

George Carlin began his professional career in radio (KJOE, Shreveport, LA) in July, 1956 at the age of 19 while serving in the USAF. Following KJOE, he landed at WEZE in Boston. That job lasted three months (1959).

The turning point for Carlin came in Fort Worth, Texas (1959) on KXOL. Together with newsman Jack Burns, he started developing comedy routines for an eventual nightclub act. In 1960 on KDAY, Hollywood, Carlin worked with Burns as the Wright Bros., morning DJ's for three months. They both quit radio in June 1960 to work nightclubs as "Burns and Carlin."

Burns and Carlin stayed together two years, playing leading clubs, getting good press exposure, and making a first appearance on *The Tonight Show* with Jack Paar. They also recorded an album, *Burns & Carlin at the Playboy Club Tonight*, on Era Records. Although working mainly mainstream clubs, the act had a decidedly anti-establishment, satirical flavor. During this period, while appearing at the Racquet Club in Dayton, Ohio, George met Brenda Hosbrook, whom he married in June 1961. Burns and Carlin broke up in 1962 so that each could pursue a solo career.

After splitting with Burns, Carlin spent about a year working in nightclubs without much success and with no television exposure. In 1963, he branched out into folk clubs and coffee houses where the audiences were more progressive, and where he could develop both styles of material he felt capable of. He balanced mainstream material with the more outspoken, irreverent routines that were closer to his heart. In 1963 he found the Café au Go Go in Greenwich Village and spent the better part of two years developing his comic style. Ironically, it was in this folk/jazz setting that he developed the first bits which got him on television, the ultimate establishment medium. *The Indian Sergeant*, *Wonderful Wino*, and the *Hippy Dippy Weatherman* were all born during this period. So was George and Brenda's only daughter, Kelly.

In 1965, Carlin began to get extensive TV exposure: 58 appearances in '65 and '66 alone, mostly on *Merv Griffin* and *Mike Douglas*. Network spots during that period included *The Hollywood Palace*, *Jimmy Dean*, *Roger Miller*, and Carlin's first few *Tonight Show* appearances, which now number over 130. In the summer of '66, Carlin was a regular on the *Kraft Summer Music Hall with John Davidson*, and the following year he starred with Buddy Greco and Buddy Rich on *Away We Go*, the summer replacement for Jackie Gleason. His first album, *Take-Offs and Put-Ons*, was released in 1967 on RCA Victor.

In 1967, Carlin began the transition to acting, his original goal. But a guest shot on "*That Girl*," a part in the Doris Day film, "*With Six You Get Egg-Roll*," and numerous auditions only served to make him feel that he wasn't quite ready for acting, and so he concentrated on his stand-up career. Between 1967 and 1970, he made another 80 TV appearances, including such shows as *Ed Sullivan*, *Tom Jones*, *Steve Allen*, *Jackie Gleason* and *Carol Burnett*. He also worked in all the major nightclubs, including the

*Frontier Hotel* in Las Vegas, where he had a three-year contract, an association that would later prove significant in an unexpected way.

During the late 1960's, because of the influence television was having on his career, Carlin's new material grew bland and safe. The rebellious, anti-establishment tone of some of his earlier routines had disappeared, and increasingly he felt bored and dissatisfied with his material and the places he was working. By 1970, his self-imposed restrictions no longer applied; his acting and career had been put on hold, and the country was changing. The people who had inhabited the folk clubs and coffee houses of the early '60s were now the "counterculture," a large ready-made audience which shared many of Carlin's out-of-step attitudes and opinions. He began to drift in their direction.

During 1970 the irreverent tone returned to his material, he grew a beard, and began to dress more casually. However, the "new" George Carlin didn't sit well with his middle-class audiences nor with nightclub owners. A series of incidents with audiences and owners that year culminated in his being fired from the *Frontier Hotel* in September for saying "shit." In December he worked his last "establishment" job: The San Francisco Playboy Club. From then on, his comedic identity became more and more associated with the counterculture.

In 1972, a recording contract led to the release of "*FM*" & "*AM*," an album that won a Grammy Award after "going gold." It was the first of four successive gold albums that Carlin recorded for Little David Records during the first half of the 1970's.

In all, he has released 22 solo albums (18 stand-up albums and 4 audiobooks), ten of which have been nominated for Grammy awards (4 winners), and there have been four separate collections, the most notable being 1999's *George Carlin: The Little David Years, 1971-1977*, a seven-CD package that includes a bonus disc of previously unreleased material and several home recordings made when he was 12 years old.

In addition to recordings, the other important medium where Carlin has found wide exposure for his stand-up has been cable TV, specifically Home Box Office. In 1977, he taped "*On Location: George Carlin at USC*." This special at the California campus was the first in a string which now numbers 14 HBO comedy concert broadcasts, including the highly regarded "*Carlin at Carnegie*," taped at New York's Carnegie Hall in 1982, and the ground-breaking "*Jammin' in New York*," broadcast live in 1992 from the Paramount Theater at Madison Square Garden.

To date, George Carlin's 14 HBO specials have garnered three Emmy nominations and six CableAce awards, and Carlin picked up two additional Emmy nominations in the early '90's, playing the part of *Mister Conductor* in 45 episodes of the critically acclaimed PBS children's show, "*Shining Time Station*."

In 1997, Carlin ventured into a new field as Hyperion published his first book, *Brain Droppings*, a collection of original routines, one-liners, commentaries and essays. In hard cover and paperback, the book spent a total of 40 weeks on *The New York Times* best-seller list and has sold nearly 900,000 copies. The “book-on-tape” version, read by Carlin himself, won the 2001 Grammy in the Best Spoken Comedy category.

A second book, *Napalm & Silly Putty*, written in the same style as the first, was published in April, 2001 and was likewise a huge success, reaching the number one spot on the *New York Times* best-seller list in its second week. The paperback edition, published a year later, has done equally well, and, together, both formats have now sold over 600,000 copies. Once again, the Audiobook CD version garnered a Grammy award—his fourth.

A third book, *When Will Jesus Bring The Pork Chops?* was published in hard cover by Hyperion in the fall of 2004, the paperback again following by one year. It’s format echoes that of the first two: long- and short-form essays and observations and commentaries ranging from the serious to the silly. It also includes more of Carlin’s trademark observations on the American language—one of his notable comedy strengths. Sales to date are right at the 600,000-copy mark, bringing his total book sales to just over two million copies. As with the first two books, the Audiobook CD version of *When Will Jesus Bring The Pork Chops?* Was nominated for a 2006 Grammy in the Best Spoken Word Album of the year category.

Meanwhile, in the spring of 2004, Carlin had a substantial role (as Affleck’s father) in Kevin Smith’s *Jersey Girl*, starring Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez. It was his eleventh feature film, and his most significant role thus far. In addition, he has performed extensive voice-over work in three animated films: “*Tarzan II*,” “*Happily N’ever After*” and “*Cars*.”

In the midst of all this, Carlin still manages to perform 90 concerts around the country each year, selling nearly a quarter of a million tickets. Additionally, he makes about eight visits annually to Las Vegas, where he performs four-day weekends at the Orleans Hotel, considered by many comics as the best comedy venue in Las Vegas.

Most recently, in the spring of 2008, Carlin broadcast his fourteenth HBO stand-up comedy special, *George Carlin: It’s Bad For Ya*, and has released a CD of the same name. A DVD will follow. He is now working on his fourth book, “*Circling the Drain*,” another collection of short- and long-form essays that present his take on the American scene.

It’s a full plate served up by someone who over the years has only gotten better.