



American Legends: The Life of John Belushi

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“Some comedians love their characters. I don't fall in love with mine. In fact, I get tired of them very fast. You have to be willing to throw it all away.” – John Belushi

A lot of ink has been spilled covering the lives of history's most influential figures, but how much of the forest is lost for the trees? In Charles River Editors' American Legends series, readers can get caught up to speed on the lives of America's most important men and women in the time it takes to finish a commute, while learning interesting facts long forgotten or never known.

Years before comedians like Chris Farley made their reputations with a particularly physical form of humor, there was John Belushi, the legendary comedian known for iconic performances in *Animal House*, *The Blues Brothers*, and as one of the original cast members of *Saturday Night Live*. Not surprisingly, posters of Belushi as Bluto Blutarsky wearing a shirt that simply says “College” still adorn the walls of countless dorm rooms over 35 years after *Animal House* came out, and *The Blues Brothers* is still a cult classic.

Belushi made people keel over in laughter in different roles, but there was always a question of how much of the performances was an act, because Belushi's behavior both on and off the set amazed friends and strangers alike, whether it was through hilarious routines or bizarre antics like walking into a stranger's house asking for food and drinks. Indeed, Belushi's escapades in real life actually provided material for *Saturday Night Live* skits, including an extended spoof called “The Thing That Wouldn't Leave.”

At the same time, however, his abuse of drugs and alcohol made him unreliable to work with, and he quickly forged a reputation for causing headaches on the set. That reputation already preceded him by the time he began working on *Animal House* in the late '70s, and the delays he caused on *The Blues Brothers* contributed to making it one of the most expensive comedies ever produced at the time.

As is often the case for people with such hectic lifestyles, it's hard to maintain a grip, and Belushi himself claimed he believed he'd be dead by the age of 30. He wasn't far off, thanks to a controversial overdose on a mixture of heroin and cocaine, a speedball that was given to him by Cathy Smith, a rock groupie who also dealt drugs during the era. Smith was later imprisoned 15 months for involuntary manslaughter as a result.

American Legends: The Life of John Belushi explores the turbulent life and career of one of America's most notorious comedians of the late 20th century. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about John Belushi like never before, in no time at all.

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