

The Anti-Americans (a love/hate relationship)

Directors' Cut Transcript

[White Cholera music starts.]

[Title: The Center for New American Media presents]

[Visuals: Montage of images of American culture]

[Visuals: White Cholera performing.]

White Cholera: (singing)

This is a rogue state.

We're doing business, business.

This is a rogue state.

You're on my hit list, hit list.

I'm dealing with the Arabs and the Jews as well.

I tell them how it is or they can go to hell.

White skin, dark skin, it doesn't matter

But if you try and cross me it's your head upon a platter.

Cause this is a rogue state.

This is a rogue state.

You're on my axis of evil.

You may be knock kneed and feeble.

You're on my axis – so there!

David McWilliams: Welcome. Welcome to Leviathan, thank you all very much for turning out; this week why do Europeans, why are we so ungrateful to a country that has never threatened us? That's one view. The other view is; why should we snuggle up to an imperialist war-mongering power?

Narrator: It was our first evening in Europe, and we were in a Dublin pub, listening to people talk about America.

David Norris: I love Bugs Bunny, the original Dixieland Jazz Band, New Orleans, the fall in Vermont, all these kind of things, but I feel I am entitled to distance myself from the atrocity and the stupid atrocity that is American foreign policy...

Narrator: It had been billed as a debate, but almost everyone seemed to be in agreement.

Izabel Chudzicka: All the European countries make an effort right now to get to know the culture, they get to know each other etc. You don't get that in America. They are very so much so into themselves. They love themselves.

Declan Ganley: It's the longest lived republic in the history of the world. America has this ability to renew and reinvent itself. It is not an empire, it is not an empire in anything like the same way that any of the European empires were. That's a historical fact.

David McWilliams: All right whose got the mic. on the floor, it's a it's a very good point.

Man in the crowd: Gobshite! You have'nt got a clue. Gobshite!

David McWilliams: America is a very, very useful construct for us to ventilate our own inadequacies and frustrations with ourselves because you're not going to attack us. You're going to be nice to us. You know it's not like a risky strategy being anti-American. You know, if you're Polish and you're anti-Russian in 1955, now that's a risky strategy. But here it's the the cute whore's the *shliveen*'s, view, which is to be anti-Americanism has great rhetoric, and no downside risk. So that's why it's embraced.

[Music starts: Hank Williams' *Why Don't you Love Me Like You Used To Do*]

[Visuals: Protesters breaking into McDonalds, American flag on fire, Bush as Hitler poster, Iraq War protest, American soldier kissing a French woman]

Narrator: Europeans loved us when we helped liberate them in 1945. Then they complained that we overwhelmed them with hamburgers and Coca Cola. During the Cold War they tolerated us as the lesser of two evils. After September 11, they wept for us briefly. But the tears turned to anger when we invaded Iraq. Next year – maybe even next month – who knows? We might be heroes again.

American Soldier: Hey, we need more guys in here!

Narrator: But given the way things have gone over the last few years that doesn't seem very likely.

Boris Johnson: I think the problem America has got is the simple, envy and resentment that attends any great power when it is unchallenged. And I think there's also a certain amount of anxiety about George W. Bush.

Ian Hislop: We see Bush on television talking about a divine mission and we think, "You can't do this, you know, we've got the Ayatollahs telling about their divine missions! We don't want to hear this from you." So that's always a problem, I think, for Europeans.

Tony Judt: Bush has switched on something I haven't seen for a very long time, which is the sense that wait a minute not only are you culturally all around us, but damn it your doing stupid things that could screw up my world in which case I want the right to have some say in who runs your country. If you must have stupid presidents, I want to vote!

[Visuals: English street sweepers, Polish Taxi driver talking to camera, French woman offering cheese, British men in pub]

Narrator: Just as France likes Camembert and England prefers Cheddar, each European country hates – and loves – America in its own particular way.

French Woman with curly hair: I think it's an excessively racist country. In every state and every small town, it's racist everywhere. We don't count New York. It's its own country. But I believe that the rest of America is fundamentally racist.

[Visuals: London improv kids walking around studio space.]

Teacher: Think about the typical American in your mind. Think about something that they might say, just the first thing that comes into your head when you think of an American in England. Freeze and 1, 2, 3 speak

[Visuals: Teacher talking to the improv kids as they walk around.]

Jessica: Oh my God! Oh my God!

Emmet: How ya doin'? How ya doin'?

Charlotte: Where's the Queen live? Where's the Queen live?

Wojciech Cejrowski: When you see a dollar bill it always brings happy memories. The only time I could buy me chocolate when I was a kid was when we would receive a dollar, go to a special store controlled by the communists, pay them this dollar and get chocolate. So America – all those presidents, all that green...

Narrator: We wanted to make sense of all these transatlantic attitudes. So we set off to see what America looked like from the other side of the pond.

Polish Woman in Purple shirt: When I went to Chicago, I saw the fattest people I ever saw in my life. I wanted to escape from America before the fat virus got me too.

Narrator: It promised to be something of a rough trip.

Polish woman (continues): And if you climbed up and sat down on their big fat behinds they could give you a ride all the way out to the parking lot.

[Title: The Anti-Americans – a love/hate relationship]

[Title: A film by Louis Alvarez, Andrew Kolker, Peter Odabashian]

Christine Ockrent, journalist, France 3: No French politician would go on television especially during a political campaign saying, “I love America and I think we should do exactly what they do. And we should be for free enterprise, and for individual merit and the state should not intervene in anything.” The guy could do that but then it's like committing suicide, ok. He'll never get elected ever again.

[Title: America has rabies. Let us sever all ties with her lest we get bitten. *Jean-Paul Sartre*]

[Visuals: *Les Guignols de L'Info*, the News Puppets, opening theme.]

[Visuals: *originally broadcast in March 2003*]

Sly Army official 1: You are the elite of the U.S. Army, the first ones into Iraq. You have a hell of a big job to do. I expect you to do well and blindly obey orders. Is that understood?

Solider 1: Sir yes sir.

Soldier 2: Sir yes sir.

Sly Army official 1: McDonald.

Ronald McDonald: Sir yes sir.

Sly Army official 1: Cowboy

Cowboy: Sir Yes sir.

Sly Army official 1: Mickey

[Mickey squeaks]

Sly Army official 1: OK, get ready.

Sly Army official2: Are you sure we can win with them?

Sly Army official 1: These are the ones we always win with.

Sly Army official 2: But sending in jerks like this, are you kidding? I don't think it's allowed under the terms of the Geneva Convention.

Narrator: *Les Guignols de l'Info* is an enormously popular fake news show on French TV. It's kind of a cross between Jon Stewart and *South Park* and we thought it would be a good place to catch up on French attitudes towards the United States.

Mr. Sylvester: I am Mr. Sylvester, President of the World Company. I fight for globalization so that I can become richer and richer. And when I have a problem, I call for Commander Sylvester.

Commander Sylvester: I'm here to destroy everything, the Commies, the Blacks. I won't rest till the job is done. Even if I have to destroy the stinky cheeses.

Narrator: Five nights a week, just before the real news, the Guignols get away with things that would give nightmares to an American network executive. The day after the World Trade Center was attacked was just another day at the office for the Guignols.

Newscaster puppet: This is the 12th of September and World War III has begun in New York and Washington. All the newspapers had major headlines, but it was the Sporting News put it best: Allah 1 Jesus 0.

Yves Le Rolland: Here we are in the home of the *Guignols*. All these boxes contain *Guignol* heads. There are about 300 characters. Here's a head you'll recognize, the father. Condoleezza is a tough girl. We're all afraid of her. Rrrrrrhhaa!! You see we have many Stallones. In the beginning, he was a bit of a dolt. He really didn't know what he was doing. He just represented the U.S. Army but little by little he began to represent American power and eventually he became the embodiment of capitalism. He changed. He got a suit and tie and he became the Big Boss of the World Company.

[Visuals: *Les Guignols*, writers room.]

Lionel Dutemple: The "Slys" represent Bush's cohorts the religious right, the big American corporations who gave money to his campaign. The "Sly" represent all these people.

Ahmed Hamidi : George Bush will disappear after the next election, but the "Slys" will remain. Things change, but the "Slys" remain in control.

Lionel Dutemple: They talk a little like this. (Imitates the Sly way of speaking.) Hello you stinky cheese. The stinky cheese is us.

Ahmed Hamidi : The French.

Lionel Dutemple: The French. The "fromage qui pue", the cheese.

Ahmed Hamidi : He calls us "fromage qui pue" like "smell[y] cheese."

Lionel Dutemple: Smell[y] cheese. You stinky cheese, you little tiny country, you nothing. It's very cynical.

Yves Le Rolland: And here's Woody Allen. We made him because we thought Kerry might win the American election and if Kerry had won, the Stallones would have been replaced by the Woodys.

Clotaire Rapaille, anthropologist: American are the ideal enemies for the French, you know. The French want to be the voice that gives another possibility. They are against the world becoming American, definitely, definitely, definitely. That would be, that would be a disaster because they will lose any significance, any mission, any function in the rest of the world.

Nicole Bacharan, political scientist: There is a need to show France is at least equal or better and that means the United States is bad. They are slightly less intelligent. Less, you know, they understand the world less. So the big thing is saying, "Oh we don't want to do it the American way." Anything the American way it's like an insult.

Jean-Pierre Jerabek: We have finally come to the most important issue before us the word "airbag" is being used in France instead of our own, *coussin gonflable*.

[Visuals: *Commission on Automotive Technology, one of 19 French language committees*]

Narrator: Everywhere they look, the French see
America encroaching. And no European country
has worked harder to defend its cultural
independence and hold back the tide.

Man with Mustache: We must ridicule "airbag". For one thing, it's not actually made of air, it's a gas. We must make it seem ridiculous.

Man with Glasses: But since they aren't breaking a law, they keep using "airbag".

Man with Mustache: So we must all agree to stick with *coussin gonflable* to avoid confusion. It may give us the means to finally kill "airbag".

Tony Judt, historian: The idea that French was somehow, and France with it and French culture and the French sort of *savoir-vivre* was part of a well lived civilized life, makes it very hard for the French to imagine themselves as a medium sized country, in a wealthy but medium sized continent, with nothing to offer the world really, other than good wine, good cheese, and opposition to American bad behavior.

[French Music starts.]

Pascal Bruckner, author : French people believe ideas as passions. That's why we like to give our opinion about any kind of subject. And everybody has a opinion of the United States, eh.....because America leaves no one indifferent. And the fact that you're hated, in fact means that you matter.

[Visuals: Montauban bridge.]

[Visuals: *Montauban, the south of France*]

[Visuals: Restaurant crowd, Person placing ice cube in wine glass.]

Jackie, Cook: The Americans? They can keep their food. Our food, foie gras, Champagne. Everything is better here! It doesn't matter what they try and do, we're still the best. It's true. It's not chauvinism, it's the truth. Their American dishes, their so-called specialties, are worthless. Their McDonalds...I have to admit I took my grandson there, in spite of everything. But it was absolutely indigestible. McDonalds is absolutely indigestible.

[Visuals: Cheese vendor packaging cheese, customer talking to a vendor at the market.]

Annick Cojean, journalist, *Le Monde*: The French think that quality of life means much more than money . We need money of course but this is not the real value. The value is time. So the ideal of America, the image that America is a trying to sell us in a way is terrifying for lots of French people. We don't want this system. We don't want this influence.

Moules Frites Man: We're not ambitious. We want to stay as we are, stay stupid. It isn't complicated.

Woman's Voice (off camera): *Are you being ironic?*

Moules Frites Woman 4: We're simple folks, we love our Camembert, our wine, berets, and baguettes.

Moules Frites Man: But the problem is we're copying you. In 10 years, we'll be just like you Americans. Progress isn't all it's cracked up to be.

Tony Judt: The French live a better life than the Americans do. They enjoy themselves more. I know Americans find this hard to believe. I mean they don't work as hard. They retire earlier. They've got better pensions. The American model, where you got to work very hard, very long hours because the whole point is to make lots of money to consume lots of goods and then go out and work some more. The idea that, that might become French is deeply frightening and it's across the board, left and right, rich and poor, educated and uneducated that's what frightens the French today.

Curly haired Woman: We threw out the Germans. We'll throw out the Americans, too.

Woman's voice (off camera): *Really? The French threw out the Germans?*

Curly haired Woman: You Americans helped a little, but we've paid a lot for that over the years. We're all paid up after thirty years.

Boris Johnson, British Member of Parliament: People go through all sorts of elaborate pretenses about anti-Americanism but deep down the French *adore* America. They lie through their teeth. It's all, it's all absolute nonsense. The French pretend...Chirac! Chirac himself is the single biggest America-phile you could possibly discover. You know, he doesn't mean any of this nonsense. It's a way of...It's adolescent self-definition, that's what it is.

[Visuals: The housing projects in the suburbs.]

Narrator: Surrounding every charming French city are somewhat less charming housing projects, where the comfortable French way of life can feel out of reach. In *these* neighborhoods, the usual tributes to

France's glorious cultural past can seem a little surreal, while the American Dream of making it big is a tempting alternative.

Lil' Cee: (rapping)

Homie, don't you know that my buyers deal in English

5AM, 3 buds for sale, I'm looking for some cash

Two eyes filled with blood, my mood is getting lower

I want to see some girl on girl, and smoke a joint or more

That's how I get high on life.

[Visuals: *Charaf Tajer & Mehdi Elattar, 'Grand Boulevard'*]

Cuertes G: In France, people are starting to notice us. We were the first to wear diamonds on our teeth....to wear big chains. Only a few of the big raps stars have them...so when rap stars see us, they think we're as big as they are. We drive big cars, we have big chains and diamonds, big watches, etc...Rap stars respect our game, because our game is so respectable.

Cuertes G: (rapping)

I'm Cuertes G you live, you see, you want

kicking a ride, with all of my bitches...

Let's cut it there (backing track stops).

Narrator: Let the elites and the middle classes worry about the influence of the US chipping away at French life. For these guys, there's always room for a bit of American swagger.

Cuertes G: We don't envy Americans, we just admire their game. Because their game is tighter than the game in France. I'm not pro-Bush, I'm more anti-Bush. But it doesn't really matter because whether I'm anti-Bush or not, nothing will really change.

Lil' Cee: We check out the techniques that Bush uses to do his thing. Because he's a smart guy.

Cuertes G: Because his game is tight. Like all Americans, he's got a tight game.

Lil' Cee: I respect that. I'm not into his ideas, but I respect the way he leads. That's what we like. He's someone who knows how to get it

done. He's a guy who succeeds at doing his own thing.

Cuertes G: (rapping)

I roll, I roll, I ride, without a license to drive

My pocket's full of cash, and illegal drugs and stuff

Pascal Bruckner: The French are obsessed with America, it's an object of resentment and envy, and uh..... We don't have the same passionate relationship with Germany, or Spain, or Italy, or Belgium, because the French only look west. And the only nation they want to compare themselves with is the United States. They think it is very unfair that you are so strong today that we are so weak. It should be the other way around.

Teacher: I'd like some quiet please. We're all going to draw a picture or write a short essay that describes what comes to mind when you think about the United States. Just do your best. That'll be fine.

[Visuals: Small child at desk writing.]

Narrator: We decided to look for signs that French attitudes towards America might be starting to change. So we paid a visit to the Lycée Henri Quatre – the school where France's future leaders are groomed.

Boy in Gap Sweatshirt: The CEO of McDonalds is very rich, and he has a huge limousine. And here is President Bush with his campaign slogan: "If You Vote for Me Hamburgers Will be Half-Price."

[Visuals: Boy standing up pointing to his drawing. Close-up of his drawing of President Bush and the slogan. Redheaded boy sitting at his desk talking to camera.]

Redheaded Boy: I think that the war in Iraq was not a good idea. It was not proven that the weapons of mass destruction existed. I think it was just a pretext.

Boy in Blue Sweater: Everyone knew that they didn't exist.

Redheaded Boy: It was only a pretext. That's what I just said.

[Visuals: Child in stripe sweater holds his drawing up in front of the camera, pointing to areas and describing them.]

Boy in Striped Sweater: Here's an American who doesn't really know his alphabet. About 60% of Americans are like that. And here's a picture of the war. There's an American with a pistol, a knife and a machine gun that he's killing someone with.

Girl in Blue/Red Sweater: This is an oil well, and that's Bush, who's collecting the oil and massacring the planet. I think he feels fine about massacring the planet.

Clotaire Rapaille: The key for the French is very simple. I think. I think therefore I am. Not I do therefore I am. I think, right? *Le Penseur*, Rodin, "The Thinker" – So the French think and they think they think for the rest of the world. And there is one thing that they are absolutely sure is the American don't think.

Narrator: So it seemed that asking Europeans about America was a bit like holding up a mirror to their national character: what was reflected was a mix of history, national pride, and cultural prejudice.

Narrator: As we headed off for Eastern Europe, we wondered what the mirror would reflect in Poland...a place where the past was never far from peoples' minds.

[Title: The enemy is tempting you with Coca-Cola. *1950's Polish Communist Slogan*]

[Visuals: Marchers in May Day parade]

Archival footage Narrator: In building their new life, the people of Poland find inspiration in the splendid example given by the Soviet people. This gives you an idea of the Palace of Culture of Science which the Soviet Union is building..

Tony Judt : The Poles have got a complex because Poland lives in existential fear of something terrible happening to it. Then there's the complication of religion. A country where the Catholic church is so

important has great difficulty negotiating it's way in secular Europe. Then on top of that, the history of the Holocaust is bound up with Polish history and of course Poles then resent the fact that lots of Poles were killed but that gets forgotten. And so all of these complexes. If Poland were a person, they would be in permanent analysis, permanent unresolved psychological trauma.

[Jazzy Music starts.]

[Visuals: Car POV crossing bridge.]

Grzegorz Rybak, taxi driver: We find ourselves in Warsaw, a place that's been under occupation for a long time. For a long, long time it was occupied of the Czar. Then we tried to become independent, but it all turned out very poorly. Later, we ended up under German occupation...and after that we were under Soviet occupation.....and at the moment, we're under...European rule...A political formulation that's supposedly ours. I don't know if it's ours or not. Someone chose it, but definitely not me. We'll see how this current occupation turns out. I doubt anything will change for the better.

Narrator: Unlike almost everyone we met in the West, the Poles were not especially interested in critiquing the American war on terror or complaining about George W. Bush. Years of living with bad neighbors had left them eager for a powerful friend who would look out for them.

Maciej Wierzynski, journalist TVN24: Polish politicians nowadays, they love to stress that we have a strategic partnership with the United States. Which is true for us, that this is our main partner, but I don't think this is true for President Bush, Clinton or whoever would live in the White House.

Agnieszka Graff, professor, American studies: We feel America's our big brother. But I'm not sure that America knows it has a little brother out there. And I think that really puts it well. Poor relatives are always gaping at their rich relative and the rich relatives tend to be forgetful.

[Visuals: Train passing in front of Soviet statues.]

Narrator: Feeling neglected is something of a Polish character trait, and it helped us understand how the

past continues to haunt the Poles. Living amidst the crumbling remnants of Soviet architecture, they're not about to forget who's done them wrong.

[Soviet music starts]

[Visuals: Various Soviet statues.]

Kryzstof Janctzar, actor: Russia is the empire of evil. It was the empire of evil and it still be for a long time to come an empire of evil, and the only power that can keep balance in the world is America. If something would happen here in our country, only America would help us. French they didn't help, twice. Brits they don't care. They don't care about anything except themselves.

[Visuals: Family walking together arms n' arm. Camera zoom in on Ronald Reagan street sign.]

Agnieszka Graff : We're kind of stuck in the 80's as far as our relationship to the States is concerned. There is this very simplistic vision of the fall of the Soviet Empire and Americas role in it. The idea is that Ronald Reagan and John Paul II and Lech Walesa got together and did it. And what anyone might think of that story, it's the story that a lot Poles believe. And I think every President after Ronald Reagan was just kind of a next incarnation, right? And we don't really see the difference. We don't care about America's relationship to the rest of the world.

Wojciech Cejrowski, writer: The commies would feed us a lot of bad things about America, bad propaganda, and we are the rebels. They feed you shit, you don't believe anything, even if there is some truth in it. You would just rebel. 'Oh yes America is bad?' ' We love it'!

[Lonstar Music starts.]

[Visuals: Tram coming toward the platform. Michael Lonstar gets out of train with his guitar. Michael Lonstar walking.]

Narrator: It's not every day that one encounters a Polish cowboy. But we knew that for the generation who grew up under communism, there would be some individuals who drew more than a passing inspiration from America.

Michael Lonstar, musician: I was seven. Actually I was just two weeks off my seventh birthday and my daddy would listen to voice of American radio program, which was the only reliable source of information in the post World War II communist Poland. And actually listening to the voice of American radio programs was a criminal act but nevertheless he would do that. And one night he forgot to switch, change channel after having heard the news. And I heard Ernest Dobbbs singing like (singing) 'I'm', oh wait a minute, 'I'm walking the floor over you'. And it impressed me so much. And I fell in love with that particular tune, and that voice, and that low tune guitar (playing). And a like we already talked, many more loves has come and gone and went through my life and this one stuck and I'm still in love with country music.

[Visuals: Michael Lonstar country western dancing.]

Lonstar song: *We're part of Europe now...and I still have troubles...*

[Visuals: Sexy Texas, dance troupe practicing country dancing.]

Lonstar song: *because my attitude's bad, and I play the same wrong notes. And still somebody forces me...to take off my cowboy hat*

Narrator: **From a childhood steeped in American Westerns and visits to Arizona Lonstar has created a kind of parallel country western universe. It may seem vaguely familiar but it has a definite Polish spin.**

Lonstar song: *that left me way too far to the East.*

[Song ends. Visuals: Lonstar talking to camera with dancers in the background.]

Lonstar: So this is kind of a political song. I call it 'Legend of the European Cowboy' – the story of a guy who discovered the outside world through Western movies. And there was a line, which by the way, that was prohibited by Polish censorship, this song was banned by Polish censorship in the 80's. There's a line saying that 'I saw, there's prairie on a screen and Siberia outside beyond the wall', the theater's wall. And another line saying 'That now we are, we have entered Europe, but nevertheless there's always somebody who criticize me and tells me to take off my cowboy hat and do this and don't do that'.

[Visuals: Lonstar performing.]

Lonstar song: *For lunch I had exhaust fumes, and drank some Coca-Cola.*

[Visuals: CU of Lonstar.]

Lonstar song: *I've hauled about a million tons, and know the road much better than my home.*

[Visuals: Audience waving flags. CU of Lonstar]

Lonstar song: *I don't know if I could have survived all the crashes and highway cops*

[Visuals: Audience member dancing.]

Narrator: It wasn't only Lonstar who took his inspiration from the romance of the open road and the down-home sentiments of American country music. It turns out that Poland sometimes looks like Branson, Missouri, these days.

[Visuals: Two women try on cowboy hats, Man in leather vest tries on hat.]

[Visuals: *Piknik Country Music Festival Mragowo, Poland.*]

[Visuals: Crowd passes by young man in cowboy hat talks to the camera YEEHAA....!]

[Visuals: Man in red shirt trying on hat.]

Man in Red T-shirt: John Wayne, excellent.

Woman's Voice (off screen): *Why does he like country music so much?*

Man with dog: It's a she. She lives in this town, and she loves this music. Just like her owner.

[Visuals: Someone holding up license plate *MRAGOWO 2006 Piknik Country.*]

Narrator: So we found ourselves at the oldest country music festival in Eastern Europe where thousands of fans can't wait to get into the spirit.

Man in vest: We come for the atmosphere. Everything's great, I feel 30 years younger here.

Woman Voice (off screen): *Where does country music come from?*

Man in green and white shirt: It's something organic.

Man in vest: The guys who watched cows, they sang about their horses, right? It started from them.

Wojciech Cejrowski: They dress up in goofy cowboy hats which are two times smaller than they should be. They don't know what cowboys are, really. Plus, you can not become a cowboy. You have to be born a cowboy. So, they don't know what it is. They think cowboys go after cows and milk them, which they don't.

[Visuals: Crowd seated and dancing to the music. Performers on stage. Audience waving American flag.]

Agnieszka Graff : If you ask a Polish person in the street "What is America?" They'll say freedom but that's partly because they are repeating a cliché. That is what you say when your asked "What is America?" But when you ask them "Well why are you going?" its probably because my cousin such and such lives in Chicago and he's arranging a job for me.

[Visuals: Title: *Zakopane southern Poland*]

[Visuals: Zakopane market, Customers are buying goods from the vendors.]

Narrator: This was one of the things that made Poland different. Unlike most Western European countries, Poles have plenty of direct experience with the United States.

Man in green: America is definitely a friendly country for Poles. But you have to go to work there. Just like here.

Man in white: They have everything over there. They've got good, dependable jobs. But in Poland, what do we have?

Woman in black t-shirt: I will probably go there in a year. I have an uncle there.

Woman Handkerchief: My sister went there, she had one son, and she's been living there for 20 years. She built a house that's like no other.

Man grey: Do they go to get a tan in Miami Beach? They go for the money.

Narrator: Practically everyone we met had a relative living in the States, and many people travel back and forth all the time, looking to make some money...But there's a problem. And we heard about it everywhere we went.

Grzegorz Rybak, taxi driver: Here's the American Embassy.

Zbigniew Hubert Skudniewski, taxi driver: Here, people wait for many hours to get a visa. They act like they're doing you a favor. They don't respect you in that place.

Narrator: It turns out that the biggest issue in Polish-American relations these days is not about the war in Iraq or Osama Bin Laden – it's about who is allowed to visit the United States.

[Visuals: Visa line.]

Wojciech Cejrowski, writer: Those French dicks that hate you. They go to America whenever they please. They don't have to show no visa. They don't have to pay for the visa. They just show their French passport that hates you. The passport hates you and they enter. They can stay 90 days, 60 days. I have to apply for the visa. I have to queue. I have to pay like hundred dollars to get it or to lose my hundred dollars because some red tape and they tell me no. So French don't fight with you in Iraq. They don't give you their hearts but they

get the visas. Free access to America. We give you everything and we're not gettin' anything in return. We're like a woman who you beat.

[Visuals: Grzegorz Rybak seated at outdoor table.]

Rybak: If you think that if they opened up America's borders all the Poles would immediately pack up and go there, that's very wrong. It's not like everyone will leave here, and the last one will switch off the lights.

Skudniewski: I have no intention of taking jobs away from Puerto Ricans. You see we love this country and we want to make it better.

Narrator: We were starting to get the idea that for the Poles, America is no longer the shining city on the hill. Its global reach is more present than ever in Polish daily life. And we wondered if the United States would end up being just another unwanted visitor coming to take advantage of Poland.

[Visuals: POV driving in a car toward buildings in Warsaw.]

Rybak: Here you see the Palace of Culture. It was a present from the Soviet Union, a typical communist structure.

Skudniewski: We associate it with empty shelves.

Rybak: Yes, we once worked for the Soviet Union, and now we work for America and the West. Over here on this side, you see the Marriott Hotel. This is a typically American structure. I suppose I should also think of it as a gift, a present from the Americans. Over there you see the building put up by the Italians. This building here belongs to some corporation, a Western company of course. This is the Hotel Intercontinental also, of course, not ours. Ours is only this building, which is for poor Warsawians. We don't have anything that's ours in Warsaw... only poverty and nothing else.

Skudniewski: But us Warsawians love this city the way it is. We love it's holes, the dissolving asphalt

Rybak: Yes, exactly.

Skudniewski: We love it because it's our city, our capital. And America, of course we love America too.

Rybak: And I will wave to you from afar.

Skudniewski: Best of luck Americans.

Rybak: That's all, nothing else.

Skudniewski: And Americans don't be afraid of us Poles. You need us, and we don't need you. Maybe you prefer Puerto Ricans.

[Visuals: Taxi pulling away, picture fades out.]

[Title: The 100% American is 99% idiot. *George Bernard Shaw*]

Narrator: Once upon a time there was another English speaking power that held sway over the world militarily, economically, and culturally.

Van Badham, playwright: You go into the Imperial War Museum...It's my favorite place in London. In the Imperial War Museum there's a map of Europe in 1940. And there's this huge swastika that covers all of Europe, apart from Switzerland...(under her breath) buggers. And there's (in a high pitched voice) this tiny little island and it's saying, "No!" And you know, like, it's just and that's Britain, and that's British culture. If you want to understand British culture look at the tiny little island versus the Nazi war machine. And you just love them.

Sam: But, but...

Van Badham: But like the thing is. Those were the days when Britain was on the world stage, was a leading role...

Narrator: But Britannia hasn't ruled the waves for fifty years. So we had come to England to see how the Brits were coping with the situation.

[Visuals: Pedestrians crossing over bridge]

[Music ends]

Boris Johnson, Member of Parliament: The British find it very difficult to come to terms with the loss of their global preeminence. We feel a deep sense of hurt and loss that we used to run the world but we don't anymore. So in order to palette that insecurity, we tend to run ourselves down too much. And we're also snooty about the people who do run the world.

[Visuals: *Liverpool, England*]

Voice off camera: *What do you think about Americans?*

Man in Red T-shirt: Seems to be a bit big headed, to be honest with ya. Rule the world, want to rule the world.

Clown man: A bit outrageous, do you know what I mean, really outrageous. And they love everything big don't they? The lot, even the politicians, Mr Bush.

Man in Blue T-shirt: To be a winner is the be all and end all in America, from what we gather. And it isn't as far as were concerned.

Woman with Sunglasses: They're friendly.

Woman in Cowboy hat: Friendly at least when I run about they were.

Woman with Sunglasses: Bubbly, polite.

Man in Blue shirt: Free, rich, brash

Ian Hislop, editor *Private Eye*: We have a very split view of America in Britain. Half of it comes from the fact that we watch a huge amount of American television. And I think a huge number of people in this country sort of live in America in their heads. The other half of the view is a political view and it imagines America as sort of blundering series of clowns, um who..., wandering around the globe not knowing what they're doing.

Narrator: In the period after 9/11, it seemed like relations between our two countries had never been closer – at least on the level of President and Prime Minister.

[Visuals: George Bush and Tony Blair walking in the woods.]

George Bush: It's my honor to welcome the Prime Minister. We had a nice walk around Camp David and got to know each other. And as they told me he's a pretty charming guy. He put the charm offensive on me.

[Music starts: "*Don't Take Your Love From Me*"]

Bush: What this world needs is steady rock solid leaders who stand on principle. And that's what the Prime Minister means to me.

Blair: We, both of us, in different ways United States and Britain have a cause to be thankful for this alliance and this partnership.

Narrator: Going back to World War Two, Britain has been America's staunchest friend in Europe. In fact, the two powers had struck a bargain that had lasted for decades. America, the superpower, would provide protection and a chance for Britain to keep its finger in the pie of world affairs. Britain, in turn, would give its prestige and loyalty to America. It would be a "special relationship."

[Visuals: Reagan Thatcher]

Narrator: On paper, at least, it's a relationship of peers. But over the years many Brits can't shake the nagging feeling that Americans aren't always on the same page.

James Baker: The special relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom is strong. It is enduring. It is based on a number of different things, but we have been close friends and...

Toby Young, author: Even back in the Eighties, at the height of the kind of Thatcher-Reagan alliance. I went to Harvard, and I was there for a year. And I would, when I got there I would refer casually in conversation to the special relationship, imagining, you know, that my American peers would know exactly what I'm talking about and to a man they just didn't have a clue what that meant; they thought it was a sex thing. (With a New England accent) "What? A special

relationship? With who?" You know, it was like, you haven't heard of this, *great*.

Narrator: After years in Iraq, most Brits have turned cynical, wondering just what's so special about following America into messy entanglements.

BBC Correspondent: According to the White House, only the Presidents most important visitors are invited to stay the weekend at Prairie Chapel Ranch. That honor was bestowed upon Tony Blair earlier this year. Much of the British press had their own verdict on Blairs status. It's a view shared according to the latest polls by a majority of the British public.

[Visuals: London Dinner Party.]

Narrator: Nobody in Britain wants to think they're playing second fiddle to America either politically *or* culturally. It's especially vexing for the members of the educated upper-middle classes who dominate intellectual life.

Andrew Neil, journalist, BBC: A fashionable dinner party in London, they would be patronizing about America, they would be leftish. They would try to deny that they were anti-American. They would say that they're just anti-Bush, that they actually love the American people. By the American people all they mean, all they mean, are the three college professors they've met and the six viewers of PBS.

[Visuals: London Dinner Party]

[Classical music ends.]

Louise: I do think Americans are quite self conscious when it comes to dealing with Europe. Americans are the first nation to come from barbarians, to skip the civilized bit and to go into

Nic: -that consumerism. That's quite cool, that's quite cool, I like that.

Nic: But I watched his debates with Kerry and Bush, and I thought Kerry was *so* much more articulate, measured...

Hugh: Yeah, but the interesting thing is, the, what, what, what I...

Hoonie: (Off camera) But that's the, that's through European *eyes*.

Hugh: Yeah, what, what I thought...

Hoonie: (Off camera) That's the point!

Hugh: Yeah, but when Bush floundered and Kerry was glib and educated and this kind of thing, the whole of blue-collar America liked Bush, because he...

Nic: Because he's a real man!

Hugh: ...yeah, because they are inarticulate and not very well-educated as well.

Richard: The scary thing is the naivete and the ignorance of the American people in relation to their politicians.

Hoonie: Yeah, but they're, but they're the voters.

Richard: I *know* they are; that is the scary thing.

Louise: Why should, why should a whole sort of idiot society have intelligent politicians? (Overlapping with Richard) Because if you just...

Richard: Well, they haven't got intelligent politicians.

Louise: Well, exactly, why should they? I mean, if the idiot society just wants a car, a television, and you know, sort of, selfishness, why should they have interesting politicians?

Hoonie: Don't buy into that. Bush is much smarter than we think.

Richard: Hm.

Hoonie: Well, he's highly manipulative. He's highly... (Overlapping with Hugh)

Hugh: Yeah, he's highly manipulated as well.

Hoonie: What, what they actually said was he's not an intellect, but he's highly intelligent, and he *knows* what he's doing.

Louise: Yes, but there's no ideology is there?

Nic: Uncomplicated

Hugh: Yeah, uncomplicated

Louise: And they're ill-informed, and they're very insular.

Nic: And international news, you know, an American man ran over in Frankfurt.

<Laughing>

Will Self, novelist: Well I think the charitable view of the British response to the reality of what America is in the twenty first century is that it is divided. I think the uncharitable view is that it is blatantly hypocritical. You know, I waver between the two because often when I experience British people articulating knee jerk anti-American sentiments you do feel like say to them but you are sucking on this tit and meanwhile you're punching the other one. You know and you really can't do that it shows you up to be an extremely shallow person.

[Visuals: Intro to Whicker's World ITN, 1980]

Narrator: They may have disdain for us, but they can't seem to take their eyes off of us either. Ever since Dickens, the British have been fascinated and horrified by American society.

Goodrich, Instructor: GO!!

Whicker: Chris Palacci is 19 – a student and a city girl. She came from New York but seems to be adapting to the Wild West.

Goodrich: Kill him! You just saw him. Engage him! Kill him!!

Voice: Duck!!

Whicker: Hows she doing?

Scorekeeper: She scored a 9 and a 0.

Whicker: A 9 and a miss. That means you're dead again.

[Visuals: *1994* (Clive James Postcards from New York), New York skyline]

Clive James: I got mugged the last time I was here. The guy only wanted 25 cents for a cup of coffee but he had very bad breath. Since then I had been too scared to go back.

Narrator: Following in the tradition of the great Imperial explorers, an unending parade of TV personalities has made its way to the wilder shores of American culture. And America never fails to disappoint.

Lord Commander: I'm Thor Templar, Lord Commander of the North American sector.

Louis Theroux: Thanks very much. I'm Louie Theroux from BBC2.

Lord Commander: Welcome.

Theroux: What does the Alien Resistance Movement actual do?

Lord Commander: We monitor the extraterrestrials coming into the planet. One of our main goals is to help the individual whose being abducted and implanted. To remove implants from average individuals
...

Toby Young: British people do feel this terrible sense of inferiority. You know, because in the global pecking order we rank so far below America, we'll clutch at anything which enables us to feel even fleetingly superior to Americans. And that's one of the reasons the stereotype of Americans is of these kind of idiotic, kind of crazy, Jerry Springer-type freaks.

[Visuals: Jerry Springer Show "*Ragin' Maniacs*".]

Blonde Guest: Oh no hell no your ass is (beep) trash.

Brunette Guest: Oh really?

Blonde Guest: Yeah really.

Brunette Guest: No that's his decision.

[Visuals: Blonde and Brunette Guest fight.]

Audience: Jerry! Jerry! Jerry! Jerry! Jerry! Jerry! Jerry!

Narrator: It may be comforting for some Brits to see all these weird characters showing up on their TV's, but for others, the intensity of American culture can be something of an inspiration.

Richard Thomas, composer: The funny thing about the Jerry Springer Show is that sometimes I find it really moving. Sometimes I felt ashamed I was watching it. All these, all these conflicting emotions. Sometimes I was embarrassed for the people on the show. Sometimes I felt an anti-American upsurge. Other times I felt like a hypocrite. So it was really interesting.

Blonde Guest: (beep) Let me tell you something bitch. Let me (beep) tell you something.

Brunette Guest: Tell me.

Blonde Guest: Alright, (beep).

Richard Thomas: To the English mind set the knee jerk reaction was, oh it's just you know people on stage screaming at each other, a huge audience screaming at them. It was just a bleep fest. And I suddenly thought hang on this would be a great opera. And it really was a eureka moment. I thought like I have to do this. I'm gonna do this now.

[Visuals: LS of stage. A Male Audience Actor is singing.]

Male Audience Actor: Here he comes. (Singing)

Audience Actors: Jerry Jerry Jerry Jerry.

Male Audience Actor: Here he comes.

Audience Actors: Jerry Jerry Jerry Jerry.

[Visuals: Warm-up Guy jumping pointing upward. LS of stage, light shines on the top of the stairs where Jerry Springer appears. The crowd cheers. CU of Jerry waving to the crowd. He turns to the Security Guard and they together walk down the stairs to meet the Audience Actors. The Audience Actors continue to sing "Jerry Jerry!"]

Dean: When it first came out and my agent called me and said, "There's this great show, that you'd be great for", and he said it's *Jerry Springer - The Opera*, and I just thought, what a ridiculous idea.....

Carrie: Oh, so did I. I just couldn't think how they could do it.

[Visuals: Benjamin looking into mirror adjusting make-up.]

Dean: ...but that's what I think is so clever.

Carrie: Yeah. I think sometimes the more truth we play it, the kind of funnier and almost sadder it is, in a way. Isn't it?

Benjamin: I play Dwight. I'm a serial adulterer. I, I've got three women on the go. Peaches, the beautiful Carrie here. Her best friend Zandra. And I'm also three-timing them with a man. But, don't knock it till you've tried it. (Laughs.)

[Visuals: Dwight on stage with Chick with a Dick.]

Chick with a Dick: (singing) I love you, I love you!

[Visuals: Dwight knocks over Chick with a Dick.]

Audience: Chick with a dick with a heart. Chick with a dick with a heart. What a faggot! Butt boy!

Dwight: What the fuck, what the fuck, what the fuckin', fuckin', fuck!

Jerry: Ok, ok Dwight.

Stewart Lee, director *Jerry Springer The Opera*: As a British person you feel like this is a kind piece of American trash and what a shame that our culture is being affected by it. But it does seem to embody on some level some of the things that are great about America, namely,

freedom of speech and a certain kind of social equality in that everyone there is allowed to say what they want no matter how stupid and ill informed it is. And I think there is something noble about that genuinely.

Woman Babydoll: (Singing) This is my Jerry Springer moment.

Narrator: Watching the spectacle, we sensed a curious mix of superiority and envy towards America. There was the usual British infatuation with weirdos and trashy culture. But at the same time, there seemed to be a yearning for a kind of vitality that's missing in Britain.

Woman Babydoll: So dip me in chocolate, and throw me to the lesbians. I don't want this moment to dieeee.

Narrator: The America of Jerry Springer may be crawling with crazies, but it's also full of possibilities.

[Visuals: Camera zooms out while she sits on the swing. Two security guards walk over and push her in the swing]

Audience Actors: So dip her in chocolate and throw her to the lesbians, to the lesbians.

[Visuals: Audience Actors are holding up flower hoops and turning in circles - fade-MS of Woman descending stairs, Security Guards hold her hands.].

Stewart Lee: There were a couple of reviews of the show that said, "Look at these ridiculous Americans and the way that they are being portrayed isn't it great." And that was never our intention. But I think that why that is happening is not so much to do with the show but to do with the fact that people want an outlet for anti-Americanism. I mean the most commercial thing you could do in Europe at the moment, would be to write a explicitly anti-American show. If you made a film which is about George Bush being tortured to death for an hour and a half it would be massive all across Europe, everyone would go. I mean you wouldn't, you couldn't do it unless you had artistic merit.

[Visuals: KKK dancing]

Collective Singing: This is our Jerry Springer moment.

[Visuals: Various shots of the KKK dancing in unison.]

Collective Singing: We don't want this moment to die. So dip us in chocolate and throw us to the lesbians. We don't want this moment to die.

Will Self: Every single English class hates America in its own special way and every single English class loves America in its own special way. What they don't dare to acknowledge is that they are, you know, that their kind of mind set has been formed by America much more than they dare to think. And that they have taken on a lot of American values for themselves. And that really in attacking what they perceive to the USA they are attacking themselves.

Boris Johnson: You gotta understand what we Brits really deep down think about America. Shall I tell you the deep truth that your viewers have got to accept, and they won't like it. We basically think we invented you. And you're our creatures. And you're our proxies. And because you happen to be speaking our language. Which as Bismark correctly said was the single most important fact in world history. We take a proprietorial pride, secretly, in everything you do. So well done. And carry on.

[Music: White Cholera begins to play]

[Text on Screen: You can always count on Americans to do the right thing-after they have tried everything else. *Winston Churchill*]

[Visuals: American culture montage.]

Tony Judt: America is so present in everyone's lives, so present in everyone's minds, in their references. Everyone wants to be American without actually losing the right to say that America is misbehaving. So there's this sort of permanent love hate relationship.

White Cholera: (singing)

They've come to steal our women.

They've come to kill our boys.

They've come to shag our daughters.

They've come to break our toys.

Narrator: In the fifty years following World War II it was possible to look at Europeans and think that they were becoming more and more like us. ...But with the Cold War over and the Soviet threat gone, it could be that America and Europe have become more like a couple that have been married for years and suddenly realize that they don't have as much in common as they once did.

White Cholera: (singing)
Why do you feel the slant eyes?
Why do you feel...

Stewart Lee: As a kid, there's no place you're more excited about going. And when you first get to America, you're as fascinated by Mount Rushmore and the Grand Canyon as you are by just the packaging of twinkies and things like that because they all have a mythical status. And the problem now is that when you go there, because of everything that's happened within the last few years, you feel irritated and annoyed by the same things that used to delight you.

Christine Ockrent: But I think we have more in common than we think. It may be the old couple syndrome, but you know many old couples eventually come to terms with the idea that it's better to stick together than to go to the unknown.

White Cholera: (singing)
Well everybody's different.
So everybody's scared.
Go about your business but beware, beware!
At the cancer society jumble ...

Maciej Wierzynski: If I would try to give the piece of advice to my American friends, I would tell them try to learn languages. Don't think that everyone in the world speak English and go outside. Go to Europe. Go to Asia. Go to Africa and learn about the world as a whole.

White Cholera: (singing)
Everybody's different.
Everybody's scared.
We've got nuclear bombs and old King Kong and low fat diary treats.
So come on downnnnn.

[Visual: Black]

Boris Johnson: Well one thing I will say is we've got to get rid of the Windows spell check. A that a we got to get rid of the Windows spell check. And the word color, can I just inform you, the word color is spelt c-o-l-o-u-r, ok? Get rid of the Windows spell check and I think relations will be greatly improved.

[End credits music starts]

[Visuals: written and directed by louis alvarez, andrew kolker, peter odabashian]

[FINAL CREDITS]