

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Maher's humor meets public ignorance in new documentary

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Public ignorance ignites this mind opener, produced not to exploit atheist belief or immoral religious bashing, but to offer an agnostic approach that often is snubbed by American society.

This mind opener is Bill Maher's (*Real Time with Bill Maher*) latest project, going by the name of *Religulous*, and is directed by Larry Charles, though written and produced by Maher.

If you are Catholic, see this film. If you are an Atheist, see this film. If you are Jewish, see this film. If you're anybody with a bit of intellect, see this film; it doesn't matter what your beliefs are. It is a provocative documentary, focusing on Maher's trips around the world in what ultimately proves to be a futile effort to find out why some people are so evangelically extreme.

What the film reveals is that many of the followers really don't have a clue when it comes to something they've advocated all their lives, a truly dismal reality in so many ways.

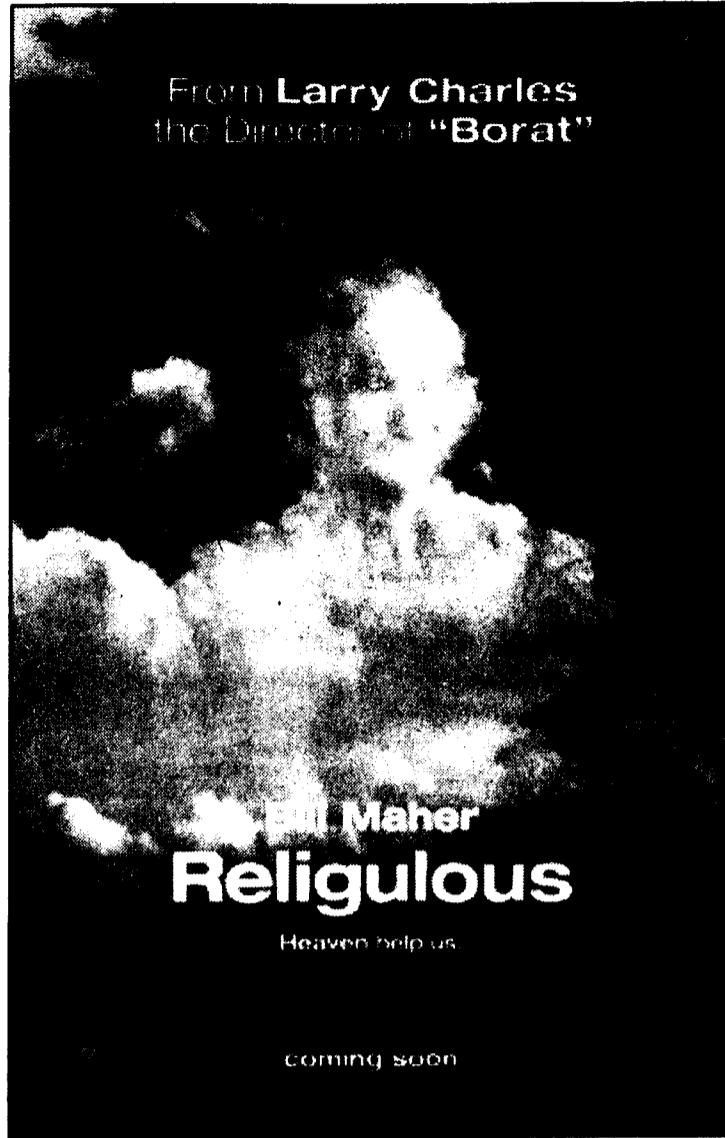
Maher is not out to roast the idea of religion, contrary to what many zealots may believe. He is merely out to ask questions.

He does take a satirical

approach in his response to some of the answers he receives during interviews; if you heard these answers, you would too. Interviewees are left utterly speechless when Maher asks some of the most simplistic things. That includes politicians, priests, an ex-gay man who tries to explain how millions of people he has never met are simply confused in life and then tries to say that he does not pass judgments. It's very comical in a ridiculous way. So many others who are blatantly sheltered from mere facts (researched by Maher) are also featured.

The most remarkable aspect of the film is that Maher is actually tremendously more informed on the subject than real people that live their lives by it.

If the film manifests one particular international phenomenon (it seems that people were evenly ignorant across the planet, not just America), it's the fact that everyone is misinformed in some way because no one actually knows what happened thousands of years ago. There are clips during the film where footage is played back to back of one person telling of something they're "sure" of, while the next person



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certifies their own countering belief, leaving the audience in a state of confusion. Who's right? Who knows.

This seems to be the general statement the film is trying to broadcast: that we're all a bit confused and that we devote so much time to a possibility of a higher power that we lose focus on what truly matters (what truly matters is always up for interpretation).

Maher succeeds at presenting what often goes unseen on the big screen.

One of the more powerful scenes in the documentary takes place in a religious theme park in Orlando (I'm sure Jesus would be pleased with the exploitation of his alleged journeys). This park is titled Holyland and features actors that re-create stories from the Bible in an outdoor theater-esque environment.

People are literally shown applauding these scenes, while an actor who identifies himself as Jesus proves through various responses that he is just as igno-

rantly close-minded as everyone else. Maher contributed minimally to this part of the film, as the tourists and staff of the park blindly proved his points.

To see this film and to understand its true message, one must realize that it in no way is attacking or discrediting people's religious belief. Set your bias aside and understand that this is a very real portrayal of a poorly informed world on the subject of God and religion.

Maher is not aggressive with his findings, letting the interviewees present their ignorance in an unfiltered style. His habitual humor naturally exists throughout the film, but it does not necessarily put a pejorative haze on the film, it is all used in proper context and does not make fun of anyone that doesn't deserve it.

Not meant to sway your beliefs, the film does its job: to make the audience think. If 16 percent (according to the film) of Americans classify themselves as atheist or agnostic, then why do politicians constantly associate America with God? Some things just don't add up, and Maher succeeds at presenting what often goes unseen on the big screen.

Punchline heats up The Hangout

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Last Saturday, Pittsburgh pop-punk band Punchline returned to the Edinboro Hangout to play a record release show for their newest full-length album, *Just Say Yes*. The album hit stores on Sept. 16, and is the follow up to their 2006 album, *37 Everywhere*. The building was nearly full as many fans came out

in support of the band.

Opening the show for Punchline were The Laundromat from Erie, Edinboro's Guts & Glory, The Promise Hero from Cleveland, and also hailing from Edinboro, Stillframe Sky.

A lot of people came out in support of Stillframe Sky, who were playing their last show together as a band. Lead vocalist Tyler James explained it was because the members were each

heading in new directions. James and guitarist Johnny Riot are starting a new band called RadioEmpire, and they will be making their debut performance in Warren, Pa. in late November.

Punchline came on stage after their openers, and the crowd reaction was strong. They played songs off of their two most widely known albums, *Action* and *37 Everywhere*, and they also played some tracks off of *Just Say Yes*.

They played a cover of the classic song "What a Wonderful World", which they said was a prequel to the song off of *Action* titled "The World." Lead vocalist and guitarist Steve Soboslai commented that they have played at the Edinboro Hangout more times than any other venue, with 26 appearances.

Audience involvement is something that is frequent at Punchline shows, with hand clapping, fist pumping, singing along, some light moshing, and the occasional crowd surfing.

The band closed the show but due to the overwhelming chant of, "one more song" from the crowd, then played "Flashlight" from *37 Everywhere* for the encore.

Punchline categorizes themselves as alternative/punk/pop. They incorporated piano into their newest album, along with the same catchy lyrics and guitar riffs fans are used to, but what sets them apart from other bands is their down-to-earth personalities and relatability. These guys truly have talent, and they are

using it to continue to produce records that their fans enjoy.

If you missed Punchline this time around, don't fret. Soboslai said on stage they plan to come back to Edinboro in December.

For more information on local concerts, you can visit www.erieshows.com. The hangout also has a website and concert calendar at <http://www.edinborohangout.org>

LCD Soundsystem invades my room

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A project of producer James Murphy, LCD Soundsystem aims to merge punk and dance music. Somehow, James Murphy effectively forged his project into something very listenable and catchy. Hardly known in the United States, LCD Soundsystem has two albums that have been on the UK top 40.

However, I'd say that it might be an emerging sound in the USA. I remember when my roommate, Sam, was playing Forza 2 early last spring; a dance beat lured me into asking more about it. It turns out it was "Daft Punk is Playing at My House" by LCD Soundsystem. Immediately after hearing it, I was hooked. It was funky, had a really dirty

electronic feel, and a ridiculously satisfying cowbell solo.

Then in early May, after Grand Theft Auto 4 was released, I found out another LCD Soundsystem song was featured in one of the advertisements. This time it was "Get Innocuous," a song with a groovy cooing synth playing along with an aggressive and maniacal riff. James sings along in a creepy, almost condescending tone as keyboard chords chime in. I guess it was a good choice for the game, but I was also very excited to find out it was used.

I figured the madness of LCD Soundsystem popping up everywhere was over, but if you're

good at picking up on commentary you can see where this is going. Step Brothers was released in the end of July. As much as I was laughing, I almost cheered "Huzzah!" when the title sequence began. A familiar keyboard tone and a wooden block riff were introduced as Will Ferrell and John C. Reilly confront each other. I heard an "Uhhh, yeah yeah," and knew it was "North American Scum."

After the movie, I must have talked my friends' ears off about that happening, and all they wanted to do was reminisce about all of the hilarious one-liners.

Besides all of this pop culture exposure in the United States,

some companies are seeing profitability in LCD Soundsystem. For example, Nike contracted a deal with James to compose a track for them. What came out of it was, "45:33: Nike Original Run," an album originally released on iTunes only as a mix created to accompany jogging workouts. Now referred to simply as "45:33," the whole album is actually just one gapless track that is 45 minutes and 33 seconds long.

Honestly, it's become my new favorite song to jam to. It lures you in so subtly, just a synth roll picking up speed, as it dies down a dance clap and keyboard jingle comes in. It takes almost 2 minutes for it to have any sub-

stance, but at that point you can't help but bob your head. It gets really funky, after this you don't care what comes next, yet it is all so appropriate and works as one long mix. James has actually taken various parts of this song and mastered them as songs on the album "Sound of Silver."

I'm pretty sure you'll be hearing more of LCD Soundsystem in the future, and I'm not going out on a limb at all coming to this conclusion. James is currently doing a lot of DJing, but according to the forums, he's planning on working on another release soon. If you haven't already, give LCD Soundsystem a listen, and I think you'll be pleased with the decision.

The death of "Great American Rock"

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Way back in the day, when our parents and grandparents were coming up in life, Elvis Presley was all the craze among Americans. His rock was so controversial to the regular country and jazz that was mainstream that they didn't show him below the waist on television. The swaying of his hips was never shown on into the later parts of his career. The way he danced was considered sacrilegious and scandalous among most households, yet his music set a new trend called Rock and Roll.

Artists have come and gone through popular culture that have set new trends in the Rock genre. Specifically, The Beatles took America by storm with their original lyrics and subtle public appearances. In addition to Elvis's legacy in '50s America, the English foursome brought their own style to the Rock world, while simultaneously beginning the biggest revolution

for American music of that time: The British Invasion.

Without the influence of The Beatles, the later movements of bands - The Rolling Stones, The Byrds, Jimi Hendrix, The Police, Def Leppard, Duran Duran, Iron Maiden, Culture Club, The Clash, and Elvis Costello - would have subsequently never happened. The success of The Beatles in America is what drove these bands here and opened the floodgates of a breathtaking next couple of decades in music.

Near the end of the English musical migration, American bands began to form in an attempt to mimic their British counterparts. They wanted to stick it to "The Man" - the idea of government power - by creating a rebellious, anarchist group with screeching guitar and loud, angry vocals. This was the day metal was born. Bands like Metallica, Guns 'N' Roses, Quiet Riot, AC/DC, Poison,

Whitesnake, Ozzy Osbourne, Megadeth, and Twisted Sister came out of the woodwork and really shaped a generation that needed to be connected with.

When listeners heard the passion and anger the voices of the singers, there was an immediate connection that took place. And, take into consideration, fame was still mainly being spread by word of mouth in that time. The internet and television had not yet taken over the communication industry, so the shows and tours were still being spread with flyers and rumors.

Furthermore, from early metal sprouted the rest of what is known as The American Rock syndicate today. The genre has changed exponentially as the years have passed, though. Nearly everything from Modern Rock to the ever-so widening world of European Black Metal has evolved from early metal. In the early '90s things erupted into

a world of Grunge. A band named Nirvana brought a whole new form of emotional rock ballad that compelled the youth of the early '90s. With them, came Green Day, Bush, Silverchair, Rage against the Machine, Stone Temple Pilots, Smashing Pumpkins, and Blink 182.

However, this wasn't taken well by Guns 'N' Roses, Quiet Riot, and Whitesnake. They felt that their time had just begun, even though they'd been in a drug-crazed popularity marathon for the last 15 years. As time passed, they quarreled with each other by blaming each other for influencing these bands, and with the exception of Guns 'N' Roses - who's barely clinging to life right now - took a dive in popularity. This later led to band break-ups, and a dissemblance of the '80s hair band soon followed.

After Nirvana stole the hearts and adrenaline from the '90s generation, there really was not

another rock band to take America - or at least its majority - by storm. The term "Great American Rock Band" completely died over the last 15 years. Due to complete expansion of the Rock genre - and the up-and-coming Hip-Hop craze - this statement will remain true for years to come. From Elvis and The Beatles' arrival, music has turned into an adventure that everyone should take advantage of.

Losing the term "Great American Rock Band" isn't necessarily a bad thing. As a matter of fact, I view it as a very good thing. It means that none of us will be the same anymore, which subsequently moves us into a new world of unique identities and interesting personalities. So, I challenge you to ask the people around you what they like to listen to, and broaden your horizons starting today. Who knows?

THE PRESLEY

A look at the world of music; from the obscure to the obscene; the new and the old.