" by Boris Dlugosch. Add the bonus cut cover of "Warm Leatherette" as understood by Mr. Danny Tenaglia, and you've won yourself a sale. If sultry house tunes with bass-fueled beats get your booty to boogie, *Re-Styled* is just your cup of groov-E.

—Josh "i pretend i'm gay just to get rob's chicks" Naftel

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