

Rock me, sexy Jesus

Kris King – November 7th 2011

<http://www.rantinaminor.co.uk/2011/11/rock-me-sexy-jesus/>

Before you get the wrong idea about me, I'm not planning to use this post as a forum for expressing some kind of deep and abiding physical attraction towards christianity's premier long-haired hippy prophet. Although the messiah is, according to some, a very naughty boy (and, under normal circumstances, I would be inclined to question therefore whether I should get to know him better), neither the [more plausibly accurate, "Osama Bin Laden in his student days" image of Jesus](#), nor the white, WASP-ish, lightly-bearded pretty-boy that most christians falsely imagine him to look like, could ever be really described as being "my type". No, this week's post was inspired by [a casual tweet from @RatiOnality](#) that got me thinking about religion and popular culture; specifically, I was given cause to consider the idea, accepted almost universally as true, that "christian music is shit".

So that there's no further potential for misunderstanding I would like to point out that I'm not going to go on a fevered rant about musicians who just *happen* to be christians; there are many contemporary mainstream artists who believe in god, just as there have always been believers working in all forms of art throughout history. In fact, some of the greatest contributions to the arts have been made by theists (Leonardo Da Vinci's "The Last Supper" is undeniably a gob-smacking piece of work), and I'm not one to throw out the baby with the ecclesiastical bath water. Johnny Cash, supremely cool, christian; Weird Al Yankovic, funny as fuck, christian; Billy Ray Cyrus ... moving on (yes, he is a christian, but since his music fucking sucks, he co-created Miley, and is more directly responsible for popularising line-dancing in the UK than almost anyone, I will say only that he desperately needs to be nailed face down to a table and have cowboy hats and mullet wigs inserted repeatedly, and violently, into his rectum).

The point I'm trying to make is that I'm not here to take apart musicians, writers, actors, or other artists who simply happen to hold a belief in god, if only because, for the most part, they don't necessarily allow their faith to directly inform, or at the very least compromise, their creative output. Even Johnny Cash, whose music is replete with affirmations of his faith and references to god and the bible, never let any of that really get in the way of the music itself. This, I think is the hallmark of a great artist; art should exist entirely for its own sake and, even though it should also always have something to say, the crucial integrity of a piece of art lies solely in the ability of its creator to skilfully get their message across without in any way spoiling the essential aesthetic beauty of the work itself. This most certainly cannot be said for the proponents of what we comically refer to as christian "music".

Taking one particular musical genre as an example, a simple search for "worst rock band in the world" will very often yield thousands of results that include top ten lists, forum posts, blog comments, and all manner of other individual opinions that frequently cite Creed as the band that most people want to see brutally sliced into two-inch chunks by a complex, death-bringing booby trap that has been formed out of a large number of extremely taut guitar strings (and, therefore, bears an uncanny resemblance to the one in the opening scene of the movie "Cube"). Although both the band, and their legions of easily pleased fans, have denied repeatedly that Creed are a christian rock band, I'm going to ignore that on the grounds that they're completely full of shit and the evidence is most definitely stacked against them. That and I was forced, against my will, to see them live at "Big Day Out" at the Milton Keynes Bowl in 1999 so, as far as I'm concerned, they've fucking got it coming.

Creed have always tried to distance themselves from the "christian rock" label; they defend their use of religious imagery as metaphor, or symbolism, and singer Scott Stapp describes his lyrics as "spiritual" rather than religious. Both of these sound suspiciously like they trying to cop out, particularly the latter; "spiritual" is how you'll often find someone describing themselves when they don't like the label "religious", and yet believe in exactly the same kind of fluffy-headed, evidence-free, nonsense (only usually with more crystals and less Jesus). "Symbolism" and "metaphor", too, are words that can be distorted to fit whatever purpose you wish – want to make a video where you

stand on a mountain, arms cruciform like you've been nailed to a tree, but don't like being referred to as having a christ complex? Simples, claim that it's "symbolic" or "a metaphor" and leave it at that ... say no more.

When individual members of a band identify as christian (while claiming the band is not), and the first three albums specifically centre around themes of christianity, and faith in general, it doesn't matter that they're not signed to a christian music label; it smacks more of a band that knows there's christian music on one side, mainstream on the other, and ne'er the twain shall meet, but are naively, perhaps even arrogantly, convinced that they're the ones to break the mould – *they* will be the ones to defy all odds and become the first christian band to get taken seriously by the mainstream. The trouble is that, when your lead singer spends most of his time doing piss-poor impressions of Eddie Vedder combined with a macho-cock attitude, messianic pretensions, and endless dead-Jew-on-a-stick poses, you've pretty much spunked any chance of being taken seriously before you even get to the chorus of "With Arms Wide Open".

Part of the problem with christian music is that any act choosing specifically to identify themselves as belonging to a religious musical genre has completely ham-strung itself before even picking up an instrument. Whether it be christian rock, christian country, or even, for fuck's sake, christian *metal* or christian **hip-hop**, the emphasis is always on the "christian" part of it, usually to the detriment of everything else. Unlike other genres, it's not about the music, it's about the message, and therein lies the problem. Most artists tend to cover a range of subjects, things that interest them, excite them, scare them ... they try to explore *all* of the wondrous and varied aspects of the human condition. The same cannot be said for acts that operate within the christian musical genres, whose only message seems to be "Jesus is brilliant" (and I maintain there's maybe one or two songs in that concept **at best**).

This is why a "christian" rock band would be in exactly the same boat as a "socialist" folk trio, for example; when you've only got one subject to cover, as dictated by the label a band identifies itself with, ideas run dry in a matter of minutes, and there's very little you can do about it without compromising the message. Since these genres, by definition, require the message to trump all, it is the music that is ultimately compromised instead, resulting in something that is little more than proselytizing with a chord progression. One could even say the same of a large number of commercial, mainstream acts, especially those that are the eventual products of reality TV shows and Simon "I Rape Music For Profit" Cowell. The art has been subverted to fulfil a pre-chosen agenda (whether it's preaching an ideology or simply trying to make shit-loads of cash at the expense of gullible, starry-eyed teenagers), rather than representing any kind of meaningful creative expression.

Another problem, and one that constitutes an insurmountable paradox for Team Jesus, is that rock, as we all know, is "the devil's music". So how does that work, then? Rock has always been about rebellion, against the mainstream, against conformity, and against the establishment – religion is anathema to these ideals, and for christians to use rock music to advance their dogma is to completely misunderstand that the medium is intrinsically incompatible with the message, resulting in work that is always nauseatingly false and insincere. It's like when politicians in Britain, particularly Tories, say that their favourite bands are punk acts like The Clash – no, they're fucking not, you're not *allowed* to like The Clash because they, and their punk contemporaries, hold ideologies that are diametrically opposed to yours, and you are part of an establishment that tried to crush them and their kind back in the day in order to prevent their message being heard. Christians don't fucking *belong* in rock, just like conservatives don't belong in a mosh pit.

The hypocrisy of a religion making use of an art form, or other significant artefact of popular culture, that they had previously spent decades condemning, highlights the boundless tenacity of faith when it comes to injecting itself into all areas of the human experience. Historically, religions have always tried, at first, to attack anything and everything that disagrees with them (be it an individual or an idea); once they've grown tired of the protesting and the oppressing and the constant banging on about how whatever it is "corrupts our youth" or "erodes our values", they gracefully admit defeat and retire to a safe distance to lick their wounds ... only joking, what actually happens is, once they finally realise that their bullshit will no longer fly with the rest of us, they change tactics and adopt the "if you can't beat them, *replace* them" approach.

I do love it when, around this time of year, the christians start bleating about how there's a "war on christmas", and how we've all "forgotten the true meaning" of it; instead of seeing it as a time to worship a long-dead zombie bastard who was the product of angel rape, we're busy trying not to offend muslims and gays and womens, and doing all that politically correct shit like banning people

from celebrating Jesus' birthday in case hindus are upset by it. It doesn't matter to these self-righteous little arse trumpets that christianity usurped existing pagan, norse, roman, and other winter solstice and spring festivals in order to completely supplant them. Still, at least their self-pitying cries of religious persecution provide a good amount of festive, irony-fuelled mirth for the rest of us while we're stuffing our faces with food, or opening presents as we sit around our pagan trees.

As they have with holidays, christians have attempted to insert themselves into the existing culture as a means of superimposing their faith over it, suffocating the life right out of it until all that is left is *their* culture. Christian music is just yet another example of that, but it is far from the only one; movies, TV, video games, cartoons, comics, there is no area of contemporary popular culture that religion won't infiltrate in order to propagatate their ideas, especially if the largest consumers of the media in question are children. Pop music, rock, metal, and hip-hop may be targets for the christian invasion because of their appeal to teens and young adults (their last real chance to indoctrinate the poor buggers before they safely escape into free-thinking adulthood) but, since their primary goal is to own the hearts and minds of children, the kids sadly have to have their media of choice completely drowned in a tidal wave of lame religious shittery as well.

Since the dawn of the home computing and video games console eras religion has been lurking creepily in the background, desperately trying to keep pace with the fastest changing medium in modern history. As with anything that has so utterly captured both the imaginations, and the short attention spans, of children the world over, religion has tried to kill it whilst simultaneously taking full advantage of the captive audience it offers ... and the lucrative revenue stream they can tap from the pocket money children so readily spend on games. "[Super Noah's Ark 3D](#)" was a blatant rip-off of "Wolfenstein 3D" that saw the player as Noah hurling fruit at hundreds of sheep; it wasn't just an appallingly bad game, it was bloody awful theology. "[Bible Adventures](#)", by the same company ([Wisdom Tree](#)), is even worse; a trinity (pun intended) of astonishingly bad games that would make you want to gouge out your eyes, hack off your hands, and then try to end your miserable existence by unplugging the console (with your feet) and perform cunnilingus on the wall socket.

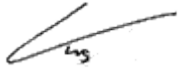
If you think that's bad, you should see what christianity has done to comic books. That's right ... *christian comic books*. Sure, it's inevitable that there was going to be a few old-school sorts; classic, simple comics, with basic hand-drawn art, depicting well-known bible stories like the Great Flood (always with Noah's Ark, but shamefully missing the millions of corpses that must be floating around it, banging into the side and providing the two vultures on board with some much needed dinner). But, as audience tastes change and grow ever more sophisticated, and as other cultures start to exert an influence on the medium, religion naturally has to do what it can to grab a piece of the action. Therefore, the existence of graphic novels like "[Manga Messiah](#)" and "[Manga Bible](#)" shouldn't surprise you any more than the idea that, as far as the reviews suggest, these titles are never bought by their intended audience – only by sanctimonious relatives who force them upon the unsuspecting and impressionable children in their lives.

Naturally, of course, there are always christian movies and TV programmes aimed squarely at the young. A few friends and I caught one of them some years ago, in the early hours of a drunken saturday morning while flipping through the higher channel numbers; it consisted of some creepy looking puppets, and even creepier looking adults, talking about the importance of always obeying your parents, no matter what, because they know best. I can't stress how deeply unsettling it was to hear so much emphasis being placed on teaching the young viewers to blindly, and unquestioningly, follow their parents' will ... and I can't exaggerate how quickly the jaw-dropping experience sobered me up. For years we knew the show simply as "Puppets For Christ", and I have never been able to ascertain exactly what it was really called. All I know is that it scared the living shit out of me that such shameless religious brainwashing was going on right in front of me.

So, with such a determined attempt by religion to crowbar itself into the minds of the young through the medium of dismal music, atrocious games, tenth-rate comic books, and grotesquely manipulative TV shows, how do free-thinking, secular, and atheist parents fight back? How do they counter the onslaught of religious culture sodomy so that their kids don't get sucked in to a black hole of irretrievably shitty, faith-based entertainment? Well, don't panic because it's really easy ... for a start, this stuff is so fucking bad that it actually acts as a warning about itself – most teenagers who haven't already been indoctrinated into a religion since birth wouldn't be caught dead listening to a christian rap record, and not just because it's christian – [this one](#), for example, encourages kids to give "side hugs" so as to avoid the temptation of sin (only christians are so sex obsessed that they can't hug normally without feeling the need to gut-fuck their own grandma).

The best course of action is, obviously, to introduce your kids to the *good stuff* from an early age; good music, great books, proper comics, real art, awesome games, killer movies, and TV that would make you turn down the offer of an invite to the biggest drug-fuelled orgy Amsterdam has ever hosted **just** to stay in and watch it when it airs rather than TiVo-ing it for later. Nothing is better at fending off an attempt to fill your child's head with inanities like the Jonas Brothers than reinforcing it from the inside with the complete works of Freddie fucking Mercury.

And before you ask about tickets to the Amsterdam orgy, I'm afraid they've sold out ... you'll have to settle for a side hug instead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'LMS' or similar, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.