

The George Carlin Sanity Test

You could say I grew up watching George Carlin.

He was always my favorite rhetoric-ist. The most logical. The most reasonable. He was in effect my only access to what I now know as the Trivium.

In my first 25 years of life, George Carlin's material truly made me laugh at what could only be defined as Carlin's hyper-realistic perspective stand-up routine. It was the most harsh and abusive form of truth intervention for the entire human species – and yet it was masked brilliantly as comedy.

At around age 25, I attended an event in Las Vegas that was the beginning of my own transformation and incremental arrival into the over-exposure of hyper-reality Carlin spewed. This event was George Carlin, live at the Bally's Casino resort. How wondrously excited I was to see up close and personal one of my few Idols in life. And the show went on...

But something was different.

Something just didn't feel right.

George wasn't the problem, for he was delivering his material just as rehearsed-ly as he always had, mentally re-ciphering eerily associative memory poems with endless lists of material and anecdotal stories with an almost autistic flair.

No, the problem laid elsewhere... It was the crowd. And it was myself.

I realize now as I listen to archives of the HBO and large older productions of Carlin's televised stand-up routines that the audiences were given a bit of help. Laugh tracks were used to either replace or augment the seemingly jovial nature of the large audiences. Years of working in Hollywood sound departments helped my ears confirm the false stereo and room

placement effect of certain “callers” within the otherwise echo-effected hall – their outbursts were out of place and sometimes non-situational. In other words, fake laughing was added to create the typical sitcom fake audience.

As I listened intently to and watched the live body language of the same old Carlin I was used to up on that stage, it seemed to me that somehow the material had changed... yet inevitably it had stayed exactly the same, with the same timeless delivery.

Have you ever wanted something so bad that in your mind you allowed it to be what you expected, even when you knew it was not? This was how my own cognitive dissonance played havoc on my conscious that night. For I realized something very disturbing as this man spoke with contempt.

George Carlin is not being funny. He is not telling jokes. In fact, George Carlin isn't actually funny.

His disturbing truth is such a blow to anyone-whom-might-be-listening's ego that the accepted response is a nervous laughter to match that of the crowd. I would bet that Carlin's last thought before he received his standing-ovation and final laughs and cheers for the night was that each and every audience member out there cheering, at one time during this routine tonight thought to him or herself: *“Yeah... the asshole he's joking about right now is me...”*. I'd even imagine he could feel and almost taste the difference in tonal quality between those who laughed genuinely and those who laughed to cover up their horror and dissonance relating to Carlin's hyper-accurate satire.

For truly, no man has ever laid out the reality of the American way of life than did this man. No common blood man in his right mind can possibly think that anything Carlin stated about the actions and control by elite forces of the common man could be even close to funny. For George was revealing

nothing but the rawest of reality, tearing it wide open, and relinquishing it upon the audience like a plague of truth. And I would imagine that George, if impossibly presented with this statement today, would simply and logically conclude that: *'this very reasonably must mean that none of them are in their right mind. My statements, that are not jokes but instead a guide to the revelation of hell on earth, are greeted with belly-laughing and idiotic group-think cheers by 90% of the population?'*

And so I laughed miserable and false laughs all night, wanting to fit into the crowd, and sometimes without really smiling, while in my heart I was taking in everything this brilliant commentator projected as his world view. In short, as far as comedy routines go, this one was horrific. I could sense the same reaction throughout the arena; while much of the audience went through the familiar simulation of comedy. But his words rang true, and I couldn't help but notice the same disappointed sentiment traveling randomly throughout the audience.

Now, many years later, I know what I was feeling was not disappointment in a show that was not necessarily very funny, but instead I was empathizing with George's live emotional state. He never laughs at his own "jokes". He seldom tells any jokes, other than to cleverly end one of his painfully real appeals to reason and logic with an anecdotal happenstance.

No, the problem wasn't George's material, it was that his material was working on my soul... and it wasn't funny.

And so I ask you to take the time to do a little experiment on yourself, like I did.

Here is a video of Carlin's finest political satire and truth telling with laugh tracks added for effect. Click it and see if you laugh at his truth-telling. Perhaps the question "are you awake" fits nicely here, for those awakened to the truth

of Carlin's words would never justify laughing at not only their own sick society-based disposition but the very sickness of society and the government that kills to protect that sickness.

Maybe it's just me, but I found this to be more sobering than any State of the Union speech ever delivered:

No smiles...

No laughs...

Just an agonizing presence and sobriety on stage mixed with hopeless comedic simulation with visions of a fat paycheck at the end. Here, truly was a man without hope, abandoning his faith in humanity long ago.

Now you might go watch the pain and contempt we call the *comedy* of Bill Hicks and see how it feels. I stopped laughing at him too.

This is the George Carlin sanity test – an experiment for the analysis of your own state of mind. I hope you passed, and I wish I could personally tell George *I get it man... I finally get it. And you are not a funny man. Just a misunderstood brilliant prophet of the times.*

From: <http://www.sott.net/article/271833-The-George-Carlin-Experiment-how-did-you-react>

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