



CALIFORNIA

'Friends' star Matthew Perry dead at 54, found in hot tub, sources say



Matthew Perry arrives at the premiere of "The Invention of Lying" in Los Angeles on Sept. 21, 2009. (Matt Sayles / Associated Press)

BY RICHARD WINTON, MATT BRENNAN

OCT. 28, 2023 5:37 PM PT

"Friends" star Mathew Perry was found dead Saturday in a hot tub at his Los Angeles home, law enforcement sources said.

Authorities responded about 4 p.m. to his home, where he was discovered unresponsive. The sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the investigation was ongoing, did not cite a cause of death. There was no sign of foul

play, the sources added. A representative for Perry did not immediately respond to The Times' request for comment.

Los Angeles Police Department's robbery-homicide detectives are investigating the death. The cause of death will be determined at a later date by the Los Angeles county coroner's office.

Perry, the son of actor John Bennett Perry and Suzanne Marie Langford, onetime press secretary of Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, was born in 1969 and grew up between Montreal and Los Angeles after his parents separated when Perry was 1.

He got his start as a child actor, landing guest spots "Charles in Charge" and "Beverly Hills 90210" and playing opposite River Phoenix in the film "A Night in the Life of Jimmy Reardon" in the 1980s and early 1990s.

But his big break came when he was cast in "Friends" — originally titled "Friends Like Us" — a sitcom about six single New Yorkers navigating adulthood that premiered on NBC in 1994.

The series soon became a juggernaut, the anchor of the network's vaunted Thursday-night "Must-See TV" lineup, and turned Perry, then 25, and his cast mates Jennifer Aniston, Courteney Cox, Lisa Kudrow, Matt LeBlanc and David Schwimmer into mega-stars almost overnight: At its high-water mark, in a 1996 post-Super Bowl slot, the series notched more than 50 million live viewers.

As Chandler Bing, the handsome, wisecracking roommate of LeBlanc's Joey Tribbiani and, later, love interest of Cox's fastidious Monica Geller, Perry distinguished himself in a crackling ensemble cast with his dry delivery, creating a catchphrase with a mere turn of inflection: Could he *be* any more Chandler? Soon, he was attached to major stars like Julia Roberts and appearing as a leading man opposite Salma Hayek in the 1997 rom-com "Fools Rush In."

There was a dark side to the life of one of television's most beloved funnymen, however. In his 2022 memoir "Friends, Lovers, and the Big Terrible Thing," Perry recounted his lifelong struggle with addiction to alcohol and opioids, which led to multiple stints in rehab and a number of serious health issues, including a five-month hospitalization in 2018 following a colon rupture that left him, he wrote, with a two percent chance to live through the night. And it was fueled, he acknowledged during a "Friends" reunion special in 2021, by the pressure to land the joke in front of a live studio audience night after night.

"Nobody wanted to be famous more than me," Perry told The Times in April, [discussing "Big Terrible Thing" at the Festival of Books](#). "I was convinced it was the answer. I was 25, it was the second year of 'Friends,' and eight months into it, I realized the American dream is not making me happy, not filling the holes in my life. I couldn't get enough attention. ... Fame does not do what you think it's going to do. It was all a trick."

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Though Perry estimated he had relapsed "sixty or seventy times" since first getting sober in 2001, he maintained a steady presence on American television, playing key parts in backstage dramedy "Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip" and therapy sitcom "Go On," and making a steady stream of guest appearances on acclaimed shows like "The West Wing" and "The Good Wife." Since his near-death experience in 2018, Perry had found solace in friendships, writing and regular games of pickleball.

Indeed, for all his success as an actor and, more recently, a bestselling memoirist, Perry told *The Times* in April that his work was not the center of what he hoped would be his legacy.

Pressed to name how he'd like to be remembered, he said: "As a guy who lived life, loved well, lived well, and helped people. That running into me was a good thing, and not something bad."



Richard Winton

Richard Winton is an investigative crime writer for the *Los Angeles Times* and part of the team that won the Pulitzer Prize for public service in 2011. Known as [@lacrimes](#) on Twitter, during almost 30 years at *The Times* he also has been part of the breaking news staff that won Pulitzers in 1998, 2004 and 2016.



Matt Brennan

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