The Arts
MIT sophomore's Quest doesn't quite reach its goal

QUEST FOR THE CUBE
By A. Frederick '93
Illustrated by Soon Young '93
Vantage Press.
133 pp. $8.95.

By John Jacobs

In matters of taste, there are no absolutes. So when I say that I don't like fantasy, you may not regard it as a negation of the fact that I didn't like the book isn't as meaningful, to me, as the fact that it's written by an MIT sophomore, Robert Frederick. Yes, we're at that age now where our peers are actually making something out of nothing. They are professional athletes, porn center-fools, musicians, authors, millionaires, and the rest of us put our pants on one leg at a time.

The book is about two warieves, Qwayne and Garth. They do a skit on Saturday Night Live in which they talk each other. No, seriously, when the war end, they get bored. The two unemployed waries are acquired by a legendary wizard named Menthar. He is the "bossman" of their day, the antagonist in scary stories told to children. He's a few hundred years old, of course, but of late he's been rather restive and has become a little too much with knowledge. For example, he knows that it is Qwayne and Garth's destiny to seek the two halves of the "Parcelona" cube. When I read that, I expected at least one half to be in Spain. Qwayne and Garth are frightened by Menthar at first, then they think the quest is stupid, and then they don't. This is the kind of inconsistency that the book is plagued with. They finally accept their destiny and split up, one for each half of the cube. There's an entire story behind the cube, of course, and it begins like this: The two, which made whole, will change their world from one of magic to a more predictable one in which there are scientific laws. Why? Menthar split the cube in the first place is another story, one that Frederick deals with in another book.

Anyway, of course they each find half of the cube and thereby cause the dawn of a new age. And all that. If you read the book, more than once will you have to suspend your own diabolicf. The book has many technical flaws. Bad diction runs rampant. Anachronistic diction makes a guest appearance. Unrealistic scenes are regular. For example, there's a scene in which Qwayne returns to his hometown and is jumped by two men. It's a standard mugging—they might have said, "Your money or your life." Qwayne wants both, so he fights, kills one, and is about to kill the other when he discovers that it's his own brother. The two are suddenly joyful and go off together to the nearest tavern. Frederick doesn't explain why Qwayne didn't recognize his own brother's voice. He doesn't explain the absence of sadness for the dead guy, or why neither of the brothers are fazed by the fact that the little brother was almost killed. There was no contextual explanation either, so I made up my own: death was so common that everyone had become inured to it. But that explanation was immediately invalidated by the next scene, in which Qwayne agonizes over the deaths of his parents.

The book, I found out when I interviewed Frederick, was primarily targeted at teenagers. It's a short, unintimidating book, and a safe way to escape the horrors of adolescence. The bad guys pet axed, and the good guys save the planet. Most people I know outgrew fantasy fiction by the time I was eighteen years old, but, according to Frederick, fantasy is popular at MIT. When I think about that, though, it makes sense.

So the short, bullet-like sentences and the exaggerated attention to detail are generally justified. In fact, Quest is very good for a first book (especially since I know the author), and we must remember that fantasy is an unforgiving genre. In any event, this book replaced Bonnwell on the summer reading list in Frederick's hometown's county. It's been favorably reviewed by The New York Times, the Atlanta Journal, and a few science-fiction/fantasy magazines.

Neil Young shows what Unplugged was meant to be

NEIL YOUNG UNPLUGGED
MTV, March 10.
By Eric Oliver

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The Surprise of the Show
By John Jacobs

The surprise of the show was Lofgren, who accompanied Young with an accordion throughout the concert. He seemed as natural an oversized black leather jacket, rolled up his sleeves, and sang a song that he had just written. The song was a musical version of the story of the song, which was effective only for the title song. For the first time in the show, the band grew as the musicians from the Rubber Factory formed a brotherhood.

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Although the Unplugged series is one of the best ideas MTV has ever come up with, some of the bands featured were just not meant to shine in this format (it won't mention any names, Brett Michel's). Throughout this concert, it seemed Unplugged was created for Young, with respect to his Harvest and Rust Never Sleeps days. If you missed it, find someone who has taped it, slip it into the VCR, and enjoy the ride.

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