

Andrew Clark: Today's Prime Time is focusing on two workshops we'll be doing this fall. One is on podcasting. Basically we'll be doing a Humber Comedy podcast, and we'll be teaching you to do your own podcast. And that's gonna be spearheaded by Joe Ianni.

Ji: Hello.

AC: He's right here on my right. *(applause)* We're gonna talk a little bit with Joe, and then we're gonna talk a little bit with Pam Thomas, to my immediate right *(applause)*, who is a producer and a manager with a fantastic resume. Pam's been doing stuff with us for a number of years, and she's been instrumental in bringing up speakers such as Jim Downey, who was head writer for *SNL*, bringing Mike Myers here for an honorary degree, Rosie Shuster, Mike Reiss from *The Simpsons*, and this fall Merrill Markoe, who I've been e-mailing with and she's excited, and also Steve Higgins from *Saturday Night Live* we're hoping to get up as well. So welcome Pam Thomas. *(applause)* Pam's going to be doing a workshop on the business of comedy, which she's gonna elaborate on. So let me just start with you, Joe. Can you tell the folks here a little bit about your background? I'm gonna give it away. You are a Humber alumnus.

Ji: Yes, I'm an alumnus. *(applause)* I do recognize some of the faces in here, some of the people I've had the opportunity to help during the audition process, so it's good to see some of you made it in. I graduated, I want to say, 2009, graduated with Honors. Before I got into the Comedy program, I was mostly just an indoor kid. I spent a lot of time making cartoons on Flash, God rest its soul. It's still around, but it

needs help, it's on life support. When I got into the program, I wasn't even fully sure what it was I wanted to do, but I knew I wanted to do comedy. I grew up with *The Red Green Show* on TV, *Just for Laughs*, all the accessible stuff that you get when you don't have cable or satellite. Second year was when I started getting into podcasting myself. I wasn't listening to comedy podcasts at the time—I'm a huge game fan, so I was listening to this one on ign.com called *Game Scoop*. (mild applause) Yeah, yeah, the one shout-out. And it wasn't just that the content was great, or that it was covering something I was interested in, it was that the people were so good at talking to each other that it was very entertaining to be able to listen to people while also getting good information. That kind of inspired me to do podcasting.

So I went to Marco Lappano, and he hooked me up with a boss recorder. It was just this one device, I put it down in the middle of the table and I'd invite everybody else I could get in the program to come sit and talk. So I did that podcast for like two years, and then we got to host that one inside Yuk-Yuk's. I got a chance to talk Mark Breslin into that. The great thing about it is that it gave me all the experience I needed to know how to do this myself. As much as it would've been nice for there to be a class or school about podcasting, it was so accessible, and it was so easy to just get started and get your feet wet, that all you're gonna do at that point is just get better and better and better at it. At that point, I'd done some standup, I did standup for about three or four years, I've done some performing, I do writing, that's kind of where my main focus has always been, but podcasting has kind of turned into my day job now. I don't actually have a day job, I just make money through editing and doing podcasts for other people. One of my friends in

comedy approached me after I stopped doing all my other podcasts, and he said...
and you can cut me off any time, by the way.

AC: I'm loving it!

JJ: He wanted to do a podcast about pornography. And I'm like, "OK, well, you can't expect me to contribute to the conversation, but sure." He had experience in the industry, and he thought, "Well, no one else is doing this, so let's do that." We got through four episodes, and the first two were just us talking, and it didn't really mesh, but once he brought on guests who had industry experience, even though I'm not personally interested in it, again, it was that information, it was hearing what they had to say in a very natural environment, and it was amazing. We stopped that after the four episodes, and I went back to him and said, "Hey, you know what I think would be really great, and I think a lot of people would actually be interested in, is maybe not a pornography podcast necessarily, but a general sexuality podcast." And we've been doing that for about a year now, and that one is called *Sex and Life*, and the great thing about that one is that, because I now have this thing that I'm working on, I show that to other people, and maybe not necessarily the content is interesting to them, but the work ethic and the actual presentation of it (is). That has gotten me with a podcasting network that's just started up in Toronto. It's called the Never Sleeps network. And we have six shows that we launched with, and we're looking to add more shows onto that. So at this point, I'm just making money through editing and producing more and more shows.

The thing that I just love about the podcasting format is that there are a lot of parallels I draw between podcasting and advertising. The ad format is so loosely defined that anything and anyone can make an ad out of something. It's the same thing with podcasting. Anyone can make anything into a podcast, as long as there are people interested in listening to it. I said to my mother jokingly, "If you want to do a podcast about your experience with being a mother and working a full-time job, you know who's gonna want to listen to that? Other mothers who are also working a full-time job." That's all it really takes. At this point now, I am not at the point where I'd like to live on my own, because this is Toronto we're talking about, but I am actually earning off the work that I'm doing. It's taken some time, but I'm at that point now. I'm talking to maybe five or six people who have all expressed people in the past, saying that they want to do a show, and they want to do a podcast, but they don't have the technical knowledge for it, and that's where I get to come in. I get to do everything now.

AC: Let me ask: just by a show of hands, how many people here listen to a podcast regularly?

JJ: Nice!

AC: Quite a few.

JJ: That's what I wanted to see.

AC: Are they comedy-related? Raise your hands?

JJ: OK.

AC: Or sports? Entertainment? Yeah, so a lot of people listening, as you say, mothers listen to mothers, comedians listen to comedians. What's the benefit for a comedian to having a podcast? That sounds a bit redundant, but I'm curious as to what you see the actual tangible benefit to be.

JJ: The benefit I got from the comedy pocast I was doing was, one, I had some leverage. Let's say I'm trying to get onto a show, and I just want to be booked onto it just to do five minutes. I can just go up there and say, "Hey, can I do five minutes?" and I'll probably get it. But I can also say, "Hey, can I do five minutes? Oh, and by the way, I'm doing this comedy podcast in Yuk-Yuk's. If you want to come on and do an episode, it would give you a chance to promote the show you're doing, and it would give you a chance to talk about your thing too." So it was a way of having something to offer, even if it's not gonna pay you a hundred bucks or anything, but it is something that I can actually elevate myself above everybody else who has nothing to offer other than just asking. It's a way to give, knowing you're gonna be taking when you're doing this. But the podcast itself, you can generate revenue from it, so money's always nice, and there are several ways to do that. You can do that through crowdfunding now, Patreon campaigns, you can get advertising, you can just ask for donations right from your people.

The podcast also gives you a lot of experience in a lot of different skills that are all beneficial. You will learn how to edit, which is a guaranteed moneymaker if you can find people who are willing to pay you to do it, and I did. You learn to host, you learn to be the person on the show, if you're actively gonna talk on it. You teach

yourself how to be better at talking. You're not stuttering as much, you're planning your thoughts ahead of time a lot more. So you become more comfortable talking in front of a microphone. Obviously, the format changes with standup, now you're telling a joke, but at least you have more experience putting your mouth to something this close, knowing that people are going to be hearing it coming out on the other end. You make more contacts through it. You'll have a good time, if your show's fun and people like coming on it, you might learn something from it.

AC: Who are the top comedians who've done podcasts, would you say?

JJ: Well, the biggest one that I think really (elevated) podcasting would be Adam Corolla. His podcast I think has the record for most downloaded podcast. But that record will change because more people are doing it. Chris Hardwick, I would say he's got the award for making the most out of what his podcast was doing. At first it was just the *Nerdist* podcast, and he had the best guests you could ask for on the show. And now if you go on nerdist.com, it's not just one podcast, I think they've got a dozen or so. And they're also doing videos now, reviews, blog coverage. That led the Nerdist website into being almost an institution now. And in the third slot, I can't think of anybody else to put in than Marc Maron. *WTF* is just so insightful, because Marc Maron has so much experience, and he knows the people that he's talking to very well. Not all the time, some people he doesn't know very well. There's an episode where he got to talk to Robin Williams, obviously before his passing, and there is a little piece of history that you can go listen to and learn something about one of the legends, and unfortunately we don't get to do that anymore. Because it's

not done just live, it can be done live, but because it's not, there's all the quality that you get out of doing the radio show, but now it's there forever, as long as somebody's willing to host it. It's a way of keeping his legacy going, even if just a little bit.

AC: Pam, I'm gonna ask you a question, a little trick question.

Pam Thomas: Can you hear me?

AC: Um, not quite. *(pause)*

PT: Oh, hello.

AC: Can you tell these guys a little bit about how you got started as a producer, manager, casting director?

PT: I got started as a casting director. I was working with Lorne Michaels at *Saturday Night Live*, going all over North America, and I cast... well, these are older gigs, but probably one of the most... *Strange Brew*? Has anybody seen that? *(applause)* So that was just a segue into management. I brought Kids in the Hall to Lorne Michaels, and I was managing them for a while, but then I wanted to produce, and I moved to L.A. So I've been gone, I've been traveling back and forth, but I've been gone pretty much for twenty-five years. After the recession, things kind of dried up a little bit, so people weren't all working anymore.

AC: It's interesting when Joe mentioned Marc Maron, because you probably know Marc, and have known him for years. What's your observation of his career and its trajectory? He's the podcast side, but you've seen Marc for a long time.

PT: He got a TV series out of it that he stars in. I don't think he's a particularly good actor, but he plays himself. And he gets great guests, like he does on the podcast. And I think it got picked up again by IFC.

AC: How would you, as a manager in the business of comedy, take on his career? Because I don't think people, and he would obviously say, thought he was going places for a long time in his career. He wasn't a bad standup or anything. In fact, if you saw him live, you'd probably think he was pretty funny. But his career was pretty stalled. So would you say his podcast was the thing that saved him?

PT: Absolutely. He wasn't getting cast in any television shows or anything like that. He's reaching a certain age. So that's one of the things that I talk about in my workshop, is being very proactive with your own career. When somebody says to me, "My agent didn't get me anything," it's like, "Really? What'd you do about it? Are you doing a podcast? Are you doing a web series, do you have a website up? Networking?" The whole thing.

AC: Can you talk a little bit about Mike Myers? He's been very public in talking about how instrumental you've been in his career. You saw his trajectory. Can you talk about, again, from a standpoint of what you can do on a business level, what Mike did and how you saw that early part of his career and his work habits and everything like that?

PT: He's a very hard worker and he's very disciplined. He knew exactly what he wanted, but he said to me, "Nobody ever hired me from an audition. I've created my own characters." And he had a bit of a falling-out with everybody, but he's in a really

great place in his life right now, writing a movie for HBO with Jay Roach. And he's got tons of money, so he doesn't really have to work if he doesn't want to, so he can sort of pick and choose his passion projects.

AC: Do you remember the first time you saw Mike Myers?

PT: Um, no. He was a child actor, you know.

AC: That wasn't the first time you saw him, at the Second City alumni (show)?

PT: He went to Chicago to work on the main stage as well. There was a show at the Fire Hall, and he went up with, like, Marty Short. He went up with some pretty tough characters, and he just killed. And I called Lorne and told him about him. I've been pretty fortunate with Lorne Michaels. I've been able to get quite a few people on the show without an audition, based on my work. Chris Farley, Mike, Maya Rudolph, people like that. So once people get to know your taste, and that you're authentic... because I haven't sent in anyone there that bombed, they're always looking for new people. Last time I was in New York for the *Spy* premiere, Steve Higgins was asking me, "Who's in Toronto? Should I come up to Second City?"

AC: You said, "No, come to Humber." (*laughter*) Can you talk a little bit about Chris Farley? Because he's the other side of it, where he's a brilliant talent, so maybe (you could talk about) the first time you saw him, and then that pitfall. I don't think we should all be worrying about, "What will I do with my infinite success, how will I kill myself," but can you talk a bit about how you found Chris Farley and what went wrong there, maybe?

PT: Well, I was going city to city for Lorne, and Chris Farley was on the main stage at Second City in Chicago, and I didn't know what to expect, but he came out, and he was Whale Boy. So he had a blowhole on his head with water spurting out, and he flopped around, with next to nothing on. *(laughter)* Whale Boy. And he flopped right off the stage, and right in front of me on the floor. I thought, "Wow, this guy, he'll do anything for a laugh. I'd rather have somebody you've got to rein in than try to get blood from a stone." So he went to New York, and he was terribly intimidated, and Lorne made him wait eight hours, and then come back the next day. Which he did, of course.

AC: That's weird. I only waited two and a half hours, and I thought that was a long time, the first time I went to interview Lorne Michaels. "Boy, two and a half hours, he's really making you wait." And then I hear all this. But he wasn't gonna hire me, so he didn't have time to make me wait eight hours.

PT: And he had characters he was bringing in, but he was a total unknown. But boy, he made me laugh. Funny.

AC: Let me ask you a question, and Joe, I'm gonna ask you the same question. Can you name me three mistakes people make when they're trying to get their career started?

PT: Three mistakes.

AC: If you can get three, let me know. If there's only one or two, then that's fine.

JJ: We can also do one mistake at a time.

AC: We'll do a mistake-off. What's one mistake people make when they, say, leave these hallowed halls?

PT: Well, not networking. It's social...

JJ: I might've had that one.

AC: You're gonna have to come up with another one. So not networking.

PT: People who don't network, who think, "Well, I've got a show at the Comedy Bar, they should come see me." They won't. They won't. It's really hard to get people out to a show. They can watch anything on Youtube or (elsewhere) on the internet. I get all kinds of links on Facebook, and people who don't know how to network and promote themselves... and that's very Canadian, by the way. That's something people laugh about in the States. "You don't want to toot your own horn, eh?" Uh, yeah, you do. It's really important that you do. And you don't have to be obnoxious about it, but if you're going to meet with an agent... I love this, when people say to me, "Well, I called him once." "Really? Once? OK. Well, he didn't get back to you, did he? So you have to keep calling." You promote yourself.

AC: So network. How about you, Joe?

JJ: Not doing the work, is another big deal. I think you get out, and you're hoping, and I don't think is just comedy or even arts related, I think this is a general issue I've seen talking to a lot of my own friends who've graduated in other worlds, is that they leave school, and they're hoping they're just gonna find some work in their field. They might luck out and get an internship or something, and it's frustrating,

because internships are just more of a money thing. And you are getting experience and exposure, but the only reason why I'm being paid to do work now is because I worked for free for myself before that. I knew that I had to show what I can do, and I had to set my own standard. There's this podcast camp that goes on every February at Ryerson called "Pod Camp." If you guys are into podcasting, go to it. I may be doing a talk there, hopefully. And one of the presenters, he just said, "Oh, you know, I just put the music at the beginning and at the end and I just set it free like a dove." And depending on the show, sure. But when I'm editing an episode, and it's my standard of quality, I am listening very carefully. I'm taking out the "ums" and the "you knows," and I'm making sure this is as good a product as I can make. And now I can actually earn something from it. I think if you just wait for a paid job to come to you, and not do the work that you want to do before that, then if that job was offered to you, they're probably just gonna end up offering it to somebody who's doing it more anyways.

AC: *(to audience)* There was a question. Yeah.

Audience member: Um, yeah. You were saying to promote yourself, but not to be obnoxious, but yet call an agent...

PT: Well, I'm not saying to call twice a day. *(laughter)* You need to leave a little breather there. I teach a workshop at IO West in Hollywood, and I had an agent from APA come and talk, and he said, "You know what? Don't send us little gifts, OK? I don't want a cake sent to my office. I don't want to open an envelope and all that, and shiny little shit falls out all over my desk." Because people try to stand out, so

they do whatever they can to stand out. But you could call, and then e-mail in two days and say, "I left word for you, I know how busy you are, but would you have a minute for a coffee next week?" It's a fine line between stalking and promoting yourself. And if somebody calls me a million times, and the next day and the next day, I don't want anything to do with them, because there's desperation there, and that puts everybody off.

JJ: I don't have the end to this story, but there's this Youtube show called "Don't Hug Me, I'm Scared." I don't know if anyone's seen it, but if you haven't seen it, it's this brilliant, freaky children's puppet show. I love it to death. I e-mailed them, and I said, "I would love to write for you guys." And they said, "We're not looking for any outside help." This was the first time where I couldn't take no for an answer. And I got a puppeteer to make the character I'm pitching to them. We made an iron puppet, and we mailed the puppet to them. So I'm waiting to hear what their response is, but I sent the script to them, and I had to do everything to restrain myself from sending a photo of me holding the iron (puppet) with my shirt off going, "This is what you've done to me!" And hopefully they'll acknowledge that. Hopefully it'll turn into something. But if not, the point was I went for it because I wanted it. You have to go after the thing that you want. You can't just settle for something where you're like, "Well, it's kind of related, so I guess it's OK." No, if you're not going after what you want, then think about that for a second. If people see that you want this, and you're willing to do what it takes for it, that sends a huge message.

PT: It's also helpful to have representation do that for you. So there's a pre-pitch, and then you can say, "Here's what I have to bring in," but to have someone else say that for you is huge. It's a business, still. I hope you get it.

JJ: I hope so too.

AC: Two more mistakes, and then maybe we'll see if there's a question. I like to be negative. Can you think of anything else? Pam? How about mistakes people make when approaching an agent or a manager? Every industry show, we probably have some people who get representation. You guys may have seen Mark Edwards on TV. You might not know who he is, but you'll see him on TV doing commercials. He got represented right away. But what about mistakes people make approaching an agent or manager?

PT: Well, you have to have something to show, something to sell. I've started a new management company here, and I'm gonna work in three cities, so show me that you've got your work papers together. Show me what your demo's like. I signed a guy named Ryan Long, I don't know if you've ever seen Ryan.

JJ: Oh, yeah. Hair of a rock star, yeah.

PT: And he had a show called "Ryan Long is Challenged" on Bite, and he's got a web series, and when I take him into a production meeting, he's got a million ideas. "I could do this, I could do reality, I've got scripted." It's impressive. Plus, he's got his working papers. He said, "I'm going down to Los Angeles for pilot season," and I'm thinking about what agency I can put him with, because he can work there. You can't

go there if you don't have your papers. They can't hire you. They used to buy a visa, NBC or Universal or any studio would buy them, but they won't do it now. So they get really mad if somebody comes in and gets a part, and they can't work in the country. It makes them mad. Well, it's a waste of time.

AC: And that really pisses them off.

PT: And everybody I've talked to at these workshops in Canada wants to go to the States. I've heard that from so many people, but you actually can make a good living here.

Ji: Yeah, I actually don't want to go.

PT: Good!

Ji: I mean, if I'm invited, or if I have a reason to go, sure, but I would rather make this my home, I really would.

AC: Let's see if there's a quick... yeah, question there.

Audience member: How long should a demo be before it's sent out? Like five minutes, or...?

PT: Five minutes is pushing it. That's pushing it.

AC: *(to audience)* Yeah, go ahead.

Audience member: To go back to the agent thing, what is an adequate amount to bug the person you want to represent you? What would we define as “stalking”?

(laughter)

JJ: I feel like the word “persistence...”

PT: A couple of calls a day, that’s too much.

Audience member: So how much *should* you...

JJ: One a week?

PT: Yeah, or you could e-mail too. Sometimes that’s an easier way of getting a response. But if they’re not looking for anybody, you can send a link to your demo and say, “Please take a look at this,” but it’ll probably be delegated to the assistant first. But that’s another way to get an agent, is to go through the assistant. You don’t know when that assistant’s going to be running that company. So I recommend not burning any bridges with an assistant or a secretary, because they can be very, very helpful, and they’ll probably be the one to look at the demo and recommend you, or read your script.

AC: Who was it, Chris Albrecht, who was a doorman at the Improv, or the Comedy Store, and became head of... well, many different networks, right?

PT: Well, head of HBO for twenty years. And now he’s at Starz.

AC: So be nice to everybody if you can possibly do it. *(to audience)* Yep.

Audience member: So about the podcasts at Ryerson, and how they just put an intro and an outro and just set it free, and you said they're not cutting out the ums and aahs, but I would argue that my favorite podcasts are ones that aren't edited, and even if they're saying nothing, they'll get better. By editing it, it might be like jumpcuts on Youtube. It could be something that is overdone. *Joe Rogan Experience* or *Sometimes Live*, they actually get fans saying, "We don't want it edited."

JJ: It will come down to a show-to-show basis. I'd say the more you care about the production, the more I'd say to look at your editing. If you're trying to emulate more like a Howard Stern natural kind of thing, I guess don't worry about editing. On all of the shows I edit, there are a lot of interviews. One of the ones I do is called *Speech Bubble*, and it's a Toronto comic-book podcast, and I would actually recommend checking this one out, because he's getting on a lot of the really important people in the Canadian comics scene. I'm trying to make these people sound and look as good as they can, so if there is some meandering that goes on for a couple of seconds, I just don't see what it brings to the episode if it's in there, so I would rather just take it out, because people are there for that reason. They're there to hear this person's story, they're here to learn as much as they can. I think with the ones you're referring to, people don't mind hearing all that stuff, because it's part of the enjoyment. So if you know that's what it's going to be when you start the show, sure, that's fine. But if I'm listening to it and there's a pause for like a minute and no one can think of anything to say, you might want to consider taking out forty-five seconds of that at the very least.

PT: You know what's worse than a pause? When they laugh hysterically at themselves. And the laughter goes on and on, and you're just listening to it like, "It wasn't that funny." *(laughter)* Do you cut that out?

JJ: I'd disagree on that one. I just find laughter at its most natural, even if it's not the most earned laughter, it's such a beautiful thing to exist.

PT: That's sweet! *(laughter)* Very nice!

JJ: I'd rather just keep it.

AC: We have a question here, I think. Paula?

Audience member: This might be a dumb question, but how do you get a visa? Because I've heard that it's just a money thing, I've heard you have to have a job lined up in the States. I've also heard of people getting Cirque de Soleil visas, where it says you've worked for Cirque de Soleil *(laughter)*, so you can go, but you can't work anywhere except the circus, but at least... *(laughter)*

JJ: So all this time, Cirque de Soleil has just been a cover for people getting their visas.

PT: Well, there are a lot of scams, you know. And you can try to do it yourself, but it takes forever. Or you can throw down seven to ten grand.

JJ: Marriage? Can't you marry someone in the States?

PT: Oh, they're on to that. They're on to that big time. My friend was doing that. She had to bring in her wedding album, Christmas cards addressed to both of them. They're very investigative.

AC: *(to audience)* Yep.

Audience member: Back to the demos you were talking about. What should you include in a demo? What's the ideal demo to have?

PT: Well, it depends on what you've got. What have you got?

Audience member: Well, right now I have a Youtube channel, so would that work?

PT: You would want to cut together a trailer from that. And if you have some standup, just one joke from your standup. And your Youtube, and any sketch that you have. Hopefully something you've written.

AC: *(to audience)* Uh, yes, one here, and then one there.

Audience member: So essentially, just show the best of yourself.

PT: Absolutely. Yeah. And you can get advice on that. That's one of the things I'm doing with this workshop. I'll look at anything. You can e-mail it to me, and I'll take a look at it and tell you where you should cut it. It's hard for people to do it themselves, because they'll say, "Oh, I better put that scene in there, I'm really good in that one." But you've gotta keep it really moving and tight, because they won't watch to the end.

AC: *(to audience)* Spencer.

Audience member: When you're promoting yourself on social media, is there any advice you'd have? I know sometimes some people post so much about it that it might be too much in your face, and you're almost like, "Now I'm not gonna go to the show," because it's too aggressive. So with the social media aspect, especially with Facebook, what's your advice on how to do that properly and professionally?

PT: Again, keep it tight. Two lines: "I'm appearing at the Comedy Bar at 8 o'clock on Saturday. Join me!" Something like that. These friends of mine created a show called *Transparent* on Amazon. I don't know if anyone's seen it. They're all over Facebook, Youtube, everywhere. I've never seen anybody promote their own show like that.

JJ: The year after I graduated, I think you actually sponsored it, it was the Whoopsie's Laugh Lounge? It was with Liam Mack and Kaitlin Loftus. She filled out the room, and we're talking at least a hundred people in the room, and the way she did it was she messaged each person individually on Facebook.

AC: That was 2008, 2009.

JJ: Yeah. Facebook was more or less operating the same way it does now, it just wasn't as fast. But she made sure to message everybody, and even though you assumed she just copied and pasted the same message, the fact that she went out of her way just a little bit to be like, "Hey, I really would like you to come out to this," that personal touch did go a long way.

PT: That's a good idea.

JJ: Yeah. The other thing I want to say is that I think there needs to be a balance between using Facebook and then promoting yourself on Facebook. One of my friends is trying to do Youtube videos for some *Heroes of the Storm* game play because he's really good at it, and he tried to post it onto the Blizzard forums, which are the main forums, and they moved his post into one of the groups that no one ever reads. And the reason why is because he's not a user. He didn't post anything, he didn't contribute anything. He just showed up, dropped off his link, and hoped that he would get people to come to it. I did that when I started using Twitter. I would only post what I was doing, but I wasn't tweeting, I wasn't writing anything, I wasn't contributing at all. And again, it's that give and take. If you're only taking taking to promote yourself, but you're not writing anything interesting, you're not commenting on other people, you're not following and being followed, people will recognize what you're up to. Yeah, we all know we want to promote ourselves, but when they see that you're a person and you actually care about this too, that does also go a long way. I just started writing tweets, and people started following me. I'm almost at three hundred now. I don't even know these people that are following me. These are people in L.A., musicians. I don't know what it was, what tweet it was I wrote, but people just keep hitting "follow," and every time somebody follows me, I follow them back, every time.

AC: Great. One more question, then we'll talk a little bit more.

Audience member: This question's for Pam. My name's Spenser.

PT: Hi.

JJ: Hi, Spenser.

Audience member: I'm very interested in *SNL* in general. Kind of a two-parter. The first half would be, is there anybody currently on the show where you're directly involved in their life in any way? And what do you find they're looking for, currently?

PT: Men. Yeah. They've got a lot of really strong women, and this new guy, I forget his name, they just hired somebody, and there was a big outcry because he was apparently a racist and a misogynist. But they're looking for a good old boy who can play a lot of male parts. So that's what I've heard, anyway, right now. And no, I left the management business for a while. I got burned out. It's a lot of cheerleading and hand-holding, and late-night calls, people crying, "Why didn't I get that part?" "Um, it's 11:30." *(laughter)* I can't really do anything right now. My last client was Emily Spivey, the writer Emily Spivey, and now she's in L.A., and she's got a deal at Sony, and I don't know what else she's working on.

AC: She did *Up All Night*, right?

PT: That's right, yeah. Lorne keeps a pretty tight-knit, loyal group around him. Mike Shoemaker and I used to travel together looking at talent, and he ran *Fallon*, and now he's on *Seth Myers*. So he just keeps people. He's recycling them.

AC: Joe, we'll start with you. Can you just tell everybody a little bit about what you'll be doing in your workshop? And maybe you guys don't mind giving out your Facebook or e-mails if anyone has questions, because we're gonna be starting these

up shortly, pretty soon, so we just wanted to get everyone a sense of it, and then we'll get it moving, and we'll do the same thing with you, Pam, take some more questions and wrap it up.

JJ: OK, so what we want to do is get you guys to actually start coming in and doing a podcast. It's the Humber Comedy podcast. I am going to help you, when you're doing the show, give you notes on how you actually performed on it or hosted it. We're going to try to figure out what content we want to make, because we want this content to be worth it for you guys to put some extra time into. It's not curricular, I don't think.

AC: No, there are no grades. These are extra workshops we're offering people who are motivated to get that experience, and hopefully through that process, say with podcasting and with the business of comedy, maybe start to do their own podcasts.

JJ: And I'll be able to show you guys the entirety of it from start to finish. I can get you guys a bunch of resources. I know royalty-free music is something that I'm gonna need, so I have some of that for you. I'm going to show you guys some equipment that you can look out for if you want to invest in your own equipment, especially if you want to do it really cheap. We'll listen to a couple of podcasts, just to get some other examples of people who've done it well. I'm not even sure I'll have to do that, because you all know podcasting already. I will also be able to teach you guys how to edit too, which is a really important skill, and it's a great thing to just know how to do for yourself, and if somebody else wants to get you to do editing,

having that to offer is gonna be really good, so I'll be able to show you that. I think that's the majority of it. Can I... actually, I'll mention it afterwards.

PT: I'd take that workshop. Sounds really interesting, doesn't it?

AC: Yeah, I know. Great.

PT: So my thing is, you're your own business. You're an entrepreneur, as a writer/performer, or strictly a performer. And so you'll get the benefit of my years of management. I've also been a development executive, and produced for television. So I look at your material, I help you get your resume or bio together, headshots. We would definitely talk about social media and how to promote yourself and the work that you're doing, and then goal-setting. You can start to think, "OK, I want to make money at this. This is gonna be my livelihood." Then we're gonna sit and think, "Where do you want to be in five years," and that's what I always said to new clients, "Where do you want to be in five years?" Maya Rudolph always said, "I want to be starring in my own feature films." That was her thing. But a lot of people said, "I want to be on *Saturday Night Live*," and Emily Spivey was actually on *King of the Hill* as a showrunner, and her agent was furious. I got her out of her contract to get her on *SNL*, got her hired, and the agent was just livid. He said, "Do you know what kind of money she's gonna make on *SNL*?" "Yeah. But it's what she wants, it's her dream." So it's defining what your dream is, and then finding the right people to surround yourself with that can make that happen. So that's what I talk about.

AC: Great. I think we have time for a few more questions.

JJ: Actually, I can think of another mistake that people make.

AC: OK, one more mistake.

PT: Oh, you have a mistake?

JJ: I did, I did. This is a general thing, and again, it doesn't apply just to comedy, but it's the idea of when you're doing something, and you're not making it count, if you did fifty episodes, make every episode count. In my experience, and this is in other worlds too, so a lot of this comes into the games we play, but people will spend an hour on some of these, and just hate themselves and not want to do it, or think they've lost when it's already started, and then they're just throwing away the next hour of their life. The same thing happens if you don't start recording your episode and want it to be the best you can make it. So if I'm gonna show somebody fifty to a hundred episodes of something, I would rather show a solid hundred episodes where I tried on every one of them, rather than maybe have ten or fifteen pretty good episodes and then a bunch of crap. Don't settle for crap.

PT: Right, and people do that with scripts too, where they'll give me something to read and critique, because I've been a story analyst as well, and then they say, "OK, well this is my first draft." No. Give me your best piece, OK? If it's four drafts in, that's the one I want to see. Don't ask me for notes on a first draft that you know isn't ready, because I won't read anything again. And it's not just me. There are a lot of jokes about it, actually.

AC: Well, it's a sign when they send in the script and say, "Don't read it, I'm gonna send another one in." It's like, no.

PT: Yeah, "I just have to punch it up a bit." Oh, make it funny, you mean?

AC: *(to audience)* Uh, Chili?

Audience member: Obviously, you're no longer a casting director, but in the eighties and nineties Second City mainstage was still a big thing, and there weren't as many forums. Today, there are so many places. Is it a lot harder? Is it still a good thing to be on Second City mainstage? Is that still a place where people are looking, or is there another spot that's better now?

PT: They're all looking at the internet. Every big agency, every big studio and network, has a digital media department, and they're plucking them. And sometimes I'll see somebody and sent them an e-mail, or contact them on Facebook, and I find out that they're huge—four years ago. It's instant, like that. So I would say put up as much as you possibly can, because everybody's looking at that right now.

JJ: I also think, with how much easier it is to access media, video and audio content is that the demand for content is only growing. People have more time now to listen to things, to watch things. It's easier for them to do it. It used to be that all you could do was maybe listen to your Walkman. But now you can watch entire shows on the bus. There's so much more room now to actually make something.

PT: Did you ever see Shane Dawson? Anybody see him? He's huge now. Now he's doing music. But I met him when he was sixteen, and he did all those characters. I

thought he was really green, but he got a deal at MTV right away. Then he fired his agent. So they were livid. That's another mistake, by the way: pay your representatives, and have some loyalty. And he just took off. But there are some funny little things that I track. Did you ever see a Youtube video, "Honey Badger"? *(laughter)* OK, so I really liked that, but when I went after the guy to find out what he's doing, is he doing something else, is he looking for any representation, it was like, "Old news, lady!" You gotta be on it right away. You put things up, new things, and then take them down, and put up something else. But for people that want to be on SNL or on a sketch show, put up as many diverse characters as possible that you've written an original monologue for.

AC: One question here, and then at the back. Yeah?

Audience member: My question is for Joe. What recording and editing software did you use when you started, and what do you use now?

JJ: The device that I committed to for a very long time was the Zoom H2, just this one portable device. Four microphones, two on each end, and you would stick it down in the middle of the room and just get everybody to sit around it. For editing, I used Audacity, which is free editing software. Since then, I actually still use Audacity for the physical editing, because I'm really comfortable with that program, but for mastering I use Adobe Audition currently. For those of you who don't know, mastering just means you're making sure the sound quality is optimal, so you're cutting out any background noise, maybe trying to increase the bass, change some levels, that kind of thing. So I master on Audition, and then I use Audacity for the

physical editing. And then for the equipment, I actually did try using a mixing board with microphones not dissimilar to the setup that we have now, and I will say that the best setup you can do is to use condenser microphones, and put yourself in a good room. I am a bit more of a minimalist, which is essentially an intelligent conservative. So what I do is, I have the upgraded Zoom product, it's called the Zoom H2N. I only have one of them, I'm planning on getting another two or three, and these things record right into the device. So all I have to do is put one in front of each person, and then I take all the tracks and put them onto my computer afterwards. The reason why I like doing this more is there's a lot less feedback and a lot less power running through everything. With microphones you've got a lot of wires, things need to be plugged in. The Zoom H2N's are battery-operated, so if the power goes out in the middle of an episode, you're like, "Nobody panic, we can still talk." I actually almost lost a recording once because one of the microphones was plugged in, and then we just had the lights flicker, and half the track was gone because it didn't save when it happened. So that's what I would recommend using.

AC: At the back there.

Audience member: When are you hoping to start these workshops?

AC: We're gonna get them going very shortly. We've got some time set aside, so I'd say within the next week or two, probably. *(to audience)* Yep.

Audience member: Question for Pam and also Joe. You say that it's just good business to be nice to anybody, but I noticed that sometimes enemies are

unavoidable. I bet that agent you said was furious with you and the writer who used to be on *King of the Hill*, was he your enemy at that point?

PT: No, I just cut him off. You don't have to be friends with everybody.

JJ: Yeah, there are some people I hate in this city. I'm not gonna name names, but there are some people I really hate.

Audience member: How do you handle enemies while still doing good business?

PT: There was an entertainment attorney that I hated. I just said, "Lose my number for a while, OK? I don't want to talk to you." But when I needed him, he reviewed a contract for me for free. So it's just balance, you know? It's how you play it. There are people you're never gonna want to see again, and there are very few people I've met that I would never talk to again, but they're out there. You can't be nice to everybody, especially not if you're representing someone. Sometimes you have to be the bad guy.

JJ: You do see in a lot of groups, even in the triple-A Hollywood movies, is that people do tend to stick together. I'm a huge Christopher Nolan fan, and he recasts a lot of the same people in his movies. I was really surprised that Cillian Murphy wasn't in *Interstellar*. I was like, "He could've been the doctor! He got Topher Grace, are you kidding me?" But Adam Sandler, he has his crew he's always with, and all his buddies, they do their movies together. I heard some grunts in there, and I respect that. But worry more about the people that you are friends with. Make them your family. When you're all coming up, you should all be holding hands. You're all

bringing each other up together. So find people that are kind of on the same level as you, so if any one of you can get even a little bit ahead, everybody's bringing everybody with them.

PT: Well, Mike Myers burned a ton of bridges in Hollywood. He lives in New York now, and he's very loyal to his friends, but there were a lot of people that wouldn't talk to him, and after *Love Guru* bombed (*laughter*), everybody thought he was such an asshole. So he went through some changes. He had to mature a little bit as well. I think he's just really selective. He had a deal on Broadway to do *Austin Powers* the musical with Elvis Costello and Burt Bacharach. He walked. He said, "I don't like those producers, I'm not working with them." Of course, he's got fifty million dollars in the bank.

JJ: So he's got leverage.

PT: Easier to walk when you've got...

AC: You don't want to let other people decide how you conduct yourself. It's like if you're playing tennis against someone who cheats, you don't cheat, you just simply don't cheat. You just accept that they're cheating. I write about driving, and in NASCAR, which I'm sure you all follow religiously, they have a very good saying, which is there are only two kinds of drivers: those who've hit the wall, and those who are gonna hit the wall. So that's probably the best way to look at your career. No matter how high you get, sooner or later you're gonna get it. And when you do, if you spend a lot of time going after people, then it's all gonna come back. (*to audience*) Yes.

Audience member: I guess this question is for Pam. Would you ever work with someone who is a great talent, but they've been a mess, like they've had drug problems or they're moody, or something like that?

PT: Bye bye. Bye bye. You can't work with that.

Audience member: It's just that I've heard about a lot of people who get *SNL* who have drug problems. Does that happen after people get a big break, or are they so talented that...

PT: Well, Chris Farley did.

AC: But he had great work habits, didn't he? He had a drug problem, but great work habits. If you can drink yourself silly and take drugs and get up and make your call and do what you have to do, no one's gonna care. They'll care for *you*, they'll worry about you personally, but ultimately it's, can you do the work? The problem is equating that behaviour with the work, when in fact it probably stopped him from doing even better work, and a lot of the people who have long careers, I don't know their personal lives particularly, but Mike Myers is a pretty straight shooter.

PT: He's straight.

AC: He might like a couple bottles of Molson Ex once in a while, but he's not going crazy. Most people with longevity, they go through a phase, and then they stop, because you can't continue it.

PT: Yeah, it kills you. Chris Farley had three years of sobriety on *Tommy Boy*. I went down and visited him on the set, and he looked great, and he was laughing about

some hooker he brought up to his hotel room (*laughter*), and how soon after that did he die from an overdose? It wasn't very long after that. And he had three years. So if a person has that kind of predilection, they're not gonna be able to turn up to a meeting, or they sleep in, or they're gonna be calling you drunk in the middle of the night. I can't deal with that. You work too hard to get somebody known, and then to have them blow it for you? No.

AC: But I think there are definitely a lot of comedians who have idiosyncracies and quirks, if you want to put it that way. Gilbert Gottfried, who we had here last year, Steven Wright. It kind of goes with the territory. It's just, can you conduct yourself? It's true for writers too.

JJ: You do have to think about your long-term strategy too. I think you can be very overwhelmed when you leave the program. You're at a point where you have so many options, and there are so many things you can do. You're not even sure if you're gonna make the right choice, but like you said, if you know where you see yourself in five years, ten years, that's plenty of time to get revenge on your enemies, for sure. And also have a career, too.

AC: And you know what? Your enemies honestly don't give a shit, man. No one really cares. No one cares about you. Not *you*, but the reality is, everyone else is worried about themselves, and I've often said, if other people suffering could make me happier, I would be delighted, because there's lots of suffering. I'd be super ecstatic. But someone doing badly, like your enemy blew a set, maybe you kind of smirk, and then you don't care. It's just not enough of a thing. You're better off just being

positive, and I know that sounds kind of corny, but particularly in this business, you've gotta be the kind of person you want to hang around. And most people want to hang around someone who's motivated, excited about what they're doing, doing something...

PT: Funny.

AC: Funny, engaged. They don't wanna be around someone who's not doing anything, complaining, spreading shitty rumours on Facebook or whatever it is. And I'm not talking about anyone here, obviously, but it's very basic social hygiene. Just be a nice person.

PT: And the comedy community is pretty tight. So a lot of us know everybody. And so if one person starts saying things about you, that can be detrimental, especially if it's on Facebook. What about the guy who stole jokes? People were outraged.

AC: Well, don't put anything on Facebook or Twitter, or anything contentious ever.

PT: It went on for weeks. And I got in trouble, because I said, "Oh come on, a couple of jokes, shut up, you guys." And then the comics, the comments I got for that one. "We work hard for our jokes, those jokes are our living."

AC: It's all bullshit. *(laughter)* That stuff just drives me nuts. It was bad enough in the eighties and nineties, the comics backbiting one another, and now they have a forum to do it twenty-four hours a day. It's disgusting.

PT: "You stole my joke." Stealing jokes is...

AC: Write another joke.

PT: Right, exactly, that's what I said too.

AC: Get over it, or go fight him. *(laughter)*

PT: Go fight him.

AC: Yeah, go fight him. Old school. Punch him out! *(laughter, applause)* I'm just saying, it works! You stole my joke, pow!

JJ: You know, Craig Fay, he was in my year, and somebody actually made a website called ihatecraigfay.com.

AC: That's just mean.

JJ: Craig Fay loves it, by the way. He's sharing it.

PT: It's pretty funny.

AC: The reality is, and I would say this, it's interesting, when you're making fun of someone in your act, they are human beings. So it's just important to recognize that. I know it doesn't feel like it, but you should know you're hurting someone. It's OK to do, if that's what you want to do, but people are always surprised. They'll be like, "I started a website saying this guy's an asshole, and I talk about what an asshole he is in my act, and I saw him, and he was really upset!" And it's like, yeah. Because it hurts. I write for a newspaper, and I get mostly good comments, but you also get wackos who write the vilest, most hateful things. And I don't really care, but it's not like you don't think, "Well, ugh, OK."

PT: Signed “Anonymous.”

AC: Yeah. They’re generally anonymous.

PT: Well, you saw what happened with the fat-shaming recently, and that girl lost her job. She lost her job on a feature film, and she lost her representation. She tried to defend herself, and nobody was having any of it.

AC: She went on *The View*.

PT: Yeah, but it didn’t work.

AC: I didn’t do it. All right, one last question and then we’ll wrap it up. We’ve done our hour, and I think we’ve had a great time. Do you guys want to keep your e-mails private, or do you want to give them out to these crazy nutbars?

PT: Well, you can find anybody on Facebook.

AC: Facebook, yeah, there you go. Find Pam on Facebook, find Joe on Facebook. We’ll be sending out an e-mail shortly announcing the first process, and we’re looking forward to doing it.

JJ: Yeah, I do want to mention, since I’ve got everybody here, I’ve already talked about this with Andrew, but aside from what we’re gonna be doing at the college, I’m also receptive to hearing some ideas, if you guys have ideas for shows you want to produce. This is not gonna be related to Humber at all, this is a completely different thing. We can talk about that, if you guys are interested. There may be

costs involved, because this is my profession, so we will have to negotiate something, but I'm just letting you know that's an option, if you're interested.

AC: *(to audience)* Yes, one question here.

Audience member: Sorry, what are your last names?

PT: Pam Thomas.

Jl: Ianni. I-A-N-N-I.

AC: Great, well thank you guys very much. This has been a lot of fun, and we're looking forward to these workshops. *(applause)*

PT: Thank God!

AC: Hot, eh?

PT: Yes!