

Wanna sell an album? Try using sex

by **Dragos Ruiu**

"Yeah, zoom in on the naughty bits. C'mon wiggle there, baby!" Joe Sludge, video director extraordinaire.

So you want to make money? There is a simple solution. SEX!

No, not like that! In music, fool. Sex sells big. Just ask Berlin. They recorded a racy song entitled simply "Sex". The lyrics are not obscene, but a few carefully placed shrieks and moans managed to incur the wrath of Mothers Against Musical Smut or somesuch group. It was promptly banned in a lot of places.

Radio stations were dropping it like a hot potato. I'm sure they were burning the records somewhere in the Bible belt. ("Yeah, Joe-Bob, I feel reah gud, keeping this filth from the innocent mind of my 25-year old." Meanwhile, the 25-year old is busy inspecting Elly-May to find out what he couldn't hear about from Berlin.)

Record buyers ate it up. It made megabucks and put Berlin on the map. With all that free publicity, how could it fail? When the Dead Kennedy's latest album was banned for the cover illustration depicting male genitalia (yep, penises), it was a sell-out.

Videos are the best for veiled sexuality. Most have perfected the art of including just

so much sexual content that people scream about it. But just short of the threshold that can get them taken off the air. They have to keep it below a certain level for survival. If they get blacklisted, people cannot just go to their neighbourhood record store and pick up a copy.

A good example of what not to do is Helix's video for "Gimme, Gimme Good Loving". It showed: "Many women naked from the waist up dancing around the band." No, folks, Pat Robertson would not approve, so you will probably never get to see this one (if you wanted to in the first place).

But there are exceptions. A version of Duran Duran's uncensored "Girls on Film video" is available for rent from most video stores. It is a must for connoisseurs of female anatomy.

Our so-called liberated society is still fascinated by this semi-taboo. So much so, that almost any sexual innuendo is bound to increase the popularity of your video or song, as well as incur the wrath of some do-gooder that thinks he is fit to judge what others can see.

Take a look at Belinda Carlisle, ex-GoGo's lead singer. She separated from the group, spent the national budget of a small nation on plastic surgery (face lifts, tummy excava-

tion, tittle inflation) and restarted her career. The money was well spent, because her looks do carbonate male hormones. Now, she has gotten over her basic lack of talent and sells records through her videos. She sings a song with her back turned and no shirt on, wiggles a bit, and watches the bucks roll in.

The list is seemingly endless... Madonna's "Like a Virgin", Vicious Pink's "Take Me Now", endless heavy metal tunes, Robert Palmer... Ad infinitum until it seems to encompass every musician on the earth — with the possible exception of Slim Whitman. (Ugh, but then again he couldn't sell records even with sex. Sorry, yodelling is just not sexy!)

But why should we pick on music? No matter what field you are involved with, sex will make it sell better. Take an experiment tried in U of A residence last year. A party poster had a seductive picture on it. Party? Instant success! Most of the people there said they came because the posters were interesting.

Mothers Against the World are having living nightmares about this. Ed Meese must be near a coronary by now. And all the tirades against sexually alluring material are only hurting the causes that spawned them. Ban

something and people automatically develop a morbid curiosity about it. "What's it like...?"

They found that out with prohibition.

So why is there such a fascination with sex in entertainment, media, and our society in general? Probably because our morals try to be double agents. On one hand we have the religion-based "sex is bad" type edict, and yet we are taught that we have to strive for gratification (monetary, mental, and other) with our life. They seem to conflict with each other, so there are a lot of sexually confused people out there.

Then you offer them fleeting glimpses of this taboo, with music, videos, and a variety of other mediums. It's like offering a brief aroma of food to the starving man. It tantalizes, then you promptly take it away and say, "No, No! this is bad." It makes you want to scream... and you end up buying Potato Disinfectant or whatever they were pushing.

So if you want to make the real bucks, toss some sexual allusion in. Just enough to squeak by the thinly disguised "Public Moral Watchdog" CENSOR groups. \$\$\$\$\$\$ can be yours!

Godspell: A modern morality play



photo Matt Welsh

The grand illusion

Doug Henning
Jubilee Auditorium

review by **Dragos Ruiu**

Doug Henning's show Tuesday night was wonderful. It was a step back into the wonderland of childhood. We all remember the amazement and astonishment we experienced as children watching magicians, and Doug and Debbie Henning brought this fascination back to two packed houses at the Jubilee Auditorium.

Winnipeg born Henning, like all magicians, is slightly corny and melodramatic, but his fantastic showmanship disarms any cynicism you may bring into the theatre.

Even known tricks seemed mystical performed by his deft and skilled fingers. Henning performed the famous and classic 5 Chinese Linking Rings trick. Everyone knows how this trick is done (if you don't, three are linked, one is loose, and one has a gap!), but in Henning's capable hands your eyes just wouldn't let you believe that this wasn't magic. You knew what sleights were being performed, but you still couldn't see them happen even if you were watching for them.

Henning was funny, witty, and charming. (He even revealed some Hollywood gossip. Johnny Carson is a magician too... He made Joan Rivers disappear!) He often picked volunteers out of the audience to act as assistants.

Children were a favorite with Henning and the audience as well. One child even managed to upstage him. Henning did the classic bit of creating coins from the pockets, ears, nose, and mouth of the kid. When he stopped, the young boy started tugging on his own nose just as Henning had done seconds ago. He was quite amazed when it failed to produce the silver

dollars that it did for Henning. Terminally cute!

Henning performed small illusions as well as large. At one point, two large projection TV's were wheeled out and an assistant operated a video camera while Henning performed some close-up magic (small tricks normally performed at a dinner table or somesuch). This let the entire Jubilee audience see.

Contrasting these small and humble misdirections, he performed large illusions with props and sets that filled the entire stage. It was all handled brilliantly. A particularly eloquent trick was one where he turned small puppets into huge creatures that eventually took the show over and turned Henning into a puppet. To the audience's dismay, we received a brief glimpse under one of the costumes, and saw Henning's colourful wizard outfit. It seemed as if the trick was botched and we knew how it was done. It was shocking when he stood up from the middle of the audience, and the slip turned out to be part of the trick.

Doug Henning calls himself the "Greatest Magician on Earth". At first one tends to sneer at this bit of egotism. After his show, any doubts about this are dispelled. Sure, there are better close up magicians, and David Copperfield's large illusions are more dramatic, but none are better entertainers than Henning. He masters all the classical sleights of magic to perfection, big and small. In the process he manages to bring back the fascination and wonderment of childhood to us all.

Fittingly, Henning ended the show by performing Houdini's famous escape *Metamorphosis* (once called the fastest illusion ever) with his wife. It was grand.

Godspell
Studio Theatre
til Nov. 15

review by **Alex Shetsen**

It is now the late eighties. At a time when we are bombarded by propaganda from all sides, in all forms, of all types, it is strangely fitting to go to the theatre to escape from all this and be presented with one of the oldest methods for religious indoctrination — the morality play.

For that is exactly what *Godspell* is: True, it's been modernized, but the intent is age-old: to act out, in a very contemporary setting, the teachings and part of the biography of Jesus Christ. Along the way, Christ becomes more reachable and, of course, we are converted to the True Light.

The play opens with Christ presenting himself as God, a powerful and dramatic scene very unlike what is to follow. The rest of the company appear one by one, presenting various religious and secular philosophies, ranging from Thomas Aquinas to Marx.

But then, with a cry of "repent ye sinners," St. John the Baptist enters the stage and, at his words, all the philosophies are cast into the garbage bin. Following re-entrance of Christ, the story is set to begin for real. Various scenes from the gospels are acted out in an end-of-the-twentieth century setting, complete with jazz and rock music. The play ends, of course, with the Last Supper and the Crucifixion of Christ.

If *Godspell* works at all, it does so only in spurts. There are passages which are com-

pletely inspired. Some of the parables are modernized so sharply and wittily that the audience can't help but roar with laughter. The Prodigal Son and Dives and Lazarus, for example, are definitely among the high points of the play.

But there are other moments during which the play takes itself altogether too seriously, the morality lessons become too apparent, and the audience becomes restless.

When the play abandons the central theme of Christianity, love, peace, and tolerance, and dwells on the eternal damnation that awaits one unless one repents and sees the light, one's stomach definitely begins to drop into the eternal abyss: "Oh no, not this again..."

No matter how good the acting is, no matter how well the company conveys the many different characters in the teachings and biography of Christ, nothing can redeem the final crucifixion scene. After all, we've all been subjected to it so much that it is difficult to treat it differently than the cliché it has become.

Despite all this, however, *Godspell* is definitely recommended. On balance, the great modernization of the parables and the freshness of the costumes make up for some of the heaviness and lack of originality of everything else. The play offers a good evening of entertainment. And even if it can't decide whether to debunk fundamentalist Christianity or to enshrine it, the audience can do that for itself. The good point is, *Godspell* succeeds in making us make up our mind about Christianity and, indeed, all religion in general.



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