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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE
BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

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Borat and Jesus Camp

Saw two movies yesterday. "Borat" was side-splittingly funny, far better than any episode of "Ali G" or anything Sacha Baron Cohen has done before. I kept thinking of Jackass, oddly, even though there's nothing as scatological here. It must be the Candid Camera-like feel to their documentary about America. Borat gets everyone from frat boys to a rodeo cowboy to an etiquette teacher in Birmingham, Alabama to say the most outrageous, hateful things. It's hilarious. But what gives the movie focus are the staged bits of comedy, including a visit to Borat's home village in Kazhakstan (where we get to see the annual Running of the Jew) to his naked wrestling fight with his hugely overweight traveling companion. It's both extremely juvenile and very smart (Monty Python comes to mind here, too) and I'm amazed that they got Pamela Anderson to let them use footage of her. (Assuming she wasn't in on the joke.) [Newsweek talks to some of the people who are shown up to be the ignorant fools that they are.](#) Most of them seem resigned; wait till they see the movie. [As you can see in this photo; Borat has no shame.](#) Definitely one of the best of the year and very original.

I followed it up with Jesus Camp, the documentary about summer camp for kids run by fundamentalist Christian evangelicals. I don't know why the people in the film distanced themselves from it. And those claiming it makes them look like the Middle Eastern madrassas are just being silly. The references to "war" here are obviously metaphorical and these people are just passing on their values to their kids the same way every parent does. Yes, most mainstream viewers will laugh at their expense once or twice (like the scene where one adult screams vehemently at the kids that Harry Potter is a warlock and if he were alive in the Old Testament he would be PUT TO DEATH!). Uh, so would women who thought they could lead people in prayer. But overall, it's a balanced interesting look at their lives and how they both isolate themselves from the world and try to reach out. I found it most upsetting to see the little eight or nine year old kids weeping in anguish

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