

Race-O-Rama

Written by Robert ID698

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Bold as Rosa Parks requesting a front row seat, this year Black History Month's usual television line-up will be shaken up by another definitive racism-bashing moment. Race-O-Rama, a potentially funny, yet serious look at America's biggest taboo subject—race—promises to propel our culture's both subtle and blatant lingering racism into the forefront of national debate.

Direct, in-your-face, humorous and irreverent, VH1's Race-O-Rama series is an encore engagement and on-going collaboration with groundbreaking underground culture provocateurs, the ego trip collective. Based on the success of their previous collaboration with VH1, TV's Illst Minority Moments special that aired last February, the series promises to open up minds with a stark but humorous look at our ignorance on "the R word", "the race issue", a.k.a. "the new pornography" according to ego trip.

Three one-hour shows, "Blackaphobia", "Dude, Where's My Ghetto Pass" and "In Race We Lust", scheduled for late February are based on the vision of ego trip, a quintet of multi-cultural and racially-mixed mavericks: Sacha Jenkins, Elliott Wilson, Chairman Mao, Gabriel Alvarez and Brent Rollins. Nailing a place on Entertainment Weekly's list of the Top 25 Funniest People in America, the crew of agit-pop journalists and publishers of the defunct, indie cult-hit mag, ego trip, are co-authors of ego trip's Book of Rap Lists and ego trip's Big Book of Racism!, the latter of which caught the attention of executives at VH1.

"Joey Anuff, a producer at VH1, contacted us, telling us he was extremely interested in seeing if we could turn some of the content in the Big Book of Racism into a TV series," Elliott Wilson says, original co-founder of ego trip magazine with Sacha Jenkins and currently editor-in-chief of hip-hop's fastest growing magazine, XXL, "After doing a magazine and two successful books, it's fine time for us to get another shot at the small screen."

"Most of the time VH1 just looks back at the stuff we love, or makes us laugh or whatever," Joey Anuff, supervising producer at VH1 says, "But when you look at ego trip's books, you see they're looking at the same stuff with a much more charged lens. In a way they're the perfect VH1 project."

VH1 and ego trip's first collaboration, TV's Illest Minority Moments, aired last February and asked provocative questions like "Who was more gangsta, Florence from the Jeffersons or Nell Carter from Gimme A Break?" It also made a strong case for Daffy Duck being a black man

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and outed Big Bird as a Vietnamese drag queen. Of last February's show, Entertainment Weekly's Ken Tucker reported, "I saw no programming more astute about race relations..." and Newsday raved, "They've popped the pin on the race grenade and the shrapnel's flying...The point is to make you laugh, wince, feel offended and-yes, finally-consider how your state of mind fits into it all."

Highlights of the first show also included hilarious commentary from comedian/actor Anthony Anderson, rap hip-hop's Wu-Tang Clan's RZA, and Boondocks creator Aaron McGruder.

This year's eclectic guest list expands in the Race-O-Rama series. Rappers (RZA, Talib Kweli, Too Short, MC Lyte); moguls (Baby); actors/actresses (Bai Ling, Bill Duke, Garrett Morris, Kadeem Hardison, Esai Morales); comedians (Paul Mooney, Tim Meadows, Joey Medina, Earthquake); a model (Tyson Beckford); a professor (Dr. Michael Eric Dyson) and an infamous pimp (Mr. White Folks) all join in on the no-holds barred racial debauchery.

Continuing to prove that ignorance is not bliss and laughter is the best antidote to our culture's history of pride, pain and prejudice, ego trip's Race-O-Rama is poised to open minds this February

ego trip is Sacha Jenkins, Elliott Wilson, Chairman Mao, Gabriel Alvarez and Brent Rollins. First appearing as self-published music magazine from 1994 to 1998, ego trip was seminal in its intelligent and irreverently funny coverage of hip-hop and other music genres.

ego trip released two books, ego trip's Book of Rap Lists and ego trip's Big Book of Racism!, in addition to the lauded old-school compilation CD, ego trip's The Big Playback and 2003's VH1 special, TV's Illest Minority Moments presented by ego trip.

Beginning March 2005, Sirius Radio will host ego trip's live, two hour radio program on Eminem's Shade45.