

# *David L. Lander, Squiggy on 'Laverne & Shirley,' Dies at 73*

He appeared in more than 100 movies and TV projects, but was best known for his seven-year run on the popular 1970s sitcom.

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By **Anita Gates**

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David L. Lander, the comic actor who for eight seasons made entrance laughter inevitable as Squiggy on the ABC series “Laverne & Shirley,” died on Friday in Los Angeles. He was 73.

His death, at Cedars Sinai Medical Center, was confirmed in a statement by his family. No cause was specified, but Mr. Lander had lived with multiple sclerosis for more than 35 years.

He and his comedy partner, Michael McKean, were members of the cast of “Laverne & Shirley,” a sitcom about boy-crazy brewery workers in 1950s Milwaukee, from its debut in January 1976 until it left the air in 1983.

The running gag was that just as the title characters (played by Penny Marshall and Cindy Williams) would begin to discuss something unpleasant — “smelly leftovers,” “raving sex fiends,” “something that cries, burps and wets its pants,” “pitiful souls roaming the earth” — Lenny (Mr. McKean) and Squiggy (Mr.

Lander), their upstairs neighbors, appeared at their apartment door.

Squiggy (full name Andrew Squiggman) was easily identified by the greasy black curl in the middle of his forehead; his favorite garment, a black leather jacket; and his distinctive nasal voice. He always said hello first.

Lenny and Squiggy were not the brainchild of the show's creators. Mr. Lander and Mr. McKean invented them in college (Squiggy was called Ant'ny then) and had been performing as those characters with the Credibility Gap, a comedy performance ensemble that also included Harry Shearer.

The characters sometimes broke away from their own series. Mr. Lander and Mr. McKean appeared on the fictional talk show "America 2-Night," hosted by Martin Mull.

Portraying two imaginary actors who supposedly played Lenny and Squiggy (but looked and talked just like them), they made small talk and sang "Creature Without a Head." That song was also on the 1979 album recorded by Lenny and the Squigtones, their imaginary musical group (which included Christopher Guest on guitar). Principal Squiggy (Mr. Lander) appeared in "Scary Movie" (2000), and Squiggy himself turned up on a 2002 episode of "The Simpsons."



Mr. Lander, right, on the set of "Laverne & Shirley" with, from left, Michael McKean as Lenny, Cindy Williams as Shirley and Penny Marshall as Laverne. Getty Images

David Leonard Landau was born on June 22, 1947, in Brooklyn, to Saul and Stella (Goldman) Landau, both high school teachers. David decided to become an actor, he said, when he was 10.

He studied at the High School of Performing Arts in Manhattan, where he changed his name — unofficially at first — when a fellow student “borrowed” the name David Landau and registered it with the actors’ union. Mr. Lander went to enroll at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, where he met Mr. McKean.

In a way, Mr. Lander started in the big league. After doing three voice-acting television jobs, he had his first

on-camera roles on “The Bob Newhart Show,” “Rhoda” and “Barney Miller,” all hit series of the mid-1970s. After “Laverne & Shirley,” he was in more than 100 movie and television projects. His was the voice of Judge Doom’s weasel of a henchman in “Who Framed Roger Rabbit” (1988); the sports announcer in “A League of Their Own” (1992); and Thumper, the vicious grasshopper, in “A Bug’s Life” (1998). His live-action films included “Used Cars” (1980), “Christmas With the Kranks” (2004) and “Say It Isn’t So” (2001).

Mr. Lander’s last onscreen role was in 2009 as a jury foreman in Steven Bochco’s legal series “Raising the Bar.” His final voice role was as Rumpelstiltskin in “Goldie and Bear” (2017), the Disney Junior animated series that stars his daughter, Natalie Lander, as the voice of Goldie.

Mr. Lander publicly revealed his medical condition in 1999. He then published a memoir, “Fall Down, Laughing: How Squiggy Caught Multiple Sclerosis and Didn’t Tell Nobody,” and became a good-will ambassador for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

His first marriage, to Thea Markus in 1969, ended in divorce in 1976. He and Kathy Fields, an actress turned film-set photographer (whose father was the producer and talent agent Freddie Fields), were married in 1979.

In addition to his wife and his daughter, he is survived by an older brother, Robert Landau.

In 2007, Mr. Lander told Brain & Life, a neurology magazine, that he was determined to make the best of his diagnosis. “Wherever the chips may fall, if I fall with them, I will make it a point to do so gracefully — and laughing,” he said.

Marie Fazio contributed reporting.