



Sicko

Moore is Less

By Josef Woodard

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***SiCKO*. Michael Moore, George W. Bush, and Reggie Cervantes star in a film written and directed by Michael Moore.**

Jean-Luc Godard may have succeeded in coming up with the pithiest response to the new genre of “documentary” invented by Michael Moore: the “crockumentary.” Moore makes movies emboldened by great intentions, big subjects worth exploring and exposing, good jolly gonzo humor, and show biz monomania ... and precious little of the fundamental values normally required of the documentary form as we’ve come to know it. With *SiCKO*, Moore badly fumbles at making what should be a scathing indictment of the healthcare debacle in America—a subject richly deserving of an actual “documentary.” But Moore really should give his Oscar back. He’s in the wrong category.

He has become a rare, oxymoronic specimen; the Filthy Rich Documentary Filmmaker. He also forgets to ask questions of the “other side” (disheartened ex-employees don’t count). This is the first of his films in which we get virtually no counteracting

interviews—not even a sneak attack non-interview like what he got from Charlton Heston (an Alzheimer’s patient) at the pathetic ending of *Bowling for Columbine*.

All those perfectly obvious drawbacks aside, *SiCKO* is as rousing as any of Moore’s previous films. But it is also misleading. While he ostensibly takes on the gross injustices of the American healthcare system—which one observer says is devised to “kill and maim” and which has left us in the paltry 37th position in terms of global medical care—Moore spends much of his time visiting other countries, where free medical care is a given. The various street-level case studies he explores—real problems with compelling “healthcare horror stories”—make up the most compelling emotional substance of the film. But *SiCKO*’s broader impact is blunted by Moore’s staggeringly shoddy and non-objective journalistic cred.

SiCKO should enrage our sense of human decency and underline the fact that healthcare should transcend politics and corporate greed. Instead, it’s a piece of old-fashioned propaganda. To put it into the context of anatomy-based clichés, *SiCKO* tugs on heartstrings, tickles the funny bone, insults our intelligence, and kicks Moore’s medium in the cojones.

Even so, it’s a consistently good time at the movies. No wonder Moore is such a rich man.