

Slow-paced film lacks excitement

BY FRANKLIN CLINE
Reviewer

Don't see "The Eye." Seriously. It's really, really bad and not even in the ironic or campy way that makes movies like "Equinox" or "National Treasure" enjoyable. It's just boring, poorly written, acted and directed, with unexciting special effects and a too-dumb-to-be-creepy plot that, for scare tactics, relies almost entirely upon a really lame combination of loud noises and demons (at least, I think they're demons) flying at you. Really, I never thought I'd see a movie so bad it left me speechless, but "The Eye" has done the trick.

Much of what's wrong with "The Eye" is that it's so boring and slowly paced that it's stripped of even the potential for sweet ironic value, which certainly would be the only way a horror movie starring Jessica Alba would ever gain any sort of recognition. Nothing about this movie is laughingly bad, necessarily, apart from some pathetic shots

at meaningful monologues that bookend the movie (I mean, let's face it, Alba is meant to be seen, not necessarily heard). These involve painfully facetious attempts at discerning things like "the self" and turning vision into a metaphor for ... well, something. I'm not quite sure what. That wasn't ever really clear, but I think it has something to do with the old "eyes are the windows into the soul" adage.

And that's the thing about this movie — nothing's ever really made clear.

Alba's character (that's right — I didn't even bother to learn the name of her character), who is blind, receives a cornea transplant from a corpse whose eyes happen to be either blessed or cursed with an ability to see into an invisible world.

In this place, those who have died wait around until these weird demon things come and take them away, presumably to hell.

Lots and lots of things never are explained, like what exactly those demon things



Photo courtesy of Lionsgate Entertainment
Lionsgate Entertainment's "The Eye" stars Jessica Alba as a blind patient who undergoes corrective surgery. Her view of the world changes as her new eyes begin to reveal unnerving images. The movie brought in an opening \$21 million at the box office.

are (they seem evil, but does that mean everyone who dies in this film goes to hell de facto, even an innocent little kid with an endearing lust for life)? It's a mystery why all these lost souls are just eerily standing around in purgatory (they don't even ask her for help, they're just creepy), and how exactly the eyes got possessed in the first place.

And most importantly, we're left wondering why anyone ever thought it would be a good idea to take what was apparently a somewhat enjoyable Japanese horror

flick, dumb it down to the point of near-intelligibility, cast hot-but-commercially-floundering Alba as the lead and then throw in some cheap scares.

I wish there was some way for me to fully articulate just how stupid this movie was, but I don't think words could convey it. I can't think of a single reason why this movie exists or any way in which the world would be harmed if it didn't exist.

Please, please, please don't go see this movie. If you do go see it, buy a ticket to another

movie and then sneak in so that they don't get your money. Next year, when the film is in the \$5 bin at Wal-Mart's across the country, don't buy it, regardless of the fact that it seems like a funny thing to buy. This movie is so bad it's not even funny. And this is coming from someone who really, really liked "Rambo."



Ouija board inspires hit album

BY HARRY BURSON
Reviewer

A Ouija board works through self-delusion. As you play, your subconscious takes control, giving you the answers you want to see. It's fun because you're tricking yourself. You're not simply sitting at a cheap plastic board, you are communing with a supernatural realm.

This dimension of self-important mythologizing makes the Ouija board a logical muse for the Mars Volta.

The group's fourth studio album, "The Bedlam in Goliath," was inspired by an archaic type of Ouija board that guitarist/arranger Omar Rodriguez-Lopez acquired in Jerusalem, according to all of the press ballyhooing the CD's release.

After playing with the board, Rodriguez-Lopez and singer/lyricist Cedric Bixler-Zavala began experiencing strange occurrences. Several group members either quit or sustained injuries during a tour. The band's equipment began malfunctioning in the recording studio, and Rodriguez-Lopez suffered a creative block.

The group decided a spirit named Goliath, who was wrathfully communicating with them through the board, was behind their recent misfortunes.

"The Bedlam in Goliath" is the Mars Volta's attempt to vanquish this evil specter through the positive energy created by its music. The band is inviting its fans to help defeat Goliath by purchasing its new CD.

This absurd level of conceptual conceit and self-mythology has plagued the Mars Volta since

its inception and has made the unprejudiced enjoyment of its albums impossible to separate from the numinous mystique the band has knowingly cultivated.

The Mars Volta formed after Rodriguez-Lopez and Bixler-Zavala quit the post-hardcore emo band At the Drive-In at the height of its success in 2001. With "One Armed Scissor" becoming a hit on MTV, Bixler-Zavala claimed he disbanded the group in order to explore more diverse musical directions.

The new band's first album, "De-Loused in the Comatorium," was a concept album purportedly about a patient in a drug-induced coma exploring the dark side of his mind, although Bixler-Zavala's obscure lyrics do little to delineate this plot.

Produced by Rick Rubin, the record stays close to the basic hard-rocking approach of At the Drive-In but adds long monotonous passages of Pink Floyd-like electronics and guitar noodling.

The band's second record, "Frances the Mute," featured the group's most accessible song, "The Widow" — a catchy, three-minute Latin-tinged, prog power ballad weighed down by an additional three minutes of indulgent synthesizers and found recordings. This album's conceptual gimmick found in Bixler-Zavala's



music review

album **"The Bedlam in Goliath"**
artist **The Mars Volta**
label **Universal Records**
release date **Jan. 29, 2008**
rating **★★★★★**

again-vague lyrics supposedly told the story of characters described in an abandoned diary found by the band.

"Amputecture," the group's third album, saw the Mars Volta introducing more distinct elements of Latin percussion and jazz, while thankfully eschewing any sort of narrative concept.

"The Bedlam in Goliath" is a logical progression in the band's sound.

Ignoring the outlandish promotional story and the group's eccentric image, this is an enjoyable record.

The Mars Volta reins in the long sections of noise and incongruously

mashed-together suites that have plagued previous albums in favor of sharper songwriting. Although many songs approach the 10-minute mark, nearly all are solid compositions whose tight structures merit their length.

The album opener, "Aberinkula," begins with Bixler-Zavala's distinctive high tenor wail over Rodriguez-Lopez and Red Hot Chili Pepper John Frusciante's dual-guitar assault. The song transitions

into a jazzy Latin groove similar to "Bitches Brew"-era Miles Davis.

The Latin influence is brought to the fore on this record, most notably in the exhilarating breakdown that serves as the coda to "Ilyena." The single "Wax Simulacra" is a short blast of psychedelically tinged driving rock familiar to fans of the Mars Volta.

The following two songs, "Goliath" and "Tourniquet Man," are the heart of the record. The former, named after the spirit supposedly haunting the band, is a seven-minute suite of focused, propulsive rock, leading into "Tourniquet Man," a short ballad with Bixler-Zavala's voice evolving into a heavily processed spectral moan.

This is the Mars Volta's best record, but it is by no means accessible. Bixler-Zavala's lyrics remain terribly convoluted, and Rodriguez-Lopez's lengthy suites will try the patience of most casual listeners. Still, "The Bedlam in Goliath" will please any fan of the band or modern progressive rock.

The Mars Volta has reached a new high point and hopefully will continue to pursue this new, focused direction on its next album, regardless of the story it uses to market it.

What's on your
>>> iPod?

Sophomore
Justin Vilbig
"The Receiving End of It All"
Streetlight Manifesto

Freshman
Kristen Eversole
"The Other Guy"
Little River Band

Freshman
Kayla Jungerman
"I Move On"
Chicago Soundtrack

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