Family Guy, a Daring Testament to What America Is

Family Guy is an American adult animated sitcom created by Seth MacFarlane for Fox in 1999. The series centers on the Griffins, a dysfunctional family who strive to cope with everyday life as they are thrown from one crazy scenario to another (“Family 1”). The family is made up of Peter the father, Lois the mother, Chris the older brother, Meg the picked on sister, Stewie the brainiac baby, and of course, Brian the anthropomorphic dog. There are countless other characters in the show. Many whom are played by surprising guest stars such as Robert Downey Jr. Cate Blanchett, and Johnny Depp to name a few. The show success displays much of its hilarity in the form of cutaway scenes that often ridicule the ridiculousness within American culture.

For those that haven’t seen it or have heard about it from their friends, yes it’s crude and rude, but the show has a rabid fan base that’s brought it back from the dead not once, but twice turning it into a reportedly $2 billion enterprise (Dean 1). Why? Family Guy entertains, but it also dares to shed light on our society in ways live actors cannot. It explores the furthest corners of "civilized" thinking and exposes the ridiculousness of stereotypes, sexism, racism, personal judgment, and any additional kinds of "isms (“What 1”). It has been nominated for 12 Primetime Emmy Awards and 11 Annie Awards, and has won three of each. In 2009, it was nominated for
a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Comedy Series, the first time an animated series was nominated for the award since *The Flintstones* in 1961 (“Awards 1”).

How does it all tie in to other famous shows of yesteryear? Something different changed in the time frame following the 1950’s and 60’s. A winning combination was created. A bumbling father, a wife that tries to hold it all together without going insane, an idiot son, a daughter that seems to be there for filler for whatever reason, and the genius younger one. Family guy works on that same premise as did *All in the Family*, *Good Times*, and *Malcolm in the Middle* with this formula. If it’s not broke why fix it.

Continuing on with this premise. As time passed steadily by *Leave it to Beaver*, the desired portrayal of fathers has been more that of the fool. Even though they may try their best at parenting they just never seem to get it right. *Family Guy* emulates old time shows that had their own zany dads to entertain. Many of the cutaway skits, show earlier era fathers doing the same level of silliness Peter displays. One example is the slapstick comedy of Dick Van Dyke or the ignorance or limited grasp of a subject like Archie Bunker. *Leave It to Beaver* had June. *Dick Van Dyke* had Laura. More recently in the same type of media format, *The Simpsons* had Marge, all family loving, stay at home, sweat heart Moms, but that specific character no longer reflects the modern day female. So Lois Griffin rolls with whatever the world throws at her that day. Which is the way most people perceive today’s wife or woman. Not every woman is like this. For example let’s take the mom off of *Malcolm in the Middle* she indeed seemed to show her wild side, but at many times almost unrestrained, mouth open ready to yell. Was there a soft side? Sure. But it is not how some perceive her.
Is the proof in the pudding? Society and it “freedoms” or the politically correct requirement that forces the world to accept what we’re told is the norm, not what we see it as. *Family Guy* allows a reality we all desire. In an episode one specific skit shows the mother of *Malcolm in the Middle* (Lois, an interesting coincidence) checking out on sanity. And Hal take the freezer door and takes care of her pain (hits her in the head to stop the ranting). It is something any spouse thinks of in that position and wishes such was possible.

Changing gears a little, what about the innocence of shows needed that take us to another place? Did that virtue ever exist? We want that place to be real but is it as innocent as it seems? A different takeaway clip showed the reality of North Carolina at the time, racism, as well a hit to the all-white universe that was the *Andy Griffith Show*, great show or not. It showed the infamous rock throwing of “Opie” but what it continued to reveal is what he was throwing at, a black family picnicking.

You ask what about production techniques in telling the story of American family or Culture and the almost slap to the forehead reality check with should have had a V8. Well if you missed the multiple examples in cutaway skits, any popular media player out there like YouTube will clue you in. Simply search greatest *Family Guy* gags.

In summation, *Family Guy* helps us to laugh at ourselves understanding what we have become. It also connects us to the best of what we were both in previous shows as well a melting pot of cultures with its turmoil in religious or political views gone awry. I invite you to simply watch an episode or two and ask yourself is America truly this way. Could it be the entire world? Fifty eight countries watch *Family Guy* in a multitude of voiceover languages (“What 1”). I wonder if they think the same thing.
Works Cited


“What Is the Meaning or Point Behind the TV Show Family Guy?”. Quora. Web. 18 Feb. 2015.