

IT'S JUST A RIDE

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By Rich Sherwood

Those familiar with the talents of the late Bill Hicks -- and particularly those who aren't -- will do well to tune in to Comedy Central's *It's Just a Ride*. This one-hour documentary that takes a look back at Hicks' unique brand of social comedy and commentary will give you an appreciation of his impressive talents.

The project, well conceived and designed by filmmaker Rupert Edwards, is told sans narrator or host through interviews with friends, family and associates and a wealth of footage gathered from more than a decade of performances.

It's an interesting production, one that's quite sincere and telling in its approach and also quite understanding of Hicks' comedy. It's less a look at his life than a salute to his career, and along the way it provides a glimpse at what really made him tick.

Hicks, who died in February at the age of 33, was one of those comedians with an incredibly loyal following who never found widespread fame -- perhaps because of his humor's biting edge. Those who knew him loved his approach and his wit, and after watching this eye-opening special you'll probably wish you had discovered him in time. It's not just anyone who could bring Jay Leno and Dave Letterman back together, but both deliver testimonials here -- along with a handful of other colleagues including Eric Bogosian, Brett Butler, Richard Belzer and Jeni -- that seek to explain Hicks' humor and perspective, and the importance of his work. Combined with interviews of close friends and family members (including his parents), it is able to look behind the laughs in an effort to understand the motivations and philosophies that drove him on.

This show is solidly constructed, and does well to capture the spirit, style and humor of Hicks. It should have dated the clips and footage to provide chronological perspective, and the footage is of varying picture and sound qualities, but they fit together well. As an introductory course on Hicks -- and as a tribute to his wit and humor -- this certainly is a worthy effort.