

## Tom Green Transcript

Tom: So it's the first time I've been in a school in a while so, it's scary being in a school but thanks for having me come out and talk to you guys.

Host: You're welcome Tom. Just by way of introduction although I don't think there's anybody here. Is this on? Yep. Although I don't think there's anybody here who doesn't know who Tom Green is, but just to set this up we're here at Humber College at The Humber College School of Comedy and we're talking to Tom Green who's our special guest. We talk a lot in the program, we talk a lot about the spirit of innovation, so let's just see the kind of innovation we're talking about I think is encapsulated by the gentleman who's sitting here with me. Think about this, reality TV, I think he got there before just about anybody, shock comedy, got there just about before anybody, prank comedy, got there just about before anybody, comedy on the internet, got there before just about anybody, the fusion of rap music and comedy, got there just about before anybody. A pretty impressive life and a pretty impressive comedy resume. Tom Green.

Tom: Wow! Thank you, Mark. Thanks.  
Clapping

Host: Andrew, why don't you ask, throw out the first question?

Andrew: Well, I'm going to start. You're from Ottawa, I'm from Ottawa and I went back over some old articles we'd done and found your grade seven report card.

Tom: Oh really?

Andrew: Which stated, Tom must learn to pay attention and not distract others. So, I mean this is a bit of a trope as a question but, growing up as a kid do you remember that moment when you started to realize that making people laugh was important or was it something that kind of happened later because I know, we talked a little bit before about Yuk Yuk's and when you were fifteen doing comedy, and that's pretty early.

Tom: Yeah

Andrew: Do you remember as a kid then, always wanting that attention

Tom: Yeah

Andrew: that comic attention?

Tom: Yeah

Andrew: And what was it always at school or through the family, or what kind of stuff were you doing?

Tom: It was at home, it was at school. I was very hyper, I was a very hyper kid. I was an army brat, grew up in CFB Petawawa and we moved every year for the first seven years or so before we settled in Ottawa so.

Host: And your father, he was a tank, he was a tank commander right?

Tom: Yeah, he looked after the tank.

Laughter

Host: Yeah, but it's, he looked after the one tank in the Canadian army. No, so there was a lot of discipline, right and was that sort of it?

Tom: Yeah, there was a strict military thing happening but also, he was a funny guy. But, very strict, lots of rules, lots of chores. But, I think, basically it started at school though, it was just sort of this way of fitting in, new kid in class way of fitting in. I did a speech on humour and comedy in the sixth grade, and I decided I'd do my speech, I figured it would be a good excuse to get up on stage and tell some jokes. So, I went up in grade six and won for the school, I won the speech contest for the school but, I remember I got the biggest laugh in front of an audience that I think I've probably ever had, at least at the time. It was an amazing experience, I was a little kid and the judges asked you a question after the speech and in my speech I said, you know in one of the things in my speech I said comedy is a good thing to use to get out of a bad situation and I didn't give an example and the judge stood up after and said in front of the whole school and said, okay give us an example of how you can use comedy to get out of a bad situation. And, I sort of started to panic and I had no idea what to say and I thought of a joke that'd I'd read in some 101 Dumb Jokes joke book that'd I'd been scouring as I'd been writing my speech and I said "well I brought my report card home to my dad and I used comedy to get out of a bad situation there." And they said "How'd you do that?" I said, "Well I brought my report card home to my dad and I said dad, here's my report card, my marks are under water. And my dad said, "well what do you mean they're under water, I said they're below "C" level.

Laughter

Tom: So it was...

Host: Thus was born...

Tom: It really was a huge laugh, I think just because people were just sort of worried for me. They were worried that I wasn't going to have an answer and I pulled something out and the whole school was laughing and I felt that was probably the best feeling I had ever felt in my life up to that point so, that was probably around the time when I thought I might want to try to do something creative with my life.

Host: Yeah

Tom: Yeah

Host: And it's interesting, just to sort of go ahead because a lot of the humour that you were doing, especially with your show starting out was very much about having that sense of what's going to happen, whether it was planking right, in 1994 I think there's that video of you online planking right, for the first time? Starting the craze.

Tom: Yeah, CNN wrote an article about it saying that I was the forefather of modern planking.

Laughter

Tom: Pretty proud of that.

Host: Maybe you could explain, maybe for somebody who might not know.

Tom: Yeah, after the class we can go plank in the hall or something. We, I didn't call it planking, I called it dead guy and it was this thing that I was doing in high school before we even filmed it I would just lie down on my face for no reason and between classes, people would be walking to class and I'd just be lying on my face. Motionless and it was always fun to confuse people, to me I thought it was funny just confusing everybody and I was a very strange kid in high school, I would do strange things in high school all the time to kind of draw attention to myself and started doing stand up when I was fifteen years old at Yuk Yuk's in Ottawa. That was really when I first said "Hey, there's an actual business here, you know people actually do this for a living. But, planking, yeah that, that was fun. We filmed it in 1994 from the roof of a, of a building in the market in Ottawa and the joke was that I was just going to go lie down on my face and see how long it would take for somebody to call an ambulance, basically and it took about 20 minutes.

Laughter

Tom: But when I saw everybody planking last summer I just kinda got a little angry about it, I said that's my move. So I went and found the video, it wasn't on YouTube and posted it on YouTube and CNN called and did this big article about it so now everyone's given me credit for the worst thing ever.

Laughter

Host: Ottawa's stand up community then is pretty small you're gonna be watching guys, we talked to like Harland Williams and Norm McDonald. There's a lot of funny people that have come out of Ottawa. Do you have any theories about the city or it just beside the point, because it seems to breed a kind of smart, but subversive comedy. You know what I mean?

Tom: Yep, I think in all honesty I think the Yuk Yuk's has a big part of that, they were very encouraging over there. Mark had a great club there and Howie was always very encouraging to people. I initially, when I went to Yuk Yuk's when I was fifteen I got kicked out for heckling. I don't know if I've ever told you this but...

Host: No, you never told me this.

Tom: I would go and me and my friends would go and we would sort of try and find creative ways to you know be shit disturbers basically because we just didn't really have any inkling or notion that we could even get on stage so this was our way of sort of getting some attention as goofy fifteen year olds. So we'd go there and we'd all sit in the front row, the three of us, we'd sit in the front row like this and every time the comic would say his punchline we'd switch our hands.

Laughter

Host: The other part of that story Tom is that you were underage in a licensed establishment. I don't know how that might have happened.

Tom: Well I think, didn't they have a restaurant license I think is what it was?

Host: Not in that place, no not in Ottawa

Tom: No?

Host: Not in the Ottawa one, no

Tom: Wow..well but then they let

Host: They watered your drinks though

Tom: Yeah, yeah we weren't drinking

Tom: But then when they let me start doing stand up there, I guess when you're on stage

Host: Yes, when you're on stage that's okay.

Tom: Yeah. I was 21 when I started at Yuk Yuk's.

Host: But, were you working at the same time then starting to work with video? Because the cameras you were talking about the last stuff that I just saw online that you did, you did with a small camera in Costa Rica, it looked fantastic. You know that's the quality that we're dealing with now, but back then those cameras were pretty involved right I mean they were not too small?

Tom: Yeah

Host: You'd have to put it on your shoulder.

Tom: Yeah, basically when video cameras came out that was something I was really excited about and really focused on a lot. All I wanted to do was get my hands on a video camera and that was an exciting time. I started the show at Rogers Cable and basically it was just so that I could volunteer and get access to editing equipment. There's so much at everyone's disposal now, it's such an exciting time that you can go edit on your laptop computer and broadcast around the world on the internet. There's so many exciting opportunities now for people that you know it's something you definitely want to take advantage of.

Host: Tom,

Tom: Yeah it's cool. At the time it was kind of an interesting thing like getting and doing that show on Rogers cause on one hand it was really hard to get a camera, it was really hard to edit and find access to that stuff, but on the other hand nobody else was doing it because of that so you'd, we'd make these crazy videos and planking and doing all of these things, waking up my parents in the middle of the night and doing all kinds of ridiculous stuff that was sort of modeled after David Letterman and skateboarding videos and all this. But then, it wasn't like it was this sort of massive influx of people doing all this stuff so we built up all this video over the course of a few years and were sort of one of the first people doing that.

Host: But you got seen to and is was Glenn Humplick and Derek Harvey and your real kinda nucleus down on, almost on the river so to speak cause that's where you eventually moved to that studio, channel ten was it or something like that?

Tom: Yep, channel 22.

Host: Channel 22

Tom: Rogers 22

Host: And you would have to book time and everything like that, but

Tom: We got picked up by the Ontario Rogers network at one point we were airing in Toronto on Channel ten and we thought that was just unbelievable we were on the air in Toronto on Rogers. We couldn't believe it.

Host: And how old were you when all this was happening?

Tom: So I started the show on Rogers a little later when I was around twenty four. I was twenty four. I was at Algonquin College studying broadcasting. Went down there to learn how to edit,

and then took a couple of buddies from school, we went down to Rogers Cable and volunteered to do the show all summer, so.

Host: And at any point, when you were doing this at that time, did you have any idea that it would evolve into a really important career in comedy, that you would move to the States? Any of that occur to you that, that was happening or were you just having a good time?

Tom: It was the dream. It was the dream for sure, yeah. It was definitely the goal but it was also the impossible to reach thing. It was definitely something that me and my friends were trying to do. We would send the tapes to people. I sent tapes to Lorne Michaels and got a rejection letter and I still have it and it was awesome. It was just cool that I was on the NBC stationary and somebody had actually watched my tape. We sent you know we started sending tapes out to everybody we could think of and we were very dedicated to it, my friends and I. We would spend all our time trying to think of the weirdest thing we could come up with and film. Very much focused on it, but there's you gotta have a lot of there's a lot of good luck involved but I also think just getting out there and doing it is half, more than half the battle. Just doing it. Really just deciding to do it.

Host: And you got your, I mean in Ottawa you had a following did you do live shows every once in a while down there or was it always on television?

Tom: So, I did college radio at CHUO and we did a phone in show from midnight til two on Fridays and we started doing the show on Rogers.

Host: And this was after Organized Rhyme?

Tom: Yeah

Host: And how long did that experience go? Because you've always been involved with rap.

Tom: Yeah, I like the hip hop

Host: I mean did you, like was that something you went through and left for a while kinda thing or did you bring more sensibility into the show?

Tom: I'd stopped doing the rap group and went back to school, went back to Algonquin after that. I was actually in Algonquin taking broadcasting when we got our record deal with Organized Rhyme and I dropped out of Algonquin to come to Toronto to record which was a pretty awesome thing. I think I was eighteen when that happened, nineteen and then I went back to school and took the program after the record, you know after the band broke up. After the band broke up.

Laughter

Tom: Sad when the band breaks up. Got a letter from the record company so we were very excited cause we had a record deal and it was a very exciting thing. We were nineteen years old, song was playing on Much Music, we won the Canadian Music Video Award, we were nominated for a Juno, I was sitting behind Corey Hart at the Junos.

Laughter

Tom: I had this thing, we went to the Juno Awards and I bought a pair of handcuffs with me and Celine Dion was hosting and I had this thing, it was going to be my first big bad decision.

Laughter

Tom: And I didn't do it but I was planning on running up on stage and handcuffing myself to Celine Dion in the middle of the live broadcast and chickened out and didn't do it. But, it was probably a good thing I didn't do that.

Host: When you were creating the show, I mean one of the things that I noticed when I first saw it was well you know the guy, I don't know if it was Phil or who was the fellow that stood behind with the

Tom: Phil, my friend Phil

Host: and he would just laugh and drink his coffee. It was very out there, but also indulgent, like you were really making a show that was basically there to make you guys laugh. It was very much about what you wanted and what you wanted to do, in a way to TV. Now is that something that happened kind of a bit more organically or did you have a very kind of specific idea when you were putting it together? Cause it did have this, it was totally unique when I first saw it, I remember that very vividly.

Tom: Phil was just a real interesting character to begin with. He's got some real eccentric qualities to him that are hilarious and he's one of my best friends and uh now he had an actual job, a real job. He worked in high tech at Bell Canada and they were sort of very professional and he had been doing this for a long time so he wasn't really interested in being in television. That's what I think made Phil funny was cause he didn't care, he didn't give a shit. He just came after work and he'd come down and he'd sit there and drink coffee and he didn't care about the show, he didn't care about working in show business or being a comedian it was just him hanging out with his friends and having fun, and that's why I think that sitting there and drinking coffee and laughing was funny because you could tell it wasn't an act, he wasn't trying to be funny, it wasn't forced.

Host: How'd you find your guests for that show? That'd be the other big question I wonder about, especially those early shows in Ottawa.

Tom: Usually we'd just ask a cab driver or...

Laughter

Tom: You know there wasn't really any celebrities in Ottawa. A couple, we had a big, Max Keeping, we interviewed Max Keeping once so we'd been to the local news in Ottawa and we thought wow, this is a big deal we've got a real celebrity guest. But most of the time it was a hot air balloon pilot or, or you know somebody who brought a pig on, we'd just talk about the pig.

Laughter

Tom: It was more just a place to throw to these segments too.

Host: Yeah, and the segments often involved the family, like the Slutmobile

Tom: The Slutmobile

Host: would be the classic

Tom: The Slutmobile

Host: Yeah, I was always jealous of you cause I thought you had the coolest parents in the world. My parents hated what I did and would do anything to stop me from being in comedy. Then I would watch your show and you'd paint your house plaid and your parents would sort of go along with the joke.

Tom: Yeah, yeah

Host: How'd you get them to do that?

Tom: Yeah they kind of, they were trying to be supportive.

Laughter

Host: I'll say.

Laughter

Tom: They were paying for my college and they wanted me to focus on something and it happened to be television. So, I was showing up with cameras and they knew I was doing the show obviously, they would watch the show every week. But, I guess that's why we had to, we'd go and get them in the middle of the night, wake them up at four o'clock in the morning. That was sort of the first one we did to our parents, I walked into their bedroom, actually my friend was just dropping me off from filming and it was four o'clock in the morning and we'd been out filming some crazy thing in Ottawa and then we got back to my house, I still lived in my parent's



basement, moved back into my parents basement. It was right after I was done college, I basically decided that I was going to dedicate 100 percent of my time to the Rogers Cable show. 100 percent of my time to the Rogers Cable show. So I didn't have a job, I didn't have any money, I moved, my parents let me live in the basement. I would take the bus to Rogers Cable and I would edit and my friend had a car, and I eventually got a car but I didn't have a car for a while there. So one night we drove home, we were driving home from the editing and we had, we would do the show every Thursday night and it was live and we had to have something to play every week and so we basically made a goal to get four or five of these little bits on the street every week edited. I'd sit there and I'd talk to Glenn, we'd talk about some ridiculous thing that was pretty much just banter, right and throw to a bit. And we only had a couple of bits for the show the next day and I thought, okay why don't we just barge into my parent's bedroom. I had this Bon Jovi live in New Jersey video cassette in the back of the car and I thought let's go and see if we can wake up our parents and get them to watch Bon Jovi live in New Jersey with us at four o'clock in the morning on a work night.

Laughter

Tom: So they got really mad cause they were getting woken up and that was it. But then we sort of had to keep topping that. Now we had to wake them, because everyone loved the bit, we aired the bit and people couldn't believe it. I guess that's the point I'm trying to make here is you know we put that on the air and we had a little studio audience of people that would come down and people couldn't really sort of believe that we did that. It was a different time ya know, you watched TV and you didn't see people, like real people getting woken up at four o'clock in the morning by their kid. There wasn't reality shows all the time. I think the Real World was on TV but there wasn't, most shows were scripted, you didn't see people that were real people getting pranked. There was Candid Camera and things like that but not something so raw that had that kind of feeling and we really realized that that was something that struck a nerve with our audience because the audience was just laughing harder than anything they'd seen in the weeks before so we started doing more and more stuff to the parents and that was fun. But, it was an interesting moment because we sort of identified something was working and then we tried to expand on that. And then that led to okay we would wake them up in the middle of the night with a highland dancer and a bagpiper and then that wasn't surprising anymore so we woke them up with a decapitated cow's head. Right, ya know and then we painted the whole house plaid and when they came home from their camping trip they'd gone on and I'd painted the entire outside of the house and always filming their reactions it was all about getting these reactions from people and from them and on the street too but the parents stuff was exciting because I think everybody related to it, they couldn't sort of fathom doing that to their parents and also it was just interesting to look at, technically it was interesting to look at that at the time, people didn't really see that kinda stuff very much. It got crazier and crazier and crazier with the parents over the years and then eventually it just sort of, it got too crazy so we kinda had to stop doing pranks to them because it was getting too crazy.

Host: Where could you go right? I mean at some point...

Tom: Yeah, I mean they got really angry with me right after the show got picked up by MTV and we had a budget now. Oh, this is, this is going on a podcast right? I'm not allowed to talk about this story cause my mother will get mad at me.

Laughter

Host: Oh. okay.

Tom: But, I'll tell you anyway.

Laughter

Tom: We did this prank where I showed up and I, it was right after the show was on MTV so everything was going great and it was a very exciting time and we couldn't believe it we were on MTV and it was a hit and it was incredible and we were living the dream and we came back to Ottawa and we made these statues of my parents having sex.

Laughter

Tom: We put them on the front lawn

Laughter

Tom: And then we woke up my parents and they came out and were very very angry. And they called MTV the next day and they left a message on the answering machine. This was my first professional, well The Canadian Comedy Network had picked us up first but then, essentially this was, you know we were trying to impress MTV, we were very new there and my father called MTV and he left a message on the answering machine and he said "If you guys air that bit, we're going to sue you bastards for one million dollars."

Laughter

Host: so that's that.

Tom: Yeah so we aired the answering machine message on the show right before we aired the clip.

Laughter and Clapping

Host: Just as a footnote, is it true that when you pitched MTV you ended it by covering yourself in shaving cream?

Tom: Yeah, yeah

Laughter

Host: In the pitch meeting

Tom: Yeah I'd say that's probably, like I don't know if I had any sort of thought to convey to you guys about breaking into this wacky business whether it's television or wanting to do comedy or whatever it is you want to do you've got to do something that will get you noticed and it doesn't mean you have to go paint lesbian sluts on your parents car or something like that. Can you say that in college? Can you say that?

Host: Absolutely

Laughter

Tom: You guys look kinda young. How old are you guys? Nineteen okay. Yeah you guys know what pornography is. Yeah you got it, yeah okay. I just realized that I'm here at a school and I'm talking about pornography and I'm a disgusting man.

Laughter

Host: It's an unusual program

Tom: Yeah, yeah

Laughter

Host: We'll put it that way

Tom: But

Host: Yeah sorry go ahead

Tom: What was I talking about?

Host: About being unique and I mean when

Tom: Oh yeah, the way we got the show on Rogers was similar to what we did on MTV. At the end of the day it was still Rogers Cable, they did give people comedy talk shows. It was called the Tom Green Show, sort of presumptuous to come in and say hey can you guys give me my own show I'm a twenty four year old guy and but we were in college and we had wrote a whole treatment, we'd learned how to, we'd taken a course at Algonquin College. It's named after the yeah so

Laughter

Tom: We'd taken a course on how to pitch a television show right so we wrote it all up we were very organized and meticulous about it. We were trying to appear professional and we sent in the proposal and we sent with, I sent it to every person that ran Rogers Ottawa, there were three people that were in charge over there. I sent them all a pineapple with a picture of me pinned into it and the treatment, and really just so they would walk into their office and say why is there a pineapple on my desk?

Laughter

Tom: And then they did that and they read the treatment and then it sort of caught their attention and they brought us down and eventually we talked them into giving us a TV show. MTV when I pitched MTV, that was a pretty nerve wracking experience because basically we had shot the show on Rogers for all these years and then we sent a bunch of tapes to the people at MTV. Now I was on some shows, I'd been on the Mike Bullard Show and I went on the Mike Bullard Show and I brought a dead raccoon on there in a suitcase.

Laughter

Tom: Which is something you can consider doing.

Laughter

Tom: But you know in the middle of the interview I pulled out the suitcase and, it's on YouTube, you can see it on YouTube. But you know I pulled out the suitcase and opened the suitcase and pulled out a piece of roadkill, a dead raccoon that I'd been keeping on my balcony all winter actually.

Laughter

Tom: Cause we were using it on the show regularly.

Laughter

Tom: It wasn't a one time prop.

Laughter

Tom: It would start to thaw out while we were taping and we'd put it back in the balcony so it would freeze. We were a few months into this but anyways I pulled it out on the show and I wanted to shave it, I had a shaver. It smelled very bad, it was rotting and they stopped tape on the Mike Bullard show for the first time ever and Mike went and puked in the alley.

Laughter and Clapping

Tom: There was a lot of you know, I don't know if I would do that today actually, but at the time there was certainly sort of a I don't know if you would call it a desperation I think just to get people to pay attention so that happened right around the time we went to MTV. We sent them all these tapes. We were, it was sort of like I said those early stages of TV being produced with a video camera. I don't think MTV had ever gotten literally 1000 videos we had or 500 videos or something. You know all on betacam tapes that we professionally put together cause they had good equipment at Rogers and they got all the stuff and the tapes started getting passed around MTV and they just brought me down to Los Angeles to pitch the show. So I have to go in, they've picked four bits, of all the bits they picked four bits they wanted me to show the heads of MTV. There was one executive at MTV his name was John Miller and he wanted me to show these bits and talk about what it was I did and talk about why the show was different than what they had on TV. So one of the bits was me going out on the street with crutches and casts on in Vancouver and just falling down on the street and having people come and try to help me. You know it was a Candid Camera kind of piece although we didn't hide the camera, the camera was there with us but it was sort of, sort of hidden, it was off to the side. It was a pretty fun bit, pretty fun piece, it's on YouTube. Somebody called it Tom Green Making Fun of Cripples when they posted it. Wasn't the intention. First of all, I was just a guy with a broken leg and a broken arm and I was falling down and we were getting people and sort of playing on people's good nature and having fun with that. But, the other bit was me walking into a pharmacy to buy condoms and getting into sort of an outrageous conversation with people about the condoms. And just sort of an embarrassing uncomfortable thing with some of the pharmacists, talking to the pharmacists. Another bit was, I think it was actually the Slutmobile was the other bit, was painting the car and the fourth bit was me sucking milk out of a cow's udder. And the guy from MTV decided to tell me sort of the day before the pitch, don't air the sucking the milk out of the cow's udder piece. That's gonna freak everybody out and they're not going to pick up the show.

Host: Is that the one where you dressed as Captain Kirk?

Tom: I was dressed as Captain Kirk, yes.

Host: It was the Enterprise.

Tom: For obvious reasons.

Host: Enterprise you know. Okay, but you elected to show it I guess right?

Tom: So he told me not to air that bit. The idea was I walk in. They brought, brought flew me down to Los Angeles put me in this fancy hotel on Sunset right across from The House Blues and they have this pitch thing that they do every year where basically people come and pitch show after show after show in this restaurant downtown or in LA. So I have a VHS tape it's got the four bits on it, I wasn't supposed to show the cow udder thing but I decided I would show the cow udder thing anyway. I stuck it on the end of the tape even though I wasn't supposed to do this. I went in, I showed all the bits got big laughs, everybody thought it was crazy, the cow udder thing really confused everybody.

Laughter

Tom: But they were laughing. I think they were just shocked cause that wasn't on TV at the time, there was no Fear Factor, people weren't eating crap and there was no Jackass or anything like that obviously at that point. So, it was just really shocking to people that I was choosing to show them that while trying to get them to give me a show. It just didn't seem like the smart choice but that's what made it funny to me. I was very passionate about the concept. I had a lot to say about it. I talked to them about how we were doing something that was different then it was on TV. You know how it's about the reaction shots of people and how television was changing and how television was being made the same way the last 50 years in studios with giant lights and cameras and how now you can take a little video camera and go out in the street and film it like a skateboard video is filmed. I would talk about how it made the show more relatable to people and to the MTV audience and I had, I actually had thought it through to a certain extent, which I think is an important thing you know to actually think everything you're doing through, whether it's stand up or just really kind of have a plan in place. That's not the fun part, it's definitely not, it's the work part of it but it was also kind of the challenge I guess. I was very challenged by trying to get this show on the air. So anyways, after I did that they were all sort of in shock and I pulled out a couple of cans of shaving cream and I poured it all over my face and I went and layed down on the boardroom table and I started convulsing, screaming I WANT TO BE ON MTV and rubbing shaving cream all over my fucking face. Then I got up and I took the shaving cream and I went up to some man in the front, I didn't know who he was and I rubbed the shaving cream on his face. Turns out he was the head of the whole fucking network.

Laughter

Tom: I knew he looked like important or something so, and then I kinda wondered out of the room and everybody clapped and they sort of applauded and then we got a call the next day and they said they were bringing me to New York and we were going to repackage ten shows. They brought me to New York, they put me in a studio, they took all my bits and we basically reshoot the studio part and wrapped around the video part. But the thing that was really kind of the most interesting part I think of that part of the experience was that it was definitely a bit of a culture shock going from complete independant Rogers television I was allowed to do whatever I want, they didn't have any executives at Rogers coming and saying you know you should edit it like this or you should...so we had just had a very artistic free experience making the show and that's why it was so strange. But when we got to MTV man, literally at one point, after one of our first tapings the executives stood up, there was a bit in the studio where I had a guy on from the zoo and the bit was I was going to talk to him about these turtles and there was a big bowl of worms to feed the turtles and the joke was I was going to eat the worms. It was a little joke right. I ended up taking all these worms and shoving them into my mouth and going out into the audience and the worms got all over the audience and that wasn't in the script. It was very serious all of a sudden at MTV it was this corporate culture I realized I was in and I had no preparation for that , nobody warned me about it. All of a sudden I was in New York and we were trying to figure out what bit we're going to air, what we're going to do that week and the

executives would all go into a room and they'd lock the door and I wouldn't be allowed in the room. You know it's on my own show and I wouldn't be allowed in the room and I got very sort of, I was a little bit angry about it right, it became, it was was a real creative tug of war because they wanted to take all the crazy stuff out of the show and I felt like this was my one opportunity to get the crazy stuff on the air. If it wasn't on the air the show would be boring so there was a lot of fear there. And that I think was the biggest challenge of starting the show was sticking to our guns creatively and not letting somebody just change it all because it was the easier safe route. But, I think you can go too far either way. I think I may have gone a little too far, you know as I look back at that time I think I could have probably handled it a little differently. You know, it got very very intense, there was lots of screaming and yelling and arguing about, because they would come in and they would say once it got time to air there would be the bit where I'm out in the street and I'm falling down and I'm on crutches and they would give it to the editor and they'd take my music out. I had shot it, put this really weird sort of strange music in, they took it out and they put in a Will Smith instrumental, right and then they cut all the shots of the people reacting out of the bit because they were over the age of 35 and they don't want people over the age of 35 on air on MTV. And I'm like wait a minute, the only funny thing about this bit is the fact that there's an old lady who's completely freaked out and she's looking. That's the laugh when you watch the show you'd see me fall on the ground then it would cut to the old lady and everyone would laugh. Now they had turned it into this bit where it was just me falling on the ground, falling on the ground, falling on the ground no reaction shot, no reaction shot, no reaction shot cause there was too many old people in our reaction shots.

Tom: So I kind of had to go in and get in these massive arguments with them and fought and won the argument and got it on the air the way it was supposed to be, not exactly the way it was supposed to be but close enough. Fortunately the show just took off instantly.

Host: Yeah, I was going to say I've not seen a show take off like that and as far as I can it was wild. In fact, I remember being at McLean's at the time doing a story and it was between you and Jesus to be on the cover. It was just like, we were like....

Tom: Who won?

Host: Jesus won, but it was huge, it was crazy and it was outrageous and I'm guessing creatively it's what you hope for but there must be an enormous amount then of pressure that happens because now you've done this thing and you've got to go back and try to top it right?

Tom: We'd been doing the show for seven years on Rogers and on the Comedy Network so we had all the stuff and then it got put onto ten episodes so we had kind of been able to, first of all the show evolved over the course of those seven years, it started out the first bit I did the very first bit I did was called Hockey Guy when we were on Rogers Cable. I'd put on hockey equipment, I'd go downtown and I'd run around in hockey equipment, that was the bit.

Laughter

Tom: Then the next one was, the next week we needed something that...I taped pork chops to my head and I'd go downtown and I'd walk around with pork chops on my head and that was the bit. And then it evolved and over the course of the second year we got into the parents stuff and then, we always have to kind of come up with new stuff. Then in the third year we got into some of the gross out stuff, then we started taking these road trips to get out of Ottawa cause everyone was recognizing me in Ottawa cause I was always, Ottawa's not a big place so I was just always roving around with a video camera basically confronting people so we had to leave and then you know when you're driving from Thunder Bay to Winnipeg and you're filming videos and you haven't seen anything even slightly interesting on the side of the road for four, five, six, ten hours and then there's a dead moose there so we started getting into the roadkill stuff right, that was, there was a roadkill phase.

Laughter

Host: Yeah, humping the moose right?

Tom: Yeah. Humping a dead moose and playing with the raccoon. So, that was a phase that lasted a year maybe and then we thought we were bored of this now and we moved on to something else. But, by the time we were on MTV we had these seven years and different phases of stuff and then we kind of mixed it all up so that's why I think the show took off when it went on MTV. It wasn't like the traditional way of launching a show where you pitch the show on paper, you write it and then they go shoot it all at once and it's all that one phase, that one creative phase when you put the show out there so there was a lot, a lot to draw from. Then there was also a lot of pressure because we had to all of a sudden deliver new shows and we had to start coming up with new stuff every week so, it was an exciting time.

Host: It seemed to me like at the time, there was you and then around the same time Mr. Show.

Tom: Mmmm Hmmm

Host: And one of the things I thought both these shows had was this, it was TV that in a way denigrated TV. And by that I mean it was subverting TV by doing all sorts of stuff that corporate wise you're not supposed to do. Now again, that's easy for someone from the outside maybe to project onto the work, was there any of that going on for you at the time in terms of thinking, we're going to do this and put it on TV and that's subversive or that's got the humour in it and it's tapped? Because it certainly tapped into that viewing audience that was wanting to see TV kind of undermined, that had grown up watching TV, watching Sesame Street or whatever you want to call it and having it...

Tom: That was the idea for sure was to see if we could get it past the sensors, get it on the air. That was more than half the battle all the time, with MTV, even before. It wasn't as hard with Rogers because they weren't really paying as much attention. But, we would get, they would come down on us at Rogers too. They came down on me at the Comedy Network and the idea was to see how far we could get. At The Comedy Network, there was one bit that they edited



out of the show. It was, I got up in the middle of the studio show and the audience was there and I got up and I went to the bathroom. I went into the bathroom stall and then I came out of the bathroom stall with a piece of shit in my hand.

Laughter

Tom: That was the bit. Actual human shit.

Laughter

Tom: Okay. I'd never seen that on television before.

Laughter

Tom: Somebody scooping a piece of shit out of a toilet and walking back into his perfectly good television studio in front of his audience, and I walked through the front row and everybody, and some guy touched the shit. Cause he thought it was a fake piece of shit right and he touched it and he realized it was real shit

Laughter

Tom: He freaked out and we have a shot of the guy freaking out and you know then I went and I sat down at the desk and I put it into a little Barbie bed and I put some little eyeballs on it and I tucked it into bed and then I threw to a commercial break.

Laughter

Tom: And, I think what was funny about it to us was we'd never seen anybody do that on television before. It wasn't really the bit itself, I mean it was more of a

Host: I'm not sure I've seen anybody do that anywhere before, let alone TV.

Tom: Yeah it was complete absurdity to us that it was even on TV. That never did get on TV, that was the one thing the comedy network would not allow us to air.

Host: That's funny

Tom: But it's on the DVD though. Something Smells Funny. Go get it. Or, it's on VHS actually.

Host: I mean once MTV took off for you, you're in that position which not many people find themselves. You're right in the centre of the big American zeitgeist and yeah how did you find dealing with that, I mean was it tricky or fun or how'd it go?

Tom: Ah yeah, it was exciting and fun and crazy but there was a lot of pressure to make sure you didn't screw up a situation that was going pretty well. And all of a sudden we had to start shooting new bits and we would go shoot bits with MTV and they didn't really know how to shoot the kind of bits we were doing at that time. Um, I remember the first time we had to shoot a new bit, in New York. Everything up to that point had been the stuff that we'd brought in. And, we went out to the shoot, it was the morning we met at our office, had an office in Manhattan, went downstairs, met the camera guy and fifteen other people, okay. Three vans, everybody had walkie talkies, there was people running around with clipboards, and the bit was we were going out to New Jersey and I was going to put on a camouflage outfit and I was going to hide in the bushes and when people walked by I was going to come out and say "You can't see me because I'm camouflaged."

Laughter

Tom: That was all we were doing and they had fifteen people. So, we're walking down the street in New Jersey and it's the first shoot and I'm trying to do this bit and I keep looking up and I see three people with clip boards ahead of me, a block ahead getting everyone on the sidewalk to sign a release form before they walk past me and see me in the bushes, completely ruining the joke. Completely ruining, entirely ruining the whole bit, right. So I have to take these producers aside, these producers who are guys who are probably, you know they're probably in their early thirties. I'm probably at this point twenty seven or twenty eight years old. And you find yourself in this sort of bureaucratic mess where everyone just sort of starts arguing with each other about who's right and who's wrong and "oh well we need to get the release form... "well don't you understand you can't get them to sign the release form before they see it, they're not going to react right." People don't understand the logic and all of a sudden there's a big argument and it's very uncomfortable and not fun and then you go back to the office and everybody's mad because you know, the guy's crazy he wouldn't let us sign a release form, and then standards and practices calls your manager who's the guy that signed you after you threw a dead raccoon at Mike Bullard and he's taking the call and they're yelling at him on the phone they're screaming this guy won't let us get a release form signed until after and they're not signing it and this whole big thing. And so basically, it was very stressful and I was very passionate, probably a bit naive I would say about the business and the fact that you probably shouldn't be arguing as hard as I did, but I was just dedicated to making sure the show didn't get screwed up, so it was definitely an interesting time and something you have to kind of learn to deal with if you ever work in television or you ever work in comedy is you have to figure out a way to deal with all the personalities and people involved and still try and protect your creative vision without totally pissing everyone off the way I did.

Host: We should probably get ready for questions soon, just in the audience if anyone's ready, we've got one here coming up.

Tom: There you go! How are ya?

Audience: Um, me first? Okay...

Tom: Yeah.

Host: You got the mic.

Audience: For me, what really got me into the stuff you do was the Japan show. The Subway Monkey Hour.

Tom: The Subway Monkey Hour.

Audience: What was it like to go over there and do that? And, how did you, did you have to change things to sort of fit that atmosphere and how did you approach doing a show in Japan?

Tom: Yeah um, I had a lot of fun doing that show. It was a one hour special. It was after, that was shot after a few years later after the show had gone off the air we went back and did it as a special for MTV. We basically wrote a lot of the bits, what we would always do is we would write a lot of bits in advance, we'd come up with a concept, we'd get the props and organize it all. We'd figure out what the general theme is of the bit. We spent about a month before we went to Japan with a group of writers essentially coming up with fifty or sixty different concepts that we'd go to Japan and shoot and we'd also improvise as we were driving across the country. We had a lot of fun. Trapped a monkey, trapped a wild monkey in a van illegally at the side of the road. If you're ever in Japan and you're driving through Nagano area pull your rental car over and the monkeys will come up. If you open the door and throw some chips or something into the car then a monkey will go in and you can close the door, and then you'll have a monkey.

Laughter

Host: Valuable piece of information. Thank you. Ah, right over here.

Audience: Hello.

Tom: Yeah

Audience: How did you feel about your transition from television into film and when you got your own movies like Road Trip and Freddie Got Fingered?

Tom: It was pretty, odd, at first cause I'd never really had any sort of, I'd never thought about acting before or being in a movie, that wasn't really something that I ever. I loved David Letterman, that was what, I always wanted to have a talk show like David Letterman. That was my goal in life I guess, as a kid and to do crazy stuff on the street and do a talk show. And then all of a sudden, they asked me to be in Road Trip and uh, cause I was on MTV, the director of Road Trip, Todd Phillips, who's done The Hangover, that was his first movie. He did an independent movie in school and he, right after my show launched on MTV, he was directing some commercials for Pepsi, he asked me to be in these Pepsi One commercials, we go to

know each other and then he asked me to be in Road Trip. And so, in one of the scenes I put a mouse in my mouth, yeah that wasn't in the script that scene so. I still enjoyed that improvising and having animals shit in my mouth.

Laughter

Tom: It was fun, that was great, it was really a lot of fun. And making Freddie Got Fingered was probably the most exciting thing because that was where I had the opportunity to write and just do whatever I wanted to do and we had a lot of creative control there and that's why Freddie Got Fingered is like that.

Laughter

Host: Just very quickly as well, after this whole thing would you be willing to rap battle our friend Beardsley here?

Tom: Hahaha, umm I don't want to get destroyed here on the podcast, this guy looks pretty hardcore man.

Audience: Thank you.

Tom: Thanks.

Audience: Hi. A lot of us are at the age now where we are all very ambitiously wanting to start projects like radio shows and television shows but a lot of us you know, we work part time jobs, there's just so much going on in our lives, that's what we really want to focus on. If you had any advice or something we can do to help keep that balance but be able to work on these projects. Would you be able to give any insight into that?

Tom: Yeah, you have to make sacrifices in your life. You have to at some point say you know what I'm not going to go out to the bar tonight with my friends while they are all out having fun or I'm not going to go to that party or I'm not. I'm going to go, take my small amount of spare time that I have and I'm going to dedicate it towards whatever it is that I am trying to do whether it's writing jokes, whether it's editing, whether it's learning how to improve yourself or reading about people that have gone and done what you want to do. I would say that's always something really good to do, you know take the time that you have and pick up a biography of your favourite comedian and read it as opposed to but, you have to sacrifice time and energy and put, you know as much as you can because there's, look, there's a lot of people out there that want to do this stuff and it's uh, you have to find a way to separate yourself from the pack of people that are doing that. I think hard work is really, really the thing that can set you apart.

Audience: Thank you very much.

Tom: Sure.

Audience: Hi. What would you say is the most difficult thing that's occurred in your comedy career and how have you overcome that?

Tom: Probably, reading the reviews for Freddie Got Fingered.

Laughter

Tom: They weren't very good.

Laughter

Tom: Um it was a very tough day, the day the reviews came out. We got one good review, well we got a couple good reviews. Got a good review in the New York Times which was exciting. Got about 20,000 horrible reviews in every local, and it was a real sort of shock I would say because up to that point people had only ever said good things because the show wasn't supposed to be good. We were doing it on, it was a little show that was coming out of public access TV, community TV. The logical story to write was hey look at this crazy show that this crazy kid's doing in Canada and it was always positive. And then all of a sudden you get the opportunity to make a big movie and you do some crazy stuff in the movie, and it's a big movie and it comes to 20th Century Fox and people like Roger Ebert are looking at it and reviewing it and it's not this little show out of a little thing. And you go from, it was sort of a bit of a whiplash effect that you sort of experience where all of a sudden you're forced with overwhelming negative criticism and it's very, very upsetting. It was very upsetting, depressing and shocking and upsetting and you think oh my god you know and people are saying stuff, I remember one, the year my show launched on MTV the magazine Entertainment Weekly said, called the show and me one of the most creative people in entertainment, okay? The next year when Freddie Got Fingered same magazine said, the only good thing about Tom Green is his goatee because it covers his ugly face.

Laughter

Tom: So you're reading this stuff and it was tough to take, but you know, kinda brings you back to earth a little bit and I think it's a good thing in the end to have to deal with criticism. That's I'd say the hardest thing, dealing with criticism. You get used to it, now with the internet, if you guys make videos, you put them on the internet you can go read under the video. Fifty percent of the people will say it's hilarious, fifty percent of people will say it sucks shit and you read that and it's not always a pleasant thing to read that criticism, right, but you've got to kind of force yourself to ignore that and believe in your ideas and keep on plugging along. And even if it, even if the ideas do sometimes suck shit, you know you can learn from making a video that sucks shit and making another video that maybe is a little better and a little better and you just keep plugging along. Negative criticism is not always easy. I've had my share of it and it's a thing that you'll get all stages along the way. When the show was on Rogers Cable there was still a viewer response line and people would call and leave a message on the answering

machine. Back when I was about your age there was a thing called an answering machine, so if you wanted to leave a message for somebody you would call and there'd be a little box and it had a tape in it, a cassette tape in it. A cassette tape was, it had like a

Laughter

Tom: But, they would transcribe all the response from viewers on Rogers and they would leave it out at the front of the station and people would flip through it and half of them would say, it was sort of like what would be like reading a comment on YouTube. Half of them would be great, this is the weirdest show. Half of them would say this is the most disgusting thing I've ever seen and you just kinda gotta keep ignoring that as hard as it is and just plow along through it and focus on what you believe is right. It doesn't mean to ignore all criticism but you can't let it affect you, you know. You can sometimes learn from it, you can always learn from it, sometimes it's, it can slow you down too. It can make you withdraw and quit basically, which is ultimately the worst thing you can do for your career in comedy is to quit. Once you quit, it's not going to happen. So if you don't quit you're only going to get better and eventually you might get to do what you're envisioning.

Host: Is that something you've ever been, not tempted by but stared down...that fatigue.

Tom: Oh yeah. Every, every day.

Laughter

Tom: To this day, everyday I think about quitting and I thought about quitting everyday before the show got picked up by MTV because it's um, it can be very discouraging, it's a tough business, you know you've got to get used to having the door closed in your face and have people say no you can't get this show or no you can't do what you want. You gotta sort of power through that but, yeah everyday but that's the difference between thinking about quitting and quitting or thinking about quitting and not quitting. It's sort of a simple thing but, it really is ultimately what ends up happening is if you quit then... It's a very you know um, you know I remember we did a pilot for the CBC, this is how, it was one of the more upsetting things that had happened to me. Before the show got picked up by MTV, we'd been doing the show on Rogers for about four years, I pitch, I went down to Ottawa CBC and I pitched them the show and they agreed to pick up a pilot, locally, in Ottawa which was sort of not something that was very common but, they said we'll shoot a pilot and we'll air it in Ottawa. It ended up airing across Ontario. This was before the comedy network existed and this was my big break, my first big break. And they picked it up and then they waited a year to go ahead and tell us that they weren't going to do the show. Everyday for a year I'd sit there, I'd pick up the phone, I'd call, what's going, are they gonna pick up the show? Are they going to pick up the show? And then after a year they decided to not pick up the show and I just remember sitting there thinking oh my god, this is just never going to happen, right. But, we kept going and fortunately the Comedy Network picked it up. But, it was a matter of, if I had quit right there and gone and tried to do something else and not sat down one day and written a treatment for the show and took the

CBC pilot and mailed it to Ed Robinson at the Canadian Comedy Network and had him see it and take me. You have to kind of still just keep pushing, put yourself out there. If you don't do that nothing's going to happen.

Host: Great. Sure right there.

Audience: Hello.

Tom: Hello.

Audience: Hi.

Tom: How are ya?

Audience: So, okay...

Tom: Hi, hi

Audience: This is going so well. With everything you've done and like the amount that Jackass has done and the trillions of videos we watch on YouTube everyday of people just crashing and setting stuff on fire, do you think that the shock reality has come to a peak and it's time for something new to slip in there or do you think it's just getting started?

Tom: Uhhhh, well, I think you just have to try to, comedy we laugh when we see something we've never seen before right? We laugh when we get caught by surprise so if you keep doing the same thing over and over it's not going to work. You know if you keep falling down the same flight of stairs with a cast on it's not going to get a laugh the twentieth time. So you gotta keep trying to find creative ways to find something that's not all over YouTube. Which is harder and harder to do now I would say because there's so many people who have access to cameras. You know one one hand you think, how great is this, you know you can make a video you can put it on YouTube and everybody can see it. But, it's something, I'd say that's getting a little bit harder to do, to do something that's not being done because there's so many people, so many creative people with access to cameras and ideas, but, that's I'd say is probably the trick. You know it's hard to sort of say, I guess things just evolve. I don't know that you would see another show like Jackass come out now doing exactly what those guys do and see it become this overwhelming success because people will say oh, they're just doing Jackass.

Host: It's interesting for you that you're...

Audience: What if they were women?

Tom: Yeah

Audience: You know if there's a twist. I think there's always a twist that hasn't been explored yet.

Tom: Yeah absolutely.

Host: In your career, I mean you've always been plugged into technology I think, I don't know if that's fair to say.

Tom: Yep

Host: Like with all of your shows and now doing stand up it's an interesting not change but twist because stand up is so unchanged in a way. Like what you're going to do tonight at Yuk Yuk's with a microphone in front of an audience isn't that different

Tom: That sort of ties into your question really as part of the reason why I am really enjoying doing stand up now. I've been touring for the last two years full time, that's what I do now. I'm touring doing stand up, when I was a kid I was doing amateur night at Yuk Yuk's, I started the show on Rogers, everything happened I always secretly said man I never really got to do stand up and now we're sort of in this place where I started a web TV show five years ago in my living room. I built a television show in my living room in Los Angeles and I started interviewing celebrities on my website. So my careers going pretty well.

Laughter

Tom: But, uhhh things are going good, but I basically thought that going back to something more traditional might be almost the weirdest thing that I could do right now because there's just, how do you top the stuff that they're doing on Jackass as far as shock? You can't top it, you can't really get more shocking. I mean you can go murder somebody and film it, that's about... a little porn with murder, put that on TV. So, just an idea for you guys. But, so, yeah to me it's the challenge of getting up on stage without any props, without any, just the audience to work off is what's exciting. You gotta keep challenging yourself, you've got keep coming up with new things that are exciting for you.

Audience: Um, you talked a bit about having to fight sensors to get what you wanted onto your show and I'm just wondering your opinion on where we are today when it comes to censorship and political correctness?

Tom: Um, I don't know, well...

Laughter

Tom: It's interesting now with everyone having a camera in their cell phone when you do stand up how sometimes you have to check yourself a little bit before you say things because things can be recorded now and taken out of context and put on the internet. Like you've seen things happen with Tracey Morgan recently and people have said things that are politically incorrect, obviously and then there is sort of a media firestorm that ensues. It's not the same kind of



ensorship anymore where you work at a TV network and there's a guy who's the censor and he says you can't do that. Now it's more the internet itself is more, and society is maybe coming in and sometimes being overly politically correct. Now, I'm not necessarily talking about that situation but, you've got to be able to sort of understand, I guess how to walk the line of pushing something so far that it's interesting and funny and unexpected, but not pushing it so far that comes back and affects you negatively and stops your forward progress of whatever you're doing. It's tough you know, you have to sort of, I think you have to sort of almost censor yourself a little bit because there are no real boundaries anymore as far as you know, if you make a video and put it on YouTube or get up on stage and say whatever you want nobody's censoring you before you do it so. Those kinds of opportunities weren't really there to put your foot in your mouth as badly as you can now. You know, ten years ago if a stand up comedian went up and went off and said something horrible on stage you know at Crackers in Indianapolis at one o'clock in the morning nobody would ever see it and it would just be a crazy thing and everybody would be laughing in the club and it would just be something that happened, but now you just have to be a little bit more careful.

Audience: Hi. One of my favourite bits from the old show was Glenn's Day of Revenge where you went to bare your mixing board and you went overhead and you threw all those clothes out over the field.

Tom: Uh Huh.

Audience: And that for me really showed how there was a sense of character on the show with you and Glenn and Phil and Derek. Like a great balance, and that's one of the things I liked was that it was like real guys making a show and I was wondering if you could say anything about developing that on screen character versus you guys being writers and producers or what have you?

Tom: Um, well, we were all real friends, we were great friends at the time, we spent all our time together when we were doing the show, when we weren't doing the show. I went to school with Derek, I met Glenn at the college radio station we've been doing this for a long time, but the idea was just to try to make it as authentic of a relationship as possible on camera. To try to do things that were genuine I guess and honest. So, with Glenn, that bit you talk about, we told Glenn that he was finally going to pull a big prank on me. So, he didn't know that I was in on the prank and so he thought he was pulling a big prank on me. Derek and the guys from the show got my mixing board which was supposedly my prized possession, this mixing board that I have for audio, for making hip hop beats.

Laughter

Tom: The idea was he was going to go bury it in a farmers field and film it and then show it on the show. I buried your mixing board. But, he didn't know that really the whole purpose of the bit was my friend's girlfriend had, her father had a cessna, a little airplane so we'd gone to Glenn's house when he wasn't there and we got all of his clothes, every piece of clothing he owned and

while he was filming the bit burying my mixing board we flew over in an airplane and dropped all his clothes on him.

Laughter

Tom: So you know it was really about getting that genuine reaction from him and having sort of a, but it was still sort of a good natured prank. But, that's the thing, we identified that we had access to a plane, we said we, that was the creative process though, we had access to a plane, what can we do with a plane? We've got to be able to do something crazy with a plane. You know, some sort of prank with a plane. And so that's how that bit came to be. But..

I'm reaching for the mystery water bottle.

Did I not answer the question properly?

Audience: No it's good.

Tom: Yeah? Okay.

Host: Umm, Kyle

Audience: Do you think that in order for success to happen to you, you had to move to the states or do you think it would be possible for someone to stay in Canada and try to make it in Canadian television?

Tom: Ah, yeah I think you could stay in Canada and I don't think you have to move to the USA but, that just happened to be what happened with me. Especially today, you know with the internet I think we're going to be seeing a very changing media landscape over the next ten years, five years, right now. Where you could do a show that maybe isn't even on television, just on the internet and if you can create something that's interesting enough, that captures enough people's attention, yeah I think you could be very successful here in Canada. That's the thing, the world's so connected now it's not like it was where you have to go to New York or Los Angeles to do a TV show, a big TV show or something. I firmly believe in independent media now, that's why I built that studio in my living room and I'm continuing to try to develop ideas for the internet, that's what's exciting to me right now.

Audience: Tom, I'm a senior administrator here. I want to thank you first for coming and talking to our students.

Tom: Yeah. Thanks for having me.

Audience: It's a great experience for them. So, I hope my question isn't going to sound like one of those executives you were talking about earlier but it might

Tom: Sure, yeah.

Audience: Do you own your material? I'm interested in the proprietary thing on this. I know your career has had all kinds of stuff in it, talk to the students for a minute about, do the people at MTV own it? Do you own it? Does someone else own it? I think that might be useful for them to hear about.

Tom: I own all my material that we shot in Canada before we went on MTV which is virtually 90% of the material, and, except for the stuff that we shot on Rogers, but all the material I shot with the Canadian Comedy Network I own that material, which is probably some of the more thought out stuff. There was two seasons on the Comedy Network. I shouldn't say I own all the material, I own half the material I guess. But all of my favourite stuff, the slut mobile and the stuff that we really kind of, where we were really thinking it about it. When we were at Rogers it was very raw and then all of a sudden we had this show that got picked up by the Canadian Comedy Network and we did the show as a co production with Rogers so, basically they lent us their truck, I did it with a production company as well. There was a contract involved, I had to get an entertainment lawyer, it was very exciting, I went down to the Bell Canada building in Ottawa and got an entertainment lawyer to sign the contract with the Comedy Network and this production company that was in Ottawa and Rogers and it was all. Initially, I don't think I owned all the content, but now I do for various reasons it reverted back to me. I think that's something that's easier to do now cause you can, you can, you know creating the content was expensive before, more so. I mean you had to get access to facilities and cameras and editing and all that stuff, now you can edit it all yourself, but yeah, I don't know if I'm answering the question properly. What, what, what

Audience: No, I just wondered if you would, is it important to you to own your own creative content? That's another way of thinking about it.

Tom: Well, it's not the most important thing to me. I mean if somebody's going to pay you for the content, then they can own it, you know if they're going to pay you. If they're not going to pay you then they can't own it.

Laughter

Tom: That's sort of the simple sort of equation there. So, if you go work for a television company and they want to put you on TV and give you an opportunity and all of sudden everyone gets to see what you're doing, you have to sort of choose how important things are to you. Do you no TV show but I own everything, TV show but I own nothing or... and that something that always ends up happening when you get into business with other people, you sort of have to negotiate and figure out who owns what and who, um, and that's actually something that's not easy. That's a hard part of this. You know I've gone through, imagine you start a comedy troupe with a group of friends okay, and it's like starting a band right? Who owns the content, right? Does everybody own it? Is there one guy in the troupe who does more work than the other guy? Does he think he owns it? This kind of stuff can mess up friendships, it can be very difficult, and then a network comes in and they go oh, wait a minute we like this guy and this guy and this guy but we don't think this one's funny and then all of a sudden who owns the right to the comedy troupe? Is it you? Is it the network? Do they have the right to come in and kick someone out? All

this kind of stuff starts happening as you get deeper into dealing with an actual business side of things where money's involved. As soon as money's involved people get really fucking shitty you know and it's not fun anymore, there's somebody that has the money whether it's a TV show or a radio station and they want to make sure that you do what they think you should be doing and you don't necessarily want to do that and they want to own it and you want to own it and you've got to kind of come to a happy medium where everybody is still happy enough where you still get to do what you want to do without ruining it. So, that's a hard part to deal with. I don't know if that...

Audience: No, you nailed it now, thank you.

Host: Jeff I guess.

Audience: Hi Tom.

Tom: Hello.

Audience: You're very funny.

Tom: Thank you.

Audience: You know a lot of funny people, you interview a lot of funny people, you've worked with them. Is there anything in particular, one or two common traits that you've noticed that you and these other people possess that have stood out to you?

Tom: Start to actually start to think how am I going to take this idea and take it to where I want to take it so, but there's sort of ability to think outside the box and try to think differently, that's something that I think always amazes me about Harland. That you can go see him doing stand up and he's doing stuff on stage that nobody else is doing. And, that's one of the things that I think is important.

Audience: Cool thanks.

Tom: yep. Whazzup!

Audience: One of my favourite times I've seen you on TV was your cameo on Clone High USA.

Tom: Uh Huh. Yeah.

Audience: And, I was just wondering when a company gives you a script that they've written themselves how much influence do you have on your own dialogue?

Tom: Well that's a good example of throwing the script out the window. That episode of Clone High was fun, the guys that were producing that had a show at MTV, to do an animated show.

They asked me to come in one day and read a script and I basically just started saying a bunch of stupid stuff basically about jumping out of a window. It was all improvised and they went and animated it afterwards. They add a rough thread to it but, what was the question again?

Audience: Just how much influence you had over your own dialogue. You pretty much answered it already for me.

Tom: Yeah, I mean the thing is is that was a very particular case where they gave me a lot of freedom and you know you don't always have that. When it's a movie for instance when there's sets and you know, I mean I stuck the mouse in my mouth but I was doing...for the most part you know it still has to make sense, it still has to make sense but you still have to bring in as much improv to things as you can without completely ruining it. Which I think I do often, I completely ruin it often but, it's hard, it's hard once you are used to improvising on stage and then all of a sudden you're in a structure where there's cameras and in this case animations, so. But, that was a fun one.

Tom: I don't know why I put the water over there.

Host: Here.

Tom: Yeah I don't know what's going on with me man. Anyway, thank you.

Audience: Hey Tom.

Tom: Yeah.

Audience: I'm just wondering what it was like, what are some of the things you had to go through when you first started to do stand up again? Like did you stay in LA or did you have to do open mics to build that first hour that you're touring with now?

Tom: Uh Huh.

Audience: Just curious.

Tom: Yeah, I started just jumping up at The Comedy Store and a club called Ice House in Pasadena and they'd have nights of people going out, trying new material. Started out with just about 5 minutes, told a few stories and jokes. The hardest part was the getting on stage for the very first time after having not done it for a very long time in a comedy club. But, basically, yeah I basically just began writing material. I'm always, what I do when I'm writing my stand up, this is what I do, I don't know what I'm doing, but this is what I do. I have my phone, it's got a little notepad in it, anytime I think of something ridiculous I pull out my phone and I write a note to myself, and I always, always, always do it. I never don't do it because if you don't write it down you'll forget about it and then it's gone. The funniest stuff to me is always the stuff that you're thinking about when you're out with your friends and you just think of something. It's never when

you sit down to write. I'm going to sit down and I'm going to write now and you sit in a chair and your back starts hurting and you're procrastinating. It's always the spark comes when you're in the real world and you're talking and entertaining your friends, so write those nuggets down, even if it doesn't make sense later just write it down. Then basically what I did for about six months or so was I'd basically write everyday and I'd get up every morning and have a cup of coffee, sit at my computer and go through my phone and I'd write out the joke, actually craft it, in a sort of a, type it out and think of punchlines and then go out and just sort of try it. And, I'd work from five minutes and then I was doing ten minutes and I had a piece of paper I'd bring on stage with me, I didn't care. I had a piece of paper, it had a point form of my jokes once I got up to about 45 minutes I just wanted to be able to stay on stage and I just set it on a stool, I'd put some water on it, I had about 50 ideas and I'd go through and I'd go through and I'd go through and eventually over about 6 months I started thinking, okay well, I got an hour now, let's go and I started booking some shows. But, it was, obviously it was, yeah it's been a lot of fun. I feel very lucky to be able to go and do shows like that. I've gotten to travel the world the last two years, I just went to, did a tour of Australia, I just went to the Edinburgh Comedy Festival in August for two weeks and performed there fourteen nights in a row every night at 10pm. It's been a real awesome experience and I'm just basically doing it everyday now.

Audience: Do you like to improvise?

Tom: Off from here to Pittsburgh. Next week I'm in Pittsburgh.

Audience: When you're doing stand up do you like to improvise or do you like to stick right to your material?

Tom: I kind of like to improvise between material or sometimes, a lot, a lot of times you'll think of stuff on stage obviously. I videotaped a lot of my shows for a long time as well, um thing is I'd never watch the videotape back so it was really kind of a pointless exercise.

Laughter

Tom: I knew I was supposed to do that cause I always, but I always try after I get off stage, if I said something I would try to write it down. I think more so now, I'm going to start improvising a lot more now this year. The first two years I was, I would definitely have a set. I have a beginning, a middle and an end to where I want to go with my show, I want to end it with a certain subject, start it with a certain subject. I start out my show in a sort of very self deprecating way. You know I come out and the first thing I start talking about is how I got fired by Donald Trump on the Apprentice for going out drinking with Dennis Rodman on the night I was the project manager and I basically, I rail on myself for a while and I think that's something that's potentially a good thing to do sometimes, not always. But you want people to think that you're having fun too, it's important to look like you're having fun on stage. These are some things that I've learned over the last two years that I didn't know two years ago as clearly. I read a great book called Born Standing Up by Steve Martin which I'm sure you guys have probably been told to read, it's a great book. But it's basically, how he started doing stand up and one of

the greatest, most successful stand up comedians ever in history. I read that book and it's got a ton of good tips in there and yeah, I basically stole all of Steve Martin's material.

Laughter

Host: One over here.

Audience: Tom,

Tom: Yeah.

Audience: You are an avid tweeter.

Tom: Uh Huh. Uh Huh.

Audience: What do you see as being the merits to social media for an artist, especially in terms of promotion and I guess keeping you connected to your fan base and keeping them updated with what you're doing and stuff?

Tom: Well, I hate Facebook. I cancelled my Facebook.

Clapping and Laughter

Tom: Thank you. I think we should all cancel our Facebooks, but I am on Twitter. I like Twitter. It's funny that you ask that because a lot of material a lot of the things I like to talk about in my show is about our society's addiction to technology and I like to poke fun at how we can't get off of our cell phones and our Facebook pages and this is a big theme of mine that I like talking about. But at the same time, I had a Facebook page so people started saying well you just railed on Facebook for fifteen minutes but then you have a Facebook page so I kind of had to cancel my Facebook. I don't really like some of the broader implications of it, to be honest with you about how everyone's sort of all in our lives all the time now, but that's a whole other story. As far as when I'm touring I like using the Twitter. It's a fun thing to help promote a show, it's a pretty fun thing that we have access to now that if you can figure out how to harness the power of social media you could probably, I don't know if you guys are doing, how many of you are stand ups, if you're in comedy troupes or if you make videos, but whatever you are doing you can harness that and find an audience with that so it's a pretty exciting time and people should try to figure out how to use that as much as possible. No reason not to.

Host: Okay. One more, I think we've got time for a couple more questions. That's a long way to go.

Audience: Ah, something you said was that you're very interested in creating internet content and even with answering this question now, um I feel like the internet has just shortened our attention spans to the point where it's not really effective. How do you feel like you can

counteract without just making 30 second videos to counteract this effect and get people to pay attention to what you're putting up?

Tom: Uh, yeah, I mean that's the hardest part is how do you get them to pay attention. You probably want to come out with you know, you probably want to reel people in pretty quickly I would say, but you know...

Audience: The reason I ask is because it's hard to grab somebody within the first 30 seconds of a 5 minute video because a lot of people will look at it and say, five minutes, I'm not going to watch the whole thing.

Tom: Yeah. Yeah. You know my shows that I was doing in my living room were sometimes four hours long and you know we had, I did a four hour show with Steve-O one night where we ended up lying in a pool of our own vomit on the floor intermingled. So, it was a fun show, but that was completely contrary to what we're talking about, about going fast. That was more about it being, it was live. That was what I was, it was live, so. But the reason that I found that interesting was because there's not a lot of people doing anything live right now, yet even. So, I think you've just got to find a way to do something that just is a little different than anything else out there which is always the challenge right. Find that hook that catches people's attention whether it's a four hour video that's interesting because it's live, and in my case you could phone in and talk to us, which was what I was doing on the internet that I found interesting was interactivity with people online and having people be able to be a part of the content. But yeah, I guess, I think again, that's why I'm enjoying doing stand up right, you're not in that sort of electronic world anymore where people are clicking around and can turn it off, they've come out, they've decided to go to a show. They've had dinner, they've got a drink, they're going to sit there until the end, they've paid for a ticket, they're not going to leave and you actually get people's undivided attention for an hour. That's something that's sort of rare in the internet world and even in television now. People are flipping around, we're living in this sort of fast paced society, everyone wants to jump jump jump jump to the next thing so, that's why I'm enjoying doing live performance and and it's something you might want to consider is getting out and doing stuff live on stage.

Audience: Thank you.

Tom: Cool.

Host: You've sort of been dedicating obviously to stand up, are there any other things you're looking towards or are you just very much like you just said, live performance, touring and then kind of see what happens?

Tom: Um, I have some ideas that I'm trying to get started and I'm always trying to get some goofy scheme going. Um, you know I'm trying to start an internet television network right now is what I'm actually doing so, for me I kind of get up in the morning and I think okay what am I going to try and do this year. I'm doing my stand up, then I'm trying to get an internet television



network started doing comedy and talk shows. I want to build a little studio in LA and have all sorts of ridiculous people come by and find a way to create sort of an online gorilla TV network that doesn't have to play by the same rules of the mainstream corporate television. So that's my big goal for the next few years and hopefully I'll be able to pull it off. You know, I've been trying to do it now for about three years. I get up every morning and I think how am I going to try and do this today, and I go meet with people and I go talk to, I went and had a meeting last week at TMZ. I went to TMZ and I met them. I went in, I met Harvey. I was in there, I met with them, I pitched them an idea. I don't know, now I'm saying this on the internet, I don't know what's going to happen with it but you know hopefully they'll call back and say hey yeah, there's some ideas and you just gotta keep going. Odds are they won't want to start an internet television network with me, that I'm now saying this on the internet I just screwed up my whole fucking thing, thank you very much.

Host: It won't be up for a while, we're not that quick.

Tom: Yeah, but the idea is you just kind of gotta keep trying. So that's what I am trying to do. I'm trying to do that and a couple other little things and hopefully you'll see something on TV soon.

Host: Harland Williams, when I talked to Harland, I remember him saying when he was a kid he had always dreamt of being on David Letterman and he had sworn to himself that the first time he did it he was going to have peanut butter on his shoes, which I believe he did. He had that moment, for him it was being on David Letterman.

Tom: Mmm Hmmm he's told me about that, yeah.

Host: Now, did you have that moment and if so, what was it for you? Or are you still waiting? Like for Harland it was that moment, I'm going to be on Letterman...

Tom: Well being on Letterman was certainly, probably was that moment for me too. Yeah, it was. I mean I didn't put peanut butter on my shoes but I now wish I had done that. No, that was a surreal and exciting thing. Hosting Saturday Night Live was shocking.

Host: I was going to say, for a lot of people that is...

Tom: Yeah

Host: And you were in a bathtub with Lorne Michael's right?

Tom: Yeah

Host: In one bit.

Tom: And that was an improvised thing as well, I mean I didn't just whip a bathtub out of my pocket but they had a script that they'd written for Lorne and I in the bathtub and we did this

script and we did a couple of these little scripts and then after we shot the script I for whatever reason said, hey Lorne can I improvise something? You know I don't know what the fuck I'm doing right and I'm completely sort of in over my head I think is what I was. Now I've never really done a lot of acting or sketch comedy before and all of a sudden I'm here. But, I was sort of running on just sheer sort of, I just, would sometimes throw myself into things maybe harder than I should have. I improvised this whole stupid thing with a duck where I basically just screaming. They ended up using all the improvised stuff cause I think it was just so blatantly stupid and embarrassing that they did that, they aired that. But, it was pretty awesome, pretty amazing. It always sort of feels like an out of body experience. To be honest with you, the thing that I probably was most excited about was when I got to host the Letterman Show though, which was something I never even imagined being able to do. I got called, this was about, you know this was years after the show had been very popular. It's five years later, the show wasn't on MTV anymore at that point and I got a call just out of the blue. I was in LA and I got a call and they said hey Tom, it was Howard Lapetis called me, who you guys know and is a friend of ours and he called and said, you know are you sitting down? I said, yeah why? He said, you're hosting Letterman tomorrow. What? So I had to get on a plane, fly to New York, write my own monologue and twenty four hours later walking out into the Ed Sullivan theatre and sitting down at his desk and hosting the show. So that was probably the most exciting thing of all of it.

Host: Terrific. One last question. There we go

Audience: Hey. Hey Tom. I was just wondering how do you handle hecklers and what's the worst heckler you've ever had? And what was it like?

Tom: Uh, I was in Australia, in Sydney Australia. They heckle a lot more in London and in Australia and in the UK in Edinburgh it's just a lot more part of the culture I think, of stand up. It's a very two way conversation. And uh, when I started doing stand up I had a guitar that I'd play, halfway through the show I'd play a couple little songs. I'd play the Bum Bum Song on the guitar, the Bum Bum Song, a song of mine. Played Daddy Would You Like Some Sausage. A little song of mine that I do.

Laughter

Tom: So, I was playing the song and every city I'd go to, every city in Australia, I did 16 well 10 cities, 16 shows over there and every city I'd get to there'd be a rental guitar there for me on the stage so I played the song and set the guitar down and somebody yelled out SMASH THE GUITAR, right. This was in a big theatre, The Enmore Theatre, it was a packed show, sold out show, 1500 people there. It was, everyone was wasted and people were heckling all night, but it was fun heckling. People were sort of more like drunken heckling you know like cheering and good times, but someone yelled smash the guitar and I said you know I can't smash it, it's a rental and then it got a little laugh and then the guy yells SMASH THE GUITAR YA PUSSY.

Laughter

Tom: So of course I had to smash the guitar now.

Laughter

Tom: So I smashed the guitar and it was a \$3000 dollar guitar. And I paid for the guitar, so that was my worst heckle. That one the heckler actually won.

Laughter

Tom: But I got it all on video, so it was sort of worth it. But you know the thing is you can't be afraid of that, of people heckling you. You've just got to kind of destroy them instantly.

Laughter

Tom: You really, you really have and even if you can't think of something just tell them to FUCK OFF. Even if it's really not intelligent it's just, just, it's about speed and just go after them and start talking to them and don't let them, you know you have a lot more freedom when there's a heckler in a way because it's, people know it's spontaneous so people are going to enjoy watching you deal with that but you don't want to let anyone get away with anything. The other thing that you can do also is, like if you have a lot of hecklers, like if you're in a, something that I've kind of noticed which is the opposite by the way of what I just said so I'm going to sound like I'm saying two different, completely different things but sometimes when you get a lot of people, kinda a drunk crowd you kind of just have to ignore them too for a second and just keep plowing along as if you don't hear them. Because, you can get carried away if you start engaging every heckler. It just kind of depends what kind of show you want to do. If you want to do a show where you're talking to the audience all night, that's fun but if you have material and you have things that you want to say and you have a point that you're trying to express, if you start engaging every heckler then all of a sudden it turns into a free for all and you never really get to get into any sort of a rhythm. You know, that being said sometimes you'll have to engage them if it's just too obvious, if they yell something too loudly or that you just can't ignore. But yeah, so. Ignore them. Don't ignore them.

Audience: Thanks a lot.

Host: Great. Alright well Tom, thank you very much. We've got an award here.

Tom: Oh yeah?

Host: Yes.

Tom: Thank you guys. Thank you very much everyone.

Clapping and cheering

Host: This is ah...

Tom: Wow!

Clapping and Cheering

Tom: Alright! That's beautiful

Host: This is the Thalley Award for Achievement in Comedy

Tom: Oh Wow!

Host: We don't give out too many and we only give them to people who have not only excelled in comedy but have kind of changed and steered comedy in new directions.

Tom: That's amazing!

Host: I think that you fit that bill entirely so number one I'm thrilled to have you here, everyone else has been excited and we're looking forward to your show tonight.

Tom: This is a true honour, thank you very much. I'll put this on the shelf beside my five Raspberry Awards.

Laughter and Clapping

Tom: Yeah. Thank you. Thank you Mark. Very nice. Thank you everybody.

Clapping

Tom: Thanks Mark.

Clapping

Tom: Thanks guys.

Clapping

Host: And a Humber sweatshirt.

Tom: Oh, a Humber sweatshirt alright, alright.

Host: Yeah, here you go. You don't want to miss that.

Audience: Smash the award

Tom: What's that?

Audience: Smash the award

Host: They want you to smash the award.

Tom: No, no I don't want to do that. You don't want me to do that.

Laughter

Host: That one's solid.

Tom: Come on ya pussy.

Laughter

Tom: Thank you, that's a very beautiful award isn't it.

Host: Yeah. There's an artist, what's his name?

Audience: Joe, Joe Kertes.

Host: They were commissioned, basically it was commissioned by a Canadian artist