

ANDY KAUFMAN - APPLICATION FOR 2020 WALK OF FAME

BIOGRAPHY.

Entertainer, actor, performance artist, song-and-dance man, *prankster*. He tested the boundaries, blurring the line between reality and the act.

Andy was so committed to his characters and pranks, never winking, that to this day many people continue to insist that he faked his own death. With vivid memories of "Taxi's" loveable Latka Gravas, Foreign Man, Mighty Mouse & other SNL appearances, his impeccable Elvis, Letterman's "Late Night" appearances, the "fight" scene when hosting Friday's, his obnoxious Tony Clifton alter ego, intergender wrestling heel, and so on...over 35 years after his death, his star still shines.

1956: Performed a full slate of TV programs to the wall in his bedroom

1970: Created and starred in the "Uncle Andy Funhouse", broadcast on a closed-circuit TV station to the Gramh Junior College campus in Boston.

1972: "Kennedy at Night" WLS Chicago – Elvis first time on TV

1974: "Dean Martin Comedyworld" – Mighty Mouse first time on TV

1974: "Joe Franklin" Appeared a 2nd time, circa 1979, dancing to no music with his Grandma Pearl.

1975 - 1983: "**Saturday Night Live**" – "Mighty Mouse" on inaugural show plus 14 other appearances.

1976: "Van Dyke & Company" – Appeared in 10 of its 11 shows

1976: "Monty Hall Variety Hour"

1976: "The Lisa Hartman Show"

1976: "The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson – 4 appearances 1976 - 78

1977: "The Redd Foxx Comedy Hour"

1977: Co-star of pilot for sitcom "Stick Around"

1977: "2nd Annual HBO Young Comedians Show"

1977: "Hollywood Squares"

1977: "Mike Douglas" (another appearance 1978) Mike announces that Andy was Elvis Presley's favorite impersonator

1978 – 82: Latka Gravas on "**TAXI**"

1979: Dinah! 3 appearances 1977-79, the 3rd of which was Tony Clifton

1979: "Merv Griffin": 1979-1982 7 times, including when Tony Clifton appeared, not played by Andy. Merv didn't know.

1979: "Good Morning America" – 3 appearances between 1979 to 1982.

1978: "Variety'77 The Year in Entertainment"

1978: "Bananaz" – host

1978: "Dick Clark's Live Wednesday"

1978: "Dating Game" – "Foreign Man" LA Times 2/27/14 says one of Jim Lange's top 5 all-time celebrity appearances

1979: "Cher...and Other Fantasies"

1979: "The Johnny Cash Christmas Special"

1979: "Tomorrow Coast to Coast" with Tom Snyder. Andy's 1st televised wrestling match.

1979: Own float in NBC's "Macy's Day Parade"

1980: "Uncle Andy's Funhouse" TV pilot for ABC's "Buckshot"

1980: "The David Letterman Show" – morning show

1980: "In God We Trust" – Universal movie. Marty Feldman.

1981: "**Friday's**" – Hosted twice, including the famous pre-approved "fight" by director, producers, execs

1981: Host "Evening at the Improv" Also did guest appearances here doing laundry & eating ice cream on stage

ANDY KAUFMAN - APPLICATION FOR 2020 WALK OF FAME

1981: Hosted NBC's "**The Midnight Special**". He participated fully, making it like having his own special. Amongst other things, it shows him as a busboy while he was a regular on Taxi. He did this to stay grounded.

1981: "Funny People" book by Steve Allen. Stein and Day. Featured with other icons of comedy.

1981: "Heartbeeps" Universal movie. Bernadette Peters

1982 – 1983: "**Late Night with David Letterman**" 10 appearances. David said there were "none better than Andy"

1982: "Catch a Rising Star 10th Anniversary Show"

1982: "Hour Magazine"

1982: "The John Davidson Show"

1982: as Tony Clifton on "The Fantastic Miss Piggy Show"

1983: "The Rodney Dangerfield Special"

1983: "Up Close with Tom Cottle"

1983: "Teaneck Tanzi" Broadway show. Deborah Harry

1984: "The Top"

Posthumous

The term "*Kaufmanesque*" became part of our vocabulary after Andy died. Bill Zehme, Andy Kaufman biographer, explains this in 2009: "...a decidedly recognizable strain of pranksterism has increasingly been sweeping through the culture with broad unapologetic force." "Evidence...from those pesky foreign men called Borat and Bruno and Sacha Baron Cohen to that odd long-bearded Joaquin Phoenix." "(...the Kaufmanesque word was used in more than 200 resulting news stories about Phoenix...)" "...sly-as-fox veneer or provocative fooling-in-fun..." "The influence remains rampant, if also more thunderous than ever."

"Still dead, still inscrutable; but the late comic, Andy Kaufman is bigger than ever, with new books and a movie resurrecting his curious life and career" Arthur Hirsch in Baltimore Sun 12/12/1999

That could still be said today, with Andy being prominently featured amongst the icons of comedy at the National Comedy Center, which opened in August 2018; a documentary currently being made about a wrestling aspect of Andy's act; millions upon millions viewing Andy on youtube, to name a few.

Some other events since Andy died:

- "Comedy Salute to Andy Kaufman". NBC 1995. **Nominated for an Emmy for Outstanding Variety, Music or Comedy Special.**
- Documentaries: "Headliners and Legends" 1999; "E True Hollywood" 1998; "A&E Biography" 2000
- Appeared in the final shows of the two biggest giants of late-night TV: Johnny Carson and David Letterman. He was included in Johnny Carson's scrapbook and was praised with clips shown on Letterman's last shows.
- Featured in CNN's "History of Comedy", "Spark of Madness" segment in 2017.
- "The Improv: 50 Years Behind the Brick Wall" 2013 documentary. Comedy Central. Seinfeld, Fallon, Wayans Brothers laud Andy
- Featured in "Make 'Em Laugh" TV special. 2009.
- "My Breakfast with Blassie": A spoof on "My Dinner with Andre". Shot in 1983, released 7 weeks before Andy died but did not appear on Comedy Central until after Andy's passing.
- "I'm From Hollywood" 1989. Comedy Central. This was Andy's vision, but it was assembled and edited after he died. It chronicled his intergender wrestling escapades, also including his "feud" with male champion professional wrestler, Jerry Lawler.
- **Biopic "Man on the Moon"**, starring Jim Carrey. 1999

ANDY KAUFMAN - APPLICATION FOR 2020 WALK OF FAME

- REM paid homage to Andy with their 1992 song "Man on the Moon". They sang MotM as the finale to end all their concerts for many years. They said it always "worked".
- Netflix: "Jim and Andy" 2017 – footage from the making of "Man on the Moon". Nominated for 7 awards including one Primetime Emmy.
- "Andy and his Grandma" audio tape recorded by Andy 1977–79 and released in 2013.
- The Andy Kaufman Award 2004–2015. Unknown, yet avant-garde performers, are given the chance to emulate the spirit of Andy's courage and uniqueness. Notable winners Kristen Schaal, Reggie Watts
- Biographies:
 - "Lost in the Funhouse" – Bill Zehme 1999 Delacorte Press. 2001 paperback.
 - "Was This Man a Genius" – Julie Hecht 2001 Random House. 2009 paperback.
 - "Is This Guy for Real? The Unbelievable Andy Kaufman" - Box Brown 2018 First Second.
- Featured in many books along with other icons of comedy:
 - "The Last Laugh" by Phil Berger 1985 Limelight edition
 - "Presence and Resistance" by Philip Auslander 1992 University of Michigan Press
 - "Extreme Exposure" 2000 Theatre Communications Group
 - "Comedy at the Edge" by Richard Zoglin 2008 Bloomsbury
 - "Concrete Comedy: An Alternative...Comedy" by David Robbins 2011 Pork Salad Press
- Wrote 3 books published after his death: "Huey Williams Story", "Poetry & Short Stories", "God & Other Plays".
- Museum Exhibitions:
 - Long Beach Museum of Art 11/19/89 – 1/7/90 ▪ Walker Art Center May 1990
 - Boston Museum of Fine Arts Circa 1991 ▪ Museum of TV & Radio (Paley) 1999
- Galleries:
 - Maccarone NYC 1/12/13 – 2/23/13 ▪ Frieze London 10/17-20/2013

QUALIFICATIONS

Taxi: Nominated Golden Globes Best Supporting Actor 1979 & 1981

Taxi: Nominated for TV Land Award Nominee in 2006 for "Most Wonderful Wedding" with Carol Kane

Taxi: "The Two Faces of Latka" (5/21/81): Andy shows his multiple personalities morphing from foreign mechanic Latka to playboy Vic Ferarri. This episode is included in: TV Guide 6/29/96 issue "The 100 Most Memorable Moments in TV History" and TV Guide 6/28/97 issue "100 Greatest Episodes of All Time."

Appeared on:

- TAXI: Part of the ensemble cast the entire five year run that the hit Taxi enjoyed, 1978-82.
- SNL 15 times: Andy's 1977 performance received a TV Land Award Nominee in 2007 for Favorite Elvis Impersonation; his inaugural Mighty Mouse performance on SNL 10/11/75 was selected by VH1/TV Guide in 2003 in the "100 Moments that Rocked TV". Andy was also included in SNL's 15, 25 and 40th Anniversaries.
- Late Night with David Letterman 10 times: The 7/28/82 episode, where he was slapped by Jerry Lawler, appears in multiple "best of all time lists" such as Hollywood Reporter's 2010's "80 Greatest Moments in TV History", Entertainment Weekly 1999's "100 Greatest Moments in TV/1980's"

ANDY KAUFMAN - APPLICATION FOR 2020 WALK OF FAME

- Hosted the show "Friday's" two times, 2/20/81 and 9/18/81. Referring to the "fight" on 2/20/81, creator & producer John Moffitt said "...that night alone got us a pickup for the next year". Rolling Stone includes this amongst their 3/27/15 "40 Greatest Sketch Comedy Shows of All Time."
- Rolling Stone also includes Andy in their 2/14/17 "50 Best Stand-Up Comics of All Time", even though Andy didn't consider himself a stand-up. In 2004 Comedy Central includes Andy in the "100 Greatest Standups of All Time." In 2007 E includes Andy in "E's Greatest Standups".
- "Andy's Fun House" Special. Taped 7/15/77, aired on ABC 8/28/79. Considered too avant-garde it took two years to air. One example why the networks feared showing it was because Andy does a vertical-hold gag to frustrate the audience. Two other unique segments were Andy reverently interviewing the original Howdy Doody puppet and he introduces the "The-Has-Been-Corner". It got great reviews, including Janet Maslin of the NY Times: "...a generally crisp, often very funny program."
- "The Andy Kaufman Show" aired on the PBS series "Soundstage" on 7/15/83. The second of two specials, the show starts near the end and then does a loop. Exaggerating Johnny Carson's chair being subtly higher than his guests, Andy's was about six feet higher than his guests. When a guest needed water, she had to stand on her chair and reach up for it. A dangerousminds.net review on 4/13/17: "If you have any yen at all for the outer reaches of experimental comedy, this is a *must-see*." The same review also wrote: "What's sometimes forgotten about Kaufman is that for all of his daring experimentation, he was almost always very funny."
- Legendary Carnegie Hall show: 4/26/79 for Showtime's airing 6/12/80. Legendary because:
 - He bussed the entire 2800-person audience for milk and cookies until 3 am
 - Unbeknownst to audience, Robin Williams sat on stage the entire show, dressed as Andy's Grandma
 - Performed a duet on stage together with Tony Clifton
 - He bought ice cream for the 300 who showed up at the Staten Island Ferry the next day

CONTRIBUTIONS

- VIP Night on Broadway Benefit – Sings "Tomorrow" 4/22/79
- Tapes "Just For a Laugh?" for the American Film Institute special – 2/2/82
- Andy, Danny & Judd centennial celebration to benefit the Actor's Fund of America - 2/14/82

Visits Dying Fan: On April 3, 1981 Andy was in Chicago with his flight to DC delayed. He took that opportunity to rent a car and drive 75 miles each way that night to Crown Point, Indiana to visit a fan, Mary Jean Burden, who was dying of cystic fibrosis. He arrived at midnight. Andy was most generous and graceful with Mary Jean, her friends, family and nurses. He sang Elvis's "Love Me Tender" to Mary Jean on bended knee, did Latka upon request, and spoke to Mary Jean as one regular human to another. Mary Jean sent Andy photos, which included Andy wrestling at least 3 different women, including a nurse. The only time Andy, the Intergender Wrestling champion, ever lost a wrestling match to a woman was that night: He let all the women beat him. One photo shows the dial on the wall clock at 12:53. He left at 2 am for a flight 6 hours later. There are several photos of Andy with an emaciated, yet beaming, Mary Jean Burden.

ANDY KAUFMAN - APPLICATION FOR 2020 WALK OF FAME

Andy was very modest about this and didn't tell me about it. The only reason I know is because he saved the photos and letters from Mary Jean, as well as the thank you card from Mary Jean's mother, Barbara Burden. The card read:

Dear Andy,

Tuesday A.M. May 26, 1981

Just a couple of lines to thank you for taking the time when you did to brighten a sick girls [sic] life. I'm Mary Jean Burden's mother & I wanted to write to you. Mary Jean passed away on May 19, but she really enjoyed your visit & showed the pictures to everyone. I'll never know why with your busy schedual [sic] you took the time to come out & cheer her up. Words could never say enough. You'll never realize how much you helped her.

I'm enclosing a picture we took that night. Thank you again for being the kind of person you are!

Mrs. Barbara Burden

A note on Andy's character:

Andy's reputation may have been crazy, but he was a grounded caring person. In a 6/22/16 Larry King interview, Judd Hirsch said Andy was "about the most normal human being I ever met". To help stay grounded Andy worked as a busboy every Monday night while working on Taxi. Andy's commitment to Transcendental Meditation had a tremendous positive impact. Once he started meditating at age 20, he didn't smoke or drink. The "crazy" myth was his commitment to his art to provide fresh entertainment to the audience. As an example, though the "fight" on Friday's made Andy look uncooperative, the entire sketch had been approved by the director, producers, censors. In fact, Andy met/dined with the director, Jack Burns, several evenings that week to get familiar with each other's mannerisms so that a fight would be more convincing. Thus, Andy sacrificed his image for the sake of delivering a performance not to be forgotten. He never winked.

ANDY KAUFMAN

TALENT / SPEAKERS:

Marilu Henner: Spoke at Andy's Memorial Service, Co-host "Comedy Salute to Andy Kaufman", showed genuine concern at Hakata Restaurant 1984, interviewed for an Andy documentary. Basically, has been gracious and tremendous regarding Andy.

Carol Kane: Attended Andy's funeral, including going to the cemetery. Has been very warm and generous of spirit to the Kaufman's. Attended the 5th Annual Andy Kaufman Award in NYC in 2009 and the opening night of the Maccarone gallery exhibition in 2013.

Cindy Williams: Included a chapter on Andy in her recent book. Had a loving, wonderful, long conversation with Andy's brother, Michael, in 2009. She dated Andy in the 1970's and was a guest on Andy's special for ABC.

Tony Danza: Taxi colleague and Special Guest Speaker at the 8th Andy Kaufman Award. Has great Andy memories.

Danny DeVito: Producer of "Man on the Moon" and Taxi colleague.

Michael Stipe, Mike Mills, Peter Buck of REM: Big fans of Andy and friends to the Kaufman's.

David Letterman: Andy and Dave were perfect together. Dave always has nice things to say about Andy. He remembers Andy positively. Recently has shown concern for Andy's family when considering projects.

Kristen Schaal: 2nd recipient of the Andy Kaufman Award. Very close to the Kaufman's. Starred in "Last Man on Earth". Standout performer on "Flight of the Conchords". Senior Women's Correspondent on Jonathan Stewart's "Daily Show". Has been in numerous movies. She may be the closest thing to Andy.

Jerry Lawler: Partners in crime with Andy. Has stayed in touch with Michael Kaufman.

Lorne Michaels: Big supporter of Andy from SNL days. Appeared in biopic.

Jim Carrey: Portrayed Andy in biopic. Spent many precious times with Andy's family.

Richard Belzer: Comedy friends with Andy. Hosted 1st Andy Kaufman Award 2004.

Bill Murray: SNL. Long shot, but he might want to just pop-in.

Alan Zweibel: SNL writer who used to speak a lot with Andy. Spoke with family at NCC 2018.

Marc Summers: Went to Grahm Junior College with Andy. Recently met with Andy's family.

Laurie Anderson: Hung out with Andy in the 70's as straight man. Very close. Interviewed by Andy's best friend from college in 2013, during the Maccarone exhibit.

George Shapiro/Jerry Seinfeld: George is like family. Andy's manager, and remains close to the Kaufman's. George celebrated his 88th birthday on May 18. If Jerry was in LA at the time, perhaps he would attend if George was going to. Long shot, but Jerry and Andy grew up together in comedy and he visited the set of Man on the Moon at the Rockefeller Center ice rink in NY in 1999.