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## Car Wash for Peace

### Jimmy Fallon and Mr. Squeaky team up to wash the world clean

By Lacey Nadeau

No more wars or dirty cars – that's the theme behind actor and comedian Jimmy Fallon's song called "Car Wash for Peace." The tune is catchy, the lyrics sometimes goofy. But the simple, two-verse song that Fallon plays on his guitar – on TV, YouTube, the radio and even at a Florida carwash – has more than a politically obscure message behind it. Fallon's proceeds from the single sold on iTunes go to Fisher House, a charity that supports America's military by providing homes that enable family members to be close to their loved ones during hospitalization.



Carwash owner Richard Sasso, watching the morning news one day, was so inspired by Fallon's song and the charity that he contacted Fallon's management about holding an actual "carwash for peace." The details took several weeks to work out, but the event was a success. It was held at Sasso's Mr. Squeaky Car Wash in Pompano Beach, Fla. Fallon (who got his start on NBC's "Saturday Night Live" in 1998) was on site meeting fans, signing autographs, taking pictures and singing his song.

"It was pretty phenomenal," says Sasso, whose staff had washed more than 200 cars by the end of the day, despite the rain. "The time he was out here, the folks got to spend a lot of quality time with him. I would say at the time that he was playing, we probably had about 100 people, maybe a little bit more than that onsite at the same time, parked and listening to him sing his song. It was pretty cool."

Mr. Squeaky donated 100 percent of the proceeds from the day – a total of \$6,000 – to Fisher House. "Certainly the families of our military who have been injured or sick need someone to reach out and lend them a comfort home," says Sasso. "That's really an important thing." Mr. Squeaky was the first carwash at which Fallon has performed, though the song had been written earlier this year, and had been available on iTunes since May 15, 2007. Since he recorded the song, Fallon has received national attention and has made appearances on "The Tonight Show," "The View," "The Howard Stern Show" and other radio and TV programs. The song lyrics were originally written to describe a parking lot carwash – a fact not lost on some operators.

"The song seems to call for a parking lot carwash, which we do not support," says Chuck Howard, owner of Autobell Carwash in Charlotte, N.C., describing the industry's disapproval of such environmentally unfriendly washes. Mark Curtis, owner of Splash Car Wash in Stamford, Conn., agrees.

"Maybe the perception could be curved towards professional washes, but the lyrics do suggest something objectionable," says Curtis, responding to the idea of an industry-wide "National Car Wash for Peace."

The reason Sasso was moved by the song, he says, has to do with the underlying message of coming



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together for good – for clean cars and a peaceful world.

"It's not a political message," Sasso says. "It's a feel-good message, and it's a get-up-and-take-action message. And the end result of it is a feel-good thing – a cause that we can all get behind and certainly have some passion for."

However, while the mission of Fisher House has a broad appeal, some members of the carwash industry aren't so passionate about the underlying theme of "Car Wash for Peace." Though Curtis says it's great that Fallon is singing for a cause and believes in that cause, Curtis has some reservations about this particular message and its connection with the carwash industry. "I don't think anybody's for war, but I don't think the country is universally supportive of withdrawing from Iraq," he says. "And so I think you're starting with kind of a semi-controversial subject."

But in interviews, Fallon has been clear about his politically neutral motivations for the song. He has described his motivations for writing the song as twofold: he wanted to do something to help U.S. troops, and he wanted to steer clear of politics. "I figure I'm a comedian, I'll write a goofy song, and if you download my song from iTunes, the proceeds go to Fisher House," Fallon told the South Florida Sun-Sentinel. "I think it's pretty universal. ... No one likes war, and no one likes dirty cars."

Sasso personally does not find the song's message to be politically charged, but while he was planning the event in June, he thought about the fact that it could potentially attract protesters. It didn't. But it did draw a lot of support.



"I think it's a credit to how the message is being delivered," explains Sasso. "We did not experience any negative publicity or negative feeling – in fact, just the opposite. Folks that had read about the event came in, before [Fallon] was on site, and gave cash donations."

Sasso tells about how some people came by to donate, saying, "I don't want a carwash; it's raining right now. I just want to contribute to the cause, and by the way, my son's in Iraq."

"That's the kind of embrace that it got," says Sasso, who had a veteran come up to him the week after the event. The 50-year-old shook Sasso's hand and expressed regret that he hadn't heard of the event in time to participate. "He said, 'If you ever do something else, I'm going to rally up all my veteran friends in South Florida, and we're going to come support the cause.'"

#### Mr. Squeaky Car Wash

Sasso graduated from The University of Miami School of Law in 2000, and practiced as a lawyer in Miami for several years. He traded in his law office for a carwash, his casebooks for soap suds. Now he spends more than 12 hours a day, seven days a week, at the wash. Surprisingly, Sasso feels more challenged mentally now than he was as an attorney.

"As far as job satisfaction and career choice, I couldn't be happier with owning the carwash," he says. "I love the stimulation and the excitement that it brings and the challenge of it, and I wouldn't trade that for the world. On top of that, I love being outside. The lawyer job was definitely a desk job, and this – I'm definitely doing what I was meant to be doing."

Mr. Squeaky, which opened in January of this year, is located fewer than two miles away from the beach. Sasso prepared for its development by researching, traveling, making connections and watching everything firsthand. He says he owes a lot to the Car Wash College and others in the industry.

"The Car Wash College was a huge part of what enabled me to be able to hit the ground running when we opened," says Sasso, who was the first student to take and pass all three of the company's courses, which included maintenance, repair and management. He received a Master Certification from the College. "I believe the Car Wash College gave me at least a year's worth of equivalent experience in the field. I knew I was on the right track when experienced equipment mechanics, who were my classmates, mentioned each and every day they had learned something new."

Sasso also received a lot of guidance from Sonny's, the manufacturer of Mr. Squeaky's tunnel equipment, who he said "really held my hand and walked me through the process from beginning to end."

Mr. Squeaky offers services that range from an \$8 basic-express wash, which includes self-vacuums, to a \$49 hand-wax and express detailing. The facility features ICS automated payment systems, and the exterior wash totals three minutes. The tunnel is 135-feet long, and includes soft-cloth wraps and water-conservation systems. Simoniz Tire Shiner is used in the tunnel, and Armor-All and Rain-X online products are used in the tunnel and in the detail area. Tunnel chemicals are provided by Blue Coral.

Sasso's Blue Coral representative "really goes out of his way," he says. But that kind of service is just something that Sasso has become accustomed to encountering since he started his business. "Folks have been good to me in this industry and really made possible my transition from a career that had nothing to do with this to a successful operator," he says.

#### Jiffy Lube Adds Two Senior Management Executives

Jiffy Lube International has named Rick Altizer general manager, global operations, and Craig Lington as customer experience manager. Altizer will be responsible for the operation of the company store and franchise networks in the United States and Canada, according to a company announcement. He will oversee delivery of profit and loss performance; implementation of strategic growth initiatives; staff development; and ...

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#### PDQ's Webinars Expand Educational Topics

PDQ Manufacturing offers free online educational "Lunch 'n' Learn" Webinars to wash owners and operators, as well as to anyone wanting to learn about the vehicle wash business. The Webinars are held on Tuesdays at noon, Central Standard Time, and last about an hour. Topics vary from week to week, but are each presented and facilitated by a PDQ ...

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#### Fatality at Carwash Deemed a 'Freak Accident'

Police in Lincoln, N.C., classified a death at a Petro Express Car Wash as a "freak accident." Jolynn Banner, 59, was trying to punch in a code by opening her door and standing inside to reach the pad. "We think that her foot slipped off of the brake and she couldn't reach it in time," Ted Mankowski, Lincoln County EMS Operations ...

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In the future, he would like to franchise the Mr. Squeaky name. In the meantime, he's enjoying his first year of carwashing.

"I've heard a lot of really cool stories and met great people," he says. "I'm a people person – the law's a very confrontational thing. You can be a negotiator, you can be a people person, but you've lost that in a sense, because you're adversarial. You spend your time on the phone arguing with another attorney and going to bat and fighting. And out here, that doesn't exist."

#### **National Car Wash for Peace**

Though it took a lot of planning, working with Fallon and his representatives to organize the Car Wash for Peace day in June was a pleasant experience for Sasso. "They believed in our intentions for it," he says, "and were really supportive of doing something positive and getting out there and getting the ball rolling for his cause."

After the event, Sasso and Fallon agreed that one day wasn't enough. They started an effort to organize a larger version of the fund-raiser. Their hopes were that this National Car Wash for Peace, on a day in August, would garner the participation of carwash owners across the country who would agree to donate a percentage of that day's proceeds to Fisher House.

"I was really struck by how passionate and energetic he was for it," Sasso says of Fallon. "I mean, this wasn't a guy going through the motions of something that his PR agency forced him to do. He believed in it; he invented it; he is 100 percent behind it, and that enthusiasm rubbed off on me."

The enthusiasm of the Mr. Squeaky fund-raiser rubbed off on Pompano Beach residents, too. The event received a lot of positive exposure, Sasso says, as it was covered by the local NBC and Fox News affiliates, as well as the area's newspapers – small and large. Everyone left smiling that day, he remembers, and felt as though, on a small scale, they had made a difference.

"Whatever you might believe in, after a while, you kind of just go on with normal life," Sasso explains. "You know, whether I'm frustrated with the war or anything like that, at the end of the day, I wash cars. I get in my car, I come to work and I move on with my life."

Washing cars, changing oil, restoring the interior of a customer's beloved vehicle – the hard work done diligently over a lifetime is a noble thing. But, as Sasso realized, there are bridges of opportunity that pop up from time to time, providing the chance to link passions and talents with a little part of the world's need.

"It was seeing Jimmy's song and knowing where the money was ultimately going – and obviously with the tie to carwashes and something that I could do to take action," Sasso says. "It really inspired me to step forward and hopefully make a positive contribution."

*You can purchase the single, "Car Wash for Peace," on iTunes, or watch and listen to it online. The popular video-sharing Web site, YouTube, is host to many versions of the song. Or you can visit Jimmy Fallon's MySpace page at [www.myspace.com/jimmyfallon](http://www.myspace.com/jimmyfallon).*

**Car Wash For Peace**

*I'm so sick of all the news on T.V.  
All this fighting got me going crazy  
And someone wrote on my car "Please clean me"  
Now I know what I got to do  
Listen everybody, I'm talking to you*

*Let's have a car wash for peace  
There's trouble in the Middle East  
There will be no more wars  
Or dirty cars  
Car wash for peace*

*Just remember—  
We got to get together  
In the parking lot across from Wal-Mart Supercenter  
Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Jews, C'mon all you Hindu dudes!  
Yeah, Yeah, Yeah, Yeah, Yeah!*

*Let's have a car wash for peace  
There's trouble in the Middle East  
Got to put down those guns  
Pick up a sponge  
Car wash for peace*

*Let's have a car wash for peace  
There's trouble in the Middle East  
There will be no more wars  
Or dirty cars  
Car wash for peace  
There will be no more wars  
Or dirty cars  
Car wash for peace*

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