

**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

Late Night Talk Shows

The Jay Leno Show

November 21, 2008

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. I interrupt the essays on the Baltic Sea and the British Virgin Islands with a report about the Jay Leno Show.

I'm writing this paragraph at the Universal City Hilton Hotel in Burbank, waiting for the 4:00 PM taping of The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, which will air across TV lands at 11:30 PM tonight. My son Tommy is appearing on Mr. Leno's program tonight.

As some of you know from our Internet discourses, for this show Tommy is to be a bass player with the singer Scott Weiland. Mr. Weiland, Tommy, and three other musicians will sing and play a piece on national TV.

I sent out a notice to my readers about this event. I wrote that Mr. Weiland also has a band named Stone Simple Pilot. I received several notices about my misspelling "Simple." His band is Stone *Temple* Pilot. Sorry, I'd never heard of Stone Temple Pilot. Music-wise I'm stone deaf.

My son's mate Rebecca was to pick me up at the Hilton, after which we would drive to the NBC studios. Tommy advised, "Dad, just look for a black car with tinted windows. That will be Rebecca." Thanks, son. Hollywood, California, has more black cars than it has smog clouds.

Watching the cars pull-up to the Hilton was like searching for a needle in a haystack. Peering inside the cars, I respectfully asked:

- "Hey, are you Rebecca?"
- "What are you, a pervert or something!?"

After a couple confrontations with irate drivers of black cars with tinted windows, Rebecca recognized me and off we went.

Shortly, we were at the NBC studios, where reserved seats awaited us. We passed by a long line of proletariat waiting to get into the show. These spectators had queued-up at 8 AM to the NBC guest services office to obtain a ticket for this show. They had to appear at the NBC studio no later than 2 PM for the 3:30 door-opening. It was an all-day affair of queuing for approximately one and one-half hours of taping entertainment.

If I were in their shoes, I would be thinking, "This Leno guy had better be funny." Not for me. I was the papa of a rock star! I went to the head of the queue.

We skipped the lines and were directed to the Green Room, from which we would later be directed to our seats. I asked the guide about the Green Room. She responded that it was sort of a VIP room. I was betting the Green Room was adorned like a British Airways Fly-A-Lot lounge: fancy food, free drinks, lounge chairs, Hollywood and Bollywood newspapers. Nope, the Green Room wasn't even green. It was a practical holding room, a modest but thoughtful courtesy to

special members of the audience. Free soft drinks were there for the asking. I passed, as all the diet stuff had been consumed. Where's the XO?

Warming Up the Audience

Have you ever wondered how or why the people in the audience of a TV talk show----when the camera first pans to them--- appear to be in a frenzied state? They behave as if they've eaten strange-tasting Brownies. The host has just come onto the stage, and the people in the bleachers have not yet heard a joke. Every single person is standing, clapping, cheering; some laughing. Those near the stage are out of their chairs, standing next to the stage shaking hands or doing high-fives with the star. What gives?

Before the taped show begins, the audience is warmed up. We are encouraged to clap, cheer, and laugh. Jay's warm-up was funny, and he made no bones about asking us to laugh, clap, and cheer. But he made the request in a humorous vein, "Don't worry about me, but laugh at my guests' jokes. They need encouragement!"

A Live Taped Performance

As explained by Mr. Leno, one of the unique aspects of the Tonight Show is, "It's a live taped performance." No re-dos. No back-tracks. He said some talk shows take four hours to get an hour and half on tape. Not this show. I witnessed only one retake, which was at the end of the program.

After a few of these introductory remarks, he kibitzed with the audience. Some people came up on the stage for a moment or two. A father and son were in the audience, and Mr. Leno offered, "Is this really your dad, or someone you met on the Internet? You never know now-a-days."

He asked if it were anyone's birthday. A man shouted that his mother, sitting next to him, was 66. Jay said, "Why don't you just yell out her age?!....Why do you look older than your mother?"

Mr. Leno is not all kid-gloves. His monologues often have pointed social satire. And he didn't dance around the next person in the audience. A young man indolently sauntered up to the stage. Bedecked in today's slothful attire, he displayed dirty tennis shoes, hole-filled jeans hanging precariously to his buttocks, all topped-off with a motley sweat shirt. Mr. Lane gave him a fast once over and dismissed him with, "Thanks for dressing-up for the show." The audience loved it.

Another husband volunteered that today was his wife's birthday. Jay, "And this is what you gave her, tickets for The Tonight show?! Take her out tonight. Buy her dinner!"

We were warmed up. The audience was in a fine mood. Mission accomplished.

Jay left, explaining he had to change into a suit. His announcer then took over. He emphasized the importance for us to: Laugh! Clap! "When Jay comes out, everyone rise and clap and cheer. ... You near the stage, come up to the stage...but DON'T GET ON THE STAGE! Watch for those 'applause' signs to light up. They mean applaud!"

The announcer then invited people from the audience to come up and say something funny or to tell a joke. This short recess allowed Jay to change and for the stage crew to do some last minute arranging.

A middle-aged fat man came onto the stage:

- "I have a joke."
- Announcer, "How long is it?"
- "About half a minute?"
- "Half a minute! That's an eternity on television."
- The man started the joke about a middle-aged fat man. On it went for about 15 seconds--- pathetic. The band started playing the theme song from *Jeopardy*. The announcer gave the man a "prize" for his efforts. (A miniature football).

A young woman was next:

- Announcer, "What do you do?"
- "I'm an actor."
- "Anything special for us to hear?"
- "Yes, I'm good at fake sneezes. Here's three of them. Ah-Choo! Ah-Choo! Ah-Choo!"
- Announcer, "I wished you had done only one. Here's a prize." (A T shirt.)

Thus ended the warm up. The announcer finished by singing a short song lamenting the fact that some American products never sell well in Japan because the Japanese are too short to use them. His ballad didn't garner many laughs because much of the LA population is of Nipponese descent, including the population at The Tonight show.

There's No Business like Show Business and Cue Cards

Out came Jay...at the very minute my DVD in Hayden Lake, Idaho, had silently turned on to record the show. Mr. Leno received a tumultuous welcome from the warmed-up crowd. Small wonder TV stars have such fine dispositions, their egos are continuously warmed up.

Jay began his monologue. He referred to cue cards directly in front of him. No teleprompter. Old fashioned cue cards. Only about 18 inches square, there was not much text on each one. The cue card shuffler was a busy man, and during the entire program he never dropped or mis-sorted a card. If he did, Jay and his guests made his gaffe transparent to the audience. Mr. Leno made deft use of the cards. Unlike some cue card readers, he was able to look around the studio to pretend he was not reading cue cards.

Walk a mile in a cue card reader's shoes. I doubt if you (or I) could memorize hundreds of lines of monologue five nights a week. Which reminds me of a story told in the sidebar below.

As we all know, talk show hosts, with the possible exception of Larry King, resort to cue cards to help them along. I say Larry King is an exception for two reasons because his program is laden with so many commercials he rarely speaks more than a few lines at a time anyway.

Cut to the Past and to Teleprompters

Before I became Your on the Street Reporter (that is, before I retired), I had an occasion to do a two hour live (not taped) TV show for PBS. Yep, your reporter had two hours of world-wide fame, as the program was broadcast to South America, Asia, Europe, and Australia. Granted, the audience was not huge, as it was on PBS. OK, granted it was even smaller because it was on the PBS Business Channel. I'll take my fame any way I can get it.

My agent for this event informed me to show up at the director's office *four* days before the broadcast. Being one who tended to show up for a gig four seconds before its launch, I wondered why I had to spend four days in New York to do a two hour show. But I was busy with other matters, and I liked staying in Manhattan. I did not bother to enquire further.

Four days before the show, I arrived at the director's office. The conversation unfolded something like this:

- Director, "It's good to meet you. But we've a lot of work to do, so may I see your script?"
- "What script?"
- "Your agent didn't tell you about the script?"
- "No."
- "You're not joking are you?"
- "Is there a problem?"
- A very long pause, as she assessed me and the situation at hand, "So, you know what you are going to say for two hours to a live audience?"
- "Yes."
- Another very long pause, "OK, but how can we time our breaks with your sayings? How can we cue-in questions from our world-wide audience? How can we know when and how to inter-leave your panel members into your presentation. Your first break must come exactly four minutes and forty five seconds into the show. How...?"
- "Let's get to work."

The next few days were spent time creating a script for the teleprompters. As it turned out, I used the "cue cards" for the first 30 minutes, but I knew my director had covered my naive ass. After all, that's what a good director does.

The Taping Begins

Below is a short synopsis of the show (It's pointless to review what you can see on the Web (go to NBC.com), so I'll keep this part of the report brief):

Jay took over. Here are a few entries from my notes:

Jay jokes:

- *Obama. If he were not our president, his name would have put him on the no-fly list.*
- *Sarah has discovered that Turkey is not only a bird, it's a country.*

One after the other. Cue card man walks off with armful of cards.

Music break. (Later entry: A few minutes for a commercial to be inserted.) Jay is walking around. Not doing much of anything.

....makes some sighs.

First guest---a comedian...Don't know him...Pilgrim...Turkey under arm...trouble with turkey ("we talked about this in the car")...First break.

Jay: participatory during break...talking a lot with guests...with staff. Staff: looking to all during the break. Coffee to the Turkey guy....refuses coffee. Something else in a coffee cup brought back...

After break: Turkey guy continues....going on too long about his children?....losing audience

another cue card person...from stage left...trying to get Turkey guy's attn...no luck...Jay breaks anyway

Break: same as before...music fine....great sax solo...good voice from lead singer...

Next: Person interviews people. Film shots. Hilarious.

Next: Kitchen skit, with a midget cook, who is asked by Jay, "Do you ever do trash talking? 'Your pumpkin bread ain't nothing!'" "

That was it for my dark-impaired note taking. And now, to finish:

The Climax of the Jay Leno Show

For the last performance, Scott Weiland and company came on. A stage to the right of Jay's desk had a bay door that opened to reveal yet another stage. It opened, Scott and his band launched into a song.

Jay Leno and his guests came over to the side to listen and watch. My attention was divided. As a father, I wanted to keep my eyes on Tommy. I wanted to focus on the TV screens in the studio to review what my DVD in Idaho was recording. And as Your on the Street Reporter, I was obligated to observe and report on Jay Leno.

There Mr. Leno was, next to the band, listening to the song and keeping tune to the rhythm with the tapping of his feet. Eh, that is, to the tune of Tommy's bass. No offence, Scott. No offence to the drummer, or the other two musicians, but Jay was tapping to my son's music.

Being tone deaf, rhythm indifferent, and pitch impaired, I could not judge the band's performance. The audience seemed to like it as they clapped, and cheered. It made no difference to me. My son has labored long and hard at his craft. He has been "hard at work" for a very long

time. Appearing on the Jay Leno show was a just and fitting reward. I hope his success continues. I hope the same for Scott Weiland. I hope Jay Leno's success continues as well.



Tommy, Rebecca, and I left the NBC studio for a celebration dinner. Rebecca snapped the photo in Figure 1 of Tommy and me.

Tommy and Rebecca then departed to later watch the Tonight Show on TV. I returned to my hotel room to transcribe my notes onto the computer and to write this report. If it seems a bit scrambled, my excuse is taking notes in Mr. Leno's darkened bleachers.

Figure 1. Rock star, and rock star's papa.

Before filing this report, I want to fill you in on an unusual convention that was held at the Hilton Hotel in Burbank, where I stayed for Tommy's gig on Jay Leno.

I've spent a lot of time in this part of America. As a young man in the 1960s, I hung-out in the LA area for two summers and lived in Newport Beach in the 1980s. Throughout these times, I recall that parts of southern California, such as Newport Beach, Beverly Hills, and Hollywood were populated with good-looking people.

They still are. Last night, upon my arrival at the Hilton, I was struck by the number of *very* good-looking people milling about in the lobby and the lobby bar, even beyond what I remember from past times. And not just in quantity, but in quality as well.¹ Most of the women were knockouts.

When I traipse around Hollywood, it seems more people resemble one another than the folks in the back hills of West Virginia. From what I know, the Hollywood inhabitants are not relatives to one another.

The ratio of fine looking women to average looking women was too obvious not to notice. Four 10s were at the hotel gym. No 4s or 5s. All 10s. And those 10s were so top heavy they leaned backwards on the treadmill.

Like any functioning male, I find pleasure in looking at pleasant looking females. If my male readers do not find this pastime pleasant, I'm sorry for you. And if my female readers do not find pleasure looking at pleasant looking males, too bad.

¹ This survey is one dimensional, as your Reporter concentrated on females. For a study on the ratio of good-looking males in this population, I refer you to another survey. I don't know its name as it is of no interest to me.



Later this morning, Tommy sent me an email in which he informed me my hotel was in the middle of hosting a convention for porno actors and actresses. No wonder! I now knew why there were so many women in the lobby and the bar, and why so many of them were 10s. I took the photo in Figure 2 in order to document my findings. She had just arrived and was checking in at the desk.

Tommy scolded me for taking this photo, “Dad, people will think you’re a dirty old man!”

I declined to grace his barb with a response. Besides, if that woman did not want attention why was she dressed in a costume that begged for attention? And she was one of many others dressed similarly. But what should one expect? It was a porn convention.

Figure 2. Porn star.

I made it back to my Hayden Lake, Idaho, home. Reporterette had stayed behind to tend to some matters. She had watched The Tonight Show and told me it was a fine performance by all (except the second skit by the Turkey guy).

Check out:

http://www.nbc.com/The_Tonight_Show_with_Jay_Leno/video/episodes/#vid=848401

Your on the Street Reporter

Jimmy Kimmel Show

May 20, 2011

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter.

This evening I visited the Jimmy Kimmel Theater in Hollywood, California. During this time, I stayed in the Roosevelt Hotel, just down the street from Mr. Kimmel’s studio.

Hollywood and Vine

The Roosevelt Hotel, as seen in Figure 1, is located on Hollywood Boulevard in downtown Hollywood. In the early 1960s, while living with my brother David, I hung-out in this part of LA. At that time, Hollywood had not yet fallen into disrepair (to be resurrected in the 1980s). It was the place for young singles to meet and maybe comingle.

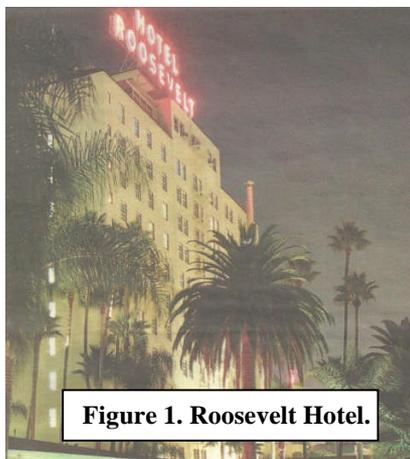


Figure 1. Roosevelt Hotel.

The Roosevelt is a fabled place. It has experienced times of wealth and poverty. I had passed by the hotel many times during my stays in LA. Recently, I read about how it had become (once more) a fine establishment. The renovation has retained the grace of its former times, as seen in Figure 2 (with photos of the lobby and one of the convention rooms).

As I was driving into the area, I passed by Hollywood and Vine, which evoked fond memories of my younger years. Just down Vine a couple blocks, the Capitol Records building still stands. Its disk-like circular architecture is as funky today as it was fifty years ago.



Figure 2. Roosevelt’s offerings.

I passed by a building that was once used to house a singles-type bistro, a place where I learned a new meaning to the yet-to-be written song, “California Dreaming.” Sweet memories of youthful adventures came back to this gray panther.



Figure 3. Fanciful Times.

dOn Hollywood Boulevard, near the intersection of Vine, I looked for the Palladium. My musty mind may have displaced its location, as I did not find it. But my memories held intact a time I spent there. I surfed the Web and came up with a picture of its front (Figure 3). It reflects my recollections of the Palladium I visited many years ago.

There's a lot of fun and fascinating history of Americana in this part of our country. For this example, I went to the Net to discover:

"The Los Angeles Times publisher Norman Chandler funded the construction of the art deco Hollywood Palladium at a cost of \$1.6 million in 1940. It was built where the original Paramount lot once stood. The ballroom opened October 31, 1940 with a dance featuring Tommy Dorsey and his Orchestra and band vocalist Frank Sinatra. It had six bars serving liquor and two more serving soft drinks and a \$1 cover charge and a \$3 charge for dinner."

Imagine: The most famous singer of his time was rocking at the Palladium. I wonder if he stayed at the Roosevelt? I wonder if he would draw an audience now?

During the time I was living in Hollywood, the Palladium had a huge wooden floor, outfitted as a fancy dance hall. In 1962, I took my college sweetheart there to listen and dance to...Lawrence Welk. Yep, I admit it.

When I channel-surf and come across LW on PBS, it's so bad it's good. But whatever one may think of his music, Lawrence had a stunning array of talent on the show.

My honey and I were disappointed because Lawrence was not there, only his band. I confronted the Palladium ticket window agent and demanded to know why Lawrence Welk was not leading the Lawrence Welk band:

- Ticket agent...yawning, "Yeah, we know, you're not the first to ask this question."
- LW fan, "Yes, and I'm still asking."
- Ticket agent, "You see anything in our advertising that advertises Lawrence Welk?"
- "Sure, his name!"
- "Nope, only his band's name. All our promotions say 'Come to the Palladium and dance to the Lawrence Welk band.' They say nothing about dancing to Lawrence Welk."

I've never had the same reverence for Lawrence Welk after that night at the Palladium.

The Pantages theatre is still on Hollywood Blvd. For one summer, brother David had a cottage on Franklin Avenue, a few blocks from this famous building. Occasionally, I would walk around this part of Hollywood and take in the tourists admiring the prints of the stars. That summer, I sauntered into a movie theatre to watch *Psycho*---without knowing a thing about the movie. I walked-out a bit shook-up...but forewarned a line of folks waiting for tickets. Kill-joy Uyless.

Fame

The idea of this visit was to see my son Tommy perform as the bass player for Scott Weiland's performance on the Jimmy Kimmel show. For my readers who may not know...gray panthers...Mr. Weiland is a famous musician. He is a rock star, the first one I've ever met. This week, he had a half-page article in *USA TODAY* (May 17, 2011, p. 6D) about his earlier life, his career, and his time as a famous person.

I had seen Scott (with Tommy) and his band perform a couple years ago on the Jay Leno show. I had met one member of the band, Dan, a splendid drummer with a fine sense of humor. But I had not met Scott. He gets special treatment at these shows, and for safety and security reasons, has a protective entourage around him.

There's a different cultural milieu encasing famous people. Be they politicians or musicians, the average person on the street treats them differently. I don't treat them differently, and most famous people I've met don't want to be treated differentially.

Whatever their chosen area of accomplishment might be, famous people have managed to be successful. Usually, it comes from talent. Sometimes, it comes from good fortune. Whatever its foundations may be, Joe and Josephine Citizen somehow consider themselves different...perhaps not as creditable....from the folks that people *People* magazine.

This behavior is both healthy and unhealthy. Healthy, because it makes for good entertainment to think of people on a different plane than Joe and Josephine. Escapism is part of our dealing with the often unpleasant realities of life. After all, why are songs, movies, books, and poems created in the first place? To take us away from our mundane lives, and for many of us, to escape the daily despair of eking-out a living.

Unhealthy, because it can lead the now-famous person into developing a sense of entitlement, of aloofness and isolation.

Enough philosophy for now, but more later in relation to rock stars.

The Jimmy Kimmel Studio

Before the show was to begin, I was hanging-out at the bar at the Roosevelt. I had several hours to spend before Scott and his band performed. Tommy was at the studio down the block. Tommy's mate Rebecca and I were tossing down soda water and Cokes to keep us aligned for a long evening.



Figure 4. The Holding Room.

Later, we waited for the show to begin at Mr. Kimmel's studio in what is called the Green Room. It's a holding room for the landed gentry, those who can gain a pass to avoid standing in a line to await admittance. There is yet another room for the ultra landed gentry...for those few who have grants from the star. I was not among these lofty folks, but I was not complaining. Figure 4 shows the Green Room in which we awaited the performance.



Figure 5. Tommy's friends.

Another waiting room is shown in Figure 5. I snapped this photo of Rebecca, Tommy, Rick, and Phil. Phil is the manager of Scott and Doug's studio named "Lavish." He's a cool and engaging man. More on Doug shortly.

I have met Tommy's friend Rick several times. It was good to see him again, partially just to have his fine company, but also to express a thought---as a father---toward this man. Several years ago, Rick formed a band (called Sparkler, which did okay in spite of its name). Rick brought Tommy on as the bass player. I recognize my son is very talented, but I also know the opportunity to show those talents is haphazard and subject to a roll of the dice. Rick gave Tommy that window. I told him so. He was surprised and graciously offered that with Tom's talent, it was a two-way street.

Back at the Hotel

I'm getting ahead of myself, so back to the bar at the hotel. While we waited there, Tommy called from the studio and told us he had some free-time and would come to the Roosevelt to hang with us for a while. Great! A semi-famous bass player would grace our presence.

A few minutes later, in-walked Tommy....and a famous musician, Scott Weiland. Tommy had mentioned to Scott he was coming to see me and invited Scott to accompany him. Scott accepted and here he was.

How does a technology geek, knowing absolutely nothing about popular music, relate to a famous musician, who knows absolutely nothing about technology? And vice-versa? Easy answer: We simply talked. We talked of our youths, of Scott's athletic days, of his wrestling and football. I talked of Tommy's migration to his love of music.

Our company was enhanced by the arrival of Scott's mother, Sharon, and his drummer, Dan. Sharon and I, being parents to the two sons before us, took each other into our confidences of older people with serious back problems. At the other end of the bar, I suspect the young ones were talking-up musical scores and amplifiers. Mom and dad were talking-up the maladies of old age.

No matter, it was a very fine hour, one of remembrance for Sharon and me. But Scott, Dan, and Tom had to return to the studio. They had a show to do. So, Sharon, Rebecca, and I walked with them to the theater.

As some of my readers know, I've recently developed spinal/nerve problems. They often render me semi-mobile. For this walk to Jimmy Kimmel's studios, I was limping. Dan took me in hand. Scott and Sharon were ahead of us. Tommy and Rebecca were just behind.

Shortly, we arrived at the main entrance to the theater. Because of Scott, we were given passage through this main door. Well, almost, Scott and Sharon were admitted, but we were momentarily

held-up as we were not sufficiently famous. And I was having a bit of trouble traversing the stairs.

Because of Scott, the guards let us through. But more: Scott and Sharon were still standing at the top of the stairs when we arrived. Scott had stayed there, holding the door open for us. His lofty entitlement and job description of a famous person did not include waiting for a gimp to traverse a stairway, all the while holding the door open for him. But there he was.

I judge a person, not just by his success, but much more: By how he handles his success. I'm not one for maudlin prose. Nonetheless, Scott's waiting for me to get up those stairs and hold the door open for me was indicative of a man who had not let fame go to his head. It was a kind gesture that I appreciated.

Aftermath

I am no expert on rock music. Rick told me the performance was smooth and on key. If you have not seen the show, go to: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SmyLHs9FoKw>.

The lead guitarist to the left of Scott is Doug Grean, one of the best in the business. The drummer is Dan. Tommy is to the right of Scott.

Mr. Kimmel interviewed Scott about his recently published book. (*Not Dead & Not for Sale: The Earthling Papers*) Earlier, I had asked Sharon about the book. She said she had not yet read it and was thinking she might not read it.

I asked why? She responded that it might be too painful, then smiled and said, "As a mom, I'd want to correct everything!"

Cool mom. Cool son.

Your on the Street Reporter