## Technological tripping makes 'Strange Days'

By TODD RITTER Collegian Arts Writer

We live in a virtual world.

TV, movies, the World Wide Web. Everywhere we turn there is a new form of technology begging for our attention, pining away for a piece of our consciousness.

The new film Strange Days takes this concept to a higher, more frightening level. It serves up the idea of virtual reality as an easy, dangerously addictive high.

It's called wire-tripping and it allows someone to feel the recorded human experiences of someone else. Or as Lenny Nero, the main character, describes it, "You're there. You're doing it. Feeling it. Straight from the cerebral cortex."

If you want to commit a crime, just wire-trip. If you want to have forbidden sex, just wire-trip. Anything and everything is available, straight on delivery, straight to

your brain. It's some pretty heavy stuff, as

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demonstrated in the very first scene, a kinetic single take filmed from the viewpoint of an armed robber. It takes the audience out of a car, into a restaurant, up three flights of stairs and onto a roof.

It's a breathless, virtuoso piece of filmmaking. When the scene is over, we want more. Before we even know what wire-tripping is, we understand its seductiveness.

Strange Days is a study in the art of virtual seduction. The film sucks us in from the very beginning, leaving us wanting more and, while not exactly giving it to us, we leave happy anyway.

It begins during the last two days of 1999. Iris, a prostitute who sells her experiences to Nero for wiretripping purposes, is in big trouble. In her possession is an incriminating disc that has serious implications. When Iris is brutally murdered, Nero (Ralph Fiennes) and his friend Mace, played with authority by Angela Bassett, try to find the disc and solve the murder.

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## Strange Days

Swirling in the background are subplots involving the murder of a controversial rapper, Nero's obsession with Faith, his old girlfriend, police corruption and the coming of the next millennium.

Bent on self-destruction, Nero is as burnt-out as Los Angeles itself. And Fiennes, who continues to impress with every role, invests the part with such sleazy charm that you can't help but like him.

Strange Days has so much going for it - a cool concept, two impressive leads, virtual reality galore that it's easy to forgive its flaws. The first hour drags a little as the intricate plot is set up, yet the end of the film, when all the plots converge at the stroke of midnight, is so satisfying that all its missteps along the way are soon forgotten.

So as technology continues to surround us and time hurtles us ever closer to the millennium, all Strange Days has to say is, "Wel-

## Kravitz's 'Circus' borrows from past musical sideshows

result that is the opposite of what is expected."

I'm not really sure if Lenny Kravitz is familiar with this word or not. I'm guessing no, based on the first single off his new album, Circus. The song in question is "Rock And Roll Is Dead," Lenny's little rant against no-talent musical hacks, with lyrics like, "You're living for an image." What's next, Madonna criticizing Marilyn Monroe for being sexually suggestive? If rock 'n' roll really is dead, then Kravitz is indulging in a little bit of necrophilia.

Apparently Kravitz thinks musical inventiveness ended sometime in the '70s, because nothing on this album even approaches a fresh or new sound. He does a nice Led Zeppelin imitation on "Beyond The 7th Sky," which sounds like its drum riff was lifted straight from "When the Levee Breaks."

In "Tunnel Vision," Kravitz simultaneously channels early

Today's vocabulary word is Aerosmith sound and Jimi Henirony. From Webster's New World drix's voice. And "Magdalene" Dictionary: "irony n., an event or blends so many different influences it would be pointless to list them all here.

About the only thing of any interest on this entire album is Kravitz's dabbling in born-again Christian lyrics, on songs like "God Is Love," "In My Life Today" and "The Resurrection."

what he was trying to accomplish with this triad of songs - "God Is Love" is more likely to put a listener to sleep than to convince anyone to convert. Maybe he figures he's combating insomnia in the name of the Lord.

Circus would be a good album if the 1970s had never happened. But unfortunately for Kravitz, they did, and anyone even considering buying this album would do much better to just turn on a classic-rock station. You'll hear the exact same music, done better, and it won't cost you a thing.

-by Joshua Kaderlan



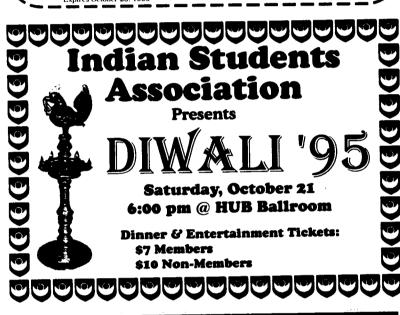


**Lenny Kravitz** acting cool

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