



BloodSugarSexMagic

Unlikely ethicist Andrew W.K. on porn and marriage.

by Ada Calhoun

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With the sincere gaze of a missionary, a [0.6](#) from Pitchfork (for the hotly contested hit *I Get Wet*) and a wardrobe consisting almost entirely of white T-shirts and white jeans, Andrew W.K. is far from cool right now. But the winningly earnest singer, intense enough to give himself a bloody nose for his first album cover and over-the-top enough to inspire speculation that he's a performance artist, is remarkably philosophical for a partier, and entirely successful as a capital-r Rock sex symbol, bridging the psychosexual gap between J. Mascis and Sebastian Bach.

But while Andrew W.K. sings a lot about getting hard or wet, he's been almost mute on the subject of his own sex life. Aside from the far-from-revealing song "Wanna Make Sex," a *Playboy* [article](#) that determined he was "definitely an ass man" and a strange, wonderful, middle-of-the-night *Cornerstone* magazine [interview](#) about pornography, he's mostly avoided the subject. We spoke with him by phone from his Manhattan apartment at ten in the morning about what he left out of his new special-effects laden concert video, *Andrew W.K.: Who Knows?*
— Ada Calhoun

There's not a lot of narration in the movie, which covers four years of touring around the world, but what there is suggests you subscribe to an old-fashioned sense of showmanship. You work very hard to make people have a good time.

Yeah, I don't know if I would call that old-fashioned or if I would call it traditional. Obviously there's a lot of audience involvement, and the thinking was not to treat the performance as an audience-vs.-performer situation but that the line between who's performer and who's audience is blurred.

The shows are almost like religious revivals.

I'm glad you think people are that passionate about it. It's clear that it's not all coming from me.

I saw you live four or five years ago here in New York, and I remember feeling kind of worried for you. There were so many people onstage.

I think it spread as this word-of-mouth expectation that the point was to get as many people onstage as possible. There's actually a moment on the DVD in the bonus footage of this show in Atlanta: the band came out and played the introduction song, then when I came out, the entire stage was full of people. I couldn't tell what was going on. I said, "Where's the stage?" It looked like I had walked right into the crowd.

One theme that comes across is that you're atoning for a former life of crime. You mention stealing.

A lot of the narration in the movie is taken from interviews I've done. The beginning, about stealing money, that was when I was working at a lot of jobs, primarily back in Michigan before I moved to New York, but in New York as well. I would run various schemes to take money from the job. You know, not usually very much, but it was stealing nonetheless. And in the context of that interview I was talking about not wanting to disappoint my parents when they found out about me stealing. For a few years I told my mom that the reason I would get fired from a job was, "They have too many employees." Or "Somebody came back, I was asked to leave." But years later I ended up telling her.

Was there something specific that happened that turned you from a thief into such a good person?

Well, I got mugged when I was about nineteen or twenty in New York on my way to work one day. When that happened I said, okay, well, clearly I've never mugged anybody, but I can't wish these things won't happen to myself and then essentially do something like that to someone else.

Is it true you never drink or do drugs?

No, I've never been dry or straight edge. I didn't drink or do drugs until I was twenty-one, but it wasn't a formal idea I was working with. Back then, I had a lot of friends who were really into drinking and drugs, and it was around enough that I almost felt like I was doing it without doing it. It was fun times either way. Now I enjoy drinking and anything else.

The movie doesn't reveal much about your personal life. I was left curious about what your love life was like during those four years.

There were parts where I wasn't seeing anybody at all and there were some parts where I had a very committed relationship, but I wasn't around very much, so it was difficult to sustain any kind of substantial relationship. But there were relationships that were had, and they were fine.

Is it true you dated Melissa Auf Der Maur [formerly of Hole and Smashing Pumpkins]?

Yes.

That seems like a strange and interesting coupling.

Yeah, I would agree. I also thought it was a very strange match. But I thought it was a good time. I feel good about that.

I found a great interview you did in the middle of the night with *Cornerstone*. I liked what you said about grappling with the good and bad aspects of porn. What's your take on that now?

Now, I think not everything needs to be shared and not everything needs to be good, and not everything needs to fit into some kind of moral code. I don't feel like I have any better understanding of it now, but I think I feel better about not understanding. What empowers anything erotic with meaning or with the ability to excite can go against ethics that we might have, but I don't think it's bad to experience that kind of conflict. I don't feel guilty and I don't feel good about it. A lot of what I worried about with pornography was, are the people involved here happy? I didn't want to support something that was leading to someone else's downfall. But now I don't think viewing it is going to matter either way. And maybe things that are upsetting, that are sad, that are dark, that are bad, are just as genuine as good things, in keeping with the general theme of fantasy.

The things that turn you on are not necessarily things you rationally approve of.

Yeah, I agree. It used to seem like I needed to have everything fit into this template. You know, at this moment, the sheer thrill of going against my own instinct seems to make me feel better. I don't want to feel bad about feeling good, you know?

Are you single?

No, I have a girlfriend.

I've heard you're very into the idea of marriage and family.

Sure. I've been most successful as an individual when I've been in a very focused and committed relationship. I mean a relationship that's very free, not like "free love," but one without any expectations. From what I've seen so far of my personality, it lends itself well to that kind of stability and freedom at the same time. I really want relationships — friends, romantic, otherwise — that are based on no expectations and ultimate freedom. Ultimately, I think that makes it more meaningful and more significant when you decide to spend time with and to give yourself to the other person.

It's refreshing to hear you're excited about marriage. It gets such a bad rap, but it can be fun and exciting and dangerous.

Yeah, it's a big risk. Sometimes it's been presented to me by people who have never been married as something you don't want to do. But it's not supposed to be easy. It's not supposed to be like anything else you've done. That's kind of the point of doing it, right?

It sounds like you will make an excellent husband.

I'm working on it every day

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