

Shazia's week



While filming in Las Vegas I see Tom Jones. I once served him a milkshake, you know

I'm in Las Vegas, which is a bit like Blackpool with fat people. It is the most amazing yet also the most tacky place in the world.

There is no such thing as temperance in Vegas. Nothing is real, not the people, not the hotels, not the breasts. They have a Paris in Vegas – with the Eiffel Tower, the lot. I assume this is for Americans who want to visit Paris but who don't want to leave America. I stayed at a "French hotel in Paris in Vegas". What next? Germany in Jerusalem? I rang room service and a woman answered, speaking French in an American accent. "Bonjour today, madame," she said, ending with, "Au revoir and have a nice day."

Over the road from Paris are the Pyramids, and just a mile up the strip is Venice, where I took a ride in a gondola.

The hotel where I'm staying is surrounded by casinos. I wake up in the morning and can hear the rattle of money and machines clicking and clanking. People who I saw on gambling machines at midnight are still there when I walk through the lobby at 7am.

I am here to perform on American television. There are 34 comedians on the show: 26 men and eight women. When I arrived in Vegas I was very nervous but also excited – I didn't know what was going to happen, and it was all going to be an experience.

But, on arriving on the set of the show, I spent three days in wardrobe as the wardrobe women

chopped and changed my clothes. I normally wear black trousers and a black shirt on stage, but this was not going to be acceptable for American TV. "The producers are not happy with your clothes," said the woman. "Why not?" I said. "They want you to look sexier." "Sexier?" I replied. "I'm a stand-up comedian, not a lap dancer." "They want you to look sexier for TV – you've got to be glamorous," said the woman. In the UK it has never been about looking sexy; it has

When he stopped singing I threw my knickers at him. "What's this, an eyepatch?" he said

always been about the material. But in the US it seems what gets you further in comedy as a woman is just how much cleavage you show, not how great your jokes are.

I didn't want to appear difficult, so I co-operated. I was then told by one person that I was too fat, and needed to wear looser clothes. I am a size 10. Considering how many obese people there are in America, it's ironic that anyone here should see me as fat.

As for the men – I doubt they were speaking to them in the same way. In the end I compromised and wore a bright pink top that they chose for me. I wouldn't normally

have worn it, but I just went along with it anyway. I reckoned that if I didn't get laughs it would be OK; at least I'd get propositioned.

I doubt Hillary will win the election. America is definitely more sexist than it is racist.

When I was a student I worked as a waitress in Fortnum & Mason. One afternoon I served Tom Jones a chocolate milkshake. He left me a 95p tip.

Today, ten years later, while performing in Vegas, I had one day off and was wondering what to do. I decided to go and see Tom Jones. On my way to the concert I bought a pair of knickers from the local drugstore for \$1.95. I kept them locked away in my bag. I didn't want to be the only one to throw my knickers at him – I'd look like a right pervert. If I was going to do it, there would have to be a whole load of us doing it.

The audience was comprised mainly of screaming menopausal women who still believed they had a chance with the 67-year-old Tom, but in front of me was a table of whooping and hollering lesbians – all with panties in hand. As soon as he stopped singing "It's Not Unusual" I stood up and threw my knickers at him. He picked them up and said, "What's this? An eyepatch?" And I felt like saying: "If you wanted more fabric, mate, you should have left me a bigger tip ten years ago." ●

Shazia Mirza

PAYNE'S GREY BY CHRIS PRIESTLEY



Tydd St Giles was so bored with England.

But he was livid with Wales.