

J'aime le Tour

by [Bill Corden](#) (August 2019)



Tour de France, Versailles, Leroy Neiman, 1964

The struggle, the suspense, the impossible, the beautiful, the fanciful, the bleak . . . and that's only the background!

I'm talking about the *Tour de France*, television's best show

of the year, every year, in July.

Over the past 50 years, I have seen it develop from grainy black and white still photographs, showing the pain etched on the rider's faces, to a full logistic and communications miracle, the pain now in full technicolor.

The show now takes us all on a magnificent tour of *la belle* France while covering the race in *incroyable* detail and every stage is a battle for your senses, and I mean all of them.

First of all is the colour—the the bikes, the team strip, the bunting, every day a kaleidoscope as these superhuman athletes congregate for the Start each morning. The atmosphere tingling with excitement and anticipation, in a part of the world where professional cyclists are like Rock Gods.

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In North America, they could walk in just about any city unmolested.

I am still like a child when I see them on TV. My admiration just knows no bounds, knowing as I do that, even back in the flower of my youth—when I was as fit as I could possibly be—I wouldn't have been able to stick in the peloton with them for

even one minute when a chase was on.

But my admiration isn't restricted to the riders alone. It's not like watching a football game or a tennis match; this is a fusion of history, achievement, technological advancement, *grinta*, architecture, politics, skulduggery and triumph over adversity. Back in the early 1960s, one of the riders was