

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

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'Waterworld' big hype, budget shown to be undeserved

The Facts

Film: "Waterworld"
Stars: Kevin Costner, Dennis Hopper, Jeanne Tripplehorn
Director: Kevin Reynolds
Rated: PG-13
Grade: B-
Five Words: "Mad Max" meets "Free Willy"

By **Gerry Beltz**
Features Editor

Kevin Costner had better be able to swim, because "Waterworld" is going to sink fast.

Granted, it is riding high right now as the number one box office draw of the weekend, but will probably soon drop like a rock thrown into a pond.

With a budget rumored at anywhere between \$150 to \$200 million, one might think that even Costner might be able to act or fake a dialect.

Nope.

It is the future, and extensive global warming (probably caused by Costner's ego) has melted the polar ice caps, covering the planet with water. Only through ingenuity and scavenging has anyone remained alive.

A mysterious seaman known only as the Mariner (Costner) comes to the mighty floating city Atoll with a cargo of a precious commodity: dirt. He gets water and other supplies, but is prevented from leaving when he is discovered to be a mutant with gills and webbed feet, and is locked in a cage and sentenced to death.

(It's nice to see that some good ol'

American values — like prejudice and fear of anything different — will still be around in the post-apocalyptic future).

Anyway, when the Deacon (Dennis Hopper) and his gang of Smokers (Hydro-Hell's Angels) attack the Atoll, the Mariner escapes with Helen (Jeanne Tripplehorn) and the young Enola (Tina Majorino, "Andre") to the high seas.

However, everybody is after Enola, for tattooed on her back is a mysterious map which supposedly points the way to the legendary place called Dryland.

Great story idea, but bad acting and plot.

Majorino is the actual highlight of the film, bringing an innocence out of all this darkness that has taken over the world.

Hopper is okay as the bad guy, but has too many one-liners to make him devious enough to be anything beyond "okay." That was the scriptwriter's fault, however. Hopper added his own touch for the Deacon by suggesting that he shave his head. Smooth move, Hopper.

Tripplehorn's role isn't even worth mentioning, except for the fact that her (brief) nude scene wasn't necessary, and the film could have gone along just fine without it.

Costner's amphibious man does have one thing in common with present-day fish: acting ability. This man has turned out such great flicks such as "No Way Out" and "Dances With Wolves," and now we watch him scowl for over two hours?!? Better



Photo courtesy of Universal Pictures

The Mariner (Kevin Costner) and the vile Deacon (Dennis Hopper) have a face-off in Universal's "Waterworld."

luck next time, Kevin.

When looking at the enormous sets used for "Waterworld," it's not hard to figure out where a large portion of that huge budget went, and they are really neat to see. Between the scen-

ery and sets, this is a movie that MUST be seen on the big-screen for full appreciation.

One interesting note about the future; make-up and toothpaste must be a common commodities. Throughout

the entire film, Tripplehorn always has a perfect face, and everybody has shiny pearly-whites (even the chain-smoking Deacon).

Just for the production values, go catch "Waterworld."

Band takes 'command' of Omaha

By **Patrick Hambrecht**
Staff Reporter

Conor Oberst is the sort of kid easily hated by envious rock bands and journalists.

Born into a musical family, he has the cultivated, honed ability to know what sounds good and what doesn't, how to act on stage and how to converse with bar-goers twice his age. He grew up listening to his father's and brothers' bands: Shudder to Think and Weld, and was adopted into the Omaha bar scene before he could read.

Now at 15, he's writing songs — better than most Lincoln rock veterans — for his band, Commander Venus.

Oberst said, "Everyone helps write the songs."

Matt Bowen, Venus' drummer, quickly disagreed.

"Conor pretty much writes all the songs," said Bowen, a twenty-year-old Lincoln freshman.

"The drums really help," Conor protested. "Matt helps out with a lot of stuff."

Both Oberst and Bowen grew up in Saddle Creek, listening to their friends jam together in early incarnations of Polecat, Slowdown Virginia and other prominent Lincoln bands.

"We'd like Commander Venus fans to be cute girls."

MATT BOWEN

Drummer, Commander Venus

When Oberst was 12, his peers encouraged him to start doing solo shows at Killgore's and the Blue Barn. A couple of years later, he and Bowen started Commander Venus with Rob Nansel, 19, and Tim Kasher, 20. They now patiently wait for super-stardom.

"I haven't really thought about doing anything else besides playing music," Conor said, when asked what he might do after graduating from Creighton Prep.

"We'd like to never have to get real jobs, to have fun. We don't really care

who likes us," Conor said. "We care if our friends, the Saddle Creek scene, like us."

"Cute girls," Bowen said. "We'd like Commander Venus fans to be cute girls."

Commander Venus's new CD, "Do you feel at home?" is disgustingly good for a first album: more evidence of the talent available in the Saddle Creek scene. The music is sharp and fantastic.

The first two songs, "Peppermints" and "Showcase Showdown," are particularly good: a Pavement-sounding catchiness with childish vocals and mature lyrics.

While so many bands are reaching for a sappy kiddy-punk sound, Conor's lyrics are genuine pangs of adolescent angst. It's easy to imagine they were written by a "Lord of the Flies" castaway, or that poor prep-school martyr in "The Chocolate War."

"Commander Venus is the male version of the love god," Oberst said, explaining the band name.

"He'd look like Kevin Bacon," Bowen said.

Computers and intrigue weave captivating "Net"

By **Gerry Beltz**
Features Editor

Another "conspiracy-envelops-innocent-bystander" flick comes to the big-screen with the release of "The Net."

Box-office star Sandra Bullock, hot off her mega-hit "While You Were Sleeping," jumps into the lead role of this mystery-thriller flick.

Bullock plays Angela Bennett, a reclusive computer hacker who unknowingly comes into possession of a disk containing a program planted by Praetorians, terrorists who use computers to create chaos.

Angela gets a taste of this chaos when her life is erased and replaced with that of some crazy criminal.

Not only does she have to avoid the police and bad guys — led by Jack Devlin (Jeremy Northam) — but she also has to find a way to get her life back.

Bullock is quite enjoyable in her role, but the story is a bit weak; her role as a recluse isn't quite fleshed out enough, but is just enough to get the

idea.

Northam isn't too bad as the bad guy, but he is very one-dimensional. However, he does show promise, so keep an eye out for him.

Dennis Miller shows up as Angela's former therapist and lover, and again proves that some comedians weren't destined to act. Some of his lines are hilarious, and he himself is an absolute scream, but how many roles of "Dennis Miller playing Dennis Miller" can exist? Not many.

The story itself is a bit weak at points, and the tempo is tepid at times. The action and plot go from frantic to snail's pace in the blink of an eye, and it is sometimes hard to figure out what is going on. But the sequence in the offices of Angela's computer company is a real palm-sweater.

However, the movie still works. The ever-increasing dependence of society on computers, and our steadfast belief in the infallibility of computers, is well-shown here by director Irwin Winkler ("Guilty By Suspicion").

Go get caught in "The Net."