

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
December 16, 2005

It Ain't Me Babe...Joey Skaggs, that is

British TV host, author, and wannabe hoaxer Danny Wallace, hoped to pull a fast one on New York artist, sociopolitical satirist, and renowned hoaxer Joey Skaggs. It just didn't work out the way he planned.

Joey Skaggs <<http://www.joeyskaggs.com>>, known for scores of hoaxes that have been reported worldwide as news by unsuspecting journalists, has been at it again. However, this time he says the opportunity just "fell into his lap."

Skaggs was contacted by producer Ben Sinden of ITV Factual, about a 90-minute special called "Danny Wallace's Hoax Files," to air in prime time Monday, December 19, 2005, on SkyOne throughout the UK. Sinden said Danny Wallace <<http://www.dannywallace.com>> wanted to speak with the all-time great hoaxer Skaggs to see if he could teach him anything. In Skaggs' experience, producers of shows like this tend to overuse flattery, thinking that people will jump at the chance to be on TV. But Skaggs prefers not to become involved with this type of show. He'd rather expose them for what they are – self-aggrandizing and exploitive infotainment.

So, on October 30, 2005, rather than do the interview himself, Joey sent his friend Norman Savage in his place. Although Wallace had claimed to be a big fan of Skaggs' work, he apparently did not know the difference.

Savage, a novelist, has sat in for Skaggs before. In 1988 he appeared as Skaggs on "Entertainment Tonight" for a piece called "The Inside Story on Great Hoaxers," and in 1991 sat in for him on "To Tell the Truth" where he stumped the panel without the show's knowledge that he himself was a hoax.

Wallace's apparent plan was to attempt to hoax the hoaxer. He switched places with producer Sinden, who donned Wallace's signature glasses and messed up his hair. Savage, who had never met Wallace, was none the wiser, but apparently to his credit did a fine job impersonating Skaggs. Sinden proceeded to do the interview with Savage and each was happy in their duplicity, neither realizing the doublecross.

It wasn't until later, after the shoot, that the Skaggs switch was revealed to Wallace, and further confirmed while reviewing the collection of news clips of prior real Skaggs appearances licensed from other networks for use in the show. Says Skaggs, "It stands to reason that had he figured it out during the interview, he would have busted Savage, on camera, and used it in the show."

Realizing he'd been had, there was now a need for damage control. The trip to New York with the crew had cost the production company money. So now, how to salvage Danny Wallace's anticipated "leg up" on Skaggs? On December 8, Wallace phoned Skaggs to tell him he knew that Savage had played him and that, in fact, he (Skaggs) had been hoaxed by him (Wallace). Wallace was now going to make Skaggs confess! Curious to know what he had planned, Skaggs asked, "Are you pulling the interview?" "No!" said Danny Wallace, gloating, "We're going to show that it wasn't me doing the interview with you! We're showing a split screen with the fake you on one side and you on the other and we'll cut to me posing as crew during the interview." Skaggs replied, "Uh...Danny, but you didn't succeed in hoaxing me because, uh, it's not me!"

It Ain't Me Babe... Joey Skaggs, that is
Press Release

So, if the piece stays in the show, they'll be showing a fake interviewer interviewing a fake interviewee, while gloating about it. Unfortunately, Skaggs has seen this type of lame spin before. Embarrassed journalists who have fallen for his hoaxes, have frequently done follow-up stories to convince the audience that they knew the truth and were just going along for the ride.

Clearly, if Danny Wallace admires the work of Joey Skaggs as he says he does, he's been missing the point of Skaggs' work all along. One wonders who he's paying homage to. Says Skaggs, "On principle, I choose not to be involved with frivolous shows like this, unless I'm hoaxing them, which is why I sent Savage in my place. My work is generally more complex, focusing on issues I believe are important. Sometimes it can take a year or more to execute a concept with actors, props, elaborate Web sites, and PR. But, I'm dependent on the gullibility of the worldwide media to help deliver my message, so I guess I should be thankful to Danny Wallace for his efforts."

"This opportunity," Skaggs continues, "came out of the blue and was too good to pass up. At the very least, it's good for a laugh. It's also a chance to again remind the public that the media we put our faith into does not always deserve it."

Host Danny Wallace, who recently hosted BBC2's "How to Start Your Own Country" and published "Yes Man," which, according to his Web site, is soon to be a film starring Jack Black, wanted Joey Skaggs to teach him a thing or two about hoaxing. Instead, he got hoaxed.

One must never underestimate the power of scriptwriters and editors to create victory where there really is none. Just ask President Bush and Tony Blair, and, of course, tune in to the Danny Wallace show on SkyOne December 19 to see how they spin it...

Skaggs is sanguine about his easy score. "What can I say? He said he wanted to learn about hoaxing... I simply obliged."

For more information on Joey Skaggs' work go to <http://www.joeyskaggs.com> and follow the RETRO link to a comprehensive retrospective dating back to the '60s or contact:

Joey Skaggs
info@joeyskaggs.com
www.joeyskaggs.com

For additional information about Danny Wallace's Hoax Files, contact:

Ben Sinden, Producer
ITV Factual London
+44 (0) 20 7578 4044
0044 7815 047179 (mobile)
Ben.Sinden@itv.com

SIDEBAR:

Some highlights of Joey Skaggs' prolific career that have been reported by such media outlets as AP, UPI, Reuters, New York Times, LA Times, ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN, BBC, Sky TV, TV Globo, NPR, and others:

Cathouse for Dogs: A bordello for dogs where for \$50 you could get your dog sexually gratified

Bad Guys Talent Management Agency: Specializing in burley bouncers and slimy sleazes, bad guys, bad girls, bad kids and bad dogs

Annual April Fools Day Parade in New York City: A satirical parade now in it's 21st year

Fat Squad: Commandos who, for a fee, would physically restrain you from breaking your diet.

Cockroach Vitamin Pills: As a world renowned entomologist, Skaggs, along with his cult-like followers, took vitamins made from extracted hormones of super cockroaches to cure numerous diseases and make one invulnerable to nuclear radiation.

Solomon Project: As an artificial intelligence scientist, Skaggs created an alternative to the American Judicial system using a series of super computers, which eliminated the need for judges and juries and provided equal justice for all

Stop BioPEEP: A sinister plot was revealed saving the world from a lethal "genetic" weapon invented by a multi-national corporation and then commandeered by the U.S. government to secretly eliminate specific gene pools.

The Final Curtain: A Disneyland-like memorial theme park cemetery and time-share program for creative people

Hippie Bus Tour to Queens: A satirical reversal where long-haired, bearded, beaded, camera-toting hippies toured suburban Queens as Skaggs' response to gawkers who came to New York's East Village to photograph the hippies in the mid-60's

Portofess: A portable confessional booth, mounted on the back of an industrial strength tricycle, peddled through the streets that brought "Religion on the move for people on the go." Skaggs, posing as Father Anthony Joseph said "The Church must go where the sinners are."

Celebrity Sperm Bank: A public auction of celebrity sperm, which pre-dated the sperm bank for Nobel prizewinners, featuring Mick Jagger, Bob Dylan, John Lennon and other luminaries.

Dog Meat Soup: As a Korean businessman, Skaggs sent 1,500 letters to dog shelters around the U.S. offering to buy unwanted dogs for \$.10 a pound to be processed as food.

Hair Today: As a native American surgeon, Skaggs offered scalp transplants from cadavers to cure baldness.

###