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The Death Of Andy Kaufman (2008)



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Andy Kaufman was many things. A comedian, actor, son, brother and friend. Andy could also drive you to insane anger or laughter... sometimes in the same moment. He was a strange, intensely private person. No one knew the real Andy. Maybe not even his family. So when he died in 1984 at the age of 35 from lung cancer, people thought he would be back. Not from the dead, but from hiding. Many people thought (and still think) that Andy Kaufman faked his own death, and that's what this documentary focuses on.



Review by **Bill Wolford**
Added: August 28, 2011

There are many reasons made known in this film about why Andy Kaufman would fake his own death. Some of them given are the fact that he had just gone through a lot of professional hardships. Losing his Saturday Night Live gig, having his show Taxi cancelled, and being thrown out of his spiritual meditation group. He told several people that he would fake his death to help cope with these losses. That he would hide away until the time was right to make his reappearance, thus staging the biggest hoax in the entertainment industry. He even created an alter ego (Tony Clifton) that he, or someone else (it was hard to tell who) would perform under the guise of.

This documentary delves quite deep into different theories of how Andy might have successfully pulled off this stunt of faking his own death. We get to go to a town where he has supposedly been seen over the years. We see letters from people having seen him in places all over the world. We are told about how Andy could have switched identities with someone in the hospital where he died, thus being free to do as he pleased while someone else was buried in his place. There are numerous websites that have members who either believe Andy is alive, or try to pass themselves off as Andy Kaufman himself.

In the latter part of the documentary, we spend time with Andy's brother, who brings a wealth of knowledge to the proceedings, and who also played the part of Tony Clifton on stage at least once. He admits to helping keep the image of Andy's death hoax alive, but doesn't go into detail how he does so. He also talks about Andy's last days alive, and his funeral.

This documentary sums up at its conclusion that Andy is in fact dead, (Which I believe as well) and that the hoax, even though it might have been in the planning stages, never came to fruition. Andy was a strange man and performer, so nothing he may have tried to do would seem shocking, as he did so many things outside the box to begin with.

Personally, while I found the subject of this documentary interesting, it was the great amount of Andy Kaufman footage that I had never seen before that grabbed my interest the most. I always felt that Andy died in 1984, and this did nothing to change my mind, or even consider any alternative. It is though, a well made and very interesting documentary about a comedian we do not have enough material on. This should be a welcome addition to the collection of someone who is curious about Andy's death, and people who find an interest in his comedy career. 7/10.

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He was the highlight of SNL. From the first time he did Mighty Mouse he owned that show. What a nut!



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