

Entertainment News: TV Comedy Pioneer Sid Caesar Dies at 91

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on February 12, 2014 - 7:19pm

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LOS ANGELES – It's a pioneering TV show practically lost to history. Sid Caesar hosted and performed in "Your Show of Shows," a 90 minute live 1950s sketch comedy program, and also helped to launch a who's who of 20th Century comedy. Coming out of his writer's rooms were such comic greats as Mel Brooks, Neil Simon, Larry Gelbart, Carl Reiner and Woody Allen. Sid Caesar died February 12th at his home near Los Angeles, according to a newsfeed from Larry King on Twitter.

Sid Caesar emerged as one of television's first big stars – along with his show partner Imogene Coca – after he was launched in "Your Show of Shows" in 1950, and the series lasted four legendary seasons with a mix of vaudeville style comedy and TV/movie satires. Brooks, Simon (and his brother Danny) and Reiner wrote for that popular and legendary show, and subsequent Caesar series and TV specials took contributions from Gelbart and Allen.

Isaac Sidney "Sid" Caesar was born in Yonkers, New York, in 1922. He began his career after high school in 1939 as a musician, and learned the comic's craft while working as a saxophonist in the Catskills. Serving in the Coast Guard during World War II, he helped put together military shows, and one such revue – "Tars and Spars" – featured him as the main comedian. Columbia Pictures made a film version after the war, in which he reprised his role. After a few more bit movie roles, he went back to New York and appeared on stage and in night clubs.

This led to his TV career, as Max Liebman (the civilian director of "Tars and Spars") launched him and Imogene Coca with "The Admiral Broadway Revue" on NBC-TV in 1949. The popular show was canceled due to a sponsorship issue, and re-emerged as "Your Show of Shows" on February 25th, 1950. It was a huge hit, and was later memorialized by Carl Reiner in "The Dick Van Dyke Show," in the classic 1982 film "My Favorite Year" and the Neil Simon play, "Laughter on the 23rd Floor."



Sid Caesar as Coach Calhoun in 'Grease'
Photo credit: Paramount Home Entertainment

After "Your Show of Shows" left the air in 1954, Caesar had two other shows in the 1950s, to varying popularity. Success on Broadway came in 1963 with "Little Me," with the versatile Caesar in a Tony winning role covering eight parts and 32 costume changes. His most notable film came out the same year, the classic "It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World."

In his later career, Caesar could not duplicate his stardom of "Your Show of Shows," but he continued to be lionized by comedians for his

famous “double talk” routine, and appeared in films, including Mel Brook’s “Silent Movie” and “History of the World, Part I,” as well as “Airport ’75” and “Grease.” When he hosted “Saturday Night Live” – inspired in part by “Your Show of Shows” – he was given a plaque as an honorary cast member, the only host to be so honored.

Sid Caesar was married to Florence Levy from 1943 until her death in 2010. He is survived by three children.

He summed up both his comedic approach and appeal in this quote...“When I did comedy I made fun of myself. If there was a buffoon, I played the buffoon. And people looked at me and said, ‘Gee, that’s like Uncle David,’ or ‘That’s like a friend of mine.’ And they related through that. I didn’t make fun of them. I made fun of me.”

Source material for this article came from Wikipedia and Variety.com. Sid Caesar, 1922-2014.



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