

Fox TV's Method Man and Red Show: Hip Hop Minstrelsy

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I don't watch that much television, when I do, for the most part, I watch to discern the spin/propaganda, social values and subliminal messages the media mind controllers are employing to indoctrinate us. Last week my wife jokingly suggested we watch the new Fox television series *Method Man and Red*.

That particular evening the network was airing an encore presentation of an earlier episode which strategically was shown immediately following one of the few shows I watch and enjoy on a regular basis, **The Bernie Mack Show**.

Lately the Fox network has been bouncing Bernie Mack (whose show is not only funny but well written) all around and it has been hard to keep up with the schedule changes. The concept of *Method Man and Red* centers around the misadventures of two hard core rappers, (Method Man and Redman playing themselves) who move into an exclusive, snobbish, white bread suburban neighborhood. Basically the show is a Hip Hop variation of the old school television series *The Beverly Hillbillies* and a much raunchier version of *Movin' On Up*. This situation is supposed to generate comedy from the culture shock/clash between Method Man and Red's Neuve rich, raw, let it all hang out lifestyle and values and their white upper class snooty neighbors; one of whom has a adolescent son who idolizes the rappers and hangs out in their house.

The show uses music video production values to capture a youthful audience: the extravagant materialism (bling-bling) of successful celebrities, scantily clad females in almost every scene many placed strategically in the background to stealthfully titillate and stimulate the reptilian brains of those who watch the program. The plot lines are juvenile and based on the show I saw offer no redeeming values or messages other than re-enforcing the prevailing message of mainstream corporate media in general and much

of commercial Hip Hop in particular: the promotion of wayward irreverence, incivility and disrespect, crass materialism, misogyny and racial stereotypes of the worst kind.

When the Bernie Mack show went off I left the room but my wife, out of curiosity, continued to watch the Fox channel. She called me about ten minutes into the show. Fortunately she taped the part of the program I missed. I watched in disgust as the “plot” unfolded. In this episode the duo, Method Man and his live in side kick, Redman, went about their daily routine of hosting a bevy of female groupies, walking around their mansion doing nothing; they are not shown rehearsing their stage act, writing songs, or going over their business schedule; they do nothing! The sub-story lines revolved around Method Man and Red worrying about an upcoming article to be written about them by a journalist from a Hip Hop Magazine who just did a hatchet job on fellow rapper Fifty Cent, Method Man’s mom (the loud, neck jerkin’ eye rolling, hand on her hip say anything out her mouth type) played by veteran actress Anna Maria Horsford who while mooching off her son, just wants some privacy, her own room which was off limits to her son’s hangers on and skeezer groupies and the next door neighbor’s son (the requisite white family to provide the tension and “comedy”) who was in crisis because he needed Method Man and Red to save his precarious pubescent self-image because his mother had planned a birthday party which would make him the laughing stock of his school.

So in one episode we have the stereo-typical loud sassy black woman (mother), the geeky white boy who wants to be down with Hip Hop, his upper class, clueless mother, Method Man and Red who no longer live in the “hood” trying to convince the reporter they are still hard core homies and a synthetic laugh track that insults anyone mindless enough to watch this nonsense.

As if that wasn’t bad enough, strategically placed in the cast is a twenty first century version of Steppin Fetchit, a character named Dupree one of Method Man and Red’s hangers on and gofer who is so airheaded he makes Method Man and Red look brilliant; as hard to fathom in the context of this show as that is. Watching this mess, it is hard to believe in 1953 the NAACP actually petitioned CBS demanding they take Amos ‘n Andy a television minstrel show that centered around the lives of big city blacks (several characters in the cast spoke in rural dialect and mangled English) off the air yet fifty years later the organization says absolutely nothing about a show like Method Man and Red?!

The really sad thing about this show is that black people, unlike the 1950's Amos 'n' Andy Show, are part of the decision making process, black folks are directly responsible for the images, vulgarity and content of Method Man and Red! The credits list Method Man as one of the Executive Producers and Redman as one of the producers. I’m all for poking fun at ourselves, laughter has helped us endure some truly horrific situations and experiences at the hands of white people in AmeriKKKa, but in my opinion the Method Man and Red Show is a modern offshoot of the buffoonery and debasement of the minstrel shows of a not so bygone era. The hook they are using to attract a younger generation to this type values indoctrination are the musical guest stars, the Hip Hop

backgrounds of the protagonists and the decision of the producers to “keep it real” and push the envelope by using more vulgarity, more titillation, more stereotypes and Hip Hop music video production values. In one scene Red says, “We get more butts than an ashtray.” Anna Maria Horsford’s character is made to utter things like , “All I want is for one room in this house to be skank free.”

Unfortunately the images and dialogue go downhill from there. To get Method Man and Red to come to his party the little white boy says, “There will be a lot of Asian mothers there.” The duo goes ga-ga over the prospect of hooking up with some Asian women and they plot a way to attend without the reporter knowing. Artistically Method Man and Red are really bad. It may not even last long, unfortunately I suspect it will be a trend setter. It will set the stage for more shows of this type unless we let the networks know we will not tolerate this type of programming.