

WFMU's Beware of the Blog

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The Kaufman's Dead (Long Live Andy)



Reading the account of Bryce's meeting, or near meeting, or fictive meeting with Andy Kaufman in [Weird NJ](#) (the story's not online, unfortunately, you have to buy the hard copy) just reminded me of the genius of Kaufman's hoaxes. Most people who read the story of the press conference Bryce was invited to in a New Jersey hotel room were probably left thinking Kaufman wasn't really there - and most people do seem to think he's dead. But even if it wasn't a hoax of Kaufmanesque proportions, it was a good one.

Or not. Whatever. The point is just that it got me thinking about Kaufman's genius. What was so great about him, throughout his career, was that he was a comedian who didn't make jokes. He pulled stunts, he talked in funny voices, but he pretty much never made a joke. His career wrestling women was without doubt his greatest non-gag.

So I was all the more happy then when I found out that *My Breakfast With Blassie* was coming out on DVD. Spinning off *My Dinner With Andre*, Andy's 70-minute breakfast encounter with wrestling champion Fred Blassie is hilariously mundane. The pair meet at a Sambo's in LA, Kaufman in a neck brace after his recent run-in with Randy Savage. The younger fighter shows nothing but respect for the "champeen." He stops to say grace before touching his pancakes. They discuss hand-shaking and hand-washing at length. When there aren't any jokes, everything becomes funny.

Which is what's so brilliant, and eventually I need to say spoiler alert here I guess, but this is why Andy Kaufman was, is, the best comedian. There's no way to read him. There's no way to tell if Blassie, or the women at the table next to them who Kaufman alternately insults and tries to pick up, are in on the joke. And that's the joke. The funny, funny joke.

The DVD includes a lengthy unedited reel from the shoot which reveals that, of course, but not, but you can't tell, but you don't know what to believe, that this breakfast wasn't shot in real time, that it wasn't unscripted. It was a hoax. Of course it was, because the world couldn't really accommodate Andy Kaufman. He had to make room for himself for the short time he was here. Unless he still is. I'm not sure. Ask Bryce.

Posted by Kurt Gottschalk on July 07, 2009 at 07:36 AM | [Permalink](#)

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