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## Movies

### Tuning in



By [Steve Schneider](#)

The men were truly separated from the boys Tuesday night at the [Central Florida Film & Video Festival](#), as the "TV Stench" program of shorts attracted an audience ready and willing to examine the crippling influence of America's favorite appliance on its intellectual and emotional development ... and perhaps their own as well.

From "Jesus 2000": A talk-show guest casts her homegirl suspicions on the Jesus and Mary thing

The first of the truth-seekers to make it to [Fashion Village 8](#) was **Eric Cooper**, director of "Jesus 2000.", a fairly clever montage of fake news clips based on the less-than-original conceit, "What if Jesus had been born today?" I asked him about its admirably message-free storyline, in which Christ emerges as a front-runner in the 2000 presidential election, only to be betrayed by a marketing-savvy Judas and delivered into the hands of a terrorist organization. No one seemed to know what to make of it, he reported, and it was being turned down on a fairly regular basis by film festival screeners who offered no explanation for their decision.

Even the fellow worshipers at his home church in Los Angeles were less than thrilled, he related. Still, anyone who makes it a point to attend regular services in L.A. has to be used to swimming against the current.

The next arrival was **Steve Garnett**, late of Orlando experimental rock project [Obliterati](#) and now with a new outfit, **Numb Right Thumb** (who perform Saturday night at [Performance Space Orlando](#) in another of the CFFVF's tie-in entertainment events). In addition to his new musical endeavors, he told me, he's also exploring a side trip into the world of acting. "Pornography would not be my first choice," he cheerfully offered. He's down, but not out.

Of the "TV Stench" offerings, it was a short titled "TV or Sex?" that Garnett claimed to be most interested in. We agreed that having the luxury of such a choice was truly something to strive for. At that moment, the film's director, **Julie Meitz**, walked up, giving us the opportunity to gain further insight into its intriguing title. She told us that she had once conducted an informal poll of some of her co-workers, asking which they

preferred: carnal knowledge or coaxial cable. "Oh, TV," one of the respondents had averred. "There's **more variety**."

The festival missed its chance to recruit a new generation of aficionados when a pair of lost little girls, no older than 9, made it to our theater. Is this '**Antz?**'" they hopefully inquired. We all avoided the temptation to answer with a hearty "Yes!" Instead it was a uniformly adult audience that took its seats for the program.

### Remote control

Meitz's contribution turned out to be a tasteful, subtle travelogue though an art installation she had erected in her Detroit loft. A seminude black couple toured the exhibit's themed rooms, constantly torn between the need to see what was coming from the strategically placed television monitors and the desire for physical closeness. On the audio track, a narrator read from **Jerry Mander's "Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television,"** the work on which the installation was based. The past Saturday afternoon at Rollins College, Mander himself had declined to enumerate the arguments, saying that it would take about four hours to explain them properly. Summarizing them in one 9-minute short must have been quite the task.

Things went a bit haywire during "Jesus 2000," as the speaker to our left began to buzz and pop at an ear-splitting volume. Soon, the sound went completely dead, and we were told that the film would be replayed from the beginning as soon as the problem was fixed. Perhaps it's a good thing that the **Frameworks Alliance** people will be on the road to Melbourne almost as soon as their Orlando engagement ends. When you bust someone's stereo at a party, you always want to leave before the collection is taken up to buy him a new one.

"My big scene was coming up!" the woman behind us wailed. This, we learned, was **Clorinda Bassolino**, the actress who plays a brassy Latina hooker in "Jesus." She's just as bombastic in person, laughing with glee throughout the showing of her first relatively high-profile project. (Her sole credit in the film's press kit reads, "Was part of the Burt Reynolds Institute for Theatre Training 1995-6.")

An awkward silence persisted as we waited for the screening to resume. But it was suddenly broken by Garnett, who for no apparent reason employed his best basso profundo to emit a thoroughly unhelpful cry of "'Antz!'" (Why was I the only one laughing?)

### Pushing buttons

No ants were seen, but the bugs were eventually worked out. "Jesus 2000" got its promised run-through, and drew a more-than-polite response. But it was the crowd's appreciation of "**The Ad and the Ego**" I really wanted to monitor. I had been raving about the film for two weeks, and was eager to see if others found its point-by-point savaging of the advertising industry as riveting as I had.

Sure enough, they too were captivated by its masterful editing and highly intelligent commentary, made to understand as never before the manipulative techniques that motivate us to "**buy**" everything from deodorants to global policy initiatives. The longest of the shorts at 57 minutes, it nonetheless held everyone's attention in a vise-like grip. Now that's effective advertising. Even Clorinda seemed to enjoy it.

Meitz and Cooper both took part in the Q&A that followed, and we learned a little about their disparate backgrounds. Meitz is a student who says she hasn't watched TV in eight years, while Cooper is an ex-business major who made and lost a few million dollars selling baseball cards before coming down with the writer/director jones. He's also developed a few novel approaches for filming in locations that won't grant him clearance: For one scene of "Jesus 2000," he said, he had an actor stand in a stream that neither of its neighbors could claim as his own property.

Although hailing from different worlds, both auteurs were respectful and encouraging toward each other. Now, if only we could put them to work on that **Cuba** thing.

Bassolino also shared a few stories, including the day she spotted Brad Pitt and chased him down the street in her full harlot's costume, professing her love and promising that she wasn't actually a hooker. "Try Charlie Sheen," I suggested. (Again, silence.)

Before we left, Frameworks' **Melodie Malfa** handed out complimentary passes to future screenings, in atonement for the earlier interruption of service. It was a gracious final note to a completely wonderful evening -- challenging films, good company, a stimulating round of discourse. I can see "Antz" some other time.

**Wednesday choices:** The festival looks back at the golden age of gangsta-hood with a 7:30 pm screening of Rudy Ray Moore's 1976 starring vehicle "**Avenging Disco Godfather**" at Fashion Village. Afterwards, put on your finest pimp threads for Ballyhoo's **Bally-sploitation Party**, 9 p.m. at the Blue Room.

*For a festival overview, read Steve Schneider's [preview story](#).*