

## Andy Kaufman bio

Though most people think of him as a comedian, Andy Kaufman considered himself to be a “song and dance man.” Andy Kaufman managed to make a name for himself in comedy clubs all around the country, displaying his unique brand of entertainment, that was in stark contrast of what you’d typically see in a comedy club during that time. Kaufman would always say that he never told a joke. Instead, he would come onstage as a foreign character and do impressions of Jimmy Carter, Archie Bunker, and more, before segueing into a pitch-perfect Elvis Presley impression, which became one of his many signatures.

Andy Kaufman was also one of the performers on the very first episode of “Saturday Night Live.” In that first episode, he did his popular Mighty Mouse routine. After that, Andy Kaufman became one of the show’s most popular guest stars, returning many times over the years from 1975 until 1983. He also became a frequent guest on Late Night with David Letterman, where you might see him pan-handle in the studio audience, hit the stage as a fakir and sing Rose Marie, bring out his fictional adopted children, or tell the entire audience that he loved them.

Andy Kaufman is also fondly remembered by television audiences for his role as Latka Gravas, the lovable foreign mechanic, on ABC’s “Taxi.” Latka was based upon the character Andy did in his nightclub act, simply named Foreign Man, who hailed from the fictional island Caspiar. On “Taxi,” Kaufman became one of the show’s breakout characters, with viewers being captivated by the adorable immigrant.

Kaufman is also noted for his work in the world of wrestling. In 1978, he started incorporating wrestling into his act, where he would challenge any woman in the audience \$500-\$1,000 if they could pin him in a match. Kaufman became the undefeated Intergender Wrestling Champion. In 1982, he decided to wrestle a man for the first time, who just so happened to be Jerry Lawler, the King of Memphis Wrestling. His match with Lawler wound up sending Andy to the hospital, before the brawl continued on Late Night with David Letterman. Not only did these two incidents play an important part in Andy Kaufman’s career, but they’re also responsible for helping bring wrestling into the mainstream.

This would not be the only time that Kaufman brought beautifully and meticulously-staged chaos to television. Kaufman had been asked to appear on Fridays. Towards the end of the show, he appeared in a sketch in which he was supposed to appear high. Kaufman stopped the sketch

cold, which led to his frustrated co-star, Michael Richards, throwing the cue cards down in front of him, which caused Kaufman to retaliate and pour water on his head. A fight with the producer broke out. He did a mock-apology a week later. A year later, he went on the show to announce he was married to a singer from The Lawrence Welk Show.

Like a lot of what Andy did, this was all a put on. He loved the feeling audiences got, when they couldn't tell what was real and what wasn't. If you were questioning whether or not something he was doing was a bit, it's safe to say it was. But so convincing was he that you never really knew. It was not uncommon for viewers - or even his closest friends and family - to be "had" by Andy.

Never wanting to be defined by one single thing, Kaufman came up with a character that serves as the direct antithesis of his lovable Foreign Man. Once described by Tony Clifton as being like "meta-physics," Clifton was your quintessential lounge singer, whose brash personality would often be more memorable than his singing. Tony Clifton once opened for Rodney Dangerfield for three nights. The crowd got so hostile after the first night that for the second show, they had to put up chicken wire. By the third night, Clifton donned a helmet to protect himself from getting pelted with bottles.

After making many appearances on TV over the years, Andy Kaufman finally got to host his own 90-minute ABC special in 1979. Like everything else Andy Kaufman did, it mixed his unique brand of humor with a healthy dose of childhood wonderment. To help with the latter, Andy Kaufman did an earnest interview with his childhood hero, Howdy Doody.

Andy Kaufman would eventually pass away from lung cancer on May 16th, 1984. But in the years since he passed away, Andy Kaufman's career has never shined brighter. In 2023 alone, Andy Kaufman has had his career cemented in the WWE Hall of Fame, and now the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Many would not be surprised if he made his grand reemergence on this day. With Andy Kaufman, anything is possible.