

## **"The Lying Scotsman"**

by David Lee Simmons 2/8/09

You know the mantra - "Hollywood... nothing but liars, con-men, dirtballs and fakes." We've all heard it, but rarely do we get the opportunity to really experience it first hand.

Such a privilege was mine last week when I attended a taping (or should I say, attempted to attend a taping) of "The Late, Late Show" with Craig Ferguson.

I was in town for a Writer's Seminar (I use caps here because it makes me feel important) and had gone to Venice Beach over the weekend just to be able to tell the folks back home I had dipped my toes in the Pacific, when I stumbled upon a guy handing out "tickets" to "The Late, Late Show."

Being the naturally skeptical guy that I am, I called the number on the ticket when I got back to my hotel. Sure enough, I got the "On Camera Audience" office at CBS. They assured me the ticket was legit, and suggested I get there early - to insure the fact I would get a seat.

So on Tuesday I made the trek from my hotel out to CBS Studios on Fairfax in Los Angeles. Since I had spent the morning at the Writer's Guild Library, just a few blocks away, I still had my briefcase with me. "No briefcases, purses, cell phones or jackets," I was told by the guy at the gate. So for \$5.00 I left my trusty briefcase across the street with a clerk at a packing supply store, who assured me that it would be safe and sound in their hermetically sealed, high tech storage facility (which turned out to be the broom closet).

Now out five bucks, but still determined, I waited in line with the rest of the "Fergunites" for my moment on national television. "Who's the guest today?" I inquired of the twenty something couple behind me. "Robin Williams," I was told, in between lip locks.

"Not bad," I thought. So I'm out five bucks and have to wait in line for two hours. Hey, Robin's worth it. Yeah, right...

After finally being shuffled to the holding area, I was magic-markered with a bold number "4" and asked to take a seat. "This can't be good," I thought. After all, there was a huge crowd there that day (it's good to know Robin can still pack 'em in) and even hayseed little old me can count. Row "4" is farther away from the door than row "1." I asked Brian, who seemed to be the only PA that actually seemed to know anything, what the seating capacity of the theater was. "113," he shot back.

Great... my chances of seeing Robin Williams bounce off the walls was dwindling with each new arrival.

After what seemed like an hour (okay, more like 45 minutes) Brian introduces himself and starts to get the crowd warmed up with "jokes."

Now, this is CBS, mind you. Not some off-beat cable network specializing in "R" rated dramas. C...B...S! Former home of "The Carol Burnett Show," and countless others. So not only was I taken aback by the fact that Brian now peppers his entire warm up with "F-bombs," he first begins by asking if there are any Republicans in the audience. Silence. He then explains that if we (the Republicans, that is) are offended by such language, we should just "give it a rest" for the day. "After all, we're all adults here..."

So why is it that those who use the excuse of being an "adult" are always the ones who insist on talking like pubescent frat boys at a kegger?

Brian finishes his pre-warm up (yes, pre-warm up, the warm up guy is yet to come) and introduces the real warm up guy - some comedian wanna-be affectionately named "Chucky-B."

More on "Chucky" in a moment.

Once we finish being subjected to the pre-show rantings of "the Chuckster," the crowd waits another twenty minutes and then the PAs begin to herd them in. Now remember, the studio only seats 113. There are well over 200 people here. So somebody screwed up. Or else CBS employees aren't paid to be able to count.

So I do the math - the studio seats 113 - I'm number 119 in line. I'm not getting in. And so, I don't. Traveled all the way across town, waited in line for two hours, stashed

my briefcase in the hermetically sealed broom closet for five bucks across the street, only to be told the ticket I had was not a ticket - it was a "we need more bodies in case someone doesn't show up, so you might get in - you might not" ticket.

At no time does the guy at Venice Beach, or the phone rep at CBS "On Camera Audiences" ever tell me this.

Hollywood. Sheesh.

So it's back to the hotel (after retrieving my briefcase) where I drown my sorrows with a hot bath and a few burgers from the local "Carl's, Jr." I guess Robin and I weren't meant to be.

But wait... it gets worse.

Feeling undaunted and completely insane, I decide to try it again the next day. So after meeting with a writer friend at Pink's in Hollywood, I have him drop me off once again at CBS. This time I had called "On Camera Audiences" the night before and had explained my dilemma to the voice machine. Around 10:30 am I got a call from a very nice young lady who assured me that I was "on the priority list" - which was great, since I had already called back earlier that morning and talked to another young lady named Amy who told me I was "on the list." (Ok, did you get that? Two different girls at two separate times both tell me I'm "on the list." Do you see where this is going, Craig?).

So once again I check my briefcase with the guy at the packing store (\$5.00 more) and stand in line at the gate at CBS. "Who's the guest today?" I inquire. "Samuel L. Jackson," I get back.

Ok, not Robin Williams, but just as good. Maybe better. After all, Samuel L. Jackson is no slouch - a great actor and a fitting payback for the previous Robin Williams-less day.

So once again, I am shuffled off to the holding area, where a PA with a clipboard asks me for my ticket. "I don't have one," I explain. "I'm supposed to be on the list. Brian's list." I figured dropping Brian's name would help win me points for something - besides, Amy told me to say it. So the PA checks the list - and you guessed it - I'm not on it. So after reciting back the "On Camera Audience" phone

number to this kid like it's the secret numeric password to the inner workings of CBS, he lets me in - where I'm immediately branded in magic-marker with a number "2."

Ok, better than a lousy "4," but why not a "1?" After all, wasn't I supposed to be on the "the list?"

After the obligatory 45 minute wait, here comes Brain once again with the same spiel, who explains that Chucky-B is upstairs and will greet us there. The PAs do some shuffling (there's a lot less people here today - sorry Samuel...) and I am upgraded to a "1."

Great. Today, I definitely make television history. So, in we go to the studios at CBS - a frozen wasteland (I mean it must have been 40 degrees in there) of hallways and backstages where we are lined up on a taped floor like prisoners at shower time. After another 20 minute wait - we're finally ushered into "The Late, Late Show" studio...

...which is about the size of your living room. I mean teeny. I've seen actual living rooms that are bigger.

After being subjected to very loud rock music and a brief montage of Craig Ferguson's greatest hits, the announcer does his thing and out comes - you guessed it - "Chucky-B."

Imagine an overweight, pock-marked, alcoholic comedic (and I use that term loosely) has-been who opens his warm-up routine with the admission that he's a little subdued today because he's been up most of the night drinking.

"Chucky-B," the great comedian, then launches into a twenty minute diatribe of nothing but blowjob jokes abundantly peppered with "F-bombs." If Carol Burnett were there, she'd have thrown up.

Yet, the audience seems to love it (idiots...) and after much fanfare and adulation, out comes Craig Ferguson.

He tapes the opening of the show. He tapes a 4 second promo. He introduces a two-bit magician who does the same "girl in a box" trick we've seen since "Your Show of Shows."

And then - Craig drops the biggest bomb of the day. "You're all here to see Samuel L. Jackson, right?!" The crowd explodes in applause. "Well... He's not here."

Turns out Samuel had a schedule conflict that day so he taped his stuff earlier - evidently with another audience. And you wait until now to tell us this, Craig?

We were in that studio for forty minutes - tops. And then - "Good night, everybody!" and Ferguson left.

I headed back to my hotel feeling used and abused, much like a hooker on Sunset Boulevard after a night with Chucky-B.

So if you are reading this, Craig old bean, just remember that Karma is a bitch. What goes around, comes around. Lying to and cheating your fans gets you nowhere.

There is an old Scottish saying that goes like this - "Fool me once, shame on you..."

"Fool me twice... shame on Chucky-B."

And both of you owe me ten bucks for the hermetically sealed closet storage fee.

DLS. 2/8/09