

The Great Plains FESTIVAL

Celebration showcases native music, dance throughout history

BY LIZA HOLTMEIER
Senior staff writer

This week, Lincoln will display several centuries' worth of culture.

Today kicks off the Great Plains Music and Dance Festival and Symposium, a seven-day festival celebrating the song and dance of the Plains.

Sponsored by the UNL Center for Great Plains Studies, the festival includes daily performances and a two-day academic conference covering the different cultural traditions in the Great Plains region.

The festival serves as a tribute to a region whose culture has often been overlooked.

The marginalization of Great Plains culture was due in part to how the region was settled, said John Wunder, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln professor of history.

"The region was seen as a place you go through, not a place you stop and listen and look," Wunder said.

To complicate matters, the region has experienced serious ethnic divisions, said Susan A. Miller, an associate professor of history and ethnic studies at UNL.

"The non-tribal people are often dis-

couraged from thinking what they have in common with tribal people. Tribal people are often discouraged from thinking about their contribution at all," Miller said.

But this festival is a sign of changing times.

Every year, the Center for Great Plains Studies holds a two-day academic symposium addressing a facet of Great Plains life.

But four years ago, planners of the symposium began discussing the possibility of a conference on music and its inseparable partner, dance.

"When you're doing music and dance, you can't just have people come and talk about music and dance," said Ron Bowlin, one of the festival's co-chairmen.

So the symposium was expanded into plans for a weeklong festival.

Now, after two years of program planning, UNL presents a series of performances by some of the region's best artists.

Highlights of this week's diverse offerings include:

■ Kansas City jazz musician Claude Williams with the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra.

■ Native American blues musicians Indigenous and John Trudell.

■ two American Indian drum groups.

■ Juan Tejada and his Conjunto band.

■ the Salem Baptist Church Choir.

■ western swing kings the Texas Playboys with Jimmie Dale Gilmore and Butch Hancock.

"The festival is a sampling," Bowlin said. "We don't have any pretext at all that we've included everything."

Even though the artists represent an array of musical and cultural backgrounds, each is dedicated to the preserving tradition, Miller said.

"Tradition is what makes us human. It's what makes culture," Miller said.

In addition to the traditional works, the Center for Great Plains Studies also commissioned a new work for the festival.

"Chasing Bird," to be performed by the Danny Grossman Dance Company on Friday, is a modern dance piece set to

the music of jazz great Charlie Parker, a native of Kansas

City, Mo.

"It was a case of putting your money where your mouth's at," said Randall Snyder, another of co-chairman.

Arts funding in the United States is limited, Snyder said, and a festival that celebrates the arts should also advocate the creation of new works.

Given the array of the artists, the festival should make for a jam-packed week of entertainment.

"We don't get this much greatness performing in our town within one week very often," Miller said.

"I don't know of any event that has brought together such a diverse group of people in one compact package like this," Bowlin said. "I'm not sure people know how to react when they have this much activity going on."



MELANIE FALE/DN

The Great Plains Music & Dance Festival and Symposium

April 5-11, 1999

This week artists from around the country gather to celebrate the culture of the Great Plains. The festival offers a buffet of original art, dance and music. Below are a few highlights; see Friday's calendar for the weekend events and symposium.

Monday, April 5
Lincoln Community Band Concert
7:30 p.m., Kimball Hall, 11th & R St.

Tuesday, April 6
Opera Excerpts: *Willa Cather*—From *Text to Opera*
8:00 p.m., Carson Theater, 301 N. 11th

Wednesday, April 7
Indigenous and John Trudell and Bad Dog
8:00 p.m., City Campus Union, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Thursday, April 8
Polka Night at the Pla Mor: Colorado River Boys and the "Ron Nacherry" Polka Band
8:00 p.m., Pla Mor Ballroom, 8600 West O

Indigenous
9:30 p.m., Zoo Bar, 134 N. 14th St.

Friday, April 9
Danny Grossman Dance Company
8:00 p.m., Lied Center, 301 N. 12th St.

JON FRANK/DN

'Matrix' a web of visuals, but plot slips through



COURTESY PHOTO
NEO (KEANU REEVES) blasts his way to the freedom of the human race in the futuristic action film "The Matrix."

BY SAM MCKEOWN
Senior editor

Just like the computer system that is the main focus of the film, "The Matrix" is not what it seems.

The film sets the inventive course of creating a false world run by a computer that treats all humans as slaves. It introduces rebels that have broken out of the computer system and attempt to destroy it. It gives us a character who is the "chosen one," the one who will lead the rebels to victory.

It's a high-aiming concept from the Wachowski brothers, Larry and Andy, who together wrote and directed the film. The script having been completed years before, the Wachowskis knew exactly what they wanted to do here.

But take away the shroud of kinetic energy, its futuristic plot and its brilliant visuals, and you realize what "The Matrix" really is: a shoot-em-up with gravitational wonders. For all of its revolutionary ideals, "The Matrix" devolves into typical gun battle in its final act, ignoring the real issues at hand. Take "The Matrix" for what it is, and it's a superior action film. Take it for what it could have been, and it's disappointing.

The film charts the course of Thomas Anderson (Keanu Reeves), a computer software programmer who goes by the name of "Neo" in his illegal hacking business. He is haunted by dreams of strange agents interrogating him about programs and a mysterious woman, Trinity (Carrie-Anne Moss), kidnapping him to take him to an

Film Review

The Facts

Title: "The Matrix"
Stars: Keanu Reeves, Laurence Fishburne, Carrie-Anne Moss
Director: Larry and Andy Wachowski
Rating: R (adult language, violence)
Grade: B
Five Words: "Matrix" is action over imagination

even more mysterious leader.

That man is Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne), the leader of the rebellion against the Matrix, an artificially intelligent computer that ultimately takes over the world. It employs humans as its slaves, forcing them to live in a computer program, which generates energy that the machines need to survive. If it sounds confusing, it's not: it's all described very well early in the movie.

It's also where the movie went wrong slightly off course. Out of the system, Morpheus tells Neo that he can save the world by freeing it from its slavery. Exactly how that's done isn't entirely made clear. Some of it isn't even addressed. The entire cyberspace world, where the rebels must ultimately fight the Matrix, seems to only be a palette for some amazing action sequences.

About those sequences: They are incredible pieces of work. The Wachowskis pull out all the stops with f/x to stop the camera, allow people to walk around walls, to bend time, etc. The movie is

worth these sequences alone.

But these scenes are honestly all there is intended to be. The climactic battle is, while stunning visually, a bit of a letdown. If the Matrix can create an entire world, it seems a little strange that it can only conjure up three super agents led by Agent Smith (Hugo Weaving) to stop Neo and Co.

How about entire armies? Planes, tanks or nuclear missiles? If the Matrix can learn and understand, surely it can create a war that these rebels couldn't possibly win.

The entire concept also creates a final bastion of human resistance in a far away city of Zion, somewhere near the core of the Earth. It is Zion that the Matrix ultimately wants to destroy. But its status is dropped by the end of the film in favor of a budding romance that never, ever works.

When confronted with the sheer proportion of their ideas here, it becomes clear that there's no way all these questions could be answered within a reasonable time frame or budget. "The Matrix" gives us an infinity of equations to consider, then goes for most basic of formulas: guns and kung fu, for its eventual conclusion.

The acting is secondary to the film premise, which is probably why Reeves is in it. He's a minimalist in the strictest sense of the word: He can minimally act. Still, he stays out of the way for the most part, and as always, shoots a gun with style.

Fishburne is a good call as the philosophy/action connection of Morpheus. He's got the looks and his voice fits the role. Moss, as

Please see **MATRIX** on 13