

# “Howie Do It” entertains with stupidity

BY FRANKLIN R. CLINE  
Reviewer

I know it seems like one of the lamest, most derivative, downright stupid shows on television right now — and “Howie Do It” very well might be. However, in spite of itself and because, like Howie Mandel’s other hit NBC show “Deal or No Deal,” it celebrates the dangerous truth that all pop entertainment needs to do in order to succeed is please some infantile part of our brain, “Howie Do It” is a genuinely amusing and engaging piece of nonsense that will leave you neither worse nor better for having watched it.

That doesn’t mean the show has any intrinsic value or stays with you. It’s only memorable in the

loosest sense of the word, as in, for some reason I will always carry with me the knowledge that this show did, in fact, exist. I was warned by a friend that this show was so bad, so ignorant and so mindless that I would only be able to watch about a minute of it, which wasn’t at all the case. I wound up watching two full episodes back-to-back on Hulu.

It was correct for all the obvious reasons. “Howie Do It” certainly is not reinventing the wheel, right down to its sleazily charismatic host, Mandel, who has somehow finally made it after years toiling in obscurity, alternating between children’s programming and a blithe stand-up routine. It’s a wonder how somebody like Howie now is on NBC two



Courtesy of www.nbcumv.com  
Howie Mandel is the host for the new show “Howie Do It,” and despite the slapstick pranks, the humor falls flat.

nights a week and heavily publicized during prime time every night of the

week, because the guy just doesn’t seem like he would be fun to get to know or

spend time with, and it’s never particularly exciting to see him on television.

So what’s the upside to watching this waste of time? Well, for one, it does waste time. This show seems to be made for airports or, even better, elevators — any place where people sit for a period of time. It’s certainly not something that anyone would feel compelled never to miss for one reason or another, and understandably so. I doubt that it gets that many hits on Hulu, especially when one could watch new episodes of fresh, intelligent, memorable shows like “It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia” or “The Office.”

Some of you might be confused by what appears to be wavering on my part to make a decision as to

whether this show is totally devoid of any purpose, and to be honest, I’m not entirely sure. In fact, I’m really conflicted.

On one hand, I knew that I was watching something that was utterly mindless, certainly little more than filler between commercials to NBC.

On the other hand, it legitimately is funny to see a starving, needy actor dress up like a pig, roll around in mud, and obliquely remind a child (who was in on the joke) about her recently-deceased father. This whole show really is one big gray area where the viewer is entertained, but feels so dirty and simple-minded as a result.

Only watch “Howie Do It” if you can turn off your brain for 30 minutes.

## Tour de force arrives at Wrongdaddy’s for weekend jam

BY JOHN HITZEL  
Reviewer

Wrongdaddy’s hosted a tour de force of musical mayhem Saturday, and if you weren’t there, I’m sure you’ll be hearing about it. All my dance muscles were sore as I wrote this on Sunday. Arriving at 9:15 p.m., I gave the doorman my money, who then wrote on my hand and let me enter just in time to get a drink as the first act took the stage. I ran into Blues Hog hanging out in the audience. They were sipping on some pre-show brews, excited to play later, smiling and thanking me for coming out.

Opening act Savage Henry (formerly known as BiPolar Bear) blasted through their 45-minute set. Professor of communication James Cianciola wailed on the axe, Mike Hunsaker held the low end down and new drummer Joey Crifo thrashed and thumped his way through. They sound as if Led Zeppelin and Nirvana procreated and time-traveled back to the late ’80s, resulting in a grungy beast of a boy with good pipes, heavy chords and tasty melodies.

The seating was full, so I meandered through the standing room until I was close enough to make out faces and read the stickers on the bass drum. They grabbed me during the first song, an original, when Cianciola closed his eyes and tore into his solo with a stratospheric, bendy flutter way up on the fret board, shredding his six-string and melting faces, mine included. Then another original, “Passion Play,” waltzed heartily, more melodic than metal. During the set, Bill (Willy) Newell, the keyboardist for Blues Hog, joined them. Afterward, they moved to covers, playing heavy versions of “Tainted Love,” “Melt with You” and a gentler “Stand by Me.” Later, two of the trio left the stage so the bassist could do a heartfelt solo singer-guitarist piece, turning the noise way down compared to the trio’s mosh-inspiring presence. Overall, their presence was humble, but their sound was big.

At 10 p.m. promptly, headliner Blues Hog took the stage, with Tony Kroeger on drums, Newell on keys, Paul Niehaus on guitar and Luke McDuff on bass. Immediately, their soulful, Allman Brothers-esque,

full blues ensemble sound was apparent. Their second song blues-ified “Let the Good Times Roll” through a shuffle rhythm, filling a dance floor which didn’t empty until last call. Niehaus executed a classic bluesman move — the old call and response — throughout the show, but bringing it out early really got the crowd into the act. In fact, the crowd behaved more like a fifth member of the band, energizing audience members who would otherwise have just sat and stared to get up and groove. Any band would be lucky to have these enthusiastic, blues-starved super-fans cheering them on and dancing without encouragement. Props to the audience for bringing the exhilaration.

The bass was getting funky, booty-shakin’ good, pushing the groove ahead, and once the song ended, some crowd members just kept on dancing without any music.

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I noticed that Niehaus had stuck a queen of hearts playing card into his Stratocaster’s pick guard, whose spicy red finish matched the bold color of the card.

Saxophonist senior Adam Yanick joined them for the rest of the first set, filling in what little space the band had left him with a blanket of thick sax draws and sock-hopping bop. His presence further juiced the crowd, who cheered after every solo and nearly every riff. He managed to somehow pack more people into the dance floor, which had become a sweaty throng of flailing skirts and untamed toes, loose untucked shirts and out-of-place bros, jiving shoulders and full-on smiles.

After the exothermic thrall of those first pieces with the sax, the band smoothed out into a moving rendition of The Band’s “The Weight,” probably so that their audience could breathe a little. Returning from the bar for the third time, I noticed a washboard had been set in front of the drum riser. Newell picked up a shaker for “Down by the Riverside,” then Niehaus picked up the washboard and a tambourine, then McDuff picked up his own shaker during the drum solo, and the result put the crowd right back where they were before “The Weight.” Afterwards, Crifo, the drummer from the opening band, grabbed the washboard and the tambourine while Niehaus donned his Strat.

“Hey, we’re gonna slow it down now.”

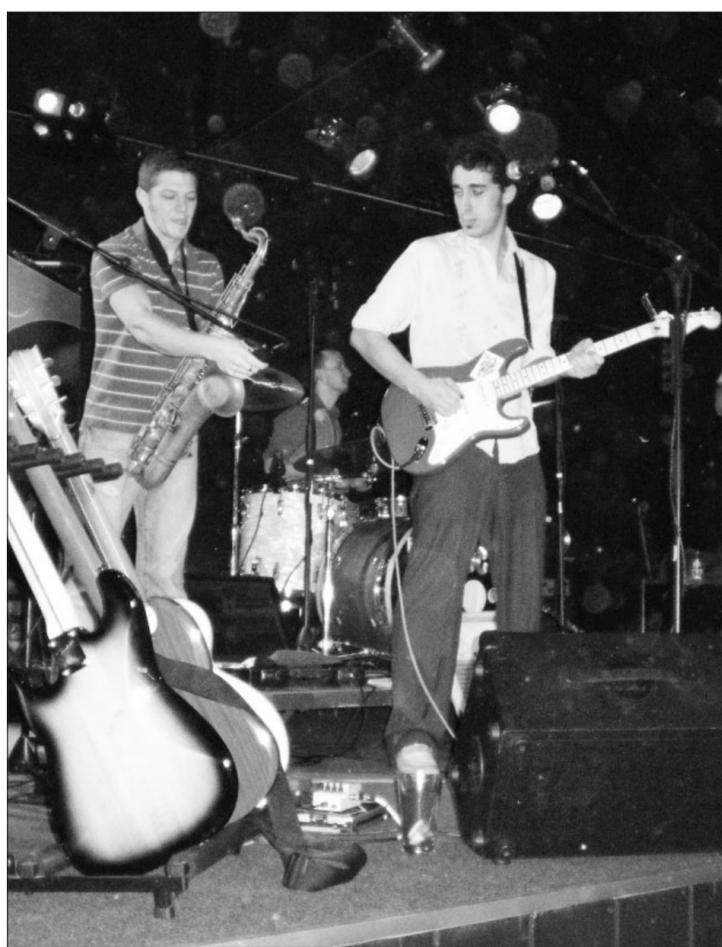


Photo submitted

Wrongdaddy’s showcases the music mayhem with appearances by Blues Hog and Savage Henry (formerly known as BiPolar Bear).

Niehaus said, and the band went into Buffalo Springfield’s “For What It’s Worth,” featuring a very soulful Yanick and a closed-eyed Niehaus, both channeling blues supernatural.

“Sweet Home Chicago” was the highlight of the first set. An indescribable energy arose from the shuffling crowd, all grooving and crowding the stage or tapping their toes in their seats. Newell put his shades on, possibly in homage to the Blues Brothers, who popularized the Robert Johnson piece in their act.

The second set featured Janis Joplin’s “Bobby McGee,” Robert Johnson’s / Cream’s “Crossroads” and Muddy Water’s “Hoochie Coochie Man.” A trombonist Truman graduate student, Theron Perkowski, joined them for “When the Saints Go Marching In,” and a second guitarist, Loren Billington, from the band Cohesion, stepped up for “Hoochie Coochie Man” and other songs, so Niehaus could play the blues harp (harmonica) and do vocals — another tip of the hat to the Blues Brothers. They saved their popular, slam-grass version of Snoop

Dogg’s “Gin and Juice” for the end of the set.

After the final song, the drunken, sweaty, amped-up crowd chanted “One more song! One more song!” Niehaus looked to the owner for the OK, which he gave them. They encored with Johnny Cash’s “Folsom Prison Blues,” jammed into Muddy Waters’ “Mojo Workin’” and then returned to Cash without missing a beat. Newell let loose a tortured solo from heaven, McDuff kept the rhythm pumping and Kroeger shuffled until his arms fell off, all with Niehaus swaying in place and looking for the soul of the blues on the backs of his eyelids. These guys are solid, and their ability to work a crowd is beyond impressive. I was positively bummed when they left the stage at 1 a.m.

Blues Hog’s next show is Friday, Feb. 20 at the Journal Building, with Deadwood and BJ Allen & Blue Voodoo, a historic first assemblage of the three local blues bands Professor of Physics, Peter Rolnick will open at 7:45 p.m., and the blues bands will start at 8:15 p.m.

## The Bird and the Bee courts new tunes

BY HARRY BURSON  
Reviewer

This week the College Music Roundup includes the latest from the Bird and the Bee, Black Keys front man Dan Auerbach and the Von Bondies.

After listening to the Bird and the Bee’s sophomore album, “Ray Guns are Not Just the Future,” I discovered they were on Blue Note Records and it all made sense.

The fabled jazz label found its greatest success in recent years with Norah Jones’ left-field smash “Come Away With Me,” a disc of genteel jazzy pop that appealed to the older National Public Radio set — your mother perhaps.

The Bird and the Bee is not a classic jazz-pop act. It has a futuristic, electronic, lounge/dance sound that purportedly is jazz-influenced, reminiscent of Stereolab without the noise.

Vocalist Inara George sings in a detached soprano, meant to convey cool self-assurance but coming off as if she is completely bored. Keyboardist Greg Kurstin handles all the production, which is decidedly modern without being forward thinking. The main reference point seems to be Gwen Stefani’s 2004 debut.

While Kurstin’s production here isn’t particularly interesting, the major problem with this disc is George’s delivery. Whether the track is a ballad or a club-banger, she sticks with the

same breathy, indifferent approach. It sort of works on subdued tracks like “Ray Gun” but sounds awful on the “Hollaback Girl”-bounce of “Love Letter to Japan” and her campy love song for David Lee Roth.

On the last disc, the Bird and the Bee courted a younger audience with wry, profane lyrics and engaging production. Here everything consistently is unobtrusive, perfect for the gradually aging yuppie who wants some relatively hip dinner music. Nothing terrible here, except for the nagging monotony. Don’t bother.

On his first solo release, “Keep It Hid,” Dan Auerbach forsakes his blues-rock combo, the Black Keys, to play, record and produce the entire record himself.

The latest album was written and recorded while the Black Keys were on tour supporting their latest disc, “Attack and Release.” Auerbach delivers 14 songs in a similar blues idiom he has explored for the last several years.

On the Black Keys records, Auerbach handles all the vocal and instrumental duties while Patrick Carney just plays the drums. As such, “Keep It Hid” is as strange as a Jack White solo

album would be, making you wonder why he would release a solo disc when he essentially is the sole creative force in the band he fronts.

One would assume he wanted to stretch out, but as the Danger Mouse-produced “Attack and Release” showed us, the Black Keys seem to be fine stretching out on their own.

“Keep It Hid” opens with an acoustic country-blues number, “Trouble Weighs a Ton,” which is a bit of a red herring because it is one of the few acoustic tracks on the disc. The next track, “I Want Some More,” with its fuzzy riff and distorted Screamin’ Jay Hawkins vocals is more indicative of the record as a whole.

The tracks are enjoyable, not as hard-rocking as the Black Keys, but fairly similar. Toward the middle of the record, all the mid-tempo blues songs begin to blend together, but they’re saved by the beautiful acoustic closer “Goin’ Home.”

As soon as the record is finished, you’re left confused. This is not “McCartney” or something — no pleasant piece of half-baked homemade pop that wouldn’t work on a Beatles album. This is, for all intents and purposes, the follow-up to “Attack and Release.” You have

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to feel for poor Carney. There doesn’t seem to be any reason for Auerbach to not have let him play.

The Von Bondies are back with “Love, Hate and Then There’s You,” the follow-up to their 2004 breakthrough “Pawn Shoppe Heart.”

Five years is a long time, so in case you don’t remember, the Von Bondies had a bit of success on MTV with their single “C’mon C’mon” but were most famous because the lead singer had been beaten up by Jack White in Detroit.

By the time they arrived, the Strokes/Hives/Vines garage rock moment already was over, yet the Von Bondies stuck with the sound, only saved by the insistence of their one great single.

So now, several years and countless trends later, the Von Bondies need to assert themselves as a band worth remembering or at least hearing. They’ve stuck with the same basic rock ‘n’ roll sound, in hopes of scoring another hit.

They won’t. There are a few decent nuggets of rock here, such as “Chancer” and “She’s Dead to Me,” but on the whole this is a completely forgettable, uninspired piece of generic garage rock that would have struggled to find an audience even when it was slightly more current seven or eight years ago. Good try, but nothing cooking. Bon voyage, Von Bondies.

That’s it for this week. Next time: the latest from Lily Allen and so much more. Keep an eye out!