



TONI BASIL (Class of 1961)

Toni Basil was born Antonia Christina Basilotta in Philadelphia, PA. When she was at Las Vegas High School, she was head cheerleader. Toni wears her actual varsity uniform from those days in the "Mickey" video. After high school, she became a go-go dancer and quickly moved into choreography, working on '60s television shows like *Shindig* and the *T.A.M.I. Show*.

ACTING

In 1964, she appeared with Annette Funicello in the film *Pajama Party*, which she also choreographed. In 1966, Basil released her first single; the Graham Gouldman penned "28". On the B-side was her recording of the title song from avant-garde filmmaker Bruce Conner's *Breakaway*, in which she also appeared as a dancer. Basil's acting career soon hit a peak with her role in 1969's landmark *Easy Rider* as a New Orleans hooker. She went on to appear with Jack Nicholson in *Five Easy Pieces* and Dennis Hopper in *The Last Movie*.

MUSIC

After several films, she launched her music career with her first album "Word of Mouth" in 1981, which was released as both a record and a video, quite an innovation at the time. Culled from that album was a innocent little ditty called *Mickey* which soon became a massive hit all over the world, first in Britain. The single *Mickey* was the first to incorporate synchronized dancing. The opening stunt, where a cheerleader jumps through the center of a human pyramid, is now illegal in competition.

The song topped the American music charts in December 1982, and the video (directed by Basil, as were all of her others) still receives airplay today. In 1984, Toni Basil released her self-titled follow-up album, which included the American Top 40 hit *Over My Head*. Although she found future chart success elusive, Basil remained busy appearing in such films as "Rockula" and appeared in a guest shot on "Baywatch" in the late 1990s.

Toni Basil received a Gold Album for 1981's *Word Of Mouth* and double platinum record for her smash single "*Mickey*", and holds the same from the UK, Canada and Australia. She received a Grammy nomination for her *Word Of Mouth* long-form video album, which she produced, choreographed, and directed.

Mickey was Billboard magazine's #1 song for the month of December 1982. The song was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame as one of the groundbreaking singles of the 1980s. The *Mickey* music video, resides in the permanent collection of the *Museum of Modern Art*. In 1992, Toni earned herself a place as an American Video Artist in the coveted Museum of Modern Art's calendar.

She starred, co-directed, and choreographed two self-titled BBC-television specials, which were re-aired in record time due to unprecedented audience response, and are credited as launching "*Mickey*" as a hit single in the U.K. charts and, ultimately, worldwide as well as appeared in a wide variety of television shows.

TELEVISION

Toni received an Emmy award for a commercial featuring MC Hammer. She has worked on an incredible range of television programming, from TV Lands *Salute to Soul Train*, *NAACP Image Awards*, *Saturday Night Live*, *Sesame Street* and numerous Music Awards shows.

CHOREOGRAPHY

Basil is a prolific choreographer who began as assistant choreographer on *Shindig!* an American music variety show, airing on the ABC network from September 16, 1964 to January 8, 1966. She choreographed David Byrne's memorable, marionette-style dance from the music video for the Talking Heads song "Once in a Lifetime". She worked with Talking Heads again to direct and choreograph the music video for the song "Cross-eyed and Painless".

During the '70s, in addition to *American Graffiti* she choreographed *The Rose*.

Toni's most notable feature film credits include choreography for such classics as *American Graffiti*, and *Legally Blonde*. Her subtle choreographic hand was visible throughout Tom Hanks directorial debut; "*That Thing You Do*".

A multiple Emmy Award and Grammy Award nominee, She has choreography and directorial credits on over 50 videos and has choreographed and co-directed concerts for Tina Turner, David Bowie, Bette Midler, David Lee Roth, Mick Jagger as well as many others.

Superstars Bette Midler and David Bowie have utilized her choreographer talents. She choreographed David Bowie's Diamond Dogs Tour in 1974, and his Glass Spider Tour in 1987. In 1998, she choreographed a successful ad for The Gap.

DANCE

Toni is one of the 7 original lockers that is considered "the group that changed the face of dance." She is recognized as a seminal influence in bringing street dance to the attention of the American public. She is currently writing a book on the history of American Street Dance.

In 2008 Toni received Hip Hop International's highest award "Living Legend of Hip Hop." Former recipients include Don Campbell, Boogaloo Sam, M C Hammer, DJ Kool Herc, and Grandmaster Caz

As a classically trained dancer, Toni continues to dance and attend Locking, Hip Hop, and African dance classes by day and underground dance clubs at night. She has immersed herself in the Latin music and dance scene, and has guest performed singing, dancing and playing percussion with the top Los Angeles based salsa bands.

She adds to her list of expertise in world dance and partnering Afro/Cuban, Tango, Flamenco, Salsa, east coast and west coast swing.

DIRECTING

Toni directed short art films. *Game of the Week* 11:20, *A Dance Film* 2:05, *Our Trip* 6:25, and *The Ping Pong Match* 2:45. Pre-dating music videos, these avant-garde pieces found a new audience when exhibited at the Santa Monica Museum of Art and New York's Grey Art Gallery. The L.A. Times noted that filmmaker Toni Basil's deft editing transformed an ordinary ping-pong match between Gray and Stockwell (Both noted American actors) into an energetic dance routine.

Toni appeared recently as a judge on the TV show "*So You Think You Can Dance*".

Continuing in the family tradition (her father- an orchestra leader and mother a vaudevillian), She has excelled in every entertainment medium; stage, music, commercials, television, film and video. Her unique form of artistic mastery is at the heart of all of her work. She remains a true pioneer in the dance world, a visionary, and a genuine American treasure.

Toni worked with Bette Midler for many years, most recently on her 2008 Las Vegas show "The Showgirl Must Go On".

Although "Mickey" represents Basil's only trip to the Top 40, she has had a long and amazingly impressive career that has scored her the following awards and honors:

- *"Mickey" installed in the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame as one of the groundbreaking singles of the 1980's*

- *Platinum and Gold Discs in the USA, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Philippines, and France*
- *Hip Hop International's Living Legend Award*
- *Grammy nomination for Long Form Video ("Word Of Mouth") 1983*
- *Emmy nomination and win for Outstanding Achievement in Choreography / The Smothers Brothers 1988*
- *Two MTV Award nominations*
- *American Choreography Awards: Four nominations & Two Wins including Lifetime Achievement Innovator*
- *The Los Angeles Theater Ovation: Street Dance Award*
- *Exhibitions include the Museum of Modern Art: videos and the Santa Monica Museum of Art*

These biographies are based on research and could contain discrepancies.
If there are any excerpts you feel should be changed please feel free to contact me at Dave@lvhsaa.com

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