

Dave's Gone By Skit: OLD GILBERT

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DAVE: Ladies and gentlemen, we're very proud here at the *Dave's Gone By* show to introduce a special guest - one of the absolute legends of comedy. He's played every possible stand-up venue as well as appearing on television and in the films, *The Aristocrats*, and, of course, *Aladdin*. He's a bit older now but we're honored to have with us in the studio, Gilbert Gottfried. Gilbert?

GILBERT: Thank you, Dave.

DAVE: Gilbert, can you tell us about that moment at the Hugh Hefner roast when you made the 9/11 joke, realized you were in trouble, and just pivoted to the most offensive joke in the world?

GILBERT: Thank you, Dave. You know, I've spent many years doing comedy. And you have moments that are good and moments that are not so good.

DAVE: Uh huh.

GILBERT: So I was doing the Hugh Hefner Roast for the Friars Club.

DAVE: Yes.

GILBERT: Now, Hugh Hefner -- I don't know if you know this, but Hugh Hefner used to publish a magazine called "Playboy." And there'd be girls in there with no clothes on. And he got famous from this, from making a magazine with nude women in the pages.

DAVE: Yes.

GILBERT: Marilyn Monroe was in there. A lot of women.

DAVE: But you were mentioning the roast?

GILBERT: Yes. Now, back in my day a "roast" was what you did to a chicken or a side of beef. And it was very tasty, and you could have it Kosher or not.

DAVE: Uh huh.

GILBERT: But for a comedian, a roast is when other comedians come up and make fun of you. They tell jokes and the jokes are all about mockery of the person being joked about.

DAVE: Right.

GILBERT: So they're telling jokes about Hugh Hefner. Who made this magazine, Playboy.

DAVE: Right. With the naked women.

GILBERT: You know it?

DAVE: Yes, you just -- But the whole Aristocrats thing.

GILBERT: Yes, I'm telling jokes to Hugh Hefner. And no one's laughing. Which I'm used to.

DAVE: Ha!

GILBERT: So I thought, uh oh... let me tell the dirtiest joke in the world. *(pause)* And that was it.

DAVE: Right, wow, yes. Um, so I'm sure a lot of our listeners would love to know how you got your most famous role in the Disney film, *Aladdin*.

GILBERT: Ah, *Aladdin*. So my agent gets a call from Walt Disney. Not actually Walt Disney, he's been dead a long time and frozen somewhere.

DAVE: *(laughs)* Right.

GILBERT: But Walt Disney made a studio. And this studio made movies like *The Little Mermaid*, and *The Jungle Book*, and *Song of the South*.

DAVE: Yeah, they don't really mention that one.

GILBERT: What one?

DAVE: *Song of the* -- doesn't matter. What about *Aladdin*?

GILBERT: So they say to my agent, "Hello. We're making this new movie called *Aladdin*, and we think Gilbert Gottfried should play the parrot character.

DAVE: Uh huh.

GILBERT: Now, there's an irony here. Because animals don't talk in real life. But they do in some Disney pictures.

DAVE: Yah..

GILBERT: But parrots can talk in the real world. They can say dozens of words and even imitate a person singing.

DAVE: Right.

GILBERT: So in this movie for Disney, unlike others of their movies where animals talk but not in real life, I would be playing a parrot that talks in the movie just like a parrot might talk in a pet store. I thought that was very interesting.

DAVE: Right. So...in doing the voice for *Aladdin*, did you just use your regular comedy voice or did you tweak it to be more cartoon-like? Or did they process your voice in post-production -- make it higher or cuter or something like that?

GILBERT: *(pause)* What was the question?

DAVE: How did you come up with the voice for Iago?

GILBERT: Well, of course, I wasn't on the screen.

DAVE: Right.

GILBERT: You heard the actors, but we recorded all the voices.

DAVE: Sure, Robin Williams.

GILBERT: Yes, he was in that.

DAVE: In *Aladdin*, yes. Do you have any memories...?

GILBERT: Very funny man.

DAVE: Of course. Please, tell us about Robin Williams.

GILBERT: Well, we weren't on screen together because we recorded the voices in a control room. But we would kid around.

DAVE: Yeah? Yeah?

GILBERT: This wouldn't go in the movie, this was just the two of us making jokes.

DAVE: For sure! Like...?

GILBERT: You know, the movie already had a script. Robin Williams would improvise some jokes that they would add, but we also made jokes that weren't for the movie at all. Because we're comedians.

DAVE: Yes. So when you first saw *Aladdin*, the finished movie, did you sense it would be a smash?

GILBERT: You never know.

DAVE: Ah.

GILBERT: You hope, but you never know. When my agent called and said, "Listen, Gilbert, Walt Disney wants you to play the parrot in their new movie, called *Aladdin*. And it's got Robin Williams in it, and it's just after *Beauty and the Beast*, and you would be co-starring in a Walt Disney animated film?"

DAVE: Yeah...

GILBERT: Now, back in my day, animation was a cartoon that you might see on Saturday morning or maybe prime time like *The Flintstones* or *The Jetsons*.

DAVE: Right, on a whole other level.

GILBERT: But it's still the same idea. The animator makes a drawing. And then he makes another drawing that's almost the same as the first drawing but just a little different. And then you put the drawings next to each other, and it looks like they're moving. Then you put a whole bunch of these drawings together and you flip them very quickly. And that's *Aladdin*.

DAVE: We've been chatting with Gilbert Gottfried here on *Dave's Gone By*. We'll be back after this.

GILBERT: Aflac!

DAVE: Save it.

END OF SKIT

NOTES & BACKSTORY:

[April 2022] I wrote this in a flurry (while at my day job -- shhh!) on Wednesday morning, April 13, 2022, the day after the death of comedian Gilbert Gottfried. Not only was Gilbert a guest on my (then) radio show, Dave's Gone By back in December 2011 (listen here: <https://davesgoneby.net/?p=4406>), but of all the modern comedians post-Carlin, he was the one

who could just wreck me again and again, be it in his stand-up act, as a guest on Howard Stern, or doing podcast bits like reading excerpts from 50 Shades of Grey in his Gilbertiest voice. For those not getting the “joke” of this bit, it’s an homage to Gilbert’s most genius-level moment. He was on the Stern show reminiscing about Groucho Marx’s later-life appearances on the Dick Cavett Show. Howard, Robin, and Gilbert all agreed that while they understood why Cavett would treat Groucho like a national treasure, the comedian’s sell-by date had passed, and his anecdotes were getting clouded over by irrelevancy. Gilbert then effortlessly slid into a Groucho-as-ancient-dotard voice, sidetracking every question with explanations that were maddeningly obvious (“Back in my day, the comedians used to drink tea. They would dunk the tea bag into the water, and eventually the tea leaves would flavor the water, and they could also add sugar to tea. Which few people knew about...”). Priceless.