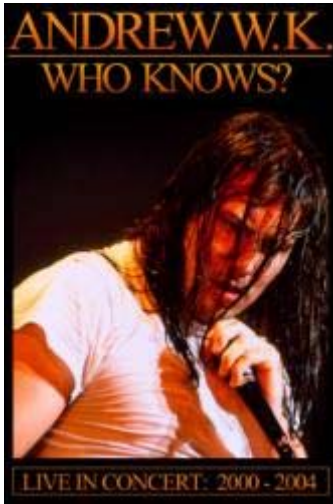


DRASTIC PLASTIC PRESS



ANDREW W.K.-WHO KNOWS? LIVE IN CONCERT 2000-2004 MVD

Ever since Andrew W.K. appeared before the world as The Jesus Of Party in 2001, there has been speculation that he is a hoax, a fraud, a pretender. That his motivational lyrics and fist-pumping music is irony and nothing more. If that's the case, it is heartlessly hurtful (as masked irony ultimately is), as it fools those that need the party more than anyone: the lost, the despised, the neglected, the lonely. The kids with little self-esteem and even less will to transcend it and become what they are. At the very worst, AWK isn't smiling with us. At best, he is The Savior of FUN. The metal dude with a heart. He's the drill sergeant for the dispossessed, encouraging his good-time soldiers to live for the moment, embrace life, become what you are. The reality is, naturally, a mystery, though there are enlightening moments in the new Andrew W. K. documentary, *Who Knows?* (the title playing off the ambiguity).

For those that don't know, AWK's music is, if nothing else, highly entertaining and original. His head-scratching amalgamation of heavy metal thrash & the sort of cheesy, uplifting pop music that was played over the end credits of John Hughes movies, is designed to make you MOVE; to do something—anything. On record, the songs have so many layers they nearly collapse under their own weight into pure noise (and make My Bloody Valentine sound like a lo-fi band). Live, with the help of two drummers, three guitarists, and the magnetism of Andrew W.K. himself, the tunes found on *The Wolf* and his breakthrough debut *I Get Wet* truly come alive. Watch AWK do the monkey, as well as his own brand of dance (imagine Donkey Kong rocking out), and try not to smile. His own ear-to-ear grin is like one of an untainted child, as is his enthusiastic clapping and aforementioned do-whatever-you-like dancing. The tunes say Work Hard, Party, You Can Do It, Party, Don't Give Up, Party, Embrace The Moment, Party. Become What You Are. There is little behind-the-curtain footage, but what is revealed offstage (in artsy, distracting, student film-like clips) is a very depressed-looking young man; it's as if he needs this music just as much as we do. On stage, at least, Andrew W.K. has become The Party, which is what he set out to do. For that alone he is an inspiration.

Those that get AWK, love AWK. This is their music. It's dorky, it's fun, it lives, it breathes, and most importantly, it doesn't care what you think. Yet, if you change your mind, you're always welcome to come aboard. And though it appears Andrew W.K. is not going to become the pop icon he surely wanted to be, to some he is The Jesus Of Party. In the end, isn't that all that matters?

--Bart Bealmear

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