

(applause)

Andrew Clark: Can you put this on?

Maria Bamford: Sure, this is good.

AC: We record these for the archives...

MB: Oh! *(laughs)*

AC: So you'll have to throw them on. Sounds really impressive...

MB: It is.

AC: OK. So, I just want to welcome you to Humber College.

MB: Thank you for having me.

AC: I don't get to say this often and mean it, but Maria Bamford needs no introduction here or anywhere else, but please welcome her. Thank you very much for being here.

(applause)

MB: Thank you very much! Thanks for having me. This is really fun.

AC: It's great to have you here. I'm a huge fan. I usually start out saying, "How did you start," and that kind of thing. But I have a very strange thing to ask you, not in any way bad, but it's about listening to your album, the line about, "Don't touch so and so's stapler," or labelmaker, because, and then there's a pause, "She bought it with her own money." I had that weird experience you get with comedy where I was

driving, and I started laughing, and I literally had to pull over, because when you're losing it, when you feel like your psyche's gonna break open, and you don't know why? That was the experience. So thank you, because that doesn't happen very often. The best way I can describe it is, you lose control, and you don't know why you're laughing anymore, and it's dangerous, so you have to pull over. But I feel like, for your comedy, it's such a wonderful example of what you do, which is observing behavior in such a way, and then refracting it back. Is that something that you just naturally do when you walk around writing comedy, or is there thought going into that? And this is a very awkward question, so I've warned you up front. Any ideas?

MB: I'm not thinking that hard. I wish I were, but I'm not. *(laughter)*

AC: So how did you get your start in comedy? *(laughter)* We'll get back to that question.

MB: Sometimes I'm powered by brownies. *(laughter)* And my brain can't function.

AC: You grew up in Minnesota, right?

MB: Yes.

AC: And you started doing comedy, I think a little bit in college. I believe there was Kasher in the Rye, was that one of your bits?

MB: Oh, uh no, but that sounds like a good one. *(laughter)*

AC: I'm quoting, and I could be wrong, from an interview with *Slate*.

MB: Kasher in the Rye, as in Moshe Kasher. He's a great comic who just wrote a book called *Kasher in the Rye*.

AC: OK. That's where I'm mistaken. *(laughter)*

MB: It's a very good book, you guys.

AC: So you started out doing comedy at college, at college nights?

MB: Yeah, you just have open mics, right? You guys have open mics.

AC: And it worked.

MB: Yeah. I mean, I don't know if anyone else thought it worked, but it felt good to me.

AC: And then you moved out to...

MB: You know, nobody was on board as much as I was.

AC: No? You were right in?

MB: Well, yeah. You've gotta like what you're doing first, because everyone's gonna have an opinion, and a lot of the time... I don't know. Not a lot of the time, but it's always gonna be different. You have to like what you're doing.

AC: Like what you're doing onstage, and have a nice feel for it.

MB: Yeah.

AC: And then, did you stay in Minnesota for long, or did you sort of leave shortly thereafter to go out to California or wherever? How did you find your way into doing comedy professionally?

MB: I finished my degree, because my parents said I should do that.

AC: You finish your degree, you can do what you want with it?

MB: Yeah, it seemed like, "This is so stupid. I don't *need* this." (*laughter*) It seemed like all I had to do was take a couple of classes in Native American Studies and then call it a day (*laughter*), so I thought, "Hey, finish it out." And then I just had done everything, and there was an opportunity, and I got a job, I auditioned for a job doing *Star Trek* characters...

AC: And you've done some really great material about that too, right?

MB: Oh, that felt good, that's good, thank you. Yeah, and then I got to move to California, and I'm sure you guys know when you're done, you've done whatever in high school, where you go, "Oh, OK, I've done high school, I've done everything that I could there," and then you go, "Oh, maybe now I'm ready for college." I guess I was just ready to move on to something new and different. L.A. is just a huge open mic all the time. There are tons of shows, and there are tons more shows now, it seems to me, than there ever were. There are just a huge amount of shows. It's really nice.

AC: Do you do that now a lot? Get out and do a lot of shows?

MB: Sure, sure, and I'll go to open mics and stuff. I don't always hang around as much as I used to, because you could hang around an open mic for five to ten hours, and usually I leave after my set, which I know is rude. Thoughtless!

AC: You should stay for six hours and sit through it.

MB: Support the community!

AC: When you started out, did you feel like there was a community? Was there a community that you were enjoying there?

MB: Yes, oh yeah, yeah. Is anybody doing standup here? *(applause)* All right, oh my gosh! Look at y'all! Oh my gosh! Look at the whole group!

AC: Yes, these are all aspiring comedians.

MB: Oh, awesome. Yes, there's community, it doesn't change. It keeps growing.

AC: When you started out, were there people you really liked to watch when you were hanging around those open mics, where you were kind of like, "Ah yes, that's someone I'm gonna stick around for"?

MB: Yeah, yeah. Just people that you like, or your buddies. I was a bit more antisocial. I think that's what appealed to me about standup, was that you didn't have to talk to people, and now I like to work with others a lot more. But I liked that you didn't have to hang around. Because with improv, it seems like you gotta chit-chat. *(laughter)*

AC: Yeah. You gotta be part of the team.

MB: There was a lot of socializing. I was not interested. *(laughs)*

AC: When you started working out your material, did you write it down? Different people have different approaches. When we had Louis C.K., he talked about how, for a long time, he didn't write anything down, really. He would just work it out. What's your approach to doing material?

MB: I just write down beats, and I do it to myself over and over, and I still do that. I'll just say the same bit over and over. What's one I'm working on right now... I was thinking about how much, when you really love somebody, and you can't... like I'm painting a ceramic dog for my dad. And it's at Color Me Mine, which is a chain in the U.S., which is sort of the lazy man's craft room, where you just go in and they go *(mumbling)*, and they give you some paint. Anyways, I was working on this ceramic dog, which is also a bank, so my father can have his own money *(laughter)*, and it was like, all the red, I wanted it to be better, and then the spots. It was just not exactly *(right)*, and there's only so much time. I was working on a V8 and some hot peanuts, and a birthday party was coming in, you know? Or I make something for my nieces and nephews, I stuff a Justin Bieber singing card with a bunch of puffy stickers, and I think, "Is that all I can do?" *(laughter)* "It's not enough." So now I've built a fire on my front lawn, and put up a live web feed, so if ever I let people down, like I forget your birthday, or I give you a huge with just my shoulders *(laughter)*, I can say, "Hey, look, eternal flame. That's how I really feel." *(laughter, applause)*

AC: So that's how you do it?

MB: Yeah. You just write out the little beat. My parents are getting older, and I just think about how much I deeply love them. I'm just like, "I gotta tell you again!"
(laughter) So I was trying to write something about that. And I like three beats. So yeah, I just do that.

AC: And your family has played a significant role in a lot of your comedy.

MB: Yes, yes.

AC: And it must be interesting for you now, having drawn from that over time, to watch their reactions and feelings about being in the material evolve, if you will, over time. Is that something that's happened for you?

MB: Yeah, and they're kind of more fine with it. I feel bad because a lot of my impersonations are just me more than it is them. It's my interpretations of them, kind of resentful, passive-aggressive stuff, where it's like, "Hey Maria, why don't you say how you feel, rather than saying it to a group of 400 people over and over again." *(laughter)*

AC: That's what you hear, almost?

MB: Yeah. Like I have this thing called "Joy Whack-a-Mole." It's a game where you bring up something that you're really happy about, and then the other person tries to slam it down. It's so fun. *(laughter)* And the truth is, I do that. That's one of my favorite... *(laughs)* Like, "Oh, look at this nice sweatshirt. Guess how much?" "Oh, I don't know." "It was only ten bucks. How do they do it?" "Oh, I was reading about that: slavery." *(laughter)*

AC: So you just yank that right out.

MB: Yeah. But sometimes I'll put that in my parents' voices, that they're saying those things, and I wonder about that, if that's super great. But oh well. I'm doing the best that I can. And sometimes it's not that good.

AC: Well, you've had your father open once for you, right, at a show? Was it in Duluth?

MB: Yep. I was really terrified. My dad had got me a gig. One of his friends ran a motorcycle club, and apparently was a fan. I don't know what was going on there, but it paid sweet. But I was terrified, so I said, "My dad'll go up first." So he did, and he bombed, and then I bombed.

AC: So it was a bonding experience.

MB: Yeah, yeah.

AC: In the car, on the way home.

MB: Well, I don't know. He worked so hard. He did a really good job. My dad mumbles like me, which is really great for expressing yourself. *(laughter)*

AC: Certainly onstage, I wouldn't describe that as mumbling. Your characters seem so precise, and you're able to go very clearly back and forth.

MB: If I'm doing a show live, sometimes I'll get into, "*(Mumbles)*, oh ha ha ha, sorry!" Part of the job is enunciating. *(laughter)* It's just that my face is so tired. *(laughter)*

But yeah, it was lovely, it was very generous of him to do that, because yeah, I was just terrified. And I'm still terrified before every show.

AC: Really?

MB: Oh yeah.

AC: And do you just accept that now as part of the process of what you do, that you're gonna get that feeling before you go on?

MB: Yeah. There's no choice but to accept it. Every single time I go, "Oh God, it's so important, comedy is so important." *(laughter)* "Oh, Jesus Christ." And the current book I'm reading, I like to read books about stuff, so that's my thing. I'm reading this book called *Zen Guitar*. I like reading about different art forms so I can relate to it more, and with practicing, sometimes I don't wanna go through the jokes. It's like, "They should just be *fresh*." *(laughter)* But the boredom and the intimacy of working on something, of just spending time by myself, going through the jokes, feels uncomfortable sometimes. And there's something weird about how you come to a new city, and it's lonely, it's weird, you're in a hotel by yourself, and you're going into a bar...I'm not a super bar person, so it's just weird, and it never seems to not be weird.

AC: You hear a lot of comedians talk about how the only constant would be that the channels are somewhat the same in the hotel room, and there's a stale buffet or whatever downstairs at breakfast. But it is a kind of lonely existence to a degree. Are you traveling a lot then for standup?

MB: I'm not traveling as much as I used to, so just twice a month, partially because it's not as interesting to me as it was. I've done that, I've gone away for two months, and I think it is fun, but on some level, at least for me, I had to have something else to keep me going, and I think for a while it was... What is it when you have dreams for the future? *(laughter)*

AC: It's either optimism or ambition.

MB: Ambition! Ambition. *(laughter)* I don't have as much of that anymore. *(laughter)* Because you know, when you succeed, it's like, "Oh, here it is," and it's super nice, it's like, "Oh, I wanted that sandwich, I've been thinking about that sandwich all day, that sandwich is super good," and then you have the sandwich. And it's like, "OK. Now I gotta wait to get hungry again." *(laughter)* It genuinely doesn't change anything, and I do remember other comedians telling me that. I don't know if you guys know Emo Phillips, but now we have the same manager, and I asked him, *(in tremulous voice)* "Mr. Phillips, how do you make it in show business? How do you make it?" I was twenty-three or something. And he said, "Well, you just keep doing it, and then pretty much, more people see you, and then more people see you, and then pretty soon a lot of people have seen you." *(laughter)* That's it. *(laughs)*

AC: The zen of standup. And you've also done a fair bit of work, you had your series on Super Deluxe, you've done Tim and Eric, I think you're doing *Arrested Development* as well. So you're part of that, and it seems like, certainly in that community in Los Angeles, the big question is, do you want some other kind of weird super fame or something like that, which I think, when you're around people

who are living that, it's not always the most appealing picture. *(laughter)* Do you find that you're looking towards other kinds of expression, like maybe writing in print, in books? I know you've done some print stuff. Or screenwriting, that kind of thing? Or are you just happy now with your comedy, with where it's at, and moving it forward?

MB: I think it's good. It's good now. It's just, get ready for the show, do a show. And I get excited about new projects and stuff, but I gotta enjoy the project I'm working on, you know what I'm saying? The nice thing is that sometimes I'll get offers, like, "You could do this, and you could do this and this," and it's like, well, I could only enjoy one thing at a time, so maybe I'll just do this, because this is fun. To enjoy something, I want to do it well. When I think about, "Hey, do you wanna poop out a book? Maybe you could get a book done, a couple hours a day, just push out a book." Well, I like books, and I would like it to be a good book. You guys know what I'm talking about. *(laughter)*

AC: I think we're probably ready to get a question from one of the *(students)*. *(to audience)* I guess raise your hands. Anyone have a question? I guess Adam. I guess we should give them a microphone.

MB: Oh, I can hear that guy.

AC: We'll hear you, but we'll get the mic going that way.

Audience member: You were on a couple episodes of *Tim and Eric*.

MB: Yeah.

Audience member: What was it like working with those guys? Did they give you a lot of direction?

MB: It was just fun. It's like in a basement somewhere, and they're just weirdos, putting costumes on. How easy it is, it's ridiculous. It was super fun, and delightful.
(laughs) Yes. *(laughter)*

AC: Sure.

MB: Oh, sorry, you're in charge.

AC: No, I'm not in charge. You can pick someone.

MB: You're in charge.

AC: You can see who looks good. Right there. *(to audience)* Yes, sir.

Audience member: So I know you did *The Comedians of Comedy*, and that gave you this tag as an alternative comedian. I was wondering what you think that means, like if there's a difference.

MB: I'm grateful to have a job. Whatever's helpful, if somebody goes, "Oh, I like alternative comedy, and that means I'll come see this show and I'll like it because I've heard it's alternative," then I think it's really helpful. *(laughter)* I don't know. I do feel like if something's funny to one person, it's funny. I feel like if something's beautiful to somebody, I can't go, "That's not beautiful, that's disgusting." *(laughter)* To me, I find all sorts of comedy... I don't know. If people want to study it, then I

guess that's helpful, to put people in different genres or something. Is it helpful because you study it?

AC: Well, I think the whole idea of "alternative" was just a way of describing what was going on. The thing with comedy now is that people really are looking at it more like an art form. They didn't so much even twenty years ago. Whereas in music, there were always these labels because music was always considered something where you study it because people work at it, they practice it, they write it down. Comedy, I think, in part because when you watch it, the comedian's job is to not show all the work that's gone into it, and to make it feel as if it's a spontaneous thing that's happening right in front of the audience, their critics wouldn't always look at it in a way that's looking for a movement or deeper meaning or whatever. I think the alternative now is more talking about what happened in the early 90's in North America out of Los Angeles, New York, reacting against the kind of standup where it was always stereotypical stuff, and sexist, and throwing that kind of stuff around.

MB: And there are always new stereotypes. There's always a new hack. Because everything's always coming into the zeitgeist. I'm not gonna think of anything that original. I'm a human being, I'm living in the same world everybody else is. I'm gonna think of relationships, and food, religion. I'm gonna think of the same things.

AC: I think that's one of the ironic things about comedy. Your goal is to be extremely unique by making everyone relate to what you're saying. So it has to have this broad experience (behind it), or there's no humour, they don't connect with whatever's happening. So it's an interesting kind of mix. *(to audience)* Uh, yeah, right there.

Audience member: You do *Wordgirl*. How do you like animated (work) and doing voice acting?

MB: It's super fun. It depends on what the thing is, but that's the really great thing about standup, is you can get jobs in other fields as a result of doing standup, because I know a lot of standups who do voiceover, because they value your ability to improvise or write off their scripts. *Wordgirl* let us improvise stuff, so that's really great, because I had tried getting into voiceover, and it was just very, at least to me, daunting. I was just like, "High voice, low voice," you know. *(laughter)* And there is a part of it that's unfair. It's not necessarily a fair situation. I think Chris Rock said it's mostly white people doing voiceover, and it's like, black people can do white voices. And that's weird, and it's not about talent. I think there are weird elements to that. But that's everything. Youth or conventional beauty or whatever sometimes are easier ways to have success, because we're all monkeys, and we look towards the strong, sexy monkeys to tell us where all the bananas are located. *(laughter)* So negative.

Audience member: So, you said you were lonely...

MB: Yes.

Audience member: In hotels. *(laughter)* No, no...

MB: Well well well! *(laughter)*

AC: Next question, over here.

Audience member: Are you lonely because you're actually alone? *(laughter)* No, because someone of your level of thing...

MB: Fair point, yes.

Audience member: ...could probably hang out with a townie or whatever all they want.

MB: Um, OK. It's an existential loneliness, I think. I have lots of good friends and family *(laughter)*, and there's lots of lovely people in the lobby *(laughter)*, and they're fun to chit-chat with. And you can hang out like all these guys, other comics, local comics.

AC: Yes, we have the beautiful and talented Rob Mailloux, Evan Desmarais and Mark DeBonis back there. *(applause)*

MB: Yaaaaaay!

AC: All proud Humber alumni. Well, proud I would say, kind of begrudgingly.

MB: I guess it's too much time in your own head, but then it's weird, because I don't know these guys super well, and I'm not a super extroverted person. So let's say, OK, last night, it's 3 AM, and I can't go to sleep because I'm still on L.A. time, so it's like, would I call up Rob and say, *(in sleepy tone)* "Wanna chit-chat?" The mental energy it takes to talk, like to hang out *(laughter)*, it's hard. I think when I was younger, I used to do one-night stands, alcohol, drugs. Those things pass the time. *(laughter)* Or gas station food. You stuff yourself with some gas station muffins, and that's a day.

(laughter) That's a day gone. So yeah, there are some existential moments, but I

don't know. I know some people find comfort in spirituality or something, but I have a new god that I've been worshipping. And he's about the size of this room. And he undulates, and he's covered in this green reptilian skin, and he has one little eye *(laughter)*, but he's really friendly. *(laughter)* And then on the other side, he's got a giant mouth, and he's like, "Raaaaaaaah!" And I can't understand what he's saying, but it's working! *(laughter)* It helps. I mean, you know. Haven't you ever been lonely? *(laughter)*

AC: Yeah, I think he's probably been lonely. *(loud laughter)*

MB: Because even if you're with a stranger, you can still feel weird. And there's something about comedy where I get more self-conscious, where I get kind of scared for shows, and get more in my brain. That is something weird, where there's a place where no one can help you. You have to do the show. Have you ever been in a place in life where you can ask for people's opinions, but you're the one who has to do it? Yeah, the horror of...

AC: Is that why you sometimes draw on your experience temping and stuff like that for your comedy, because it's so much about relating? Your material about temping, I think most people who've worked trying to be writers, actors, everybody has done that. It's always this weird first-day-of-school thing, of having to fit in, having to find your place, and then by the time it's done, off you go. Is that a little bit of it for you?

MB: Yeah, comedy's a lot like temping. You go to a city, and you see people. It's really nice now, because I have a little audience...

AC: Well, your audience is there to see you, for sure.

MB: That is incredible. I get worried I'm getting a little soft, because it's so nice. I don't run into people going, "I didn't know this was here tonight!" Not as much, you know? *(laughter)*

AC: Once in a while. Great. Joel, did you have a question?

Audience member: Andrew mentioned the apparent spontaneity, but I know you've been involved with the "Setlist" show, which is an improvised standup comedy show. I guess this is a two-parter. Number one, what do you think of that format, and number two, how do you personally experience improvising a whole standup comedy set?

MB: They do "Setlist" where the audience sees the list you go through. It was super fun. I was really scared at first, but it was really fun. And the weird thing on the TV show, which is classic show business, *(laughter)* they gave me a list of topics that were pretty... something like, "What would Eve say to Adam in the Garden of Eden?" Things that were kind of soft-serves, where I felt like, "Ohhhhh," but I was grateful as well, because I'm frightened, and I want to look good. But I really love the concept. I felt a little bit sad, though, that it wasn't riskier. If you're gonna say you're gonna do it...

(At this point, the audio cuts out.)

MB: Because, like any obsession, when one thing becomes the answer to your self-esteem, you've gotta have something else to think about. I enjoy making stained glass! *(laughter)* I don't...

AC: But you could...

MB: I could. There's no reason I couldn't.

AC: *(to audience)* Another question. Ryan.

Audience member: Was there a moment where you felt like you found your voice onstage? Was there a moment where you were like, "This is who I am onstage, and this is who I want to be?" Do you remember that exact moment?

MB: I think you're always changing. Like the secretarial work, I did that probably ten or fifteen years ago, so I always go, "I can't remember any of those jokes!" And I was nicer then. I was so nice then. You know? That's funny, when you go out and have shows, and this is again a quality problem, like, "I really liked your first album." And I'm like, "Sorry." *(laughter)* "These are my new bits." Yeah, my own voice. I still find it hard to listen to my own voice, because it is high, and childlike, and irritating.

AC: But growing up, did you do voices as a kid, or was it something that came later?

MB: I did it to get people's attention, because this voice, people don't want to hear it.

AC: You have quite a range onstage. There's a musicality, I think, to the different characters, and how you seem to have different inflections colliding against other ones, and stuff like that.

MB: All right! *(laughter)* That's good, that's good. I get bored. They had this show in L.A. *(laughs)* where they have comedians roasting each other on your act. Agggh. I always get roasted, like, "All your voices sound the same," and I'm like, "I know! I know I do six of them!" I wish I could do celebrity impersonations. I'm trying to accept that I have limitations and/or I genuinely don't want to move past those limitations.

AC: Watching it, it doesn't feel like you're doing impersonations. It feels like those characters are there for however long. It's not like, "And now I'm going to do my mother." They're present. I think with the Super Deluxe show, each one was fully there. It was interesting. You grew up watching *Saturday Night Live* with your dad. I often hear people, male and female, talking about their dads influencing their sense of humor. Has that happened at all for you?

MB: Yeah, totally. My mom's really funny, and my dad, I always like making my dad laugh. He's ridiculous. He has this website that we like to talk about, where he's selling bars of wood shaped like bars of soap. *(laughter)* And it's called No Soap. And the only way you can get one of these bars is if you send \$25 in a cheque form to a skin-related charity, send him the receipt, and then eight to ten weeks later he'll send you this bar of wood. Because his whole philosophy is, you shouldn't use soap, because it's drying and irritating to the skin. And then if people say, "What should I use," he'll say, "Why don't you try this?" And he gives them a bar of wood. And they'll ask, "Won't I get splinters?" And he says, "Yeah. Better not use it." *(laughter)* And the website's been up for about fifteen years now, ever since the internet (started). One

person has gotten one. *(laughter)* And it's such a delight. Just the potential that it never happens *(laughter)*, nobody ever gets one. And sometimes I'll tweet it, and he'll go, "Oh, Jesus. I only got fifty of these." *(laughter)* You know, just jokes with your family are just so funny. I love my parents. But my parents can be just as hard. I did a set for my dad, and I rehearsed it for him twice, and he was kind of irritated, and it was for TV, and he was like, "Oh, Jesus, no wonder you're still single." Oh, whoa! Eight ball corner pocket, Dad! *(laughter)* So I love my parents, but they're not completely supportive all the time.

AC: But being funny was something that was valued?

MB: Yeah, yeah, totally, totally. My sister's super funny. My sister does videos. She does life coach videos about animal totems and things like that.

AC: And she was, and maybe still is, a pathologist?

MB: She was a pathologist, she no longer does that. Now she works in the energy community. *(laughs)* And it does seem to blow over pretty quickly. My mom, this last thing she got really mad about, she said she couldn't find me in the house, and she called my sister and said, "Maria has disappeared. And I'm worried she's killed herself, and I have a hair appointment in town." *(laughter)* And I thought that was so fucking hilarious. That's so awesome. There are just so many things you can think about. "I would dredge the shallows for your sister's body, but we're out of ginger snaps, and your father loves ginger snaps, but he would never tell you girls, oh no, he would never tell you girls." But she got really angry that I was making a joke

about that. But then she forgot about it completely as soon as she saw me do the joke in person. She was like *(chuckles)*. So, FYI, it blows over pretty quickly.

AC: Yeah, so stick it out?

MB: Stick it out, stick it out.

AC: *(to audience)* Any more questions? Stunned silence. Oh, sorry, yeah.

Audience member: You did *Louie* this season, and I just want to know, do you think you were the one who gave Louie crabs, or did you give Louie crabs? *(laughter)*

MB: That character, it totally wasn't me, I was totally acting. *(laughter)* Although we did have sex. *(laughter)* We had sex a lot. We had sex all the time, because that's how it is in acting. *(laughter)* You gotta *do* it. I think we both had crabs. *(laughter)* You gotta be careful. Protect yourself on the road.

AC: How did that appearance come about?

MB: I think he's just a kind man who gives people jobs. He's providing jobs for America. *(laughter)* Yeah, that was super fun. It was super neat, because he's really made those things himself. He made, what's the first movie he made?

Audience member: *Pootie Tang*.

AC: *Pootie Tang*, yeah.

MB: Totally did that himself. And then he does his show himself. He shoots it, there's no makeup, no hair. Everyone's just all together. A lot of times, on big-budget things,

you have your own trailer, and everyone's apart from everybody, and there's this big hierarchy. And it was just so nice to see him. He's looking in the camera, and then he's acting, and he's looking in the camera. I thought that was really inspiring. It was so great that he's super involved.

AC: Yeah, he sort of set a bar in terms of doing that kind of thing. One other person maybe is Woody Allen, who puts out a movie every year, and kind of does that, but it's amazing.

MB: Yeah, it is amazing. I do not have that work ethic.

AC: Now, you did *Just for Laughs* this summer, right? Or was it the summer before?

MB: The summer before.

AC: You probably get this a lot, this being Canada, but do you notice any difference between Canadian audiences and American audiences, or is it that your audience is your audience, whether it's in Toronto or (elsewhere)?

MB: In Toronto, or at least at the Comedy Bar, where it's a theater-type situation, and there are probably a lot of young artists and comedians in the crowd, people are listening a lot. They appreciate different references. But I'm sure I could go outside or go a block or go ten feet outside the club and do my act, and people would say, "Shut the fuck up, you stupid cunt, before I snap your neck in half!" (*laughter*)

AC: It's possible, yeah.

MB: It's all individuals. But yeah, I have the ability to bomb anywhere.

AC: And do you think of each set of material almost like a book, or like an album, or whatever? Do you build it that way and say, "OK, that's done, now I'm gonna start on another"? And if so, how do you know when you're ready to begin that next sort of body of material?

MB: Well, I just recorded one with Comedy Central, so I'm like, "OK, that's done," but I still do that material because I've gotta build more. I opened for Louis a couple times, and what he does is he starts with his new material, and then he goes into the old stuff. So he does all the new bits up front, and then slowly replaces everything year by year. I seem to have a cycle of once every five years, having a new album. (I'm like) Sade, I mean Sade is once every ten years, basically. I wish I were more prolific, but oh well. *(laughter)* Who cares? *(laughter)*

AC: Move it around. *(to audience)* Any other questions? They're stunned.

MB: Stunned. Frightened.

AC: *(to audience)* I'm sorry, did you...?

Audience member: So on the Comedians of Comedy tour, you guys did more rock venues than traditional comedy clubs. Is that sort of the same thing with the Comedy Bar, in that you found the audience was a lot different, and did you prefer that experience?

MB: I think those guys liked rock clubs because they're big music fans. Patton and Brian, and I don't know about Zach, but Patton really loves music venues and feels super comfortable in them, and he's more like a rock star, because he has a super

powerful delivery. I like theaters because I think I'm more of a theater person. I just like, "Everyone's sitting in their seats quietly, and it's difficult to go get a drink."

(laughter)

AC: So like the Comedy Bar...

MB: Yeah, I like that venue. But you can perform anywhere you want. That's the great thing about standup. You can create your own venue, the exact circumstances you enjoy performing under, and just make them.

AC: How do you decide between "This is standup" and "This is a one-person show"? Do you make that distinction, or is there a slightly more theatrical element to a one-person show that you've done? It's a tricky one. It's often more about where it's being presented. If it's in a theater, then it's a one-person show, but if it's in a club, then it's standup.

MB: I always go, if there's blackouts... I don't know. I never thought about that. If I just change it, if I just go, "Well, tonight's show is a one-person show." *(laughs)* If there's a spotlight? I don't know what makes a one-person show. If there aren't as many laughs? If there's not as much pressure? With clubs there's a definite pressure where it's like, "This story has been sad for a while. This shouldn't be in a club."

AC: Did you find that when you were going from what we would call "middling" or "featuring" here to where you're headlining, doing forty-five minutes to an hour, did you have to work in those pauses for the audience? Usually when you're doing, say, fifteen minutes, you're trying to get as many laughs as you can, but when you're

doing an hour, you can't make an audience kill themselves, I don't think, for a whole hour. They just get laughed out. Do you consciously put in pauses, or do you just let it happen organically with the breaks?

MB: I just get terrified and hope that it's all going well, and keep rolling. "Oh, another one! OK, another one!" And yeah, keep going. I feel bad. These guys have so much experience doing standup locally, in the Canadian circuit. That's probably more important to the country's future. You guys are Canada's future! *(laughter)*

AC: *(to audience)* We have time for one more question. Yep, right back there, James.

Audience member: What would you say is the highlight of your career?

MB: Yesterday was pretty fun. *(laughter)* I have a couple friends, there's this guy Joe Zimmerman I'll tell jokes to on the phone, just tell each other jokes and tag them and stuff, so that was really fun. Thought of some good bits. You know when you make somebody you know laugh? Those are actually still my favorite moments. That's fun. That's what's most fun. When I think of times where it's like, "You just shot a half-hour special," it's neat, but things where I make my family laugh or something, it's more fun. And today, on the drive here, we had fun. We were laughing about the toaster. How do you make a grilled cheese sandwich, Mark? The Toastmaster. Of course, they don't sell those anymore. But what you do is, you put Velveeta and margarine, and you put that on some bread, and you can put Nutella on it, and it makes a real good sandwich, while it's hot. Once it gets cold, pffft. *(laughter)*

AC: Not nice.

MB: It's not any good.

AC: Well, Maria, thank you so much for being here.

MB: No, thank you so much for having me! Yeah yeah yeah!

AC: A token of our appreciation.

MB: Whaaaat?

AC: Maria Bamford, thank you so much.

MB: Thank you so much, and please hire me when I'm opening for you!

(applause)