



The Matrix (BFI Modern Classics)

Joshua Clover

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The Matrix (1999) was a true end-of-the-millennium movie, a statement of the American Zeitgeist, and a prognosis for the future of big-budget Hollywood filmmaking. Starring Keanu Reeves as Neo, a computer programmer transformed into a messianic freedom fighter, *The Matrix* blends science fiction with conspiracy thriller conventions and outlandish martial arts created with groundbreaking digital techniques. A box-office triumph, the film was no populist confection: its blatant allusions to highbrow contemporary philosophy added to its appeal as a mystery to be decoded.

Joshua Clover undertakes the task of decoding the film. Examining *The Matrix*'s digital effects and how they were achieved, he shows how the film represents a melding of cinema and video games (the greatest commercial threat to have faced Hollywood since the advent of television) and achieves a hybrid kind of immersive entertainment. He also unpacks the movie's references to philosophy, showing how *The Matrix* ultimately expresses the crisis American culture faced at the end of the 1990s.

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