

Wednesday, 12 May 2010

Anthony's America Part 9: Los Angeles



Time does fly when you're having fun because, somehow, I've been in Los Angeles for a month now. I feel as if my feet haven't touched the ground from the second I got here; maybe because they haven't. I've been rushing around - like the proverbial blue-ass fly - going to scriptwriter meetings, conferences, networking events, workshops and lunches with people I might be able to work with in the future.

Being in LA is, obviously, a much faster-paced environment than Fort Bragg, the small town I lived in for four months in northern California. I've worked in London before, but Los Angeles is completely different to that. Aside from the hot sun, it's hard to describe how LA has a paradoxical feeling of both a "chilled out" approach to enjoying life (the Californian way) but also one very much of "work yourself HARD...all the time".

Most of the meetings and conferences happen at night and at the weekend, so you have to be prepared to be at places - talking to people - until after midnight and then be ready to get up early to do it all again the next day. But, you know what, that really is fine with me because I'm here and grabbing the opportunities LA can offer me with both hands...whilst I'm here; I can catch up on sleep when I retire.

And, not only have I been learning how to constantly sell myself at meetings (which is actually very tiring and a concept us British are not particularly adept at - we generally prefer, sadly, to watch and moan about what other people are doing), but I've also had to adjust to driving across immense freeways in this huge city for my meetings, which can take hours. The traffic here is disgustingly busy.



I've discovered the 405 Freeway was actually created by the Devil so he could watch us sat in our cars going nowhere and laugh. The evil bugger.

But, that's fine too. The traffic is the negative trade-off for being here (think along the lines of yin and yang), because LA has a certain vibrant, creative energy about it that draws you in. There are thousands upon thousands of people who have all gathered here to entertain and better themselves and that

communal expression of creative energy gives Los Angeles its feeling of dreamy optimism, hope and makes it full of real possibilities to succeed in your chosen art.

Aside from the fact that I had a pretty bad crash on the freeway last week (where a dumbass student smacked into the back of my pickup and gave me whiplash), and the fact I got *another* police ticket (fines so far in the US of A: \$550) for parking the wrong way on a two-way road and "more than 18 inches from the sidewalk"...aside from this, I like Los Angeles.



I'm developing a very good Bullshit Radar (BSR) being here too, because there are A LOT of people who say they're doing this project, that project, working with Leonardo DiCaprio or working with Steven Spielberg...and they're clearly not doing anything of the sort. I tend to ask these people "what're you working on right now?", which has become my Bullshit-finding question. The majority of them stumble and say "not much at the moment, but I am trying to do this...".

I really don't understand the mindset of wanting to lie about what you're doing, when you're not doing it; I was brought up to be honest. I want to achieve many things here - including writing scripts on a TV series, producing and directing my own films - but I don't feel I'm going to do this without being truthful to myself and others I meet. I want people to know that I'm genuine and, yes, I've had lots of writing experience, but very much want to learn afresh here and produce projects in an American style. I want people to know I'm a clean slate, open to advice, guidance and learning. Who doesn't love learning new things, right?



And because of this openness, so far I've managed to become a Multi-Media Man (think of a slightly less muscular Superman without a cape, but with the Clark Kent glasses) and get involved with: recording a voice-over for a training video; going to a secret weekly scriptwriters meeting attended by working writers, actors and producers; going to a Disney Fellowship writing workshop at Universal Studios; meeting the writer of Clint Eastwood's *Dirty Harry* movies; meeting Michael Winner's cinematographer; talking with writers who

have written for TV series such as *Ugly Betty*, *Glee*, *Dexter*, *House*, *South Park*, *The Simpsons* and *Sex and the City*; attending a scriptwriters monthly meeting at 20th Century Fox Studios (in the building next to where they film the TV series *Bones*, meaning I'm getting closer to my goal of meeting Stephen Fry because he stars in this series!); having a great laugh with the very funny daughter of Roger Allers, the man who directed *The Lion King*; and talking with a producer about filming my own work too.

And, with all this film-like energy around me, I've been inspired to write a short film. It's called *Dark Angel* and I'd love to produce and direct it. I'll provide more information about it when I've let it rest for a while and re-written it.



I also, amazingly, got offered a full-time job at the Los Angeles' film commission - Film LA - as a writer and film campaign manager. This would be a 6-month contract and mean I'd stay in America until Christmas. However, due to this country's "immigration caps", it makes it illegal for me to start paid work here until October after I've changed my visa to a H1-B status, so the job won't work out. I'm looking into other visa possibilities to counteract this bureaucratic nonsense, as I think I might like to stay here a little longer, but the other thing I could

do is get a writer's job on a show. Now that *would* be excellent and, also, a massive help in my career for when I go back to the UK.

For this, I've been given the advice that I *have to* write a "spec script" to demonstrate my writing skills for a particular American show. So I will be writing a *True Blood* script over the coming weeks as I have an excellent storyline idea for one.



But, as for other LA tourist-like things, I've spent time visiting the seaside area of Santa Monica. The Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica has a great atmosphere in the day time and, at night, lots of bands and singers come out to play all along the pedestrianised road. They have a *Johnny Rockets* burger diner there (the burgers are the tastiest in the world!) and I was eating my approximately 15-inch thick double bacon cheeseburger the other day, with sauce running down my chin attractively, when the song *Johnny B Goode* came on the radio. In a matter of seconds, all the cooks, waitresses and most of the customers were singing and jumping out of their seats to dance and clap. It was a fantastic only-in-America moment that made me smile and cheer along.

I also took myself to *The Getty*; an art gallery perched on two mountains overlooking Los Angeles. *The Getty*'s architecture is spectacular and the gardens are stunningly beautiful. You completely forget you're in an over-populated city, it's a very restful place (see pics) with 20-feet high structures and gorgeous pink and red bougainvillea arbors hanging from them.

I also went to the fantastic Farmer's Market in *The Grove*; a shopping area with a mix of food stalls and old stores that have been trading in Los Angeles since 1934. They have gorgeous homemade icecream, sushi, English toffee chocolate (which was, admittedly, *quite close* to the real thing - I asked for a discount as I'm English but they said 'no', the buggers), masses of chinese food, Gumbo from America's deep south, and a strange selection of candied fruit, such as green pineapple...which *has* to be wrong, surely?



Whilst at the market I visited the *Avatar* promo stand and morphed myself into a James Cameron Pandorian clone. I think I make quite a good mutated alien.

So, thank you for listening, I'm off to find myself a *True Blood* script to read at the Writer's Guild of America screenwriter's library, and continue in my goal to conquer Hollywood.

As per usual, please just click [here](#) to see all the pictures that go with this part of my American Adventure. And, until next time, stay well and keep dreaming. Wink.