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The Gospel of Stop Shopping

By LAURA KERN

For some of the parents interviewed in Rob VanAlkemade's fast and funny documentary "What Would Jesus Buy?" the answer to the question posed by the title is simple: whatever gadget of the moment their spoiled-rotten kids are craving.

According to the film's subject, Reverend Billy, the charismatic bleached-blond performance artist and mock evangelist whose real name is Bill Talen, this is part of a larger problem. His get-up may be for show, but his activism is the real deal, and his mission is to fight what he calls the "shopocalypse," the buying frenzy Americans indulge in every holiday season.

The film takes us on a 2005 cross-country tour with Reverend Billy; Savitri D, his wife and organizer of his Church of Stop Shopping; and the church's gospel choir. Along the way they deliver their message — that peace and love, not spending, are the true backbone of holiday spirit — through witty speeches and songs to unsuspecting patrons at assorted problem spots like Wal-Mart, the Mall of America and [Disneyland](#).

Reverend Billy is zany and energetic enough to hold the attention of those he's preaching to — average to extreme shoppers, many clueless as to what globalization means — long enough for them to consider his crusade. At the very least, the film might make a viewer think twice about that next purchase at the Gap.

"What Would Jesus Buy?" is rated PG (Parental guidance suggested) for brief mild language.

WHAT WOULD JESUS BUY?

Opens today in New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Directed by Rob VanAlkemade; written by Mr. VanAlkemade, based on a story by Savitri D, [Morgan Spurlock](#), Bill Talen and Mr. VanAlkemade; narrated by Alan Sklar; directors of photography, Alan Deutsch, Daniel Marracino, Martin Palafox, Alex Stikich and Mr. VanAlkemade; edited by Gavin Coleman, Stela Georgieva and Mr. VanAlkemade; music by William Moses; choir director and choreographer, James Solomon Benn; produced by Peter Hutchison, Stacey Offman and Mr. Spurlock; released by Warrior Poets Productions. In Manhattan at the Cinema Village, 22 East 12th Street, Greenwich Village. Running time: 90 minutes. This film is not rated.