

Koala Bear Infestations

and other facts about the late

Mitch Hedberg



by Josh Allen

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If we hadn't known Mitch Hedberg, we wouldn't have known about Smackey the Frog, the British version of Smokey the Bear. We wouldn't even think about changing the cover of a Rice Krispies box. We wouldn't have been warned about the frustrations of playing tennis with a wall.

And we would've missed out on one of the wackiest, funniest, most creative personalities in the history of comedy.

The one-year anniversary of comedian Mitch Hedberg's untimely and unfortunate passing is quickly approaching. On the morning of March 30, 2005, Mitch was found dead in a New Jersey hotel room following an apparent drug overdose. Nine years after his first big television appearance on "The Late Show with David Letterman," he had finally begun to break into the upper crust of comedians in terms of popularity. After all, there are two Facebook groups dedicated to him here at UTD. How far he could have gone as an entertainer will have to remain a mystery.

So what separated Mitch from other comics? Extremely random, sometimes absurd one-liners were his forte.

But reading his jokes just doesn't do the trick. Mitch's laid back delivery, from behind his trademarked shades, went hand-in-hand with his style of humor. If the audience's reaction to one of his antics was subpar, he would just sigh, "All right," followed by something like, "That joke was better than you acted!"

The native Minnesotan began his stand-up career in about 1989 performing at comedy clubs in south Florida. He then moved to Seattle, where his routines gained momentum. Hedberg achieved a major milestone in 1996 when he performed at the Just for Laughs Montreal International Comedy Festival. Soon thereafter, he received a call from David Letterman in New York to

Hedberg's One Liners

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 "If you're an animal, you want to have a beaver as a friend, 'cause they have some kick-ass houses. Lakeside my ass, lake on!"

.....
 "I hope the next time I move I get a real easy phone number. Something like 222-2222. People would say, 'Mitch, how do I get a hold of you?' I would say, 'Just press 2 for a while, and when I answer, you will know that you have pressed 2 enough.'"

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 "A sleeping bag is a tortilla for a human."

.....
 "I wanna hang a map of the world in my house. Then I'm gonna put pins into all the locations that I've traveled to. But first, I'm gonna have to travel to the top two corners of the map so it won't fall down."

.....
 And of course...

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 "If carrots got you drunk, rabbits would be ****-ed up."

appear on the "Late Show." It was to be his first of ten appearances at the Ed Sullivan Theatre. As he toured the country over the next several years, his popularity steadily grew to cult status.

Mitch's success has not been confined to the stage and microphone. In 1997, "Los Enchiladas!", an independent film which Hedberg wrote, directed and acted, premiered at the Sundance Theatre. The comedy features the interaction between employees of a Mexican chain restaurant as it deteriorates over a day's time. In addition to his numerous stints on the "Late Show," Mitch also appeared on Fox's "That 70's Show," NBC's "Ed" and Cartoon Network's "Home Movies." In 2003, Comedy Central sponsored his only two albums, Strategic Grill Locations and Mitch All Together, which were released



photo courtesy of www.nothans.com

Comedian Mitch Hedberg was just breaking on to the big-time comedy scene when he was found dead in his New Jersey hotel room almost one year ago, March 30, 2005.

as he toured with Lewis Black and Dave Attell.

Mitch was not all that shy about his continual use of drugs and alcohol. A few of his lines were even centered around that fact (e.g., "I like the FedEx driver, because he's a drug dealer, and he don't even know it."). As the Pioneer Press describes: "His success occurred in light of, in spite of, and even because of his quarter-century affair with drugs and alcohol." In 2003, Hedberg spent two days in jail after an arrest for heroin possession. He downplayed the severity of the charged, claiming that he was only charged with misdemeanor possession of "paraphernalia and pills and things like that."

Despite that reputation, Mitch had given up marijuana in the final years of his life. According to an interview found on MTV.com, he gave it up because it "didn't feel as good." Nevertheless, at the young age of 37, Mitch Hedberg added his name last year to the growing list of comedians whose lives were tragically cut short (others being Phil Hartman, Chris Farley, and John Belushi).

If you haven't been exposed to the great Mitch Hedberg's comedic genius, it's certainly not too late to discover it. The next time you have 12 bucks to blow on a CD, you might consider getting one of his works and finding out why his unique and purposeless observational humor is so appealing. Or at least hear why a koala bear infestation would be so much better than roaches.

Rest in peace, Mitch. You are greatly missed.