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Woody Allen: “Whatever Works, ” By Adrienne Papp

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October 15, 2009 [13](#)



By Adrienne Papp

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“I never got a pleasant surprise in life. But once you experience life, it’s such a vivid, and amazing thing.” [Woody Allen](#)

Coincidentally enough, [Annie Hall](#) is playing on one of the main stream television channels as I am writing this article in the middle of the night. That is Woody Allen right there: 32 years later, his three - decade old movie is still a sensation on prime time broadcast. Sensationally enough Woody himself hardly looks any different than he did thirty something years ago.

The unexplainable fact of everlasting youth can only happen to a ‘[comedian](#)’ who actually puts his own life into his films as self-therapy, portraying his [neurosis](#) (or genius) and insecurities onto the screen, making all of us relate, – without holding much back.

Certainly his sense of humor has not changed a bit ever since he first started selling one-liners to gossip columns at the age of 15. Wry, dry, bittersweet, nervous with everyone talking over one another, chaotic – the Woody Allen signature, – simply put, sexy, unexpected and hilarious.

Certainly not for the faint hearted, his corky jokes, which he used to pump out 2000 a day, would entertain anyone including our grandparents and grandchildren equally. He uses long monologues and very down to earth human realities: stutter and uncertainty. Nothing is staged. Everything sounds like the first date that never ends. A mathematical impossibility.

A genius entertainer? Crazy, absurd, irrational? All of the above and more than that. Woody Allen is a timeless sensation who at first strikes you as a normal elderly gentleman: His voice is soft, the 74-year-old asks you to move closer as he is hard of hearing. His gestures are careful and measured, and his clothes, shirt and chinos, seem ironed and starched. But the true Woody reveals himself in his answers, – with his biting wit and [melancholy](#), his self-irony and ultimate love for his fellow human beings, – all of which is in display in his most recent film, *Whatever Works* about a misogynic New Yorker intellectual who discovers compassion and affection in unforeseen ways.

[New York](#), which appears in almost all of his films is close to heart. But, with Woody Allen everything is close to heart. That is the whole point. That is the Woody Allen way of treating, well, everything.

When asked if there is a bitter but honest [pessimism](#) in his movies, he responds, ‘Yes. I don’t think human existence can get any worse. It’s as bad as it can get. You are born, you don’t know why. You live a life. You get old and sick. The people you love get old and sick. They die, you die. You become exterminated. You didn’t do anything. You did nothing wrong, nothing bad. You still get old and die, and so does everyone else around you and nobody understands anything.’

As a legendary film-maker he certainly had it better than a homeless guy at nearly every second corner of New York City, – I add, but I see the point he is making.

‘Within the scenario of a very grim one, some are luckier than others. Some have a terrible life, some have a better one, – I have been luckier. But in the end, it’s like the first scene of [Stardust Memories](#). Both trains wind up in the same junkyard. In the end, the homeless vanishes and I vanish, and the planet vanishes and the stars vanish, and everything vanishes. All the struggling, the deal memos, the phone calls, all the nonsense that you are involved with,- it doesn’t mean a thing. ‘

As the conversation turns toward the topic of bringing children into such a pessimistic world, he concludes:

‘I don’t sit in front of my children and bemoan the fact that I feel that life is meaningless and a very cruel experience and that the universe is just a random, cruel meaningless thing and that life is just a terribly [Darwinian](#) affair. I believe children should be given the space to find out for themselves.’

Despite all his pessimism he seems to love his characters in all of his movies.

‘It’s a horrible world that we live in. It would be just as terrible if the [Islamic](#) liked the [Catholics](#) and the [Pakistanis](#) liked the [Indians](#), and the [Palestinians](#) liked the [Jews](#). If all political problems were settled, and everybody was happy, it would still be a terrible world. Because that’s not the worst of the problems! The problem is much bigger than that. It’s the human condition and the randomness of existence, the fact that the universe came into being in a [gigantic](#) meaningless explosion at random.’

While most of [Hollywood](#) swears that movie making is the most difficult thing that mankind ever faced, Woody Allen, with all of his notorious pessimism thinks it is the easiest. He thinks what is difficult is doing cabaret. I do not blame him. How can you make a good joke in a world that is not even supposed to be here unless we all voted for suffering?

‘Most of the time if I say it’s a good joke, it’s a good joke.’ he says.

This very true, yet very Woody-like statement, feels to me that the [Universe](#) is really according to Woody! If he sees it this way, it is soo. If he sees it that way it is soo. And, so one day he may thank me for the very insight that he entertains us with the most genius of ways: from the point of view of the observer. Because in the end, it is really just how Woody Allen sees it, or any of us see it!

God bless such a kindred spirit who thinks that the number one thing in life is health, the number two is knowledge, the number three is money and the number four is love! And, he managed to experience it all, which by all means is no small task.

About the Writer: [Adrienne Papp](#) is a recognized journalist who has written for many publications including Savoir, Beverly Hills 90210, Malibu Beach, Santa Monica Sun, The Beverly Hills Times, Brentwood News, Bel-Air View and Celebrity Society, among many others. She is the President and CEO of Los Angeles/New York-based publicity companies, [Atlantic Publicity](#) and [Atlantic Publisher](#). Adrienne writes about world trends, Quantum Physics, entertainment and interviews celebrities and world leaders.

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- Marjorie
- Oct 19, 2009, 17:48
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-

You seem to get a lot of fans, judging from the other pieces I have read by you.

- -
 - Marjorie
 - Oct 19, 2009, 17:49
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I liked the piece. The writer has a distinctive ‘voice’ and a strong position. Well done!

- -
 - Derek
 - Oct 19, 2009, 18:17
 -
 -

Both writer and subject are very, very, very funny! I enjoyed this piece a lot!

- -
 - Robert Newanski
 - Oct 19, 2009, 19:08
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 -

This eccentric genius needs to give more interviews. This piece captured him really well. I never read a piece like this on him. Good piece!

- -
 - Lorna
 - Oct 19, 2009, 19:29
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Who was the comedian here? The writer or the interviewee? I know it is gloom and doom but somehow it just sounds right.

- -
 - Erika
 - Oct 19, 2009, 19:55
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Fantastic insight! She is right.

- -
 - Erin
 - Oct 20, 2009, 6:42
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But of course! Woody Allen. I loved this piece! Very well said.

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 - Niria
 - Oct 20, 2009, 7:23
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But of course! Woody Allen. I loved this piece! Very well said.

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 - Daria
 - Nov 18, 2009, 14:47
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Well, I really agree that the number one thing in life is health. And, actually he is right about the sequence of what really matters. I really like that the writer captured some essential inside about Woody Allen. Usually whatever is written is fluff. This piece seems to be an insider one. Good job!

- -
 - Janet Maday
 - Nov 18, 2009, 14:47
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None of us really KNOW what Woody is about in his personal life, but professionally – his movies make me think and more importantly laugh – they are real in a satiric way and if they make us look in a mirror..oh well, thats life!

- -
 - Katelin
 - Nov 18, 2009, 14:48
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Love his work! Great article.

- -
 - [att uverse discount coupon code](#)
 - Sep 27, 2013, 14:42
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Your style is so unique compared to other folks I have read stuff from. Thanks for posting when you've got the opportunity, Guess I'll just book mark this page.

- -
 - [Shannon Fukumoto](#)
 - Sep 28, 2013, 12:38
 -
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Incredibly cool Mr. Elliot. I'm starved for missives from the mailbox. I'll admit it, I even open junk mail. (Hey, maybe it's a check with a lot of zeros at the end.) Such a sad existence for me when my one a small rush of importance is ripping open junk mail. Bills can wait around, so a real letter sounds excellent. Will subscribe.
Cheers, Iris

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