

# Reelspiel

by  
Gerry Laskey

Monty Python's Life of Brian playing at Nashwaaksis Cinema 2.

Monty Python's long awaited Life of Brian is well worth the wait for all Python lovers and those with a taste for their more bizarre brand of humor. If you liked Monty Python and the Holy Grail you can't miss Life of Brian. The audience was kept literally in stitches throughout the 90 odd minute film. For those of you who have friends who subject you to endless recitations of Python sketches, get ready for some new material!

Concerning the controversy surrounding the film and its Christian and Jewish critics, I must say that as a Christian I took no offence and feel the condemnation on religious grounds unjustified. However, I can see some people's negative reaction. The problem, I think, arises from two factors: 1) people seeing the film who don't know what to expect from the Monty Python crew and; 2) people who feel organized religion and its traditions are beyond satirical comment. So be forewarned.

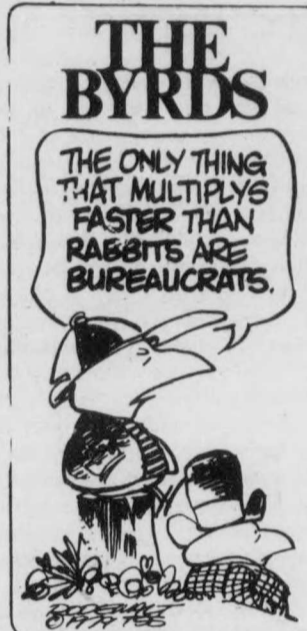
The film has been dubbed "a parody of the New Testament" by many reviewers. This is highly misleading. Only the time, society and events of the life of Christ are used as the setting for the story of Brian, who is not really a Christ-parody. The only real elements of this are a first mistaken visit of the Magi to Brian and his mother, the hounding of Brian by a crowd of misguided followers who try to deify the reluctant messiah figure, and Brian's crucifixion. So Brian borrows some motifs from Jesus' life, but he is not a substitute messiah. One must remember that the religious climate of the times was very volatile and people saw the Messiah in many forms. Also the gallows humor surrounding crucifixion must be seen in the context that the Romans used this as a policy of mass suppression in Occupied Palestine, and in the film Jesus is not among the crucified, a form of execution used much more often than once. The historical figure of Jesus is present in the film and is not replaced or denigrated by Brian. Throughout Jesus accurately portrayed and appears only once, in the Sermon on the Mount. In this scene he is not ridiculed but the attitude of some of his listeners is. The only other references to Christ are indirect and just - usually appearing as misconstrued quotations of people who have seen him.

What is parodied is not Jesus Christ, but the nature of some people who follow false messiahs, or those who warp the truth. Although the movie can be seen as a basically agnostic or atheistic critique of religion, it nevertheless offers some beautiful insights into Christianity and cuts to the bone of a sometimes shameful past of the Judeo-Christian traditions. The most memorable scene, to me, is when an "ex-leper" begs for alms and complains that the "bloody do-gooder" Jesus has healed him and left him without a livelihood. Disgusted Brian finally gives him a coin saying "There's just no pleasing some people", to which the ex-leper replied "Funny, that's what Jesus said." (Referring, from one of the nine's point of view, to the incident of Jesus healing 10 lepers and only one returning to give thanks.) This scene conveys the grand theme of the movie. That is, that many who followed or sought after messiahs, (including Jesus), missed the point and were looking for signs and miracles and not God. This is where the critique of religion really begins in the movie. The point is not (although it could be implied) that any fool could have been Jesus Christ, but that many followers of religious teachers, false and true, were and are fools. When Brian accidentally becomes a messiah-figure every insignificant thing he does or says is seen as a "sign". Implicit in this is sound Christian theology - even if it is unintentional.

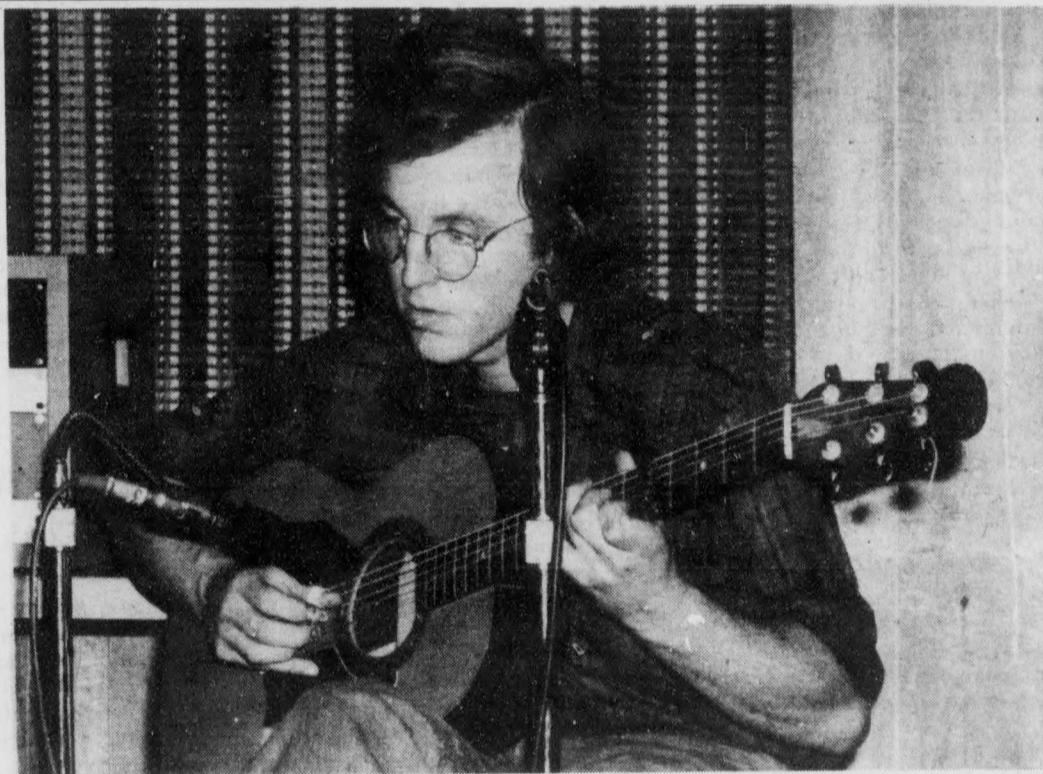
The movie is as much, or more, a parody of contemporary society as of ancient Palestine. The plot, for the duration, is mainly the story of Brian's involvement with the Jewish resistance movement in the People's Front of Judea. This is great stuff with the endless haggling over motions and resolutions and the sectarian splinter groups in the movement. I think Yasser Arafat and the PLO would object more strongly to Brian than Jesus would. Those who have attended a stuffy church will appreciate the shooshing and bickering at the back of the crowd in the Sermon on the Mount scene. Anyone who has suffered through a British style classics education will appreciate the scene where the Centurion makes Brian write out "Romans go home" 100 times on the palace walls, after he makes a mistake in Latin grammar. Perhaps the most hilarious part of the film involves a lisping Pontius Pilate and his "fwend fwum Wome", "Bigus Dickus". If you've ever tried to stifle a laugh in a classroom you'll love the two Pilate scenes.

The scene in which Brian becomes a messiah is well done. One must remember that prophets and lunatics comingled during this period to appreciate it. Brian, finding himself on a sort of vaudeville stage of crackpot preachers, has to adlib to elude Roman detection. He quotes Jesus parable of the lilies of the fields and the birds - no doubt many of the preachers had heard Jesus - and as he beats a retreat he is followed by a crowd which creates a new cult or sect with everything he does or says.

The movie is a MUST viewing for Python aficionados and many others who enjoy a good laugh. I would highly recommend it, except for the warnings already stated and the presence of a little nudity and the usual Python studding of four-letters (although I doubt this is any more offensive than the actual language of the common people in Judea, B.C.). The setting in Tunisia is terrific and creates a cinematic time trip that is visually very nice. Oh, yes, the spaceship scene is a wonderful Python touch.



Jon Soderman appeared at the Woodshed last week



ANNE KILFOIL Photo

## Ad Hoc Players return

The Ad Hoc Players, who last year performed the hilarious melodrama *The Mumberley Inheritance*, will present two Canadian one act plays at the Nashwaaksis Junior Highschool auditorium at 8 pm November 7, 8, 9.

The Players address the problem of old age in two contrasting and interesting plays of life after retirement. *The Garden*, by Fredericton writer, Rick Burns, is a bizarre spider and fly comedy. Gregory, an unsuspecting young painter, lured to old

Martin and Irene's garden by an array of irises, is quickly trapped in a web of lies and vagueries.

Martin and Irene, to pass the time confuse Gregory about their lives, their illnesses, and the colour lawchairs until finally, in a blaze of insight, the young man get his won back.

The play is directed by David Etheridge and the cast includes Mona Loosen, John Toner, and Ronald Cathcart.

*Passacaglia*, a volatile contemporary drama by Joan Mason

Hurley, explores the fears and hops of four old ladies in a retirement home. At Fairview Manor, Mrs. Rose, celebrating her seventy-seventh birthday in the company of friends Mrs. Martelli and Miss Gibbs, anxiously awaits a visit from her granddaughter, Miss Fanshawe, a hopelessly frustrated and bitter former school principle, explodes Mrs. Rose's illusions about her family and granddaughter. In doing so she drives Mrs. Rose to the brink of death, and leaves the audience wondering if there can be "dignity and security and happiness" in old age.

Mrs. Hurley's soon to be re-published drama is high octane realism, deft in construction, and powerful in effect. The play is directed by David Etheridge and cast includes Jaqui Hunter, Jackie Dickison, Nancy Martin, Gwyn Martin, Cathy Hay, and Mary Hatherly.

Tickets for *The Garden* and *Passacaglia* are available for \$2 at the door, at Kelly's Stereo Mart, King's Place, and at the SUB information office. Curtain time is 8 pm Wednesday November 7th, with the shows running Thursday the 8th, and Friday the 9th.

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