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CINEMA

Until Thurs 29th May

Odeon George Street 0870 5050007

JOHNNY ENGLISH (PG) Wed & Thu: 8.45
Rowan Atkinson in spy spoof. See review at dailyinfo.co.uk

THE MATRIX RELOADED (15) Daily: 12.45, 1.15, 4.00, 4.30, 7.15, 7.40

There is still no spoon. See review at dailyinfo.co.uk

KANGAROO JACK (PG) Daily: 1.30, 3.45, 7.00
Kangaroo steals mob money....

X-MEN 2 (12A) Daily: 1.00, 1.45, 4.15, 5.00, 7.30, 8.00

They're, erm, back. See review at dailyinfo.co.uk

THE JUNGLE BOOK 2 (U) Daily: 12.15
Mowgli's back for more adventures

ODEON SENIOR SCREEN: THE PIANIST (15) Wed : 10.45
Surviving the holocaust. Over 55's only

BRING DOWN THE HOUSE (12A) Wed & Thu : 3.00, 6.00, 8.30

She breaks out of prison to be with him...

Odeon Magdalen Street 0870 5050007

ANTWONE FISHER (15) Daily: 2.30, 5.30, 8.30
Denzel Washington's directorial debut. Review at dailyinfo.co.uk

THE MATRIX RELOADED (15) Daily: 1.45*, 5.00*, 8.15*
Nor fork. See review at dailyinfo.co.uk

SEEING DOUBLE (PG) Daily: 12.30
S-Club

Ultimate Picture Palace 245288

LAST TANGO IN PARIS (18) Wed & Thu: 9.30pm
Marlon Brando & Maria Schneider in torrid affair.

THE THIRD MAN (PG) Wed & Thu: 7.00pm
Classic mystery with Orson Welles

Phoenix Picture House 512526

I CAPTURE THE CASTLE (PG) Wed & Thu: 4.50, 6.45
17 year old Cassandra & her eccentric family endure fortified 1930s bohemian lifestyle. See review at dailyinfo.co.uk

THE MATRIX RELOADED (15) Daily: 12.30, 3.10, 6.00, 8.50

Or cutlerly of any kind... See review at dailyinfo.co.uk

MOSTLY MARTHA (PG) Wed & Thu: 2.15, 9.15
Hard-bitten chef changes her outlook on life in German comedy

CHICAGO (18) Thu: 11.30pm
Retro musical sleaze.

* = Wheelchair Access

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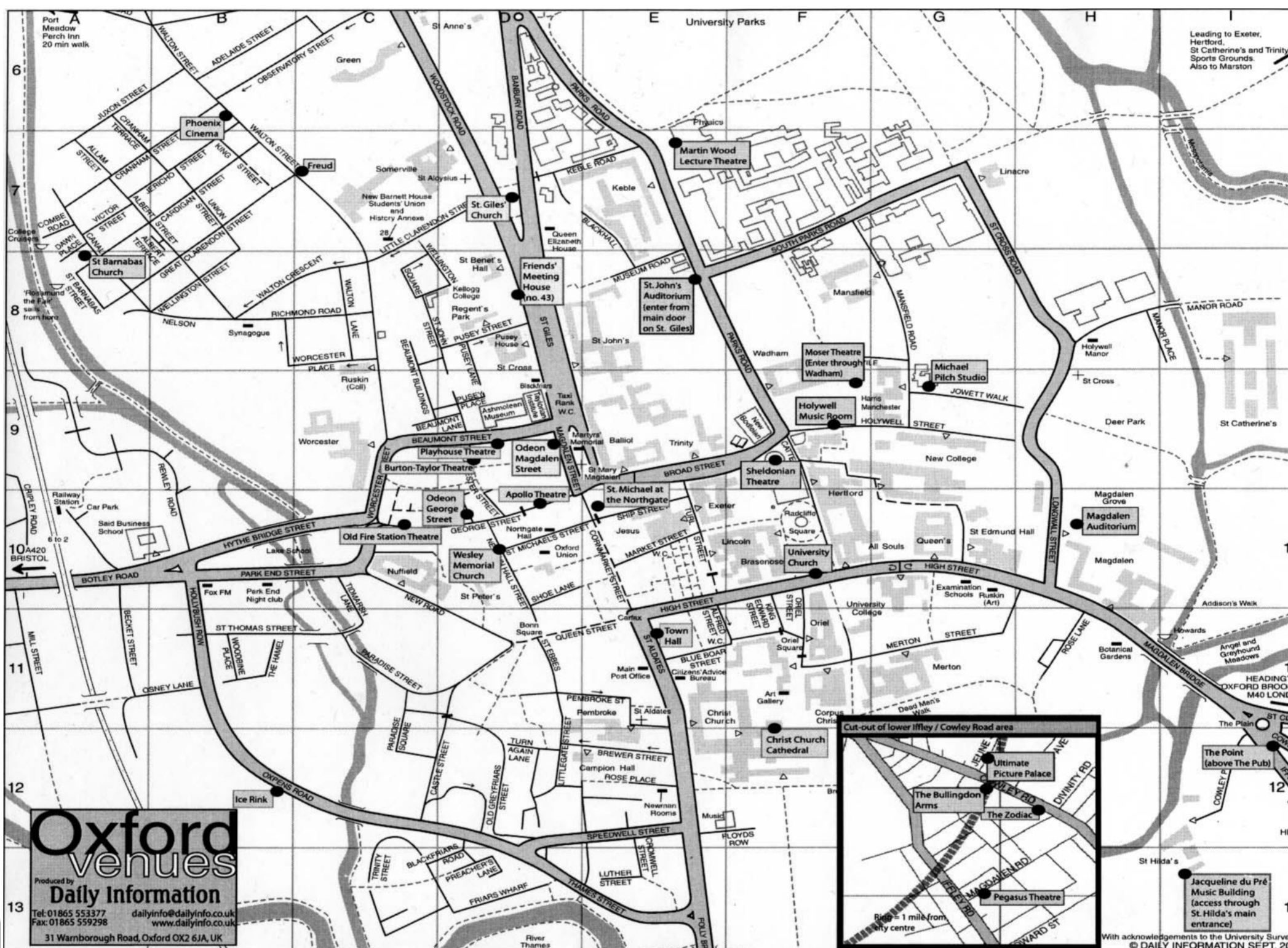
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CINEMA REVIEW

The Matrix Reloaded

Now showing at Odeons George & Magdalen Street & the Phoenix Picture House

It is only fitting that 'The Matrix Reloaded' should feature both a set of identical twins (Adrian and Neil Rayment), and a character who continually replicates himself (Hugo Weaving as the Smiths) - for sequels have always been about imitation, reduplication and self-cloning. Yet, as the second film in a tightly woven trilogy, 'The Matrix Reloaded' is not only obsessed with seeing double, but also with the meaningful unity promised by things seen in threes. Or, as Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne) says just before the film's climactic sequence, 'When I see three objectives, three captains, three ships, I see procedure...'

Yep. 'The Matrix Reloaded' is every bit as self-conscious and overcoded as 'The Matrix', plugging the viewer right back into its predecessor's labyrinthine hall of mirrors. Once again, Neo's violent adventures in digital wonderland are punctuated by an overwhelming series of philosophical questions, and while the order of priorities here is strictly spoof first and ask questions later, the film will certainly leave you, once the gunshots have died down, with more than enough to puzzle over on the shadowy relationship between reality and illusion, chance and causality, free will and determinism, man and machine, man and god. This blend of dumb-assed action and clever-clever concepts adds up to the perfect formula for a classic, both demanding, and repaying, more than one viewing.

Neo (Keanu Reeves), Trinity (Carrie-Anne Moss) and Morpheus again enter the artificial world known as the Matrix, hoping to learn how to foil an army of Sentinel robots bent on destroying Zion, last outpost of humankind. Distracted by vivid premonitions of Trinity's death, confused by the enigmatic Oracle (Gloria Foster), menaced by the decadent Merovingian (Lambert Wilson), seduced by the vampish Persephone (Monica Bellucci), helped by the handy Keymaker (Randall Duk Kim), and impeded by an ever-growing viral mass of implacable Smiths, Neo heads ever closer to a meeting with his maker, the Architect (Helmut Bakaitis), in a film which replaces its predecessor's central question ('what is the Matrix?') with a whole set of new ones ('who controls the Matrix, and what is its purpose?').

The minor characters, each affectionately drawn with their own idiosyncrasies, introduce to the proceedings a real charm and humour which the wooden Reeves and Fishburne would be incapable of attaining by themselves. The action set-pieces are breathtaking, in particular a wire-driven chopsocky standoff between Neo and a slightly irritated-looking host of Smiths, and a fast and furious freeway chase sequence in which Morpheus and Trinity leap from one exploding vehicle to the next, fighting off Agents and wrath-like twins. Earlier sections of the film are less diverting. While the sets for Zion are impressive - part underground factory from 'Metropolis', part cavernous parliament from Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom, part cheesy nightclub - the scenes in them are strangely static, and the sex-scene between Neo and Trinity seems to last an age. These longeurs might better have been left out of the film altogether, but at least the Wachowski brothers have been judicious enough to place them at the film's beginning. Once we re-enter the Matrix, the film never again lets up, making it all the more plausible that so many humans should choose the illusion of the Matrix over the grey tedium of the real world.

Best of all, like 'The Empire Strikes Back' before it, 'The Matrix Reloaded' is a mid-trilogy film that can afford to strike a truly downbeat note. For, unlike the first film, this is all about failure, and its ending becomes more and more depressing the more you take the time to unravel just what has happened.

A sequel so good, you'll immediately want to see it again, and then revisit the original. Get reloaded.

Anton Bitel, 22.05.03

THEATRE

Until Thurs 29th May

Oxford Playhouse 305305

GEORGE PIPER DANCES Wed 28 & Thu 29: 7.30pm

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Burton Taylor Theatre 305350

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LOS HOMBRES / Latin guitar / 11pm-2am / Freud's, Walton St; Tel: 311171

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