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Tribeca Update #4:

Stickin' It to the Man

By Aaron Hillis

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More than one colleague of mine has suggested that the documentaries this year might actually be stronger and more consistent than the narratives, so it seemed appropriate to look at three good docs about people who wage battles against the sociopolitical grain. From Iran, ***Sounds of Silence*** opens eyes and ears to the quandaries facing Tehran's underground music scene, as the aftermath of 1979's Iranian Revolution banned most tunes beyond military marches and traditionals. Directed by Amir Hamz and Mark Lazarz, this absorbing record of young artists striving to create beauty under the oppressive restrictions of a fundamentalist government isn't asking for your pity, but it should make westerners appreciate the civil liberties we take for granted (while we still have them). With posters of Tupac and Jim Morrison on their walls, musicians like hip-hopper Mehrak (a/k/a Reveal) and pop sensations O-Hum reveal that lyrics must be approved by committees, the concept of love is reserved only for God, women are forbidden as vocalists, and distribution is a farce thanks to the Lalezar-Mafia (essentially the Iranian equivalent to Clear Channel). The country's 25-and-under majority breeds music with opinions that often guarantee censorship, so how do these bands reach their audiences? The next time you complain about a spotty wireless connection, consider that for many young musicians in Iran, the internet is the only outlet that lets their passions bloom.



Sounds of Silence



Al Franken: God Spoke

Executive produced by verité pro DA Pennebaker and directed by his partners-in-crime Chris Hegedus and Nick Doob (*The War Room*), ***Al Franken: God Spoke*** is an outspoken and pretty damn funny portrait of the cheeky political satirist, best-selling author and former *Saturday Night Live* player. From his famous feud with Fox News ranter Bill O'Reilly to his founding work as spokesman for liberal radio network Air America, Franken has established himself as someone to watch your words around. "I take what they say and use it against

PREVIOUS UPDATE

Update #3: April 26, 2006

Featuring *Ontic Antics Starring Laurel and Hardy: Bye, Molly; Lunacy; and The Case of the Grinning Cat.*

NEXT UPDATE

Update #5: April 28, 2006

Featuring *Crime Novel, The Free Will; and The Yacoubian Building.*

them. What I do is jujitsu," he says in one public speech, fearlessly on-call against hypocrisy lurking everywhere. Set mostly against the backdrop of the chaotic 2004 election, Hegedus and Doob are given an all-access pass to Franken's life as he establishes the radio show, goes on a USO tour in Iraq, riles conservative pundits Sean Hannity and Ann Coulter, and even performs his Henry Kissinger impression for the man himself. When Franken is on, he's hilarious, but the most impressively honest moments are in close quarters when he's spouting anecdotal asides about his father and interacting with his loving wife. Though he can be prickly, the film shows this savvy wordsmith to be a kindhearted progressive, not the "vile smear-merchant with emotional problems" that O'Reilly calls him. Though it's less political than it is personal, this smoothly edited snapshot of a roaring mouse could be effectively employed if Franken decides to run for public office. As the film hints, he just might!

The title ***Jonestown: The Life and Death of Peoples Temple*** gives the what and where, but the who is Jim Jones, the notorious preacher responsible for one of history's largest mass suicides in 1978. A conventional but genuinely heartrending exposé of the Indiana boy who grew to be a powerful religious cult leader, director Stanley Nelson's thoroughly researched doc