



Note the capital letters in the middle of the words at the top of the page. They're a classic sign of rebellion.

His letters are carefully penned, articulating—and honoring—their form, indicating somebody who's strongly visual.

Careful printing expresses individualism. He resists the cultural norm—to write in cursive—instead deciding to do it in his own way.

To write a lowercase letter and have that letter stop sharply, as if on a dime, takes willpower. It's a sign of determination and having the ability to make things happen.

Here, he prints his signature. On an intuitive level, he knows that flowing text is a form of self-revelation. He opts against it, and so maintains his desired composure.

## Famous Last Words

Pee-wee Herman's handwriting makes clear that true comedy is timeless *Written by Frances Dodds*

**T**o create a compelling character unanchored in time is close to impossible, but if one exists, it is Pee-wee Herman. Not only was the cult-classic children's show *Pee-wee's Playhouse* set in a bizarre, psychedelic room of detritus plucked from across 20th century, but agelessness was at the very core of Pee-wee's persona. A manic boomerang of elation and spontaneity, he was just like the kids watching him on Saturday mornings, and yet he was a grown man in a tailored suit, their tour guide on adventures of self-expression. The character was so influential, in fact, that he often eclipsed Paul Reubens, the man who created him. According to graphologist Annette Poizner, however, Reubens' handwriting shows this is far from accidental. Analyzing the sample above, where he chose for Pee-wee to speak on his behalf, she says, "He positions himself very deliberately. That careful printing, one little letter at a time... He collects the details, one by one, and makes patient

decisions, completely unaffected by the herd. He is quietly defiant."

Reubens is famous for his perfectionism, and there's no question he's always wiggled to the beat of his own drum, even if—like any self-respecting neurotic—he can't help but seek out the criticism. "I read it all," Reubens says. "But I try hard not to pay attention to it. I think it's a very deadly trap."

This spring, Pee-wee will receive a much-anticipated revival with the Judd Apatow-produced Netflix original feature *Pee-wee's Big Holiday*. The film continues in the footsteps of *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*, the Gen X staple that follows an epic cross-country hunt for a lost bicycle. And it's arriving just in time: We need Pee-wee's all-inclusive weirdness now more than ever, and Reubens says he chose the quote above for more than nostalgia's sake. "I don't want to get too serious or corny with you," he says, "but I thought it was right for the times...for where we are now. It's about deflecting negativity and hate, and turning it into something funny." ■