

Let-down of the year awarded to "Matrix Revolutions"

Sean Hennen
Reviewer

Everything that has a beginning has an end, reads the tagline for "The Matrix: Revolutions." This is a very apt statement, but one would have hoped that the filmmakers behind "Revolutions" would have strived for a superior ending, instead of merely an adequate one.

At this point, it is safe to say that each film in the series has become successively tired and — though it is hard to say — *unoriginal*. All that was fresh and fun about the initial film was diluted by "The Matrix: Reloaded" and completely abated by this third and final installment. What did the first film have that these subsequent episodes lack? The answer is quite simply a genuinely human story at the center.

The original "Matrix" blew away audiences back in 1999 with its eye-popping style and cutting edge technique. Above all that, however, was a very intimate story at its center; one that dealt with uncertainty, faith and to quote a certain Oracle, "Knowing yourself."

These latter chapters in the epic "Matrix" trilogy have lost the

humanity and no amount of tiredly endless philosophic babble about choice, love and destiny can reclaim the feeling of the original. It's all mere lip service and unfortunately the writing/directing team of Larry and Andy Wachowski think they can gloss over this absence with intellectual overkill. They can't.

For viewers who haven't seen the other movies, you have a lot of homework to do before you think about sitting down for "The Matrix: Revolutions." The movie doesn't even consider pausing before diving right back into the futuristic saga of Zion's (the last human city on earth) battle with the evil machines. At the helm of this war is Neo, the all-too-indestructible über-warrior and eventual savior of the human race.

Trying to map out the Byzantine narrative of these films is pointless. Those in-the-know don't need a rehash and those not, wouldn't even be able to follow. Suffice to say, this film packs all the blockbuster-action wallop of the first two (it seems climatic combat sequences are around every corner), but still lacks the truly authentic emotional core.

Amidst all the kung fu fighting, explosions and countless rounds of ammunition, a true

"cineophile" should still feel the loss.

An addictive cycle of metaphoric introspections and gunfights isn't all that attracted viewers way back when. It was the story of a fallible hero named Neo who was as uncertain about his ability to save the day as the audience. Say what you will about Keanu Reeves' acting, but in that first movie, he forced the audience to learn to believe in him as his character learned to believe in himself. And it was one grand journey.

The central cast of this film still includes Neo (Reeves), Trinity (Carrie-Anne Moss), Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne) and the evil Agent Smith (Hugo Weaving). All supporting characters are given so little exposition that it doesn't even bear mentioning them here. One noteworthy standout is Jada Pinkett-Smith as Niobe, a spunky hovercraft pilot with attitude to spare.

If it is action you crave, "Revolutions" does deliver. The apocalyptic battle to save Zion features some of the best computer-generated image baddies ever



Photo courtesy of movies.com

"Matrix" fans were disappointed with the trilogy's third installment "Matrix Revolutions" for its lack of emotional core.

created, as an army of mechanic Sentinels face-off with humans in gun-turret equipped, metal exoskeletons. The sequence is truly a sight to behold. Elsewhere, there is a final showdown between Neo and his arch-nemesis Agent Smith, but it doesn't live up to the hype it was given.

When all is said and done, "Revolutions" offers style, but lit-

tle substance. If you're happy with aesthetic action, this flick is your cup of tea. Those of us that crave something with a little more emotion, we'll hold off for "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King."

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"The Elf" delivers an early Christmas present to audiences

Blake Hinton
Reviewer

Will Ferrell is one of the most popular up-and-coming comedians today. After his long and very funny stint on Saturday Night Live, Ferrell went on to the big screen with "Old School." He was very funny there, but mainly played second fiddle to other comedic stars. With "Elf," Ferrell gets his first lead role and knocks it out of the park.

The plot of the film is your basic fish-out-of-water comedy. After stowing away in Santa's toy bag as a baby, Buddy (Ferrell) is adopted by Santa's elves and raised as one of them. After a while he grows to his normal human size, and it becomes obvi-

ous that he is not an elf. After being told who his real father is Buddy is sent to New York to meet him.

Once getting to New York he goes to the Empire State Building where his father, played by James Caan, works. Not wanting to admit that he has a son, Buddy's father throws him out. After that, Buddy goes into a toy store next door and is mistaken for an elf working in the toy section. In a short amount of time Buddy accidentally lands a job. Once there, he falls in love with one of the people working in his section. The rest of the movie spends its time alternating between Buddy's relationship with his father and this girl.

This is a great movie, albeit one with many flaws. The plot is

conventional in every sense. Most of the jokes derive from Buddy being out of his league and very lost in New York City. Even the ending, while showcasing a great set piece, is extremely cheesy and definitely lowers the movie a notch.

The other problem with the film is James Caan. Caan is an extremely versatile and great actor, but he never seems completely comfortable in the role here.

He gives the sense that he is holding back for some reason, as if not wanting to completely commit himself to the material.

Yet, on the other hand, Ferrell makes a wonderful comic debut. While Caan stays at a distance from the film, Ferrell throws himself in the role and doesn't look

back. It's a character that could have easily become one-note or cheesy, but Ferrell provides Buddy with a certain sweetness that's hard to deny. Also, Ferrell is just plain hysterical. This is his best and funniest role to date. In the end, Ferrell alone easily makes the movie worthwhile.

The writing, while being conventional, is also quite funny too. The end and especially the beginning have some nice irreverent humor. Even in the middle, where the film becomes more conventional, there are still many gags that work. This is a surprisingly funny movie with heart.

In a world filled with bad to mediocre films, it's always nice to see a movie try to do something simple and worthwhile that succeeds. Hopefully, Ferrell will



Photo courtesy of movies.com

Will Farrell strikes gold again with his new film "The Elf."

tackle more lead roles because with "Elf," Ferrell proves that he has quite a few tricks up his sleeve.

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