

VAN CLIBURN

# Celebrated pianist attained rock-star status worldwide

## 1958 Moscow triumph helped thaw Cold War

ANGELA K. BROWN  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



EVENING STANDARD/GETTY IMAGES

Pianist Van Cliburn, seen in 1963. In 1958, he won the prestigious International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow.

FORT WORTH, TEXAS — Van Cliburn, the internationally celebrated U.S. pianist whose triumph at a 1958 Moscow competition helped thaw the Cold War and launched a spectacular career that made him the rare classical musician to enjoy rock star status, has died. He was 78.

Cliburn died early Wednesday at his Fort Worth home after battling bone cancer, said his publicist and longtime friend Mary Lou Falcone.

Cliburn made what would be his last public appearance in September at the 50th anniversary of the prestigious piano competition named for him. Speaking to the audience in Fort Worth, he saluted the many past contestants, the orchestra and the city.

"Never forget: I love you all from the bottom of my heart, forever," he said to a roaring standing ovation.

Cliburn skyrocketed to fame when he won the first International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow at age 23 in 1958, six months after the Soviet launch of Sputnik embarrassed the U.S. and propelled the world into the space age. He triumphantly returned to a New York City ticker tape parade — the first for a classical musician — and a Time magazine cover proclaimed him "The Texan Who Conquered Russia."

But the win also proved the power of the arts, bringing unity in the midst of strong rivalry. Despite the tension between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, Cliburn became a hero to music-loving Soviets who clamoured to see him perform, and then-premier Nikita Khrushchev reportedly gave the go-ahead for the judges to honour a foreigner: "Is Cliburn the best? Then give him first prize."

In the years that followed, Cliburn's popularity soared, and the young man from the small east Texas town of Kilgore sold out concerts, caused riots when spotted in public and even prompted an Elvis Presley fan club to change its name to his. His recording of the Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No. 1 with Russian conductor Kirill Kondrashin became the first classical album to reach platinum status, selling more than a million copies.

Time magazine's 1958 cover story quoted a friend as saying Cliburn could become "the first man in history to be a Horowitz, Liberace and Presley all rolled into one."

"Since we know that classical music is timeless and everlasting, it is precisely the eternal verities inherent in classical music that remain a spiritual beacon for people all over the world," Cliburn once said.

But he also used his skill and fame to help other young musicians through the Van Cliburn International Music Competition.

Created by a group of Fort Worth teachers and citizens in 1962, the competition, held every four years, remains a pre-eminent showcase for the world's top pianists.

"It is a forum for young artists to celebrate the great works of the piano literature and an opportunity to expose their talents to a wide-ranging international audience," Cliburn said in 1997.

Then-U.S. president George W. Bush presented Cliburn with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest U.S. civilian honour, in 2003. In 2004, Cliburn received the Order of Friendship of the Russian Federation from Russian President Vladimir Putin.

After the death of his father in 1974, Cliburn announced he would soon retire to spend more time with

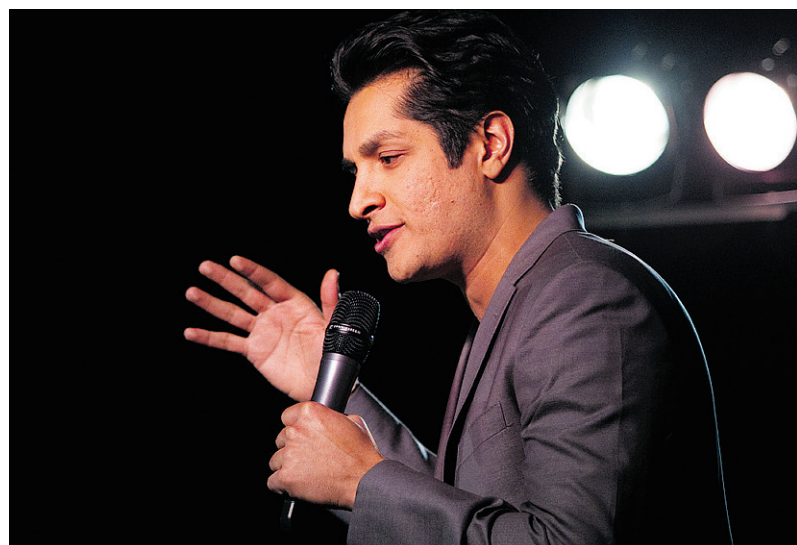
**CONCERT REVIEW**

Read T'Cha Dunlevy's take on Wednesday's Swedish House Mafia show at the Bell Centre on our Words & Music blog.  
[montrealgazette.com/wordsandmusic](http://montrealgazette.com/wordsandmusic)

# India to get taste of Sugar Sammy

## Comedian pauses his Quebec domination for an overseas visit

JEFF HEINRICH  
THE GAZETTE



JOHN KENNEY/GAZETTE FILES

Sugar Sammy will perform in Bangalore, New Delhi and Mumbai in mid-March for U.S. cable TV channel Comedy Central.

They're gonna hassi, as they say over there.

Sugar Sammy will do three stand-up shows in India — the land of his parents — in mid-March for Comedy Central, the U.S. cable TV channel will announce Thursday.

The wildly successful Montreal comedian will perform in Bangalore on March 15, New Delhi on the 16th and Mumbai on the 17th.

It's Comedy Central's first foray into the nation of 1.2 billion people.

Tickets went on sale Wednesday in India, via [www.bookmyshow.com](http://www.bookmyshow.com). The shows will be in Hindi and also in Punjabi, Sammy's first language.

After the trip, the comic will return to Montreal's Olympia Theatre from March 27 to 30 to give shows in four languages: Hindi, Punjabi, French and English. He also performs, in French, at the Olympia on Thursday, Saturday and April 10 to 12, and in French and English from April 24 to 27.

Sammy performed in India in 2009 — once in Mumbai and once in New Delhi — but to much smaller audiences. This time, he'll be packing them in at about 1,000 people a night. And judging by his popularity on social networks in India, he expects there will be more shows added.

"It's a great market," said Sammy, who was born Samir Khullar in Montreal 37 years ago (on Feb. 29, 1976) and was raised in Côte-des-Neiges.

"Here in Quebec, we've got six million and I'm doing pretty well," said Sammy. "But I'm pretty excited about the prospect of having a billion people out there in India."

He'll be a cultural ambassador of sorts for Quebec, too.

"I'll talk to them about the Quebec referendum, about our problems over here — and I'll tell them about red squares," he said, alluding to the student protests.

"Let's see how that goes over." Sugar Sammy has done more than 1,000 shows in 30 countries, selling more than 120,000 tickets in the past year alone. His latest tour ranked 30th in gross sales in North America over the past three months.

He's a regular at Montreal and Toronto's Just for Laughs festivals, and packed the Olympia 45 times (selling 53,000 tickets) with his bilingual show You're Gonna Rire.

Now it's back to his roots.

"India may never be the same," his promoters trumpeted in a news release as tickets went on sale, "after Sugar Sammy brings his comedy and his views on his Indian roots, world travels, arranged marriages, pop culture and modern-day relationships to the homeland."

his ailing mother. He stopped touring in 1978.

He told The New York Times in 2008 that touring robbed him of the chance to enjoy opera and other musical performances. "I said to myself, 'Life is too short.' I was missing so much," he said.

Cliburn emerged from his sabbatical in 1987, when he played at a state dinner at the White House during the historic visit to Washington of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. Gorbachev leaped from his seat to give the pianist a bear-hug and kisses on the cheeks.

The 13th Cliburn competition, held in 2009, made history when a blind pianist from Japan, Nobuyuki Tsujii, and a teenager from China, Haochen Zhang, both won gold medals. They were the first winners from any Asian country, and Tsujii was the first blind pianist to win.

Cliburn was born Harvey Lavan Cliburn Jr. on July 12, 1934, in Shreveport, La., the son of oilman Harvey Cliburn Sr. and Rildia Bee O'Bryan Cliburn. At age 3, he began studying piano with his mother, herself an accomplished pianist.

Cliburn won his first Texas competition when he was 12, and two years later he played in Carnegie Hall as the winner of the National Music Festival Award.

At 17, Cliburn attended the Juilliard School in New York, where fellow students marvelled at his marathon practice sessions that stretched until 3 a.m.

Between 1952 and 1958, he won all but one competition he entered. By age 20, he had played with the New York Philharmonic and the symphonies of most major U.S. cities.

In December 2001, Cliburn was presented with the prestigious Kennedy Center Honors Medallion.

Until only recently, Cliburn practised daily and performed limited engagements.



**CANADIAN INSTITUTE FOR LASER SURGERY**

Profraxel has arrived! This painless Non-Surgical Face-Lift will erase Wrinkles, Stretch Marks and Tighten Sagging Skin. Reduce the signs of aging with Botox, Fillers and Lasers. Treat veins & skin lesions when YOU want. The Beverly Hills also offering Labioplasty, LipoDissolve, Smartlipo and Laser Hair Removal. Free Consultation.

**OPEN HOUSE**  
March 13 6pm - 8pm  
SEATS LIMITED  
**CALL NOW 514-482-3456**  
Win a gift certificate  
Sponsored by **Merz Aesthetics**  
Manufacturers of **Radiesse**

Queen Elizabeth Health Complex • 2100 Marlowe, Suite 306  
514.482.3456 • [www.lasermontreal.com](http://www.lasermontreal.com)



**Conveniently Manage Your Account Online**


Did you know you can easily manage your newspaper subscription account 24/7 through our handy online Subscriber Self Serve website? It's simple and secure.

Manage your subscription today at:  
[montrealgazette.com/subscription](http://montrealgazette.com/subscription)

**The Gazette**  
[montrealgazette.com](http://montrealgazette.com)

YOU COULD **WIN** 1 OF 50 DOUBLE PASSES TO THE SPECIAL 3D ADVANCE SCREENING OF **OZ THE GREAT AND POWERFUL**

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6<sup>th</sup> | 7 PM | CINÉMA BANQUE SCOTIA MONTRÉAL



**IN THEATRES MARCH 8**  
In Disney Digital 3D™, RealD 3D and IMAX® 3D  
To see the trailer visit: [Disney.com/OzTheGreat](http://Disney.com/OzTheGreat)

**TRIVIA QUESTION: Who is the director of OZ THE GREAT AND POWERFUL?**

Enter by emailing your name, address, phone number and skill-testing answer to [gazettecontests@postmedia.com](mailto:gazettecontests@postmedia.com) with the subject line OZ SCREENING.  
Contest closes at noon on March 1, 2013. Winners will be contacted by email only.

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. Screening subject to change. You must be a resident of Quebec who has reached the age of majority to enter this contest. Employees of The Gazette, affiliated sponsors and their families are not eligible to enter. Winners will be drawn at random from all eligible entries received and must correctly answer the skill testing question. Rating: Subject to classification. ©2013 DISNEY ENTERPRISES, INC. and IMAX™ is a registered trademark of Imax Corporation.

**The Gazette**  
[montrealgazette.com](http://montrealgazette.com)

February 26 - March 24, 2013

CENTAUR THEATRE PRESENTS  
A SIDEMART THEATRICAL GROCERY PRODUCTION

PRODUCTION PARTNER  
**lavery**  
LAW • BUSINESS



An Irish centenarian and his father are on a mission.  
**NOW PLAYING!**

BY **MARK DOHERTY** DIRECTED BY **ANDREW SHAVER** FEATURING **PATRICK COSTELLO, GRAHAM CUTHBERTSON, ANDREW SHAVER**

**CENTAUR THEATRE .COM** billetterie box-office **514-288-3161**

Media Sponsors: **The Gazette**, **beat 92.5**  
Government Sponsors: **Canada Council**, **Conseil des arts du Québec**