



The Associated Press

Geoff the Robot and Craig Ferguson during a segment of the "The Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson."

## Craig Ferguson, sidekick skeleton providing late-night TV laughs

If you've ever watched "The Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson," you know it's not like any other late night talk show on television. It's spontaneous and inventive, and I'm totally addicted — even though it airs way past the point I should be asleep.

You recognize instantly that the show is different when you see that Ferguson's sidekick is a robot skeleton named Geoff Peterson. You have no idea what's going to come out of Geoff's mouth and what's even funnier is that Ferguson has no idea what's coming out of his mouth either.

The man who gives voice to Geoff is actor/comedian Josh Robert Thompson and he is in control of everything Geoff does — whether it's his voice, a surprise sound effect, or the movement of Geoff's head and arm. Recently I had the privilege to talk to Thompson about being Geoff and what he told me made me love the show even more. Nothing between Geoff and Ferguson is scripted.

"Every single line of dialogue, other than the commercial break stuff that I write myself every day before I go in, all of that is improvised," Thompson said. "It's all made up. There's no net, there's no script, there's no preparation."

The original idea behind Geoff was that Ferguson's show



Angela HENDERSON-BENTLEY

had so little money that he couldn't afford to have a real sidekick. Ferguson was actually the first voice of Geoff, but he didn't like it. So he turned to Thompson, who had appeared on the show numerous times as Arnold Schwarzenegger and others. Geoff's original voice was modeled after George Takei ("Star Trek") and only spoke pre-recorded phrases. But when Geoff and Ferguson interacted for real during a trip to Las Vegas to celebrate Geoff's one-year anniversary, Thompson convinced Ferguson that they needed to interact in the studio.

Geoff -and Thompson- secured a permanent spot on the show during a now famous exchange with Ferguson in May during his nightly tweet mail segment. Thompson cracked Ferguson up so much that Ferguson almost couldn't continue with the segment.

"The realness of that moment, the idea that two people are having real genuine fun on

television. That's fun for the audience," Thompson said. "The crew and the producers of the show told me multiple times that in all the six years that Craig has hosted the show they had never seen him laugh that hard ever. And so that meant a lot to me as a comedian and as a performer. And it meant a lot to Craig too."

Thompson, a celebrity impressionist, has since added additional voices to Geoff, including Morgan Freeman, Schwarzenegger and a 1940s radio announcer. And he hopes to continue adding more, including our old friend, Matthew McConaughey.

"Matthew McConaughey is one that I've been desperately trying to work in," Thompson said. "I will find a way to work that in somehow."

For much more from Thompson, including where else you can hear his voice, what he does during the show and the surprising classic sitcom character he uses as inspiration for Geoff, be sure to visit my blog.

"The Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson" airs weeknights at 12:35 a.m. on CBS.

Angela Henderson-Bentley writes about television in her "Stay Tuned" blog at [www.herald-dispatch.com](http://www.herald-dispatch.com). Contact her at [ahendersonbentley@hotmail.com](mailto:ahendersonbentley@hotmail.com).