

**REVIEW****DVD Review: Andrew W.K. - *Who Knows?***

February 09, 2006

Pete Blackwell

Andrew W.K. stalks onto stage in a white t-shirt, faded blue jeans and sneakers scraggly hair covering his stubbled face. He leans over the electric piano and strums a simple line that sounds like it's his piano-lesson homework. His band is *huge*. It has to be at least three guitarists--not counting the mutton-chopped bassist, of course. He's even got *two* drummers. All of this crammed on to a tiny stage. The piano reaches a climax and then--everything explodes. The quarter-dozen guitarists, two drummers, mutton-chops on the bass; all that potential energy comes crashing down in a single instant. The crowd goes wild. Andrew W.K. goes spastic. And the song is probably the dumbest thing you've ever heard. Gloriously dumb. My god, is this guy for real?

As can be inferred from the title, this DVD really isn't about answering questions about partying. Hard. The genius of Andrew W.K., if you'd like to call it that, is that he pulls it off without ever coming across as insincere. His music is about pure energy and that's what he delivers. Even when an excessive bit of partying on stage caused him to perform several shows from the confines of a wheelchair, he still brings the marvellous energy like he's leading an extreme jazzercise class at the old folks home.

Mr. W.K., nee Andrew Wilkes-Krier (allegedly), grew up in Michigan where he--it's not as no surprise--took piano lessons as a child. At 17 he moved to New York City where he pursued songwriting and eventually assembled a band. As the DVD shows, he can assemble that band well beyond the bounds of necessity, but the sheer number of instruments pounding out W.K.'s simplistic music lend to it an impact and a mass appeal that are quite impressive to behold. *Who Knows?* gathers together live performances between 2000 and 2004--a period in which the band put on over 600 shows. In the DVD songs, the viewer is treated to snippets of Andrew's life that are, to say the least, interesting. More often than not, it's just a 30-second shot of Andrew staring intensely into the camera from his bare-bones bedroom. Other segments are eerily reminiscent of that freeze-frame in *The Ring*.

The question most everybody has when first encountering Andrew W.K. is: Is th

The songs are melodic, super-catchy pop-metal explosions that explore the the partying, partying hard, partying to the point of nausea, and pretty girls. There about how you better be ready to die because Andrew W.K. is coming over--to get the wrong idea, though. These are absolutely not songs about drinking, sex, assorted debauchery. They are about the purity of enjoyment and release. The unbelievably silly.

And that's where the genius comes in. Andrew W.K.'s songs are the musical ec Zen koans: they clear the mind thought, leaving behind only sensation and exp More so than any other "bad" music I've ever heard before, Andrew W.K.'s son be parodied. They are either emphatic works of self-parody themselves, or else heartbreakingly, almost touchingly, earnest. I'm not sure it matters which. For worth, the band plays it straight-faced to the end. They're there to rock out an some positive energy, and they bring down the house every time. There's absce self-consciousness to their shtick, if it is in fact shtick.

The DVD liner notes come no closer to answering any questions. Part of the text written by (supposedly) Andrew W.K.'s father that has a conspiratorial tone as that his son's persona is merely an extension of his own long-held philosophies rest of the text is a bizarre but entertaining messianic treatise on the power of rocking. Andrew's music, it says, "brings the boiling sonic magma to our ears--of impossible magisterial glory." You get the idea.

*Who Knows?* is a fun and enigmatic DVD, whether you're looking for that inner enlightenment or you're just looking for a rocking good time. Party on!



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