

Review – Eric Andre: Legalise Everything

Having been a long-time fan of the Eric Andre Show I was interested to see how his anarchic brand of fearless “gross-out” humour would translate to a stand up special.

The Eric Andre show itself is a cult masterpiece. As a spoof of the Saturday night talk show format, Andre is a master of going to extreme lengths to make his unwitting celebrity guests always feel uncomfortable. He is constantly ready to pounce on anyone who looks too sure of themselves or any lull in the conversation with acts of comic madness. He will ask questions that can be either ridiculous or poignant, whichever puts his interviewee on the back foot.



Infamous meme generated from the show - Spice girl Mel B is asked about Margaret Thatcher's girl power after being hand fed funions by Hannibal Buress (Eric Andre Show)

Games and characters are introduced on the show seemingly at random to great fanfare – despite the fact they represent a 5 second gag or concept. The studio itself is constantly shifting, being destroyed and rebuilt at random. Andre’s desk itself becomes a character, when it is not being violently broken apart or spitting out coffee at unsuspecting D rate celebrities. People are shot, reunited with their white fathers despite being black, statements of little worth or meaning are given rapturous applause. There is nakedness, violence, cockroaches, rats and things falling from the ceiling (including two soldiers suspended in a compromising position - seal team 69). Andre will strip naked, mutilate himself or feign an emotional breakdown to try and break his guests, sometimes all three. Fights will start between the show staff and the house band, guests will be imitated by lookalikes, pyrotechnics and props will burst through the set - all whilst Hannibal Bures remains calm and collected in the background eating funions. You never really know who is in on the joke, or even if there is a joke – nobody is safe.



Eric Andre Show – Season 5 Opening Compilation

Andre would often perform an opening monologue/stand up routine in the style of the Johnny Carson Show, much to the dismay and derision of his co-host Hannibal Burress who is a professional stand-up comedian. My favourite example of this is “this isn’t your momma’s monologue” in which Andre purposefully loses the crowd with weak premises and punchlines. It was from this, as well as finding Eric Andres

comedic sensibilities hard to imagine translating to stand-up comedy that I had doubts about Legalise everything.

Sometimes it is good to be wrong, Eric Andre: Legalise Everything is a riot. If the Eric Andre Show was an impression of a talk show host, his impression of a stand-up comedian is just as interesting. The show starts with a street bit in which Andre imitates a police officer dispensing “goodies” from the evidence room, so far so familiar for established fans of his work.

On the stand-up stage Andre’s powerful physicality remains intact. He is at his jumping around, shrieking best and is not afraid to use his body as the punchline. I am sure some stand up purists may take issue with an act who must roll around on the floor to sell a gag. However, I cannot think of many acts who could pull off miming their little brother brushing his teeth with cocaine with the same fervour.

The show does touch on some radical topics such as police brutality, feminism, sex work and the war on drugs. All of which are subterfuge set ups Andre uses to about turn straight back into the surreal and perverse. For example, a bit about the plight of factory farmed animals quickly turns into a call for us the audience to start “titty-fucking” genetically modified chickens. The unpredictable energy from Andre’s other work carries through in this regard as he continuously undermines his own premises throughout the show, however as an audience it is also easy to believe in his storytelling. This is not achieved through wordplay or sincerity, but because it is easy to believe there is genuinely nothing the man would not do! Andre is also skilled at crowd work throughout. There was no cliché “what do you do for a living?” audience interaction, instead an audience members parents were brought out on stage to strip off and show how they were conceived.

Comedians who go for shock value can become tiresome quickly, and I would understand those who feel Andre does not have much else to say. I would argue there is nobody in comedy doing what he does, however. Especially one who could push the same limits and still somehow remain endearing. His material in the hands of a more cerebral comedian would be a brutal mess and that’s not to say there aren’t lighter moments in the show – a video call with an audience members unsuspecting mother or opening up about his Black and Jewish ancestry for example. The teasing here is gentle and shows a comedic range outside of the mania.

In summary, tucking your willy in between your legs might not be to everyone's taste, but god be damned if this man is not the master of that *particular* discipline! I am glad some danger and anarchy has been introduced to the slog of uninspired phoned in Netflix specials over the past few years, and I hope Eric Andre continues his stand-up experiment further.

Appendix

reddit. (n.d.). *r/TheEricAndreShow - Girl power (X-post /r/me_ira)*. [online]

Available at:

https://www.reddit.com/r/TheEricAndreShow/comments/6wtxby/girl_power_xpost_rme_ira/ [Accessed 5 Jan. 2021].

www.youtube.com. (n.d.). *The Eric Andre Show Season 5 Intro Compilation - YouTube*. [online] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f5VB_xKxfRs [Accessed 5 Jan. 2021].

Adult Swim. (n.d.). *The Eric Andre Show* [online] Available at:

<https://www.adultswim.com/videos/the-eric-andre-show/>.

www.netflix.com. (n.d.). *Eric Andre: Legalize Everything | Netflix Official Site*.

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