

Bojack Horseman

By Raphael Bob-Waksberg

Set in a Los Angeles in which humans and anthropomorphic animal-people coexist, BoJack Horseman is an animated show about one man (who is also a horse) who peaked early and is trying to figure out what to do with his life now.

An outrageous and dark comedy with a melancholy center, the show asks the question, What happens when you have the world at your fingertips and you still can't figure out how to be happy?

Characters

BoJack Horseman (horse) – star of the 90s sitcom *Horsin' Around*, a show about a wisecracking horse who raises three precocious human children. Now he's a washed up misanthrope who lives in a gorgeous bachelor pad in the Hollywood Hills, complains about everything, and wears colorful sweaters.

Insufferably cynical, BoJack engages the world with a nihilistic prickliness that's a clear front for a well of neuroses. Acerbic, self-righteous, self-destructive, and as alienated as he is alienating, he's Larry David mixed with Jay Gatsby mixed with a Noah Baumbach character mixed with a horse, someone with high impenetrable walls around a lonely and scared center.

Deemed untreatable by just about every psychiatrist in L.A., BoJack vacillates wildly between extreme narcissism and extreme self-loathing, seeming to simultaneously believe that he is both better than and not as good as everyone he talks to.

He spends his days lounging by his pool, watching reruns of his old show, venturing out into the world as little as possible, and idly jabbing at half-finished projects including his long-delayed memoir "One Trick Pony" and a script for a romantic comedy he calls "Love Is An Illusion And Happiness Is Fleeting And There's No Such Thing As God And The Beatles Beat Their Wives" which he describes as "basically three hours of people crying."

Since the show follows BoJack's day-to-day life, the supporting cast is used when needed, but there's no guarantee that everyone will appear in every episode. Some episodes will utilize all of them, while some might feature none of them.



Other characters include:

Todd Chavez (human) – BoJack’s best friend and permanent houseguest. A happy-go-lucky twenty-something who sleeps on BoJack’s couch and spends his days working on various internet start-ups, Todd is the cheerful yin to BoJack’s depressed yang.

Todd throws parties at the house and goads BoJack into going out and meeting people. BoJack is often annoyed by Todd’s energy and enthusiasm, but it’s clear that if it weren’t for Todd, BoJack would rarely interact with the outside world.

Princess Carolyn (cat) – BoJack’s agent and on-again off-again girlfriend/employee-with-benefits. Princess Carolyn (not actually a princess) is constantly breaking up with BoJack because of his toxic attitude and inability to commit. However, she continues to work for him, because she takes pride in her ability to separate her personal life from her professional life.

As his girlfriend, she complains that he’s a miserable washed up hack whose best work is behind him, while as his agent she promises that new exciting work is just around the corner. BoJack recognizes this is probably an unhealthy professional relationship, but is too lazy/self-destructive to end it.

Pinky Penguin (penguin) – BoJack’s contact at Penguin Publishing. Like everyone in the publishing industry, Pinky is just barely hanging on. Desperation wrapped in a used suit (a suit he got cheap because a guy died in it), Pinky is constantly getting suckered in by pyramid schemes and other get rich quick scams. He is eager for BoJack to finish writing his memoir, as he believes it’s the book that will keep his company afloat.

Diane Nguyen (human) – a ghostwriter Pinky hires to help BoJack finish his book. BoJack is initially reluctant to work with her but is won over by her charm and wit. Upbeat, but not cloyingly so, with a dry sense of humor, Diane is the first person who BoJack feels really gets him, and he is crushed to learn that she’s dating his friend/enemy Mr. Peanutbutter.

Mr. Peanutbutter (dog) – a dashing golden retriever and former star of “Mr. Peanutbutter’s House,” a mid-90s sitcom in which he played a wisecracking dog raising three precocious human children, a premise BoJack dismisses as ludicrous and hackneyed.

BoJack hates Mr. Peanutbutter for being essentially a less miserable/more deluded version of BoJack, relentlessly positive and free of neuroses and shame. Comfortable being a C-list sitcom actor and an A-list schmoozer fifteen years past his prime, Mr. Peanutbutter is currently filming a pilot for an E! reality series (or a Vh1 reality series, or a Bravo reality series—he’s filming a new identically premised pilot every time we see him) and is followed around by a camera crew everywhere he goes.

Episodes:

Every episode is made up of stand-alone segments that range in length from five minutes to the full half hour. Possible segments include:

BoJack throws a party!

After Princess Carolyn breaks up with BoJack, Todd tries to cheer him up by convincing him to throw a party at the house, even though BoJack hates parties; at his last party, he just sat in the corner the whole time eating cotton candy until he threw up.

Meanwhile, Pinky tries to get BoJack to take on a co-writer for his memoir to help him speed up the process. He gives him a book to peruse by a young writer named Diane, emphasizing that the book is a loan, because he can't afford to be giving books away. Pinky tells BoJack to invite Diane to his party so he can get to know her.

As Todd and BoJack prepare for the party, BoJack alternates between being insulted by the implication that he needs a ghostwriter and frightened to meet a real writer because he's sure she'll see what a phony he is.

After spending several hours standing by himself in the corner eating cotton candy, BoJack finally works up the nerve to talk to Diane, who quickly wins him over with her charm and genuine interest in his life. After they agree to work together, BoJack learns Diane is dating Mr. Peanutbutter, which makes him throw up.

Lights, Camera, BoJacktion!

Carolyn gets BoJack a cameo in a movie about Hitler's horse (as it's explained to him, it was going to be an Eva Braun biopic, but it got retooled), playing Hitler's horse's Jewish friend.

As the shooting of his scene is repeatedly delayed, BoJack spends the whole day in his trailer, pigging out on sugar cubes, making small talk with the bizarre P.A.s, and rehearsing his one line, which is about how important it is to live every day to the fullest.

At the end of the day, the director asks BoJack to come back tomorrow, but instead BoJack quits, complaining that he's already wasted a whole day, a day he complains he'll never get back. He goes home and watches a Match Game marathon on the Game Show Network with Todd.

BoJack supports the troops!

At the supermarket, BoJack gets in an argument with a greyhound over the last box of muffins. The greyhound claims that he had dibs on them, but BoJack claims that his dibs are nullified because he left the muffins unattended. The greyhound argues that since he left the muffins in a place where muffins don't belong, it should have been obvious that he was planning on returning for them. BoJack dismisses this argument as completely without merit and leaves with the muffins.

The next day, the greyhound appears on Fox News. It turns out he's a soldier on leave for two weeks. He tells a story about how all he wanted when he got home was his favorite brand of muffins, but BoJack Horseman, a fine example of the Hollywood Elite, hates the troops.

BoJack calls in the show and argues that a) the fact that he's a soldier has nothing to do with it, b) if people would just look at what really actually happened they would see that BoJack was right about the dibs being nullified, and c) he can't return the muffins because he already ate the muffins. When pressed on whether or not he ate all the muffins, BoJack admits that yes, he ate all the muffins in one sitting, because he's a big fatass with no self-control, is that what you wanted to hear?

Diane tells BoJack she could never be the center of attention like he is and that sometimes she climbs onto Mr. Peanutbutter's roof just to escape the cameras.

Mr. Peanutbutter has a great idea. He'll host a reconciliation of the two. Since he's currently filming a reality show about the remodeling of his kitchen and another reality show about his second career as a conflict resolution mediator, if he invites BoJack and the greyhound back to his kitchen to talk things out, it could be a great crossover event for his two reality shows.

BoJack reluctantly shows up to Mr. Peanutbutter's house with a new box of muffins. The greyhound has parlayed his recent fame into a reality show deal of his own and has brought his camera crew along too. Additionally, the director of the greyhound's reality show also has a camera crew following him for a new reality show about reality show directors.

BoJack tries to give the greyhound the muffins, but the different camera crews continually get in each other's way, causing a production pile-up. While everyone's distracted, BoJack climbs onto the roof where he meets Diane, and they share the box of muffins.

BoJack makes a public appearance!

BoJack's car breaks down in Beverly Hills on the way to a promotional event. When the OnStar operator recognizes his voice, she demands he sing the Horsin' Around theme song, which he reluctantly does, to her delight. Then she asks him to do it

again, for her friend, which he does. Then her friend asks him to sing the Growing Pains theme and he hangs up.

BoJack tries calling AAA, but his phone dies—Todd drained the battery while talking on the phone all night with his internet girlfriend (he couldn't use his own phone, because he wanted to play snake on it while he talked)—so BoJack is forced to knock on strangers' doors asking to use their phones, and he gets in various misadventures around the neighborhood.

BoJack does lunch!

Pinky, Diane, and BoJack visit a café in Echo Park to discuss a potentially lucrative product placement deal for BoJack's memoir with the café's owners.

The meeting goes well until BoJack notices something strange about his meal; there seems to be the same amount of soup in the cup of soup as there is in the bowl of soup, even though the bowl is twice as expensive. The café's owners apologize that BoJack "feels that way" but this offends BoJack even more, as the issue isn't about how he feels, it's about very real measurable evidence.

Diane and Pinky try to get the conversation back on track, but BoJack refuses to move on until the owners admit that their soup deal rips customers off, a subject they repeatedly avoid commenting on directly.

BoJack says no to drugs!

In support of National Hugs Not Drugs Week, BoJack is invited to speak at a local high school, an invitation he accepts while expressing a supreme ambivalence about advocating hugging, as he is someone who doesn't like to be touched.

At the school assembly, BoJack barely hides his disdain for the other washed up celebrities present, the panel of "Hugs Not Drugs Heroes," and goes off on long tangents about his depressing life. At one point, he lets it slip that he uses horse tranquilizers to help him fall asleep each night. The students are confused – aren't those drugs? – and BoJack explains that some drugs are good drugs. The next day, the news is all over the internet: BoJack loves drugs and hates hugs.

BoJack is asked to apologize and retract his statements, but he refuses, arguing that labeling all drugs as equally dangerous is an irresponsible message to send to children. However, when Pinky tells him that this P.R. snafu could shutter his book deal, thus depriving him an excuse to see Diane every day, BoJack agrees to make amends.

Carolyn arranges for a high profile mea culpa: he is to deliver a public apology during the halftime show of the Super Bowl, after which he is to hug the president of the Hugs Not Drugs Council.

Flanked by a clearly high halftime show rock star and a clearly on-steroids pro football player, BoJack makes his half-assed apology: an admission that both drugs and hugs should be used in moderation. The football player grabs the microphone and offers a simpler way to live: Say yes to hugs and no to drugs.

This sets BoJack off on a tirade about the dangers of hugging. From child molestation to perfectly innocent relationships that end in heartbreak and bitterness, BoJack argues that more lives are ruined by physical intimacy than by drug abuse, and if children really want to live happy adult lives, they should say yes to drugs and no to hugs. BoJack leaves the stadium to a chorus of boos.

Plaaaaaay BoJack!

When BoJack complains about how little he contributes to the world, Diane convinces him to do some charitable work and BoJack volunteers to coach an underprivileged inner city little league team.

BoJack enjoys working with the kids and teaching them things like, “The point of baseball isn’t to win; it’s to try your hardest and then lose anyway so you learn that no matter how badly you want something, there’s always someone better than you that deserves it more.” But when Mr. Peanutbutter starts coaching another team in the league, BoJack’s competitive side comes out.

Mr. Peanutbutter claims that his team is a ragtag crew of underdogs, but BoJack is convinced that his team is ragtaggier and underdoggier. The two compete over who can make their team more pitiful, buying worse and worse equipment, and replacing their best players with kids from the cancer ward.



Illustrations by Lisa Hanawalt