

SILVER PICTURES

TO: Wendy Wanderman/ DATE: February 4, 1994  
Joel Silver

FROM: Will Staeger

TITLE: **The Matrix**  
AUTHOR: Larry and Andy Wachowski  
FORM: Screenplay, 136 p  
CATEGORY: Virtual Reality/Sci Fi Action  
LOCATION: Virtual Reality/Major city  
CIRCA: Future/1994

SUBMITTED TO: Wendy Wanderman

SUBMITTED BY: Circle of Confusion

LOGLINE: A computer hacker is recruited into a band of virtual reality rebels battling in the future against CyberMarine computer robots who have taken over the world. The battle must take place in "The Matrix," a constantly-recycling "reality" of the present (years 1989-2009), where we oblivious humans are being used for energy by the CyberMarines.

SYNOPSIS: A computer screen traces a phone call as we listen to the telephone conversation, between EDDY, who is calling his girlfriend, CHRISTIE, telling her about all that he has learned and that he can't wait to see her. They agree to meet, but the computer has traced Eddy's location, and FBI agents and a SWAT team break down his doors and try to kill him. Eddy's just a teenager, but he's superhuman: he is so fast that he wipes out all of the attacks, and sprints between 40-foot gaps between buildings. One agent, AGENT BROWN, has the same physical abilities. Prior to the chase, Eddy is contacted by MORPHEUS, his "control" of some kind, and told to make a phone call from a remote booth. The Agents catch him, however, and jam a high-tech truth serum into him, attempting to get information out of him. They get three names, one of which is NEO. AGENT SMITH talks into the payphone when Morpheus calls, and tells him he's going to catch him sooner or later.

We meet Neo, another teenaged computer hacker, as he sits in his room in the middle of the night, and is summoned by another phone call--from Morpheus. He is met by a motorcycle-riding woman, TRINITY--a fellow computer hacker--who takes him to see Morpheus in a mysterious room.

RECOMMENDATION: **WEAK MAYBE.** It's very difficult to recommend this script. If it were available for a low price, perhaps we could pick it up and develop it, but it would take total rewriting job from page 35 on. As a total script, it is a pass; the first 35 pages are very good, good enough for us to consider some of its merits.

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### **SYNOPSIS**

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Morpheus is a mysterious figure who is one of the most legendary computer hackers of all time; he tells Neo that Neo has been selected to be a soldier in a virtual reality war that is going on all around us. He offers him membership, but only if he isn't in love with anyone. This, Morpheus says, is a weakness (and it's what got Eddy killed).

They take Neo back into a computer room where Trinity and another legendary hacker are working the keyboards; Neo is given a large pill, which he is told is a medical test of sorts, but which is actually the virtual reality pill that allows him to bridge the gap between reality and VR--and it allows them to control him. They tell him about a "Matrix" and the concept of virtual reality without helmets and gloves and wires--in which the difference between reality and the computer world is always vague. Neo goes into a near heart attack, and wakes up the next morning in his own house.

He finds himself in his classroom the next day, but FBI agents, led by Agent Smith, take him into custody and abuse and interrogate him. They tell him he can go free if they agree to give them "the location" when Morpheus does; he flips them the bird. Morpheus then shows up in his hospital room later on, and tells him he's passed the tests. His life signs go crazy, and we move into the virtual reality world, a huge human cell-type space, in which Neo is connected to a computer controlling device, and is essentially reborn as a virtual reality being.

On board a Hovercraft ship, he meets up with Morpheus, Trinity, and a handful of other members of Morpheus's VR team. He is told in a computer training program that in the future, CyberMarines, the equivalent of RoboCops, were sent as soldiers around the world. They stopped obeying human commands, took over the world, and established their own society, killing off humans. They ran out of energy, though, and decided to use "human electricity"--and thus, now "breed" humans on a "farm," which is what we consider reality, the period of 1989-2009, recycled over and over. Morpheus's group along with others, headquartered at an underground society known as Zion, are fighting CyberMarine figures through holes in this "Matrix." Enemies are everywhere; one of them is Agent Smith, a CyberMarine in disguise; they are trying to root out the last of the human resistance.

Neo is trained with computer disks, taught to become a martial arts expert, history academician, etc., instantaneously. Soon Morpheus goes back through a "hole" to set up a base at a hotel in the "present," and Trinity, Neo, and the others fly aboard the Hovercraft, supervising operations. Agent Smith captures Morpheus, though, and holds him captive, attempting to "trace" out the location of Zion with truth serum.

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Trinity and the others determine that the only way to save their society is to use their Electromagnetic Impulse missiles--which destroy all electronic equipment but spare people--and kill off Morpheus and Smith and the others. Neo decides that he's going to go back and save Morpheus, though, because there's still a chance. He goes into the present world, and a lengthy action sequence follows, in which Neo succeeds in saving Morpheus and defeating Agent Smith--just in time to be rescued by Trinity with the Hovercraft--but she has already fired an EM impulse missile. The missile destroys the CyberMarines and the Matrix, but our heroes get out in the Hovercraft just in time--and Neo and Trinity kiss, finding love isn't such a bad thing, as Morpheus watches, smiling.

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COMMENTS

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COMMENTS: This script involves a brilliant first 35 pages. In those pages (which are synopsized in depth for the first page and a half of this coverage), an interesting premise involving virtual reality, some exciting action sequences, and compelling main characters are all presented. The tension of the adventure, and the mystery of what's going on, are both kept alive throughout those pages. Probably due to the merit of these 35 pages, this script will create a fervor, and possibly even be in great demand.

Unfortunately, it falls into the same vague, mystical, bizarre trap into which "virtually" every other "virtual reality" submission we've seen also drops. Right from the point Neo is put under (from his hospital bed on page 35) and taken into the world of virtual reality, the visual images in this script become decidedly high-budget, bizarre, and confusing--a bad combination. We lose track of the main characters' plights, and the premise that is ostensibly established is vague. The premise remains vague throughout, the fighting that takes place is never fully explained, and the entire story gets caught in a strange in-between world that I still don't understand. It just isn't very cinematic at all from page 35 on; it's almost written like a confusing, spiritual science fiction novel rather than a movie. I don't know if this is a reader's kiss of death, but if you read the entire script, you will agree that, from page 35 on, this thing is reminiscent of the movie Dune--lots of futuristic, internal-workings-of-the-human-mind, bizarre scenes with strange scenery--and very expensive to produce--but with an utterly confusing story that abandons its premise and the fantastic beginning, and never explains the sticky points.

The premise seems interesting: it's a Terminator-type idea in which "CyberMarines" have taken over the world and are sending robots back to kill off the small army of human rebels, who use virtual reality as their weapon, in order to quell the last of the resistance. The entire world as we know it is essentially an "energy farm" of humans, existing as energy batteries for the robots of the future, recycled from the year 1989-2009. This, however, isn't carried out in the script, at all. It is communicated in one or two expository scenes during Neo's training in this bizarre VR world (aboard the Hovercraft), but that is all.

What does happen is that we spend a lot of time in this Hovercraft, and then finally return for an action sequence in the "real world," by which time all the involved characters and their actions are thoroughly confusing. As you're reading it, you expect, and hope, that from page 45 or so, to return to the "present" world, where a CyberMarines vs. Virtual Reality Warriors (disguised as computer hackers) drama could play out.

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Though this would be something of a Terminator ripoff, it's what is set up with the beginning, and expected by the reader as a result. It's what would work here.

But it doesn't happen; the bizarre, spiritual, artsy, imagery-oriented script that follows from page 35 is what does. There are so many confusing points that go unanswered: what will it take for Morpheus' troops to win? Why are the CyberMarines, in the form of Agents Smith and Brown, killing them off? What's at stake in the "real world"? Do the bodies of those who are going through virtual reality remain elsewhere during their "trips"? After such a great beginning, you hope for clarity, where, in all of the other VR scripts, there is none. Unfortunately, there is none here either.

To make this into a mainstream motion picture would take a complete reworking of the project--a page on rewrite--from page 35 on. The story would seem to involve a basic ripoff of The Terminator, as that is the story that is set up by the beginning, and would seem to work, given the world, the characters, and the VR stuff.

Therefore, it's very difficult to recommend this script. If it were available for a low price, perhaps we could pick it up and develop it, but it would take total rewriting job, and seems as though it has those difficulties in it that could doom it to box office bomb status. As a total script, it is a pass; the first 35 pages are very good, good enough for us to consider the merits of developing this project.