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Grad Research: Absurdity and Authenticity in Comedy at SXSW

by American Studies

Today, we're sharing a piece by one of our contributing writers, Carrie Andersen, who recently wrote about her experiences watching and reviewing comedy shows at South by Southwest. The full piece can be found at [Humor in America](#), a blog dedicated to comedy and humor in America that was founded by UT American Studies alum Tracy Wuster.

This year, South by Southwest's comic offerings highlighted a variety of styles which were bookended with pure absurdism and unadulterated rawness. The full range of humor left audiences on their toes, but it's the latter form that I am continually drawn to and that speaks to some broader compulsion to excavate authenticity wherever we can find it.

*I think we've seen a rise in raw, authentic, deeply personal – and sometimes cringe-inducing – comedy in the past ten years. We've been blessed with shows like *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and *Louie*; comics like Marc Maron, Louis C.K., Mike Birbiglia, Doug Stanhope; movies like *Borat*.*

These examples point to the integration of the personal in the comic narrative. Louie, for example, is funny in part because the title character is an extension of the real Louis C.K. As C.K. told Terry Gross, "The guy I am in the show is definitely me without anything I've learned. It's just me making horrible mistakes that I don't make in real life, but that are inside of me. They're the things I would do if I didn't think for a second." Louie is the id to C.K.'s superego.

Check out the full piece here.

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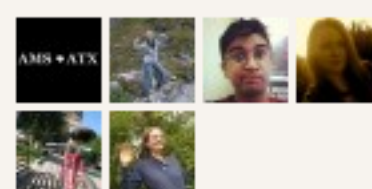
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