

# American Legends: The Life of Walter Matthau

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## Synopsis

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Includes Matthau's own quotes about his life and career. "Every actor looks all his life for a part that will combine his talents with his personality.... *The Odd Couple* was mine. That was the plutonium I needed. It all started happening after that." (Walter Matthau)

A lot of ink has been spilled covering the lives of history's most influential figures, but how much of the forest is lost for the trees? In Charles River Editors' American Legends series, listeners can get caught up to speed on the lives of America's most important men and women in the time it takes to finish a commute, while learning interesting facts long forgotten or never known.

Walter Matthau is probably best-remembered for his films with Jack Lemmon, but he was clearly an established actor in Hollywood by the time they appeared in their first film together. Before his movies with Lemmon, Matthau most often played shady criminals in dramatic films, and his character in Elia Kazan's *A Face in the Crowd* (1957) offers one of the best examples. Matthau's major breakthrough did not occur until 1965, when he starred in the stage production of *The Odd Couple*, which was later adapted into the film that might be the duo's best known movie together.

In several of their movies, viewers witness all of the core elements of the Lemmon-Matthau dynamic. Lemmon plays the straight man to Matthau's shadier, conniving character, and a sharp contrast exists between the two.

## Reader's comments

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