

= The War for Late Night =

The War for Late Night : When Leno Went Early and Television Went Crazy is a 2010 non-fiction book written by The New York Times media reporter Bill Carter . It chronicles the 2010 conflict surrounding the American late night talk show The Tonight Show involving Conan O'Brien and Jay Leno . It is a sequel to Carter 's 1994 book The Late Shift , which detailed the struggle for the hosting spot on The Tonight Show between David Letterman and Jay Leno in the early 1990s following the retirement of Johnny Carson . It was first published on November 4 , 2010 , by Viking Press .

The book received a generally favorable reception from reviewers including the Associated Press , BusinessWeek , The Buffalo News , New York Magazine , Star Tribune , The Hollywood Reporter , The Washington Post , Entertainment Weekly , the New York Post , the Los Angeles Times , Time magazine , and ABC News . The Las Vegas Review Journal said , " The War for Late Night ... offers an exhaustive , eye opening , how could he possibly know that look at the late night feud that ultimately was a muddled victory for Leno : He won back ' The Tonight Show , ' but his ratings have fallen below O'Brien 's . "

= = Background = =

Author Bill Carter previously wrote The Late Shift , a book about the 1992 conflict between Jay Leno and David Letterman to decide who would succeed Johnny Carson as host of The Tonight Show . The book was well received by critics from publications including The New York Times Book Review , and The Christian Science Monitor . A film adaptation of the book , which won several industry awards , was produced in 1996 by HBO .

= = Research = =

Carter researched for the book during 2010 . He had secured a publishing deal for the book by January of that year . Carter confirmed to Gillian Reagan of Business Insider that in his research , he tried to gather information from multiple viewpoints . He said , " I 'm reaching out to everyone I possibly can to get every side of the story . " Carter said that he was remaining neutral about the 2010 Tonight Show conflict . " I obviously have to reach out to all sides " , he said . " For the longest time , I personally tried to watch as many episodes of all the shows as I could to get sense of each show , and what each guy does . I don 't just pick one and stick with that guy . " Carter researched the impact of financial decision making on the controversy . He said he had known Leno for a long time , and O'Brien since he began working for NBC , and that these connections gave him the benefit of familiarity .

= = Contents = =

The War for Late Night chronicles the 2010 conflict surrounding the American late night talk show The Tonight Show involving Conan O'Brien and Jay Leno . Carter gives biographical description of other late night television personalities , including David Letterman , Jimmy Fallon , Jimmy Kimmel , Craig Ferguson , Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert . As host of Late Night with Conan O'Brien , O'Brien decided to remain with NBC after attempts by ABC and Fox to attract him to their networks ? as NBC executives had told O'Brien that he would become host of The Tonight Show after Leno 's retirement . While hosting The Tonight Show and analyzing ratings results , O'Brien told his manager Gavin Polone that he feared that Leno might be moved back to the program . Carter 's book contains details of O'Brien 's and Leno 's contracts , and describes O'Brien 's emotional state during the 2010 conflict . According to Carter , Leno had an advantage during negotiations because of a stronger contract agreement with NBC , which gave Leno the option to sue NBC if his program was canceled .

NBC executives tried to solve the problem so that both Leno and O'Brien would keep their jobs .

Jeff Gaspin , the chairman of NBC Universal Television , instructed both parties that he did not wish to make a difficult decision but that the most appropriate solution was to move Leno back to his previous timeslot and push O'Brien to 12 : 05 . Carter details a heated exchange between NBC executive Jeff Zucker and O'Brien 's agent Rick Rosen during which Zucker told O'Brien 's representatives he could enforce O'Brien 's contract and " ice him for two years " , after details of the conflict were leaked to the media . The author cites O'Brien 's disappointment with the perceived unfairness of the situation , and quotes O'Brien 's comments at a meeting with NBC Entertainment and Universal Media Studios chairman Marc Graboff and Jeff Gaspin , " I know how hard I worked for this . It was promised to me . I had a shitty lead @-@ in . " Carter recounts how affiliates of NBC complained to the network about the poor ratings performance of Leno 's program The Jay Leno Show . O'Brien asked the two NBC executives , " What does Jay have on you ? What does this guy have on you people ? What the hell is it about Jay ? "

Carter writes about how the " Team Coco " movement and fans impacted O'Brien following the controversy , " The outpouring of support made Conan feel as if he was starring in his own version of the movie It 's a Wonderful Life , both because he was allowed to see a ' Tonight Show ' where he never existed and because the support made him realize he really was ' the richest man in town . ' " O'Brien was hurt by the fact that Leno did not communicate directly with him during the fiasco . Carter also says that compared to the eventual payout to O'Brien of \$ 45 million , NBC would have suffered a financial loss of \$ 235 million if O'Brien had left the company in 2004 to host a talk show for another network . O'Brien moved from NBC to host his own late night program on TBS . Carter 's work concludes with an interview from comic Jerry Seinfeld , who favored Leno ; Seinfeld argues that O'Brien should have remained at NBC .

= = Reception = =

Writing for the New York Post , Larry Getlen wrote , " Veteran journalist Bill Carter details the vicious recent battle over ' The Tonight Show , ' showing how Leno was hardly the devious schemer he was made out to be , and how O'Brien was not always the angelic innocent the media portrayed , as he and his team aggressively pursued the show at every opportunity . " Jon Bershad of Mediaite commented , " It 's as tense and exciting as expected . " Writing for TV Squad , Joel Keller analyzed Carter 's comparison of Leno 's legal contract with O'Brien 's , and wrote that the author " paints a picture of Leno and his producer , Debbie Vickers , as pragmatists and Conan as a cockeyed idealist " . Joe Flint of the Los Angeles Times commented about changes in the media industry since Carter 's prior book The Late Shift , " The only difference is that the media world has changed a lot then , and while " The Late Shift " had a lot of inside dirt and drama that was news to everyone but the most hardcore industry insiders , this time around the soap opera played out on TV and in the media . " James Poniewozik of Time magazine wrote , " There are lots of juicy bits , but the big takeaway : the guy with the best contract , wins " , and called the book , " Bill Carter 's Jaypocalypse dirt @-@ disher " . Writing for ABC News , journalist Sheila Marikar commented , " Bill Carter 's new book , ' The War for Late Night , ' reveals what happened behind the scenes , the expletives that were hurled during closed @-@ door discussions , the roller coaster that O'Brien , Leno , and their cohorts rode during that tumultuous time . "

Frazier Moore of Associated Press wrote , " He plays this latest late @-@ night conflagration right down the middle . He keeps the story moving almost cinematically , crosscutting from one personality to another , deftly and revealingly presenting different points of view . " Writing for BusinessWeek , Jim Windolf gave the book a rating of three stars out of a possible five , and commented , " Bill Carter has become the Bob Woodward of the 11 : 35 time slot . " Paula Duffy of HULIQ News described the book as " a juicy tell @-@ all " . Dylan Stableford of TheWrap called the book " a must @-@ read " for fans of Conan O'Brien . Jeff Simon of The Buffalo News called the book a " definitive history " of the 2010 Tonight Show conflict . Willa Paskin wrote for New York Magazine that Carter , " spoke with enough people involved in the situation to provide an account so detailed , it even includes re @-@ created conversations and dialogue " . Neal Justin of Star Tribune commented on the author 's neutrality in his writing style , " The next time network TV executives

stumble into an ugly behind @-@ the @-@ scenes battle , they should consider hiring Bill Carter to negotiate . The veteran New York Times media reporter has a way of sharing juicy stories without painting anyone as a complete saint or sinner , a feat he pulls off again in his latest book , ' The War for Late Night : When Leno Went Early and Television Went Crazy ' " .

Nate Jones wrote for Time magazine , " There are no landmark surprises ? Jay Leno comes off as affably opportunistic , Conan O'Brien as a tragic self @-@ dramatist with a little bit of a martyrdom complex ? but it 's a worthwhile look at the procedural negotiations that led to last winter 's messy divorce . " The Hollywood Reporter said , " Bill Carter 's book reveals explosive new details about the Jay Leno @-@ O'Brien debacle . " Kyle Anderson of MTV.com wrote , " the story takes an amazingly candid look at the conversations and arguments that went on behind the scenes . It even takes you to the moment when O'Brien decides that he has to walk away from ' The Tonight Show . ' " Paul Schwartzman of The Washington Post wrote that it " is a great read and an example of narrative journalism 's power when practiced by a reporter steeped in his subject matter . " Lynette Rice of Entertainment Weekly gave Carter 's book a rating of B- , and wrote , " In the end , Carter presents a pretty compelling argument that while the fourth @-@ place network lost the public relations war , it probably won the late @-@ night battle . " Speaking on his program The Howard Stern Show , host Howard Stern said of Carter 's writing style , " It is just endlessly fascinating the way he paints this picture . "

= = Film adaptation = =

On January 19 , 2010 , during O'Brien 's last week of shows , guest Quentin Tarantino jokingly suggested that he direct a sequel to The Late Shift , cast O'Brien as himself and make it a revenge movie in the style of his film Kill Bill with the title Late Shift 2 : The Rolling Thunder of Revenge . The Toronto Star reported in February 2010 that a sequel to The Late Shift film was in planning stages . In the final episode of The Tonight Show with Conan O'Brien , O'Brien said he wished that actress Tilda Swinton could portray him in a film version about The Tonight Show conflict . Swinton subsequently expressed interest in being cast as O'Brien in a sequel to The Late Shift .

When asked in a June 2010 interview with Movieline whether there would be film adaptation of the book , Carter said that plans were not serious at that point , and , " Not really . Nothing serious . Let 's put it this way : There have always been people kicking it around because they think it 's funny ... Letterman made a ... joke saying that Max von Sydow should play him . So , you know , people are just kicking it around like that . " Actor Bob Balaban , who portrayed NBC executive Warren Littlefield in The Late Shift said he would like to portray Jeff Zucker , and said Jason Alexander would also be a good choice to play Zucker . Andy Richter jokingly told Movieline that he would want Justin Bieber to portray him in a film adaptation of the book .