

San Francisco Atheists -- September 2011

Back by popular demand! Cal State philosophy professor Matt McCormick has presented this program to several local atheist groups, and it is his most successful and popular. We're pleased to have him back to again address the question, **Are We Proving the Negative Yet?**

"Two groups resist the conclusion that there is no God. Some think it's mistaken because God is real. Others think that there is some special challenge because atheism can't be proven. 'You can't prove a negative', they say. God is beyond our comprehension. You can't KNOW that there is no God because you might be wrong.

Once we understand it right, it's clear that both groups are off the mark. There are lots of negatives that we can prove, including atheism. The atheist is being saddled with a burden of proof that no one, including the critic, can meet for any of her reasonable, justified beliefs. The critic is 'going nuclear.' She invokes a standard of proof that is mutually assured destruction for all beliefs, but only the atheist is expected to answer it. We will also consider the lessons to be learned from the countless mistaken gods humans have believed in."

Please join us on **Saturday September 24 at Schroeder's Restaurant, 240 Front St., rear dining room, San Francisco.**

Gather at **4:30 pm** to eat/drink/socialize, formal program will begin around 5 pm.

Near the Embarcadero BART & Muni station. Parking available on the street or at the nearby Embarcadero Center.

American Atheists is asking all of its supporters to participate in a coordinated action campaign in the days prior to September 11 to remove the steel girder 'cross' from the 9/11 memorial and ensure equal representation for all victims of the 9/11 attacks. Sign the petitions, write your local paper and contact your legislators! Get all the info here <http://911MemorialCross.blogspot.com/>

On August 27, SF Atheists had the pleasure of touring the *Story of Time and Life* exhibit at SF City College, with the enthusiastic and informative commentary of Earth Sciences Professor Katryn Wiese. We were also pleased to collect and donate \$100 to the preservation and improvement of the exhibit. This amazing display is free and open to the public during school hours-- check it out: http://www.ccsf.edu/Departments/History_of_Time_and_Life/

Message from the Festival Director 8/24/2011

Three days later and I'm still reeling from this year's **Atheist Film Festival**-- what an amazing ride we had! Every year we've been fortunate enough to show a range of amazing films, but for the first time we were able to screen first run features and enjoy Hollywood film directors, producers and composers in attendance.

Three films in particular were festival favorites: Matthew Chapman's riveting thriller THE LEDGE, a film which succeeded in making a powerful statement about atheism versus religion through the gripping story of a passionate love affair and its deadly aftermath; THE NATURE OF EXISTENCE, which documented Roger Nygard's trip around the world asking the big questions about life, the universe and everything (the film's co-producer Billy Sullivan also attended the Q& A); and Ondi Timoner's JOIN US, a masterfully captured look inside a family's real-life escape from a fundamentalist cult.

Alejandro Amenábar's gorgeous, overlooked 2009 masterpiece AGORA was also a standout, followed by Q&A from renowned classical historian Dr. Richard Carrier, who had high praise for the historical drama. Two original short film collections rounded out the program: the hilarious/scary/hilarious again 2011: THE YEAR OF THE RAPTURE, which featured shorts from across the globe, and THE FIRST ATHEIST MUSICAL, a fun romp and a perfect close to the day-long festival.

Meanwhile, at the festival's second theater, there was also a full lineup from prior years, including past favorites like Julia Sweeney's wonderful LETTING GO OF GOD; astounding overlooked local gem AUDIENCE OF ONE; San Francisco comedy troupe Killing My Lobster's brilliant, zany EVOLUTION: THE MUSICAL! and others.

I'm so incredibly grateful to everyone who wore so many hats and poured so much of their time, talent, energy, good nature and sheer hard work into making this third annual event our biggest and best yet: Julie Michelle, our tireless webmistress; Anne Sauer, our promo power princess; Susan Fink, who does it all; Saul Santell, tenth degree black belt film editor; executive producer Larry Kaufman and the fabulous Margaret Morgan who did so much and on top of that opened up their home to us all for the Directors' Reception; Michael Morgan, chauffer to the stars; Dana Fredsti for all her hard work behind the scenes and ongoing patience for the long, grueling months of festival planning; and finally the incredible David Diskin and Caralee Hickey, who went above and beyond the call of duty all weekend by missing ALL the movies in order to staff the merchandise table and take event pictures.

As invaluable as their hard work was the support of all our wonderful sponsors who gave so generously, the film directors and other VIPs who came out for the festival, the terrific staff and management of the Roxie Theater, the filmmakers from around the world who submitted their work, and to all of you who came out to enjoy the films with your fellow heretics and provided such lively and thought-provoking Q & A sessions!

My heart is fairly bursting with all the love for you amazing, delightful folks who gave so much to make this festival such a rollicking success. The festival continues to grow bigger and better every year, and it's exciting to be a part of it. Join us on Facebook, Twitter and the AFF website at www.sfatheistfilmfestival.org to stay informed about submission info, previews, where to pick up cool AFF merchandise, and more.

Thanks again to all of you for your generous support over the years, and see you next year!

All the best,
Dave Fitzgerald
Director, the Atheist Film Festival