



**“THE COMEDY AWARDS” TO HONOR LEGENDARY COMEDIAN DON RICKLES
WITH THE “JOHNNY CARSON AWARD FOR COMEDIC EXCELLENCE”**

AWARD TO BE PRESENTED BY JON STEWART

Television Event Honoring The Best In Comedy Tapes At New York City's Hammerstein Ballroom
On Saturday, April 28 And Premieres On COMEDY CENTRAL On Sunday, May 6

NEW YORK, April 2, 2012 – [“The Comedy Awards,”](#) the annual event dedicated to honoring and celebrating the world of comedy, announced today that legendary comedian Don Rickles will be honored as the recipient of the prestigious “Johnny Carson Award For Comedic Excellence” at this year’s ceremony. “The Daily Show’s” Jon Stewart will present him with the prestigious award.

The “Johnny Carson Award For Comedic Excellence” is presented annually in honor of iconic comedian and talk show host Johnny Carson, to an individual who embodies the same comedic excellence of the renowned and beloved comic powerhouse. Rickles, who credits Carson for giving him his first big break and was a frequent guest and guest host on “The Tonight Show,” appearing over 100 times during Carson’s tenure, is being honored for more than 55 years of outstanding work in stand-up comedy, paving the way for countless entertainers. He is the second recipient of this award, following David Letterman, who was presented with the honor by Bill Murray at last year’s inaugural ceremony.

“Don Rickles is an American treasure. Together with the John W. Carson Foundation we are thrilled to be honoring him at ‘The Comedy Awards’ this year,” said Casey Patterson, Executive Producer, “The Comedy Awards” and EVP, Event Production, Viacom Entertainment Group.

Rickles commented, “I’ve been blessed with many highlights in my career but guesting with Johnny Carson on ‘The Tonight Show’ was particularly memorable for me as they were more than just appearances, they became events. Carson was Mr. Magic. He always made me feel that my talent was something special. To receive an award bearing Johnny’s name means everything to me as he will go down in history as the greatest in his field.”

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The “Johnny Carson Award For Comedic Excellence,” the first and only award sanctioned by the Carson family, will be presented during the taping of the second annual “The Comedy Awards” at New York City’s Hammerstein Ballroom on Saturday, April 28.

As the host of NBC’s “The Tonight Show” for nearly 30 years, Johnny Carson became a beloved comedic icon and a welcome guest in the homes of Americans across the country. His legendary career earned him the title “The King of Late Night,” propelling him to become one of the biggest names not only in comedy but in all of entertainment. With such a respected position in the industry, the “Johnny Carson Award For Comedic Excellence” is an honor bestowed upon those that exemplify Carson’s generous, pioneering spirit and love of laughter.

It is befitting that Rickles will receive this special award, in its sophomore year, as one of Carson’s oldest friends. Although it is difficult to pinpoint the exact moment of his breakthrough, Rickles believes the ball really started rolling on the night of October 7, 1965, during his first appearance on “The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson.” His freewheeling performance that night became the talk of the show business industry and caused nationwide comment among the press and public.

Regarded as one of the world’s top entertainers, Rickles has appeared in top showrooms and concert halls across the U.S. and internationally. He began his career in the early 1950s and quickly became known as an “insult” comedian for the way he would respond to hecklers in the audience and his indiscriminating way of making fun of people from all walks of life, leading to the monikers “The Merchant of Venom” and “Mr. Warmth” (coined affectionately by Johnny Carson). With support from fan and friend Frank Sinatra, Rickles became a popular performer in Las Vegas, where he first started in 1959 and has been a headliner ever since.

Rickles has been featured in numerous movies, beginning with “Run Silent Run Deep,” which was his first film after graduating from The American Academy of Dramatic Arts. He has graced the silver screen with many memorable roles since, including the cult-favorite “Kelly’s Heroes,” “The Rat Race” and, perhaps most famously, as casino manager Billy Sherbert in Martin Scorsese’s “Casino” and as the beloved “Mr. Potato Head” in Pixar’s “Toy Story” franchise. He has appeared on numerous television series including Kathy Griffin’s “My Life on the D-List” and “Hot in Cleveland,” and has found success in the publishing world, having written two best sellers for Simon & Schuster. Rickles continues to be very active on the stand-up comedy scene and is still a popular performer in Las Vegas, Atlantic City and other venues around the country.

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“The Comedy Awards,” now in its second year, is dedicated to celebrating the art of comedy with an historic, one-night-only celebration honoring the most talented writers, directors, actors and stand-ups, who provided the laugh track to our lives this past year. The ceremony will take place at New York City’s Hammerstein Ballroom on Saturday, April 28 and premiere on COMEDY CENTRAL on Sunday, May 6. “The Comedy Awards” also will air on COMEDY CENTRAL’s international channels across Europe, New Zealand, India, Israel and Africa.

A full list of [previously announced nominees](#) for the 2012 “The Comedy Awards” and more information about the show and its prestigious Board of Directors can be found at www.thecomedyawards.com. “Modern Family,” “Bridesmaids,” “30 Rock,” “Crazy, Stupid, Love.” and Louis C.K. lead the nominations and fans can vote for “[Breakout Performer of the Year](#).” Previously, [Robin Williams was announced](#) as the recipient of the prestigious “[Stand-Up Icon](#)” award, which will be presented to him during this year’s ceremonies. A complete list of the [nominees for the digital categories](#) can also be found at www.thecomedyawards.com and fans can vote for [Best Viral Original](#) on “The Comedy Awards” page on YouTube (www.youtube.com/ComedyAwards). Click [here](#) to view a highlight reel from last year’s show. Follow “The Comedy Awards” on Twitter [@TheComedyAwards](#).

“The Comedy Awards” is led by its Board of Directors, which include such luminaries as: Carol Burnett, James Burrows, Greg Cavic, Stephen Colbert, James Dixon, Budd Friedman, Jim Gosnell, Rick Greenstein, Brad Grey, Caroline Hirsch, Sharon Jackson, Blair Kohan, Martin Lesak, Steve Levine, Jamie Masada, Adam McKay, Jimmy Miller, Conan O’Brien, Peter Principato, Joan Rivers, Jay Roach, Chris Rock, Ray Romano, Rory Rosegarten, Michael Rotenberg, George Schlatter, Mitzi Shore, David Steinberg, Jon Stewart, Lily Tomlin, Sandy Wernick and Geof Wills.

Don Mischer, Casey Patterson, EVP, Event Production, Viacom Entertainment Group and Charlie Haykel are the Executive Producers. Julianne Hare is Producer. Beth McCarthy Miller, the Peabody and DGA Award-winning and Emmy-nominated Director, will once again direct “The Comedy Awards.” “The American Comedy Awards” were originally created by George Schlatter.

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