



The Blues Brothers

1983 Certificate 15

Directed by John Landis

Starring:

John Belushi

Dan Aykroyd

Carrie Fisher

James Brown

Cab Calloway

Aretha Franklin

Ray Charles

What this film is about

Jake and Elwood Blues are two brothers who have been brought up by nuns in a Roman Catholic orphanage in Calumet City, Illinois. In the opening scene of the film, Jake has just been released from prison and Elwood collects him in an ex-police vehicle. Their first task is to visit 'the Penguin', the nun who runs the orphanage. Jake and Elwood are scared of her because she frowns on any swearing or bad behaviour and find her spooky and supernatural. The Penguin asks for their help because the orphanage has run out of money and asks them to get her the money to keep the orphanage open. This is their 'mission from God'.

Jake is less than impressed with this commission but on his way out meets a man who suggests he goes to James Brown's church. James Brown is the preacher who inspires the people in his church to sing and dance for love of God. The brothers enter the church and before long Jake 'sees the light' and is soon filled with fervour, singing and dancing with Christian inspiration. They decide to reform their old band to play some gigs and get the money that way.

This means tracking down old band members and persuading them by any means to leave their jobs, wives and other pursuits. They put the band back together but before long everyone is after them, the police, Jake's dumped fiancée, various angry and duped people and a group of Neo-Nazis, but 'We'll never get caught. We're on a mission from God'. Despite a huge amount of action, car chases, explosions and disasters, nobody gets hurt, not even the Nazis who merely disappear into a hole in the ground. They boys organise a huge gig which is a great success and earns them the money. Eventually, chased by the military, police, helicopters and nearly everyone else in the film, Jake and Elwood and the

money make it to the payment department. Dodging everyone, they give the money to the payment officer (Steven Spielberg) before everyone bursts in and they are arrested. Their final scene is of Jake and Elwood getting their fellow prisoners to sing and dance as they perform 'Jailhouse Rock' in the prison.

Major themes of the film

Mission, music, inspiration, community

Excerpts from the film to watch

Jake's release from prison

The commission from the Penguin

Jake 'seeing the light' in James Brown's church

General issues for discussion

- ⊕ **What impression do you get of Jake from the opening scene? Does your opinion change later?**
- ⊕ **What does this film tell you about 'mission from God?'**
- ⊕ **What do you make of the scene in the church?**
- ⊕ **What does this film say about 'good' and 'bad' people?**
- ⊕ **What does this film tell us about love?**