

REACTING TO MOVIES

BY AUSTIN HORNBOSTEL

Editor-in-chief
index.editor@gmail.com

Don't ask me what my favorite movie is if you don't want me to assault your ears with all the things I love about "Fight Club," even against my better judgment — get it? Because the first rule of Fight Club is don't talk about Fight Club ... right, I'll see my way out. Don't ask me about my next favorite movie, either, unless you want another 20 minutes of me geeking out. "Donnie Darko" is a cult classic for a reason. It's criminally underwatched and is by far the most confusing movie out there if you only watch it once.

You also don't have to ask me about the movie that takes the number three spot on my heart's list of best movies of all time, because I'm about to talk about it. It's really similar to both "Fight Club" and "Donnie Darko." I'm sure you already have some ideas in mind from the comparison alone. "American Psycho," right? Maybe "Gone Girl"? Surely it's something creepy, convoluted and hard to follow.

Nope, it's "Scott Pilgrim vs. the World." I say this movie is really similar to my first two favorites not because it matches their serious tones but because of its filmmaking and editing. But before I dive into this comparison, here's a brief run-down of "Scott Pilgrim" if you haven't seen or heard of it. In Michael Cera's greatest role

to date, as yet another plucky, awkward protagonist who looks either teenaged or almost 30, Scott Pilgrim must fight off seven evil exes to win the love of the mysterious Ramona Flowers. It takes place in Toronto, Canada and the film is based on a series of graphic novels by Bryan Lee O'Malley.

So, things already aren't as serious as the plots of "Fight Club" and "Donnie Darko." That's compounded by a couple of the major aesthetic focuses in "Scott Pilgrim" — rock music and video game culture. Scott plays bass in a band called Sex Bob-Omb — a Super Mario reference in its own right — which soundtracks part of the film. Video game music and sound effects are interspersed with these rock tracks. At one point, Scott "levels up" by earning the power of self-respect. When Scott fights and defeats the evil exes, they burst into a shower of Canadian coins like enemies in an arcade game.

Can you tell why I love this movie yet? Okay, you got me — how can I possibly put this film in even close to the same category as a story about a guy who forms an underground fight club with his split personality, or a story about a teenager preventing the end of the world with the help of a time-traveling man in a bunny costume? Those movies are both far more serious than "Scott Pilgrim." Then again, maybe not, if my incredibly vague one-sentence summaries are any indication.

The answer lies in the viewing experience — these are all movies you can watch over and over, yet still notice something new every time. I love films like this, that give you a nice payoff for paying close attention to what's going on. Try it out with "Fight Club," and you'll see glimpses of a character before they're ever introduced. Or give it a shot with "Donnie Darko," and after a watch or two, you'll be able to pick out key moments, before the viewer is supposed to know something important has happened. It's no different with "Scott Pilgrim," but the reason I keep coming back is always for director Edgar Wright's editing.

Wright is an editing master. If you want a more detailed description than what I can give in 1,000 words or less, I highly recommend checking out YouTube channel Nerdwriter1, who produced a fantastic video essay on the editing of "Scott Pilgrim." I'll try to sum up some of the content of that video here, because it's the reason why watching this movie more than once is worth it.

Wright subverts our expectations as viewers when it comes to scene transitions. Often, we just see a hard cut, and we're in a new scene. However, "Scott Pilgrim" is a lot more cohesive. We might see a scene with a set of three or four screen wipes — using parts of the scene such as people walking by the camera — to transition from place to place, accompanied by the

sounds of a car or skateboard rolling on the street or hangers moving across a rack at a thrift store. These sounds move us into the setting before we've even realized it.

Wright also brings us from one setting to the next, sometimes in mid-conversation, by using shots between pieces of dialogue to place us in a setting that is different from the previous shot. For example, there's a scene where Scott is talking with his bandmate, Stephen Stills, at band practice, and Stephen walks from one side of the screen to the other, passing behind Scott. As Scott says a line and Stephen looks back at Scott with a reply, we've suddenly moved from the living room where the characters were holding their instruments to the streets of Toronto, as the band walks to a party. Now, Stephen is looking back at Scott as he walks behind him on the street, and we've hardly had time to notice how we got here. That's a brilliantly smooth way to transition from scene to scene quickly and effectively.

These are the kind of things that go unnoticed on your first watch of "Scott Pilgrim" and stand out on the second, and I love it. Movies that turn me into a more observant viewer are my bread and butter, and they're too rare. I highly encourage giving "Scott Pilgrim" a chance if you're either a music and video game culture nerd like I am or a lover of great filmmaking — or, I guess if you're a huge Michael Cera fan, too.

Society for Sino-American Studies celebrates Chinese New Year



Photos by Johanna Burns/TMN

Above: Students wait for the Feb. 11 Chinese New Year event to begin. The event featured a variety of performances and speakers. Left: University President Sue Thomas speaks before the presentation of traditional Chinese costumes.



Truman's Lincoln Contest Art, Essay, and Oratory

Some would argue that what Abraham Lincoln is most remembered for is his signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. The document may have had a limited direct impact on the lives of many slaves, but it was a watershed moment in stating that previously bound people shall be "forever free" (Emancipation Proclamation, paragraph 2). To emancipate commonly means to free from bondage, oppression, or restraint. This year's prompt asks you to choose one of the following possibilities and develop it into an essay:

- Choose another emancipatory moment in Lincoln's life and write about it, incorporating source material.
- Choose an emancipatory moment in someone's life and, incorporating source material, write about it.

Fred & Ethel Schwengel established the Lincoln Contests in art, essay, and oratory to pay tribute to Abraham Lincoln. This semester the collegiate essays will be judged by Professor Monica Barron and the speeches and art by Professor Barry Poyner.

By Feb. 28, submit a 1000-1500 word, 3-5 page essay in response to the prompt to Barry Poyner, Barnett Hall 1110. Provide a list of

"works cited" as appropriate. On a cover sheet, provide contact information, and clearly indicate if entering the essay or oratorical contest, or both. Finalists in the Oratorical Contest will deliver their speeches before the National Communication Association Student Club later in the semester. Communication Club members will assist Dr. Poyner in judging. Essay and Oratory Prizes for 1st and 2nd places will be \$200.00 and \$100.00, respectively.

For the art contest, entries should be submitted to Professor Poyner by Feb. 28. Create a faux poster promoting a "Live" Presidential speech from President Lincoln announcing the Emancipation Proclamation to the nation that is at least 11x17. What would this poster look like in today's visual aesthetic, or how would have looked in the 1860s? What message/concept in the design would speak to a broad audience or to a very targeted audience? Alternatively, create a faux poster on behalf of a social movement advancing or celebrating emancipation.

Winning art will be added to the Schwengel Lincoln Collection in Special Collections at Pickler Memorial Library. Art Prizes for 1st and 2nd places will be \$200.00 and \$100.00, respectively.