

## SNL Rightly Touts Its Influence in ‘Live From New York!’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on June 15, 2015 - 11:32am

- [1975](#) [2]
- [Abramorama](#) [3]
- [Alec Baldwin](#) [4]
- [Andy Samberg](#) [5]
- [Chevy Chase](#) [6]
- [Dana Carvey](#) [7]
- [Garrett Morris](#) [8]
- [George Carlin](#) [9]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [10]
- [Jane Curtin](#) [11]
- [Julia Louis-Dreyfuss](#) [12]
- [Laraine Newman](#) [13]
- [Live From New York!](#) [14]
- [Lorne Michaels](#) [15]
- [Movie Review](#) [16]
- [New York City](#) [17]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [18]
- [Rudy Giuliani](#) [19]
- [Saturday Night Live](#) [20]
- [September 11th](#) [21]
- [SNL](#) [22]
- [Steve Martin](#) [23]
- [Tina Fey](#) [24]



Rating: **4.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Love, hate or maintain indifference to it, the TV dinosaur “Saturday Night Live” has and will continue to influence American culture as long as it may reign. To celebrate its 40th Anniversary, filmmaker Bao Nguyen takes a fresh look at the iconic television show in “Live From New York!”

To put the era in perspective, when I saw the first very first episode (October of 1975) I didn’t understand parts of it – it was unlike anything this teenager (at the time) from small-town Indiana had ever seen. A joke about two men doing a parody of the Geritol ads at the time – “my wife, I think I’ll keep her” – was light years ahead of that situation being a reality. And that is how Bao Nguyen approaches this documentary, with an eye towards how SNL broke barriers, and how it maintains a jaundiced view of the cultures, news and the world. It’s not so much a history of the show – although there is much of it to explore – as a timeline of their truth, and how it affected us, from the confused 1975 boy in Indiana to maybe another teenager, a budding young comedy geek sharing a sketch on their iPad in 2015.

On October 11th, 1975, “Saturday Night Live” made its debut, with the late great George Carlin as host, and veteran Canadian television guru Lorne Michaels as producer. It was a mishmash of bizarre sketch comedy – the Chicago based “The Second City” was highly represented in John Belushi, Gilda Radner and Danny Aykroyd – and off-the-grid acts. The first Weekend Update premiered that night as well, with anchor Chevy Chase.



‘Live from New York!’ It’s a Documentary About ‘Saturday Night Live’

*Photo credit: Abramorama*

That format expressed itself and evolved through 40 years. Weekend Update – a skewering of contemporary news and newscasters – continues to be on the show, and that strange mishmash has become a slickly produced (still by Lorne Michaels) variety show that hits, misses and keeps flailing, but continues to line up the sacred cows, and point out that they are just mammals.

It’s impossible to not give the show credit, I’ve been a watcher of it for all 40 years, but it is possible to judge the documentary. When the film was announced, there was my fear that it would be just another rote overview of the history of the show, done time and time again through its many anniversaries, reruns and specials. What director Nguyen did effectively was view it through the prism of its social influence, and question what it had done when faced with the program’s own human frailties of sexism, racism and their own show business cache.

It’s not as often as it used to be, but the documentary does highlight when the show really pushed the envelope. The early days were marked with an outsider’s point of view, heavily borrowing (in both the writers and performers) from the anarchistic National Lampoon attitude of comedy in taking no prisoners. The doc rightly points out that once Lorne Michaels first left the show in 1980, that attitude fell off the cliff. He returned, found some new comic footing in the 1990s, and has never looked back.

There are the usual talking heads, most of them very familiar, but stand-outs are surprisingly people like Julia Louis-Dreyfuss, who called her time on the show an “anti-golden age.” There are also conservative bloviators Bill O’Reilly and Rudy Giuliani, O’Reilly put in for the “see, even conservatives like us” and Giuliani to remind us of his role – once again – in September 11th. He gets a bit of a pass given that he was instrumental in SNL’s first show after the incident, which is still powerful and appropriate. Former cast member Will Ferrell rocked it that night, and gives an insider’s view on how he did it.



George Carlin on the First Episode of SNL in ‘Live from New York!’

Photo credit: Abramorama

Another remarkable point brought up in the documentary is how the show has progressed from an antique era where you actually had to watch the show at 11:30 (EST) on Saturday night or you weren’t “with it,” to the post digital age, where the show blew up a just-starting-out YouTube with “Lazy Sunday,” and former cast member Andy Samberg knowing that the first paragraph in his obituary will include “Dick in a Box.” SNL invented the wave, and rode it.

One of the most appropriate snippets that “Live from New York!” uses is from the 1970s tone poem “The Revolution Will Not be Televised,” while ironically showing that yes, “SNL” did televise part of it, and it has been absorbed and mainstreamed in the process, much like me, the teenager that watched the first episode, wondering what it all meant. To deconstruct a famous Chevy Chase line – “they are SNL, and we are as well.”

*“Live from New York!” has a limited release, including Chicago, starting on June 12th. Featuring interviews with Chevy Chase, Jane Curtin, Laraine Newman, Garrett Morris, Julia Louis-Dreyfuss, Dana Carvey, Alec Baldwin, Steve Martin, Tina Fey, Amy Poehler, Andy Samberg, Rudy Giuliani and Lorne Michaels. Not Rated*



[25]

By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [26]  
Writer, Editorial Coordinator  
[HollywoodChicago.com](http://HollywoodChicago.com)  
[pat@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com) [25]

© 2015 Patrick McDonald, HollywoodChicago.com

**Source URL (retrieved on Mar 29 2024 - 7:38am):**

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/25605/snl-rightly-touts-its-influence-in-live-from-new-york>

#### Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hankq>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/1975>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/abramorama>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/alec-baldwin>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/andy-samberg>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/chevy-chase>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/dana-carvey>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/garrett-morris>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/george-carlin>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/hollywoodchicagocom-content>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/jane-curtin>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/julia-louis-dreyfuss>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/laraine-newman>



[14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/live-from-new-york>  
[15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/lorne-michaels>  
[16] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/review.html>  
[17] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/new-york-city>  
[18] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/patrick-mcdonald>  
[19] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/rudy-giuliani>  
[20] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/saturday-night-live>  
[21] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/september-11th>  
[22] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/snl>  
[23] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/steve-martin>  
[24] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/tina-fey>  
[25] <mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com>  
[26] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#PAT>