



TONI BASIL (Class of 1961)

Toni Basil was born Antonia Christina Basilotta in Philadelphia, PA. At Las Vegas High School, she was head cheerleader and 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. 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"; 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. During the '70s, she choreographed films like American Graffiti and The Rose, and also worked on David Bowie's 1974 concert tour

After several films she launched her music career with her first album "Word of Mouth" in 1981, which was released both as 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's self-titled follow-up album was released, 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 appeared recently as a judge on the TV show "So You Think You Can Dance".

Basil is a prolific choreographer who began as assistant choreographer on Shindig! an American music variety show which aired on the ABC network from September 16, 1964 to January 8, 1966. In addition, she is frequently credited with bringing street dance to prominence with The Urban Campbellocking group, The Lockers. 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".

Her choreographer talents have also been utilized lately by superstars Bette Midler and David Bowie In 1998 she choreographed a successful ad for The Gap.

She also choreographed David Bowie's Diamond Dogs Tour in 1974, and and Glass Spider Tour in 1987, and has worked with Bette Midler for many years, most recently on her 2008 Las Vegas show The Showgirl Must Go On.

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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