

Jeff Around Town – June 21st, 2024

Otis: Let's go around town with Jeff.

Jeff: Around town, good morning, Otis. Hey, so anyone who's been listening to you for a while, Otis, knows that you love coffee, is that fair to say?

Otis: I love coffee.

Jeff: Yes, and for you, is it the taste, the warmth, the smell? What is it for you?

Otis: It's the chemicals.

Jeff: The chemicals, the caffeine, to be honest.

Otis: Yeah, I mean, I appreciate a good cup of coffee. I can savor a good flavor. But the essential at four in the morning.

Jeff: The essentials.

Otis: What's in here? If this is decaf, I'm upset.

Jeff: You're upset, yeah. Well, for me, it's that first sip in the morning. So, have you ever had a coffee sauna?

Otis: I'm afraid to ask.

Jeff: Well, okay, we'll get to that.

Otis: Is where you toss coffee onto the hot rocks?

Jeff: Well, you know, maybe. We'll get to that in just a moment.

Otis: Alright, I'll listen.

Jeff: Yes, for many of you who listen to KVNO and wake up to Otis' voice and this great classical music, what if I told you something that maybe Otis doesn't know, and that is that his voice not only accompanies the drinking of your coffee, but the roasting of coffee beans as well. Did you know that, Otis?

Otis: No, I did not know that.

Jeff: Recently, I was hanging out with Chris McClellan, now for many years.

Otis: I know Chris.

Jeff: Yeah, owned Blue Line in Dundee. And last year, he sold the business to Jessica McKelley. But it's still the Blue Line that people love. But Chris still roasts the beans for Blue Line. And when it comes to coffee knowledge, he's your guy. You know, especially when it comes to things like fair-trade coffee. At one point, you remember he had a second location

in North Downtown. At that point, his roasting of fair-trade coffee accounted for almost 1% of all fair-trade coffee in the U.S.

Otis: Really?

Jeff: Yeah. And for many years, he's had this spot for roasting coffee, not at Blue Line in Dundee, but on 33rd and California. And he often roasts early in the morning, Otis. So, the day I was there last week, he started up the roaster before 6 a.m. so that by the time Morning Classics and you start, he's ready to roast. And this roaster is ginormous. And it was set to 400 degrees. So, the whole place is really hot. And this machine is super loud. And his radio is cranked up to KVNO. And it has to be really loud to overcome that sound. So, Chris is a big fan of KVNO. And at one time, he even studied classical guitar at UNO and also studied Philosophy, including at the Sorbonne in Paris. But anyhow, so there he is scooping raw coffee beans at the roaster. The roaster machine is going. The beans are crackling like a fireplace. And Vivaldi is playing.

Otis: Wow.

Jeff: I love a coincidence because Vivaldi hung out, as you may know, at one of the oldest coffee houses in the world, the Cafe Florian in Venice. And anyhow, so then, Otis, I hear your booming voice over the sound of the roaster and the crackling beans. And it's as if you were right there. Okay, so about that coffee sauna, as Chris calls it, so of course, we're roasting coffee. I haven't had any coffee. And I'm thinking, come on, Chris, gotta have some coffee. And it's really hot in there, as I said. So, all I could think of, gotta have some coffee.

Otis: Some coffee sauna, yeah.

Jeff: So, he does this thing. He grinds two different beans, sort of like a taste test. It felt like a wine tasting or something. He pours water. He does the pour over technique in two different filters. And as the coffee's blooming, he holds the whole filter up to his face, pretty much puts his face into it to test it. And it's steamy. I try it. It's steaming up my glasses. I can't see, but that smell, oh my gosh. You think that first taste of coffee is good? The smell was incredible. And this is what Chris calls a coffee sauna. So, there we are, taking a coffee sauna, listening to Vivaldi and you. And so that next time you drink coffee and that first sip is extra good, it might just include a bit of Vivaldi magic in those beans and Otis' voice. And Otis, that's another Jeff Around Town.

Otis: Hey, that's fascinating. It's nice to hear that he's still roasting the beans.

Jeff: He is still roasting the beans.

Otis: Good. I'm gonna have to stop by Blue Line to sit at a table.

Jeff: Yes, outside.

Otis: Outside, oh yeah.

Jeff: Yeah, of course.

Otis: That seems like the place for me. Hey, thanks, Jeff.

Jeff: Thanks, Otis.

Otis: Jeff Around Town, every Friday, 8:45 here on KVNO.