

**Andrew Clark:** Welcome, everybody, to our awkward introductions.

**Jeremy Hotz:** Wow. Look at how old we are. *(laughter)*

**Brian Hartt:** This sucks.

**AC:** So this is our first Primetime of 2015, and it's a great one. We have two very, very funny comedians, writers, who I've known for quite a while. In fact, I guess we kind of started out around the same time.

**JH:** Yeah, we did.

**BH:** Yeah.

**JH:** We started the same time. You hung onto your hair... *(laughter)*

**AC:** I did. That's what I'm known for. *(laughter, applause)*

**JH:** Shut up!

**AC:** Thank you.

**BH:** I gave up. I just gave up. I was just like, "This is stupid, it's ridiculous. I don't know what's on my head anymore." Stuff was living in it.

**JH:** You used to do jokes about your hair in your act.

**BH:** I used to have a tuft. I had an Afro, but I had a tuft here. And I used to go, "I got this tuft, and all the little bugs in here are saying, 'Hey, let's go to the island for the weekend!'" *(laughter)*

**JH:** Yeah, I remember that, you used to do that.

**AC:** Everyone please welcome Brian Hartt, on the far right... *(applause)*

**BH:** Hello.

**AC:** Who, again, was a hilariously funny stand-up, and has a fantastic writing resume, everything from *The Kids in the Hall*, *MADtv*, *The Jamie Kennedy Experience...*

**BH:** *Experiment!*

**AC:** *Experiment*, sorry. And most recently, *The Tonight Show*. If we can, we're gonna see a little bit later, but it's fantastic to have him here. And of course, Jeremy Hotz *(applause)*, who you guys know. A fanstastically funny standup.

**JH:** Thanks!

**AC:** Was your first acting (job) *Married Life*, or *The Newsroom*?

**JH:** *Married Life*.

**AC:** *Married Life*. And then that led to *The Newsroom*. And Brian, you were in "Choking and Toking" on *Freaks and Geeks*, which was great. And you were angry because the guy gave the kid a peanut, and I have a peanut allergy, so I totally connected with that.

**BH:** And then they cancelled the show.

**AC:** *(laughs)* Now you both started out as standups. Now how did you start? You grew up in Winnipeg, Brian?

**BH:** I grew up in Winnipeg. I actually was just a big fan of *Monty Python* and Second City. I had a couple of tape recorders in my parents' sound system, and I started writing my own sort of sketches, and I would lay down my voice on one recorder and leave spaces in between, and then mic that, and then record it with the other one. I would do the other voice. So I would make my own sketches and stuff, and I did this for about three or four years, and then I went to the University of Winnipeg and started a sketch troupe called Theater X in Winnipeg. We did a lot of shows, and then when I moved to Toronto, I was like, "Well, I can't make a living with a sketch troupe here, because none of my guys came with me," so I just started doing standup, because I'd always wanted to do that.

So I just stayed in that, and because I enjoyed standup so much, but I wanted to keep doing sketches, I started doing one-man pieces that wouldn't work at Yuk-Yuk's that were just crazy and weird, and I'd do them at the Rivoli. The Kids in the Hall saw me, and I became good buddies with Bruce McCulloch, and we did stuff together. And so when it was time for them to get a writer for season two, they needed writers, all of their material they'd used up, so they needed to hire some people, so they called me when I was on the road, and I was in Saskatoon, I think, a one-nighter in Saskatchewan, and it was just shit, it was horrible. Guys were playing pool *behind* me. And I got a call that night, "You wanna write on the show?" And I was like, "Yeah!" (*laughter*) "I think so." So that's my quick sort of (explanation) to where I got into writing.

**AC:** Great. Now, Jeremy, you're from Ottawa; so am I. How did you start in Ottawa?

**JH:** I took a bus to Toronto. *(laughter)*

**AC:** You didn't do any standup... There was nothing?

**BH:** There was a Yuk-Yuk's there.

**JH:** No, later. When I started, I started briefly...the way it worked for me was, I wanted to be a standup because I'd been a tremendous failure at everything else. I got on a bus, and it was a four or five hour ride to Yuk-Yuk's in Toronto, which was on Bay Street, which was actually very close to the bus station. You could walk from the bus station to the gig. I went on amateur night, and I went on last, after fifteen people. And I had a really good set for some reason, just blind luck, I can't really explain it. And then the owner of the club, Mark Breslin, said, "Would you like to do this professionally?" And I said, "Yeah, OK." That's the whole thing. *(laughter)* It's not a very exciting story. Then I got back on the bus and I went home that night.

**BH:** But there is something to that, because I remember going there, and he would come down from Ottawa all the time, and I was like, "Just move here. What's your problem?" But that's dedication, that he would come down and do it.

**JH:** I tried.

**AC:** So would you take the overnight bus back?

**JH:** Yeah, yeah, I really got used to the smell of the bus. *(laughter)* It was horrible, but I did it.

**AC:** How long until you finally did make the move, then, from Ottawa, commuting four and a half hours?

**JH:** Well, then they opened up a club in Ottawa...

**BH:** That's when he moved. *(laughter)*

**JH:** It's funny, I did, actually.

**BH:** Makes sense.

**JH:** They said, "Why don't you just go to the Ottawa club and be the regular opening act at the Ottawa club?" So that's what I was. So people hated me, because the same audiences would come back every night. So it'd be me and then a bunch of new guys they'd never seen before. So I gotta go out, and I'd hear things as they were introducing me like, "Aw fuck, this guy again!" *(laughter)* And then I'd go up and do my set and everything, and after eight months of that torture I moved to Toronto. That's what happened.

**AC:** And how long did it take for both of you before you found yourselves featuring and then headlining in standup? How many years?

**JH:** About the same amount of time.

**JH:** It was pretty quick for us. They didn't have a lot of guys, you know what I mean? And Breslin was expanding and opening up clubs in Edmonton...

**BH:** So there was lots of places to go. We also like writing. We liked writing our own stuff, and we would really try to do new stuff all the time, and there was a

generation ahead of us, and they were very much, they'd get their 45 minutes and they'd lock in on it, a bunch of those guys.

**JH:** Same order, same intonation, everything. Same movement when you deliver the joke. We didn't do that. We were frowned upon, too, at that time. We were the lazy comics, right?

**BH:** Because we worked harder. *(laughter)*

**JH:** Yeah. They didn't understand what the hell we were doing.

**AC:** Did you ever tour together, the two of you?

**JH:** A couple of times, they let us.

**AC:** What about the hellish road gigs? Would this be early nineties, or is it late eighties, the really bad...can you give us a couple of road stories?

**BH:** There were so many. I had a couple breaking up in front of me at a bar.

*(laughter)* And it was like a Wednesday night, and I was like, "Guys, it's Wednesday. You're breaking up on a Wednesday. That's so sad." And the woman just got so mad at me, and it was really bad, and I was like, "Look, can I help? Is there something I could do?" So my act became like I was a psychologist to them, and they still broke up. And actually, in London, I went on, and I don't know what it was—it was at Western, and this girl was in the front, and she was lighting matches and throwing them at me, and another person was throwing ice cubes. They were talking, and it was really loud. And what I realized was that the shows that had gone before, it was a routine for them to destroy the first act, and I was on before the other guy. So it

doesn't matter who it was, they were gonna make it hell for that person. So I got up, and I don't know, I used to a thing, a punk version of "Frosty the Snowman," and I just laid into them as students, and it was vile, some of the most vile things I could ever think of, I said to these people. And it got so bad that I had to get escorted out at the end. *(laughter)* It was fun, though. It's like, you're not gonna win. Against a comic? You're just not gonna win.

**JH:** We had some good ones though, man. One Super Bowl, we saw on a boat, for the Navy. I guess it's a ship, they'd probably call it. *(laughter)* So we were on a ship, remember that? And this guy, this little tiny man, is an amazing arm wrestler, we found out.

**BH:** I was then.

**JH:** And he was just skinny, not like this. *(laughter)* And he was arm-wrestling these guys...

**BH:** These are Navy guys!

**JH:** And he's winning, and they're getting real pissed off. He's winning so hard that when he knocks their arms down, the fuckin' boat's going like this. *(laughter)* So they had to bring in a big Native to beat him at the end. They've got a guy from the back of the ship, and he's walking, and we hear his feet, and we're like, "I don't like the sound of this, man!"

**BH:** It was literally the guy from *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. *(laughter)* And you looked at his hand, and his hand's up here.

**JH:** He barely fit through the round door on the boat to get in. It looked like he was gonna beat him for a while...

**BH:** No, he beat me right away. It was ridiculous.

**JH:** But beer was a quarter, remember that? *(laughter)* For some reason, the Navy gets a deal on beer.

**BH:** And they had to escort you to the head. You couldn't take a leak on your own. I don't know, like I was gonna go start up the ship? "Let's go for a ride!"

**JH:** Yeah, I wondered about that. I think they just liked us, and they wanted to hang around the can! *(laughs)*

**AC:** Right now, comedy is in a boom. Can you tell us a bit about the bust? These guys haven't been through a comedy bust. In the nineties, everything all of a sudden, boom. How'd you guys survive that? A lot of people didn't. Their careers kind of petered away.

**JH:** Well, he screwed off from Yuk's around that time. There were two major clubs that were in the Toronto area. There was something called the Laugh Resort, and then there was Yuk's, and Yuk's came first, I think, right?

**BH:** Yuk's had control of all the comics.

**JH:** They had more clubs.

**BH:** And a bunch of us from Yuk-Yuk's decided that we didn't want the monopoly of that. We wanted to be able to play anywhere we wanted. So one night, a bunch of us



just went on at the Laugh Resort, and Breslin got pissed off, and it turned into this big thing, and we had meetings, and we were kicked out of Yuk-Yuk's, and there were a bunch of fuck-you's...

**JH:** It was fantastic! *(laughter)*

**BH:** But it was really cool, and then I remember having a meeting with Mark and going, "Mark, if you allow other comics to play everywhere, just think: you'll be able to do the Laugh Resort!" And that was not funny to him at all. *(laughter)* But I don't know if you know about this guy (Andrew), but this guy was an insane supporter of us.

**JH:** Yeah, he helped our careers!

**BH:** Andrew was really, really cool to us. *(applause)* And through that whole thing, he understood that what we were doing...the great thing that we were doing was, we were basically freeing ourselves. A lot of guys In Yuk-Yuk's, at one point we were just thinking, "Wait a minute, this isn't show business. We're just going out and selling a product. We're not being ourselves, we're under the Yuk-Yuk's banner." And when we left, it was like, "Look at all the things we can do. We can go and do this. We can go write. We can promote ourselves. We can do one-person shows. All those different things just opened up."

**JH:** Because he only promoted the club. That was the problem with Breslin. You'd pull into a town for a gig he was running, and it would say, "Yuk-Yuk's

Comedians/Brisket Half Off.” *(laughter)* That’s all you’d see on the sign. Your name was never, ever there.

**BH:** That’s true. I started answering the phone at my house with, “Yuk-Yuks’ Brian Hartt, hello?”

**AC:** But (Jeremy), you remained at Yuk’s, though.

**JH:** I did, because I was moving already...

**AC:** Going to L.A.

**JH:** Yeah, back and forth. I had some heat on the Montreal (Just for Laughs) Comedy Festival, which if you’re gonna be a festival, that’s really what you want to do. You want to get yourself in a position where they actually want you at the festival, because that’s a place, or at least it used to be, and I think it still is in some areas, where you can be seen by agents, managers. I was seen by Disney the first time I did it, and they gave me a development deal, which means they give you a whole bunch of money for a year, and they never fuckin’ talk to you. That’s what I got for a year. I got that, that expired, and then the next year I went back, CBS did the same thing, and then never talked to me. So I was actually making quite a bit of money doing absolutely nothing at all. *(laughter)* That was great, until it ran out, and then I had to do my act once in a while, but for a while, it really looked like it was gonna be cool, money for nothing, which is why I got into standup in the first place.

**AC:** Your standup changed thought, your style. You had a change. You wanna talk a little bit about that change? I remember your early work, and then there was a shift between that and what's now your signature...

**BH:** It was called "puberty" with him.

**JH:** Yeah. I grew up, I guess. I don't know what happened. I was much more fancy-free...

**AC:** It seems like your earlier stuff was kind of like, I don't know, but you got angry. I remember this at Yuk-Yuk's...

**JH:** Yeah. I got furious for a while.

**AC:** Yeah. You seemed very mad.

**JH:** And then you wrote, "Stay angry, Hotz, this is gonna work for you!" You wrote it in the paper. *(laughter)*

**AC:** Yeah, that's true.

**JH:** I read that, and I thought, "No!" *(laughter)* "He's a great writer, but he's wrong! I don't have the energy to be furious like that every night!" So it was kind of a marriage between the two things. I could be quite psychotic for a while, where people wouldn't really know if it was an act, or if I should be institutionalized. So you go too far to find the right character you want. It's better to go far and then bring it back, right? And I lost my hair. Back in the old days, I had this wonderful

curly perm. I had hair down to here, like Weird Al Yankovic, and I was about as funny at the time. *(laughter)* So then I cut my hair, and I got a lot funnier. *(laughter)*

**AC:** Now, I think we should probably see if there's a question yet, in the audience. Do we have one yet? Yeah, OK, right here, Matthew.

**Audience member:** Even today, it's less talking. Our society is very, "Let's be happy, let's eliminate negativity." Do you find that you get pressure to tone down your style at all in this modern culture?

**JH:** No. Comedy's a nice little area where they can say you can tone it down, and you just go, "Yeah, OK," and then you just don't do it. *(laughter)* And then if you kill, nobody says a word to you afterwards. So if the question is what should you do, stick to your own (voice). Nobody can tell you what to do. It's your act, do it yourself. And people will tell you what to do, or try. That's just the thing.

**AC:** Do you guys remember any of the worst advice you got?

**JH:** Yeah, that thing you wrote, "Stay angry"! *(laughter)*

**AC:** That was good advice. Let's get some bad advice.

**JH:** That really screwed me up.

**AC:** But managers, agents, all the things that get involved, club owners, people telling you to do this, do that...

**JH:** People lie to you! *(laughter)* OK, let me explain something, you're gonna go through it. People you respect will lie to your face, and then you'll see them two

years later, after they've lied to you, and they'll talk to you like they never lied to you at all, like it's OK. Whereas back in school, when somebody does that, you punch the other guy in the face! But no, you can't, because the guy's, like, important or something, right? *(laughter)* So that's the problem, they lie, they lie. I've had people say, what was his name, John Stamos. Do you know this guy? *(laughter)* What a bullshitter that guy is! *(laughter, applause)* He said to me at the Improv after one of my sets, he came up to me and he goes, "I know you probably hear this a lot, but I've got a new sitcom coming, and you're the dude. You're gonna get a call. I know you hear this all the time, and you hear about Hollywood bullshit, but this is *not* bullshit." Never heard from him again. He's a bullshitter.

**AC:** So Stamos. Stay away from him.

**JH:** I call lying "Stamosing" now.

**AC:** Great. *(to audience)* Another question? Yeah, in the back there.

**Audience member:** After being removed from Yuk-Yuk's or whatever, a lot of comics want to go their own way. Were you discouraged for a while, or were you like, "I don't need to go back"?

**BH:** No, it was great. It was the best thing for all of us to do. And the guys that came out of it were guys like Brent Butt and Mark Farrell, who are just incredibly successful here. They're such smart, funny guys, and I'm not saying they wouldn't have had successful careers, but I do know that all of us after having done that had an energy within us that we didn't have before. We had a great community, a good

support community. And a lot of the guys at Yuk's, who still stayed at Yuk's, were like, "Fuck, it was great you guys did that, man."

**JH:** It's the truth. You got total respect from everybody, and that was a really cool thing that you guys did. And also the camaraderie that we had, you're going to come up with a group of people that are the same, and they're gonna be your peers, they're gonna be your comedy peers. Like us, we started at the same time. There was a group of us that came out at the same time. Just luckily, you can't control this, it just happens, it was a really good group of tight-knit, funny people. And I think that I'm sitting up here today being a standup that you've heard of before simply because we were surrounded by a hell of a group of funny people, some of whom are still my friends, the ones that didn't lie to me. *(laughter)*

**BH:** Yeah. But also, the generation ahead of us was more competitive with each other.

**JH:** It had a meaner vibe.

**BH:** It was like someone else's failure was a success to them, and we didn't really have that in our generation. A couple guys, but it was mostly supporting each other.

**JH:** There were guys running around the club ahead of us going, "You have five minutes to make that funny, or I'm taking it next week." Remember? Stuff like that. Hey, it helped your creativity. You tried to make the shit funny really fast, before a guy better than you was gonna take it. But we never did any of that stuff. And we weren't really working to get onto TV at the time, the way they were making

Americans do the same five minutes over and over again so they could get on TV. We didn't have any, so we were actually encouraged to be different and unique, and that's why there was a wave of comedians that moved to the United States when comedy changed that were Canadian that did real well. We had freedom here. I think Canada's still like that.

**BH:** Unfortunately, back then, there wasn't a lot of support for Canadian talent versus the way it was in the States and in England, where they would develop shows around comics and people that were popular. They just didn't do it here. It was literally, I was like, "Man, if I'm gonna really do what I wanna do, or just have fun writing, I gotta get outta here."

**AC:** The only thing was *Comics!* You guys both had your episode of *Comics!*, right?

**JH:** Yeah.

**AC:** It was a show where they would give a standup half the show doing their act, and the other half sort of B-roll sketches, or documentary stuff. People did different stuff. You (Jeremy) did a mockumentary, right?

**JH:** I did, yeah.

**AC:** But other than that, I think it's hard for people now, because it's not like it's super-supportive, but there is a lot more work, including writing work. The *Spun Out* show, there are like three Humber grads writing on it, and I can't think of any writing room, and if you were *The Kids in the Hall*, you would get a writer. They

thought they were being really generous if they gave you a writer. I think there were three or four at the end, right?

**BH:** There were three in the first year, and then there were five by year five.

**JH:** That's incredible. Three writers.

**BH:** I was actually talking with Andrew about this, this was the early nineties. At the Montreal (Just for Laughs) Comedy Festival, there was this presser for the press by CBC, and people were there, and there were reporters there, and Andrew was there, and the CBC was talking about how their mandate was to develop young talent and comedians, and they go out and support them and find out about them, and they're gonna gear up their shows to them and all that. And Andrew put up his hand and goes, "Um, I review the comics, and I'm out there every night, and I've never seen any of you people at those clubs." And they were like, (*grunting noises*), bullshit, bullshit. And they started trying to back themselves and say, "Well, we're doing it now, and we've started doing it," and then Louise Parent, who's an agent here, she put up her hand and she said, "Well, you know what, two weeks ago, I did a showcase of the top comics in Toronto," and I was one of them that was on it, "we did it at the theatre at the CBC building, in the basement. I went up and put flyers on all of your desks. It was in the basement of where you work, and none of you came." (*laughter*) And I don't think it got better. (*laughter*) That was the bad part, but at least they were humiliated.



**AC:** There was a nice moment, an awkward moment, and it didn't get better for a long time, and even now, I don't know how much better, but there's a little bit more, I think, a little bit more going on.

**JH:** They seem to be creating more shows that are Canadian for Canadians right now, which we didn't have. At our time, when we were coming up, they were pretty much relying on American content, and then it changed a little bit, and they realized, "Hey, we have some funny people here." But when you get really good, in my opinion, you'll be really good for about ten years before they even know who the hell you are. That's just the way it is, I think.

**BH:** But just keep kicking at the door.

**JH:** Yeah, go through every gig you possibly can. Some will be very dangerous (*laughs*), but you gotta go and play these rooms. What was the place...

**BH:** Roly Scagnetti's?

**JH:** Oh, that place was a shithole, wasn't it, man? I almost got killed at Roly Scagnetti's. I'm not kidding. First of all, I'm not lying to you, the guy that ran the place had a big scar down his face. And his name was Snake. I'm not kidding.

(*laughter*)

**BH:** What about the guy with the...?

**JH:** Oh, yeah! You'd go on, and I went with a girl, Lisa Gaye, remember her? She was a good comic, and she went out, and the microphone hung upside down from the ceiling, like an old boxing match. (*laughter*)

**BH:** They wanted you to *announce* your act.

**JH:** Yeah, whatever. They didn't spring for the stand, is what happened. So it's upside down, and she's trying to do your act, and it's a room full of bums. I mean, just total pigs, you know? Clearly coming to get out of the cold outside. And they're saying every filthy thing to her in a row, and she lasts about a minute and a half, and just runs off the stage in tears. And no one's there to introduce me now, because she's gone, so I'm pissed off, you know? *(laughter)* So I gotta walk on cold, with nothing, you know? And I walk on, and I go up to the mic, and I just kinda hold it, and nobody says a word when they see me, and then all of a sudden I hear, "Hey, look!" And a guy sticks his hands up, but they're not hands at all. They're like two little hooks, but the guy can move them, because they were the modern version, I don't know. And he does this *(makes gesture)*, and all you hear is "click, click, click." And I go, "That's really cool. I bet it comes in handy when you're eating lobster." *(laughter)* That's what I said to the guy. And he gets up, and he's running towards me, so I ran off, right out into the car, and took off. I left. *(laughter)* I left. Come on, man. You want a guy with hooks for hands after you? Get the fuck out of the club, that's what I say! It's not like he could drive his car and catch me! *(laughter)* We all have those, right? Near-death experiences. And Yuk-Yuk's paid me for that, too. Shocking, I know, right? They did.

**AC:** They could've said no.

**JH:** They could've said no.

**AC:** You didn't do the gig.

**JH:** It's true.

**AC:** Technically.

**JH:** Poor Lisa Gaye.

**AC:** Yeah. You left her there.

**JH:** Dude. *(laughter)* She was a weak opening act. It was her own fault! *(laughter)*

**BH:** If she would've introduced him, maybe. Maybe you throw bus fare behind you.

**JH:** She had a car, shut up. *(laughter)*

**AC:** You guys both eventually made that trip down to the States to work, for both of you.

**JH:** He started it.

**AC:** Now, your first job, was it *The Jon Stewart Show*?

**JH:** Yeah.

**BH:** It was *The Jon Stewart Show*, yeah.

**AC:** And you both worked on that, right?

**JH:** He started it, though. Tell him the story.

**BH:** What do you mean I started it?

**JH:** You went first.

**BH:** Oh, yeah. I went before you, if that's what you mean.

**JH:** That's what I mean! You started it!

**BH:** Use English! *(laughter)*

**JH:** I was fine in Canada.

**BH:** "He started it." What does that mean?

**JH:** You started the whole...

**BH:** I didn't start it! It's like, "Hey, you started it..."

**JH:** Yeah, that's the way I'm putting it, like you started it. *(laughter)*

**BH:** I went first.

**AC:** How did the *Jon Stewart Show* gig happen?

**BH:** I actually did Just for Laughs, and hung around with Jon Stewart. He really liked my act, and we were just hanging out and stuff, and just had a lot of fun. I actually had Steven Wright say something to me. I did this bit, "Man of a Million Voices," a piece I used to do. And it was a guy who basically went, "I'm a man of a million voices, I can do a million voices. Come and see my show at the First Street Theater, I can do a million voices. I can do such voices as...oh God, which ones...oh, yeah." And ultimately, what I end up doing is just imitating my next-door neighbor who's pissed off at me because my dog is shitting on his property. So I'm just doing an impression of them...

**JH:** So the gag was, it wasn't celebrities at all, so you didn't know if he was doing the voice or not.

**BH:** So it just got angry, and at one point (I say) "I can do my nephew. 'My uncle's a fuckin' loser!'" And it was just all those kinds of impressions.

**JH:** And I loved that.

**BH:** I get off, and Steven Wright was walking by, and he grabs my arm and just goes *(in Steven Wright deadpan)*, "That's one of the funniest things I've ever seen."  
*(laughter)* It was really fun. But yeah, Jon just really liked that, so he called me down to Los Angeles and said, "I think I'm doing this show up in New York," and he said, "I want you to write and just do some acting on it and stuff." So when he got the show, he called me.

**AC:** Great. And that was your first green, not your green card, your first visa...

**BH:** Yeah.

**AC:** And did you get representation and everything out of that too?

**BH:** Yes, actually, after that, yeah.

**JH:** You had no agent before?

**BH:** No, I got Laurie during that.

**JH:** Oh, OK, I didn't know that. You did pretty good without an agent or manager, right? You got *Kids in the Hall*...

**BH:** Yeah, and *Jon Stewart*...

**JH:** With nobody.

**BH:** Yeah.

**JH:** That's unheard of, anymore. So you did that all yourself...

**BH:** But that's also how you can take things, like doing your standup, and making sure that your craft is as good as you can make it, so that when things happen at a certain time, you're hitting it. And that's why, when Jon saw me, it was like, "Oh, yeah, love this guy," and we hung out and had fun. If I'm not there and I'm not hitting it, that doesn't happen. So you never know when it's gonna happen, so you never want to not do your best.

**JH:** But you were an amazing writer on that show. He wrote pieces, and there were guys that wrote monologue jokes, setup/punchline, that sort of thing. We weren't that. I thought you were pretty much the best piece writer on that entire show. And the guys writing on that show at the time, we should tell them...

**BH:** That was an insane staff.

**JH:** It was an amazing staff. Tom Hertz was on that show. Dave Atell was on that show.

**BH:** Steve Higgins, Al Higgins...

**JH:** Al Higgins was on that show. Who else...

**BH:** Chris Albers...

**JH:** Brian Posehn was on that show for when we needed a sight gag. *(laughter)* I'm just saying.

**BH:** Well, he was good to walk home with in New York. Nobody messed with you.

**JH:** You're going home with Frankenstein, it's fantastic. *(laughter)* We had fun on that show, didn't we?

**BH:** That was a great show.

**JH:** But you had more fun than me because I hated it, remember? *(laughter)*

**BH:** He despised it.

**JH:** I hated writing jokes for...

**BH:** Other people.

**JH:** Yeah. I'm real selfish. I'm an asshole that way. I don't like someone else doing my material and getting laughs for it. Luckily, the stuff I wrote wasn't getting any laughs. *(laughter)* But I was good acting in it. That's where they used me. You always would put me in pieces and stuff. We wrote some pretty funny stuff together.

**BH:** But he's not a natural writer. He's a standup. He has to talk about himself because his ego needs to be fed constantly. So it's that kind of a thing, and some people are able to write for other people, and some people aren't.

**JH:** Yeah. You gotta be like a team player. *(laughter)*

**AC:** Jeremy, can you talk about doing late-night shows, doing standup, like *Letterman*? What was that like, doing that for the first time? That's a dream for a lot of...

**JH:** You know, it wasn't, I'll tell you that. That was so weird, because that was a dream that *you* (Brian Hartt) had, to be on *Letterman*. And then I got it, and I didn't want to do it, and I went, "I don't wanna fuckin' do this!" And he was like, "You asshole, everybody wants to do that!" Remember? *(laughter)* And I go and I do the show, and it's freezing cold, it's my first major...it's in America, it's my first major talk show. The guy meeting you, shaking your hands, wearing headsets, he's more famous than you. The guy who played Biff Henderson or whatever? All the people that are on the show...

**BH:** *Played Biff Henderson? He was Biff Henderson!*

**JH:** OK, well, you know! I knew him as Biff Henderson-he was more famous than me, is what I'm saying! So I'm shaking their hands and stuff like that, and I'm terrified, and you don't know what's gonna happen on *Letterman*, it's all up to Dave. And I remember sitting in the chair...well, here's how it first happened. I did my set, and they didn't know if I was gonna panel or not, that's a Dave move. So he came up to me, and he said, "Really good stuff, Jeremy. Why don't you come and sit down for a while?" That's when I knew I was paneling. So I'm like, "OK, great." Didn't know what he was gonna ask me or anything. But I remember sitting in the chair, and it was like a soft chair like this, but it had wooden...

**BH:** Arms?



**JH:** Arms, that's what they're called. And I remember looking at one of the arms next to his desk, and it had all these scratches from other guests that had been digging their nails into the wood. I swear, I'll never forget that. And then I forget about that, was the thing. But I remember at the commercial looking over, and I remember sitting in the chair when it was gonna happen, and the segment producer coming over and saying, "OK, I guess we're gonna go to panel now." And you gotta just adapt, that's what I'm saying. Anything can happen. It was a cold kind of feel to it, but it was a great show, and a great set, and I'm really glad I got to do it. When I did *The Tonight Show*, that was a completely different thing. That's a family atmosphere. *(To Brian)* You know, you worked on it, right? I did that five times, and that was like... Jay comes and stops by before the show and taps you on the back and goes, "Really happy to have you here, welcome to the family," sort of thing...

**BH:** No, that's not what he... *(Spouts gibberish in high-pitched Jay Leno voice)*  
*(laughter)* How can you not do Jay? You just had a chance to do Jay and you chose not to. Why would anybody do that? *(More Jay Leno gibberish)*

**JH:** Because it's hacky. It's like doing Nicholson. What are you doing to the kids?

**BH:** No, Jay isn't hacky. You've gotta do Jay.

**JH:** I can't. I don't have the chin for it. *(laughter)*

**BH:** I'll tell you, that was the hardest thing, to not do Jay in front of Jay. You'd be pitching, and it'd be like, "OK, then Jay, you go up and go... *(in un-Jay deep voice)*" Uh,

hey, how's it goin'?" *(laughter)* Because you're sitting there going *(in Jay voice)* "Hey guys, how's it goin'?" And you're like, "Oh shit, I just did Jay in front of Jay."

**AC:** And is that something that you as a writer would have to have, your own Jays, because you're writing in his voice so often? Is that sort of a trick of the trade, or are you just making fun of him?

**BH:** Oh no, it's just what you do. You just do his voice. *(laughter)*

**AC:** So you did *Letterman* five times, was it?

**JH:** No, just the once. Here's what happened. I got caught up in the old "He's doing *The Tonight Show*, he's not doing *Letterman* anymore" (thing). I was one of the few guys that actually got to play them both. They had a rift, something to do with... I don't remember what it was about, some high school fight or something. I figured I would do *The Tonight Show* because I lived in Los Angeles at the time, and I preferred to drive to work than take a flight, you know what I mean? So it just made simple sense. So that's how I never got *Letterman* again. That was a stupid move, wasn't it? *(laughs)* I'm kidding.

**AC:** *(to audience)* Another question?

**JH:** Oh, we're done!

**BH:** Jeez. *(laughter)*

**AC:** They're in awe. Uh, yeah, right back there.

**Audience member:** Did you do a lot of standup when you were in L.A.?

**AC:** A lot of standup in L.A.

**JH:** Who, me?

**AC:** Yeah, you.

**JH:** Oh. Uh, yeah! *(laughter)* That's how I make a living! *(laughter)*

**AC:** *(to audience)* How is the comedy scene different? The L.A. comedy scene versus Toronto or New York?

**JH:** Oh, OK. I think right now if you're a young comic and you want to make it in the United States, you probably want to move to New York, and I'll tell you why. They have way more clubs to go on at, they have way more opportunity. All you're trying to do right now is get onstage as much as you possibly can, and work on your craft as much as you can, in every situation. New York has way more opportunity for that. I don't know what the clubs are, but there are really only four major ones in the L.A. area. So if you're not a known, renowned comic, you're really not gonna get spots there at the beginning. You're gonna have to really struggle. That's the difference. There's probably way more rooms in Canada for you guys to go on at as well. So by the time, if you're thinking of moving to Los Angeles, know going in that it would be really good if you had some huge heat behind your ass before you moved, whereas in New York, you can just come up through the ranks a little better, a little unnoticed. You want to time it right so when you get there and people see you for the first time, they go, "This guy's really good," so if you go two years early and

you're not there yet, it could screw you a little bit, they say. But hey, they also say that some people are late bloomers. I'm one of those. I'm still waiting. *(laughter)*

**AC:** Do you have a home club that you like to play in Los Angeles?

**JH:** I play at the Laugh Factory most of the time, or the Comedy and Magic Club, or the Improv.

**AC:** Or the Comedy Store? *(laughs)*

**JH:** I don't play the Comedy Store. I don't have a gun. *(laughter)* I'm not kidding, man. You'll see.

**BH:** It's haunted.

**AC:** It *is* haunted.

**JH:** Yeah. The place smells of failed dreams. *(laughter)* Oh, shit, wait'll I tell the guys that one. *(laughter)*

**AC:** *(to audience)* Uh, yeah, in the back there. Yes, sir.

**Audience member:** How did you end up finding your, what I would refer to as, "comedic voice," where you understood what it was about you that made the audience laugh? What was that moment for you?

**JH:** Cool! *(laughter)* I noticed I found my voice when I spoke! *(laughter)* It's, again, a process. You go through a process. *(to Brian)* You did too, man.

**BH:** My act changed a lot, and it wasn't until I just kind of stopped and went, "OK, what do I really want to say?" that it actually started working properly. I would just sort of go, "Oh, people will laugh at this." And I'm not saying what you really want to say in terms of, "I'm gonna pull the curtain down and expose all the problems of society," not that kind of thing, but just how you want to say things, and what you want to say. You have to do it to find it, obviously. You have to fail a little bit to find it, but I think it's really about being yourself. Just be yourself, and you'll cut through a lot of shit really fast.

**JH:** It's true, and you'll find that extension of your personality that makes you unique, and you present that to the audience, and you've won. I remember the first time I realized I was funny. I was in a car with three other comics: (Sean) Tweedley, remember him, (Tony) Krolo...

**AC:** Tony Krolo.

**JH:** I think it might've been... I don't know the third guy.

**BH:** It doesn't matter. *(laughter)*

**JH:** Anyway, I forget the story.

**BH:** Get on with the story!

**JH:** Forget it, forget it. I can't remember where I was going now. You screwed the whole thing up, man, and it was really poignant, and the kids were gonna learn something, but you're so selfish...

**AC:** You were in the car with three comics...

**BH:** You were in the car, you were leaving Lisa Gay Tremblay behind... *(laughter)*

**JH:** Yes, I did. Bad middle. Anyway, we're driving, and I remember I was just saying stuff, commenting on people, and they started dying laughing, and I thought, "Oh, they're just screwing with me." But no, it was the first time I ever felt other comics were respecting my comedic talent, and that's a big moment. Because there are a lot of people who go, "Hey, we're good buddies," but secretly they're not like that. So this was the first time where I really realized, "Hey, maybe I found something here." I'm really dumb, and I don't catch on quick.

**BH:** Not true. When he first started, he had the mic out of the stand, and he paced around, and it was all energy, and it was fast, and he talked quick and loud.

**JH:** Ugh.

**BH:** And it was like really aggressive and stuff, and he would kill, he would still kill, but I think he found it through talking with the audience.

**JH:** Yeah, that's true.

**BH:** He did a lot of riffing with the crowd, and then slowly after a while, when he would riff with the crowd, he would just leave the mic in, and he would just go, you know, this whole thing *(makes hand gesture)*. *(laughter)* Because he's pointing at people...

**JH:** And I was like, "That guy has big balls, look at him!" Real hacky shit.

**BH:** So the hip guys were sort of like...

**JH:** "This guy stinks!"

**BH:** They didn't want to hang with Hotz, but they were wondering, "Why is Hartt hanging with Hotz? What is that?" And I was like, "I like him and he's funny. What the fuck?"

**JH:** Then we started writing together, which was really good. We've been writing together ever since I've known you. How many years is it?

**BH:** I don't know. Ten? Thirty? Sixty?

**JH:** Thirty years?

**BH:** Twenty years, twenty five years...

**JH:** Twenty-five years?

**BH:** Yeah.

**JH:** The first thing we wrote was one...

**BH:** No, twenty years.

**JH:** He had a printer, and it was shit. He had a printer, and this is how old it was...

*(laughter at embarrassing picture projected on screen behind them)* You fuckin' asshole. I'm never, never, ever speaking to you again, you realize that, right?

**BH:** Finally!

**JH:** You asshole. Anyway, I don't know if you ever saw this, but it was like a dot matrix printer? Do you know what those are? It had holes down the side of the page, and these wheels on the side would turn it, and it went through. So we're writing the thing, and I remember, you had to line up the pages, remember? Because it wasn't printing right.

**BH:** And then after seven pages, it would start moving onto the other page.

**JH:** It was so frustrating, and we were trying to write this thing, and we didn't have the knowledge to work the printer (*laughter*). And so we were in two different rooms. I was writing some stuff, and he was trying to print the thing out, and we started doing voices from *A Clockwork Orange*. Do you remember that? (*laughter*) All of a sudden, you'd hear from the other room (*in British accent*) "No more pickin' on Dim." You'd hear things like that. (*laughter*) "Have another glass." Things like that. We did it for five hours. We just kept doing that. (*laughter*)

**BH:** "Who on earth could that be?" (*laughter*)

**JH:** We had tons of fun. One time on the phone, this was hilarious, we were on the phone, and I had, you know *Hustler Magazine*, the filthy magazine? It was still when you had porn magazines, and I had "Hustler Humor," and it was all the jokes from *Hustler*, and they were in terrible taste. And he had a *Hustler* magazine, which also had jokes. So I phoned him, and I explained to him, he couldn't see the joke, and I explained the cartoon to him over the phone. It was fantastic. The cartoon was, there was a guy, and he was dressed up—this is so bad—he was dressed up in a marathon outfit, like he'd been running. And there are two guys holding him up (*laughs*), and



there's a guy with a tape measure, and he's sitting next to it like this, and there's this long line of shit behind him. *(laughter)* And underneath, it just says, "World's longest shit." That was the whole joke. *(laughter)* And then he would do one back to me, and we just did that for about five hours. That's what we did.

**BH:** But the funny thing is, we would start doing it with our friend's standup too.

There was this guy David Merry. He was a comic, but also he was a magician and stuff. Very funny guy, very nice guy. He was not a guy who would riff back and forth with hecklers and stuff, he had to have a couple of written ones. So if a person in the crowd was bugging him or whatever, he would say, "You really don't want to mess with me, sir. I've got a bad case of diarrhea. And I'll go get it if I have to." *(laughter)* That was his joke. So one night, Jeremy and I were sitting there...

**JH:** Well, we loved the joke. It was the funniest thing. It had shit in it, it was great. Loved it.

**BH:** But we started analyzing it, and it was the funniest thing in the world. We're going, "OK, wait a minute. He's got this case of diarrhea in his car..."

**JH:** "Like a briefcase." *(laughter)*

**BH:** "So it's gotta be a briefcase. But does that mean, is he driving around with it, like all day? And now he's with his family? 'Hey dad, can you take the case out?' 'No, because I got a gig tonight, and if a guy heckles me, I gotta have my case of diarrhea...'"

**JH:** “So I can go back and show him and just present it to him and go, ‘Look what I got,’ and wreck his day.”

**BH:** But is that what he’s gonna do? He’s gonna present it? And the other thing too, if you’re traveling, can you take a case of diarrhea? This guy does gigs all over the country. So does he have to fly with this case? “Anything to declare?” “Yeah, a case of diarrhea. Can I fly with it?” “No, you’re gonna have to make a new one when we get to Calgary.” So it was really fun, just taking this one joke and treating it like Shakespeare.

**JH:** And you learn from that. You learn what’s funny about the joke.

**AC:** *(to audience)* Megan, you had a question.

**Audience member:** Can you speak more about late-night writing culture? Are you all competing with one another, or is it more of a community thing?

**BH:** Well, there is a level of competition, in that if you don’t get something on for a while, you feel it. You’re like, “Oh God, I gotta get something on, and they didn’t pick any of my bits, oh God.” You have to stay in the rotation. It’s a matter of... I had to find my way on *The Tonight Show*, because Jay’s humor is setup/punchline/setup/punchline, and I didn’t come from such a strict setup/punchline kind of writing, although I’ve been able to adapt to a whole bunch of different kinds of shows and kinds of senses of humor. That helped me when I got to *The Tonight Show*. But I pitched some stuff for a while that was just way off, and Jay would be like, “What the hell is this? It doesn’t make any sense.”

**JH:** Because (Jay's) style is setup/punchline jokes, and you write (so that) the whole thing is funny. He's looking for jokes, but your sketches, the whole thing is funny.

**BH:** Or it's a big setup, and then a whole bunch of stuff happens.

**JH:** Bang bang bang bang, yeah.

**BH:** For example, there was a bit I did called "American History Through Jaywalks."

The idea I had was, what if all the answers that these people from "Jaywalks" were giving, what if they were true? So he would ask a question, and there'd be the ridiculously stupid answer, and so what I did was, I took a bunch of Jaywalk questions and answers, and turned it into a Ken Burns kind of documentary. So when they would answer, I would then have Jay narrating, and I would use Ken Burns kinds of images and stuff to show... for example, somebody said, "Who attacked Pearl Harbor?" and the woman said, "Hawaii." (*laughter*) I just went right to, "In 1943," talking about how Hawaii attacked Hawaii, and I had the arrows coming from Hawaii back to Hawaii. (*laughter*) So it was like a documentary talking about all these different things. Someone said Mexico was at the Boston Tea Party, so I showed them throwing tacos over the side.

That was one, actually, where we showed Jay that one, and I swear to God, we're in the room with the head writer, Jack Cohen, and Jay, and he watches it and he goes, "Is there even a fuckin' laugh in this thing?" And I was like, "What the hell?" He's just like, "I don't know." And Jay's not a mean guy at all. Ten minutes later he sees me in the hall (and says), "Hey Brian, how's it goin'?" But he's questioning the thing, and then it went on and the piece killed, and we wound up doing like seven more. Jay

after comes up and goes, "I thought it was fantastic. We gotta do one on religion." So it was pretty cool to go, "Jay didn't see it, Jack saw it, and I saw it," and it went on, and Jay was fine with it. "Let's go, let's go do it." To his credit, he would do that. But to your question, there is a competitive nature. When you're on a good team, it's a positive competitive nature. There are guys that can be jerks. On that staff, they were there for so long, and it was such a good atmosphere, that it was all positive.

**AC:** Would you have any advice to a comic who wants to be on late night? How would you get on (one)? Most of them would like to write for a late night show.

**JH:** Well, tell them how you got me on *Stewart*. He told me to write sketches, and I wrote sketches, and I sent them in, and then he bothered the head writer, and then the head writer eventually hired me, and as soon as I got there, they fired the head writer. So I was kind of on my own. That was kind of crummy.

**BH:** Yeah, that wasn't good. *(laughter)*

**JH:** Yeah. But I hung around there, and we had a nice team, right? And everything was OK.

**BH:** But monologue guys, *The Tonight Show* would take monologue jokes from people, so you could send them in. Maybe you become a person who sends in a lot of jokes they like, and you go down and have a meeting, or you write some sketches that are particular to that show. You have to watch the show, and really get the voice of the show, before sending in a pack.

**JH:** Tell them about the pack, so they know, like when you worked on *MADtv*, that's a perfect example, because you were the head writer on *MAD*, people would send you packs, and then you'd read the packs...

**BH:** You'd read them and see if it was the right sensibility, first if it's funny, if they know how to write, and if it's the right sensibility for the show, and then you take a meeting with them. But the big thing is, you have to do so much writing that you don't get paid for to be a writer. If I had a stack of all the stuff I've written that's never been on TV or movies, it would fill this room. So you have to have an idea that all of your stuff is disposable. You kill babies all the time. You're on to the next thing. But if you are writing specifically for a show, watch the show, try to get the voice. That's really important, because if you're reading something...I would get packs, and I would go, "This has nothing to do with our show. It might be funny, but it has nothing to do with our show. Why would the person send me that?" It just goes to (suggest), "Well, the person really doesn't want the job, they're just throwing stuff out there."

**JH:** Or they put no effort into this particular gig.

**BH:** Yeah, it's something they wrote twenty years ago.

**Audience member:** So it seems like you've worked at a lot of very pleasant places. Do you have any stories of toxic environments that you've worked at, and how you were funny even though the environment around you was...?

**BH:** *Mind of Mencia* was sort of like that. *(laughter)*

**JH:** Oh, you've heard of this guy. *(laughter)*

**BH:** My management company had that show, and they needed somebody to come in and...

**JH:** Save it.

**BH:** Be the executive head writer. I got to work with Robert Morton, which was really cool.

**JH:** Morty's famous, yeah.

**BH:** So I went in, and I didn't know his reputation when I first went in there, and then at the end of the first year, I was sort of getting to know it quite a bit, and I thought, "Can I come back?" And I was like, "You know what, I'm gonna honor my contract and go back," but at one point, he was trying to defend the Cosby bit that he stole, and then there was another piece that we did that these guys in Florida was saying was their bit. And I was just like, "I gotta get out of here. I can't come back for another year."

**JH:** Because (Joe) Rogan was all over him.

**BH:** Rogan was screaming at him, and I'll tell you an inside Hollywood story about that. I don't know if you know this, but they were both handled by an agency there, and one of the top five agencies, and what happened was, when this fight between Rogan and Mencia was going on, because Mencia was on television, and Rogan's show, the one where he ate bugs and shit, what was that called? *(Various audience*

*members shout "Fear Factor")* Yeah, that was off, so they dumped Rogan and kept Mencia, because he had a TV show. Money.

**Audience member:** Do you feel like you got good work, like you were proud of what you did?

**BH:** On that show? Yeah.

**JH:** Yeah, there were good sketches.

**BH:** I think we did good stuff, and he was an incredibly hard-working guy. He would stay there until 3 in the morning working on stuff.

**JH:** It was other people's stuff, but he stayed there. *(laughter)*

**BH:** As far as work ethic, yeah. You can't steal work ethic.

**JH:** He's a diligent thief.

**BH:** But it was a weird situation, because he had his posse with him that was just sort of made up of crazies, and he loved manipulating it, and that was sort of fun for him. And I did a thing, in the writers' room I used to do a thing, I'd say to all my writers, "When you're pitching something to me, if I say no, you can take it away and rework it and bring it back again. If I say no again, then it's done. We don't talk about it ever again. But you can bring it back." I had to do it, because people were pitching stuff forever, it'd be the same thing, it's like, "I gotta stop this." So that sort of became my rule. But Carlos—Ned, his real name, makes a lot of sense—he loved arguing with people...

**JH:** Ned is his real name? He even stole his name! *(laughter)*

**BH:** That was a very good one. *(laughter)* But he really wanted to argue and stuff, and so this one thing I was saying, "Maybe I should try this," and he said, "No." And I said, "Well, if we try it this way, we can do it." And he said, "No." And I went, "OK." And he was like, "No, well no, come at me, let's argue more!" And I was like, "No, we're moving on." And it really pissed him off that I would do that. But that was just one way I got through working on that show, was just not getting myself into those dumb situations.

**AC:** *(to audience)* Yes, Joe.

**Audience member:** Can you comment on people who've influenced you?

**AC:** Who'd you love watching, comedians?

**JH:** Who, me? No one. I like me, man. *(laughter)* I wasn't really impressed with anyone else. I'm kidding. Carlin, I guess. I went to see George Carlin when I was a kid at the National Art Centre, and I thought to myself, "One day, I'd like to do that." And then that happened. So I should've set higher goals. *(laughter)* Now I'm fucked. I got nothing to do. *(laughter)*

**AC:** How about you, Brian?

**BH:** I loved Lenny Bruce. I just loved, and I was never a Lenny Bruce kind of comic, but I loved him, and Python. Python was my biggest influence.

**JH:** Which is why you went into sketch, right?



**BH:** Yeah.

**JH:** Yeah, that was it. They were the greatest.

**BH:** And (Richard) Pryor. Pryor was just otherworldly.

**AC:** Jeremy, you talked a bit about development deals, holding deals, and you've had an experience down there (in L.A.) working as an actor and all that. Now you're still doing a lot of standup, and you're still doing acting, I think. How do you do both? Not everybody is able to do both.

**JH:** Well, when I'm not acting, I do standup. *(laughter)*

**AC:** Nice, there you go.

**JH:** Pretty much. I do like standup though, because, as I said, it's your own game, and no one can tell you what to do, and no one can tell you what to write or say, it's up to you. Acting, sometimes, you gotta read the other guy's stuff, and sometimes you're in a movie, and the guy that's written that stuff wasn't very good, and you gotta try to make it funny.

**AC:** It seems like some standups, they don't really enjoy auditioning, or fitting into stuff.

**JH:** Auditioning is the most cold, horrible thing that can possibly happen. You have no idea what's gonna go. Half the time, they've already cast the thing when you go in to read for the thing. You just have to understand that something will happen for you, and you will get cast in something, but it's not going to be everything every

single time you go in, and a lot of people get really frustrated with failure and negativity. To be a standup and a performer on any level, to write, you're going to run into "No." And when you run into "no" enough times in a row, it can bring you down real bad.

**BH:** Just get used to the word "no." Just get used to it. It's gonna happen all the time. You just gotta roll with it.

**JH:** It's not just your job, it happens with sex, it happens with everything. *(laughter)*  
You run into "no." It's true. Bill Cosby didn't listen to that. *(laughter)*

**BH:** That's the one good thing, that Carlos didn't steal that from Cosby. *(laughter)*

**AC:** *(to audience)* Robbie, yes.

**JH:** His foreplay technique... *(laughs)*

**Audience member:** On that note, did either of you guys have a point in your career when you thought about quitting...

**BH:** About a week ago.

**Audience member:** And what pulled you back from doing that?

**JH:** I've had that thought quite a bit, but I realized I would not be gainfully employed by any other institution other than standup comedy. I never really had a job, so how could I get one now? I worked in a laundromat when I was 16 for two weeks *(laughter)*, and the guy went away for an ingrown toenail operation, and then he came back and he was wearing these little blue booties, and I pointed and laughed at

him, and he fired me. *(laughter)* The guy looked like an idiot. Shuffling around. It was ridiculous. *(laughter)*

**BH:** I think, though, if this is what you really want to do, and you find your niche and you find some success in it, I think this is one of those things that drives you, that you just have to keep doing it. It's just that you find a way to keep doing it. There are certain things that I think are jobs, and certain things that are vocations. My wife's a nurse, and that's a vocation. It's something that lives with them their whole lives, and I think something like this in entertainment, you just have to do it, and you'll just find your way to do it, even when you get low and don't find success for a while.

**JH:** But you do get low, and you do have to fight the depression of not getting what you think you should be getting, and that's the way it is. You've gotta keep ahead of that and just work harder. Is that not the truth, you think?

**BH:** Yeah, absolutely.

**JH:** Yeah, I think that's what it is too.

**AC:** Well, I wonder too, the sort of business side of things, it does seem to be the things that often trips people up, particularly going to Los Angeles with a deal in place or something and there's all this expectation, and a lot of times it doesn't go exactly how people want, and I've certainly seen a lot of comics who aren't able to navigate that. I don't know if it's changed a lot. Even the idea of holding deals, are there really that many around anymore?

**BH:** No, it's not like it used to be.

**AC:** Just for Laughs used to be this giant sort of cipher that led to all that. Now you go to Just for Laughs, and it's almost just like a festival again.

**JH:** You mean no one's getting deals anymore?

**AC:** Yeah, not so much.

**JH:** Not so much, but once in a while it can still happen, and that's why I said to the guys, if you're doing standup, you should try to get your ass there. Also it's not just the United States now, Australia's there, it's all over the world. I got sent to Australia, Ireland, all of these places, because of that festival.

**AC:** Let me ask you: do you find there's a difference in audiences, say Australia, Ireland, England, Canada, America? Is it that people are more or less the same, or do you find that you have to alter or expect different kinds of laughter when you're performing around the world?

**JH:** I do see a difference in every country I'm in. I find that they are different, and they're not gonna get certain things. For instance, in Canada, I'll do a joke, and then I'll tag it once, and then I'll move on, because everybody gets the joke already. Whereas in America, you can tag it, and tag it again, and tag it again, and tag it again. Whereas here, they're more, "Next, next, next," you know? Australia...aw, fuck, they're stupid there, man. *(laughter)* Yeah, seriously.

**BH:** Never heard that.

**JH:** Have you heard the way they talk? *(laughter)* How did that accent even catch on? That's all I'm saying, because it's ugly. Anyway, so they're different. England is different too, and Ireland, they just kind of stare at you a little bit.

**AC:** Yeah?

**JH:** Yeah, because you don't even look like them. You have, you know, pigment. *(laughter)* They're a very white people, they really are. The sun is not their friend.

**BH:** My people.

**AC:** *(to audience)* Another one back there? Yeah.

**Audience member:** When going out on the road, on the circuit, is there any advice you have for avoiding any trouble out on the road?

**JH:** In what way?

**Audience member:** Like finances, or bedding, or anything like that...

**BH:** Don't bring a blacklight with you. *(laughter)* Just don't do it.

**JH:** A blacklight!

**AC:** Looking for bugs, you mean?

**BH:** Yeah, yeah.

**JH:** It's gross sometimes. I found bedbugs once.

**BH:** You find a way to make yourself as comfortable as you can.

**JH:** Yeah, because the worst part of standup is everything else other than performing. *(laughter)* Getting there sucks. Seriously, everything else about it... you're driving with your buddy in a car, you don't particularly like the guy, you've gotta spend three and a half hours with him to get to, I don't know, any place, a shit place. And then you don't like him, and he does better than you. Ahhhh! *(laughter)* Then you gotta drive home with him and hear him talk about how fuckin' great he thinks he is. It's terrible, man, really. Everything about it.

**AC:** I always felt like that was a Canadian thing, too, whereas if you're a comic, say, in Boston, there are so many colleges and universities and towns, so they do less driving. It always seemed to me like Canadians, especially out west, you're driving like four hours...

**JH:** We drove through blizzards, Andrew! *(laughter)*

**BH:** Oh, it's crazy.

**JH:** You have no idea. Total whiteout, where the news is saying, "Stay in for five days." *(laughter)* You're driving, there's no lines on the road, you're making the lines. You're driving through the snow, essentially. So you're four hours later getting to the gig, and they're mad at you, and you've almost died on the road getting there.

**BH:** I remember going to a gig up in Calgary from Lethbridge, and Mike, uh...anyway. *(in old man voice)* I sound like an old guy. "Mike, uh, Mike!"

**JH:** Which Mike?

**AC:** Mike Elliott? No, he's in...

**JH:** Wilmot?

**BH:** No.

**JH:** Aaaaaah. *(laughter)*

**BH:** Anyway, he's driving, not me, this Mike character...

**JH:** Bullard?

**BH:** No.

**JH:** Aaaaah. *(laughter)*

**BH:** But we were behind...

**JH:** McDonald?

**BH:** No.

**JH:** Aaaaaah. *(laughter)*

**BH:** But we were behind a truck, and he pulled up behind this truck, and this truck, it was like a *Star Wars* kind of storm coming at us, and he pulled up behind this truck that was going fifty, literally five feet behind it, so that the snow wouldn't come onto our car. So we're five feet from this truck going fifty miles an hour in a blizzard, the whole way. And it's just like, this is insane. I'm going to a one-nighter. What am I doing?

**JH:** For \$250, I'm threatening my whole existence.

**BH:** It was really stupid.

**JH:** But you do it, because the people are waiting there. Yeah, you gotta do it. You can't let them down.

**BH:** And there's like ten people when you get there, because it's a blizzard. Why are they coming out?

**JH:** And then the guy makes you do the show anyways, always, right?

**BH:** Yep.

**JH:** Yep, do it anyway, uh huh.

**AC:** *(to audience)* Yeah.

**Audience member:** Would you say, talking about Yuk-Yuk's, brands, banners, when you're away from brands, do you feel the necessity to brand yourself, to franchise yourself?

**JH:** Yeah, you have to do that with social media. That's really important. Right now, it's the age of social media. You all know it, you all should have a Twitter page, Facebook page, Instagram. You should use it as best as you can. Someone wrote a little emblem for me, a little "JH" thing I use that's sort of my emblem. It's kind of shit *(laughter)*. OK, fuck off, it's the best I could do, *(laughter)* and I'm really proud of it, and it brands me. And that's what you have to do, you're right. You're absolutely right. Because you are, at the end of the day, if you're gonna be a standup, an independent performer. You're by yourself. You're on your own.



So yeah, do all that. Try to get as many followers as you possibly can, but legitimate ones, people that really like your stuff, you know what I mean? There are ways of doing it. When you're onstage, behind you, a lot of these clubs have projectors and stuff, and you can have your Twitter handle right behind you, and they'll do that at the club. You might want to do that. They just have their phones, they just add you right away, so your numbers go up. And you know what? When you're trying to get stuff, and clubs are trying to book you, and you're trying to get acting gigs, one of the first things you hear is, "How many Twitter followers do you have?" And it matters, to people who don't really know anything. *(laughter)* But they're the ones making the decisions, so you have to do that, yeah. It's important. So follow me. *(laughter)*

**AC:** Mike Cliff!

**BH:** Mike Cliff.

**JH:** Oh, Mike Cliff! Cliffy. Forgot about him.

**AC:** *(to audience)* Is there anything you want to do, whether in writing, acting or standup, that you guys haven't done in your careers, but you still want to do?

**BH:** I want to get a movie made that I've written. That's the one area I haven't really concentrated on as much as I wanted to, so I'd like that.

**JH:** No, I'm good. I think I did everything I... *(laughter)* I don't really, I don't think, there's nothing else I would like to do. I don't know.

**AC:** Do you find you still learn stuff about standup, about how it works?

**JH:** Yeah, sure. Every time you go on. That never stops. When it does, I think you're kind of lethargic and lame, and you do the same thing over and over again. So yeah, you do learn stuff. Absolutely. I still grow. Sometimes I put my hand here, sometimes I put it here. *(laughter)*

**AC:** How do you like to get all your work on how your sets are gonna come together, and how the jokes will come together? Do you do a lot of writing at home? Do you do a lot just on your feet? It's hard to tell when you look at someone who does a lot of work with the audience. It always feels like this is just, boom, happening right out of the gate.

**JH:** Right, but what I do is I use the moment to break in material and stuff, and yes, a lot of my material has come from just talking to the audience, but it's not, "Where you from?" Bits have come from talking to the crowd. And then I have the great system of writing them down on a notepad, like a Post-it, and then I stick it on a glass door in my house, and once in a while I go and read those notes. But most of the time, I try to go up with my head totally blank, totally blank, and see what comes to me. You've seen me work, that's how I do it. And then I do material when it seems to be fitting in with what I'm talking about.

**AC:** So you know, "OK, I've got that up on the Rolodex, whatever..."

**JH:** Right, and I'm not saying I'm better than the guy who goes and sits down and has a notebook and writes out every single joke, that's just another way of doing it. It's something that I don't really do because that sort of thing would give me incredible anxiety.

**AC:** That's interesting, because I think a lot of standups...for people who are thinking of doing it, what you've just described would terrify them. So I'm interested to know how you feel a moment before you go on knowing, "I'm gonna go in completely blank." Is that a great feeling? Do you feel completely calm and relaxed? Are you heightened and hyped up?

**JH:** No, I'm OK, because I'm on medication for that. *(laughter)* Of course you're scared out of your mind, but that's challenging yourself. I get nervous every single time before I go onstage.

**BH:** Which is the craziest thing, because I've never seen anybody like him, in terms of coming up, it didn't matter where he went, or what the gig was, whether it was a one-nighter, a crappy one-nighter, or a family kind of show, or anything like that, he always killed. And it would drive other comics crazy, like, "How is he doing this?" But every single place, every different kind of place, he would always kill. And he still thinks he's gonna bomb.

**JH:** Every time. I think, "I've fooled them for all these years." Every single time. That churn in your stomach that you feel, I really hope that never goes away from you, because it means you're still active, and you're still challenging yourself, and you're still gonna do the best you possibly can when you walk out onstage. Don't tell anyone I told you that. *(laughter)*

**AC:** *(to audience)* We have time for one or two more questions. Yep, right there.

**Audience member:** Brian, you said you got your first writing gig through the guys watching you do your standup. Later on in your career as a writer, did you have to get an agent to help you get another gig as a writer, or was it based on your performance?

**BH:** Yeah. That was on *The Jon Stewart Show*, I got a manager through that. But she had also known me, she knew me from *Kids in the Hall* as well. But yeah, you do need to, at some point, basically they just won't read stuff. So you have to get it through an agent or a manager, or both.

**JH:** But not so much in Canada, right, if you're trying to get on a show? You don't need one?

**BH:** No, it's different here. I'm just talking about the States, I can't speak to here.

**JH:** They'll read unsolicited material in Canada. They will. Absolutely.

**BH:** But certainly in the U.S., you've gotta go that way.

**Audience member:** So it wasn't just based off your reputation from previous gigs?

**BH:** Well, it was somebody that I met when she was up in Toronto at a *Kids in the Hall* taping, and we talked, and she liked my stuff, and we had fun talking together, and then after a while it was like, "Oh, well, I'd like to represent you." And it was like, "OK." So that worked out.

**AC:** *(to audience)* Uh, yeah.

**Audience member:** For both of you guys: what's your favorite sketch or bit that you ever wrote or came up with?

**BH:** Ah, geez.

**JH:** Jeez.

**BH:** Wow. *(laughter)*

**JH:** Yeah.

**BH:** Oh, jeez.

**JH:** I don't know either.

**BH:** Um...wow, that's really interesting.

**JH:** It's a tough question.

**BH:** I wrote sketch for so long, so literally I've had a thousand things produced.

**JH:** Hey, that thing that we did together on *The Jon Stewart Show* was pretty damn funny.

**BH:** Oh, the *Incredible Journey* thing?

**JH:** Yeah, we did that *Incredible Journey* thing together, that was good.

**BH:** Basically, the premise of that was, there was a sidekick Jon Stewart had, Howard, and they went out into New York and they got lost and had to find their

way back to the studio. So we did it like the dog and the cat (*laughter*), and they had to come back.

**JH:** And he did the voice, and he sounded exactly like that guy.

**BH:** That narrator, yeah.

**JH:** You were great. That was fantastic. That was really good.

**BH:** There are just a lot of them.

**JH:** And when you're a comic, it's a bit, probably the latest bit that I've worked on that's killing the most right now. That changes a lot, you know what I mean?

**BH:** Actually, one other thing, we didn't get to show it, but I did a thing on *The Tonight Show* that I really loved, which was called "Kid Metaphors." The idea is that kids out there, they just say what's on their mind, and so the guy who was gonna do the bit for *The Tonight Show*, we sent him out. I wrote up these metaphors for stories, so it was a way of getting kids to answer to topical stories, and so what I would do is, I would take a story in the news, and I'd write a metaphor for it. And so then we would present it to the kids, and when we'd play it back, we'd put up pictures that showed what we were really talking about, but the kids didn't know what they were answering to.

So there was one where it was like, Hugh Hefner married that 21-year-old woman, and so the guy sitting down with the kid, the host, was like, "OK, I know this really old guy, and he just got himself a brand new tricycle." And we'd show the woman with him. "Now this guy's had a lot of bikes in the past, but why do you think an old

guy would want a three-wheeler?" And this one kid goes, "Well, maybe he's trying to relive his childhood?" (*laughter*) And then we had another one, it was another kid, and (the host) asked, "Well, what do you think? Why would this old guy want a three-wheeler?" And he goes, "Maybe he finds it really hard to stay up on a regular bike." (*laughter, applause*) So it was a really fun piece to do, because the kids were innocently answering these questions.

**AC:** Any parting words of advice for comedians who want to work in the business? We've done a lot of it today, but anything you can think of, something you wish someone had told you, maybe, when you were starting out?

**JH:** Here's what I would say to you guys. You're funny, and you're fortunate enough to be in a place that is helping you grow as a funny person. The job that you have in this world, because the world is so shit, is to entertain people. And if you really, really want to do that, then I strongly suggest that you realize what your job is, and how important you really are. Because you're gonna hear your whole career, "What the fuck do you do? It's nothing." Whereas it is really, really important.

The number of letters and e-mails I get from people going, "I had the shittiest year of my life, my mother was ill, my dog died, and then I came and I saw you and I feel so much better, you really got me out of a shit situation," those are the moments that you realize what you're doing is good, and those are the moments that you're really doing standup for. Even though I was kidding about how I'm a solo player, you do standup comedy, and comedy writing, for other people, to entertain other people. Never walk off the stage and go, "That crowd was shit." Never do that. If you're not

funny, they'll let you know. If you are funny, they'll let you know. That's it.

*(applause)*

**BH:** I was gonna say that. *(laughter)* Actually, the one thing I would leave you with is, have fun. There are some people who just take this so seriously. When I was head-writing on *MAD*, there'd be all this tension and stuff, and I used to walk down the hall and just mockingly yell, "We're saving lives, people!" *(laughter)* "You need to write sketches where people can live! We're saving people!" Because we're not, we're just having fun. You have to be responsible, and you have to do your work, and all that stuff, but have fun. We're in a fun business.

**JH:** We played ball hockey in the halls on *The Jon Stewart Show*. We played ball hockey.

**BH:** There was this one little story, and it was like, how I became head writer on *MADtv* was kind of interesting. It was just an interesting thing, and it's one of those "you never know what's gonna happen when" kind of things. We were about six shows in, and the guys who created the show, Fax Bahr and Adam Small, great guys, two of my best friends, they were running the show and they were head-writing, and it was too much for them. It was their first gig, and it was a monster hour-long sketch show. I just saw that they weren't on it, and there were sketches that were getting in that weren't written properly, and nobody was really monitoring the head-writing thing because they were so busy running the show. And after a taping one night, there was this one sketch about bathroom police that was just horrible.

*(laughter)*



We went to the Cat and Fiddle, which was this bar on Sunset, and we would go there after tapings. We got drunk, and I'm sitting there with Fax, and I started going, "You guys can't head-write the show at the same time! The quality's going to shit! That sketch should never have gotten in!" And I was basically cutting this guy down in front of him, to his face. But what I was saying was kind of right, and it was this really crazy moment, and I woke up the next morning, and it was one of those things where I woke up, and a buddy called me, it might've even been (Jeremy), and I said, "OK, on Monday, I'm either gonna be fired, or I'm gonna be the head writer of the show."

**JH:** Yeah, I was the guy, I remember that.

**BH:** And I go in, and Fax calls me in and he goes, "That was hysterical." I go, "What?" "The way you laid into me, you were right. So we're making you head writer."

*(laughter, applause)*

**JH:** So I think what Brian's trying to say is, when you get a job, make sure you get drunk and yell at your boss. *(laughter)*

**BH:** But it did come from passion, it did come from passion. I was just really lucky that the guy I was yelling at was a really cool guy.

**JH:** Yeah, he is, he is.

**AC:** Well, thank you very much, both of you. *(applause)*

**BH:** Thank you guys!

**JH:** Yeah, we had a good time, thank you very much!

**AC:** For you.

**JH:** What the hell?

**BH:** Oh, I hope it's a hat! *(laughter)*

**JH:** Oh!

**BH:** Oh, thank you, Andrew.

**JH:** OK, thanks. What is it?

**AC:** Well, you can look.

**JH:** Can we look?

**AC:** Yeah, go ahead, if you want.

**JH:** It's all just *this* shit. *(laughter)* Oh, great, yeah, this is cool!

**BH:** Nice!

**JH:** Oh yeah, there you go! There you go!

**BH:** I got the same thing!

**AC:** Wear it with pride! Thank you, guys, that was fantastic. *(applause)*

**JH:** I think I need an extra large. *(laughter)*

**BH:** I'm so glad I lost weight.

**JH:** Yep, there we go. No, these'll fit.

**BH:** All right, thanks you guys. Good luck! (*applause*)