

ticed. Yet, while the filmmakers have crammed their film with clever Christian motifs and mythological allusions, the metaphysical mulligan stew serves to obfuscate the overstuffed and at times incoherent plot rather than affect any real philosophical musing.

Late in the film, Neo learns that a prototype version of the Matrix failed because the world it fabricated was too perfect, suggesting that suffering is an inherent component of the life equation — a theological insight consistent with Christianity's understanding of man's fallen nature. This, however, like many of the film's existential ruminations, remains a philosophical carrot dangled tantalizingly but never given a vigorous workout in the narrative. Both films explore thought-provoking topics foreign to most action flicks, but the intellectual elevation is weighed down by its stylized mayhem.

Regrettably, the Wachowskis' bold, dark vision quickly devolves from one of recent Hollywood's more interesting premises into a disappointing head-scratcher, concerned only with showcasing its innovative effects and over-the-top, consequence-free carnage — made more repellent by the body counts equally tallied by both good and bad guys. Part three of the trilogy, "Matrix Revolutions," is due out later this year.

Due to much fantasy-style violence, a shadowy sexual encounter and some profanities, the USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is A-IV — adults, with reservations. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R-restricted.

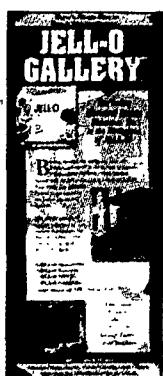
DiCerto is on the staff of the Office for Film & Broadcasting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.



Hugo Weaving and Keanu Reeves star in a scene from the sequel action-thriller "The Matrix Reloaded." Warner Bros./CNS

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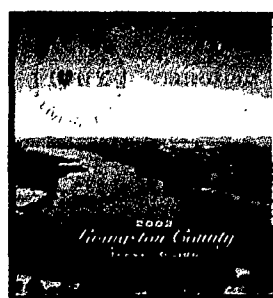
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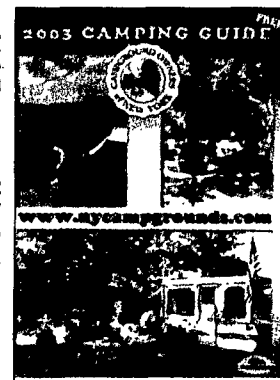
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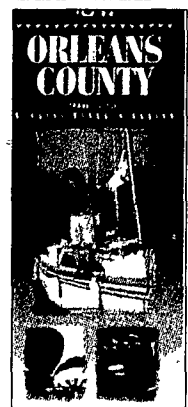
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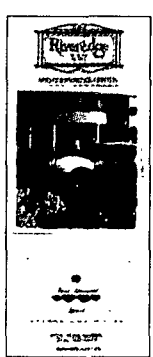
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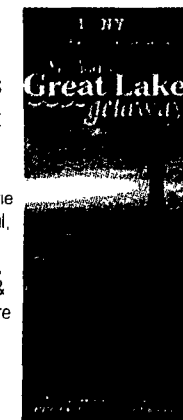
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