

...from the ridiculous to sublime

Monty Python's Flying Circus

by Satya Das

No. No. No. You're all very silly people and I'm not going to tell you about the amazing spread of a phenomena known as Monty Python's Flying Circus. Actually, I suppose I shall, but I plan to go about it in a much better manner than Fred Davis did last Sunday and Monday nights interviewing John Cleese.

I really didn't want to write this article, as I felt that one should attempt to acquire a taste for Python through bittersweet experience. However, after watching Davis attempt to expose Cleese, I felt some explanations were necessary.

There's a very simple story behind the name. In the words of Michael Palin, one of the stalwarts of the cast, "it is not a circus, it has nothing to do with flying, and as far as we know, there is no one called Monty Python." An absurdly simple answer which typifies the illogical driving force behind the entire concept.

Monty Python's Flying Circus is the ultimate in satire. It takes all things held sacrosanct by the British and buries them in a dungheap of silliness. Glowing examples such as having British Home Minister Reginald Maudling walking down St. James park without any trousers on, or Cleese as her majesty's minister of silly walks.

Python sketches have no beginning or end, only a middle. This eliminates the need for punch lines, which, according to Cleese, are the most difficult part of a joke.

A recent example of this was in the last series. The sketch starts outside a building encribed with the legend 'Tudor Job Agency', whose sole purpose is to find jobs for people living in Tudor England. The man behind the counter turns out to be a "porn-shop" operator, with the "dirty books" in a room behind a secret wall. A police inspector comes to make a raid, the proprietor escapes through a back door. The police inspector follows, finding himself in Tudor England, and is immediately mistaken for Sir Philip Sidney, champion of anti-smut campaigns in the reign of Henry VIII.

Python has been criticised as being silly. This is not necessarily true. Silliness is used as a device to produce brilliant satire. All six members of the team do the writing, and Terry Gilliam's bizarre animations are often used to end a sketch.

The satire transcends modern times, with sketches featuring a World Cup soccer match between Greek and German philosophers, the sides respectively led by Aristotle and "Nippy" Hegel. Referee Confucius starts the game, and the philosophers ponder till Archimedes kicks the ball into the untended goal with a cry of "Eureka!"

Or a TV panel show with Mao Tse Tung, Karl Marx, Lenin, and Che Guevara, where the prize is a new dining room suite.

Monty Python has no qualms about offending the

world. A sketch features an Australian university where everybody is called Bruce, satires of the inhabitants of continental Europe, and supranational bodies such as scientists in general.

The most cutting sketch concerning scientists shows an intrepid group of Britishers attempting to prove that penguins are as smart as people. They ask several people who don't know English questions in English. Naturally, the people don't answer. They then proceed to ask penguins the same question, and when the penguins don't answer, they have proven that penguins are as smart as people.

The American people aren't lucky enough to escape. Python shows Little Red Riding Hood discovering U.S. astronaut Buzz Aldrin instead of the wolf.

Sometimes, they go a bit "too far", especially in several sketches involving cannibalism. I use the term "too far" a bit reluctantly, because it all depends on the context in which you take it. If you take it as satire and nothing else, it's all right.

I have basically tried to give you a brief introduction to the world of Monty Python's Flying Circus by providing you with a very small selection of highlights. Unfortunately, the show will not return until next spring. However, they have three excellent albums currently on the market. Listen to them if you have the chance.

Parents rule big loan problem

by Gordon Turtle

The biggest problem in obtaining a student loan in Alberta is the parental financial obligation.

This is the opinion of Patrick Delany, Academic VP of the U of A, Student's Union.

A student whose parents are capable of financially

supporting him but are unwilling to do so, has difficulty borrowing money from the Alberta Student Finance Board.

Although a letter from the parent stating his unwillingness to contribute will free the student from dependency on his parents, the loan application fails to mention this.

Often, a student discovers this rule after mid-term exams, when fee payments are long overdue, and the student still doesn't know if he'll be able to stay.

However, hundreds of U of A students are now operating on loans up to as much as \$3900, \$1400, from the Canada Student Loans system and \$2500 from the Alberta SFB. These loans are not subject to repayment until six months after graduation, and 9½ years are allocated for repayment.

If a student wishes to obtain a loan to go to an higher education institution outside of Alberta he may get money from

the SFB only if he MUST go outside Alberta to take the courses he wants. If courses he takes are taught in Alberta but he still wants to leave, he can receive only a Canada Student Loan.

The problems of borrowing money are becoming less of a block against most students as the system improves, says Delaney. He supports the idea of the SFB establishing an office right on campus, at least during the "rush season" of the summer months.

If the board would train them, Delaney is certain the Student's Union would supply students to staff the office. The main purpose of the staff would be to offer advice for potential borrowers, and help them in obtaining a loan.

This would ease the burdens on both the students and the Board during July and August, when there are line-ups at the main office downtown.



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