

# LAUGHING Matter

Day in the life  
of Entertainer

**JASON HEWLETT**

With a performance pricetag of \$10,500 plus travel expenses, you might think local corporate entertainer Jason Hewlett is laughing all the way to the bank. But companies don't just hire him for 55 minutes of impersonations, stand-up comedy and musical parodies. Entities including Nu Skin, Little Giant Ladder and BYU are paying for his years of music lessons, his top-drawer sound technicians, his study of pop culture and his century-wide knowledge of musical legends — including their intonations, width of smile and percent of white eyeballs showing.

Utah Valley Magazine spent an afternoon and evening with Jason as he performed for local tech giant AtTask at the Utah Valley Convention Center on Dec. 12. From arriving at the curb at 4:30 p.m. to walking out of the convention center at 10:18 p.m., we saw this father of four utilize every muscle of his mouth — and his brain — to make merry with 750 IT specialists — “and they tend to laugh only on the inside,” Jason retorts.

**Now this is funny business.**



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Jason arrives at the Utah Valley Convention Center with two assistants, a trunk full of books and DVDs, and three suitcases of equipment. “I’ve been thinking about this gig since I woke up last Friday morning,” Jason says.



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Jason's younger brother Jared Hewlett (yellow hat) and friend Andy Fernuik unload the Subaru. “Bring everything but the first aid kit — that stays with the car,” says Jason in his first joke of the night.

During soundcheck, Jason meets the emcee, who confirms he got Jason's bio from his agent. “If I get a bad introduction, I have to spend 20 minutes re-winning the crowd over,” Jason says. “Sometimes they introduce Jackson Hewitt, and I have to explain that I won't actually be doing taxes tonight.”



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To check the sound, Jason sang “Piano Man” and “Can You Feel the Love Tonight.” He also crooned the McDonald's slogan, “I'm lovin' it.” To listen to a few short sound clips, visit UtahValley360.com.



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Jason checks the monitor at the Utah Valley Convention Center to see which floor will be his home for the AtTask gig. “Qualtrics is here tonight? I performed for them last year!” he says.

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Haberdasher Custom Clothing (a Utah company) suits Jason both on and off the stage.



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After the sound check, Jason conducts a media interview and answers questions on camera for an upcoming project planned for his website. “My goal is to create something new every year,” he says.



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Jason asks the client if he can sell merchandise in the ballroom or if they would prefer it in the hallway.



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AtTask promotes their headliner in various ways throughout the Utah Valley Convention Center. “They are using my bearded shot,” Jason says. “I hope they are OK seeing a hairless face tonight.”



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Jason hires Trevor Young from Webb Audio for the night. “We've done gigs together all over the world,” says Trevor, who is from Orem. “As a tech crew, we love it when Jason is the emcee because he keeps the pace and solves problems on stage.”



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The 30-minute sound check balances microphones, piano, speakers, monitors and harmonicas.



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Jason shows the emcee a magazine clip about AtTask he found during his research on the company. “I like to know who my audience is — who founded the company and what they do in their industry,” Jason says.

Jason controls his music from an iPod, which has 500 songs. “I have a plan when I go on stage, but if they aren't getting something, I switch it up and go a new direction.”

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Jason removes his shoes carefully from cloth bags. He pays attention to every detail of his look. “Nobody wants to see an out of shape performer,” he says. Jason filmed his DVD at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas in front of 10,000. “I don't love doing shows for fewer than 200. Laughs don't carry far in small groups, and the show feels long and laborious.”



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“Should I keep the blue shirt or change to this white shirt?” Jason asks in the green room. His team agrees the blue shirt and gray coat are best with the blue back-light on the stage. “I feel weird without a suitcoat on — I need to cover the rolls I ate at Kneaders last July.”



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Jason's brother, Jared, is his right-hand man for performance night. The two of them are working on a two-man show for a possible 2016 release. “It's along the lines of the Smothers Brothers,” Jared says.

“Before heading to Provo to perform for AtTask, I got my haircut, ran errands, bought gift cards for clients, practiced the piano for half an hour and firmed up a gig for 2016.”

# JASON HEWLETT

John Schefer, a sales engineer with AtTask, helped land tonight's gig for Jason. In the green room, these two funny men reminisce about Jason's first one-man comedy act at Johnny B's (which John owned.) "I did 30 minutes because that's all I had," Jason says. "People were asking for their money back, and I was crying in the corner. I stayed up all night and expanded my show to over an hour, which I performed the next night. I used material from Bill Cosby and Brian Regan. I didn't know it was illegal. You can 'cover' a band, but you can't 'cover' a comedian."

Jason's signature move is transforming into a velociraptor – both in looks and sound. Jason did his "classic show" for 13 years. His 2014 show was called "Father Time," with bits about being a dad and getting older. His 2015 show is "Tributes," with 5-minute vignettes of nostalgic artists.



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Although Jason practiced several songs on the piano during the sound check, during the performance he only sat down once for an Elton John number. "The energy went way down because the piano wasn't on the stage," he says.

My ultimate goal is to be a stay-at-home dad to my four kids. I've not been home for a decade, which is what happens when you're creating a career.

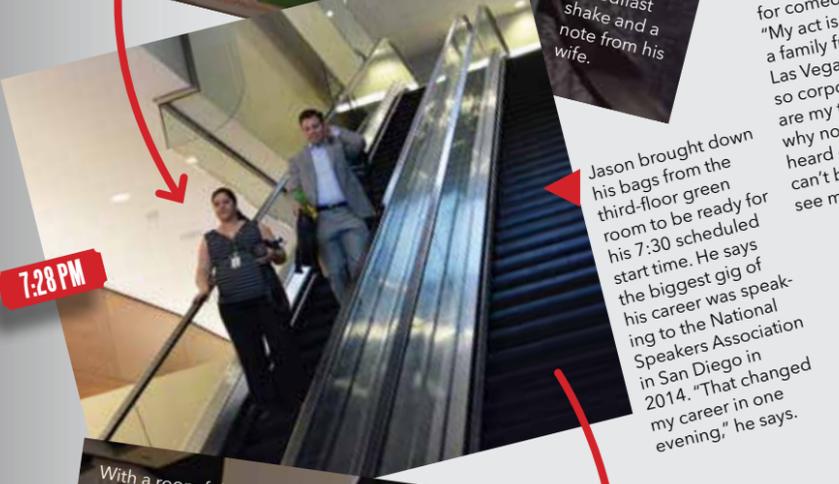


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Although he is usually invited, Jason rarely eats with the group he'll perform for. Instead, he packs his lunch box with oysters, fresh veggies, a Medifast shake and a note from his wife.

At age 35, Jason says he is actually 55 in "performer years." Early on, Jason figured out he was "too odd" for comedy clubs. "My act is more like a family friendly Las Vegas show, so corporate gigs are my thing. That's why nobody has heard of me. You can't buy a ticket to see me anywhere."

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Jason brought down his bags from the third-floor green room to be ready for his 7:30 scheduled start time. He says the biggest gig of his career was speaking to the National Speakers Association in San Diego in 2014. "That changed my career in one evening," he says.

For "Sweet Child of Mine," Jason alternates between impersonations of Axl Rose and Marge Simpson.

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With a room full of IT guys, Jason started out by making fun of the way tech guys laugh. "You don't make noise when you he rubs his ribs. You laugh 'in here,'" as prove him wrong, which was his strategy. For the first seven years of his career, Jason's wife ran a CD from the back of the room and had to guess which song he was leading up to next. Now he has a team of 12 independent contractors who assist him in their area of specialty.

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Parodies are a staple of Jason's style. Here he transforms Air Supply's "Open Arms" into his own rendition of "Broken Arms." Jason used to show a monthly show at Thanksgiving Point and a yearly show at SCERA, but in 2012 he stopped doing public performances to focus on corporate entertaining.



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Between corporate shows and school visits, Jason performs 100 times per year. AtTask booked him for this party back in 2012. "The second Friday in December books out two to three years in advance," Jason says.

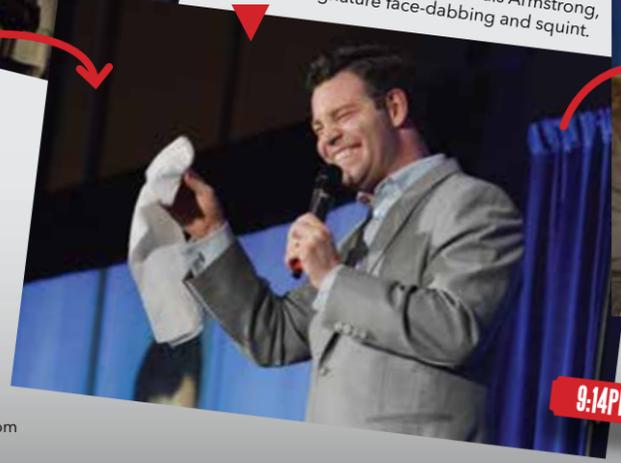


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A dentist was the first to tell Jason he had unusual control over the muscles in his face. This childhood mentor encouraged Jason to develop movement on both sides of his face.

In a more serious moment of the night, Jason tells of visiting the troops in summer 2014 along with David Archuleta. "I was obviously there for comic relief!" he says.

"What a Wonderful World" is Jason's last song, as he transforms into Louis Armstrong, with the signature face-dabbing and squint.



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"Now let's go to Denny's!" Jason is ready to celebrate tonight's performance and regroup for tomorrow's gig for 2,000 eBay employees in Salt Lake City.



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The line for the valet was forming at the end of the night, and Jason stopped to visit – while holding his empty water bottle. "I'm constantly fighting the genetic gift of gaining 30 pounds in a day if I sniff pizza," he says.



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Jason relives moments from the night with fans as he signs DVDs and books. One of his favorite audiences includes school faculty. "I help them discover strengths of the kids they are teaching," he says.