

'I'm calling from the Late Show with David Letterman ...'

Pop culture pilgrimage to Letterman complete

BY CHRIS TRABER
ctraber@yrmg.com

Priceless and rare, coveted by thousands and available free to few, I won the Letterman lottery.

Aptly listed by the New York City Tourist Bureau among the Big Apple's top ten attractions, the Late Show with David Letterman remains the hottest ticket on Broadway.

The quest for the Holy Grail of television tapings began months ago, online at the show's official website. Detailed information is dutifully entered and submitted over the Internet. Yet, hope springs eternal. And, is answered in the form an unexpected phone call last week from Lisa Gold, an audience relations staffer.

"I'm calling from the Late Show with David Letterman," she said. "You've been randomly selected for a chance to get tickets to the show."

A chance?

"Yes, you have to correctly answer a Late Show trivia question," she explained. "We get a lot of requests and like to make sure tickets go to fans. Ready?"

Ms Gold asks where Rupert Jee works.

Any Letterman aficionado knows it's The Hello Deli, next to the The Ed Sullivan Theater where the CBS show is taped for air week-nights at 11:35 p.m.

"Congratulations," she offered on the passes six days hence. "That's the only day available. Bring photo identification. You have to be in New York by 11 a.m. on the day of and at the theatre by 2 p.m."

'It's the enthusiasm of our audiences that make the Late Show a success.'

Umm, it's not like I'm on the show, merely in the audience. I sheepishly ask if there's anything deeper into the summer.

"April 15," Ms Gold asserts politely. "Can I confirm them in your name?"

Yes, I reply blindly. To decline would be pop culture sacrilege.

A few steps from Times Square and at the assigned hour, the line for the favoured weaves from the box office around to West 54th Street.

Only 400 seats are available, a Late Show page informs us. Once you've flashed government issued photo ID, you are handed a numbered ticket.

Many giddily flaunt the passes at the forlorn line waiting for stand-by tickets.

Ticket holders are told to return an hour before the 4:30p.m. taping. Vigilant against scalping, you, your ID and ticket must be inseparable.

Prior to entry, mustered in a serpentine

line inside the dark lobby of the venerable theatre built by Oscar Hammerstein's son, Arthur, between 1925 and 1927, a Late Show standup warns and warms the crowd.

"No cell phones, cameras, loud whistling

'Many giddily flaunt the passes at the forlorn line waiting for stand-by tickets.'

or shout outs," he says. "And, for those with beepers, I just want to inform you it's 2009."

Restless, the crowd is asked to rehearse loud, unabashed applause.

"It's the enthusiasm of our audiences that make the Late Show a success," we're told.

Ushered in, the first impression is both surreal and familiar. The theatre is bright, shiny and altogether compact.

The same stage where Elvis Presley and The Beatles debuted and what appears to millions of television viewers as an expansive arena is really an intimate, close packed set abuzz with activity and awash in lights, monitors and cameras.

GIVE IT UP FOR THE BAND

Paul Shaffer and his CBS Orchestra members are introduced, Mr. Letterman strolls out to thunderous applause. He sports his trademark suit, tie and light hued socks and appears remarkably taller and thinner in person. A few quips, a welcome and he excuses himself.

Taped in real time, the house lights dim and announcer Alan Kalter's familiar introduction, "From New York, the greatest city in the world, it's the Late Show with David Letterman," gives you the same gut churn as the first motion of a theme park thrill ride.

After 30 years, the past 16 in the historic Ed Sullivan Theater, the production is as smooth as a botoxed forehead.

After the sarcastic and prickly monologue and before the anticipated Top Ten list and guest Drew Barrymore, the band kicks it loud through commercials while a swarm of crew members set up the next segment.

Mr. Letterman talks with stage managers, casually inspecting his Blackberry. Seconds before the camera trains on the iconic host at his desk, each worker retires out of lens range.

In reality, a battalion of staff surround the stage, awaiting the next commercial break and their choreographed duties.

It's a very fast hour, several shows in one, all in a routine day's work for Mr. Letterman and company.

But, for legions of fanatics, it's a pilgrimage completed.



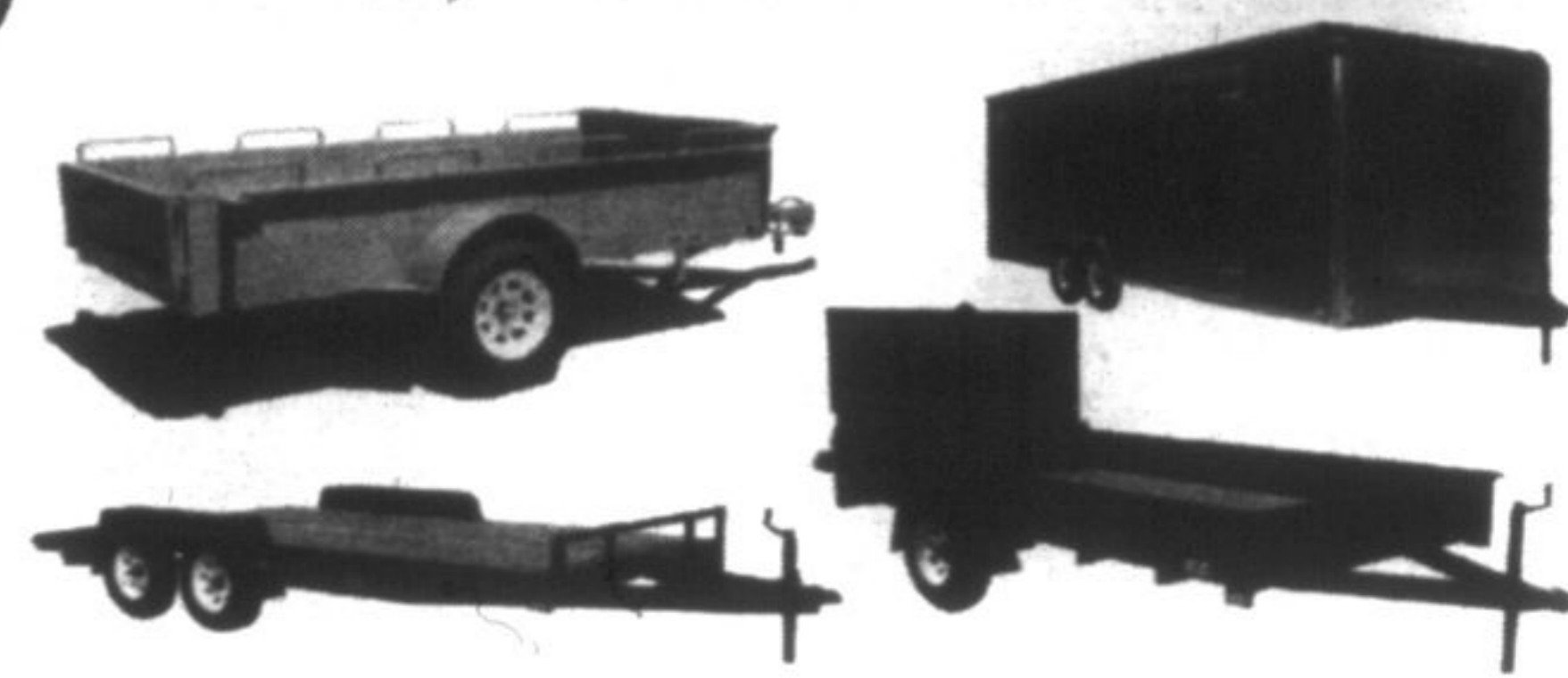
Writer Chris Traber with Late Show's Biff Henderson outside The Ed Sullivan Theater.



AUTO & TRAILER

www.NorthPortTrailers.com

Locally Owned & Operated



**TRAILER SALES
PARTS & ACCESSORIES**

905-985-9330 Toll Free 1-866-985-9330

**NEW
LOCATION**

181 NORTH PORT RD, PORT PERRY ON

MORE BUSES ON THE GO

**STARTING SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 2009,
THERE WILL BE MORE GO BUS SERVICE.**

Four new weekday southbound trips will depart Lincolnville GO Station at 6:00, 9:10, 10:10 and 11:10 p.m., make stops at the Stouffville, Mount Joy, Markham, Centennial and Unionville GO Stations, then run express to Union Station GO Bus Terminal.

The weekday southbound 10:30 and 11:00 a.m. trips from Lincolnville GO Station will now run express from Markham GO Station to Union Station GO Bus Terminal. The 8:20 p.m. trip from Lincolnville will now depart ten minutes earlier.

There will also be new northbound and southbound trips on weekends and holidays.

GO BY BIKE

As of April 25, all GO Buses will have bike racks.

**FOR MORE INFO, VISIT GOTRANSIT.COM OR JUST GIVE US A CALL.
SIGN UP FOR E-NEWS AND RECEIVE CUSTOMIZED GO INFO.**



416 869 3200 1 888 GET ON GO (438 6646) TTY 1 800 387 3652

Pour plus de renseignements, veuillez visiter le site gotransit.com ou composer un des numéros ci-dessus.

EARTH DAY
APRIL 22, 2009