

# George Carlin - a bad boy of comedy

## Entertainment

George Carlin was one of the original bad boys of comedy. Long before Andrew Dice Clay and Sam Kinison burned up the airwaves with their raw brand of humor, Carlin was pushing the limits of outrageous stand-up comedy.

The Supreme Court in 1973 felt Carlin had gone too far. It ruled that a cut off his comedy album containing the "seven words you can't say on television" was indecent.

Ironically, Carlin, 52, a longtime anti-establishment figure, has almost become the granddaddy of bad-boy comedy. His seventh special, "Do'n' It Again," airs the month of June on HBO.

A native of New York, where his father was a newspaper executive, Carlin began his show-business career as a radio deejay in Shreveport, La. In his spare time, he developed a comedy nightclub act with Jack Burns.

By 1962, the pair had split up, and Carlin began performing in coffee houses and folk music clubs, where his humor was more accepted. In that venue, he developed some of his most popular characters, the Hippy Dippy Weatherman and the Wonderful Wino.

This more accessible comedy led to wider acceptance and extensive TV exposure beginning in the mid '60s on "The Merv Griffin Show," "The Mike Douglas Show," "The Ed Sullivan Show" and the ultimate prize for a comedian, "The Tonight Show."

Carlin's 12 comedy albums have been hugely successful, with four of them going gold.

Q: I just watched a tape of your latest HBO comedy special. Is your humor too X-rated for network TV?

A: Gimme a break. I've done 135 Johnny Carsons. I could do an hour's worth of PG comedy if I were inclined to do network shows. But the big problem with commercial TV is having to bend and shape your material to fit these artificial standards. Another problem is that network TV is constantly interrupting your art with commercials, so it's all very artificial.

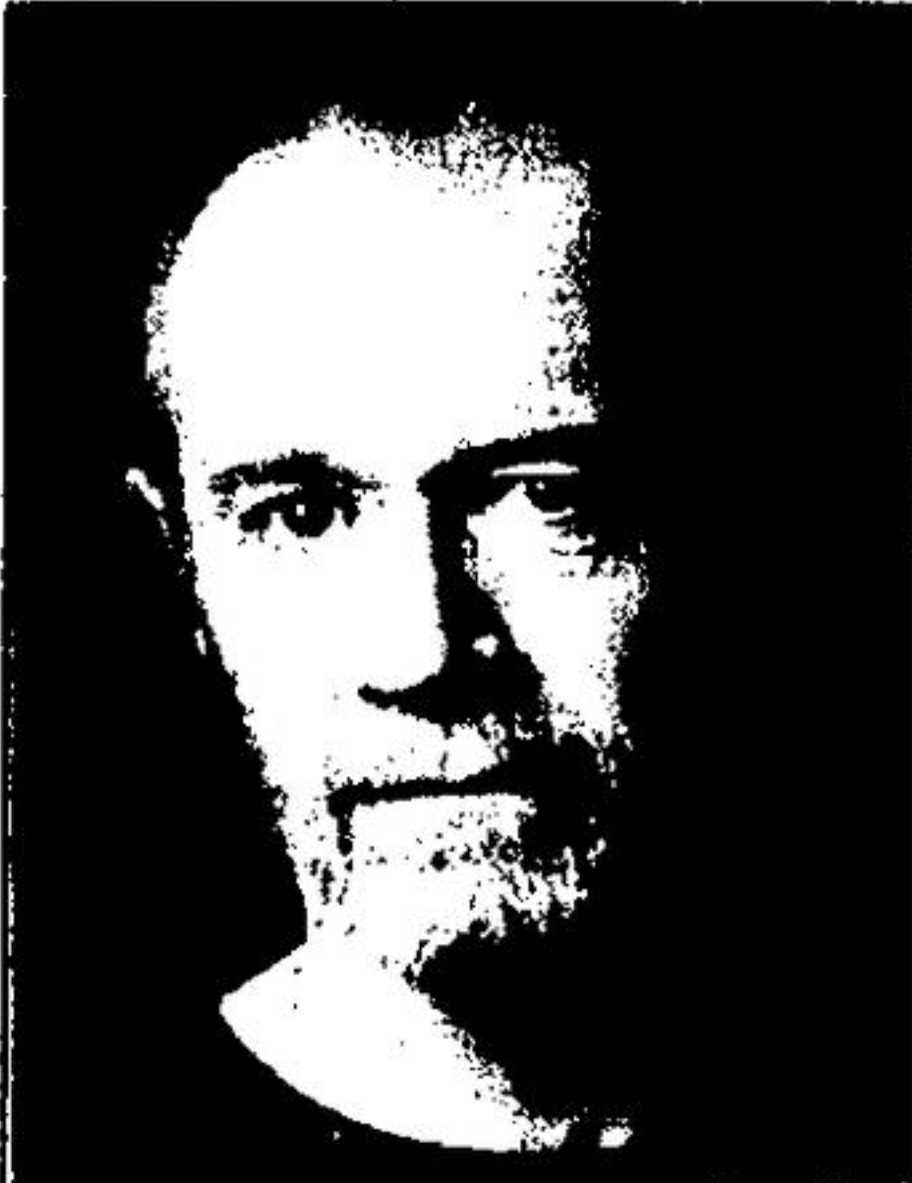
Q: What do you think of the new generation of X-rated comedians like Andrew Dice Clay and Sam Kinison?

A: I don't understand the term "X-rated." But I like Sam Kinison a lot and Eddie Murphy's stand-up act. I don't care a lot for Andrew Dice Clay.

**'The big problem with commercial TV is having to bend and shape your material to fit these artificial standards.'**

— George Carlin

because he picks on underdogs. Traditionally, comedians pick on people with power. Satire has always been used to attack the powerful, not the weak, so I don't understand Clay making jokes about the handicapped, for instance.



George Carlin

Q: But weren't you the Andrew Dice Clay of your day, with your infamous "seven words you can't say on television"?

A: Clay does jokes about women, gays, immigrants. His language is secondary. I never did jokes about the weak, the underdog. The fact that we both use common street language doesn't make us similar. That's a very superficial similarity.

Q: So you don't agree with Clay's defenders who say he is the Lenny Bruce of the '90s?

A: I think his publicist made up that comparison.

Q: Why did CBS drop the sitcom you were developing for the network? Was it too outrageous for Middle America?

A: CBS changed management and threw out everything in development. My show was just one of many they tossed into the garbage when they changed management. I don't regret it, except that I lost the opportunity for a little acting exposure.

Q: It's clear from your comedy that you have extremely liberal political views. Did that hurt your popularity during the conservative Reagan era?

A: In the '80s, I was on the road 120 nights a year in front of, mostly, sold-out audiences of 2,000 or more. I really don't think Reagan affected my audience.

Q: Your official biography says you abandoned Roman Catholicism "as soon as possible." Why?

A: It's a repressive institution — the same as any other organized religion. It's anti-man. It's a perversion of the good instincts people have. So I abandoned it when I saw it was cruel.

Q: And when was that?

A: When I was 10.

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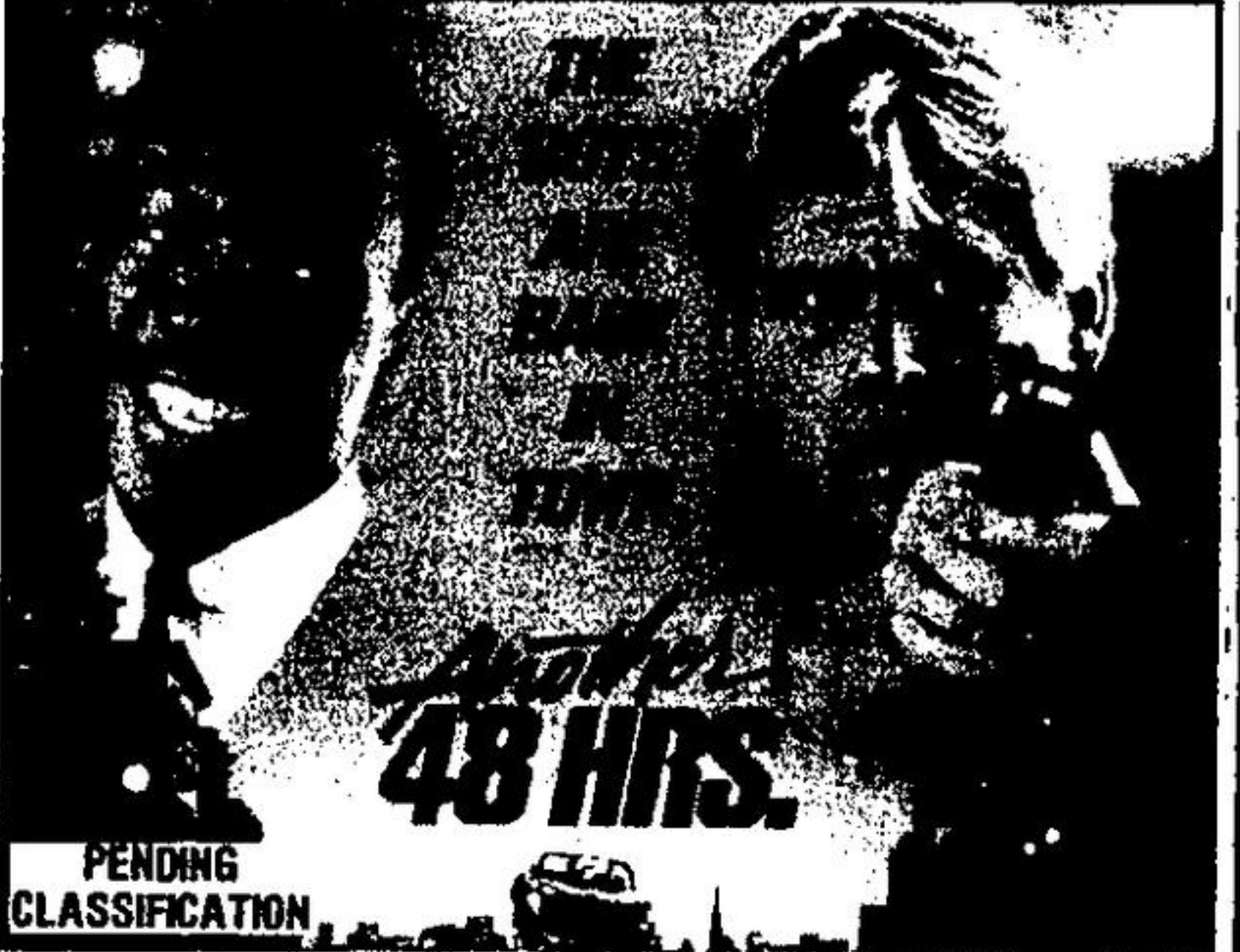
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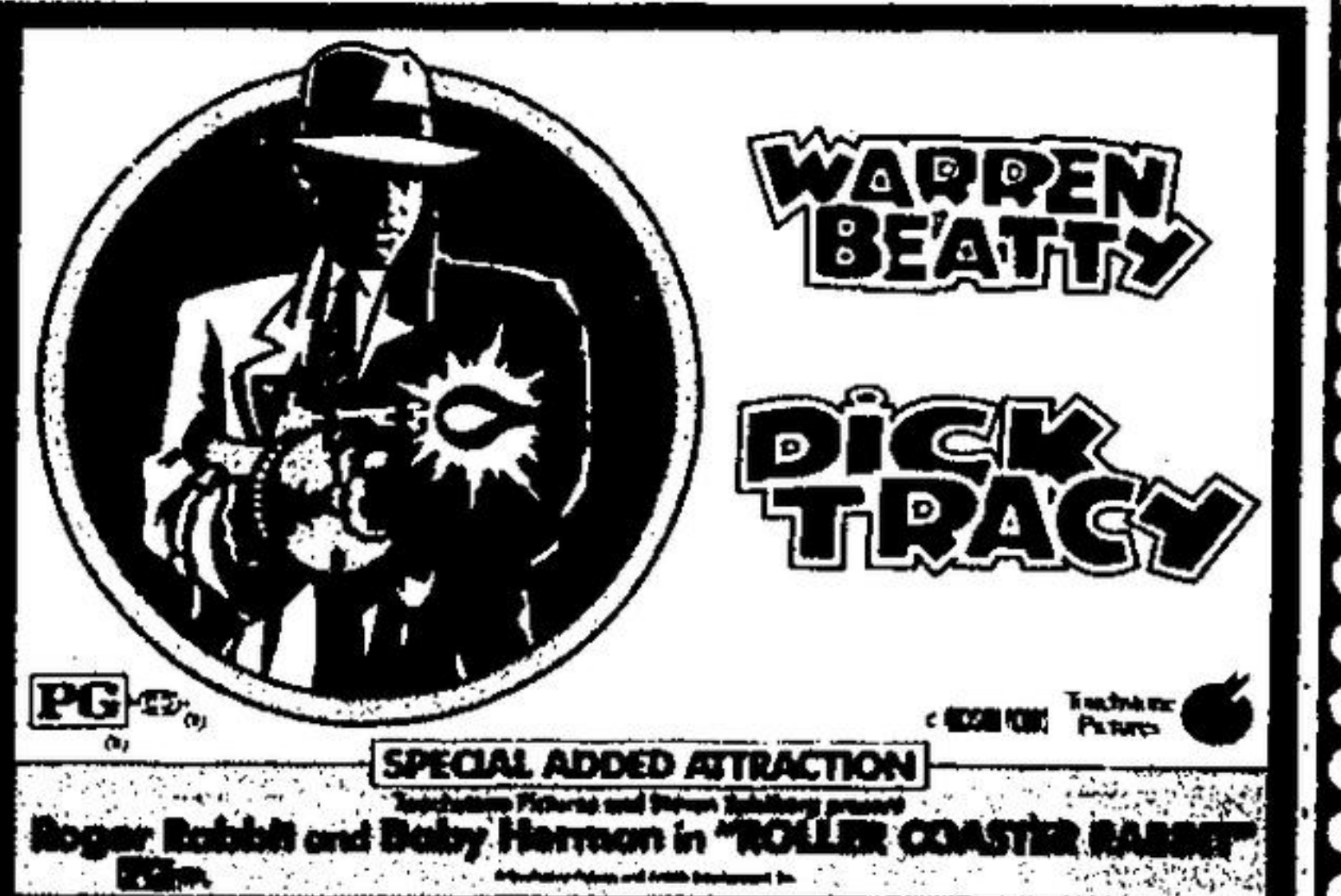
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