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A Communal Life in Film and DVD, Examined



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Kenneth Keith Kallenbach: American Icon



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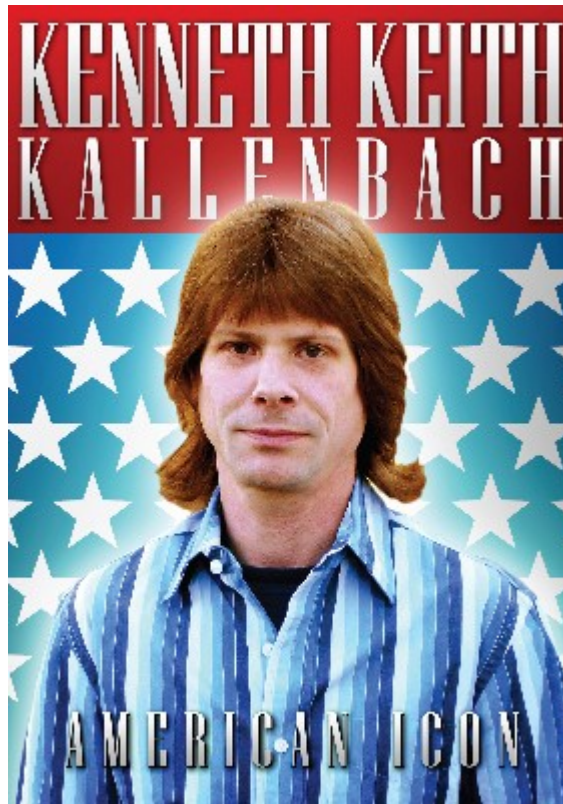
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I guess **Kenneth Keith Kallenbach** is a sort of forerunner to **William Hung**, the *American Idol* contestant, from a few years back, who was so awful that he achieved a strange sort of meta-fame, bypassing any and all requirements of manifested talent or hard work. Like Hung, Kallenbach's fame — to the degree that it really exists — seems to hinge on a combination of fortuitous discovery and the snickering derision of those who from thence forth afford him a platform. All I know is that, **Kentucky waterfall 'do or not, Kallenbach is an awful, awful... comedian or actor, musician or entertainer, however you want to slice it.** (Based on the lanky physicality and hair, though, I suppose it's worth noting that [Sam Rockwell](#) could play likely him in a biopic if some suitably grandiose tragic fate should befall him.)

Billed as a one-of-a-kind jack-of-all-trades, Kallenbach's bizarre ascension charts itself back to Howard Stern, on whose very first Channel 9 show he appeared. His outgoing personality and strange delivery — **think a pretty spot-on Bill Paxton, by slight way of Beavis** — grabbed one's attention, I guess, though since I'm not a habitual listener of Stern's (favoring XM over Sirius, sorry...), I'm not sure how Kallenbach is deployed/tolerated, and whether his apparently recurring guest spots as part of the shock jock's "Wack Pack" allow for his own brand of air-quote comedy, or whether he's really just doing Stern's bidding.

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This single-disc DVD, dubbed *American Icon*, compiles eye-gougingly atrocious clips of Kallenbach's almost two decades in entertainment, from ramshackle, man-in-the-street bits where he rephrases passersby's replies to his queries and adds a random lame observation (on someone's favorite talk show host: "Yeah, I like Ellen [DeGeneres] too... I think she's a lesbo") to longer-form sketch material. The entire affair employs production values just below your average cable access show (sleeping bags duct-taped to a wall serve as the backdrop for an interstitial talk show wraparound bit, wherein Kallenbach interviews himself) and, **simply put, none of it is funny**. Kallenbach talks about bits like cutting off and eating his own hair, or putting firecrackers in his pants and the like, but we see precious little of this type of thing, and **his humor certainly doesn't even fall into the *Jackass* category of classification, which might have some goosing, occasional entertainment value, no matter how insipid the host**. Instead, here we get Kallenbach prattling on and on about himself, and starring in stupid Superman sketches that will have even the biggest [Bryan Singer](#) detractors yearning for the relative comfort of *Superman Returns*. Clocking in at over 90 minutes, **this title doesn't even have the decency of brevity**; bits with an eponymous musical side project, old stand-up footage and phony phone calls (in which Kallenbach's "victims" get off much better one-liners than he) round out the slate.

Housed in a regular Amray case, *American Icon* is presented on a region-free disc in a cruddy full screen transfer, with source audio that also sometimes (against considerable odds) manages to grate almost on par with the material itself. There are no special features, per se, just the cold comfort of knowing that this DVD is billed as being comprised of never-before-seen sketches and shorts, etcetera. It should stay that way, really. **F (Movie) D+ (Disc)**

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