

God Bless Bob

Crazy '80s comic Bobcat Goldthwait lost the silly voice and became a director of subversive films, finds *Michael Adams*.



Goldthwait films such as *World's Greatest Dad* and *God Bless America* mercilessly flay US pop culture.

'I PLAY BOWLING ALLEYS IN ARKANSAS. I DON'T HAVE TO SUCK UP!'

What surprises and satisfies Goldthwait is the "good chunk" of his audience who've seen the seriously funny and subversive movies he directs these days. His most recent effort, *God Bless America*, levels both barrels at modern stupidity. The film's hero Frank – terminally ill and sick to death of vapid American culture – goes on a murderous rampage against reality TV morons, conservative blowhards and all manner of rude douchebags.

Goldthwait's misanthropic movie is no one-off rant. His 2009 gem *World's Greatest Dad* satirised self-aggrandising grief culture and gave long-time friend Robin Williams his best role in years. In 2006's *Sleeping Dogs Lie* he explored honesty in relationships by having a woman admit to her man that she once performed oral sex... on her dog. His 1991 directorial debut *Shakes The Clown* was famously lauded as the "Citizen Kane of alcoholic clown movies".

God Bless America sets its gun sights on TV talent competitions, bad-girl programs and stupid ringtones. "There's so much of this distraction media out there that like it or not, you hear about these things," Goldthwait says. "Yesterday the *Jersey Shore* got cancelled. I don't watch it but I had it brought up to me three times. It's very interesting how it takes the place of people's own families, friends and lives."

Goldthwait has a long history of not giving a shit what people think while supporting himself through stand-up. "People are always trying to appeal to the greatest number of people," he says. "I don't have to. I play bowling alleys in Arkansas so I don't have to suck up!"

Born on May 26, 1962, in Syracuse, New York, Goldthwait began performing comedy professionally at age 15. After graduating high school in 1980, he and friend Tom Kenny – now the voice of Spongebob Squarepants – moved to Boston and performed as "Bobcat and Tomcat". Goldthwait made his first appearance on *Letterman* in 1982, was *People* magazine's hottest upcoming comic in 1984 and landed the Zed role in *Police Academy 2* the next year.

Goldthwait showcased his anarchic

stand-up schtick in three late-1980s cable specials but became more infamous for three insane TV talk-show appearances between 1993 and '94. First he tipped over furniture on Conan O'Brien's set, then he spray-painted "Paramount Sucks" across Arsenio Hall's backdrop and finally he set fire to his chair on Jay Leno's *Tonight Show*.

The 1990s weren't lucrative for Goldthwait and he alternated stand up with cartoon voices, sitcom guest spots and game shows. He re-embraced directing with *The Man Show* in 1999 before working on *Chappelle's Show* and *Jimmy Kimmel Live*.

Goldthwait quit Kimmel in 2006 to focus on filmmaking and hasn't looked back. "I write screenplays all the time," he says. "I just make them when I can. Getting a movie made is not as important as getting the movie I've written made. I have this action movie about an ex-marine who's gay and he goes into this redneck town and kicks ass. I want to make a movie that if you were a 13-year-old gay boy you'd love as much as *300*."

Before that, however, Goldthwait has to edit the *Bigfoot* movie he just shot up in northern California. "It's a little dark, I guess, but I really hate the title 'dark'," he says. "For me, 'dark' is a Kate Hudson movie. I don't know who the fuck those people are. That's a scary world." ❖

TERMINOLOGY

NEW BUZZWORDS
Will they catch on or are they headed for the linguistic dustbin?

SoLoMo

Not a trendy New York neighborhood but a term for the convergence of Social, Local, and Mobile.

Gamification

In Web design, among other things, the use of game design elements in non-game contexts to encourage users to engage with technology and undertake undesirable tasks, such as filling out an online survey.

Phablets

Samsung are responsible for this hybrid word when they launched their hybrid tablet/smartphone device the Galaxy Note. They sold so many, the bloody word has stuck.

It's Friday afternoon and Bobcat Goldthwait's preparing to play the UARK Bowl in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

"I'm doing stand-up in what used to be a bowling alley so don't tell me my career's not taking off!"

The veteran comedian's only half joking. "I feel like I'm behind enemy lines. Last night it seemed to be more a debate than comedy. A lot of people were mad because I wasn't doing the 'Grover' voice. They're expecting the dude from *Police Academy* to scream

for an hour. What they're getting is a 50-year-old grumpy guy."

For the record, Goldthwait last played Zed in 1987's *Police Academy 4*. Even though that was literally half a lifetime ago, when he's in places like, well, Lafayetteville, it's the first thing people mention. "I do my best to be polite and friendly but it is a bit like *Groundhog Day*," he says. "This might be the first time you've ever said 'I used to watch you in *Police Academy*' but I've still got to say 'Oh, cool... I get that a lot.'"