

“Let’s watch *the Simpsons*, get drunk and play ping pong”

Intimate and interactive with an ex-producer of one of TV’s most innovative shows

BY SOHRAB FARID

David Silverman is a pretty fascinating guy to listen to. As an esteemed alumnus from the fraternity of producers of *the Simpsons*, television program *non pareil*, Silverman possesses first hand knowledge of the reality behind the paragon of modern progressive television.

On Thursday, Oct. 28, Silverman’s college lecture tour landed him in Dalhousie’s McInnes Room, prior to which he granted interviews to adoring *Simpsons* enthusiasts operating under the guise of journalists, myself among them.

The interviews, detailed later, were entertaining and insightful, not unlike the main presentation. In front of a near capacity crowd, Silverman’s narration and clips were informative and fun, so as to enhance the appreciation of *Simpsons* fans, from neophytes to the casual to the many who fancy themselves the cognoscenti. Sporting an Otto-like coif that resulted in an uncanny though apparently incidental resemblance to the famed school bus driver of Springfield lore, Silverman offered the wide-eyed mass all they could

have hoped for, not allowing for many moments of boredom.

A prologue detailing the history of animation and an outline of his personal career marked the commencement of the presentation. A behind-the-scenes look at the television show ensued, including the material clips from the *Tracey Ullman* years, thumbnail sketches, “great performances”, a visual evolution of the word “Doh” (not enough can be said about the identifiable lexicon of the show), and out-takes. The out-takes were a particular treat, the funniest of which had Marge questioning who had ordered a “blowjob” following a night in a hotel, and the scene’s implication being that young Bart was the culprit.

The interview session also managed to provide a greater appreciation for the *avant garde* show. Silverman, whose quirky humour and engaging disposition matched what one might expect from a *Simpsons* producer, spoke liberally about his tenure on the show. Besides shedding light on what is next for Matt Groening (an animation program set 1000 years in the future), his favourite episodes (“Homey The Clown”), and the Fox television network (battle interference at all costs), he also

opined on the following subjects:

On the *Simpsons* phenomenon: “First of all, it was really good. But it also hit at the right time, thanks to the success of *Roger Rabbit*.”

On the alleged decline of the show: “I don’t think the show is in decline, but... the well gets dry. When the show first came out, it was ‘edgy’, but the bar has been raised and everyone else has got edgier and edgier. I do think that some of the newer episodes have become stranger.”

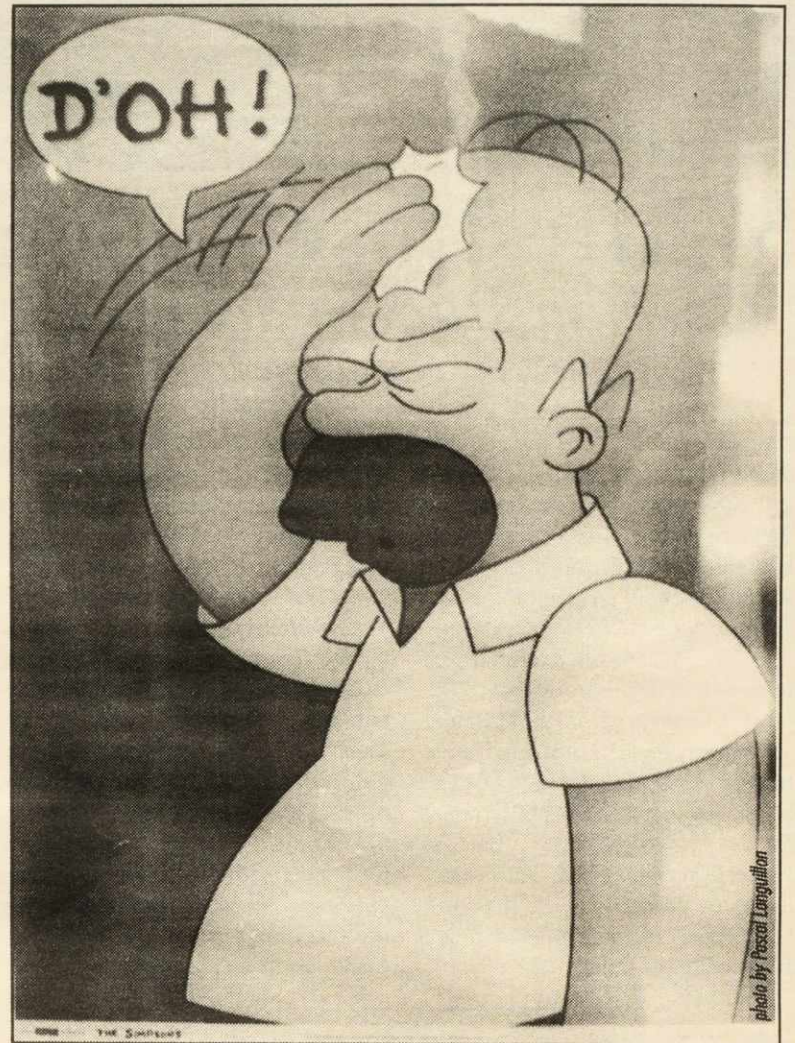
On the future of the show: “Big dough for Fox [Television]. Actually, I think they’re going to do more experimenting.”

On Conan O’Brien: “He was a very good joke-teller, and a very good actor. And he was very, very fast. He had his own flair.”

On Homer: “[After the first couple episodes] Homer just got stupider and stupider.”

On Smithers: “I think he’s gay as a Dutch bassoon.”

On the popularity of the show on campuses: “It’s one of those shows that is a great shared experience. It’s perfect for university campuses. Your pals are around, and it’s like “Hey, let’s all watch *the Simpsons*, get drunk and play ping pong.”



“[After the first couple episodes] Homer just got stupider and stupider.”

Irondale Ensemble opens dialogue on democracy

BY ANDREW GILLIS

Believe me, *The Good Society* is not your everyday theatre experience.

The Irondale Ensemble of Halifax presented the play *The Good Society* this week in the basement of St. Francis elementary school. The play portrayed the lives of Fathers Moses Coady and Jimmy Tompkins.

The first thing that surprised me was that a small classroom in

St. Francis school was the stage for the play. There were sheets draped on the back wall, covering the art created by elementary school students. Various percussion instruments were strewn about, and there were only hard benches to sit on.

I thought I was going to see a play about the Antigonish movement, a movement that saw adult education and co-operative economics become important issues during the first half of this century. What I did see not only

surprised me, but inspired me.

The play was an attempt to open up communication on democracy. Irondale used the technique called “study club theatre” as a vehicle to start t h i s communication. This meant a u d i e n c e participation was important — and necessary.

I admit I was shy at first. I didn’t want to participate. But when I saw there were only nine other people there, I relaxed and got involved.

Between the sketches of Coady and Tompkins, audience members were encouraged to become a part of the play. Whether it was playing odd instruments or making grotesquely huge hand signs, we became important aspects

of the show.

The further I got into the play, the more I thought about democracy — I was inspired by the passion

“[The Antigonish Movement] wasn’t just about bitching and moaning. They would have a mass meeting, and this is our mass meeting. Then they’d have education sessions. This is our education session.”

Manager. “Coady and Tompkins were searching for the good [in] society. They were trying to find the path, and we’re still not there.

“[The Antigonish Movement] wasn’t just about bitching and moaning. They would have a mass meeting, and this is our mass meeting. Then they’d have education sessions. This is our education session,” Ritchie said.

The Good Society made me want to go out and make my opinion heard. And that, essentially, is the next step in the Antigonish Movement: action. *The Good Society* would make Moses and Jimmy proud by using theatre to keep their message alive.

The Good Society is Stephen Cross, Jim Fowler, and Maria Bourgeois.

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Correction: In the last issue of The Gazette, Avi Lambert was credited as the photographer of two images from the *Drumspeak* event. In actual fact the photos were taken by Gazette photo guru and all ‘round nice guy Pascal Languillon. Come back Pascal, we’re sorry. We miss you. Really. Honest.

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