



NEWS RELEASE

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FIFTH ANDY KAUFMAN AWARD SET FOR NOVEMBER 3

Comedy Competition Will Commemorate 25th Anniversary of Legendary Comic's Death

(Montclair, NJ) May 12, 2009) Twenty-five years ago the world lost an entertainer who left people wondering, “Was that for real?” Twenty-five years ago a myth was born around speculation that a famed comedian staged his own death. Twenty five years ago comic legend Andy Kaufman passed away on May 16, 1984. On the 25th anniversary of his death, Kaufman’s brother Michael Kaufman will announce the fifth annual Andy Kaufman Award is set be held on November 3 at Caroline’s in New York City.

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After a year's absence, the revival of the Andy Kaufman Award this year will commemorate the anniversary of Kaufman's death and pay tribute to his continuing legacy. "The award recognizes new talent that is in the spirit of a comic legend, someone who will alter the definition of comedy, as Andy did," says Kaufman, the performer's brother.

Those wishing to enter the competition will be asked to submit material on tape or DVD, and finalists will be selected from among those entries. More details will be made available when the Andy Kaufman Award website goes up in about a month.

Previous winners include Kristen Schaal, star of HBO's *Flight of the Conchords*, HGTV *House Hunters* host, Suzanne Whang, Brent Weinbach, and Reggie Watts.

Although widely known for his role as the lovable immigrant mechanic Latka Gravas in the hit television sitcom "Taxi," Kaufman identified himself alternately as a "performance artist" or "song-and-dance man." He thrived on baffling and surprising audiences with characters like the bumbling "Foreign Man," who after embarrassing himself and the audience with a display of ineptitude and lack of talent, morphed into an iconic Elvis Presley impersonation so uncannily accurate that The King himself favored it above all others. He baffled and pushed the limits of audience acceptance with acts such as lip-syncing "Here I come to save the day" to the Mighty Mouse theme song, reading F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Great Gatsby" in its entirety, doing his laundry on stage while performing, and transporting his Carnegie Hall audience in school buses for milk and cookies after the show.

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Kaufman also enjoyed provoking responses other than laughter from his audience. He taunted women during his career as the self-proclaimed “Inter-Gender Wrestling Champion of The World.” He courted audience rejection by encouraging “Saturday Night Live” viewers to vote on whether he should remain on the show. He incited professional wrestler Jerry Lawler into a wrestling match that left Kaufman injured and wearing a neck-brace for months while publicly vowing revenge. Kaufman annoyed and instigated his audiences with his own opening act, Tony Clifton, a flamboyant, verbally abusive caricature of an obnoxious talentless lounge singer who was as detestable as Latka was loveable. Clifton, reported to be Kaufman’s alter-ego, referred to Kaufman as his “arch-nemesis,” and vice-versa. To this day, Clifton haunts Kaufman.

Throughout his career, Kaufman never broke character and never let on about what was real and what was a hoax. His performing, as both a comedian and actor, redefined the meaning of the word funny, and earned him a reputation as master of the art of the hoax. Kaufman’s influence continued well beyond his death. He was immortalized in the 1999 Milos Foreman biopic “Man on the Moon,” starring Jim Carrey. The world-famous musical group R.E.M. immortalized Kaufman in two songs (“Man on the Moon” and “The Great Beyond”), and he has been the subject of television specials and independent documentaries. New performers are sometimes described as “Kaufman-esque,” indicating that Andy Kaufman has, in his status as a comic icon, become part of the American lexicon.

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Twenty-five years after his death, Andy Kaufman's fans have multiplied by untold thousands across the globe as a result of the internet and new technology. Millennials have now joined ranks with the baby-boomers who constituted Kaufman's original audience in the days before computers and cell phones. A cursory search on Google, Yahoo or MSN search engines, reveals that Andy Kaufman's comic legacy is alive and well in this new medium of entertainment.

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Note: Interviews with Michael Kaufman are available upon request