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With a movie about Kaufman already out, this is his manager and friend Zmuda's recollection of the late comedian. Best remembered as English-challenged immigrant Latka Gravas on the '70s sitcom "Taxi", Kaufman also appeared regularly on "Saturday Night Live", did stand-up, and wrestled women. Photos.

Andy Kaufman Revealed!: Best Friend Tells All Details

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Andy says

This book inspires me on so many levels. Andy Kaufman is a genius, and he lived his life in such a unique way.

I met Bob Zmuda in character as Tony Clifton at the Andy Kaufman Awards show in NYC in 2009. He was amazing, He was drunk and belligerent, and it was awesome. The experience really made the book come alive.

The stories Zmuda tells are unbelievable and interesting. They'll make you wish your own life wasn't so boring. We're all so afraid to try things. Andy didn't have that fear, and that makes me so envious, and yet it fills me with joy.

Read the book. Be inspired. Trust me.

Raina says

This made me laugh out loud *several* times, and most of the others I was smiling like an idiot. I've always loved Andy, so reading about him in further detail was truly fascinating and entertaining as hell for me, even if I do kind of feel as though Zmuda was stretching the truth a bit too much at parts. The overuse of a thesaurus was pretty apparent, too. Well worth the read, though. Halfway through it I had to go on Youtube and binge-watch a million Andy videos. God, he was the best. Just the greatest, weirdest, funniest, most brilliant dude ever.

Mark Russell says

Seriously one of the funniest things I have ever read. For a man whose on-camera hijinks were legendary, you wouldn't think that what happened to him offscreen would be even funnier, but it was. Among the highlights:

Bob Zmuda tells of his time working as an assistant for "Mr. X," a big time Hollywood screenwriter (though he never divulges Mr. X's identity, he swears that this guy wrote on a lot of movies that you would instantly recognize as major films). Mr. X specialized in gritty, true-to-life dialogue, which he collected by cutting in lines at the donut shop, defecating in the middle of airports and, in one particularly harrowing scene, crashing mob funerals and telling a weeping mother that her son killed JFK. It was Zmuda's job to follow him around with a briefcase that contained a small TV screen and a video tape. Whenever Mr. X was in danger of getting arrested or killed by an angry mob, he'd shout, "Zmuda, the tape! Give them the tape!" At which point Zmuda would open the briefcase and play the tape of a world famous movie star (again unnamed) telling people that everything was fine and that Mr. X was doing important work on behalf of the movie industry. Miraculously, this always seemed to work, though he had enough close calls that Zmuda decided to quit while he was still alive.

While on a live performance circuit, Andy liked to experiment with new routines, especially when he was in Kansas, or somewhere in the Bible belt where people were only really familiar with his work on *Taxi* and had no real idea of what they were in for. After a bit of standard comic fare, he would announce that he was also a collector of rare films, and that a genuine but incredibly rare clip of the Lincoln assassination had just come into his possession which he would now like to share with the audience. He rolled out the film projector and proceeded to show them a grainy, black and white clip from D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*. As John Wilkes Booth dramatically fired his pistol into the back of Lincoln's head, there was a palpable gasp of horror from the audience. Afterwards, instead of letting them in on the joke, Kaufman solemnly led the audience in a group prayer and ended the evening on a somber note.

On another live performance, Andy was performing in what appeared to be a talk show format. At one point, he brought out a hypnotist played by Zmuda (I think he was introduced as "Mesmero"). After a little casual banter, Mesmero asked for a couple of volunteers. After selecting a young man and woman from the audience (they were, in fact, planted actors), he hypnotized them, having them do a variety of silly tricks that grew increasingly obscene until he had the woman stripping completely naked and the man profusely pissing his pants. As the crowd grew increasingly agitated, Andy Kaufman stood up and asked the hypnotist to stop what he was doing. Mesmero responded by looking directly into Kaufman's eyes and commanding him to "SIT DOWN!" Andy, as if his body was no longer under his own control, rigidly sat back down in his seat and yelled, "Whatever you do, don't look into his eyes!" This sent the audience into a panic. People started screaming and running for the doors. The cops showed up. When they tried to arrest both Zmuda and Kaufman, the remaining audience members immediately leapt to Kaufman's defense, telling the police about how he had bravely tried to stop the mad Mesmero.

This book will kill Andy Kaufman fans, and make everyone else wonder just why the hell they aren't Andy Kaufman fans. It's about a hundred times funnier than that *Man in the Moon* movie.

Cathy says

Entertaining enough.

Scott says

Amazing account of one of the funniest and strangest people who ever lived... Andy! Zmuda really paints a great picture of a very mysterious man. In one sense, I felt bad that Zmuda ruins all of Andy's secrets yet I feel closer to understanding Andy as the sensitive and complicated person that he was.

Sue Silverman says

Here's the thing: This is not an authoritative, well researched biography of Andy Kaufman. In fact, it is probably more about Bob Zmuda than Kaufman. But it is a glimpse into the world of Kaufman/Zmuda and a behind-the-scenes insight into their ideas and philosophies about performance. I couldn't decide to what degree Zmuda is full of it, but then I realized, who cares? Andy Kaufman's performances were all about blurring the lines between reality and b.s. - if this book is a continuation of that, kudos to Kaufman and Zmuda. I don't actually believe it is b.s., but who knows? Bottom line, I enjoyed this book and didn't mind

the fact that maybe I am being hoodwinked by a dead Kaufman.

Ray Dunsmore says

A very funny memoir from Bob Zmuda, accomplice to Andy Kaufman, comedic force of chaos. Kaufman was a true artist among comedians, he was interested more in playing the audience like an instrument, reversing the set boundaries and becoming the audience himself, watching the reactions of those confused or angry patrons playing unwilling parts in Kaufman's show. Andy Kaufman was a true master of the disruption of traditional life, a force to shake the observer out of complacency and into something else; maybe positive, maybe negative, but something you inevitably feel with all your heart because what Kaufman was, above everything else, was interesting. The audience may come out the other side loving or hating him, but they would certainly feel something. And it's that purposeful disruption of the status quo by any means necessary that truly made Kaufman's comedy great, because it got to the inner truth of why comedy succeeds: it is an escape. Whatever you felt before you saw Andy Kaufman didn't matter, because all that you could think about afterward was what he did and what in the hell he was thinking when he did it. He did things so out of the ordinary that you just had to look, thus brightening your day (or souring it for the unlucky ones, as Kaufman worked like nature: in regards to the audience, casualties in mood did not matter, so long as the audience exits in a different state than they were in.) It was like enlightenment through disruption, like with every event he and Zmuda orchestrated was a quick peek behind a curtain of order to see the nonsensical machinery that lies underneath.

Johnny Galt says

Funny and real. More than just jokes about a comedian, by a comedian. More than just MAN ON THE MOON. One should read and watch both simultaneously. Many of the skits in the movie are described in more detail in the book! Great for starters who want to know more about Andy and told by his closest friend.

Jay says

Taxi reruns on WPIX were always a good watch along with Cheers and the Honeymooners. I believe they ran in succession from 10 pm till 11:30. Then they played the national anthem and then went off the air. (do stations even go off the air anymore?)

Anyways, this book provides a candid and personal look at the wacky man who brought Latka to life on the small screen. Bob Zmuda--Kaufman's manager, closest friend, and even skit assistant--gives us the scoop in a juicy tell-all. From Kaufman's shy beginnings all the way through his death... or maybe not?

David Ward says

Andy Kaufman Revealed! Best Friend Tells All by Bob Zmuda (Little, Brown & Co. 1999) (Biography). There has never been a stand-up comic like Andy Kaufman. He roared into the public eye with stunning performances on late-night television on Saturday Night Live and on The Johnny Carson Show before

landing a gig on the sitcom "Taxi" in which he reprised his stand-up character "Foreign Man" as the character Latka Gravas. He once lip-synced to "The Mighty Mouse Theme Song." On another occasion he read "The Great Gatsby" from stage until he was shouted down by disgruntled audience members. He could be gentle as well. After one televised performance, he chartered buses to transport the entire studio audience to the NBC commissary for milk and cookies. Andy Kaufman was great; Bob Zmuda not so much. Very little of this book by Zmuda is actually about Andy Kaufman; it's more about Bob Zmuda's last grab at fame. I can't imagine recommending this book to anyone. My rating: 6/10, finished 6/21/16.

James says

I was trapped on a Swiss mountaintop (Thyon) with Andy for two summer months. At that time, Andy was just on the cusp of his fame, performing in NY clubs. So although there were a few TM instructors from NY there who knew about Andy's talents, most of us did not -- at first.

In addition to dairy cows with bells, high meadows all abloom, and surrounding snow-capped peaks, Maharishi would touch down in a chopper once in a while, and the repartee between Andy and Maharishi was both philosophical and hilarious, with Andy assuming his immigrant persona and asking probing questions about comedy and aesthetics, as well as some over-the-top queries about sex and chocolate.

I remember Andy asking if laughter was caused by a comedian doing something weird, and Maharishi replying that, more generally, it is caused by contrast. You can see Andy took this to heart on the Letterman appearance where he sings the country-and-western tune "Rosemarie" while dressed as an Indian fakir.

Near the end of our retreat some one had set up a talent show. I'd never laughed so hard and so long in my life. (I've never understood why we tack on the phrase 'in my life.' One would think that 'never' would cover it.)

There are some clips of Andy on YouTube.

Bob was Andy's buddy and business partner, so a reliable source.

Christiane Swenson says

man fuck bob zmuda

Zmuda says

This is a hilarious book on Andy Kaufman with too much emphasis on Bob Zmuda! Bob's personal stories may be funny, but they're not really relevant. I bought this book to read about Kaufman, not Zmuda. But it's still worth reading! When Bob does talk about Andy (which is about 70-80% of the book) it's really enjoyable! I would suggest this book to anyone that wants to dissect the enigma that was Andy Kaufman.

Chris Brusich says

I knew of some of Andy's work before reading this and thought he was funny, this book opened my eyes to the comedic genius of Kaufman. I love the crazy stories of MR X.(Norman Wexler, the script writer of Serpico)

Another amazing part of the book that kept me in stitches was the all of the Tony Clifton stories. READ THIS!

Mandyhello says

Complex and mysterious like Kaufman himself.. Only the last 30 pages or so are about Andy's death (or faked death) which was probably good because it was shocking after all his antics. I think he's probably dead but I also think Clifton is reeeeeal!
