

Ep. 23 - Showrunner Paul Witten's Road to the Emmys was Paved with Nos - Transcript

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Honestly telling a story that's personal, and really opening yourself up to tell those truths that you have. We hope they're universal, we hope that they are relatable. But most importantly, it's just kind of exposing yourself and allowing yourself to be vulnerable and tell a story that may not always be pretty, but that's uniquely you. And I do truly believe that when people read something like that, or hear a pitch for something like that, and connect to it, they want to be a part of that, right? Because it feels connected, it feels like something they can relate to, because it's no different than when you watch a show. And there's a moment in the show that happens and you're touched, and you cry, or you laugh. It's like just an honest reaction. And so that's what I do. I try and express myself and open myself up to be vulnerable. Tell a story.

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Whether you're an actor, creator, put your baker or candlestick maker if you believe that creatives can save the world, then you're in the right place. Hi, I'm Brian Patacca. In this is Brian Breaks Character, where we slay the suffering artists myths so you can attract the right attention. Get out of your own way and become so aligned with your spiritual purpose that abundance in all its glorious forms finds you. Each episode will go behind the scenes with people who proudly walk the path of least taken inspiring activists, artists, creative folks, plus working actors and solopreneurs who will offer down and dirty advice and lots of laughs all while sharing how to bring home the bacon and make a living and a life in a creative field. Brian breaks character is your new favorite. Listen If you're done suffering for your art in second guessing every step of your yellow brick road. Hey, and welcome back to Brian Breaks Character. I'm so excited for you to meet today's guest. Paul Witten is a very dear friend of mine. He's a talented actor and creator. And what I love about Paul is that he has an on dying, unceasing and a relentless ambition to make things which I think is the heart of any creative in the world. And he makes things that are very high quality so I can't wait for you to hear from him. And I want to share just a little bit of his background so that you know who this is that you're going to you're about to meet. So Paul recently shot the comeback trail, where he was working alongside Robert De Niro, Tommy Lee Jones, Morgan Freeman and Zach Braff. He just did a guest spot on Brooklyn Nine-Nine. And then he has a recurring role on Apple pluses. The morning show with Jennifer Aniston. Now Paul also created co wrote and stars opposite Jane Lynch in the Emmy Award winning comedy series dropping the soap and you can currently watch that on Amazon. What you need to know about this is he made the series on his own. And Jane Lynch won the Emmy for and I think it's incredible that he had this idea and then suddenly here it is starring Jane Lynch and getting her an Emmy write his short film, which is called a play. He produced it co wrote it and stars in it, are you picking up on a theme here, and it's currently running the festival circuit. And it is a really funny film, we talk about the concept of that film in this episode, which I know you're going to giggle at You should also know that he is right now working on a half hour comedy pilot called you are here. I'm going to save what that's all about till we talk about it inside of this episode. Because it's very different from these more funny pieces that I've shared with you so far. You should also know that the first time I ever saw Paul act was in Los Angeles theater where he was in the goat or who is Sylvia and he was the best actor nominee from the ovation awards. So he's done tons of theater in LA as well. And the thing that I want to underline around all of this is Paul runs his career with kindness and creativity. I feel like those are the two headlines. And through kindness,

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he continues to love up on his network, which is why when he says I want to make something people come running. So I think there's a lot to learn from this conversation today. And I can't wait for you to meet my dear friend. All right, let's get started. All right, people I am so excited about today. I know I say that often. But I have to tell you there's a secret extra simmering of excitement because today's guest is Paul Witten, who is one of my dearest friends in the world. And what he has to share with us I want to jump right in. But what I can tell you is what I notice about Paul is his relentless pursuit of creativity and putting things out into the world. And I am just going to grill him about where that comes from today. So Paul, welcome to the dungeon of grilling you on creativity.

04:22

Thank you. So nice to be here. Thank you for having me, Brian.

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For sure. So Paul, I've known for quite a while and I'm just going to start off with adoration for you if that's okay. Since I've known you you have been someone who relentlessly puts I hate the word content and content feel so blanket when you ever hear they put content out and it can be like did they put sketches on YouTube? Like what like you put out what I would say is the same way that a showrunner puts out material like you've got a short film that you're doing and you're putting out an incredible series. When I first saw one of your first activities as you were in the goat in a theater piece, so you're working all the time. And to me as I was thinking about this this morning, I was like does Paul think of himself as someone Who is working all the time?

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That's a really great question. And I think the honest answer to that is probably no. And yet, the things that you've said and the things that I know that I've, I'm working on now or have worked on in the past, there's always something percolating. So I guess I am, but it doesn't feel like that is more my point, it feels like sometimes artistically, even if we may have our finger in different pies, and maybe working towards creating something. Sometimes we don't feel like we are because we place value on the professional job, I got a check. I was paid by HBO max to do this show. And that's real. And me doing this other thing that maybe I've created, or maybe that I'm working with other friends that we've co created, you don't necessarily get the same value. And I think that's a mistake. So I think to your point, thank you very much. That was really sweet. And I try to be because I love working. I love creating I love. I love collaborating with people. And so I was trying to keep busy, but sometimes I do forget. And I think No, I'm not working because I haven't had the validation of that network acting job or that movie or something like that. That's a mistake. But this is a great reminder. Thank you.

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06:20

And even Paul, as you say that I think about and you do book those jobs as well. So I don't want to put the sole focus here on like Paul makes kinda that's it you actually do book those jobs like the film that you just did with Robert De Niro. And you just you were just on the morning show. But before we go there I just what you just said something so interesting is like we put the value on the like the paycheck or the network, or the somebody other than me made this job happen. So it meant something more is there. When do you experience like a tipping point of, Oh, this thing I made actually does feel like something that's real is ever Is there a tipping point that you ever experience?

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I feel like when someone else says yes to you, in your world, to a personal project, I feel like that becomes the tipping point, even though Clearly, we sometimes forget that. But I think as you put your own workout in the world stuff you've created when people say yes to you, and say, yeah, I'm gonna do it for way below what I'm worth, we're often always doing work for way below our worth, which is okay. But I think when you have people start surrounding you, especially if it's something that you've created, that starts to feel really good, and that I would say is kind of for me anyway, the tipping point of going, Okay, I'm on the right track.

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Yeah, I love that. I love that you're saying because like, what I hate what I'm hearing, and that is, when I put this thing that I'm thinking about making are going to make it someone says yes, I'll work on it. Yes, I'll maybe give you money or whatever it is that that's reassurance that what you're doing is I hate to use this word because it sounds reductive, but worthy or that like it means something that it is worth being out there.

07:52

Oh, absolutely. I think it's validation. And I think we all want validation, I think that becomes very, very now to act like we don't need that. And I'm not someone who subscribes to that I do need validation. I do need someone to read something maybe that I've written and support it, or say like, Oh, this is great. I love this moment. I also equally am not afraid of the criticism, and feedback, good, bad or indifferent. But But I love to hear that. You can shower me with that all day long.

08:22

I love that one of the things that is really that you've made clear to me in the past that I thought was such a powerful way of taking care of yourself as an artist is when you are offering someone a script that you have a very clear relationship with like, I don't want to give you the script, unless you're going to read it because it's gonna make me feel some kind of way. Can you share that? Because I think a lot of artists need better boundaries around their creative vulnerability. Let's call it that like because I think it can leave you in a dark place.

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08:48

Well, I'm just insecure enough to be honest to feel like if someone doesn't someone requests to read something of mine, I think Oh, please send it to me. I'm like, Yes. Are you like are you going to do in the next few days? Or do you want to just text me or email me when you're ready? Because then I'll send it to you because sometimes not always. And it depends on the person to be honest. But sometimes when I've sent someone a script, and weeks, months go by, I assume that they think I'm garbage and it's terrible. And they don't know how to tell I'm just being really honest. Yeah, obviously not always the case. But people are just busy and have their lives but I do like to make sure that someone is actually going to read it because the flip side of that is I don't have to have them read it. I don't I'm okay. I hate reading scripts. I would rather swallow bleach than read the script most of the time, especially if it's like 120 pages. Oh my god, just shoot me. So so I'm okay with someone saying no or not being interested but I don't need someone to say please want to read it and Not Be sincere? Yeah.

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And I just want to underline kind of what you said here is like, I don't need someone to read it. So if I'm asking them to read it, it's because I,

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or they're asking me Sorry, yes. Or they're asking me, right.

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And I just love that the way if you're like, if you're gonna give your script to someone, you want to be a great, you're gonna read the next few days because if not, I, I'll give it to you when you are going to read it. Like there's just like a different like, because otherwise, I know about myself enough that if you don't say anything about this, I'm going to decide that you thought it was crap. And maybe you don't even like me like this, the story we can write because

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No, I just go down that rabbit hole nice, really healthy. Yeah, by the way, I'm not saying this is the way to be, I am trying to be more of a person that can send something off and do that and kind of release my attachment to whatever a result would be, or whatever feedback would be. And I actually am getting better at that. And I've learned to kind of hit that send button and go, we're okay. Whatever that is, is okay. So there's some personal growth in this in this area. Yeah. Which is probably do but, but I do prefer if someone wants to do it, like, just do it.

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Yeah, totally. And I also think there's something that I one thing that I know that any artist I think struggles with is asking for help, sometimes can be real hard asking even when you're like, I'd love to read the script, but only if you want to can feel like a weird ass like, I'm not you don't have to read this for me. So I just appreciate just

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that knowing this, even if you do want to grow a little bit around this, what I wanted to say is I just think it's awesome that right now you know where you're at with, like this particular script, I don't want you to have for four weeks because it's gonna make me do this story or whatever. And I think that's such a powerful.

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Yeah, yes, thank you. And as as from experience, we kind of shared together with a mutual acquaintance friend, I was very patient. So there is some personal growth. And then eventually, I heard back and was lovely. So I am trying to learn those moments where there's more of an immediacy, from my point of view that I need more immediacy in a given circumstance than others, which I think has been healthy for me. But yeah, I still if you're gonna ask to read it,

12:01

read it. Read it. Yes. And I just think what you just said is, again, it is that knowingness of yourself, like, I'm aware that this, I'm not going to be worrying about this one without so you have a continual process of having to ask for like, will you do my project? Will you give money to my project? Will you be a part of this project? How like, this is probably not how excited are you? Is that \$1,000? excitement? Or \$5,000? Can you lead? That's one of the things that I think so many people are daunted by and you have been a producer on these projects. So before we get into like the asking, I'd love for you to just share a little bit about Now there were a few years out from your series, dropping the soap, what did that series teach you producing it and being in it,

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I learned that there are no rules. Even if you think there are rules there are. And you can kind of when we started dropping the soap, it was still very early on in the short format game. And I was doing it just to get some tape. on myself, it was a really slow time in my career, you know, I was middle aged. And work was kind of slow. So I want to create something for myself and worked with a couple of friends. And we did it. And I raising the money actually came very easy for that. I was really, really,

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everyone's pissed off when they hear you say that spill the tea. But they have

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to know like this was long enough ago where we were shooting an episode for 1000 or 15 \$100. And the way I looked at it, because money was just kind of a I think people liked the content. So they were kind of charmed by it. So it wasn't massive amounts of money. But for us, it gave us the ability to tell another section of the story, which was great. So I'd get it'd raise another 1000 or 15 \$100. And we finished up an episode and shoot it and over a weekend, and everyone donated their services. This was years ago, like I said, when we first started this very long journey to where it actually ended up. And I was so grateful for that. And one of the ways I did that is I'm not good at asking for money. And I chose to put kyron or a bumper on the episode at the end that said, This episode is sponsored by Brian Patacca. So what would happen is if people watched it, they'd

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go, Oh, what is that? How do you sponsor an episode? And it allowed them to be curious, and to reach out to me. And then it invariably went to how much is that? And I would tell them, I'd say this is for camera rental and to feed everyone because we're all just like a bunch of pals hanging out and trying to tell some stories that we think are funny. So I got very, very lucky with that, but that's how those kind of individual monies per episode were raised. And when you're talking

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about, he said like there are no rules. You also said earlier that there's always like an idea of percolating is the idea that's percolating one that's like, I really think this is funny, or is it also like, I really want to explore that? Or does it kind of come to you in different ways in terms of your creative process like for dropping the soap, which I know your next project is very different from dropping this So? So can you share a little bit about how that how that starts for you how that percolation becomes a full pot of coffee?

15:24

Yeah, with dropping the so like I said, it was it was me trying to, I wanted to create some work, and I happen to be taking a nap, which, if you don't take naps, I don't know, I can't know. I love a good bath. And I was thinking, and I came up with a story idea. And it was dropping the soap. And so I pitched it to a friend. And that kind of got the ball rolling. And I think what prompted that was that I got my sag card doing a soap opera. And I did an under five on General Hospital. And I remember being fascinated with the way these people work, and how much work it is and how devoted they are, how quickly it moves. It was a fascinating world that was unlike, in my opinion, the primetime TV and film world. So it's its own microcosm. And I kind of wanted to pay Amash and poke a little fun at it. And so that's how that idea came up. Also, sometimes just talking with other creative people, and it's usually born from some circumstance that I've had or they've had, or some idea, like the short film that I did was kind of inspired by years of going to see friends and plays, and not always being blown away by the productions.

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So positive, very kind right now what he's saying is, when your friend says, Come see my one person cabaret, it's 90 minutes long, and I think 35 songs all by and low and I talked about my dead dog, like and sometimes it's not even that bad of a description. Sometimes, like I've come see my great play, and you're like this was not a great play. And this film is captures it's so incredibly, it's absurdist, and amazing. I think that film is such a great, so that idea that come from I've gone to one too many bad plays.

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Yes. And my friend Shawn wings, who wrote it with me, Sean wing, and Mara Marina, who we all three co wrote it. We've all been friends. For years, we've all been a theatre company. For years, we've seen bad, horrible plays together. And we've seen magical transformative plays together. But that was less interesting to tell that story. So we just started brainstorming over, you know, dinner one night, and came up with this idea. And it kind of became tangential and a really fun way, which you know, that I won't ruin in case somebody

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actually wants to watch this. It's called a play. And if you go to my social media, I think there's a link there. But it was so much fun to create with them. And so that's what that was born up. I think very often it really just is from personal experience things that mean something to us good, bad or indifferent. That feel like a story you want to tell for whatever reason. I guess it means I'm a little twisted that story.

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If I can just circle back as we're recording this episode in the week, when the Yahtzee a unit has just authorized a strike

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was an incredibly like a vote of what it was. Is it

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99% 99%

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of people amazing.

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Okay, all right. So but what I think I want to go back to dropping the soup, because it's also an homage to crew people to people who are on sets, like it's just such an honoring of all of those people. And one of the things I was just thinking about is how curious slash not surprising is it that you wanted to choose the backstage and front stage scenario of a soap opera, where you are getting to know these people and what it is that they do every day. And I just think that it feels very current. It feels very modern. It feels very off the times. So if you ever watched wrapping this up on Amazon yet, it is a great watch.

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Go watch it. Yeah, it

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is a great.

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It's fun. Yeah, totally fun. Yeah, and I love behind the scenes thing, I anything behind the scenes, I really love to see what makes people tick, and how things work and to kind of peel back and look behind the artifice if you will. And I find people's flaws so interesting. So and I don't think that's unique to me. I think we all do. And for me, that's what that story also became about someone's journey of self discovery, which happened to kind of coincide with something I was going through too so it was Yeah, it was a lot of fun.

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Yeah, and as I'm thinking about this I was gonna like look at the poll which and oeuvre it celebrate. I have a new friend is like there's something around celebrating hubris or watching hubris and how it plays out, even in come see my play. There's a hubris around, come see my play. Even in the hubris of your lead character and dropping the soap. There's something around that is like, both play it's like it just make it is. So what I would say is so easy to empathize, it's so easy to go along the journey with the characters that you've written, I think. And so this kind of leads me into what your next project is. And I would love for you to share with the audience just a little bit, whatever you're willing to tell us about this project of coming in Sure.

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It's called you are here. And it's basically about a good group of middle aged friends that are at a certain point in their life, which is not often a story that we get to see. And these people are mostly single, and kind of navigating life as single people in Los Angeles, although it certainly is applicable anywhere, and what it's like as we age, and we start discovering who our family is, if we don't have close ties with our blood family, the people that we bring close to us, and that we include in our orbit that enrich us and that become our chosen family. And how we depend on those friendships, maybe more than people that have strong relationships with their blood relations, or as well as, and that is something that I'm very familiar with. And I wanted to kind of explore that. And I know so many people, but like myself, that I'm single right now and have been for a few years. And I love it. And I also want partnership, but you know, you start getting older, especially in the gay world. It's like there's a real kind of stigma. And I wanted to kind of shine a light on that. I think it's really fascinating. Yeah,

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and that what I love about your saying is because I think anyone here can relate to the chosen family, because as a creative, you're usually an outlaw in your own family. So you got to find someone who like says yes to you. And then also what this specific, the specificity of it being in middle age where a lot of people around you are probably pairing off. And so what does it look like to be one of the singles? Who's in that, that crew? And what does that life look like? So and you're right, this is a story that's not being told.

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And without pity, I I don't feel sorry for single people. And I think, as a fellow single person, I love being single, I love living alone. There's a lot I like about which can present its own challenges, right? So when I'm in the dating world, and I'm not someone who is starved, let's say, to add a partner to my life, because I've created this life that I'm not mad about. It takes it takes a lot to kind of let that person in, and sometimes to maybe my detriment. So I think that's also something that is interesting to explore how we become so independent and self sufficient that sometimes, maybe what we're lacking is sex, maybe because we've surrounded ourselves with wonderful friends and our chosen family, our blood family, right? And we've set ourselves up for success in our lives at this age. So that maybe the only thing missing is a sexual gratification, which can be a trap, search

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or search and can limit someone else from fully entering your life because you're maybe not valuing everything that they have to offer. Because you're fulfilling and yourself.

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Well, yeah, you're humming along, maybe you're maybe you're just okay, maybe you don't maybe like this might be fun.

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And maybe that's fine. And maybe it's not, maybe it's a little lonely. On some days, maybe it's amazing. But I think that's such an interesting thing to explore. Because I like I said, I have so many friends that are single and, and also people in couples. And that's not always a walk in the park either. It's just human, I just think it's a I just think it's a fascinating story that we don't see a lot.

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And I love what you're saying, because I think most of us relate or have seen enough of the story of like the 26 year old who is out of school, and it's so tough, and also being a big slot or like going out all the time, or like having this boyfriend and that book or like just not settling into their life yet, right? It's a very different conversation around. When you're a different age and you have a life you've established and you're trying to say dessert, do I want someone else in here? Well, maybe on Tuesdays, I do. But on Wednesdays, like I left Today was a great dad, this is a good day by my like that it can be almost like the weather of how you're experiencing what you want. Right. And also I just want everyone to point out clearly Paul is not a sensitive artist at all. You can see he's just as like just a moneymaker here. I mean, I think the stories you're telling are so unique and awesome, that I can imagine that there's a certain audience or producer or money that you can find that says yes to a story, like the one you've just described, it's more nuanced than maybe less yucca, yucca then everything dropping this up is yada yada but Java itself is definitely

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much more like that's much more like it's much more of a straight up comedy. A little absurd. It's it's a satire, basically. So and it's fabulous. It's wonderful. I'm really proud of it but with you are here, it's really more slice of life. It should feel just real and like you're peeking in on these people, and their lives and their myriad of Can I swear Yeah. Marry the fuck ups. Wow. I don't know about you and I don't know about your listeners, but I fuck up constantly and I make the same mistakes over and over again. And I see other people do it too and it's just so human. And it's exciting exploring how people do that, you know, how they maybe learn and maybe don't learn from those backups or experiences.

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So I want to talk a little bit about her little doggie there. How exciting. Oh, can

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you hear her?

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Even on the podcast? I love it. She's trying to have

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someone else be walking by. I have a dog named Stevie Nicks.

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Hey actors, I'm gonna get really real with you for 90 seconds looking for representation is one of the most disempowering disenchanting and can we just say it dysfunctional parts of an acting career It feels like a one sided conversation everyone's got an opinion about what you should do and even your friends get weird when you ask them for referrals. So I want to shut down all of that noise. Join me for my free masterclass, make agents want you the three biggest lies that stop you from finding the right representation go to make agents want u.com to register, the class is on demand so you can watch it right away, or schedule your own private viewing. And since you're a Brian brakes character listener, I just want to warn you right now in your big, beautiful, gorgeous heart, this class might piss you off, because you've been fed a lot of crap over the years that has actually been keeping you out of rooms, you're going to learn why a target list is the worst strategy you can use to find the right match. And agents aren't worried about your credits, half as much as you are in your reel is a giant waste of time and money. So before you go off and write a story about any of that, I want you to get the juicy learning inside of this class, snag your spot now and I will see you there make agents want you calm or text agentgoals one word 244222. And I'll send you an invite. All right, let's get back to the show. So I want to get into the artistic experience of being a producer and an artist at the same time. So when you're out there, because we talked a little bit about how the money kind of came easy for dropping the soap and you're on to this next project. And I think a lot of listeners would relate to this of like he is a magician who knows tricks I've never heard of before. How does that ever happen in the history of the world? If you were Is there a way that you can break down a little bit of how you approach Oh, it's time to get some money for this? If you were to actually think about how you walk through that door? How do

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you how does that start for you honestly telling a story that's personal, keep going, this is great, keep going. And really opening yourself up to tell those truths that you have. We hope they're universal, we hope that they are, they are relatable. But most importantly, it's just kind of exposing yourself and allowing yourself to be vulnerable and tell a story that may not always be pretty, but that's uniquely you. And I do truly believe that when people read something like that, or hear a pitch for something like that and connect to it, they want to be a part of that, right? Because it feels connected, it feels like something they can relate to. Because it's no different than when you watch a show. And there's a moment in a show that happens and you're touched and

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you cry or you laugh. It's like just an honest reaction. And so that's what I do. I try and express myself and open myself up to be vulnerable. Tell a story show warts, initially the name of you are here was warts and all and I thought having a title with a woman Walmart sounds vaguely disgusting. So I thought that, but i think that i think it's kind of that simple. And people will read something like that, as I said, or connect to something like that and want to be a part of it. And that's kind of how it's worked for me personally. Because I've been in situations you know, with dropping the so we were so lucky that Jane Lynch came, and she happened to see what we were doing. And she was like, wow, this is really good. I want to see if I know anyone that would like to help with this. So eventually this was over the course of years. Eventually we connected with Lisa qdros company and she was an executive producer at one point so we had Lisa and we had chain and Dan Lipinski and Don Roose, with isn't entertainment and we were shopping around and we had CIA on our corner and we were pitching it and trying to become a branded series kind of in the early time and it didn't end up happening and you know, you think as an artist you think Oh, hell yeah, I've made it because I've got bucket Lisa Goudreau, fuckin Jane Lynch ca Yes, done. Not true. Didn't we had great meetings, met great people. We've made great relationships, but that wasn't actually the thing that ended up triggering it and making it happen. So I eventually kind of took the reins back and did it on my own kind of independently initially. And that was what made it happen. And again, I think it was just because people connected to it. I think luckily the subs case it was because people just thought it was funny. So Mandy Fabian was the writer of that, and she's hilarious. And she and I have a very similar sensibility. So as the showrunner and the writer, we just had a great simpatico. And I think that that resonated for people.

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So what I'm hearing you say almost is people got so into the pitch and the idea that that people were Yes, men and yes, Manning it a lot when actually they didn't maybe have the follow through that they want they could actually give when pushed out

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or the industry didn't. I think that the interest was there, certainly with Lisa's company, and with chain. It was definitely there. But at the time that we started this journey, which is going back eight years, maybe longer. When this first started with this idea. The industry wasn't quite sure Ileana Douglas had a series called IKEA one, the IKEA one I can't remember. I'm blanking on it. But you know, that was kind of trailblazing, and it was around it was post that but people didn't know what to do with shortform. Right. Right. It was kind of the redheaded bastard stepchild. I don't know if we can say that. But I just said it. So it's, it was really hard to get people to understand how do you monetize this? Where is this going? I think it's still a challenge to be honest with you. But we were able to kind of navigate our way around it and find the way in which worked for everybody that was involved.

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Well, and also I can just compliment you pause. I think that one of the things around short form is like does it pay off. And I think like we saw the horrible. I put the word horrible, you could change the word or something

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else. But like kwibi in it released is so different from what you were able to do and dropping the soap would you think clearly was trying to be like some short form version or whatever is that the episodes, when I would watch them didn't have payoff. And when I would watch an episode dropping this up, I was like, I've just watched an episode of a television show. It just the shortness isn't part of what's registered for me. But I feel like I've watched an episode, and I can be ready to watch the next one, which is very different than this was short on purpose. For some reason, which is not the same as I've constructed art, I've created an art piece that happens to be 10 minutes long. That is the biggest

32:06

compliment. And I can't wait to share that with Mandy too. That's that's such an enormous compliment. Thank you, we really work to do that we, we would have loved to have a half hour series, we didn't have the funds to do a half hour series. So we created 1010 minute episodes. So we had a 10 episode series. And it does feel like a mini series Oh

32:25

my god, it feels like I'm watching the show. There's, there's nothing about it that feels anything less than

32:30

that's honestly an enormous compliment. So it really truly thank you so much. And with kwibi. I didn't I didn't watch a lot of content on there. But what it felt like, and I'm talking out of my ass here, because as I said the disclaimer is that I didn't watch it. But it felt like it was a lot of opportunity for stars to come in and have some platform of some ancillary content that was I wish what could be had really been and promoted was for people, like I'm sure many of your clients and people that are out there in the world trying to create something and tell stories that are the underdog, the person that doesn't have a big company behind them that doesn't have a million dollars to spend on a series, I would have loved for it to be that. And maybe there was an element of that. But it didn't feel like that based on my kind of limited perspective, it felt like it was it was appealing to a different audience.

33:22

And it was I mean, it was everything was shot beautifully. But again, wasn't telling a story, which is the story is what this audience wants to hear stories. So I wanted to ask you another question. So what I heard you saying I want to go back to the money thing and just a little bit because I know our listeners are going to be really interested in it is you didn't do any crowdsourcing for any of your products. Isn't that right? It wasn't at all, very much, wholeheartedly vulnerably sharing the story with a human being to get them on board. And I just think that that is such an important thing for people to hear. Because I think oh, the easy answer, not easy. But the easy answer is crowdsourcing. Let me go to one of these websites and do it that way, which is not how I've known you to do any of the projects you've done so

33:59

far. I haven't. And I love that that's an opportunity for people and then that works for a lot of people. I didn't think I'd be successful on it. Because I didn't think that someone here gave \$100 and I'll give you a pencil with the title aren't like I just I couldn't. That didn't interest me and again, like so I tried to just kind of put out there what I thought was interesting and hope that someone got on board, but it's hard to raise money. But I feel like if you surround yourself with people that are like minded, which is what I've tried to do, people that are like minded that are talented and like having Jane Lynch, let's say involved in dropping the soap that certainly added an element of legitimacy, for lack of better words that other people coming along could go Oh, this is funny. And this amazing. Actress comedian, also is on board. So that also gave people some security right? So people that are about to write a check, you don't know that there's any ROI with this return of investment. So you don't know. So when you see something that maybe is content that you like, and other people kind of gravitating towards a project that you like, I think it starts to kind of feed into itself when people start getting involved or willing to jump on board based on those things, too. So yeah, and

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one of the things that I one of the things I think everyone needs, maybe not reading between the lines, so I'm going to point to the in between the line space for a second is that Paul treats his network of people he's worked with really, really well. And one of the gifts I think of a creator, that is overlooked too easily, I think sometimes is the opportunity to give someone how it you want to do this job with me, you want to work on this project with me, like everybody out there is hustling and trying to get work all the time. And one of the opportunities that Paul can give someone as I'm doing this pilot, would you like to it is not going to pay a lot of money, but it's going to be really fun, you're gonna get people that you like, and that that is part of what you do within your network as you just treat them well, by sharing all this stuff with them. I think that that's one piece where we all need to run with that idea of how do we treat our network? How do we offer them opportunity? Because too often I think we we think it's about asking a favor. But I don't know, Paul, when you are asking someone to be a part of your project are you dancing with? Is this a favor slash This is awesome gig for them? Are you mostly Think of it as a favor?

36:21

That's a great question. And it's a little of both. And there are times when I feel like it's a favor. So I usually, I would say more than half the time I feel like it's a favor. And I'll say to them, Look, I'm not gonna be able to pay you what you're worth. No one on this show is going to get what they're worth. But I would love for you to get on board because I think you're really talented. I love your energy on a set. You're fucking funny. You're fun. I'm going to feed you well. We'll have some cackles. Yep, we'll probably work some long hours. But we're gonna have fun. And I think when you just kind of acknowledged to people like, yeah, this the money on this sucks. So only, but also I and I said this to people. If you don't connect with this project, don't do it. Yeah, if you can't happily do this for the crappy 125 you're gonna get Yeah, or 200? Then don't do it. I get it. I totally get it. And I would never hold that against someone. Yeah. Because to me, I only want people that show up that are okay

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with that and got like a Yeah, I mean, it'll be crushing mine, whatever. Yes. Great. I enjoyed, I'm gonna enjoy doing this piece. And I enjoy the people that you've got involved. And that's the best thing to do. It sets you up for success. Yeah. So if it starts tilting into, it's a favor, and someone is resentful about money, which I just personally haven't run into, because of what I just said, then that would be a different, that'd be a different thing. But there was someone on dropping the South Basha that came in and did us a favor, and was doing just like a one or two liner thing and came in and right before lunch, and we all have lunch. So he was waiting around for 30 or 40 minutes. And then we started back up again. And we had one thing to do right before we got to his stuff. And he was like, I thought this was gonna be quick, what am I going to be out of here? And that was so unlike anything I'd heard on our set, which was so not that energy. That I said, you know, go? It's okay. We've got it. Don't worry, please get a plate. Take yourself some dinner. Like, if you've got to go go. And I sent him home. Yeah, wow.

38:39

Yeah. And what?

38:40

It wasn't important for me to have someone there that didn't want to be there. And I get it. You have limited time. Take some food.

38:48

One of the things that Paul just said that I think is because a lot what I'm hearing Paul over and over again, I'm actually really recognizing this about you right now is this incredible power you have. And I would call it a strength, not a power or strength to ask a question and give someone the dignity of their answer. Meaning I'm not going to manipulate the situation into a space where I don't want to take up too much of your time and SEO. Could you do me this favor, but actually saying it's not going to be a lot of money? We're going to have fun? And if you say No, that's okay. That just like allowing some of the dignity of your answer, I think just give someone such so much. It's so much easier to ask a question. When you kind of out yourself. We both know, this isn't a lot of money. This is a project that's going to be fun. And if it's not going to be fun for you, then this isn't a fate this won't be a favorite to me. It needs to be something that you're gonna say you love to

39:33

do. Right? Yeah, thank you. That's so that really makes me feel good to hear that I tried to do that. And I haven't always done that. That's why I say it makes me feel good to hear that. Because I think before I kind of moved through the world differently, and I did there was I didn't maybe respond in the same way. And I learned a lot I learned that didn't didn't fucking feel good. So what felt good was just to go I just have to be honest Authentic with what this is for me and you, you get to do the same. And maybe they don't align. It's like when you're dating. Yeah. Yeah. Like, you're awesome. And you're not for me. Yeah. You know what I mean, like. So that's something I'm learning and still learning. Yeah. But thank you. I appreciate that.

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40:18

And I think this is something that we all can just witness and also take into our own. Everyone is listening to take into our own journeys of like, let someone say no, and that doesn't that what that means is, you have a big capacity probably for hearing some no sometimes or someone is saying no. Yeah, right.

40:31

Everyone in this business, you're so often hearing No, then I think you'd become somebody newer to it. I don't look at the nose necessarily as a bad thing. I try to look at them as a good thing you have to or you're screwed, because. But I think they can be really good because they usually teach you something. There's usually a lot to learn from a no. Sometimes it's just introspection. Sometimes it's looking at why did they say no? Maybe I approached this badly.

41:00

Or sometimes it's like you said, Oh, this isn't a match. Good. I'm glad they said no, because it would have been that with them anyway. And that's

41:05

what this actor, this particular actor was a wonderful actor. And, yeah, he, he had his boundary, it was not what he expected. I'm not the one who personally had reached out. So I felt like Oh, he may have been told, Hey, could you run over and do this thing? It'll be really quick. So it wasn't to demonize him in any way. That's why I was like, take some food. You're good. Go. And I'm sorry. We wasted your time. Yeah. Because he had been there a couple hours, two or three hours. Yeah. So he had his boundary, and I can I can respect that. I mean, it's I said his car on fire.

41:42

The day and the shooter, like, get it together, like yeah, there's a few things in there, like pissed me off.

41:47

Just to be clear, I fucked up and scarred.

41:49

I'm gonna save a question I want to ask at the end. But before we get there, I would love for you to share a little bit. You just did a big feature film that with Robert De Niro and Zach Braff and Tommy Lee Jones and Morgan Freeman, can you just spill the tea a little bit on that, because it's also another one where like, we're seeing the love that it's also fun, where you're like, showing the making of the film was another backstage.

42:08

Yeah, it was so much fun. And one of the ancillary gifts of creating your own content, so just I'm going to totally Yes, let's talk about that. The reason that came about was because someone saw dropping the soap. So it's

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the power of just getting out there and doing it. You never know who's gonna see it and go like, Oh, I like that person. They don't suck that bad. Let's have them be, you know what I mean? So that kind of was what made that happen for me, which was such a fantastic experience, top to bottom. I got to go to New Mexico for a month, like you said, and I worked with Robert De Niro up. And his lovely and Morgan Freeman, Tommy Lee Jones, Zach Braff who I work the most who's awesome in this movie, and and really good guy. It was directed by George Gallo, who did the night run. And it was supposed to come out a while ago, because of the pandemic kind of like this James Bond when we it's been like it was ready to go two years ago or something, and now it's coming in. I think it's coming out before the end of the year, but I don't know an exact release date. And it's called the comeback trail, comeback trail, the comeback trail. And I play the production designer that the story is about a producer who is shooting a movie that he puts Tommy Lee Jones and has this old drunk cowboy with the hopes of killing them and collecting insurance money. So and it's a really kind of fun, silly comedy. That's a real throwback to like a 70s. And it takes place in the 70s. And I played Danny, who's the production designer of the movie within the movie called The oldest gun in the West, I think was that right? The old I think the oldest gun on the west. And it was just there was one moment where I'm in Tallinn in Mexico, and I'm standing on this beautiful cliff overlooking this amazing Vista. standing with Zach and Robert De Niro. Tommy Lee Jones behind me. And I'm in this dance of beauty that's on this. I think it's an Indian Reservation to sunny and it was surreal. It was absolutely surreal, these great costumes, this most of our guests who's the best costume designer. It was amazing. It was such a great experience. And it was really a pinch me moment, the whole thing but that was a moment I remember really tracking going. I want to remember this. We tend I think so often to when we're in moments of creativity or moments of success or moments of jobs where someone has finally said yes. And we're thinking outside of it. We're thinking about the next thing or how we're going to get I mean I should speak for myself. I can sometimes do that. By sometimes. I mean I always do that. So I didn't let myself do that. There were many moments that one being just one that really was marked for me where I did not let myself Do that. I sat in the moment. And I really took it in every aspect that can remember what it smelled like I remember I was just this amazing moment. Yeah.

45:10

And I just love what you're saying, Paul, because I think you're right we I call that the refrigerator moment where your refrigerator you just got home from the grocery store is completely full with refrigerate your food and you're like starting to make the next list already. You're like already making list before you guys wait, I'm the fridge is full. I'm here, I'm on this beautiful VISTA here with these incredible performers that are this is. And what I also see in that is the recognition of I have created a life where it's possible for me to go be for a month in another state where I'm shooting a film, like there's so much gratitude for your own showing up next to acting and your calling in that moment, just by like, certain many people can just like I'm taking a month off to go to New Mexico shoot like you have to set up a life that supports that. And so often I think we're like, I have this shitty life because I have to have a flexible schedule for acting. And actually like this is what it provides. In some ways. I think that's so such a good just to clock that and like you did and you took that in, I think it's so important for us to all notice that and notice when we've we found ourselves in that right? That's really beautiful.

46:08

Yeah, I try it's a work in progress, man, because I don't always do it. But I try to more and more. And every job I get to really sit in the moment of like when you get the call and get the email that says you're booked to let that little kid go. Cheer yourself on and have a moment of real celebration. We Rob ourselves of that, or at least I have in the past where I haven't let myself really just be a little fat seven year old boy going like, Yeah, I did. And I did it. So I try to let those moments seep in instead of like, Oh, this is so great. Okay, so focus on the next thing.

46:43

Oh, yeah. Yeah. What's that book this? I'll be able to book that. And then this will happen. And then this. We're in the future already. We're missing out on what's what's right here in front of us. Yeah, yeah. Important. Yeah. So to kind of put a cap on, I think this conversation could go on for hours, I could talk to you forever, as we probably see. But to put a cap on this for some of the listeners here who are creators or who are sparked by kind of some of the things that you've said today. There's so many things I think we can take away from this conversation. But if you were going to say to someone who is thinking about creating or sitting on that ideas, or any advice or wish that you would have for them that you want them to hear from this conversation,

47:19

don't take no for an answer. Do it regardless of get out there and do it. There's no excuse now you know, we have we have phones we have, we have so many things that our fingertips to tell a story, it doesn't matter if it's the best production value, it doesn't matter if it's written or it's improvisational, whatever, like, this is the great thing about something like Tick tock, where creators or people who are not creators that suddenly decide they want to create are able to empower to just put stuff out there. I think that's the best thing. We have these platforms now where we can really express ourselves. It's It's such a gift. So just do it. Because why the fuck not? Why not do it? I mean, and then you might end up winning an Emmy. You know what I mean? And that's great. That's a wonderful thing. But it's it's not the end all. But if you're just putting it out there and you're continuing, I look at these people and I and I'm not as great about it. I see these people that do do Tick Tock or people that do content, like someone like Jeff plotnick are constantly are putting stuff out. I'm so envious. I feel like gotten such a slug. Look at this, they've done like Jimmy Fallon is another one that I see him doing content. And he's so great at it. And he really puts it out there so well. And I love that I'm so inspired by that. So I need to listen to my own. What I'm saying here myself, I need to be better about just really getting stuff out there. I tend to kind of be a dog with a bone like one project where I really will focus on it and get that done. Sometimes I could do this other stuff that would also bring me joy.

48:58

I don't know I'm gonna just compliment you for being a dog with a bone because the dog the bones that you put out are good bones. So I tell I love that you want to be more inspired. But I would say like, there's

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something really beautiful about your creative process. So I'm totally down to see some tiktoks from Paul, but I also

49:14

got a few they're not good. That that medium is like, I'm really impressed with people that do it well, and you can be crazy it makes you can go down that rabbit hole for an hour and you're just mindlessly scrolling.

49:28

And fully awake and fully entertained by the way.

49:32

Yes, and laughing I have sometimes late in bed and scroll and I'll end up belly laughing for find some hilarious video. I'll repost on social media because I can't stop laughing. It's so great.

49:47

So listen, everybody. You heard it from Paul. Just do it. Don't take no for an answer. And I know that everyone here is probably very intrigued about finding more out about Paul. So Paul, we're going to link to your Instagram and drop This app is on Amazon. Obviously you're on tik tok where we can see as a beginning tik tok or it's very rare. Yeah, there's nothing impressive there. But Sure, yes. Do more I probably but I will just say that Paul's Instagram is is funny all the time. So it's a great one to follow. Can you just tell them what that is in case someone's listening and they're driving?

50:20

I think it's Paul underscore Witten. So pa ul underscore wi TTM.

50:26

Right. And I just want to thank you so much for coming here today. And really like I feel like the lesson that I'm hearing again, and again, I want everyone to hear is that strength of vulnerably reaching out and the resilience around a no and giving people the dignity of a no and this What a powerful path that has led for you that that that strength that you've developed, has been what kind of is the pebbles underneath this path that you've walked out? And just for all of us to just take from that? The willingness to

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put yourself out there? And and know that there's a yes, right behind the no, yes, there will be a yes.

50:57

Thank you so much, Paul, we're so glad to have you on Fw every back Sunday.

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51:01

All right. Thank you. Yeah, it's a pleasure, pleasure to talk to you. And of course, to see your handsome face,

51:06

too. Oh, my goodness, thank you so much for tuning in to Brian breaks character. Look, I know you have a lot of podcasts to choose from. And a lot of different ways you can spend the time and your day and that you have spent it with me, means the world to me, I poured my heart and soul into each of these episodes. So thank you so very much. If you haven't already done so please subscribe to the podcast on Apple. And that way you won't miss a single episode. And if you're feeling extra generous, go ahead and toss us a review. It means the world to me, it can because it helps to boost the episode and gives me the chance to meet more creative out there who are suffering and get them into action. And if you actually want to go a little deep On this episode, or any of the episodes you've listened to, we post the video of us recording this episode to my YouTube channel. It's uncut. It's unedited, it's a little more casual and a little more messy. So if you want to see those little spicy videos, head on over to my YouTube channel, and know that every Wednesday I will be delivering a new episode to you. And on Saturdays, the bonus episodes come out, we have a lot of great guests coming up and I cannot wait to share their brilliance with you. So thank you again, I am so grateful to be on this path with you to be on the planet with you at the same time. And whatever you believe your function is whatever purpose you are fulfilling on this day and in this moment, I hope that you feel the resolute peace of mind. Joy, celebration and alignment that I hope that this podcast can provide to you. So if I've noted you along in your inspiration today, if it's pulling you a little bit closer to what you want to accomplish in the world, then I've done my job. If you know a friend or know an actor or creative who could use that kind of nudge. I hope you'll spread the word as well. Take good care of yourselves. I'll see you soon. Ah wait, no, I won't see you but you'll hear me soon. Okay, you