

Can you trust the Man on the Street interview?

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Occasionally, in a news story, the reporter will ask for comments or opinion from a passer-by (nicknamed “the man on the street”). [Greg Packer has created a second career as that man.](#)

In the last 10 years, he’s been quoted at least a dozen times by the New York Post. He’s been quoted at least 14 times by the Daily News, most recently just last week. He was quoted in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution two weeks ago. And Packer has been quoted or photographed at least 16 times on separate occasions by the Associated Press. ...

[H]e checks the newspapers for concerts, sports games, parades, book signings – anywhere media trucks might be camped out. Then, he requests time off from his job as a highway worker on Long Island and shows up early, scanning the crowd for reporters.

It got so bad that the Associated Press issued an internal memo instructing reporters not to talk to the guy any more! That story from [On the Media](#) reminded me of a related incident back when the hype surrounding *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* was building. The [New York Times](#) sent a reporter [to cover the people who had been waiting in line for months.](#) The first person interviewed is Sangay Kumar, who claims to have flown in from Bombay just to see the movie. A friend of mine read the article and started laughing.

Because my friend knows Mr. Kumar, who it turns out is not actually from Bombay. He’s from Baltimore. He was just waiting in line with everybody else and saw a reporter coming and decided to put on a campy Indian accent and make up a nutty story. And the reporter bought it.

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