

1

00:00:00,762 --> 00:00:07,385

[BRIAN]: Happy Gay Pride! Well, hello, welcome to the first episode of the month of pride

2

00:00:07,525 --> 00:00:13,869

[BRIAN]: on Brian Brake's character. Now, caveat, our pride sequence of episodes is actually

3

00:00:13,889 --> 00:00:20,852

[BRIAN]: gonna start next week because we need to put this rider strike front and center just

4

00:00:20,893 --> 00:00:24,494

[BRIAN]: a little bit longer, but I have the perfect guest to have this conversation with

5

00:00:24,534 --> 00:00:29,517

[BRIAN]: me today. And Michael Sousi just happens to be gay, so I think it all kind of works

6

00:00:29,757 --> 00:00:36,081

[BRIAN]: out. So if you don't know Michael Susie, he is a Golden Globe Emmy and PGA award-winning

7

00:00:36,101 --> 00:00:41,484

[BRIAN]: film director and a screenwriter and he's a producer and he is best known for creating

8

00:00:41,704 --> 00:00:47,307

[BRIAN]: Grey Gardens on HBO. So you may not know this about me, but I am a Grey Gardens

9

00:00:47,587 --> 00:00:52,270

[BRIAN]: mega fan. I have seen the documentary hundreds of times. I know it from beginning

10

00:00:52,310 --> 00:00:56,692

[BRIAN]: to end. My best friends and I quote it back and forth to each other. My mom and

11

00:00:56,792 --> 00:01:02,459

[BRIAN]: I send memes to each other. Michael's production is the one that starred Jessica

12

00:01:02,499 --> 00:01:06,380

[BRIAN]: Lange and Drew Barrymore, and this is the film. And I don't know if you've seen

13

00:01:06,400 --> 00:01:11,182

[BRIAN]: this or not, but if you have not, their performances are incredible. Jessica Lange

14

00:01:11,222 --> 00:01:15,824

[BRIAN]: won the Emmy for it, and Drew Barrymore got the best actress Golden Globe and SAG awards.

15

00:01:15,904 --> 00:01:21,387

[BRIAN]: So run on over to HBO after you're listening to this episode and watch this movie.

16

00:01:21,407 --> 00:01:24,828

[BRIAN]: It is incredible. Now I fell in love with the documentary, and so this movie just

17

00:01:24,848 --> 00:01:30,158

[BRIAN]: took it to a whole nother level for me. So. A little bit more about Suzy's Grey

18

00:01:30,178 --> 00:01:36,321

[BRIAN]: Gardens. It actually won two Golden Globes in six Emmys total, and it actually

19

00:01:36,541 --> 00:01:41,183

[BRIAN]: took the record for 17 Emmy nominations. So I just think that's like, you know, I thought

20

00:01:41,203 --> 00:01:45,465

[BRIAN]: I'd bring us some good royalty, some TV royalty to have this conversation about

21

00:01:45,545 --> 00:01:51,967

[BRIAN]: the WGA strike. And Michael is also a member of the DGA. So he is perfectly positioned

22

00:01:51,987 --> 00:01:56,809

[BRIAN]: for us to really have a conversation that it grasps kind of both of those perspectives.

23

00:01:57,530 --> 00:02:02,811

[BRIAN]: as we're seeing producers and writers wrestle with the future of what it looks like

24

00:02:02,851 --> 00:02:07,052

[BRIAN]: to make television. A little bit more about Michael, because I think you deserve

25

00:02:07,072 --> 00:02:11,333

[BRIAN]: to know who you're hearing from today.
He also directed Sony's box office hit, The

26

00:02:11,413 --> 00:02:16,815

[BRIAN]: Vow, starring Channing Tatum and Rachel
McAdams, nobody's total unknown actors you've

27

00:02:16,855 --> 00:02:22,737

[BRIAN]: never heard of. He also directed MGM's
Every Day and multiple episodes of 13 Reasons

28

00:02:22,777 --> 00:02:28,515

[BRIAN]: Why on Netflix. He is the president.
and the CEO of Hungry Duck Productions and

29

00:02:28,575 --> 00:02:33,198

[BRIAN]: resides in Los Angeles with his husband,
Dimitris Sugakis, one of the Hollywood Reporter's

30

00:02:33,339 --> 00:02:41,584

[BRIAN]: top 20 interior designers in Los Angeles.
So before any more wonderful news about Michael's

31

00:02:41,624 --> 00:02:45,347

[BRIAN]: background, I wanna set you up for
this conversation. So in this conversation,

32

00:02:45,407 --> 00:02:49,450

[BRIAN]: we're talking about where the writer's
strike intersects with the Directors Guild

33

00:02:49,470 --> 00:02:54,453

[BRIAN]: of America, how it affects writers

now, how we imagine it's gonna affect writing

34

00:02:54,493 --> 00:02:58,767

[BRIAN]: in the future, when we're talking about AI, when we're talking about television production,

35

00:02:59,248 --> 00:03:03,930

[BRIAN]: we get into all the nooks and crannies of that. And you know, Michael's a writer at

36

00:03:03,970 --> 00:03:09,994

[BRIAN]: heart, a creative. And so in this conversation, we dig personally into, how is this affecting

37

00:03:10,014 --> 00:03:15,017

[BRIAN]: him as a creator? Where is this like holding him back? And even get into the conversation

38

00:03:15,037 --> 00:03:19,599

[BRIAN]: of like, how is your family showing up for you in this weird writer strike time?

56

00:03:51,133 --> 00:03:54,744

[BRIAN]: right. So let's get to the episode.

BRIAN: (00:00.864)

Well, Michael, welcome to the show. I'm so glad that you're here.

MICHAEL: (00:03.798)

So happy to be here, BRIAN:. Thanks.

BRIAN: (00:05.112)

Warning to everyone, the Peacocks are really having a good time today. So you might hear some squawking today, which I just think means the Peacocks are on the writer's side with this strike going on right now. They are picketing all over the yard right now. So what are the reasons I wanted to have you on Michael, and I'm so

grateful that you're here is because you're a member of the WGA and the DGA. And the DGA. And so I think that you have a unique perspective being members of those two groups. And you know, I think most of us have a good sense of what's going on with the strike, but can you share from your perspective, you know, what's going on? Why is this happening? Big, big question. I thought I'd start off with a really big question.

MICHAEL: (00:38.414)

Well, I mean, it's a massive question. It's complicated, but I think it can actually be boiled down to something that's pretty simple. I mean, I think that the elephant in the room is extreme income inequality, and that is happening across the country. It's happening, you know, of course, across the world, but it's really, really hitting home in the US, and it's really hitting home in Hollywood. And as everyone knows, the entertainment industry is undergoing, you know, rapid changes has been for the last, you know, several years. It almost feels like we're playing a game where the rules are constantly changing and nobody tells you what the rules are or that they've changed. And it always feels like we're playing, you know, catch up in that regard-or the ground shifting beneath our feet. And it's natural for things to evolve and change, but the speed at which they're changing, and as I mentioned, the income disparities that it's perpetuating or causing, it has reached a crisis point. So that's sort of the big picture. There's a lot of specifics to it that I'm sure we'll get into.

BRIAN: (01:53.852)

Yeah. And so when we're thinking about this, I love the way you put that into that perspective, it sounds like the writers are like, hey, we need to stop. This is like a running train that no one is ever saying, like, let's catch up and see what's going on so we can adjust what's happening because this contract is no longer working for how fast things are changing right now. That's what I'm hearing you say.

MICHAEL: (02:13.142)

Well, that's exactly why we have contracts for a certain period of time, in this case, three years and then they get renegotiated. But the last time, excuse me, allergies are kicking in today. The last time that we were negotiating, you know, the idea of everything was on television and the idea that things were going to be on the internet was sort of ridiculous. We're not, I'm sorry, it wasn't ridiculous. It was actually the WGA saw into the future what was happening.

MICHAEL: (02:42.326)

I think it's like the day that the contract got finally renegotiated was the day that Hulu launched. So it was all happening right around that time. But the distinction is that the streamers aren't like even the old HBO and I say old HBO because it just changed over to a new format yesterday called Max was still considered a form of cable, not basic cable, but it was cable. So it was still television even though their slogan was that they weren't television. But the pure streamers were under internet contract, under a different set of negotiated terms. And now essentially, maybe not everything, but 90% for give or take, is all on the internet streaming side, but it's still television. That's how people are consuming television and film entertainment for the most part. And the contract that we're being paid under is not reflecting that. And so, I mean, that's one of the things that, you know, some people said, oh, the spoiled writers, they're, you know, demanding this and demanding that. We're

not even looking for more. We're looking for what we already used to have. And that's part of the technique of, you know, on the studio side is to roll things back and claw back in these negotiations and

BRIAN: (03:58.968)

Hmm

MICHAEL: (04:10.063)

and give a little, but take even more. And it's very frustrating.

BRIAN: (04:12.632)

Got it. Yeah, when we're saying this and kind of to get into some of the specifics, you start to touch on it just now is, can you give us, is there a way to articulate like three important asks that the WGA is wanting right now? I know it's hard to narrow down to three. Yeah.

MICHAEL: (04:28.842)

Yeah, and also the WGA isn't just one group of writers. There are night time comedy writers, there are feature film writers, there are television writers and obviously a lot of our needs and concerns overlap but there's also distinct differences between them. So it's a little bit hard to be all encompassing but generally speaking, there are...I mean, certainly the rate at which we're compensated, what our minimum is that you can pay us. We're asking for an increase in that. Everybody in this country is aware of what's going on with inflation. And normal inflation is what, 3%? And we're more than double that right now. So even if we go up 3%, we're still losing money in terms of our spending power. It's very frustrating. So, you know, unsatisfactory pay, I guess would be sort of, you know, a one major thing. For the television writers, there's a huge concern with staffing. They've created this system of many rooms. It's kind of complicated to explain, but I'll try to be, you know, succinct about it. In the old broadcast network days, you know, of like Grey's Anatomy or something like that, there was, or ER, there were like 22 episodes a year. And so that meant you had

BRIAN: (05:26.806)

Right. Right.

MICHAEL: (05:52.786)

a whole staff of writers. I didn't write on the show, so I don't know the exact number, but well above a dozen that would work with the show runner to break down the season, write all the episodes. You don't write all of them, all 22, and then start working. You get a couple under your belt and you start shooting them in sequence and moving forward. And then there's 52 weeks in the year. There might be some weeks of development in the beginning. There's of course weeks in...

And so by the time you're done with it, it's basically a year of work with a little bit of a break and then you'd go back and start over again. And then also, and in the meantime of that, the shows would rerun while those 22 cover 44 weeks and you still have 10 weeks of Christmas specials or whatever you want to talk about. And

what would happen is that the writers would, in addition to getting paid for those weekly times when they were working, they would get residuals on the reruns of those. And then...

BRIAN: (06:32.248)

Hmm.

MICHAEL: (06:48.834)

further residuals if they aired in foreign markets and things like that. So with the streamers, if you probably noticed, if on a quote unquote television show on the streaming services, there's probably six or eight, maybe 10 episodes. So it's sometimes a third or a fourth of the number of weeks. In addition to that, they used to, for a new show, shoot a pilot. decide whether they're gonna go forward with it. And if they were gonna go forward with that into series, like I said, they'd hire the writer's room. Now what they're doing is they're buying a pitch of an idea, they're creating something called a mini room where they bring in a couple of writers at minimum pay, you know, the lowest they can pay them. And two writers, not 10 writers, two writers or 10 or 15, two writers will work with that show runner to break three or four episodes. And then they'll go in and shoot that.

MICHAEL: (07:42.506)

or sorry, maybe even they'll break the whole, they'll break the six episodes. I'm not, I'm not a show runner, so somebody else could be more, more specific in, in how this works. But the point is, is that it's less, is way less work, way less people, way less money. And because it's on a streaming service, they own it in perpetuity and are not sending it out to other and globally. So they're not sending it out to other services and, and, and selling it off to their, they are getting more viewers for it, but they're not.

BRIAN: (07:46.583)

See ya. Right.

MICHAEL: (08:12.43)

they're not compensating the creators, the writers, the directors, the producers in the way that they were. So that's residuals. And so that's, so, so with the reason that people have been comparing it to like a gig economy and being, you know, Uber drivers or, you know, that kind of a thing is, is that you, you can't piece together, uh, you can't pay your bills only off working off, you know, six weeks a year. I mean, you just can't, especially not at minimums. So

BRIAN: (08:36.672)

Right.

MICHAEL: (08:39.946)

you're back in the pool, you're not, with that show gets picked up, you're not, those two writers in the beginning aren't even guaranteed to get back on the show to continue writing. It's just very, you feel discarded as a creative. You don't feel respected, you don't feel valued. So those are some concerns. And on the feature side, it has to do, the equivalent on the feature side is that the way that feature scripts are,

BRIAN: (08:46.368)

Right, right, right. Hmm. Yeah.

MICHAEL: (09:07.254)

Contracts are broken down, they're called steps. So you do sometimes a treatment, like an outline, you get paid for that. Then you do a first draft and get paid for that. Then you get to do a rewrite and get paid for that. You do a polish and get paid for that. And each one's a step. And what has been happening for a lot of people is it's called a one-step deal. And they're like, you get one shot to do it. And so then there's a lot of pressure on the writer to do free rewrites because they want to do a good job so that they get more work in the future and the movie gets made. Because if the movie doesn't get, first of all, you usually have a bonus if the movie does get made, so you're incentivized to get that movie made even if it's beyond your control. But you're doing tons of free work. And that's what it boils down to. It's we're being asked to do work for free. And-

BRIAN: (09:40.37)

Yeah, yeah.

MICHAEL: (10:02.302)

Not like for a week, but like months and months and months.

BRIAN: (10:04.696)

Right, right. And that's also, it feels like it's trading off of the passion that any creative person has for the work that they're doing. It's like we're not paying you because we, you have a passion and you're getting paid, you're getting paid because you're living out your passion. I mean, that might be that conscious of a thought from the studio, but like that's what they're trading against. I was like, you love writing. So you're going to keep putting in every, your best effort every single day, even if it's for so less money and less time. And again, yeah.

MICHAEL: (10:18.125)

Yeah I would definitely say that that's our Achilles heel. This is that we love what we do. We are passionate about it. We want to do great work. The work is tied to us, you know, in terms of our name and our reputation. We don't wanna put out track. You don't wanna just phone it in. And so you wanna do a great job. And the other, yeah, go ahead.

BRIAN: (10:42.344)

Yeah, your name reputation. Yeah. Right?

MICHAEL: (10:53.862)

I'll just say the other thing and we can get into it is AI. Their AI is rapidly improving. I mean, rapidly. And there is this threat of, I mean, if you look at, like what I said before about the number of weeks that it used to be a year of work and now it's like six weeks of work or something like that, they're just trying to get everything down to the bare bones to make the most amount of profit. And what they're doing is they're actually cannibalizing the

industry and they won't even, and we can get into that in a minute, but with AI specifically, it's not just, oh, I'm going to be eliminated. My job's going to be eliminated. Therefore, I've got to fight this is that you're going to drive people away from the business. Who's going to want to join this industry?

BRIAN: (11:46.924)

Right.

MICHAEL: (11:47.67)

And this is what I mean by cannibalizing it. Like, yeah, maybe they'll make more money in the super short run, but eventually people are gonna drop out. I know a bunch of people are already talking about dropping out. And new people are not gonna be attracted, not gonna be drawn to the industry if they see what, you know, that you can't make a living doing it.

BRIAN: (12:07.18)

Right, yeah, I mean, what I just heard you say is like, this is like a denigration of the art forms. What we're seeing is like people leaving, less people doing good work. Like at some point, let's pretend the WGA burned and died. And then we're like, the writers aren't gonna, the good writers aren't gonna be around. It's gonna be, have it scabbled around and maybe we could scabble together to do it. Like, it just feels like it's gonna be a losing promise. And that's what people are saying is the only reason that, you know, they can't say yes is money.

MICHAEL: (12:36.938)

Yeah, basically. Yeah. I mean, it's not, as you know, it's not, as you mentioned in the beginning, it's not just the WGA. So it's the WGA right now is on strike, but the contracts for both SAG and the DGA, which are two separate contracts, two separate unions are both up on the same day, which is June 30th. And the actors right now are voting to authorize or not, but most likely, yes, strike authorization.

BRIAN: (12:38.269)

Yeah, it's money. Right? That's right.

MICHAEL: (13:07.874)

And who knows what will happen with the directors and then next year, you know, Ayasi comes up in the Teamsters. So every, it's not, it's not just, I mean, yes, there are specific issues that are just for the writers, but the principle behind it, it's happening across the board to everybody. And they want to eliminate, they want to, yeah. I mean, it's sad.

BRIAN: (13:29.964)

We saw this with the Ayatzi strike last year when we really went through this conversation about what is your condition of life like? What is your life like? How does it all add up to having a life that is worth living when it's looking like this? So, right.

MICHAEL: (13:43.362)

Well, and the other thing that they've been doing on the feature side too, it's just that it's this whole, I keep pushing my hands together like I've got a marshmallow between them because it's like being inside that trash compactor. In Star Wars, you're asked to do more with less. Now, budgets are way up on these television shows, but the writer's compensation is down by 25%. So they can't, as somebody described, it's like, well, they can't negotiate on the price of lumber. Lumber is lumber, you know, and gas is gas. And so they can't negotiate on that. So they're negotiating on what they think they can, I guess. And so even though they're spending more money, they're squeezing the people that do it. So for me as a director, or so I was mentioning before, the writers are expected to do things, maybe not as many episodes, but even still, I mean, sorry. They had 22.

BRIAN: (14:25.548)

Yeah.

MICHAEL: (14:39.862)

Yeah, they had a year to do like 22 episodes and now they're only doing six. But even relative and compensating for the difference in the number of episodes, it's still squeeze, squeeze, squeeze, squeeze, squeeze. They don't have enough time to do our, for us to do our best work. And it's the same thing as a director. You know, what used to be, when I was a production assistant, I used to work on movies that were 110 days. And I'm sure there's some massive movies that are still shot like that. But then it went to like, 70 days and 50 days and 30 days and now it's like 25 days. And you're still expected, you're still doing a two hour movie.

BRIAN: (15:17.996)

Right, yeah. Where's all that money going that is spent on the, is it like CGI and the actors or what's, and you're saying that's making the bigger investment. I may sound like a little bit like a novice when I ask that question, but like, where's the new, where's that big budget going?

MICHAEL: (15:27.76)

Yeah.

MICHAEL: (15:33.915)

It's not one place. So I mean, it depends on, I mean, if you're looking at the budget of all the Netflix projects or I mean, are you looking at everything Netflix spends? You know, I mean, those are two different numbers. I mean, obviously, inflation is part of it. Obviously, television shows used to be shot, you know, mostly on a studio backlot in Burbank and now they're flying to Italy.

BRIAN: (15:34.889)

Right, right, got it.

MICHAEL: (16:01.322)

you know, and, and, and New York and LA, you know, all in one episode type of a thing. But, but so, you know, they're spending more money. People are, are, I mean, they're creating value for their customers who want to tune into that, that kind of, of, of material. But they're also doing a great job of compensating themselves. I mean, I, I wrote down, I, it says here in 20, in 2022, the two co-CEOs of Netflix,

BRIAN: (16:04.445)

Yeah.

MICHAEL: (16:29.826)

combined made \$101 million. And the next four executives took home another \$66 million. So that's \$167 million. And the total annual cost to Netflix to give the writers everything that we're asking for is \$68 million. So \$167 million to compensate six people. And we're asking for \$68 million so that we can live and have a.

BRIAN: (16:37.718)

Yeah. Yeah. That's wild. So when we're thinking about this, if you had like a megaphone and you could say, you know, this is what I want them to hear, the producers and all of this, is there one message that you'd want them to hear? Is it around this, this like lifestyle, this money lifestyle situation? Or is it something else?

MICHAEL: (16:58.122)

you know, essentially a middle-class lifestyle. I'll talk more from my own perspective and just sort of like the perspective of everyone in the guild because that's not my job or my role. But the amount of free work that we do, or it's not even the kind of free work that I was talking about before about, oh, like a rewrite that's like not really considered a rewrite. It's more the work that we do on spec.

BRIAN: (17:22.389)

Yeah, please.

MICHAEL: (17:43.326)

Meaning that like the, you know, we work out the whole outline, the whole plot before we go in to pitch it. And then we pitch it for weeks and weeks and weeks and weeks. And, you know, and then takes a really long, I mean, everything takes a very, very long time. So you're sometimes working on a project literally for three or four years before you're paid anything, if you're paid anything, because maybe it doesn't sell and you're not really compensated in it. When you do make something, you're not so well compensated that it makes it worth it for that other time. I don't think people realize that. Outside the industry only sees the projects that get made, not the films and television shows that don't get made. That doesn't mean they don't get made because they weren't any good. It means that the market thought it was risky to tell that kind of a story.

BRIAN: (18:14.848)

Makes it all worth it. Yeah. Yeah. Right.

MICHAEL: (18:41.27)

this year type of a thing or there's or you get picked up and you're in development and then there's a regime change at the top and They wipe the slate clean that happens all the time. Yeah So it's tough. It's tough. You have to have Resilience perseverance passion. You have to have all these things In spades just in spades just to get through

BRIAN: (18:50.156)

We're not doing it anymore. Yeah. Right. And so it seems so normal that you'd be like, and so we'd like to humanize a little bit of this, which feels like a lot of the messaging we actually heard from Ayasi when it was coming out. It was like, we need to be able to have a lifestyle that actually allows us to do this art form in some way or another. When you're thinking about the writer's strike, how has this affected you personally? Like, you know, how's it feel to be over there to be Michael right now? Is it stressful? Is it like, is it on your mind nonstop? Is it like, oh, we'll get through this? Like, what is the, what's your reaction to this?

MICHAEL: (19:32.238)

I think the adjective is anxiety. I think it's not like jaw-clenching stress. It feels, it's anxious, because we all have a sense that this could actually go on for quite a long time, because the two sides are fairly far apart, at least at the moment. And actually negotiations aren't going on right now, at least on the WGA side, because the DGA negotiating in advance of the expiration of the contract. So that's where the AMTPT is focused right now.

BRIAN: (20:07.736)

Actually, Michael, if I can interrupt you, that's a question that I wanted to ask you. We hear about the debt ceiling right now in the conversation. Every single day, they had this meeting and this is how much they gave on this side in terms of like when this strike, it's kind of like silence where everyone's picketing and we're striking right now. What you just said to me is they're not meeting every day like getting a little closer to anything. It's just nothing's happening.

MICHAEL: (20:27.826)

They're not even talking as far as I'm aware. The studios are talking to the directors. It's done behind closed doors, even as a directors guild member. We're not told day by day. They do update us from time to time, but they haven't since they went into the room. And that's understandable why they need to keep that private, but they'll either come to terms or won't.

BRIAN: (20:29.909)

Right, which is.

MICHAEL: (20:56.558)

Um, uh, uh, and if they, if they do, um, that could put pressure on the writers to try to compromise, but, um, but not necessarily because, you know, they've come this, we've come this far and maybe we won't want to, um, or maybe, or maybe they don't and it puts, it puts more pressure on the, on, on the studios to, to, to change, um, yeah.

BRIAN: (20:56.725)

Right, right. I see that connected to, I can see how that can feel. I could see the additional anxiety around like, well, what's happening? What's going on? Like, are we getting any closer? Like, are we any closer to finish line here? What's the deal here? And as I'm thinking about this, you must have relationships with tons of people who are on the studio side of this thing. And are those relationships strained? You just never talk to them anymore right now. Like, what does that look like? Do you have relationships where you're like, it's really awkward conversations, or do you just like, oh, this sucks and we're not in charge anyway? Like, how does that filter down?

MICHAEL: (21:52.406)

Well, there's been a bit, I mean, at least it's, it's a little bit more complicated for me since I'm, you know, a high, you know, belong to two different, two different guilds. But the, you know, the, the principle behind the strike is to withhold the, you know, to, to, to stop the pipeline, to withhold material, withhold our labor so that, so that they are forced to come to the table and forced to come to a compromise. So, you know, we're asked not to be talking to the studios and not to be promoting. I don't have a film coming out now, but other writers are being asked not to attend the premieres of their films and things like that. So yeah, it's awkward, but it's not like my friends who are the executives are the people who can make this, you know, can really turn, you know, come to terms in terms of negotiations. It's the Bob Iger's and the, you know, and...

BRIAN: (22:43.082)

Right.

MICHAEL: (22:52.259)

and his friends that can really make a change.

BRIAN: (22:54.168)

When you said that I could just, when you said like, you know, they're asked to being not to go to the premieres of their film. I could just feel that being super heartbreaking for people who put all this effort in and like to, no, don't go. I mean, you shouldn't because this is, we're fighting for something else, but what a hurt that must have for the, for those filmmakers, right? Yeah.

MICHAEL: (23:11.59)

It's very, it's very, it's very disappointing because, you know, that the director and the writer of that, of that, or the writer of that film in this case, because the directors are on strike at this point. But if someone's a writer director, they're still being asked not to attend and not to do promotion. So you're sort of losing out on that sort of PR run for yourself and your own career. Your movie could get buried. Your movie, if it's a, if it's a theatrical release could get, you know, terrible box office returns, which doesn't look great on your track record. And you know, sure, right now we all know there's a fric going on, but in five years are people going to remember that? You know, I don't know, maybe it's not his or her fault, but that will be, you know, that will sort of be on the record and out of their control. So oh, and the other thing is, is that that person may very well have been working on this for five or six years.

BRIAN: (23:49.633)

Right. Yeah, painful, yeah. Yeah, when you know, everyone, you know, as we're talking about like ways to get involved, a lot of people are picketing. I think that's a great way to get out there. How do you see that impacting like this, you know, how it works? I mean, I think it gives a really good face to it. We see a lot of social media. We saw a lot of films, air TV. We see people showing that all the time. What is your thought on, you know, people, you know, joining the picket line?

MICHAEL: (24:07.197)

Not five or six months. Well, I mean, it's been a thing for a very long time because it works. It's visibility. I mean, it's something that it ends up on social media. It ends up on the news. People are driving by. I mean, one of the best things that happens when you're out there in the hot sun, walking back and forth at sort of a monotonous pace, not quite getting dizzy, but practically, people are coming by and honking and support. And you know that they're not just doing it because it's a spectacle. They're doing it because they actually do know what we're striking for and what we're fighting for. And it is fair. And people are supporting that. People outside the industry. I don't think every single person driving by is inside the industry. And almost every single person's honking in support. It's great.

BRIAN: (25:13.748)

Right, right. As you say that I'm thinking about, right, yeah. As I'm thinking about this, and you know, we touched a little bit on the like anxiety that might be coming up, that's coming up for you and I'm sorry for other writers, is are there people in your life who like, your family all understands or you have to explain this to them? Or like, how's it going? I'm just imagining so many artists are out, they're one person in their family who decided to go to LA and do this thing, right? You're laughing, so...

MICHAEL: (25:37.766)

LA. No, I'm laughing because I actually sent them a podcast. I sent them the strike talk from Deadline and I said, you should listen to this. And they did. And I got some really sweet messages back from my family about hanging in there and just sticking to my guns and keep doing what I'm doing. And it was really, it was great. But that podcast by Todd Garner as a producer and

MICHAEL: (26:07.45)

Billy Ray, who's a writer, really does break it down. A lot of the things that, you know, that we've been talking about today and helps people under both inside and outside the industry. And I say inside and outside the industry, because you'd be surprised. The whole, this whole really came about because the WGA put out a survey to its the guild members and six or 7,000 of us wrote back. And I think that the leadership of the guild was aghast at how difficult things were for us.

BRIAN: (26:29.164)

Hmm.

MICHAEL: (26:36.018)

And we are all programmed, even though everyone in production is really programmed to like just get it done no matter what. Totally. Sure. I'm, I mean, if you're, if you're the set designer and the, you know, the circus set works on Friday and you're like, I'm not going to have it done till Tuesday. Well, it doesn't work that way. You, you, you just work until it shoots Friday morning. It has to be ready Friday morning. There's no, there's no like.

BRIAN: (26:41.504)

head down to get it done. We're all chipping in, like community, yeah, totally. Yeah.

BRIAN: (26:55.382)

Yeah.

MICHAEL: (27:03.146)

Oh, just push it a little bit. Like, you know, if something, the storm happens and it gets knocked down, they redo the schedule, but not because somebody's behind. And so this idea of like, just get it done, just deliver and do it at the highest quality, no matter what sort of the sacrifice is sort of embedded in all of us in Hollywood. And I just totally lost my, oh, so the six or 7,000 person survey that came back, they realized how miserable.

BRIAN: (27:10.313)

Right. Right.

MICHAEL: (27:32.766)

we were and how people were just not making a living any longer. And then how widespread these problems are. There's a feature director's dinner every year at the director's guild. And sometimes depending on what is or isn't going on in my career, I do or don't want to go because I don't, let's say a movie just fell apart from me. I don't want to go sit there with a bunch of directors and hear about how amazing everything is for them and how crappy everything is for me on this particular Wednesday. And my husband always says, no, you're going. So I go and it's always the best. It's the best day of the year. Because a lot of what I hear, it's like we're all in the same boat and we start trading stories. And someone says this happened and I was like, that happened to me. And then someone I go, that happened to me too. And you especially directors are quite isolated.

BRIAN: (28:18.456)

Yeah.

MICHAEL: (28:30.09)

working. I mean, when we're making a movie, we have a whole team of people to help us. But in between, we're pretty isolated. We don't like hang out, you know, sort of, there's not like the writers room, we have a bunch of other writers. And so so you can get kind of siloed. And and and so I think the same thing kind of happened with with this survey from the WGA, the guild members, is that all sudden, the leadership realized, oh, my gosh, this is happening throughout, it's pervasive, it's at all levels, everyone's being squeezed. And

BRIAN: (28:39.959)

Right here.

MICHAEL: (29:00.106)

And I think that that's why we're taking the action that we are. And it's also why it is resonating in other, other unions and guilds within the industry and why it's resonating with people outside the industry, because it is sort of this insider baseball thing that's going on, but for all the reasons that we've been talking about, it actually is transcending the business to the outside and it is able to be understood.

BRIAN: (29:03.541)

Yeah.

MICHAEL: (29:31.793)

I think, you know, by those that are paying attention.

BRIAN: (29:34.152)

Yeah, and I think, Michael, one of the things you just said just really struck me because one of the in the tagline to this podcast, it says to slay the suffering artist myth. And I think that there's like a weird tie into this conversation of, well, you've decided to be a writer. So shouldn't you just be suffering anyway? That's like part of what you signed up for when you decided to be a writer, which is separate from we have a job and we have a job to do and we are delivering for you and it is unfair. And so there's like it's trading off of that story sometimes, I think, when we are discussing the strike or when we're talking about the intricacies of the strike, you can hear that kind of in people's way that they're showing up into the conversation. And I think it's important that we make this kind of distinction here, right? Does that resonate with you?

MICHAEL: (30:13.986)

For sure. I mean, that concept, totally. The first time I came across that concept or some form of it was in Big Magic, the book by Elizabeth Gilbert, who wrote Eat, Pray, Love. And yeah, this idea that to make great art, you have to be miserable or suffering is BS. And I agree with that, that you don't need to be suffering.

BRIAN: (30:23.808)

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Of course. Yes. Elizabeth Gilbert. Yeah.

MICHAEL: (30:43.466)

In fact, I think it's the opposite. I think the more blissful you are, the more in tune with yourself you are, you can make absolutely great art. I mean, I suppose some people do great suffering and make great stuff, but they're not required. They're not connected in that way. However, we are making passionate, great work, and we are suffering, and we don't need to suffer. We don't need to be, the crews don't need to be working 18 hour days and driving home in dangerous conditions and back within eight hours or six hours the next morning. It's insane. And we don't need to be doing something in the shortest possible time. I have two projects that I, there's one project, a film project that I wrote on spec, did it all myself. I mean, meaning like I turned down

other work because I'm very passionate about writing this and I thought it would take me as long to convince someone else to pay me to do it as it would to just...

BRIAN: (31:19.486)

Yeah.

MICHAEL: (31:43.234)

...do it myself. So I did it myself. And I put it down for a year and did other stuff. And I picked it up and did a rewrite. I put it down for another year and picked it up and did a rewrite and kind of finally got it on the third try, which goes back to that idea of like one step deals. I mean, I don't, I'm not saying that it should take somebody three or four years to write a script, but in principle, getting space from it, getting time away, as you know, you come back to something fresh. And this idea of like,

BRIAN: (32:01.196)

Sure.

MICHAEL: (32:11.018)

everything being squeezed down to the minimum number of days and hours that you can possibly get anything done, it's not good for the product. It's not good for creativity.

BRIAN: (32:18.224)

Yeah, that's what I heard you say. What I hear you is like, we're not gonna have great, this is not gonna be the great golden age of television that we've been experiencing if we keep squeezing and squeezing and squeezing. Get it done in two days, get it done in three days. Like figure it out. It's not.

MICHAEL: (32:29.066)

No, and this is coming from the country that has zero weeks of paid vacation. I mean, it's the same thing. You've got to relax. You have to relax your mind, your body, your soul to come back to the life that you're living, that you'd be more productive. You could be more productive when you're not burned out. And the idea that you just burn everyone out, discard them, and fill the gap with the next crop of people is extremely short-sighted.

BRIAN: (32:47.072)

Yeah, 100%. Yes, yes, yes. So I'm sure there's a lot of people listening right now who are writers or they're directors and they're just thinking about the future of this or they're aspiring writers and directors. What would you want them to hear both in this moment and just from you, Michael, the person who's had success in this way?

MICHAEL: (33:14.07)

Well, I do get approached by a lot of people from the schools that I went to and for the alumni connection and try to help them find their way. I'm talking about historically over the decades and as well as sons and daughters and nieces and nephews of friends and things like that. And I try to get them in touch with

BRIAN: (33:33.74)

for sure.

MICHAEL: (33:42.09)

their voice and why they want to do this. Because if you don't really, really, really want to be an artist, be a creative person, the insecurity on an economic level of approaching this lifestyle in this sort of capitalistic society is really difficult. And so you've really, really got to want it. And you've really got to want it from the core. And you've really got to be willing to do no matter what it takes.

MICHAEL: (34:11.49)

takes, whether that's taking a really crappy side job or running a side hustle or marrying a really rich person that you don't love, whatever it is, to get there. I'm just saying it doesn't always have to be noble, but you've really got to want it because this business, it sheds the people who can't hack it. And so...

BRIAN: (34:23.109)

I think you're writing a movie right now, Michael. I think you started writing a movie just now.

BRIAN: (34:30.57)

Yeah.

MICHAEL: (34:40.394)

the attrition, you know, the people that stay in the basket are the tough ones, you know, and can stick it out. So I guess the first piece of advice would be along the lines of like, you know, are you, do you want it for the fame and the glory? Do you want it for because it's, you know, easy and whatever, glamour? Those are the wrong reasons because it's not.

BRIAN: (34:45.237)

Uh huh.

BRIAN: (35:05.259)

Yeah.

MICHAEL: (35:10.282)

elements of it there are. But it's not like that every day. You just see that every day. And you just see the people that succeed. You don't see the people that fail. And there are a lot. And you've got to be able to, and you talked about this on one of your other podcasts with an actress, about being able to handle rejection and not let that seep into your sense of self-worth.

BRIAN: (35:20.332)

Yeah. Yeah.

MICHAEL: (35:40.078)

And part of that you develop as you go and as you get rejected and as you gain success but it's also just as weird to have success and Then I wouldn't say failure but rejection after that. They're like, wait a minute. What do you think? We what you know, what well that was great. Yeah, but the rules changed again. You're like, oh geez, you know, so

BRIAN: (35:52.056)

Sure. Well, I mean, even when you talked about going to the director dinner, you're like, yeah, but if it wasn't a great past couple of months, I'm not going to feel like be full of myself a little bit. I want to feel full of myself when I go there. Obviously you have a great husband who says go. So kudos to him. And it always turns out great, but we all feel that like the, I call this the, like the lie of recency or like how recently something good happened means your value, like it equals your value because you recently did something good. And there's so much more in your history, right?

MICHAEL: (36:10.623)

Yeah, totally. It's, yeah, it's all insecurity and silly ego driven stuff. But when you, but my point in that story was that you get there and you realize that there's community and that you're not alone and you're not the only person going through it. But we're, and we all, we're all experiencing these things, you know, at different levels and at different times, but we all go through it.

BRIAN: (36:34.965)

Yeah.

BRIAN: (36:45.992)

And what you just said, Michael, I think kind of landed the plane around the conversation of like, when you're saying like, why do you want to do this? Is it fame and fortune or whatever? If you can say yes to, I would like to be in a community where we know it's a bit of a rollercoaster of up and down. Sometimes you have success and sometimes it doesn't happen. If you can say yes to what that path looks like, then you're going to be okay here. And if you don't feel like that's going to be okay for you, the up and down piece of it. I'm also wondering like how you, how do we, yeah, go ahead.

MICHAEL: (37:08.942)

And, yeah, noticing and the financial side of it, because a lot of like, when I say it's like my friends who's looking out for their kid wants their kids 18 and wants to like get into Hollywood and the father, you know, the father's like, you know, thinking, like, what am I going to do? How do I support, you know, how do I do I subsidize this kid or do I cut them off or, you know, what's that the cut? Those are the kind of questions that the parents are asking me. Like, how do I not squash his or her dreams, but how do I, you know, I've just paid for

\$500,000 for the college, I'm tapped out, you know what I mean? Like, what do I do? And so, I mean, there isn't a right answer to that, except that going through it myself, I just always had to keep my eyes on the distant horizon and not like...

BRIAN: (37:40.972)

Yeah.

MICHAEL: (38:05.17)

on the road right in front of me, because that makes the car go wiggle, wiggle, wiggle across the road. I had to look at there's going to be big paydays and then big spans of time where nothing's coming in and one has to get you through the other. Or like I said, maybe you have a side hustle or something. But if you're, the moment you get a check, you're out there getting the bachelor pad and the expensive car and then you're going to just I don't know, you're going to get in trouble. So you have to, you just have to, like I said, just sort of keep, at least what I did is I worked freelance my whole career after the exception of like three years after I graduated from college. And so I never, I wouldn't say got used to, but I understood how to ride out that financial roller coaster, but it's still hard. It's not easy. It's very, I mean, you asked before about how it feels right now.

BRIAN: (38:36.524)

Yeah.Sure.

MICHAEL: (39:02.506)

that's part of the anxiety is because I have a whole bunch of projects that are ready to go and I can't put them into production right now. And even if I were to like want to cross the picket line and do things my, you know, break with my guild or whatever, you can't get, I mean, not that I would, but you can't get bond companies to insure your project, SAG's about to go on strike. You know, it's a goal. This is the time we've got.

BRIAN: (39:11.252)

Yeah. Yeah.

MICHAEL: (39:31.574)

We've got to fix this now because it's affecting all of us. And like I said before, if we don't, we're going to destroy, we're going to decimate the talent in the industry.

BRIAN: (39:44.36)

Yeah, that is the big call that I think everyone needs to hear right now, that that's that we will decimate the talent in the industry. When we're talking about this, I was going to add the question that comes to me is all the energy that you normally put into those projects or that you're writing right now. And like, I don't know if the picket, I don't know if the strike means you're not allowed to put a pencil to paper. You're not allowed to write right now. Like, I don't know if that's exactly how the strike works, but like, what do you do with that energy? Like, are you like secretly writing like that no one ever gets to see until someday? Or like, do you where do you put that that creative force that's already was in you from, you know, for so long?

MICHAEL: (40:11.438)

The, the, the, it's, it's pencils down. That's, that's, that's the headline. Um, if, if you're writing something on your own for SPAC, they don't, that's something that you have the right to do. But, um, but you can't, you can't be writing, you can't, as a guild member, you can't write something non-guild and you also can't write something for, for a producer studio that is signatory to the guild's regulation. So the only thing you could write would be a book, because that would fall outside of this, or a play or something unspecified. But also, I mean, this isn't a great thing, but similar to how the pandemic was sort of not right in the beginning, but maybe like in that first like third or whatever, or half was sometimes recalibrating and taking a minute and be like, okay, like, maybe I need a minute to not work so hard, you know, because I've been working very, very hard to get all of these projects up. Maybe I just need a minute to circle the wagons, recenter, so I can come back so that when I am able to come back, I'm not, I'm recharged and not exhausted. I mean, that's not the point of the strike. But-

BRIAN: (41:33.004)

That's not the point of it. Right, right.

MICHAEL: (41:37.298)

If there's going to be a strike, if there's going to be a pandemic, if there's going to be something, you might as well figure out how to, I don't want to say take advantage of it, but use it, you know, to get something good out of it instead of, I mean, if you sat here, if I sat here every day with the, with the shades drawn, you know, laying on the couch, you know, crying, I'm not sure that I'm not sure that would do me any good. So yeah, we go out there and we fight for.

BRIAN: (41:49.367)

Sure. I don't think it would.

MICHAEL: (42:05.314)

for fight for what we're asking for. And yeah, with an eye to what we're gonna do when we get back.

BRIAN: (42:15.046)

So Michael, we're wrapping up here. It's when I add, yeah, not crossing. Yeah.

MICHAEL: (42:19.15)

But not crossing the picket line. No, not doing things surreptitiously. Well, it undermines all the people who are, it undermines all of us if that happens.

BRIAN: (42:21.472)

Writing stuff, yeah.

BRIAN: (42:27.712)

Right. Right. And it sounds like, you know, there are other places to put your energy. And I think what I'm also hearing you say is, you know, when the pandemic happens, you know, we slow down, we, we, we take it for that piece of it. This isn't a pandemic. I realize that, but we could take it down for the slow down piece and the, we're standing up for something at the same time, that energy kind of shifts there.

BRIAN: (53:33.2)

So if I can have five more minutes, I need to tell you that I am a Gray Gardens mega fan. My best friend was the original music director for the Broadway show before it even went to Broadway. In our little tiny apartment at 508 West 29th in New York City, it was on every single day. I can recite the entire thing from beginning to end. And so, and of course, I've watched the HB show, your film.

MICHAEL: (53:42.367)

I didn't know that, thank you.

BRIAN: (54:01.284)

And so I've got one question for you. Don't worry, it's not going to be a trick. It's not a tricky question. But knowing that this documentary is kind of like a perfect documentary, like it doesn't need to be touched or remade. Like what was your inspiration? A, you know, that yours was, I want to tell the story differently. And the B part of this question is, did knowing that it exists limit you in some way? Did it really give you a foil to create what you created? It says if you all haven't watched the film, you need to run over to HBO, even though we're mad at HBO right now. Right now.

MICHAEL: (54:02.254)

Thank you. Sure. Okay.

BRIAN: (54:30.504)

and watch it because it is so excellent.

MICHAEL: (54:34.218)

Thank you very much. I'm glad I didn't know that you're such a big fan. It did not limit me. Okay, so what basically happened was that I was, I had gone to, I mean, this is kind of going back a little bit, but I'd gone to film school. I was, you know, I was out making commercials. I was, you know, trying to figure out how I was going to, you know, make movies. And I had got, I was a little hemmed in by the formula of the screenplay.

BRIAN: (54:34.75)

Yeah.

MICHAEL: (55:01.386)

you know, this has to happen by 30 page 30 and this has to happen and that has to happen. And I got a little obsessed with like following the rules and it kind of short circuited me and I was like, oh, and a friend of mine

wrote a novel. And if you're writing a novel, you want to go off on 10 pages on the color of the curtains, it's your book, you can do whatever you want. And I thought, you know what, I'm going to write a novel and then I'll make that into a screenplay once I've sort of expressed myself or figured out what I want to say and then I'll squeeze it into the Hollywood formula.

BRIAN: (55:20.844)

Yes. Cause writing a novel is so easy. Cause writing a novel is just so... But at least it was free.

MICHAEL: (55:32.996)

And so I started that and well, I do think it can be a little bit more freeform. I think there are more variations of the structure of the novel. And so I started writing a novel, and it was about a twin brother and sister who had a very eccentric mother, and they lived in some sort of vacation hamlet. I mean, I'm from the Hamptons, and so that was certainly the backdrop, but it was like Fisher's Island or Black Island or Hamptons or something like that. And I was four or five chapters into writing it.

BRIAN: (55:40.565)

Yes.

MICHAEL: (56:04.81)

when I finally saw Grey Gardens, which I had heard of for years and years and years, but I had never seen. I had even biked past the house in Grey Gardens, I mean in East Hampton. And it came out on DVD and I saw it and I just, well the truth is it's so kind of hypnotic and mesmerizing that I actually fell asleep at one point. And I woke up at the end with this like epiphany and I said, this is the themes I'm already writing about, but this is a way better vehicle for a film. And these will be roles that actresses, prominent actresses will want to play. I mean, it just, yeah, but it all came to me like, it was like that. It was literally like an epiphany. I mean, it was like this like one lightning bolt. And I immediately restarted the documentary and I got out a legal pad and I just started writing down questions that it was, the way it's edited a lot, there's a lot of overlapping dialogue. It's.

BRIAN: (56:40.66)

would die to play. Yes.

MICHAEL: (57:00.962)

hard to decipher what they're saying. We didn't have closed captions and stuff like that back then. So I started all these questions and I just started from my educational background. I just knew how to dig deep. The internet, I exhausted the internet in two days on Grey Gardens. There was nothing. The internet was very much smaller back then. And so I went to microfilm and microfiche and magazines and all this newspapers and all this stuff and I found Edie's death certificate. And through that I found the lawyer and then through that I found track down the family. Now you can do all this stuff on the internet but back then you had to be kind of a sleuth. So anyway, that's how the whole thing.

BRIAN: (57:41.38)

Right. Wait, did this wait so Michael did it have a second level of excitement for you because you got to be sleuthing because that must have been a totally different part of your brain than the writer part of you. Was it like, this is cool. I'm learning things and I'm like, were you in love with these women at that point? Like what was the deal for you?

MICHAEL: (57:59.448)

Well, I was very close to my grandmother and there was something about my grandmother that sort of overlapped between the two of them. I mean, she didn't live in poverty and she didn't, you know, she lived alone because my grandfather passed before my parents got together. But my grandmother was kind of a born showman the way that, well, that both of them were, but the way, especially how big Edie was about how she would sort of perform and whatnot. And then, you know, just going up with her and Summers and the Hamptons and that point when Edie goes into the surf and you see her, you know, in the bathing cap. Like it was just all kind of these parts of my childhood, my relationship with my grandmother that really came to the front. And yeah, I fell in love with them in that way, like immediately and sort of in their relationship. And there was like a lot to figure out. The thing that

MICHAEL: (58:59.63)

drawn to is that they were themselves despite adversity. That was the thing that I think the thematic pull for me. And that became, I didn't ever see it, I didn't see them as campy. I didn't see them as, I mean, it's not like I can't see it now, but I didn't see them as inherently campy. I wasn't laughing at them. I felt for them. I felt this idea of a dream deferred, this idea of

BRIAN: (59:20.062)

Right.

MICHAEL: (59:29.19)

of you had dreams and you lost your chance. That crushes me. An artist who isn't fully realized is still an artist, but maybe what could have been different? And what do you do? Do you banish that and let that die or do you still let it be part of your spirit? And these were all the things that attracted me. I mean, of course the costumes and all that were fun, but it was more those core things. I can't even remember your original question, but that was, but, but no, that the documentary I, oh, so I didn't, I, I didn't think that the documentary. I was conscious. The first draft of the screenplay or many drafts of the screenplay, actually, the one that I originally set up at HBO was linear because I didn't have the money at the time to get the rights to the documentary. So I didn't want to write something that I then was like that would fall apart. So.

BRIAN: (01:00:25.42)

Hmm, right.

MICHAEL: (01:00:28.01)

In that original version, the documentary is like two pages because it covered 40 years and the documentary was shot over six weeks. So it didn't cross cut like that. But later when we went to HBO, then they secured the

rights from the Mazels. I had already been in contact with them and talked to them, but I wasn't legally beholden to them in that way and that's how I structured it. But I did want to.. I, all my intention was always that the documentary was perfect. And if I was going to create something, I wanted it to enhance the documentary and not replace it and not just simply, you know, recreate it. And so that was, and, and when you know that it was originally linear, then you really know, you know, you know, that that's, that was the case.

BRIAN: (01:01:13.64)

Yeah. Yeah. And all of those things that you tried to accomplish in my end felt very true for someone who felt very beholden to and obsessed with the documentary. I know I'm not some big film critic, but I will say that as a mega fan, I want to share that with you. And so it's a thrill to talk to you on that level. And so to kind of end our conversation today, I know I took in a different director, Greg Arnst, so I'm delighted I got to hear kind of that piece of it. What's your big hope for what's next on the other side of this, on the other side of the strike?

MICHAEL: (01:01:24.534)

Thank you.

Thank you.

That's right. Sure.

MICHAEL: (01:01:44.618)

I just, I really hope that they're on the other side of the strike. I hope that the strike does end because I hope that, I hope that there's a rebalancing. We, like I said before, everyone in this industry works really, really hard and we do it because it comes from this like core place of passion and storytelling and artistry. And I mean that all the way through the different trades, the work that everyone does is extraordinary. Uh, it's not just the directors and the writers. It's literally everyone. And coming from production and then becoming a director, I know that, because I was at the bottom and I saw what everybody was doing and what care they take with their work. And we all do that. And profit is important, but it's not the only thing. And some profit is great. Like tons and tons of profit.

MICHAEL: (01:02:43.278)

You've got to rebalance things because we're the people doing the grinding work and doing this the, I'm not saying that they're not important to and that they're not contributing, they are. But they can't keep grinding us down because we're just going to leave. And whether it's literally us leaving or just not new people coming in, they're going to destroy an absolutely incredible business and we'll tell stories, we'll just tell them in a different way, in a different medium. And we don't want that. We like this medium.

BRIAN: (01:03:23.132)

Yeah, we do. Yeah, for sure. That's a great way, I think, to end this conversation. Michael, thank you so much for educating us and also sharing really your own personal experience throughout this. I think that is really what I think a lot of people are gonna hear in this episode is your personal experience with this. So thank you so much for joining us. If anybody wants to watch what's going on with Michael, is there a place they can do that?

MICHAEL: (01:03:29.634)
Thanks BRIAN:.

MICHAEL: (01:03:40.962)
Thank you, BRIAN:.

MICHAEL: (01:03:45.326)
Yeah, I mean, on Twitter, I pretty much just share my political angst and frustrations. And then on Instagram, I just sort of like share a little bit of my life and what's going on. My mom says that we should not have had a good time. And I tell her, well, I only post when I go to the grocery store. But yeah, so they're just both at Michael Susie on those two platforms. And I really do.

BRIAN: (01:04:05.016)
Ha ha ha!

MICHAEL: (01:04:13.274)
I do like sharing and I like hearing from people. When work I've created affects other people in a positive way, it's actually the thing that sustains me and keeps me going. It really does mean a lot. And people do reach out and do that out of the blue, and it's very kind.

BRIAN: (01:04:30.776)
Great. Thank you, Michael. We will link to both of those in the show notes here. So if you've got something nice to say to Michael, please send it to his way. Thank you so much. He's going to need that support out on the picket line. So thank you so much, Michael. I appreciate it.

MICHAEL: (01:04:34.307)
Thanks.

MICHAEL: (01:04:41.55)
Thank you very much, BRIAN:.. Thank you, everyone.