

Walter Latham

Business mogul Walter Latham is often referred to as "*The King of Comedy*", as he has made an indelible imprint in the evolution, creation and impact of urban comedy throughout the world. He is credited with launching the careers of several award-winning actors and comedians including, Tyler Perry, Chris Tucker, Steve Harvey, Mo'Nique, Cedric "The Entertainer," and the late Bernie Mac.

All of these accomplishments, however, pale in comparison to Latham's humble upbringing. Born to a single mother in East New York, Brooklyn, everyday presented challenges, which shaped the rest of his life.

At the young age of 18 Latham fathered his first son, Kevion Latham. With no job, and no college degree, Latham seemed to fall into the trap he always said he wouldn't. Relocating to North Carolina where his grandparents resided, Latham took odd jobs here and there in order to feed himself and his young son. Even serving a brief stint in the United States Air Force.

At the age of 20 Latham struck gold when he landed a permanent position at the American Express Call Center in Greensboro, NC. He recalls being so thrilled that he could provide healthcare for his son. But even with that there was a restlessness inside. He wasn't satisfied and knew he was meant to be doing something greater.

After attending a concert one evening that featured a performance by one of his childhood friends, MC Lyte, Latham felt he had found his calling. He wanted to produce concerts. However, with no money or contacts that became an overwhelming undertaking. Borrowing money from his mother, Latham produced his first concert in a nightclub. Things seemed to be off and running until the headline act didn't show and Latham had to refund the patrons their money.

Never one to back down from a challenge Latham decided to produce more concerts but mitigate his losses by soliciting sponsorships. He wrote 50 letters to various corporations about promoting a southeast tour with the hottest comedians. 50 letters were mailed and only one corporation replied. Coors Brewing company was interested in hearing more. Latham flew to their offices in Atlanta, GA to discuss his idea further. At the conclusion of that meeting Latham was invited to pitch his idea to the decision makers in Golden, CO. At 21 years

old, Latham was standing in a boardroom of top executives pitching his comedy idea. He had come a long way from the small apartment in Brooklyn.

Latham went on to produce his first tour, which featured Chris Tucker and Bill Bellamy. Coors was so impressed that they asked him to do another. During these tours Chris Tucker told Latham that he was filming a movie with Ice Cube and when that movie was released, he wanted him to promote the entire tour.

When "*Friday*" was released, Chris Tucker became a superstar and kept his word by having Latham produce his national tour. The tour gave Latham instant credibility as a serious player in the concert promotion business.

From there he became the main tour promoter for Bernie Mac, Cedric The Entertainer, Sommore, Chris Rock, DL Hughley and many others. Without knowing, this was all a prelude to what was about to become the biggest game changer in the business of comedy.

After a few years of promoting comedy in theatres all over the country, Latham felt a strong desire to do even more, to do something bigger, something that mattered. He wanted to take urban comedy out of theatres and play arenas and stadiums. He created the "*Kings of Comedy Tour*".

The "*Kings of Comedy*" Tour, which he created and produced, starring Steve Harvey, Cedric "The Entertainer," D.L. Hughley and the late, Bernie Mac, took urban comedy to another level as it sold out in all major arenas throughout the United States including, Madison Square Garden, the MCI Center in Washington, D.C. and The Georgia Dome (65,000 seats) in Atlanta, Georgia. "The Kings of Comedy" Tour, out-sold all of the Pop and R&B concerts during the same time, and was one of the largest grossing tours in US history. Mr. Latham also created and produced "The Queens of Comedy," starring Academy-Award winner, Mo'Nique, and "The Latin Kings of Comedy," starring George Lopez.

He Produced of the Award-winning "*The Original Kings of Comedy Movie*," along with MTV Films, directed by Spike Lee, and distributed by Paramount Pictures. "*The Original Kings of Comedy Movie*," was the first urban comedy tour film to top box offices throughout the U.S. and remains second to this day behind Eddie Murphy's "*Raw*" The movie grossed over \$38 million and is considered a comedic

classic. The accompanying soundtrack was released on Universal Records and received a *Grammy* nomination for "*Best Spoken Comedy Album*." Following the success of "*The Original Kings of Comedy*" film, Paramount Pictures signed Latham to a five year First Look Deal.

Walter Latham Entertainment created and produced the "Crown Royal Comedy Soul Festival," a 20-city tour, which for the first time, combined comedy and *Grammy-winning*, chart-topping musical acts. The tour featured world renowned musical groups Earth, Wind and Fire, The Isley Brothers, and comedians Rickey Smiley, Adele Givens and Earthquake.

Mr. Latham also Executive Produced two seasons of HBO's hit comedy series "P. Diddy Presents the Bad Boys of Comedy," and produced FOX's "Shaken Not Stirred," five one hour highly rated "toasts" of some of the biggest names in pop culture. "Shaken Not Stirred," is a modern version of the "Dean Martin Roasts."

Walter Latham is a trendsetter, and at only 45 years old, has almost single-handedly changed the face of urban comedy.

Latham Entertainment productions have to date, grossed over \$250 million worldwide.

As if all of these accomplishments weren't enough, in 2012 Mr. Latham signed another major 3-year "first look" deal with Paramount Home Media for digital and television projects.

Now, Walter Latham is braced to make history yet again.

Mr. Latham partnered with YouTube on a new comedy channel (which launched in July 2012) that hosts a half-dozen comedy shows with various artists and comedians. The channel brings urban comedy to digital programming 24/7, a historic milestone for urban comedy. The channel features content from Latham's past productions featuring Bernie Mac, Tyler Perry, Mo'Nique and others as well as new content from Michael Blackson and Tara "Miss P" Powell. Latham has also created other original programs for his YouTube channel like "*Comedy After Dark*", a standup special hosted by hip-hop Queen Trina, models, Rosa Acosta, Carolina Catalino and adult film legend Jenna Jameson.

Latham continues to ink deals to showcase his programming with distributors such as Hulu, Daily Motion, Vessel and many others. Latham has recently signed with the “United Talent Agency” to strategize on how to make Walter Latham Entertainment a more effective business in the ever-evolving entertainment space.

“I hate to sound trite,” says Mr. Latham, “but none of my accomplishments mean as much to me as my foundation.” He continues, “To make a significant impact in turning lives around, and to help young people get ahead by providing the resources for him or her to do so, is what I see as my mission. When I see the smiling faces of those whose lives I have touched, nothing else really matters to me. I sincerely want to make available to them resources I did not have. My success has allowed me to do this; and for this, I am grateful.”

Walter Latham is Founder and Chairman of *The Walter Latham Foundation*, which provides scholarships to underserved children and sponsors youth-oriented events annually.

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