

FACTBOX

- **AWARDS**
Life of Brian has frequently been nominated for the title 'greatest comedy film of all time', by Total Film (2000), Channel 4 (2006), and The Guardian (2007).
- **CLASSIC SCENE**
The ending which parodies Spartacus and features the tune 'Always Look on the Bright Side of Life', sung by Eric Idle.
- **CLASSIC QUOTE**
"He's not the Messiah!" Also before the crucifixion, when the Centurion receives an order for Brian's release. He asks: "Where is Brian of Nazareth", and one by one the other prisoners all claim to be Brian, including one who shouts out: "I'm Brian, and so's my wife!"
- **DID YOU KNOW**
When Michael Palin's Pontius Pilate dares his soldiers to laugh at the names 'Biggus Dickus' and 'Incontinentia Buttocks', the soldier extras had no idea what Palin was going to do – they were just told to stand still and not to laugh!



Look on the bright side

Cheer up, Brian – 'you know what they say: some things in life are bad. They can really make you mad. Other things just make you swear and curse. . .



MONTY PYTHON'S LIFE OF BRIAN (15)
Starring: Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Eric Idle, Terry Gilliam, Terry Jones, Michael Palin
Director: Terry Jones
Running time: 94 mins
Released 1979

He's not the Messiah, he's a very naughty boy! Now, p*** off!" shrieks Brian's mother at the crowds gathered outside their house.

They don't, of course, p*** off, and Brian soon meets a sticky end up on the cross (sorry, I couldn't resist). The poor guy was only trying to rebel against his mum and the Romans by joining the Judean People's Front (or was it the People's Front of Judea?). He did a bit of graffiti, got chased by Roman soldiers, abducted by aliens, mistaken for the Son of God, lost his virginity to a woman called Judith, and suddenly found himself on the wrong side of Pontius Pilate's speech impediment. Wuff day indeed.

By Miles Lawrence

The Life of Brian caused an outrage when it was released in 1979. It was banned in Ireland, Norway, and even a cinema in Truro until this year. Can you imagine that today? A comedy banned at a UK cinema for taking the mickey out of Christianity? The only films that get banned here nowadays are Z-list flicks about people being sewn together by psychos. Life of Brian very nearly didn't get made at all. Backers EMI pulled out, saying the script was too blasphemous. Beatle George Harrison ended up payrolling the project for £3 million just to have another Python movie – he even 'pawned' (his words) his London home in the process!

Terry Jones later joked that Harrison had just bought the 'world's most expensive cinema ticket!'. Whatever you think of the close-to-the-bone jokes, this film is pure comedy gold. It was even great revision for my own theology finals at university. If you've read the gospels and a bit of First Century Jewish history, you'll know how spot-on this film gets it. Respected Anglican minister Rev. Prof. Richard Burridge recently said that it's 'probably a more accurate portrayal of the historical context than any Hollywood films about Jesus'. We're looking at you, Mel Gibson. One of our favourite moments is when Brian gets caught in the middle of the night graffitiing a wall. He's written 'ROMANS GO HOME' in Latin, a protest on behalf of the Judean People's Front. Only problem is, he's got the

translation wrong. In a hilarious throwback to the Pythons' schooldays, the Roman soldier who's caught Brian proceeds to give him a lesson in Latin grammar, at knifepoint. The soldier-cum-schoomaster then gives Brian a detention, ordering him to write the phrase 'ROMANI ITE DOMUM' on the walls 100 times before sunrise. **Religion** Despite all the hoo-hah the Church made about Life of Brian, we're not sure how blasphemous it really is. It seems much more intent on mocking aspects of religion which even many Christians would agree are stupid, such as blind devotion to petty legalities, and discrimination against women. More than taking the p*** out of Jesus and his disciples, the Pythons seem to be taking aim at people

who blindly follow others without a second thought. Think of the raving crowds who follow Brian, picking up on anything he does and interpreting it as a miraculous sign from God. Brian loses his shoe, and everyone else takes off one of theirs. Brian tells them to think for themselves, and they parrot back, 'yes, we've got to think for ourselves!'. Brian tells them to f*** off, and, after a pause, one asks, 'Lord, how shall we f*** off?'. In a completely non-preachy way – I'm agnostic – Jesus didn't tell people to be brainwashed zombies. He wanted people to obey his message because they had carefully thought it through. Thirty five years after its release, Life of Brian doesn't look like such a blasphemous abomination after all. Give it a few more years, and maybe they'll be screening it in the Vatican.

Classic album

Jay-Z – The Blueprint

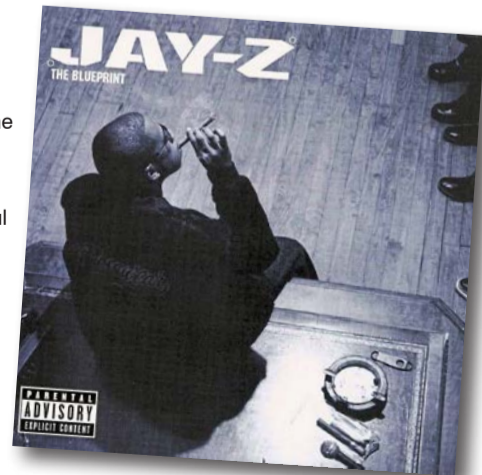
American rapper Jay-Z's sixth album contrasted with the radio-friendly mood of his previous work.

It was written in circumstances that could reasonably be described as 'stressful' – Jay-Z was awaiting criminal trials for gun possession and assault and he'd become one of hip hops most unpopular performers,

having been dissed by 2Pac, Nas, Prodigy and Jadakiss, among others. Recorded in 2001 at Manhattan Centre Studios, The Blueprint took a soulful approach. Kanye West and Just Blaze were largely responsible for the change in direction: Kanye produced four of the 13 tunes, including Izzo (H.O.V.A.) and the controversial Takeover, which hit back at Nas and Prodigy.

The Blueprint was a commercial success, shifting 2.7 million units and becoming the fourth Jay-Z album to reach number one on the Billboard 200 chart. Despite its unexpected direction and controversial nature, it was widely acclaimed as being one of Jay-Z's best albums, along with his debut, Reasonable Doubt. Vibe Magazine named it Best Album of the Year while it also received a rare and distinguished five-out-of-five from The Source. Soulcentric and sample-reliant, The Blueprint changed the game and opened the doors for a new generation of artists. It made sampling cool all over again and showcased the poetic nature of Jay-Z's work. It was considered his magnum opus. Jay-Z's level of megalomania soared on The Blueprint. He identified with God,

describing himself as being the eighth wonder of the world. From his lofty perch, he attached the rappers who had dared to question him. And then he called himself The Sinatra of his day – and he was damn near right about that. But it was the music that set the record apart as being a modern day classic. Soulful and stirring, he sampled Al Green, Bobby Bland, David Ruffin, The Jackson Five and other greats. The rhymes were solid and dependable. Punch lines arrived like an uppercut from Floyd Mayweather; bop, bop, bopping the listener right between the eyes. **Download these: Girls, Girls, Girls; Izzo (H.O.V.A.); Takeover, HOLA Hovito**



Andy Richardson