

Life of Brian, Breaking Away

# Python like peanut butter on garlic bread.



That's if you must have a meaning behind your madness. Personally I choose to regard Monty Python as entirely a surface disorder, one whose humor is all in the rhythm and cadence of the lunatic events. In these terms, the "Life of Brian" is as good as anything the team has ever done. It's not better than their best, nor is it significantly different, except insofar as it follows a more-or-less single narrative line. It's just more of the same. Like a certain, popular, local beer, those who like it, like it a lot.

Another film new to town and of some merit is Peter Yates's "Breaking Away". An offbeat, upbeat comedy about Middle America, this movie is surprisingly fresh and witty. Surprising because it is essentially a formula job, one of those getting-out-of-high school, pain-of-growing-up numbers. True to type it wrings tears and cheers from the audience as our heroes, four townies in Indianapolis variously intimidated by the local university crowd, learn important lessons and come through in the end. But it is lifted above its cliches by Steve Tesich's quotable screenplay, by Peter Yates' brisk direction and by a few key performances.

The story centres around the nice, average boy in this group of nice, average boys who suddenly conceives a

passion for all things Italian. Before the astonished and uncomprehending eyes of his parents and friends he transforms himself into an Italian bicycle racer, speaking, singing and dressing as if he were living in glamorous Naples, instead of plain, old Indianapolis. This is an amusing idea, and it works well. Dennis Christopher is engaging and confident as the mad cyclist and Paul Dooley turns in a convincing performance as his long-suffering father. The other actors are at least pleasing, with special mention going to Daniel Stern for his laconic delivery of some of the film's wittiest lines. Within its

limits, this is an excellent movie.

This last point is particularly pertinent to their new film "Monty Python's Life of Brian", recently unleashed on the metro area. Allegedly a satiric mauling of the New Testament, it has been roundly denounced by Christian organizations throughout the land. Which is their constitutional right and all but, he asks knowingly, how many of its detractors have actually seen the film? Because it is pure oatmeal from beginning to end, frivolous, irresponsible and almost totally indifferent to Christian doctrine.

by Frank McGinn


You can't analyze the humor of Monty Python for very much longer than you can hold a snowflake on the palm of your hand, and for the same reasons. Its effect is meant to be cumulative, and it evaporates on contact. However, a few analogies may be permitted us.

Like venereal disease, Monty Python has no respect for persons. It can and does intrude itself anywhere. And like a taste for peanut butter on garlic bread, it cannot be rationally explained. You either respond instinctively to its unique blend of controlled lunacies, or you don't get it at all. (Some of these latter types fancy themselves like the little boy in the story of the emperor's new clothes. They hear a lot of noise and don't see anything, so they decide the masses are fooling themselves again. However, scientific tests have proven that

nine out of ten Python fans are born, not made. It's something in the blood, like the RH factor only different). Finally, Monty Python is like ring-around-the-collar in that it appears offensive but is really a quite harmless phenomenon, unless you want to make something of it.

Of course this careless indifference could be the whole point of insult; they could hardly have chosen a less tasteful conceptual framework than a parallel to the life of Christ. But as water is necessarily wet, so these boys are necessarily tasteless, and beyond the indignity of the reference, there seems to be little in the way of a concrete attack on Christianity. As a target for savage satire, the life of Jesus leaves much to be

desired, and the film is actually more putting the boot to terrorist groups, mob psychology and bureaucracy.



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