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## DVD Review: *Andrew W.K.: Who Knows?*

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**Posted: 2/16/06**

That's not my characterization; that's what the back of the back of the DVD case says. It's a pretty tough statement to contest, and not only because it doesn't seem to make any sense. The new concert DVD *Andrew W.K.: Who Knows?* is fairly definitive proof that the man (hereafter Mr. W.K.) is truly somewhere between being real and being *forever*.

On the existence side of the spectrum, things are pretty unclear. Even our evil digital overlords have to admit to being a bit confounded by Mr. W.K. Wikipedia begins "It is believed that Andrew W.K. was born in Los Angeles..." Is he a yeti or something? The fascist database continues, "Many contradictory versions of Andrew W.K.'s history and rise to celebrity have coexisted, with some of the contradictions seemingly coming from Andrew himself, however the source of the confusion is difficult to pin down. As a result, some have claimed he is an actor merely playing as a rock star." What the difference between a rock star and an actor playing one might be is only the least of the questions that remains unanswered by even the smartest-acting of websites. All the super-archive seems to be certain about is that his "real" name "is" Andrew Wilkes-Krier and that he is known for, among other things, "his powerful 'party hard' message." (To find out what the party-hard message is, download the music video "Party Hard" from the iTunes music store).

But it's a message that has sometimes come across *too* powerfully. The cover art for his first album (*I Get Wet*, 2001) features Mr. W.K. with matted hair and blood pouring out his nose, covering his mouth, chin and neck. This sparked a controversy in (you guessed it) Europe because it was seen as glorifying cocaine use. Mr. W.K explained to the media that the massive nosebleed was actually the result of an intentional face-plant into a cinder block (although Wikipedia alleges that the effect was enhanced with corn syrup) and not drug abuse, thus demonstrating that his idea of a party is safe and society-friendly.

Presumably in order to clarify his transcendent and eternal message (seemingly lost in the much more corporeal and existent party context) Mr. W.K. has released a DVD that isn't just about concerts, but also about wisdom. Behold:

"We do what we do because it's what we're doing."

"This feeling is nothing. Or, it's as close to nothing as I can get, because the only place it's impossible to get is nowhere."

"...And I am here now to do this. Not because I want to do it, but simply because it feels good."

Think about it. Coming to terms with the difference between "do" and "doing"?

Emotionally approaching the infinite limit of absolute nothingness? Forcing yourself to do things that you don't want to just because you feel good? Truly, these are eternal insights.

In addition to his aphoristic philosophical musings and concert footage, the film (and it should be considered such) also includes what look like chopped up pieces of a music video directed by David

Lynch. The first chapter on the disc features Lynch's trademark "camera slowly flying around the room and then zooming in on nothing as weird droning sound gets louder" shot. A dingy frameless bed on a dingy floor gets intense treatment, then cut to voiceover and skyscrapers. Similar moments are peppered throughout the film. Towards the end the flying camera returns to the dingy bedroom to show a struggling Mr. W.K. trying to force his way out from behind the discolored mattress and making sounds like an asthmatic gorilla from the future. There are also 30-second clips of his mouth open as wide as it can go, making dying dinosaur sounds. One time he stares at you through an ajar bathroom door. The meaning of these moments, like so many others in the film, is difficult to grasp. What is clear is that there is more to this man than his hard-line party ideology.

These heavier themes and cinematic advances are not the main thrust of the DVD. Mainly, Mr. W.K stresses, through both his performances and the bulk of his narration, a strong commitment towards inclusion.

"It is my absolute honor and privilege, responsibility, and my job to make as many people feel good as possible. We don't have fans; we have friends. And these are the greatest days of my life and all they are revolving around is the intensity of so many friends. Life's too short. Everyone's invited to this party. Doesn't matter who you are or what you like, what you taste like, what you act like, what you like, what you don't like, if you like *you*, if you like things in general, if you're happy to be here, *come inside!*"

The only criteria for being an Andrew W.K fan - excuse me, one of Mr. W.K.'s friends - are that you like a) yourself and b) things and c) being here. Self, other entities, localization in space. If you are subject to the fundamental ontological conditions of human being, Mr. W.K. likes you.

Moreover, he's not afraid to come out and say it. After claiming that the W.K. stands for "who knows?" (this happens while the flying camera examines the skyscrapers) and the credits roll (with sentimental piano music) Mr. W.K. begins the narration proper by addressing his audience. "Look, I can't wait to see this and I can't wait to show this to you, to anybody. I'm showing it to myself." I didn't understand that the first time I heard it. I didn't really understand any of it. I'm not sure that we are meant to, or that Mr. W.K. has any idea what he is saying. All I have come to realize is that I too can't wait to show this DVD to you or to anyone else, even myself.

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