

Andrew Clark: So we often bring alumni back. Last year we had Rebecca Addelman. But we rarely bring someone back who graduated less than a year ago. *(applause)*

And by the way, I should mention he *graduated*. He got all of his Gen Eds and Comms. So let that be a lesson to those of you who are still in the game here, that you need to pass your Gen Eds and your Comms. They're valuable. But not everybody is as interesting or accomplished as this young man, who I know pretty well, because I taught him for two years, so make of that what you wish. He's working in an area which is very exciting, and which I know absolutely nothing about and don't pretend to. So rather than have me lie to you and have me tell you about social media and how it works and how to be funny (with it), why not just bring someone in who's doing that, and that's Kurtis Conner. So welcome Kurtis Conner. *(applause)*

Kurtis Conner: Thanks, guys.

AC: Now, in your bio it says you're a "viner".

KC: Yeah.

AC: And you're a Youtuber.

KC: Yeah.

AC: And you're kind of on everything.

KC: Yeah.

AC: And in fact, you spent the summer, much of it anyway, touring as part of that.

KC: Basically.

AC: Can you just tell us a little bit about that, and then we'll take a look at some of your Vines, and we're gonna talk about, how do you make it funny, and then how is it a business, because obviously it seems like this is your business.

KC: Yeah. So, what was the original question? *(laughter)*

AC: The original question was, you spent the summer touring and supporting (yourself) as a Viner. *(laughs)* To me, and I don't even know the proper terminology, but it is, like a lot of stuff in the media, something that starts off as something old people don't understand, and then a lot of people make a lot of money at it, and all of a sudden it's a thing that everybody wants to understand. So, for instance, Vine. We obviously, I know what Vine is, but you're actually doing it...For instance, we're gonna see 27,000 likes, or 67,000 likes. That's pretty big...

KC: Yeah.

AC: And I'm sure there are people going even crazier.

KC: Oh yeah.

AC: So how does Vine work? And then we'll watch some of your Vines and we'll take it from there.

KC: The thing is, once they added those loops there, which basically translates to views, and that's what Vine headquarters is really focused on, because they can

gauge it. If you have like a million loops on one (video), that's like a lot of people seeing it over and over.

AC: So you had 900,000 people watch this Vine that we're gonna see.

KC: Yeah. Vine is just figuring out how to monetize it this year. It's not like Youtube where you can just turn it on, and ads are just there. Vine doesn't really pay Viners directly. It's more like there are these outside brand deals, where these companies like Coca-Cola and M&M's or any company can just be like, "Can you make a Vine for us and we'll give you this amount of money?" And that's basically how Viners make their money. There are all these other ways where you can be signed with a company that takes care of all your Vines and content and "content-claims" them, so people aren't stealing them. So there are all of these super *exciting* ways that people make money with Vine. *(laughter)*

AC: Shall we take a look at some?

KC: If we want, yeah.

AC: Let's look at a few of these, just to get a sense.

Vine:

"Here are your peanuts."

"I actually wanted them roasted."

"Oh, my mistake. Boy what are you doing—"

(laughter)

KC: Because you *roast* people, right?

AC: Yeah, you roast them! Here's the next one.

Vine:

"Come on, stay with me!"

"In German."

"What were his last words?"

"They were 'In German'."

"I don't know German."

"Me neither."

(laughter)

KC: Stupid. So dumb.

Vine:

Music: "I remember the day/When you left for Santa Monica..." (laughter) "I remember the day/When you left for Santa Monica..."

(laughter)

Vine:

(Grunting sound)

"Don't lift with your back, man, lift with your legs."

"Oh shit, true."

(laughter)

Vine:

"Why did you put your wooden shoes in the toilet?"

"Why do you **think** I did it?"

"I don't know, but it's clogged...oh."

(laughter)

Vine:

"It seems you have gesticular cancer."

"What is that?"

"You'll never make the correct gesture ever again."

(laughter)

Vine:

"Release the Kraken."

"What's Kraken?"

"Not much, dude."

(laughter)

Vine:

"I didn't mean to get douchey body spray all over you. It was an Axe-cident. We can all go home now! I win comedy!"

(laughter)

AC: Great. All right, so let's talk about this. There are literally millions of people trying to do these, so that they can get almost seven hundred thousand or two

millions loops or whatever. How many do you do, before you decide to post one? How do you make it funny? It seems like part of the (appeal) of the vine is that it runs on a loop. It gets funnier as the weirdness repeats.

KC: Yeah, I guess that's the whole appeal of it. I try to post daily, if I can, because if you don't, and they see you randomly, they're gonna be like, "Why am I even following this guy anymore?" So if you're constantly pushing yourself to make them, even if they're not as funny, if it's funny to you, that's what really matters. But if other people seem to like it, that's even better. For whatever reason, those ones did OK. But some just don't hit at all. And there's the whole thing of posting at the right time...

AC: And what's the right time?

KC: It's between...it's also knowing your demographic. A lot of the people who follow me live on the west coast, and they're young, they're in school, so I have to post after 3 PM there, which is after 6 PM here, so they're scrolling and they're gonna see it, on Twitter and Vine and stuff. So it's posting at the right time, posting stuff that's topical, kind of, or relatable, or whatever. So yeah, there are so many factors to think about. But at the same time, you could post a random one at three in the morning, and it could just blow up. It's pretty crazy.

AC: Do you just shoot them, just get an idea and shoot it, or do you think, "OK, I'm gonna do a bunch of them," or do you just do it whenever one comes to you?

KC: Yeah. If I'm outside or something, and I think of an idea and I can't just (shoot it) in the middle of the street, I have to write it down in my phone so I can film it later, and I just do that. I have a bunch of ideas in my phone, and I'll just go to them.

AC: So you've got a bunch of followers on Vine, on Twitter, and elsewhere. Do you mind telling us how many followers you have on Vine?

KC: I'm at 290,000.

AC: And how do you know where these people live or who they are?

KC: They have apps you can download to see your demographics...

AC: What are these apps called?

KC: There's one called Rankzoo.

AC: Rankzoo. And that's just for Vine, or is it also for Twitter?

KC: It's just for Vine, but there are also apps for Twitter. It's by this company called Collab, and I'm signed with them, because they manage some Viners as well.

AC: Oh, OK.

KC: But yeah, they do all that stuff. There are these companies you can talk to, and they'll give you all your analytics and stuff if you're signed with them.

AC: We'll talk about how you got signed in a second. When did you start doing Vines?

KC: I started in 20...13? *(laughter)* I think I need a watch. What year is it?

AC: Well, it's time.

KC: Yes. *(laughter)*

AC: They're related.

KC: Time. It was summer of 2013, and it came out February 2013, so at the time, having a thousand followers was insane. And now people have ten million and stuff, so it's definitely grown. But I didn't gain any sort of following until a year later, when I made some stupid Vine, and then this Viner I really look up to, she revined it, she shared it with her following.

AC: And who was that?

KC: Her name is The Jasminator.

AC: The Jasminator? *(to audience)* Do you guys know the Jasminator?

KC: Yeah, Pat's a very avid Viner, he knows everyone.

AC: So it was obviously something you just did to be funny and have fun.

KC: Yeah, it was just to have fun, and I honestly didn't do it (thinking), "I'm gonna get money..."

AC: Were you also on Facebook? Because I know some people are off that now.

Were you doing all of that stuff?

KC: I try to do all of it. And now Facebook video is huge, and people can make a lot of money on Facebook. It's stupid.

AC: Again, I'm gonna be the dumb guy.

KC: Cool.

AC: How do you make money putting videos on Facebook?

KC: Their algorithm, the way it works for views, is like...if you guys are scrolling on Facebook, and you see a video automatically start playing, and if it's going for three seconds, that counts as a view. So people get millions of views on (a video of) a puppy taking a poop or some random thing, it's like, "Oh, sick." And if you click on it, and you see all those ads on the side of the page, that's where the money comes from. The number right there will say, "A million people saw this," and then if the ads pay even two cents a view or something, it adds up. And some people post whatever garbage they can spew onto Facebook.

AC: And then Youtube, that's one of the older ones. You also do Youtube, obviously. Were you doing that before you started doing Vine?

KC: Yeah. Me and Jacob and Meg...

AC: Where's Jake?

KC: There's Jacob over there. *(applause)*

AC: Hey! Holy mackerel!

KC: Yeah, we made these "Hot Talk" videos, little sketches. Yeah, that was just a thing to do. I started Vine, and people started following me, and they were like, "You should do Youtube videos," and I was like, "OK." I was pressured into doing it, but I

wanted to do it anyway. Before, I was just putting a camera up and being like, “This is what’s funny, hey guys.” Youtube’s tough, because you really have to be on top of it.

AC: And the audience is young, and I mean *really* young...

KC: Yeah.

AC: Like eight.

KC: Yeah, it’s weird.

AC: Like (talking about) Minecraft, right? Like the videos with those British people right? Talking about Minecraft? I fucking hate that. *(laughter)* Sorry. Not sure why everyone has to be fucking British. *(laughter)* Anyway, the only thing I can relate it to is when blogging started. People all thought it was a highway to riches. And then those who started doing it realized, “Oh, gee, this is a full-time job. Because if I’m not posting, not even once a day, but multiple times a day, they’re gonna stop (reading me).” Because the whole thing is, they have a routine. And I’m interested to know if you know that about your audience. In other words, every day, the next time they check who they’re following, you’re one of them in their Rolodex, to use the old terminology. And they’re gonna check it, and if you don’t have something new, eventually you just drop off the face of the earth.

So the pressure, I’m imagining, is pretty relentless. Because the thing about social media is, you’re never off. That’s why there’s so much trouble, I think, in high school with people, because it used to be that when you were bullied, you got to go

home and you were OK for a while, unless you were bullied there too. Now it's just like you're forever getting the crap kicked out of you. So how do you deal with that pressure to be funny? Because, again, it used to be that you went to the comedy club and you were funny, and when you were done, you were done. No one was expecting you to crack jokes all the time. For what you're doing, you have to constantly be thinking, "This could be funny. This could go online."

KC: I don't even know. I'm pretty used to it right now. I don't know what I was doing at the beginning of it, but once I did start getting a following, I didn't want to use it, because it's nice to have people excited about what you're doing, so obviously I wanted to keep that, so I would just keep doing as many things as I could, and that's still the case. The thing with social media too, because everyone's numbers are just right there, and you can compare them to everyone (else's), and that's the worst part of it, because you can say, "This kid is an idiot, and he's doing so much better than I am. He's got millions of followers!" So that's the tricky part, to not worry about everyone else and try to focus on what you're doing. And that's the way you can tell a good creator from a stupid one, because they're just making stuff that they would laugh at, and that's why it's enjoyable.

AC: How did it become something you were doing as well as performing, like you going out and doing standup and stuff like that? How did it go from that to now, where this is a job? How did that happen for you?

KC: It's weird thinking that what you just did for fun would become a way that you make money.

AC: That's life. You have this fun thing that you do, and then it's ruined by money.

(laughter)

KC: Because then, your *(sarcastically)* "artistic integrity..." *(laughter)* As stupid as that sounds, it's like, "Oh, I have to put this hashtag in here for this tweet or this Vine."

AC: But how does that happen? Do you all of a sudden get a check from Youtube saying, "Hey, you got this many views, here's your check?" Basically, is that what happens?

KC: So the way Youtube works is, you sign up to be a partner, and then you start getting ad revenue on your channel, and they just put random ads in front of your videos. And then you have this thing called the "CPM," which is "cost per thousand." The "M" is a Latin thing, or some shit. *(laughter)* And it changes a bunch for whatever reason, (depending on) what ads are playing or the time of day. So say it was like two cents a view or something, and you got a couple million views on a video, then that's a lot of money. And they'll just sent it to you every month. These MCN's, or "multi-channel networks," they manage all of these channels, and they give them brand deals and all of these other opportunities to collaborate with other people and stuff. And they usually take thirty or twenty percent of your ad revenue, and you get to keep all the rest, and then they do what they do. But they have all these channels, so they're making tons of money.

AC: At what point did you get a management company? How did that occur?

KC: It was probably a few months after everything started happening on Vine.

AC: He said it was *just* after that! *(laughter)*

KC: Just after starting, yeah. *(laughs)*

AC: That should be a Vine! *(laughter)* You missed one! You missed one, man!

KC: Shit! What was the question?

AC: The question was, management company. Did they actually call you out of the blue? They go, "Hey, you're tracking, you're doing this, what do you want to do?"

KC: Yeah, because they want to pounce on people before it goes away. I just put my e-mail address and my Vine bio, I guess, and they e-mailed me and they were like, "Hey, we're this company, and we want to..."

AC: And was that Omni? Was that your first management company?

KC: Yeah. And the thing is, every single one of those companies are going to promise you everything. They're gonna be like, "You're gonna be like the next fuckin' huge dude in the world. You're gonna make every single dollar ever." And you're like, "OK, sick." And then you sign with them, and that doesn't happen. I was with them for a year, and they were just like, "Yeah, we're gonna get you out to L.A., we got a script for this web series we want to get you on," and I was like, "OK, sweet." And then nothing happened. They got me one brand deal for a hundred dollars, and then my contract ended, and then I went with another one and they were shitty too. So you have to really do a bunch of research, and it's not even for everyone. Those

companies really only do a bunch if you're already huge, because you can make them money. So if you're on the smaller scale, it's a little tougher, and you need to find the right one for you, if you even want one.

AC: Well, the way agencies work, too, is they get a commission if you make money, but if you're on their roster, you really aren't costing them a whole lot. So they'll sort of book everybody, and hope one makes it, and that pays for whatever they're doing. But you're with a company now called Viral Nation. How did you hook up with them?

KC: There was a Vine Canada meeting, and I met some other Canadian Viners, and then they were saying that they were with them, and they were (saying) it's a good place to be, especially in Canada, because they're based out of Vaughan.

AC: Really?

KC: Yeah. So they have all these campaigns for Canadian Youtubers and Viners and stuff. So I e-mailed them, and I had my friend Ray put in a good word, and then I signed with them.

AC: Great.

KC: Yeah.

AC: And so how does that work? Basically, it seems like a lot of this is, the more known you are, and the more of a loyal following you have, then the money comes in the form of sponsorship or branding. In other words, and I'm not talking about you specifically now, I'm just using you as an example, it's like, "We would love it if you'd

talk about Dove,” or something. “Be funny about Dove.” In a way, it’s like radio in the thirties. “Chesterfield Cigarettes Presents Wayne and Schuster.” Is that how it works?

KC: Well, I haven’t got a cigarette deal yet...

AC: You won’t, probably.

KC: No.

AC: You could get Javex bleach or something. *(laughter)* Bleach is legal still. Because if you remember your history of comedy, Wayne and Schuster’s “The Wife Preservers” was sponsored by Javex bleach. *(laughter)*

KC: So with things like that, usually how you get brand deals is that the company itself makes them, and they’re like, “This is what we’re doing. You’re gonna make a post for us, and we’ll give you whatever you’re worth,” I guess. But a thing like Viral Nation, they reach out to companies themselves, I guess, with brand deals already in mind. So they have the companies pay them, and they pay out to us, to make the deal. So a little more money’s being made in that way.

AC: The other way that seems to have worked for you is that you have work that you were doing, I think it was with Cineplex?

KC: Yeah.

AC: So they saw what you were doing, and now they’re having you make content for them, is that right?

KC: Yeah. I feel like, if I was doing what I'm doing right now and I was in the States, I probably wouldn't be making that much money, because there are so many (content producers), and it's such a tiny market of Youtubers and Viners in Canada, so we need this to happen in Canada, because there are Canadian companies. So they don't have many people to choose from. So the Cineplex thing was just Canadian people doing it, and it was a year contract, so it's like a monthly paycheck...

AC: And they'll say, "OK, *The Revenant's* coming out, can you do something on that?" Is that how it works?

KC: Yeah, they send out a brief every month, and they give a lot of freedom. This month, I have to do one for *Kung Fu Panda 3*, (*applause*) and everyone should go see it! So I'm supposed to dress up my pet or something like that, but I don't have a pet, so I have to figure something out for that. Then last month, I had to do one for the James Bond movie (*Spectre*), and I'll just make a Vine where I say, "Go to Cineplex and see the movie." It's usually a thing to make people participate in a contest where they can win stuff.

AC: But for Cineplex, that's big. If you get X hundred thousand people watching or forwarding it or whatever, that's really gonna promote their stuff.

KC: And they post it out on all their channels, and they pay for Twitter ads and stuff. I was at a party two nights ago, and the guy was like, "I saw your face on Twitter in a Cineplex ad," and I was like, "No way!" They just put it out to random people on Twitter. It was cool.

AC: Wow. I noticed that with all of your material, you're working very clean. That's a conscious decision?

KC: Yeah, I try not to use any of the swears in my (content).

AC: Is that also partly because of your audience? What is their demographic?

KC: Vulgarity and stuff, and being dirty and weird on Vine, is really popular. That's what I laugh at too, the really funny Vines are when people are vulgar, but in terms of being "brand-smart," I guess, (people might say) "Hey, I don't want this guy who's talking about pooping on his wiener," *(laughter)* "I don't want this guy to promote my bleach." *(laughter)* Personally, I don't think I need it to be funny. With some people, it could make things funnier...

AC: Well also, if your audience is younger, their parents are not gonna like it, and it could end your career pretty quickly.

KC: Yeah, and that's the best thing, when the parents like you, right?

AC: Yeah. You're in.

KC: It's way better.

AC: Every drug dealer's first rule of thumb. *(laughter)* Not you.

KC: You heard it here first.

AC: My mom always had this thing, whenever I had a friend who was polite, she'd go, "Is your friend a drug dealer?" I'd ask, "What do you mean?" She'd say, "He's very

polite. Drug dealers are polite.” She was convinced they were polite. *(laughter)* I don’t know. They are polite, generally speaking. Time for a question, on that note. Yes, sir.

Audience member: Hi, Kurtis. If I can call you Kurtis. *(laughter)* So you said you had a Vine person that you really looked up to.

KC: Yeah.

AM: Was that the same as a standup looking at (George) Carlin? Did you worship this person and want to be like them?

AC: I’m gonna repeat the question, just because it’s a podcast, if that’s OK. So in other words, was there a Viner you looked up to in the same way that a comedian would look up to another comic, is the question.

KC: I think there are some parallels there. You see what’s being done in that medium, and you’re like, “Oh, that’s really impressive, I want to do something like that.” Her vines are a little different. She would use puns in them and stuff, which is pretty funny, and that’s mostly what I do. It was super unique and weird, so I totally looked up to her as a Viner. There are also a bunch out now where every time they post it’s like, “I wish I could do that.”

AC: I think that there’s a thing that happens with every new medium where it’s automatically dismissed by the mainstream. So Vine would be dismissed, right? But I think if you look at it, there’s obviously a pedigree. It reminds me of if you go back to

the twenties, this kind of Dada movement where there's a kind of short, strange (nature), but it has a weird, reductive logic to it, you know what I mean?

KC: Yeah.

AC: You could pay me a million dollars, and I could never do something funny like that, it's just not in my wheelhouse, necessarily. What is it, it's about eight seconds?

KC: Six seconds.

AC: Six seconds. And just having seen your stuff getting ready for this, they all have a beginning, middle and end, and a payoff, and they're fairly streamlined. Do you do a lot of editing? Or do you just shoot as is?

KC: Yeah. Well, a lot of them are just point-and-shoot within the app, because the way it works is, it's pretty versatile in terms of editing and filming stuff, but that one, I used another app, because it had the little slideshow thing at the end.

AC: And that worked nicely, changing it up.

KC: Yeah. So sometimes I'll go into iMovie and add some music to make it funnier, but not so much. Usually, it's just a point-and-go type of thing.

AC: *(to audience)* In the back, Ian.

Audience member: Yeah, you mentioned going on tour. What do you Viners do once you're there?

AC: What do you do on tour?

KC: Well, it wasn't a tour per se, but I hosted a lot of meet-up type things, because the thing is, as weird as it is, people see you on their phone, and they're like "This is a fun person to watch," and then they're like, "Oh, they're gonna be in my city, it'd be really cool to hang out with them and stuff." It's just meeting people who want to meet you. It was just a cool thing to do. And then you just hang out and talk to them. That's basically what the tour was. I didn't do any shows or anything, but there are some Vine meet-and-greet tour things, like a thing called Press Play I went to once that a couple of my friends are on, they just tour different cities, and they have meet-and-greet things and a concert. Some Viners don't have any talent, so they're just like, "Hey, here's me and my pretty eyes, and this is what we're gonna do for an hour. We're just gonna talk about stuff." But if I were to do one in the future, I guess I could do standup, but some people, especially the audience that watches Vine, they're not really into live comedy or standup.

AC: Do you find it a little unnerving? I know sometimes meeting someone who knows you well, because they've read something that you've written or they saw you on TV or saw you on Vine, do you find that at all a little strange? (These are) people with very intense feelings about you, who you've never met, and it's not always relaxing, I'm guessing. What was it like to meet lots of people who know you who you've never seen before?

KC: It was weird, starting off, because I didn't even know that side of the Internet even existed. And as soon as I started coming out, people would have Twitter accounts about me and stuff, and it was super overwhelming. (I was like) "It's just

me. I'm not anyone interesting." As time went on, obviously, you could see the good parts of it.

AC: Are you able to deal with the negative (things)? Because the other things that social media is known for is people doing stuff to people online that they would never in their wildest dreams do in person, but (online) they're free, they're anonymous, and they're very cruel. Have you ever had to deal with anything like that?

KC: Oh yeah, yeah. It's just stupid. The worst things I've gotten was (someone saying) "Kill yourself, you rat," because I kind of look like the guy from One Direction, so they'd be like, "You're just trying to be him, you're not him," and it's like, "Yeah, OK, I know I'm not him." *(laughter)* "So it'd just be stupid things like that. Just teenage girls on their faceless Twitter accounts, so they can say whatever they want. I don't have it too bad. I think the worst of it is done. Usually the people who like my Vines and watch them are people who support me, but sometimes when a Vine really gets big and goes on to the popular page on Vine where just anyone can see it, then it's like, "Faggot, this guy's gay!" *(laughter)* "Cut your hair, you gay!"

AC: Doesn't bring out the best in folks.

KC: Yeah, it's stupid.

AC: Yeah. A lot of people working stuff out. *(to audience)* Aine, yeah.

Audience member: What's the weirdest thing you've ever seen online about yourself?

AC: Weirdest thing you've ever seen online about yourself. *(laughter)*

KC: Someone wrote something about me. *(laughter)* It was so gross. It was like a fan fiction type thing. *(laughter)* Yeah. And it was about...

AC: Come on!

KC: I was babysitting a girl *(laughter)*, and then... you can probably imply what happened. *(laughter)* Yeah, just gross. That was the weirdest...

AM: What goes through your head when you see something like that?

KC: At first, I was like, "This must be a joke." I thought they did it jokingly. Then I was broadcasting a thing online, and I was talking about it, and the girl who wrote it was watching, and she was like, "I wrote that! I'm so happy that you read it!" And she was so upfront about it, she wasn't ashamed, and she was like, "I wrote that about you." And I was like, "Holy moly!" *(laughter)* I can look back at it and have a sense of humor about it, because they're just hormonal girls who are just trying to figure it out, I guess. *(laughter)* I laugh about it now, but at the time I was like, "Uh oh."

AC: Well, it was coming from a good place.

KC: Yeah, yeah. *(laughter)*

AC: *(to audience)* In the back there, yes.

Audience member: Hey, how's it going?

KC: Hey, Pat.

AM: I have, like... sorry, I'm a bit nervous. *(laughter)* You're like a standup, you do standup, right? How has this whole thing with Vine affected that? Are there a lot of requests to go do standup? When you do shows, do people just see you as a Viner?

AC: So is there a negative fallout from doing Vine and also being a standup comedian, someone who's working on being a standup comedian?

KC: I think it's helped, because if I'm doing a show somewhere, I can post about it and be like, "I'm gonna be doing a show here, it's five dollars, just come and hang out and see comedy," and then some people actually come and see it, which is amazing, it's the coolest thing ever. So that's helped. I don't do enough standup to really notice a difference, but the fact that I can bring people who want to see me to a show, I'm really fortunate and lucky to have that. I think that covers that question.

AC: Do you feel a pressure or a stigma from other comedians? Standups tend to be very purist, if you will. You do your standup, and anything else...you get any of that?

KC: Not directly towards me. I'm sure maybe people have said things, but it's never directly affected me.

AC: They used to say that about doing improv. People who did improv and standup, there would be kind of a stigma to that.

KC: Totally. When you think about Vine, if you don't know that much about it, you're just like, "Oh, it's just these kids on hoverboards who don't do anything." *(laughter)* But there is a lot of quality comedy happening on Vine, and the things that are

happening on it, in terms of six-second (videos), what people are accomplishing, it's pretty crazy. If you want to talk shit about Vine, you can do it, but I don't know.

AC: No, I'm just saying that the thing that would stop me is that I wouldn't know where to look. I've seen your stuff, but the idea of looking at the rest of it is not super appealing. But I'm not the target demographic. *(to audience)* Ian, yeah, at the back.

Audience member: Things on Vine, like there are those challenges, like the "don't judge" challenge...

KC: Oh yeah, right.

AM: Do you ever feel pressure to do stuff like that just to get people following you and stuff?

AC: When you say a "challenge," do you mean like there'll be a challenge on Vine to do something?

KC: There were these stupid trends that they were doing. What was that one called?

AM: "Don't judge."

KC: "Don't judge." It was so stupid. People would just make themselves look stupid, and then turn to the camera and say, "I'm actually beautiful. Tricked you!" It was stupid, but it was popular, so everyone was doing it. Or yeah, just things like that. But I don't really feel too much pressure to do that. I know it's a thing that's

happening, but if I were to post that, I feel like I'd lose followers. They'd be like, "Oh, what are you doing, man? Pull it together."

AC: This sort of stuff is having a big effect on publishing. A lot of the best-selling books are by Youtubers right now. Do you feel any allure in trying to do print, to do something like that, to capitalize on it?

KC: Yeah, I think that'd be pretty interesting to do.

AC: The agents are sort of like, if you have this many, you got a book. They'll hire someone to write it for you.

KC: They'll usually target the huge Youtubers, because their audience is so active...

AC: What is "huge" as a definition for Youtube? Is that like a billion, or is it five hundred million, a hundred million?

KC: I'd say once you're at a million, that's a huge number, and then you can start doing tours and book deals and all that stuff. That's when you're a common name on the internet.

AC: Sounds easy, but how do you go from three hundred thousand to a million? It seems tough. What do you have to do? I'm not saying you know, but what's the perceived wisdom, say, from your management company? Do they say, "Well, try to do comedy on this, this seems to be a fertile topic"?

KC: You have to collaborate with people. There are a few exceptions, but you have to get other people's audience to become your audience, and they have to get your

audience to become theirs. That's why I always see these big Youtubers doing videos together. They're not friends, they're just doing it because (they say), "Hey, I could really benefit from your audience, and you could really benefit from mine." It's like a business deal, in a way. So they make whatever video together, like "baby food challenge" or whatever stupid things they do on Youtube, and then they'll just gain a bunch of followers. Or there are ways. My friend Chris is a Youtuber, and this guy Tyler Oakley shouted him out in a video, and he got a bunch of subscribers from that. That's kind of how it happened with me, because one person shared my thing.

AC: And you'd never met her or anything like that? She just liked what you were doing?

KC: I've never met her.

AC: You've never met her?

KC: No.

AC: Wow. But you've communicated a little bit online, stuff like that?

KC: We've communicated online and stuff like that, but yeah, I haven't actually (met her).

AC: Huh. Neat. *(to audience)* Yeah, Isaac?

Audience member: Hi, Kurtis—should I call you "Kurtis" or "Mr. Conner"?

(laughter)

AC: "Sir Mr. Conner" will do.

KC: “Viner Extraordinaire.” *(laughter)*

AM: Have you personally done any collaborations with (content producers) like that? Are you strictly a Viner, or do you collaborate with people on Youtube as well?

KC: Well, my Youtube isn’t really that big, compared to the Vine. It’s more of a thing I just do because it’s a lot of fun. I get my friends, like Jacob and Dean are in my videos and stuff, *(applause)* but I would collaborate on Vine with people. I was in New Jersey, my friends live out there, and we did one. I did one in L.A. with my friend Daniel.

AM: Sorry—these are other successful Viners?

KC: Yeah, and it’s easier and more natural to be like, “Let’s make a Vine,” because they Vine, so they’re the same type of (content producer). It’s tougher to collaborate on Vine, because they’re short, and you have to kind of showcase both of you, and you both have to be really funny in it. But yeah, Youtube’s easier, because it’s longer and you can edit stuff together better.

AC: So there’s a Vine Canada, but would you say the center for a lot of this is still the West Coast? You’re going to Los Angeles shortly, right?

KC: Yeah, that’s where everyone is for Vine. There are maybe four or five near Toronto that actually Vine, but yeah, everyone’s out in L.A. That’s where everyone goes when they get any moderate success at Vine. That’s where all the Twitter head offices are, Youtube’s there, all the management companies are out there, so I guess it just makes sense. And they all collaborate, and they just grow so fast.

AC: When we had Danny Robinson, who was here in the fall, he's an agent, he just talked about how there were these big shows, Youtube road shows, more or less, just touring around and doing insane business. Public appearances, effectively, like they used to do with TV stars. And they're just running them, and these departments are getting bigger and bigger. They don't quite know necessarily what to do with it, because I guess it's so early that no one knows what the longevity of their career. In other words, you're a big Youtuber now, but will you be a big Youtuber in three years, or will your audience have aged out?

KC: Yeah, that's the whole question. A manager at Viral Nation asked me what my goals were, and obviously you want to be bigger than the Internet, and you want to strive to be an actual notable person, and he was like, "Honestly, that's the way the world is going, everything's going to be online. So if you just stay online and keep making stuff, that's the next (level)." He said that that's where the next generation's Brad Pitts are going to be, online. Which is pretty crazy, I don't think it's gonna be that big, but it seems with Netflix and everything like that, everything's going to the internet.

AC: Well, yeah, I think you're right. I'm not an expert, but if you look at what seven year olds are doing, in terms of what they're consuming, I'd say it's more like (the internet) than it is TV. So those people, they're the number one demographic, right? You can make a fortune from kids, and then as they age up...

KC: Minecraft.

AC: Yep, you got it!

AM: Have you ever had a situation where you posted something, and then a manager or company was like, “Hey, no, delete that, we don’t like that”?

AC: Have you ever been asked to delete something because a company didn’t like it?

KC: No, I don’t think so, actually. Usually they make it pretty concrete, what you have to post. I’m way too scared to go outside of those lines. So it hasn’t happened, but I’m sure it must have, because some people on Vine or Youtube are just crazy. No, it hasn’t happened to me, thank God.

AC: *(to audience)* Ian at the back there.

Audience member: Do you feel like it’s a shot in the dark with every post you make? You don’t know beforehand if it’s gonna pop or not?

KC: Yeah. There are some where you kind of have a feeling it might do well. When I made the first one, the roasting one, I was like, “I think this one’s gonna do OK,” and it did OK. But most of the time, when you’re just messing around, like “This should be fun,” and then it goes really well. But then you plan something for a really long time, and you work on it for a half hour, and then it just *(makes splat sound)*, it doesn’t work at all. So yeah, it’s tricky.

AC: How long does it take before you know it’s gonna hit? Do you know almost instantly? You post it, and if it starts to *(makes engine noise)*, then you know it’s gonna do OK, and if it’s not...

KC: Yeah, you can tell. I'm used to my average numbers, I guess, and if anything goes above that, then it's pretty easy to gauge that it's gonna do well. And I'll go to the popular page and just check to see if it's on it.

AC: So if you tweeted something right now, we could almost watch it go (viral), basically.

KC: Yeah. And the thing is, with Vines, you put it up, and if it's doing well, the people at Vine headquarters curate all the content that goes in the separate channels. So if they see a Vine that's doing well, and they like it, they'll put it on the comedy page, and it's featured for a few days, and then that's usually where a bunch of the views come from, and the loops and followers and stuff like that. So I guess they're trying to focus more on that and get focusing more on spotlighting creative content on the app.

AC: *(to audience)* Austin, yeah?

Audience member: When you're creating on your page and everything, or your Vine account, is it all about finding your voice, just like in comedy?

KC: Yeah, totally, I think so. Not everyone's humor could really translate well to Vine. I'm sure there are obviously ways to do it, but I'm sure there are some... hmm.

AM: I'm only thinking of that because Just Rain does a lot of the Indian...

KC: Yeah, yeah.

AM: And it's so funny.

KC: He's so funny. He does kind of the same types of Vines (as me) too, where he just makes fun of the popular stuff on Vine. So yeah, he really found his voice that way. And then there are some people who are just known for the one thing that they do on it, so if you can find the right thing, then people want to watch it and come back to it every day. Yeah, that's totally it. I think it probably took me at least a year to figure out if I was remotely entertaining on it. I got really, really lucky though, as far as the right person seeing my Vine at the right time.

AC: Is that a Catch-22 a little, though? Because what social media allows people to do is to really do what they want, initially, because there's an anonymity, right? Before, if you wanted to get published, you had to get a publishing company to publish your work, so you had to go through those hoops. But once you start to gain some interest, you have to start thinking about tailoring what you do to fit a market. Do you worry a little bit about that effect? Because generally speaking, it can limit you sometimes.

KC: Yeah, I think with anything, if you're doing it and it becomes a job, you're gonna have to make a few compromises, but in the grand scheme of things, you're doing what you want to do for a job. So it's a small price to pay, I think, in the grand scheme. So sure, you have to make a stupid Vine, you have to be like, "Hey, I'm here with some Cap'n Crunch," or whatever. Worst ad ever. *(laughter)* But yeah, sometimes you have to do stuff like that, and I'm sure it's the same thing if you're doing a weird commercial. I think you have to make some sacrifices when it turns into a business.

AC: How is Twitter different than Vine in terms of how you approach it for comedy?

KC: Twitter is the hardest thing to do, I think. To gain followers on it, it's really difficult. Because there's so much stuff on it already. There are some really good comedians on Twitter, like Rob Delaney made a career out of it, just doing weird tweets, and there are a lot of those kind of accounts that are weird Twitter accounts that just put out these crazy tweets that are just funny. But it's the same thing with Twitter, there's a lot of money to be made, like with those weird parody accounts, like White Teen or Dory or something, those weird Twitter accounts.

AC: Well, Shit Girls Say, that was a Twitter account, right?

KC: Yeah.

AC: Two guys living in New York or something wrote it. How do you make money off Twitter, then?

KC: It's the same thing with Youtube and Vine. These companies, it could be part of the brand deal, where it's like, "You're gonna make one Vine, an Instagram post, and a tweet," so you can cover your whole audience. Sometimes, some people will pay big Twitter accounts to retweet their tweets.

AC: Really?

KC: Yeah.

AC: Is that common knowledge, or is that an industry secret?

KC: I'm pretty sure it's common knowledge. But if you're a company starting out, if you have a thing you want to share with people, you might message the big accounts that usually just retweet anything, and they'll do it, and they have millions of followers, for whatever reason. And it's usually the same people who own those big Twitter accounts, the parody accounts.

AC: So there are comedy writers just doing these Twitter parody accounts?

KC: They're not even writing them, that's the whole issue. They're just stealing popular tweets.

AC: Is that like that Fat Jew guy? That was the one where people hated that guy?

KC: Yeah.

AC: They accused him of just taking old twits, or tweets, pardon me.

KC: And then people like that will say that the process of picking and reposting content is an artform to them, like picking the right one that will do well. Which is stupid, because they're not coming up with anything. And then people on Facebook who are posting videos to make money, they just steal videos and post them, and you can't message Facebook and be like, "This is my video," because Facebook is making money from the ads, so they don't want to take it down. It's like a weird little cycle.

AC: So the idea of private ownership is not really happening.

KC: And it's so hard to stay on top of that now, because you can just save anything and put it on your profile, no problem. Like on Tumblr, some of my Vines have a bunch of notes on them and stuff, but I didn't post it.

AC: Really?

KC: Yeah. It's weird.

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

Audience member: On Vine or Twitter, you don't have a lot of room to tag your jokes and make them yours. How do you keep your stuff from being stolen?

KC: I've been pretty lucky in terms of people not stealing my stuff, but some of my friends, their shit gets stolen all the time, and there's no real way to stay on top of it unless someone notices it, and then you tell them, "Hey, this is mine, you can't do that," and they don't care, they're just gonna be like, "Well, sorry, I already got a bunch of favorites on it, so it's mine now," or whatever stupid way their brain works. There's really no way to ensure that your stuff isn't gonna get stolen. That's just part of it, and you've got to live with it. Some people are just gonna mooch off you.

AC: *(to audience)* Anna Simone, did you have a question?

Audience member: Uh, yeah. I'm just gonna skip back a bit to your collaboration point. In terms of collaborating, if someone was like, "Hey, do you want to collaborate," do you have requirements, do you have a certain number of followers that they have to have?

KC: Um, I don't know. If the person is putting out really funny stuff, and they're close to me, and we would work well together, I don't see why we wouldn't. Yeah, that's the whole thing. When I was starting out, I was like, "Why are these popular Viners hanging out with other popular Viners?" It was just like a weird thing that happened. But then I kind of get it now, but at the same time they kind of limit themselves just to those people, which is kind of stupid. Because you want to grow as, I don't know, a brand or creator or whatever you want to call yourself, so you need these other people to help you, but at the same time, if that person's going to help you make quality content, then why not? Just collaborate with them. It doesn't matter how many followers they have or how pretty they look (*laughter*), or whatever other criteria you can think of.

AC: (*to audience*) Isaac?

Audience member: Well, I think we can agree that it's probably pretty hard to steal a face, so would you suggest when you're doing comedy to make more videos as opposed to comedic writing?

KC: That's the whole thing where some people are starting to watermark their videos now, so even if they steal it, they can go back to the original person. I don't know how much that happens, where it's like, "Oh, a watermark, I'm gonna go see them." Even then, some One Direction account on Instagram posted one of my Vines the other day, and I was like, "Thanks a lot, that's mine." And she was like, "Well, I didn't steal it, I just reposted it," and I was like, "Wow, you're a saint." (*laughter*)

Maybe the dream is, no matter who steals it, maybe you're well-known enough to be like, "Oh, that's Isaac." *(laughter)*

AC: You *want* to have it stolen. Well, not really. *(to audience)* Any more questions? *(to Kurtis)* We often ask this question: Are there any common mistakes that people make, you think, when they're trying to, say, be funny on Vine, or wherever?

KC: Hmm, common mistakes...I don't know. I don't really know. Vine's so weird in how people grow, and how they actually find a way to be successful on it. No matter what Vines you make, there's got to be an audience for it, so you're not completely doing things wrong. Maybe going to other people's videos and being like, "Hey, like for like." I don't really know. That's a hard question.

AC: It just seems like such a large...

KC: Maybe going into it with the idea that you're going to be successful, and you're gonna make a ton of money, you're gonna get a bunch of followers, that's the wrong thing to do. Sure, it works, but you're not really doing it for the right reasons. People message me all the time being like, "Can you give me a shout-out or something?" If you're just doing good stuff, then it'll happen naturally. So yeah, it just comes down to just making good stuff.

AC: Great. *(to audience)* One last question? Yeah, Isaac.

Audience member: So yeah, another question. Does your Vine success transfer over to other social media at all? Do you get followers on your other accounts like Facebook or Twitter or whatever?

KC: Yeah. Vine was the big one, and it kind of trickled down into all my other ones, and that's where I thought everyone was coming from, was Vine, and then other people would be like, "I found you on Youtube" or "I saw you on Instagram" or something. Vine was the big one that started everything, and then they all turned into their own types of things and kind of grew that way. Usually, when people start (following you) on a thing, and they're interested in you, then they want to see more of you, so they just follow all the other stuff.

AC: *(to audience)* Do you have a question here?

Audience member: Yeah. Do you feel, because you're popular on Vine, when people are asking you for shout-outs, that you have a responsibility to only shout out things that you think are going to be really successful? Or is it just based on your own personal taste?

KC: Yeah, (the latter) is really it. I've never once given a shout-out to someone who asked me to do it, because it's just weird. But if I see a funny Vine somewhere, and I think it's really funny, then I'm gonna share it with people and revine it and whatever, because good stuff deserves to be seen. So you just have to, in terms of reaching out to people...my buddy Christian, he used to... *(loud laughter, applause)*

AC: I've got 1900 followers. *(laughter)* I'm not kidding. I got 1900. 1900.

KC: Are you actually sharing that one?

AC: Is that OK?

KC: Can we take a better photo?

AC: Oh, all right.

KC: Nah, share it, whatever, whatever.

AC: Do you want to see it? Here. This is it.

KC: Oh, that's god awful.

AC: Do you want to take one, then?

KC: Yeah, let's do another one.

AC: Do you want to take it yourself?

KC: No, that's fine.

AC: You can take it yourself.

KC: OK, let's do a candid one.

AC: You can take a picture of yourself with my camera. *(loud laughter, applause as picture is taken)* That's pretty good.

KC: That's a good one.

AC: I'm gonna tweet it now, yeah? I'm gonna tweet it now @KurtisConner. Is that you? That's you, yes?

KC: Yep.

AC: All right, you keep talking.

KC: Right. Shout-outs, right. So yeah, my good friend Christian, he messaged me to be like, "Hey, can you revine some of my stuff? I look up to you and it'd be really cool if that happened." And I said, "Honestly, I don't really do that, but your stuff's really funny, so keep doing what you're doing," and now he's at almost a million followers. He's huge. So honestly, it comes down to just putting out good stuff, and just not worrying about that. Obviously you want it to do well, so it's hard to think like that, but if you just try your darndest, maybe it'll happen.

AM: So there's no resentment between you and Christian?

KC: No, he's one of my best friends, yeah.

AC: It's already tweeting.

KC: You did it? *(laughter)* Nice.

AC: Two retweets. *(laughter)* Here's a quick question as we're winding down. Vine was the new thing for a while. Is there something similar on the horizon? What's the next version, if you will, that other people are talking about or getting into?

KC: Periscope is pretty big right now.

AC: Periscope, yeah. *(laughter, applause)*

KC: I've never used it, but I've heard it's really cool. I might try it soon. Also, it's really weird, but has anyone heard of Musical.ly?

AC: Musical.ly?

KC: Yeah. It's really big, apparently.

AC: What is it?

KC: It's literally an app where you can film yourself doing lip-synch videos. Some people upload their funny videos to it as well, but apparently, that's really popular, and there are Musical.ly users that are gaining a bunch of followers, millions of views on the app. It's so weird.

AC: So you have a song and you lip-synch to it, and then you film yourself, and then you post it, and that's it?

KC: That's it, yeah.

AC: Fair enough.

KC: It's usually just little kids messing around, and other kids being like, "Whoah!"
(laughter)

AC: Again, I'm not asking you to be categorical about this kind of thing, but there was, long ago, Myspace, and it just went *(makes evaporating sound)*. Is there anything that you think, and I wouldn't hold you to it, that the industry is saying, "Oh, that might have peaked, or it might have had its moment, but it may go away"? Are you hearing rumblings about any of that kind of stuff? I'm not gonna hold you to it, but I'm just curious if people are talking like that.

KC: I've heard that Twitter's not doing that well...

AC: Yeah, it's been struggling.

KC: Yeah. Because I guess only millennials are using it, and people don't want to invest in it because they don't know what it is. People have said that Vine's not popular anymore, and it's not as popular as it was, but it's still pretty big. Other than that, Facebook out of nowhere, with that whole video thing, they blew up like crazy. Most of (the big social networks) are doing pretty well.

AC: *(to audience)* Any more questions? One more. Yeah.

Audience member: I'm just curious. You were talking about people saying Vine's getting less popular. What do you see yourself doing in five years? What are your goals?

KC: Um... gosh. The whole idea of making little videos is really interesting to me, to be able to convey one joke, several jokes, in such a small amount of time. That's really interesting to me, and a challenge, so I want to be doing that, even if Vine is done. I still want to be making tiny little videos, regardless of where I'm putting them up. And yeah, just being on top of Youtube...I don't really know what I want to be doing, as long as I can still create videos and stuff that makes people laugh and is entertaining, and I enjoy doing it. As long as I'm doing that, I'll be happy. That's my goal.

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

KC: Thanks. *(loud yelling from Kuris and audience)* Nice!

AC: You've made it! You can wear that in one of your Vines! Humber! *(laughter)*

Thanks a lot, Kurtis, that was terrific.

KC: Thank you, thank you, everyone. Thank you so much. (*applause*)

END