

Mp3 Father Bingo - Hygienic Productions



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"The Kind Of Music You Will Like To Listen To... IN PRIVATE." Sort of like if Ministry ever produced an Eels or Pedro The Lion album. 9 MP3 Songs POP: with Electronic Production, POP: Quirky Details: Father Bingo is the solo musical project of Philadelphian graphic artist Mike Lebovitz. "Hygienic Productions," his debut, tells the story of 1940s exploitation film promoter Kroger Babb and his decline. Not all of Mike's songs are depressing or about obscure people from film history. Mike can also be seen kicking your ass with the Philly punk band Stereo Atomico. Here is today's film history lesson, from David F. Friedman's book "A Youth in Babylon:" Like Hygienic Productions [Kroger Babb's production company], the Legion of Decency was well organized. The major film companies dutifully submitted all their pictures to the organization for rating, prior to release. There were four categories of acceptability: "A-1, Morally suitable for all audiences;" "A-2, Morally suitable for all, with reservations;" "B, Partially condemned;" and "C, Condemned." Only a few bold-for-the-time foreign films, a couple trashy American-made entries, and [Babb's flagship film] "Mom and Dad" were on the "C" list. Weekly, the Legion publicized the current ratings in the motion-picture trade papers, and copies of the timely designations would be sent to every Catholic diocese in the country for promulgation to the faithful. Exhibitors would consider carefully whether or not to book a "B"-rated film, and most would back away entirely from a "C." Unlike several mainstream producers and distributors, who would make recommended cuts in their movies to avoid a "B" or a "C" rating, Babb never knuckled down to the dictates of the ultramontanes. The church, in dealing with the motion-picture industry, had never come against such an individualist who had so little to lose and so much to gain in challenging religious meddling. He also had the communicative talent and money to found a firm of his own. Martin Quigley, Sr., publisher of two New York-based film trade papers, Motion Picture Daily and Motion Picture Herald,

issued weekly, was the industry's unofficial liaison with the church, conferring often with Father Masterson, the Legion of Decency chief, and Cardinal Spellman, the powerful archbishop of the New York diocese. Babb didn't advertise in either of Quigley's publications, spending his trade-notice money heavily in the rival weekly, Kansas City-headquartered Boxoffice, whose editor and publisher, Ben Shylen, Babb's buddy, responded to the largess by filling page upon page with puff and plugs pouring out of Wilmington, Ohio [the headquarters of Hygienic Productions]. A few months after meeting Kroger Babb, 18,000 Boxoffice subscribers opened their copies and, depending upon their religious calling, gaped, glared, gasped, grinned, giggled, guffawed, gagged, or grimaced while perusing a full-page ad reading: KROGER BABB America's Fearless Young Showman Proudly Announces His Next Eye-Opening Attraction Guaranteed to Startle the World! FATHER BINGO An Expose' of Gambling in the Parish Halls Within an hour of the time the magazine containing the bogus ad was in the hands of its New York Readers, phones at the Hygienic office started ringing. Babb took the call from Mr. Quigley. They chatted amiably for a minute or so, inquiring of each other's health, family, well-being, and prosperity. Casually, Quigley asked about the announced new production. Babb, pinching his arm to keep from laughing aloud, went into what he later told me was "the best 'snow-job' of my life." He told his called he was preparing a movie in which the protagonist was a fast-talking, con-man priest operating a "controlled" bingo game in his parish. Babb assured Quigley it was going to be a comedy, but also a warning to suckers to shy away from all games a chance, even those played in a church. After a few seconds of shocked silence, Quigley muttered something about such a movie being certain to get a "C" rating from the Legion of Decency. Babb assured the New Yorker that this would be nothing new for him, said a polite goodbye, hung up the phone, and laughed so hard his secretary ran into his office thinking he was having a heart attack. I can only imagine the conversation in high church places when Quigley related his telephone conversation to the officials of his faith. Babb continued mentioning Father Bingo in many of his trade ads for years. He never made the picture; he never had any intention of making such a film.

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