

Andrew Clark: So I'll just introduce our guest, who you've been anticipating for weeks now. To my far right, the director, a member of Human Giant, the brilliant, brilliant sketch group and writer and former child actor Jason Woliner.

Clapping

To my immediate right, Chris Elliott.

Clapping

Andrew Clark: So this is our second go through today, where we are going to needle them with questions, but I'm just gonna start out a little bit... Since we just watched Eagleheart, maybe we'll start there. Can you guys talk about the beginning of the show? I know we talked a little bit about that earlier, about how you came to be involved and how the show has, sort of, progressed over the last few years, the three seasons.

Jason Woliner: Yeah, it was... The pilot was written by these two guys, Michael Koman and Andrew Weinberg, who were Conan writers for like, ten years. They had this idea to do a show that was about the making of, like, a terrible action show. And then we... they wrote a pilot and then I read it, I didn't really know those guys and then I kinda came on to direct it. Then we found out that Chris liked it and we shot it and it didn't come out great. There were just things we wanted to change about it. So we wound up... when we did the show we threw everything out and kind of, the three of us, Me, Michael and Andrew, we kinda wrote it from scratch and wrote all the episodes together. And wrote for a lot more for Chris, or what we kinda wanted to do with, what would be like a weird action show starring Chris, and kind of in line with his other stuff.

Andrew: When you are approaching that character, do you have a method to creating that kind of performance? **Chris Laughs** What's your approach?

Chris Elliott: Oh Christ no. Have you seen any of my work? No, I have absolutely no method whatsoever Andrew. I was, though, attracted to, you know, the original script because it was, you know, playing a tough guy and I thought "Well, it's time for me to change my image a little bit."

Jason: And that did not work.

Chris: That did not work at all.

Jason: So back...

Chris: Back to the old stuff

Jason: Old Reliable.

Chris: I guess I was trying to do a little bit more of a straighter character than I had been doing on something like Get a Life or some of the goofier kind of Chris Elliot stuff that I have done. Certainly in the last season of Eagleheart I think played him a little bit straighter and little more deadpan...

Jason: Yeah, the one we watched...

Chris: A little more Clint Eastwood-esqe or something. But, that one I think I'm a little goofier in then...

Jason: Yeah, this and like, we did one about the blues, where he falls in love with like, the blues, which is like the Jim Belushi version of the blues. But, uhh, those are the best episodes, where you're just funny in them, like I think, that's the ones I watch. Those are the most fun to watch.

Chris: Any time I do anything, if I try to change anything that I'm out of my comfort zone, I tend to work myself back into my comfort zone. And even if I look different, if it's a different wig or whatever, it still starts to work it's way back to what I'm most comfortable doing, which has worked for me for almost 30 years. So, I like to tell myself that I'm a versatile actor, but I'm really doing the same crap over and over again.

Andrew: Can you talk about... you've had a great career, you still have a great career. Can you talk that beginning, at Letterman, and, we talked a little bit about that, but...

Chris: Right, well, I started working for David Letterman. I was hired when I was 20 years old, and I was hired as a runner. I actually almost didn't take the job, because I had been working at public television in New York City as a production assistant. Someone told me there's this job at Letterman, there's a production assistant job that's gonna open up at this new show called Late Night with David Letterman. I was sorta promised that job, and I went for the interview and I had quit my public television job and that job was taken. All they could offer me was a runner, which meant I was really just a go-for and they were going to pay me \$100 less that I was making at public television to take the job, and I almost didn't take it. My Dad, who was a comedian in the business actually talked me into taking it. So I took the job thinking, you know, it's gonna get me my foot in the door and maybe I could become a writer on Saturday Night Live if I get into that building, that 30 Rock in New York. But, it was the best decision I made because pretty soon after that Dave took notice of how goofy I looked at put me on TV pretty quickly and I started to develop this persona.

Andrew: Was your first on-camera appearance Lederhosen or something? Is that correct?

Chris Laughs

Chris: Yeah, the first time I was on TV, was the first show that Dave did of Late Night was the... it was an Oktoberfest and he did a tour of the studio and they went into the control room and there was a big celebration going on there and I was in lederhosen and had a big beer in my hand and uhh. No beard yet, I think it's the one appearance I ever made in my life without a beard and I think I probably saw it and realized 'Oh God, I have no chin' and that prompted me to grow a beard.

Andrew: And how did those on-air... you mentioned earlier about slipping Dave jokes. Is that sort of... how did it build towards....

Chris: Yeah, I was... he was pretty open. It was a real small group of people back then and he was open to anybody giving him jokes. I would write some jokes and give them to him, and he used a couple of them. He also would bring me out on the remotes. Him and Merrill Markoe, who was his girlfriend at the time and helped create that early show. She was a big supporter of mine and she helped me tremendously. They would bring me out on the remotes that he would do, the taped pieces, and sometimes they would put me in those taped pieces. I remember a tour of the New York City Children's Zoo and he was doing jokes at various places. There was one sign that was warning people to stoop, because it was a low doorway, and he had me stand under the sign 'stoop' and apparently I was one of the exhibits, I was the 'stoop' and he would use me in those ways. Eventually, after he used a couple of my jokes, I guess, I did a submission, and about 2 years into getting people coffee, they made me a writer.

Andrew: Was conspiracy guy your first running character?

Chris: I guess so... or maybe the... yeah, it might have been. I did a series of these running characters on the show and uhh, that, Dave used to do viewer mail, where he would read viewer mail and answer the

viewers mail with a funny answer and somebody pointed some discrepancy out on the show and said “What’s the conspiracy Dave?” or something like that and I, you know, the answer, I wasn’t a writer yet, some other writer wrote an answer where I popped up out of the audience and then said “Yeah, there’s a huge conspiracy going on” and I was dragged out and beaten up and made to be quiet and that worked well, so we did it again the next week. He had other writers writing for me, but then once I became a writer all I did was really basically write for myself, at that point, and try to get myself on the air. But then, I started writing these other characters, and they usually did kind of involve the audience.

Andrew: Well, you mentioned too that a lot of them would come out of the audience; you mentioned that the audience likes to see itself, and you watch old... they really do, when you said that. People would always be waving, it was quite a novelty to be on camera.

Chris: Yeah, well, I remember I did this character called “The Guy Under The Seats” and it was... originally, we did it, the first time we did it, it was, the audience was like this and I came from around these bleachers and talked to Dave, and it went alright, but it didn’t really play that well and I didn’t know why it didn’t play that well cause the jokes were ok, but it didn’t play that well. And then it suddenly occurred to me that the audience really likes to see itself, so I should come out of the audience and if I live under the bleachers, let’s cut a hatch in the aisle and I’ll climb out from underneath the bleachers, which we did. The next time we did the bit, I opened a hatch and climbed out from underneath the bleachers and the audience was on camera and they went crazy and it seemed like the bit was a huge hit, so I got to do it several times.

Andrew: Was that... you wanted A1 sauce.

Chris: Was that? Boy, Andrew, you’re a stalker.

Audience Laughs

Andrew: I do my research. I do my research.

Chris: Oh my god. A1 sauce? Ok, if you say so. I’m just going to move over here a little bit more.

Andrew: Let’s talk a little bit about this and then... yeah. The idea of the way that... It seemed like a lot of the humour you were doing was coming out of these weird awkward moments. Like the guy under the seats comes out, does his bit, which lasts about 30 seconds or so, and then the rest of the sketch is you trying to get back under the stairs while Dave kind of passive aggressively works you into a lather that ends up with you cursing at him.

Chris: Yeah, it would sort of evolve into him eventually making me snap. It was a strange sort of thing where, the audience, I seemed to be... A lot of the people who liked my stuff seemed to think that I was sort of the voice of the audience, like I was saying stuff that the audience wanted to say to Dave. Even though I was doing it in a psychotic way, much like you and the A1 sauce. **Audience Laughs** But, it was kind of a rapport that Dave and I had up in the office. You know, he would ask me to get him coffee and I’d go “Ok Dave, I’ll get you your f***ing coffee” and walk off and get it for him, and he would laugh at that and that attitude just worked it’s way onto the show, and he loved that. He loved to bring something organic like that onto the show and, in fact, if it wasn’t real, he didn’t like it. Our chemistry, I think, always felt right because it was very organic. It was stuff that made us laugh off camera as well as on camera.

Andrew: Jason, were you a Chris Elliot stalker like me growing up?

Jason: I was more Get A Life era, because I was pretty young when a lot of the Dave bits were happening, but yeah, I would watch Get A Life when I was like 12 with my Dad and then we went and saw Cabin Boy opening weekend in a theater in Queens. It was a snowstorm right?

Chris: Right.

Jason: Yeah.

Chris: You were the only ones in the theater, I've heard this story a thousand times

Jason: No, there was a sleeping homeless guy. He smelled like urine, and he was also in the theater.

Andrew: You started out as a child performer? Child actor?

Jason: Yeah, I acted from when I was about 4 to when I was around 12 or 13. I was in a movie called Weekend at Bernie's, I don't know if anyone ever heard of that **Audience Cheering** It's not... It's not good. It doesn't hold up. It's not as good as...

Chris: Cabin Boy?

Jason: No, Weekend at Bernie's. Yeah, I did some stuff. It was good. I didn't get famous. I remember thinking it was good I didn't get famous

Chris: Sit down!

Jason: Walk out number 1

Chris: And it begins. You had to bring up Weekend at Bernie's. That's what you get. Didn't happen to Cabin Boy.

Jason: Maybe one of his grand-parents was dragged around and puppeted after they were dead. That's why it offended him.

Chris: Sorry, what?

Andrew: We were talking about... Again, I'm gonna mention this again. Cabin Boy, I think, and we talked about this, has been revisited. It has a cult following, and it's funny. We screened it right here in this very room, and it got a lot of laughs.

Jason: Yeah, it's great. I think. It is one of my favourite movies.

Chris: Yeah, I mean, it was not when it came out. It was... you know. And it is gratifying now that people have looked at it again. But at the time it was vilified. I mean it ruined my career and Adam Resnick's, who was my writing partner at the time and still is my best friend. But for both of us, we really couldn't, and haven't worked together since Cabin Boy. We actually, you know this story, but after Cabin Boy opened and closed, we figured, you know, what can we do next. I was so naïve I just thought, "Well, ok, that movie opened and bombed, but they'll let us do another one." And, umm, that's apparently not how it works in Hollywood. So we got together an idea for a show and we went and we pitched it. We went to, I forget where it was. I think it was NBC. They liked the pitch and they bought it. We got these calls in the parking lot. They bought the pitch in the room, they want the show, this is great. And we were ecstatic, we were so happy. And then Adam got this call later from his agent and there was one executive higher up who wasn't in the room, and found out it was the two of us who had pitched the show and she said "ooh, not those guys. No no no no, forget it." We realized at that point that Cabin Boy had really done some major damage to us, and it seriously scarred us, almost emotionally, for a long time.

Jason: Do you remember what the show was about?

Chris: It was about a dead guy that we bring to the beach, and then kind of walk him around like a puppet.

Audience Laughs

Jason: That's probably why they didn't go for it. It had already been done.

Chris: You know, I don't remember. I seriously don't. And it probably was a really great idea and I don't... I have no idea what it was. I have no idea what that show was. That's too bad. It probably was a really good show, if they bought it in the room.

Andrew: You're an author; you've published books as well. Do you approach writing humour for a book differently than you would do anything for TV or film?

Chris: Yeah, I mean I don't consider myself a writer, in terms of comedy writer, like Jason is. I can write books. For some reason it easy for me to sit at my desk at home and without a timeline, without the pressure of a network to give me notes and all that and feel comfortable writing long form. I'm not comfortable writing, even sketches anymore, certainly not scripts. I'm way more comfortable writing a long story. So I don't really... and I'm not even sure I'm that comfortable writing long form anymore if you read the reviews of my last book. So, I have a love hate thing with writing. Whenever I do write though, I like writing with other people, except for writing books, I like writing by myself until I get a first draft, then I like people to read it.

Andrew: Then you submit it and get notes from people?

Chris: Well, I like my friends to read it, and to see what they think, and you know, help me out and all that. Like, at Letterman it was more fun for me to write with Adam then it was for me to sit by myself and think up things to do.

Andrew: Let's see if we have a question from the audience. Anybody? Yeah, right there.

Audience Member: So, there has been like 3 generations, I guess, of Elliots in showbusiness. I was just wondering, did you, as a 20 year old, feel pressure from your own father and what kind of pressure are you putting on Abby? Or like, does she.... Oh, there's a microphone in my face.

Audience Laughs

Andrew: We do actually teach mic technique.

Chris: Ok, next question. Umm, I didn't feel any pressure from my dad whatsoever and did not pressure either of my daughters to go into it. Both of them are in it, both of them are actresses and.... No, my dad... I think it was clear that I was gonna go into it. I come from a family of 5 kids, I have a brother, 3 sisters. They all sort of dabbled in it. I'm the youngest and I ended up sticking with it, but it... I never felt pressure from him. My dad has never been the kind of guy to talk about what he does for a living and, uh... is almost embarrassed by what he does for a living. I'm kind of the same way. Rest assured, I goof around like an idiot around the house and did raising my kids as well, so Abby was around me being an idiot around the house a lot and she has an incredible sense of humour, but her, you know. I never pressured her. The only bit of advice, actually, I ever gave Abby would be when she was offered SNL, Saturday Night Live, was I... because nobody gave me this... had ever given me any advice in my career... well, actually Dave did give me one bit of advice, but... I told her she didn't have to take it. I told her "just don't feel like you have to do it." Because she was, she was my age. She was 21 when they offered her the show. And I said "just don't feel like you have to do it if you don't feel like you're ready to do it... if you don't wanna absolutely do it."

And she said "Well, of course I want to do it." And she did, and she was great, but I just wanted her to know that she didn't have to.

Andrew: And the David Letterman advice would be...?

Chris: That's none of your business

Audience Laughs

Andrew: Ok

Chris: It had nothing to do with showbusiness. It was about how I was wearing my pants

Andrew: Ok. Another question?

Chris: No, no. His advice, which is actually... which is, it's sort of like, maybe it's too obvious I guess, but for me it made a lot of sense, because I was doing very odd, very strange comedy. But his advice was not to change it, not to sell it out, not to adapt it for anybody, and I've, to the best of my ability, I've stayed true to that. I don't know that I've that I have stayed true to it. I've done jobs, as anybody will have to do, for money, and you all will have to do that as well, and that's selling out to a degree, but it's not also, because you have to survive. But he's... that was the best piece of advice I ever got, was just, you know, even if you're not getting work don't feel like what you're doing is bad. It's what you do. That's you.

Andrew: Another question? Right there. Can you just pass the microphone down?

Audience Member: Hi

Chris: Hi

Jason: Hey

Audience Member: Jason, the third season of Eagleheart is distinctly different, it's like body-horror almost...

Jason: Yeah

Audience Member: ... which is awesome, but like, how did you... it's just it came to a very different show. Could you talk about that for a bit?

Jason: Yeah, we get bored really quick, and want to keep changing stuff, and doing something different. We never wanted the show to be a spoof or parody so that... we were kind of fighting in the first season. The second season, we felt good about it. We felt like we figured out how to do these little contained episodes and then the third season we knew going in that we wanted to do one big storyline and all that really disturbing stuff, we just wanted... I think that was just where our heads were at. We wanted to make it sadder and darker and weirder. It's kinda like a drama by the end and I think that was just, I don't know. It's hard to say why, it was just making us laugh a lot and we were just like... we were just trying to surprise ourselves and take this show in a new direction, that you wouldn't necessarily expect. We just kept pushing what we liked about it. And then it just like... throughout the show it just kinda because a clearing house for anything we wanted to try, so like walls becoming alive, I think that could work in this universe and we could have a shootout where blood starts flying out of the walls. We don't really analyze it too much, we just try do... follow what we want to see.

Andrew: Another question? Right there.

Audience Member: Hey Guys. Chris, how did you come up with the character you played in Scary Movie 2?

Chris Laughs

Chris: Umm, in Poltergeist 2, there's that guy, you know, if you've ever seen that who comes to the door and he's the preacher who's the ghost from, you know, who sings, you know *silly voice* "Can I sing to ya? Alright, I'll sing to ya then. God is in his holy temple.", which I always thought was creepy, that that guy was actually pretty good. They actually left it up to me, they said "Whatever you want to do." I think the hand, the little hand, was their idea, but everything else, the southern stuff and stuff I came up with, but the hand was written in already, which I was really happy for, because I had it in my contract that I, cause I was working on a sitcom at the time and here's... that was a little bit I guess a sell-out, that movie. But it wasn't... it was fun. It was really fun to do that movie, and I think I was funny in it. But, I was doing a TV show at the time, and I had to... I could only do a certain amount of days, so if they went over, they had to pay me more per day, and then every time I came on set this special effect... they had a big budget for this movie because sequels get big budgets if the first one is a success. So the sequel had this huge budget. But every time I got on the set, this little hand didn't work. Cause it was this big apparatus that went around me, you wouldn't believe... They had like 4 little hands. One was a puppet, and one was like, Bruce the shark, with like 3 guys working it, and hydraulics and stuff just to do that. And it just never worked, so they kept having to add days and send me home and all that. I was making so much money on that. And I was just "Aww, damn, the hand doesn't work. Ok"

Andrew: Yeah, right at the back?

Audience Member: Umm, Chris, if I can call you that...

Chris: No, you can't

Audience Member: I'm curious about your season on Saturday Night Live. You came in at a really big era where there were lots of big names, Mike Myers, Chris Farley. How did you feel as a performer, and was it hard to get the things you wanted on the air. Obviously you only did spend that one season, so was that difficult for you as a performer, and such a broad performer, or did you enjoy that?

Chris: Umm, no, I didn't enjoy it, and yeah, it was very difficult. I had a relationship with Saturday Night Live for many years, or, with the people there, with Lorne Michaels and I had opportunities to go there earlier in my career. I went there late, I went there when I was 35, I think. I think I was... yeah. 35... 95... is that when I was there? You know me, more than I do.

Jason: Yeah, I think it was around there, yeah.

Chris: You're right, it was a huge cast, and yeah. I was not used to writing for myself anymore when I went there. I didn't realize that was gonna be the expectation of me when I got there. I thought "Ok, I'll go there and they'll throw me some sketches and it'll be fun." And I went there, and that's not how it works. And all these big stars: Chris Farley, Adam Sandler, David Spade. All these guys where there late into the night, writing sketches for themselves, which they would basically have to audition at this table read on Wednesdays, which is part of the process, which you have to do. But they had been doing it for 7 years already, from when they first started in their business. I had been in movies, I had had my own TV series. And I got there and I was just... honestly it was all my fault. I got there and just realized, not that I was too good for this, but just that I didn't have the "Eye of the Tiger" for this, to put it in terms that are, you know, way too old to use at this point. That what I realized right away, was that I'm too old for this. This is a young man's game. This should be your first job out of the gate. You need to be hungry, you have to be willing to be there all night. You have to be willing to compete with your fellow actors and get bigger laughs than them so that your sketch gets on instead of them and I hated that. I grew up watching shows

like The Carol Burnett Show, this sketch show, where you knew that every actor was being written for every week. It wasn't like these actors had to come up with these sketches for themselves, and that's a totally different set of talents, and a set that I'm not good at. And I'm definitely not good at competing with other people, especially on a comedic level. On a physical level, I think that I can compete with anybody. But, comedically I'm... ugh.

Andrew: How did that compare to say, the Letterman writers room? Was that a more... or less competitive, or more open environment? Or was it...

Chris: Well, it was less competitive in the sense that you were writing for one person, and I was really the only person writing for myself. I wasn't, I mean other writers were writing with me, but I was the only performer/writer on the show. So I wasn't really competing with anybody for airtime on Letterman, and I guess there was some... with the other writers there was some competition about how many jokes they got on in Dave's opening remarks or what bits they got on that week. But for me, if I got on once a week with a bit of my creation, or with Dave, and it worked, I was contributing to the show, and that's all I needed to do.

Andrew: It seems maybe they have a very specialized writers too. There wasn't like you're saying, everybody doing the same thing. These guys are doing monologues or...

Chris: Right, I don't know how it works now, but back then, even though everybody would jump in on a Top-Ten list or everybody would jump in on pieces that were, you know, like small town news, and everybody would come up with jokes. In general, people would find their niches and work on those.

Andrew: Did you ever think that it would have been nice to be part of a group, like say Jason, you're coming out of a group, your comedy's coming out of a group thing. I'm just wondering what that was like for you, and I'm wondering, Chris, if you ever thought that would have been nice, or a partner or a duo, like you were working on your own a lot of the time.

Chris: A partner, I would have liked. I mean, Adam Resnick is my best friend, and we were the closest to being writing partners, certainly at Letterman, and then Get A Life, and Cabin Boy and a couple of other projects. A performing partner, definitely. My dad had a partner. He was part of a comedy team called Bob and Ray, and his partner Ray... I always thought I'm funnier playing off of somebody than I am by myself. In terms of a group, I was in an improv troupe when I was younger than you guys... I was in high school, I started an... I was in an improv troupe in New York City and I hated it. I just hated it. I hated it because it wasn't written. I hated it because I didn't know what was going to happen. Everything about improv, I was scared about. I was like "But, I know, yeah we're supposed to be out on a wire here, and that's what's exciting about it, but at the same time, I don't know that I'm gonna get a laugh here, so I don't wanna go out there." But I did, but I found myself, every night in this improv troupe when we would go and perform, falling into what worked the night before, and trying to repeat it. I think I kind of realized at that point that I'm probably better off trying to be a writer than even a performer cause I'm... I'm... A lot of people I'm... I'm talking about myself here, and I'm sorry.

Jason: You're supposed to.

Audience Laughs

Chris: I hate talking about myself.

Jason: What did you think this is about? A lot of people what?

Chris: No, I've read that people think I'm like, fearless. That I've done like really...

Jason: Oh no, you're like, deeply afraid.

Chris: I am, thank you.

Jason: Oh, yeah.

Chris: No, I am! My comedy is fearless, and all that, and it's not. It's really safe, I think.

Jason: No, it's fearless in a way that you're really unafraid to make yourself look like an idiot or repulsive or really unlikeable. In a way that...

Chris: But that... but you're wrong, that's really safe. Because that is a guaranteed laugh. For me to take off my shirt. Folks, here it comes... It's a guaranteed laugh. And that's the safety net.

Jason: I don't know. If that were all you do, that would be one thing, but it's part of a much bigger more...

Chris: Oh shaddap.

Jason: Don't you think? You're not just pulling your pants down. There are people who do that, but, people pay good money to see that.

Chris: That's been done.

Jason: No but when... when I... When we're promoting Eagleheart, and we went with you... Chris was doing Conan, and me, Michael, and Andrew went over there, and I saw how much preparation and thought Chris would put into a panel segment on a talk show. Like, it's clear when you watch that Letterman stuff that they're all written, but it was just interesting to see how much, yeah like every line, every moment is just written. There's a lot of value in that.

Chris: Well, yeah that why... I think a lot of people thought even that when I was doing the Letterman stuff that a lot of it was just off the cuff. I remember that, people saying "Do you guys just come up with that when you're talking with Dave?" And I'm like "Well, of course not, no." Not only is it written, it was rehearsed. We went through it, and Dave would go "Let's lose that joke" and I'd go "Ok." And we'd run through it a couple of times.

Jason: Which I think, you know, obviously, there is so much great improv in the community, and it's great and there's great communities all over, but there's something nice about putting value in writing, and really... cause we would work hard, and really sweat over ideas, and make sure each moment is as funny as it can be.

Chris: Right, well a lot of good writing comes out of improv too. I mean, a lot of... you know, Adam and I wrote some scripts for Get A Life, but then in general, I was in the room for all the writing for Get A Life, in the writers room, when I could be if I wasn't down shooting. And a lot of it was me... somebody coming up with an idea and then me popping up and riffing on it, or acting it out or whatever. Get A Life was kind of physical, there was a lot of physical stuff, and that would end up in the script. So, I'm not putting down improv, I'm all for it. I'm just not good at it, you know, in front of an audience. I'm fine by myself in my room, improvising.

Andrew: Another question? Ok, right back there.

Audience Member: Hello. When I first heard that you were coming here, I immediately thought the guy from Everybody Loves Raymond.

Chris: Right.

Audience Member: So, my question would be...

Chris: Ray Romano?

Audience Member: Hopefully. Who are you lovin'?

Chris: Alright, that's it. Sorry to disappoint yet again.

Audience Member: But umm, my question would be, from, like... what do you think are the pros and cons of working on a sitcom from other different types of comedy mediums?

Chris: Uhh, well. The pros for actors are, umm, and it's probably different for writers, but for actors, the schedule is really sweet. It's a really nice schedule. And this depends a little bit on what the show is, but in general it's not a hard week. It's a really easy week, and the money is very very good if the show is successful. The cons are it's really hard to get on a good one, that, where you feel artistically, creatively satisfied with what you're doing. And if it's a show in front of a live audience, a multi-camera show, there's a lot of, sort of, rewriting done in front of the audience. Like, you'll do a scene, and it'll play ok, and then the network will be in the green room, and they'll say "Ok, well, that joke didn't work" or whatever and then the writers will punch it up and they will have standby jokes. And a joke that the writers had worked on really hard in the writers room, that didn't play well because of that particular audience didn't get it that night has to be substituted for a sort of lame joke, that the audience goes crazy for and 9 times out of 10, that's the joke that ends up in the the sitcom on the air, cause the audience went crazy for it. So, to me, it's... A) It's better to do a show without an audience, I think, a live audience. The one camera format or multi-cam... we did Get A Life, my show, without an audience, but did it multi-camera to make it seem like there's an audience. So, I don't know, I guess to me the pros are the schedule and the money, and the cons are just, creatively it's not... you're not doing Shakespeare. You're not doing something that's really gonna reward you. Unless, you know, I mean, again, there's exceptions. There are some good shows out there, for sure. But they're hard to come by.

Audience Member: Thank you

Chris: You're very welcome.

Andrew: Another question? Over there. Pass it along. We gotta get another mic.

Audience Member: Hi there. I actually have a question for Jason. I'm a really big Human Giant fan...

Jason: Oh.

Audience Member: ... and I, yeah. I'm just wondering, when did you actually get involved with the other guys in the show. Where you just there for the TV show, or were you involved with them before that?

Jason: No, it was... the weird thing about that was that it was never a sketch group before we had a show. I was just... I had dropped out of college and I was living in New York and making a lot of stuff on my own, and then Aziz was kind of... he was just, like, doing stand-up around New York but no one really knew who he was yet and the other two guys: Rob and Paul, were performing at ECB, at the ECB theater a lot and then... and I was just making stuff on my own, and then Aziz got this weekly show, like he would do a show every Monday and have a different host and on the first week he and Rob Huebel did this bit where they just improvised. So they had this stack of kid's headshots and kind of made up stories about the kids, and then... Aziz and I kind of knew each other, and he just emailed me and asked if I would help them film this thing. So that was like... I think that was like, the second time he'd ever been on camera for anything, and we just shot it in a friend's office. And then he and Paul Scheer wanted to do a thing about magicians, so we just shot that, so it's all, there's no crew and no production value or anything, we just did it on our own, and it was before you would even watch videos on the internet. It was like, right before... so basically we made two videos... we made like 3 videos, and then Lazy Sunday happened, the Lonely Island thing, and then suddenly YouTube blew up and everybody wanted short comedy video things. And MTV came to... we just like... we're like "Oh, we'll call it Human Giant." And then very quickly MTV was like "Would you like to do a pilot?" And so, the 4 of us had never... we'd been in the same room, but we'd never written

together, like the 4 of us had never even made anything together, and then suddenly we're doing, like, a pilot and then we're like "well, this will never happen, cause MTV doesn't show stuff like this." And then they went for it. It was, yeah, it was just... we were all friends, but it wasn't a group before we had that TV show.

Andrew: Great. Right there, behind you.

Audience Member: How's it goin'? Huge fan of There's Something About Mary, and I just wanted to ask you guys if you ever had any doubts in your career about the direction you're headed, and if so, what you did to overcome them.

Jason: Yeah, every day. Every minute of every day.

Chris: You should have seen us at Crush last night. Just, talking about our careers. Uhh, yeah, absolutely every day. I mean, you can't be in this business... I've been doing this... I'm 54, I've been doing this since I was 20, and I'm incredibly insincere... uhh... Insincere well, for sure, **Audience Laughs** in this answer, it's not real. No, I'm incredibly insecure, and you can't not be in this business. It's designed that way. It's designed... It's not like any other business where you're climbing a ladder and, you know, you make one level this year, and you're gonna get promoted next year, and you're gonna work your way up. It just doesn't work that way. It... it's... it's its own thing. The one thing I would say is that the best thing about this business is that you don't know what's around the corner. So, umm... in some ways that's the worst thing too, but it's the best thing when you are out of work and nothing is happening, and believe me it's happened to me so many times, when suddenly something really great appears. And suddenly, it's like "Oh, yeah, that's how this business works." Somebody I met a year ago suddenly remembers this, or saw this, or whatever. Or suddenly I met Jason, and he's doing this show called Eagleheart and oh, I'm gonna be doing this show, and we did it for 3 years, and I have a great friend here, and we are gonna do something else together. That stuff just happens, and I didn't plan that and... so that's... when... if you ever are questioning yourself in the business, or what your commitment is to the business, or if you still want to be in the business, that's the thing that's always kept me going.

Andrew: Another question? Right down there.

Audience Member: Hey Guys. I was just wondering... you guys have mentioned emotional scarring, you guys have mentioned insecurities, and failure and stuff. I just wanted to know how either of you deal with stuff like that, or questioning your careers or decisions that you make. For like... how do you deal with stuff like that? Failing, feeling... like, questioning things. What makes you keep doing it?

Jason: I can't do anything else. I have no other skills. I cannot make any money doing anything else.

Chris: That, really, is the answer. I mean, and even if Jason did have other skills, and he doesn't, he wouldn't want to do anything else, he can't do anything else. And I do have other skills, but I can't do anything else. This is what I do. I can't do anything else. So, as depressed as I might get, at times, about it, I can't do anything else, so there is no real answer to your question in terms of how you deal with it. You just have to realize that this is what you do. You are an actor, or a sketch writer, or a comedian, or an agent, or whatever you are in the business. You've chosen this business, this is what you do and it's a hard business. It's really hard on women, it's way harder on women than it is... I mean we're bellyaching about being depressed up here. I have two daughters in the business, and it's much harder on women, but the bottom line is what Jason said: what else? You've chosen this, probably, a long time ago, that this is what you want to go into. I mean there are people that dabble and try it, you know like I said, my whole family played around with it and then said it wasn't for them, but if you're committed, if you're taking classes, if you're investing money, time, effort, years and effort into this, then this is what you do.

Jason: Yeah, it is a system that kind of self-selects and does seem to weed out the people that could be doing other things, cause it is really hard. There's no job security, and you could be doing something one

week, then not work for months and months. But it's also, when it's good, you get to sit in a room with your friends, or people you really respect and admire and just make each other laugh and you get to get paid for that. It's pretty great.

Andrew: Is it kind of "don't have a plan B, cause if you have a plan B, you'll do it"?

Jason: Yeah, I've heard that. That's true.

Chris: I think that is true. It's absolutely true. And I also think it's true that the longer you stay in it, I... I dunno... For... on some level, it will pay off for you. I'm not saying everybody is gonna be... you know, a huge pay off, or what you think it's gonna be. But on some level, it's gonna pay off.

Andrew: Do you think... some people liken it to... it is like, a sort of a cycle, and that first spin round, where you get things, and things are taken away from you, things work or don't work, is the hardest. Do you find that? I don't know if you agree with the metaphor but that first time, when everything is new. I don't know if it's harder or easier.

Chris: Yeah. I've seen it more with my daughters than I have with myself because I really, and I've said this before too, I should not... I put down showbusiness as being horrible because I've been so lucky. I have seen with them, the cycle of disappointment, elation, disappointment, elation, disappointment, elation a lot more because I got this great job working for Dave, which was basically a 9-5 job working in showbusiness, which just doesn't exist when you're 21 to get something like that, that allowed me to settle down like a business man and get married and raise a family. But, they are going from one job to another like most people do have to early on in the business and yeah, it is a cycle. It's a cycle, you know, and I'm in that cycle right now. I'm right with them. Yeah.

Andrew: Another question out there? Yeah, a couple over there. Pass the mic over. If you see it, you can pass it to... This is what you'll remember from Toronto, this microphone. Go ahead, please.

Audience Member: What would you say, in your experience, is the most difficult part of any writing process? For your work?

Chris: I'm sorry, where are you? Oh...

Audience Member: Right here.

Chris: And what was the question, too?

Audience Member: The question was....

Chris: What was the different...?

Audience Member: What was the most difficult part in your writing process, or any writing process?

Chris: Well, you would probably be better at answering that than me. I mean, for me, because I don't really consider myself a writer, the process is finishing. I... Ideas, I have plenty of. Obviously it's just finishing it. It's seeing it through and having the confidence to and not backing away from it. Knowing "Ok, this is going to be funny. As funny as when I thought of it when I'm done with it."

Jason: On Eagleheart, it was just trying to... we kinda tried to reinvent the show every episode and do a different thing with each episode and so it was just sitting around silently for a long time trying to think of new things to try. Or just get to a point where things are kind of... where everyone's chiming in and it's working. You feel like, when it's working... when it's working it's amazing because it's clear that it's

working and then, there will be days on end where we just... we wrote this show, we would rent houses, through AirBnB and we would just go to weird people's homes, cause we didn't like writing in an office. We would just sit in a house of a stranger for a few months and there was a lot of just sitting in silence.

Andrew: So, can you tell us how Spats came about then, for example?

Jason: Yeah, uhh, I was flying. I was visiting New York for a weekend, I was in the Jet Blue Terminal at JFK airport, and there was a shoe shine stand. I just walked by it and I thought "It would be, like, a shoeshiners dream to have another one upside down and be able to shine shoes while getting their own shoes shined." And I thought you could call it 60-shining. **Laughs** And I came back to LA, we're in the middle of writing, and I was like "I have this one idea, I don't know how it can be in Eagleheart, or what it's related to." And I explained it, and Andrew thought it was really funny and Michael thought it was funny, but Andrew really liked it a lot and so we just put it on a card and put it on the board and 60-shining sat there for a long long time. And then, it was unrelated, so then the second half of the season Chris was out on the road, and we'd do these little episodes where he would go to different places on this kind of bigger search, and we had an overall idea of what we wanted to do. We'd never written an episode that's like Chris ruins a town. And so we were like "What's a version of that that can just go further and crazier than just he screws things up and tries to help people and then they... it backfires and they all hate him at the end." Which we thought would be a funny attitude for him to play. Which, like we were saying before is like this more kind of up-beat idiot who thinks he's helping people, and is like, destroying everyone's lives. So then we kind of started... everyone was like... It was coming up with a lot of different ideas be like "oh, that could work with the... what if it was a town that was ruined by lack of shoeshiners?" And then we're like "what if halfway through it seems like the episodes over and then it just completely goes crazy." And then, we're like "oh, and then we could end with like, a Full Metal Jacket thing." And then in the middle, there's that movie "Zapped", did anyone see that? It's an 80s movie with the two guys from Charles in Charge, where they get these magic... or he gets telekinesis in his high school and uses it to zap girls shirts open and see their bras, because that... high school boys love bras. **Audience Laughs** Just wanted to see bras, and so, we just threw everything in, and tried to cram as much as we could, and at a certain point, we were like "Ok, that feel like... an episode"

Andrew: Another question? Yup, right back there.

Audience Member: Well, Jason, I just want to say that I'm a big fan of Human Giant. It was a good high school watch for me. Chris, this year, you had worked on a project with my friend in New York Michael Ratner on a short film.

Chris: Yeah.

Audience Member: Yeah, you were the mohel in 30 Year Old Bris. I just wanted to know how that experience was for you, working with a young director who was like 24.

Chris: Uhhh, it was... I was so drunk.

Audience Member: You seemed it. You were a great mohel. Very unorthodox.

Chris: How is he doing? How did it come out?

Audience Member: It came out well. It got into Tribeca.

Chris: Oh, good.

Audience Member: And he's in LA right now.

Chris: Oh, good. No, it was fun. It was a strange thing. It was... yeah. Bob Weinstein asked me to do something with that, cause he's friends with...

Audience Member: His dad and him...

Chris: Yeah.

Jason: Wait, who's his dad?

Audience Member: Scott Ratner.

Jason: Oh, not Brett Ratner.

Audience Laughs

Chris: No. That's what I thought and I showed up.

Jason: That's why you said yes.

Chris: Yeah. I was like "Ah, shit." Well, say hi to him for me.

Audience Member: Yeah, well. For projects like that, just as a second part then, how would you get involved with that. Just, no auditions or anything, just a favour?

Chris: No, they just asked me if I would. Honestly, I just don't turn anything down. I honestly would... I like to try to help... it sounds stupid... I will, like, try to help people who are trying to do films and stuff. Little stuff like that.

Audience Member: Well, if you're in Toronto for the next week, I have a project due on Tuesday.

Andrew: I sensed a pitch.

Chris: Well, I'll tell you this much, I'm not cheap. No, uhh, you know, if I was, I'll probably be back in the spring doing something here I would do it. I've done little web series stuff and things like that for people. There's so many venues out there now for people and all that... yeah, people help me and it makes sense, you know, to do this stuff.

Audience Member: Awesome, thanks.

Andrew: Question? Yup, one more over there.

Audience Member: Hi Chris, I'm a big fan of Get A Life, umm.

Chris: Thanks

Audience Member: The Handsome Boy Modeling School episode was, like, one of the best things I've ever seen.

Chris: Thanks.

Audience Member: I was wondering if you were aware of the hip-hop concept album "The Handsome Boy Modeling School"

Chris: Yeah

Audience Member: ... and what you thought when you first heard that.

Chris: I liked it. I mean, it was funny. Who are those guys again?

Audience Member: Prince Paul and Dan the Automator I think.

Chris: We met... Adam and I met with those guys cause we were actually thinking of, like, doing a, like, a real, like a version of zoo animals on wheels, which was this... one of the episodes of Get A Life with those guys actually doing some music for... like the actual music for... we never did.

Audience Member: Would you do it on Broadway?

Chris: Yeah, Broadway was really begging... they were begging us. They were coming to us. No, we were... I don't know... We were talking about... We met in Adam's office a few years ago about like, talking about doing something and talked about doing something, but nothing ever came of it. But, it was funny. It was more funny to hear my dad's voice on that than mine. Yeah, but they were... it was pretty cool.

Andrew: Any... you know... what advice would you give? This is sort of the question, but, you know, if you were to talk to yourself when your career was starting up, advice to that guy for both of you, or advice to these people now who are looking at comedy as, hopefully for them, a life or career. Jason?

Jason: Ok. The only good advice is just do a lot of stuff and keep doing it. My only, I think, advice is just, for, if you want to do what I... If you want to like, film things, make things and edit things, just do a ton of it, and be really hard on it. I think there's a lot of really supportive communities right now, which is great, and I was making a lot on my own, and definitely nothing would have happened until I started working with those guys and getting out there. But then, you go to a place like ECB and people will kind of go crazy for everything. And I think it's important... when I dropped out of school I made this movie that was just completely terrible, just like totally shitty, and it was like a full length movie, and I dropped out, and convinced a bunch of friends to drop out.

Andrew: You convinced your friends to drop out of university?

Jason: Yeah, I guess I was really charismatic and I was like "Guys, we all gotta leave school, and we gotta make this movie, we're gonna take it to Sundance" and so we made this movie over the summer, and as we're making it I was like "Oh, this isn't very good." And we still... we didn't get in anywhere. We took it to Sundance in that I took a tape of it to the town of Sundance when it was happening. I was like "I don't know what to do with this." And so I just like... And then I got like a flu and I was in like a hotel. I just remember wailing in the middle of the night and I was like "Well, I'm finished." I was 21 and I was like "well, that's the end." So I was gonna go back to school, and I'd registered and I was about to give up and then I got this job as a video editor making educational videos and they would let me use their equipment at night and I would just work. I would just work for hundreds of hours making things on my own, and then started going to shows and started meeting people. But that, making that shitty movie, it really... I'm really glad A) that I made it, and that no one saw it, and it's not on YouTube and it's not available to watch cause it's truly embarrassing. But, I was able to, afterwards, go "oh, I see. This joke could have been better. This was too much like something else. This was lazy. Here's why this didn't work." I think it's good to make a lot of stuff and then see... really be hard on it and see what's working about what you're doing and what isn't and really try to make it better. And also just rip off people you like and eventually hopefully you'll find your own voice. But I think that's what everyone does. You just kind of ape people you admire, and

eventually something else emerges and that's what you're bringing to the table. Yeah, just make bad stuff and don't necessarily put it on the internet and then try to figure out what's bad about it.

Andrew: So, don't put your first effort on the internet?

Jason: I'm just glad my early stuff is not on the internet cause it's really bad and I think everyone just uploads everything now, and so... There was a friend of the family that emailed me. She was like "Oh, I'm going to school, I'm in this sketch group. I'd love you to, like... or any advice? Will you look at my stuff?" And I looked at their YouTube page, and there were just like 100s of videos and they weren't that great. Or like, there were some that were funny and some that were not. There's just such a volume of stuff out there, it seems like it would be better if people were working harder, maybe, on fewer things before they put them out there. But I also just said make a lot of stuff... Maybe just, I dunno, maybe just work a long time on your stuff. Really, even that... all that early Human... I wound up editing all of Human Giant, pretty much and... It just takes... Even like Tim and Eric are like, friends of mine. And people are like "Those guys must just get high and you know, goof around." And it's like, no those guys work really hard. Everything you see, as effortless as things look, it's just time. Everyone who, kind of, makes it to a certain point, it's just a ton of time. **Laughs** Sorry.

Chris: A ton of time. Kind of like that answer.

Jason: Yeah, yeah. Sorry.

Chris: Yeah, I would echo all of that. I guess I would... I guess I would say... because all of that's true, and I've given you David Letterman's advice to me, which I would just reiterate and... It's hard for me to give you any advice, because... and maybe this is advice in itself, because I don't feel like I have cracked this myself yet. I still feel like I am learning this business, and I think that that, in a way, is really really healthy. And it's healthy for you to take some pressure off yourselves and not feel like you have to learn it. Like, it's... yes, you need to be in this school, you need to be learning. But don't feel like you're gonna learn everything. Don't feel like it's gonna happen when you leave here that you're gonna have all the answers to this. Because I don't, and anybody who says they do, they're lying. They do. And Jason is lying, he doesn't have all the answers.

Jason: I didn't say I have all...

Chris: Oh yeah, you were. No it's... I'm still learning stuff when I walk on a set. I'm still learning how to act. I'm still watching, you know, how other people work and picking up things, and going "Oh, yeah, I see. That's how... shoot, I should have been doing that for 30 years." Which is, I think, really healthy and maybe that's something that you guys should all just keep in the back of your mind. It's a process that you gonna be doing all through your careers. You're gonna be learning until you retire and I wish I could tell you anything more firm that I've learned. But what I've learned is that I'm still learning.

Andrew: Great. Well, Jason. Chris. Thank you, thank you, thank you thank you.

Chris: Thanks guys, thank you. Thanks for having us.

Jason: Yes, thank you. It was fun.

Chris: Thanks a lot guys. There's brownies and cookies and all sorts of stuff out there.