



THE PLAIN DEALER

Brian Chalmers, TV news illustrator drew the Buzzard - OBITUARY

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Plain Dealer Reporter

Parma Heights- Brian Chalmers drew the Buzzard, photographed rock stars, illustrated TV news and helped Hollywood showcase Cleveland.

"He was a sensitive, creative, talented artist and designer," John Gorman, operations manager of WMMS FM and WMJI FM, wrote on a blog. "His contributions to the local music and media scene were beyond measure."

But Chalmers worked in a volatile field in a struggling town. He fled new WMMS owners about 1999 for WKYC-TV Channel 3, then fell victim there 18 months ago to broad cutbacks.

He grew depressed, had trouble finding work, and mostly took care of his mother, Eileen, at her home in Parma Heights, according to family and friends. He died there Saturday, an apparent suicide at age 54.

People will remember a happier Chalmers making them laugh. Long before computers made it easy, he'd remake photos of their faces. He'd also make slapstick moves, especially pratfalls.

He was born in Cleveland and graduated from what was then Root High School in North Royalton and from The Art Institute of Pittsburgh. He joined Scene magazine in 1975 as an illustrator and later became art director.

He moved to WMMS in 1985 and took over the station's icon, the fat-beaked, scowling Buzzard.

The Buzzard's creator, David Helton, wrote, "Brian Chalmers was one of the most creative individuals I have ever known and had the talent, insight and sensitivity of a true artist."

Chalmers plastered the Buzzard on everything from billboards to T-shirts. He also worked for WMJI FM and WHK AM under common ownership, turning out art and photos for all three stations.

His Buzzard calendars won a gold and a silver World Calendar Award and four National Calendar Association Contest silver awards.

One calendar appeared on the Drew Carey Show.

At WKYC, Chalmers worked afternoons and evenings, making maps, charts and illustrations, often for late-breaking news.

"He was a model designer," said art director Jim Kegelmeyer. "He could be very creative within our framework."

On the side, Chalmers free-lanced for The Plain Dealer, Blossom Music Center, Belkin Productions, Billboard magazine, the Tri-C JazzFest and more.

He also provided memorabilia from 1973 for "Almost Famous," a 2000 movie about Cleveland rock. Director Cameron Crowe wrote him that "the movie was authentic in no small part because of your fine eye for detail."

You can see some of Chalmers' art at www.teaserlive.com. For information about him, click on "Teaser Friends," then "Meet Teaser Logo Creator Brian Chalmers."

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