

Paul Reubens aka “Pee-wee Herman” Dead After Private Cancer Battle

Reubens, 70, left a message to fans about why he hid his cancer diagnosis for six years.

August 2, 2023 By Laura Schmidt

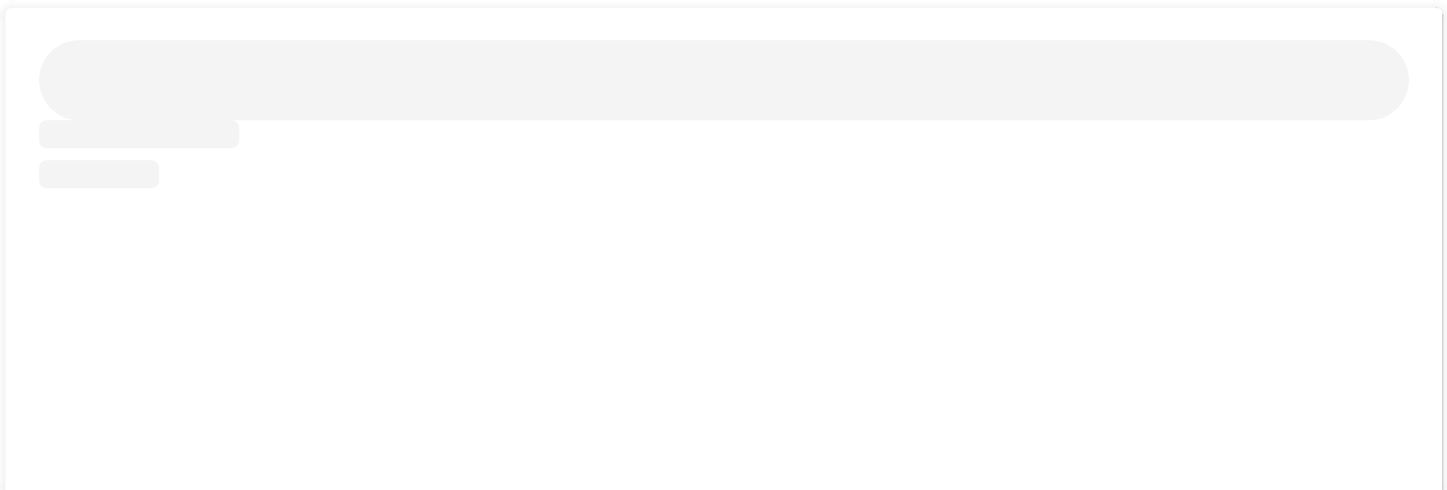
Actor and comedian Paul Reubens, whose character Pee-wee Herman delighted children and adults alike throughout the 1980s, died after a six-year battle with cancer, his team said in a [statement on Facebook](#). He was 70 years old.

“Paul bravely and privately fought cancer for years with his trademark tenacity and wit,” the statement read. “A gifted and prolific talent, he will forever live in the comedy pantheon and in our hearts as a treasured friend and man of remarkable character and generosity of spirit.”

Reubens also left a final message to his fans and loved ones: “Please accept my apology for not going public with what I’ve been facing the last six years. I have always felt a huge amount of love and respect from my friends, fans and supporters. I have loved you all so much and enjoyed making art for you.”

No further details about his cancer were made available.

Reubens swept the nation in the 1980s and early 1990s with his character Pee-wee Herman, a man-child with a surreal and bizarre sense of humor. First developed for the stage, Pee-wee s transitioned to the silver screen in 1985 with Pee-wee’s Big Adventure, a cult classic directed by Tim Burton.





[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Tim Burton (@timburton)

Following that film's success, Reubens created and hosted a Saturday morning CBS show, Pee-wee's Playhouse, which ran from 1986 to 1991. Reuben's legacy has stood the test of time. People today still quote Pee-wee's catchphrases, such as "I know you are but what am I?"

Fans and [celebrities](#), such as Jimmy Kimmel and Conan O'Brien, took to social media to share heartfelt memories of Reubens.

No tweet can capture the magic, generosity, artistry, and devout silliness of Paul Reubens. Everyone I know received countless nonsensical memes from Paul on their birthday, and I mean EVERYONE. His surreal comedy and unrelenting kindness were a gift to us all.

Damn, this hurts.

— Conan O'Brien (@ConanOBrien) [July 31, 2023](#)

Paul Reubens was like no one else - a brilliant and original comedian who made kids and their parents laugh at the same time. He never forgot a birthday and shared his genuine delight for silliness with everyone he met. My family and I will miss him.

— Jimmy Kimmel (@jimmykimmel) [July 31, 2023](#)

As a final act of kindness, Reubens asked anyone so inclined to make a donation in honor of his late parents, Judy and Milton Rubinfeld, to Stand Up To Cancer or organizations involved in dementia and Alzheimer's research, care and support.