

Etymology of "Green Room"

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David_Lebling — 08 Feb 1998, 15:59

mantis,

Quotation from "Return of the Straight Dope," by Cecil Adams:

"Legend has it that the green room, also styled greenroom or green-room, goes back to the Elizabethan era, when the actors lolled away the time between entrances on the lawn behind the theater, or "on the green." Alas, like so much else in show biz, this appears to be a crock. According to my OED, the earliest known usage of green room was in 1701. One plausible theory is that the green room was originally painted green to rest the aching peepers of the actors, who were bleary-eyed from the bright stage lights."

I find it amusing that the Autarch's green room is just like the one in the legend Adams finds unlikely.

I suspect Adams' "plausible" explanation is as unlikely as the legend -- actors had all the social status of sewer rats back then, and it's doubtful anyone would have gone to the trouble of painting a room a restful color for their pleasure. I'd tend to suspect that there was an important theater, probably in London, whose green room was coincidentally green, and the name became attached.

-viz

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