

DVD Review: *A Scanner Darkly*

by Zack Harding
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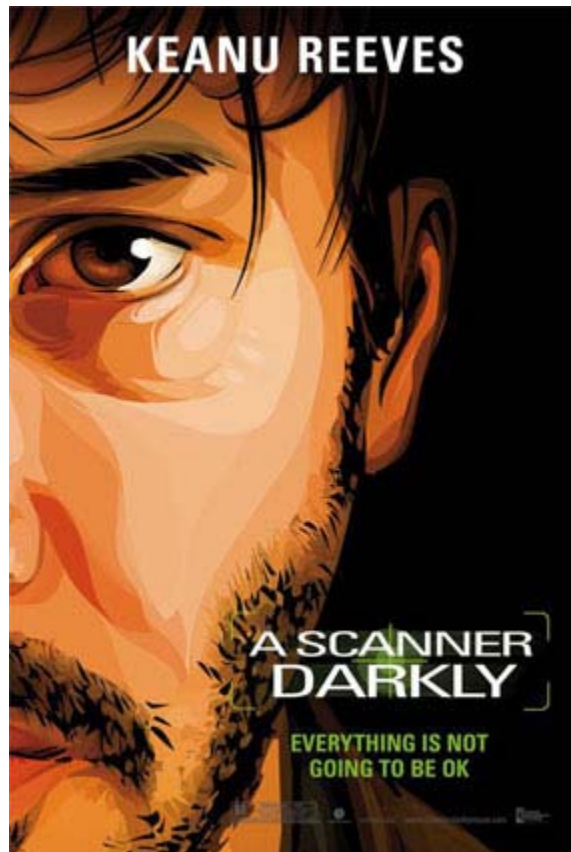
A Scanner Darkly
Richard Linklater
Keanu Reeves, Woody
Harrelson, Robert Downey
Jr., Winona Ryder
Warner Independent, 2006



The recent DVD release, *A Scanner Darkly* is definitely a unique experience in the world of movies, and can be appreciated on many different levels.

The movie is based on Phillip K Dick's 1977 book of the same name. It stars Keanu Reeves as undercover drug agent Bob Arctor, and is set in the near future. The plot revolves around a group of individuals heavily involved with drug culture, where a drug simply called "substance d" has addicted a great deal of the population in the future; the United States has lost its war on drugs.

The majority of the movie details Arctor's relationship with his housemate drug addicts, played by Woody Harrelson and Robert



Downey Jr., and with Arctor's own addiction to substance d and its implications on his job. Harrelson and Downey are extremely believable in their drug-

over the movie is executed very well.

The movie was shot with live actors and then animated over using a process called rotoscoping,

addled ramblings and are at times hilarious; this is one of the real highlights in the mostly darker themed movie.

Another sub plot is Arctor's relationship with his girlfriend Donna Hawthorne, played by Winona Ryder. Their relationship and the way that it pans out

much like director Richard Linklater's 2001 film, *The Waking Life*. This rotoscoping technique creates a very surreal visual experience, at times extremely realistic and at times psychedelic and jittery.

One of the more interesting parts of the movie is that everyone in the undercover drug agency wears what is called a "scramble suit" that constantly morphs their entire appearance to look like an ever-changing mesh of different human faces and clothes. This suit is required to keep the agents anonymous to each other to allow for an objective relationship in their undercover drug culture activities. It is hard to imagine how much animation and time must have gone into the making of this film.

There are several plot turns and twists that most viewers probably won't expect, though the plot is never so far removed as to be too hard to follow. The ending of the movie is pretty unorthodox and jumps out with little warning, leaving the viewer to answer a lot of things on their own, but that is intended. This is a one of a kind film to watch, and succeeds with its technology, acting, and plot. I give it 4.5 out of 5 stars.

Nominations put Oscar season in full swing

By Richard Coleman &
Nicholas Rys
Daily Collegian (Penn State)

U-WIRE) UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. - February is approaching which means Oscar season is in full throttle. The nominations were announced Tuesday, yielding the predictable choices and some interesting surprises.

One of those surprises being "Dreamgirls," which leads the race with eight nominations -- three of which for Best Original Song -- but none of which include Best Picture. In the Best Picture category, there are the expected contenders - "Babel," "The De-

parted," "The Queen" -- but the big surprise nomination this year is "Little Miss Sunshine," also nominated for Best Supporting Actor (Alan Arkin) and Best Supporting Actress (Abigail Breslin).

Martin Scorsese ("The Departed") will try his luck against Clint Eastwood ("Letters from Iwo Jima") once again for the Best Directing award, but there will be stiff competition from Paul Greengrass ("United 93"), Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu ("Babel"), and Stephen Frears ("The Queen").

In the category of Best Actor, Will Smith ("The Pursuit of Happyness") will try to beat out Golden Globe winner Forest

Whitaker ("The Last King of Scotland"), first-time nominee Ryan Gosling ("Half Nelson"), and old-timer Peter O'Toole ("Venus"). Leonardo DiCaprio is also in the race, but surprisingly not representing "The Departed," but instead for his performance in "Blood Diamond."

The favorites in the category of Best Actress are veteran actresses Helen Mirren ("The Queen") and Judi Dench ("Notes on a Scandal"). However, Meryl Streep ("The Devil Wears Prada"), Kate Winslet ("Little Children") and Penelope Cruz ("Volver") will provide tough competition.

The unscripted comedy "Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for

Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan" is unexpectedly nominated for Best Screenplay Based on Material Previously Produced or Published. It will face some tough competition from "The Departed" and "Children of Men" while "Notes from a Scandal" and "Little Children" will be the dark-horse nominees.

As far as Best Original Screenplay goes, "Babel," "The Queen" and "Letters from Iwo Jima" look to be the favorites but "Pan's Labyrinth" and "Little Miss Sunshine" have some potential to walk away with the award.

The ceremony will be held at 8 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 25 and will be hosted by Ellen DeGeneres.