



Take Two!

It was about a year ago I think, that I mentioned in one of these stories about taking a trip with an NHK camera crew to make a travel program. While we were on the shoot, and when I saw the resulting program, I was left with the impression that I had done a basically good job with what they had asked of me.

Some time later though, out of curiosity, I looked up some other episodes of the same series on YouTube, and what I saw made me suspect that the program producers had perhaps been somewhat disappointed in my performance. Compared to some presenters of other episodes, I hadn't really done the job with any style; I had just kind of plodded through the scenes, responding to questions, and giving a fairly dispassionate survey of the area in which we were travelling. Other presenters were visibly enthusiastic in front of the camera, oohing and aahing at what they were seeing, and speaking volubly about the experiences. They were excited about being there, and this was communicated to the viewer.

In comparison, my episode was downright slow and ... dare I say it ... pretty sleepy.

So when I received another call from the program producers a few weeks back, asking me to host another episode, I was surprised. "Me? Again? Are you sure?"

Yes, they were sure. They wanted to know if I was available for a three-day trip to Osaka, to host a program featuring some of the public art to be found there. And my first thought was that here was a chance to redeem myself. Now that I understood the general style of the program somewhat better than I had before, I was far more confident of doing a better job. "OK! Let's go!"

They sent me the program 'dai-hon' - the rough overview of the planned content, with script and scene suggestions - and I studied it while on the Shinkansen for Osaka, early on the first morning. It seemed pretty straightforward: we would do some street scenes first to 'set the location' and would then look at some public sculptures, drop in on some antique shops, and visit a man making art down at the riverbank. I wasn't sure how much of this would be amenable to a more enthusiastic and passionate approach, but I would give it a try.

And so I did. Or at least so I tried. The very first scene was filmed in the famous Dotonbori area; I was to stroll along the street with all the famous advertising signs flashing in the background, and give some opening remarks to set the stage for the rest of the program. The red light on the camera went on, and the director motioned me to begin strolling.

I put on my brightest, cheerful face, spread my arms wide to encompass the streetscape, and began, in the most enthusiastic voice I could muster. "Unmistakably Osaka! You couldn't confuse this wonderful scene with any other place in Ja ..." "Cut!" The director jumped in, "Dave; that's not quite the approach we have in mind. Please just peacefully stroll along, and mention some of the points we outlined in the script ... OK everybody, 'take two' please ..."

Urk. So 'take two' it was .. Actually I think it took three or four before we moved on to the next item on our list, with me getting progressively quieter and more subdued each time. He finally accepted the lines that I delivered, or perhaps gave up, I'm still not sure which. For the rest of the three days of filming, I tried to find

David Bull
Seseragi Studio
Nagabuchi 8-4-5 Ome City
Tokyo Japan 198-0052
<http://astoryaweek.com>

a balance between the competing approaches; I wanted to appear enthusiastic and interested in what I was presenting, but I couldn't let myself be too 'outward'. We sometimes took quite a large number of takes ...

I guess perhaps I shouldn't have worried about any of this. After many years and dozens of appearances on NHK, they must by now have a pretty good idea of who I am, and what I am like. When they call me for a job, it's *me* they want for the job, not a facsimile of someone a lot more young and bubbly. If they had been all that dissatisfied with my previous performance, they wouldn't have called me back.

But now, I'm very much waiting to see the final program, and to see which of the many 'takes' they used for some of the scenes. Will I put you to sleep, or keep you on the edge of your chair?

Bring a pillow!

David Bull
Seseragi Studio
Nagabuchi 8-4-5 Ome City
Tokyo Japan 198-0052
<http://astoryaweek.com>