

8 Mile: Eminem's film debut an intense performance



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Brittany Murphy and Eminem (above) star in the new drama 8 Mile. In the film, Eminem plays a character similar to his real-life persona; he is an aspiring rapper with a dead-end job and a poor relationship with his mother.

By Aman Solomon

Contributing Writer

Title: 8 Mile
Starring: Eminem, Kim Basinger, Mekhi Phifer, Brittany Murphy
Director: Curtis Hanson
Length: 118 minutes
Rating: R

Much of the buzz surrounding Eminem's debut movie 8 Mile has been centered on one question: Can the man who makes millions rapping about murdering his mother and gulping down Vicadin tablets turn in a credible acting performance?

The answer is a resounding yes, and it is Eminem's intense, stoic performance that holds this terrific movie together.

The rap movie genre has been filled with awful vanity projects such as Vanilla Ice's Cool as Ice and dime-a-dozen action movie knockoffs.

This film manages to transcend most of the stereotypes that preceded it, while at the same time giving audiences a truly atmospheric look at the hip-hop subculture.

The film opens with Eminem's character, Jimmy Smith, Jr., nicknamed Rabbit, preparing to compete in a battle rap in a grungy hip hop club called The Shelter. He hops from toe to toe in the public restroom and stares at himself in the mirror, the fear and self-distrust laid bare in his eyes.

Soon after he chokes at the competition, and it is revealed to the audience that along with his embarrassed on stage, he has also broken up with his girlfriend. After leaving her his car, he is forced to move back to his mother's trailer. Located along the eight-mile road of the title, which separates the largely white areas of Detroit from the extremely poor black neighborhoods,

Rabbit enters only to find his mother Stephanie (Kim Basinger) in the throes of sexual passion with a man barely older than he is.

However, he has no choice but to live there with her and his young sister Lilly (Chloe Greenfield), and to work at a stamping plant where his job consists of repeatedly pressing a button for terrible pay. The film makes it completely clear that Rabbit is at, or very near, rock bottom.

When he is not fighting with his mother's uneducated boyfriend, or working at his dead-end job, Rabbit spends time causing trouble with his group of friends, most notably Future (Mekhi Phifer), another aspiring rapper and the host of the weekly battle raps at The Shelter. More than anyone else, he believes in Rabbit's ability, and his performance helps make the movie.

There are other influences in Rabbit's life, including a group of rappers who call themselves the Free World and are constantly confronting Rabbit's crew. In addition, there is the shady Wink (Eugene Boyd), who constantly entices him with the promise of time in the production studio and introductions to "producers" who will help him make it big. There is also the character of Alex (Brittany Murphy) who temporarily interests Rabbit, perhaps due to his relating to her intense goal of escaping the world in which they live.

As the film progresses, there is also a series of intense and consistently hilarious sequences in which Rabbit completely demolishes other characters through battle raps. One particular situation in which he defends a gay coworker against a character played by the rapper Xzibit is not only deftly written, but it also serves to clarify Eminem's stance on homosexuality and the use of certain words that have drawn him much heat in the media. In fact, the entire movie is somewhat a vindication of Eminem's talent.

There was probably little doubt in anyone's mind that Eminem would have some amazing rhymes in the movie. However, many would expect the quality of the film to pale in comparison.

The director, Curtis Hanson, who directed the Academy Award-nominated movies *L.A. Confidential* and *Wonder Boys*, certainly helped matters. His careful direction manages to paint a gritty picture of the character's journey without resorting to clichés or judgment.

The writer, Scott Silver, also gave the film a great boost by making the scope of the film relatively small. The entire movie takes place in less than a week, and the characters are barely better off in the end than when the movie began.

The real brilliance is how carefully this movie handles the small victories Rabbit manages to achieve as he accepts his situation and learns to make the most of it.

The climactic series of battle raps towards the end of the film had the preview audience clapping and almost jumping out of their seats, but the final battle with the leader of the Free World in which Rabbit dissects the fact that he is white, poor, and humiliated and turns it around on his opponent is one the most satisfying and well earned conclusion of any movie in recent memory.

As Rabbit leaves the club to head back to a night shift at his dead-end job, his future is still up in the air. There is no sappy Hollywood conclusion, but the true lesson of this film is self-acceptance. Eminem has staked his claim as not only being one of the best rappers out there, but perhaps the best rapper-turned-actor to yet grace the screen.

And his movie didn't need any overblown action sequences, multi-million-dollar escapades, or Steven Seagal. DMX, take notes. The Verdict: An acclaimed rapper finally produces a great film; Enimen makes crossing genres look easy in this terrific film. Perhaps his performance will pave the way for more artists to do the same.

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Seventh Woodstock festival showcases local, Tech bands



By Scott Meuleners / STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

Grant Wheelless, a Tech student, performed at Woodstock last weekend with his band Weberdog. Woodstock, currently in its seventh semester, is organized with the help of RHA, Hall Council and others.

By Amanda Bryson
Contributing Writer

Looking for some good live music at Tech? You should have kept your eyes open for the modest fliers on campus telephone poles advertising Woodstock.

Six semesters ago, Cole Getzler was a Peer Leader in search of a way to get more live rock music to Tech campus. Under the Couch was great, but not quite enough on its own. So with the encouragement of his Peer Advisor to "do something big" and with the help of some friends and residents who were in bands, Getzler set about creating the first Woodstock.

Held indoors at its namesake, "Woody's," sometime around Halloween, the first Woodstock was essentially a really big party thrown with the help of RHA, Hall Council and very devoted music enthusiasts. Since then, Woodstock has grown to a semesterly outdoor concert held on the Freshman Experience commons, attracting various local bands and receiving increased support from RHA and Hall Council, as well as students looking for good live music at Tech.

It's traditionally put together in short order, and its essence is still the same: live music, free food and a bunch of music fans. "Take about two weeks, put it all together, and then you have Woodstock," said this semester's lead organizer, A.J. Milton.

The results are good, if this semester was any indication. The first band to play this year was local rock act Weberdog. Weberdog had such a good time appearing at the last Woodstock that they volunteered right away to headline this year's show. They sounded exactly like the weather the day of

the show: comfortable, energizing and cool.

The second and third bands to play were the Taj Motel Trio and Slow Children at Play, both local ska bands. Taj Motel Trio was great. They sounded good, were fun to watch, and the band looked like they were having an awesome time during the show.

Slow Children at Play were also making their second Woodstock appearance, and put forth another excellent ska set. All the bands were previewed by organizers through means such as MP3.com.

The only thing missing at this Woodstock was the number of people the show deserved. The crowd near the stage was sparse, and those who had the urge to dance were in no danger of running into anyone. Turnout at previous Woodstocks has been close to twice that of this semester's, according to Milton, who suggested that the decline may have been due to a large number of Greek and athletic activities competing for students' time this past weekend. That's too bad, because Woodstock is a good thing-the kind of laid-back student entertainment that Tech students need more of.

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Tilden's Faith ends their run after three years

By **Brian Basamanowicz**

Senior Staff Writer

I've come across about a thousand flyers promoting this band, and I routinely see their name in concert listings. I've even interviewed their publicist, but I still have yet to see a performance by this band called Tilden's Faith. As a Technique entertainment journalist (Senior Staff Writer nonetheless), it's almost irresponsible of me to not have at least one show under my belt.

Tilden's has made several appearances in the Technique over the last three years and is arguably the most successful rock act to have roots at Georgia Tech. But recently, the word got out that the Tilden's legacy may be winding down.

I happened into a chance encounter with Coleman, the lead vocalist from Tilden's while at a friend's family gathering in Gwinnett. Like I said, being ignorant of actually seeing the band play, I was introduced to Coleman, all the while having no idea that I had just written a story on his band and a few other Tech-based acts only two months ago.

He was dressed quite sportily as he arrived, escorted by his girlfriend, who was decked out in full soccer- playing attire, fresh from a game. Katie had just missed the final goal in an overtime soccer shootout and was somewhat distressed. Anyway, somewhere in one of the many conversations being exchanged, Katie brought up the subject of Coleman's band breaking up.

Coleman...band...so it all at once fit together-the Tilden's Faith guy! And Tilden's Faith, the legacy Tech rock band, was being broken up. I had to learn more. Essentially, the band members' priorities have diverged. Tilden's drummer Jim and lead guitarist/Tech grad Dave Curylo, decided they want to search out some new horizons. Yet nonetheless, Coleman and bassist/Tech grad Lewis are not quite ready to give up the Faith. Coleman expressed interest in finding a new drummer and guitarist to replace their recent departures. The band clearly means a lot to him. He even got a bit pestered at his girlfriend for bringing up the issue of the band's separation.

But with a little attention to the band's history, there doesn't seem to be too much to be worried about. Redesigning the band through the coming and going of its members is not a new practice for Tilden's Faith. They have been through a series of transformations since the band first began playing together over three years ago.

They acquired their current bass player, Will, the night their former bass player quit the band. Coleman himself has been fired and later brought back on at least one occasion. While this ongoing series of shuffling may give the impression that the band has had problems with its unity, it also shows that they must be onto something with their music persisting through this chaotic rearrangement of personnel.

Not to replay the material that was published two months ago in this very section, by this very writer, but for those of you who didn't get copies, Tilden's Faith has released two albums. Stayed was released in March 1999 and featured two tracks, Someday and Scarecrow, which became favorites of local radio stations. Their second EP, Change, was released three years later and was critically acclaimed by local pop culture magazine Creative Loafing as being "unusually cohesive."

So apparently the efforts of Tilden's Faith up to this point have not been in vain, and even if their best days are behind them, they've still made a rare successful run through the local music scene. The band (as it is presently configured) will be performing one more show before calling it quits. It will be tomorrow at CJ's Landing in Buckhead.

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Spike Lee speaks about political issues at the University of Texas

(U-WIRE) University of Texas – Austin-Politically charged filmmaker Spike Lee spoke Tuesday night to a sold-out crowd at the Texas Union Ballroom.

Lee spoke about several issues, including the portrayal of African-Americans in the media, the need for young people to possess a passion for their future careers and the need to vote.

“Two years ago on Nov. 2, while your [Texas’] governor was out breaking the record for the highest number of executions ... we [the United States] got bushwhacked, bamboozled,” Lee said. “The highest office in this country was stolen – the election was fixed,” he said, recalling Florida’s flawed vote-counting process.

In addition to emphasizing political awareness, Lee told students to seek careers that they are passionate about.

“You have to find out what it is that you love to do in these four years or however many it takes you to get through school,” he said. “Or else you can end up like some of my old college classmates – miserable, divorced and overweight.”

Lee also spoke of the power and danger of mass media images. He said young African-Americans are often forced to deal with conflicting societal messages, citing evidence of cultural stereotypes that equate intelligence with whiteness.

“If you’re African-American, know proper English and are intelligent, you’re often criticized for being too white,” Lee said. “But, if you’re on the corner and jobless with a blunt in your mouth, that’s considered being ‘real.’”

Lee said it’s important for everyone to learn and recognize cultural stereotypes in films as weak.

He spoke of Michael Clarke Duncan’s role in “The Green Mile” as the stereotypical “super, duper, magical mystical Negro with special powers.”

In the film, Duncan plays John Coffey, who is on death row and possesses special healing powers that serve an all-white cast of characters, Lee said.

And, in the film’s conclusion, he embodies the “happy slave” stereotype by deciding to proceed with the execution despite the suggestion from prison guard Paul Edgecomb, played by Tom Hanks, that he attempt to escape.

Highly influenced by director Martin Scorsese, Lee said his films seek to debunk faulty portrayals of African-Americans.

“What people missed about my film Bamboozled is that it not only was about African-Americans, but the misrepresentation of minority groups-Latin-Americans, gays, women,” Lee said.

“I enjoyed hearing him speak, but I would have liked to hear more about the ideas behind his movies and how they originated,” said Desmond Rice, publicity chair for the African-American Culture Committee and a journalism sophomore.

“I’m glad he addressed the need for young people to follow their dreams and to do something that they would be happy doing,” UT staff member Amy Yearwood said. “As a staff member, it’s a message that we all feel is important, but perhaps it is better for younger people to hear it from outside sources.”

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...Two Bits

Welcome to this week's rendition of satirical, cynical, spiteful goodness-all lumped into Two Bits.

Well, isn't it just wonderful that we have so many people in Congress now for Bush to get along with? I think this will really help remedy some of his social problems and feelings of isolation. I for one was getting fed up with that snobby clique of liberal Capitol Hill thugs that got a kick out of cornering Bush in the White House bathroom and giving him swirlies.

So now we've finally got some folks elected here who are going to be agreeable, complacent and just plain nicer to poor old George, who's doing his best to keep us safe from the evil doers.

It doesn't surprise me that in Georgia the Republicans pitched a winning campaign. I mean, would you vote for Roy Barnes knowing that he once picked Bush last for kickball and tried to lie about it, saying that he thought Bush had already been picked by the other team?

And if that isn't scandalous enough, get this: Max Cleland was the only Congressman who failed to attend Bush's White House slumber party and tried to say that he thought it was the night after.

Saxby Chambliss not only came, but brought along some cookies for everyone and told the best ghost stories, and he didn't laugh in the morning when everyone woke up to find that poor Donny Rumsfeld had wet the bed again (he has a problem). Saxby's kind of behavior sounds more like what I want to see displayed in the U.S. Senate, and that is exactly the reason why I bought that "Saxby for 2002" doggy t-shirt for my puppy.

But no doubt it was the access to Bush's glorious coattails that pushed the Republicans to their victory. And even though I don't really understand what exactly Bush has done that makes him such a wonderful president, I suppose it's just one of those things that are better off left unquestioned-like who is the Two Bits Man or why should we invade Iraq.

But nonetheless, I figured it would be worth the energy to schedule a quick interview with the president to get his thoughts on the outcomes of Election Day. Two Bits Man: Mr. President, your affiliation has clearly influenced the results of several elections across the country. But I must ask you to elaborate on your accomplishments. For example, could you explain to me how much safer we are now than we were before September 11? Or if we are on our way to regaining the economic prosperity that we once enjoyed? George Bush: (slowly and resolutely): My non-patriotic opponents... (pause) may say that not enough evidence has been accumulated to justify an invasion of Iraq (he's looking me dead in the eye, and I think he doesn't like Iraq), but if we wait for further evidence to mount...it could be too late. TBM: Mr. President, now that the Republicans control congress, what benefits can we come to expect from our now overwhelming Republican leadership? GB: Well (seems

to be really stumped but I know he's not)...I'm going to put it to you simply, Iraq... (pauses) is...well...just bad.TBM: Is it bad Mr. President?GB: Bad, Bad, Bad.TBM: Thank you Mr. President and congratulations on your...GB: (in a sudden fit of rage) SADDAM TRIED TO HURT MY DADDY!

After this interview, I was somewhat skeptical of the whole idea of Iraq being "just bad," but I wasn't going to let a little skepticism contaminate my patriotism. Folks, I plead that you would not doubt my faith in American democracy, nor my patriotism (if I were a dog I would wear the Saxby doggy t-shirt as well).

But all t-shirts aside-doggy or otherwise-could you believe how intense the Senate campaigning got? It was news to me that Saxby Chambliss had promoted legislation to burn senior citizens with blow torches paid for by social security money and that Max Cleland voted 7 times to let violent prisoners eat under-educated children. But you just can't tell for sure exactly who is telling the truth these days.

The elections are over, so I'm going to quit my griping about politics, at least until next year's primaries. This is the Two Bits Man signing off to go play with my puppy.