

## CELEBRITY

## 7 Fun Facts About Peter Dinklage

Happy birthday, Peter Dinklage! You may know him as the clever lush Tyrion Lannister on 'Game of Thrones,' but there's more to the talented actor than you think.

LAURIE ULSTER · JUN 11, 2015

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Actor Peter Dinklage turns 46 today. (Photo: Featureflash Photo Agency / Shutterstock.com)

A New Jersey boy splitting his time between Croatia and Northern Ireland? As the only American in the *Game of Thrones* cast, [Peter Dinklage](#) is having a field day as Tyrion Lannister. His character is still alive and thriving after five seasons, no mean feat on that particular show. Dinklage has already won a Golden Globe and an Emmy for the role, and it has catapulted him to stardom and established himself as a fan favorite, no easy task among a cast of so many.

The actor celebrates his 46th birthday today, so we're celebrating too, with 7 fun facts about his life and career.

He spent part of his early career living with rats.

Good training for *Game of Thrones*? Maybe. But in his early days as a struggling actor, Dinklage was more interested in building a real career than taking parts that exploited him for his size, so he turned down quite a few roles. He and some friends shared an apartment in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, long before it became the expensive hipster neighborhood it is now. They lived under the bridge, which made the apartment shake like Alvy Singer's in [Woody Allen's](#) *Annie Hall*. They didn't have heat, because the oven was filled with rats. Yes, rats.

His solution was to get a cat, and when his roommate didn't take the cat with him, he ended up owning it for over a decade.

Of course, the story has a happy ending: his career is thriving, and these days he lives in upstate New York with his wife, their daughter, and a very happy dog.

You've seen and heard him on TV before *Game of Thrones*, even if you don't know it.

No, we're not talking about his 30 Rock guest appearance, when Liz Lemon ([Tina Fey](#)) patted him thinking he was a child, and then ended up on a date with him out of a combination of attraction and guilt. And we're going even further back than his 7-episode run on *Nip/Tuck* as Marlowe Sawyer. Long before that, if you watched *Oz*, you may have caught his big moment as a stunt man in one of the crime flashbacks, where he met an untimely and harrowing death.

And if you're more of a comedy person than a fan of dark and violent prison dramas, you've probably heard him but not seen him on *Seinfeld*, playing Elaine's ([Julia Louis-Dreyfus](#)) sexy wake-up caller, James.

He grew up next door to [Bruce Springsteen's](#) manager.

And that meant that Bruce was around a lot when he was a kid, although he doesn't remember much. When he was two years old, Bruce was next door all the time, playing guitar and practicing. When he was 17, his parents went to a wedding at a surfboard factory (!) and a 17-year-old Bruce was playing in the band. Peter's mom reported that his playing was "too loud," but we're guessing that future fans wouldn't agree.

He used to be in a band himself.

Before he made it as an actor, Dinklage used to play in a self-described "punk-funk-rap band" called Whizzy. They even played legendary New York club CBGB's, and Dinklage still bears the scar that runs from his neck up to his eyebrows from a particularly energetic performance.

He's still a pretty good singer, as you can see in this team-up with Coldplay for Red Nose Day, where he sums up *Game of Thrones* and the longevity of Tyrion Lannister both succinctly and musically:

He's been on *Sesame Street*.

We love when big-name actors agree to appear on *Sesame Street*. In this clip, he gets to play the very famous Simon of the game "Simon Says," although he doesn't seem quite sure why:

He says that working with the "Muppeteers" was a lot of fun, because their language is so dirty. "When the kids aren't around," he said in a *Playboy* interview, "it's like being in a muppet brothel."

Dinklage has a history with puppetdom: he also worked with [Frank Oz](#), famous as the voice of Grover, Bert, Cookie Monster, and *Star Wars'* Yoda. Oz directed him in *Death at a Funeral*, a 2007 British movie that was remade by American movie director Neil LaBute in 2010. Dinklage is the only actor to appear in both versions.

His college nickname was. . .predictable.

Dinklage went to Bennington College, where we finally found people he could fit in with. High school wasn't that much fun for him; he went to an all-boys Catholic high school where most of the kids wore Izods and played lacrosse, while he was an all-black-wearing broody smoker. But he found theater there, and acted in a lot of school plays.

When he got to Bennington, he'd taken his all-black ensemble to the next level, adding a black velvet cape, tights, and combat boots. There he met people who'd become lifelong friends and artistic collaborators for the rest of his career. He was in a lot of productions there too, wore his hair long like a hippie, drank a lot, and friends called him by the not entirely unguessable nickname of Dink. (You did guess it though, didn't you?)

He's been accused of dissing [Brad Pitt](#) and [Angelina Jolie](#).

If that doesn't make a person stand out, what will?

At the 2012 Golden Globes, when his name was called for Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role in a Series, Mini-Series or Motion Picture Made for Television, all he could focus on was making his way through the crowd to get to the stage. He found out later that among the people he'd passed without looking were Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, who were expecting him to stop for a moment so they could congratulate him. Later he found out that there was gossip going around about how he'd completely dissed them, but he admitted he didn't even see them standing there.

Now there's a level of fame you can respect.

**Extra fun fact:** Before the show, Dinklage spoke to his mother, who told him that fellow nominee Guy Pearce was wonderful in *Mildred Pierce* and that he was the one who was going to win. "Thanks to our moms," he said in his acceptance speech. "They keep us humble."

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