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Hello everybody and welcome to the max frequency podcast
I'm your host max Roberts joining me this time the handsome one Ben Smith Ben. Welcome to the show

Hey, thanks for having me max. I appreciate it. Of course. Thank you for coming on the show with me Dustin

I had Dustin on the show. I think a couple episodes ago by the time this one comes out and He was like, oh, yeah

no Ben Ben does all of this when I started asking him questions about live production and The audio editing side of things and so he got us in touch and you decided to come on the show

So I'm super thankful for you taking some time out of your day to talk to me about

You know the sooner that Dustin realizes

That he needs me the better really for me

Quite frankly, I mean he wouldn't mess. I mean he could but necessarily wouldn't have his job without you. So I

Mean he could I suppose I suppose that's you could make that argument

But in the current timeline in the current sure line he needed to you

But before we dive enough to all of that and your work and whatnot

I wanted to ask you how you're feeling about succession season four here cuz oh man. I'm in love

so

true facts I

always wait

specifically with succession every I started after the first season and

Watch the whole thing and then I was like, oh I gotta watch the next season and for some reason

season, I waited for three weeks after the second season started airing to start watching it. And then by that point I had three in a row, and I was like, the next season, when the season three came out, I was like, "I'm gonna do that again," because it felt nice having those couple episodes. So my plan for Monday, I actually have it planned out that Monday I'm gonna sit down and watch the first three episodes.

So you have not seen a single thing, then?

I have only seen GIFs and tweets and stuff from the HBO account and the Succession account.

So I have done as good of a job as I can avoiding spoilers.

And I don't know why, I think it's more just like a tradition for me now.

I very much like the week-to-week rollout of shows.

I mean, I like that in some sense.

I like binging in another sense.

But with this show, I feel like I need that little, those quick couple burst in order for me to get into it.

And then I'm anticipatory, you know?

So, I don't know.

It doesn't make any sense, but it's what I'm doing.

It does make sense.

I mean Apple TV+ specifically, I know other services do it too, but new shows in particular, they generally drop the first three episodes and then they get you hooked to come back for the next seven to four weeks, however long it is.

So I totally get it.

I'm glad I didn't say anything specific.

Me too.

End recording.

But as someone, I got into it, I guess last, a year or two ago, it was, I think season three had ended because I was able to watch all three.

And then I've just been waiting for season four.

But one way to describe just how much I love the show is when I heard the name Siobhan, I was like, wow, that's a really great name.

And I tried to actually convince my wife to let us name our daughter Siobhan.

And there's more reasons than just HBO.

She's of Irish descent.

some heritage and some naming and stuff that fits, but I just like Siobhan. I didn't get first name, but I did get middle name. So. Okay, okay. So, you know, only two people have been like, "Is that because of succession?" I'm like, "Yeah, yeah it is." Yeah, it is. I get it. My oldest son, his name is Egan, and we also named a beer, which we'll get into talking about all that stuff, Egan's Irish Stout. And people were like, "Oh, it's nice you named a beer after your son." I'm like, "Actually, I named the beer and my son after a pub in Lascanter, Ireland that I visited in 2011 and fell in love with. But we can pretend like I named a beer after my son. That's fine." Sure, I like that. That's so funny. Let's use that as a segue into here. I wanted to kind of touch on some of the other, I don't know, facts, attributes, businesses that you've run, things you've done.

I think a lot of, especially the Last Stand community in particular, probably knows you as the mayor or former mayor of Butler, Pennsylvania.

And there's that great episode of Fireside Chats with Colin.

I think it's actually still is a Patreon exclusive.

I don't think it's available in Free Feeds anywhere.

I'm not, I don't think so.

- That makes sense.

I think because that show, I don't know if that show was ever on Free Feeds, was it? Maybe not, actually probably not. Yeah, I don't know. Patreon exclusive, you should check it out, I listened to it. But it's this interview where you're at, it sounds like you're at Collins House out on the west coast before you move back over here to the east side and just talked about becoming the mayor of Butler. But you also ran a brewery/sagar bar, speakeasy, you became the mayor, there's all sorts of stuff. And so since that interview with Colin, you're no longer the mayor of Butler, you stuck to the one-term plan. And it sounds like the brewery and the cigar bar are closed, unfortunately?

Yeah.

I would, I was kind of curious about that. I was wondering, there's COVID, I was reading some local

Butler news that a fire burned next door and caused some damage. What happened with all that,

if you don't mind me asking?

Yeah, so we, just to go back a little further, we started the brewery, we actually opened in 2015, and then in early 2018, we opened the cigar bar, which was just a couple doors down.

And then, of course, you know, things were going well, everything was looking good, we were looking at expansion, and then COVID hit, of course. Within weeks of when we were supposed to sign a lease. So it was like kind of good timing and bad timing at the same time. which there was no good timing for COVID obviously, but you know what I mean.

You weren't stuck in some lease on a property. I know of someone who did sign a lease for an office

space and then COVID hit and they couldn't even go in. It was a disaster.

I know many people in that same situation, yeah. So that happened and, you know, we made it through.

Our customers were good, they were loyal, they supported us. It was a struggle, obviously, but it wasn't like we were destitute. And then, you know, right as soon as we were coming out of that,

They let us reopen and then we had a couple months that were you know, just still not the best they could be but they were

As good as we could have hoped I guess at the time

And then I woke up one Saturday morning and my wife was like hey

And she she said I won't say the name of the business

It's probably I mean, it's public knowledge, but the business next door is on fire. I was like, oh she's like, okay

I was like, yeah surprisingly because I like hate I've always hated the thought I

I was on an episode of Constellation recently, and we talked about our greatest fears.

And I mentioned that mine was like my house burning down. And I always thought that would translate to my business, but for some reason it didn't. But I was just at peace with it,

it was fine. And so the business next door, it was a total loss. And in order to put that fire out,

they had to, I mean, thousands and tens of thousands of gallons of water got onto our place.

They had to cut open the roof to let because all those old buildings we were on an old, you

know, historic Main Street

They're all connected. You know, the floors are rotten. The walls were rotten by the from the water

so it was just like well our lease was gonna be up in a couple months and we were looking at expansion, but

it just didn't seem smart to try to

I don't know recoup all that old stuff

And so we in the building owners kind of came to a mutual decision just we weren't gonna do it

So then we still had the cigar bar. Sorry. I interrupted you. No, I just I'm looking at the picture and yeah

They're all it's these brick buildings just slap next to each other. Yeah. Yeah, that's nuts

That's that's one of those problems with the old like Main Streets is that one if one building catches fire the whole

Block is usually gone. Fortunately. This one wasn't it was able to be stopped

but right so we just um, we decided to keep going with the cigar bar and

Part of the way I won't get into all the intricacies

But part of the way we were able to have the cigar bar

We you know, of course we had cigars. It was a smoking lounge

More of a you know, I don't want to sound uppity but a higher-class smoking lounge

It wasn't just like you come in and throw down a Bud Light and a pack of Marlboro's or anything, you know

you know it was like you had to you had to go there and want to

Experience something a little different sure and part of the way we were able to keep that operating was by using the same license as

the brewery so we needed to open a brewery again and

And as we explored that further and everything, we just kind of came to the decision that

the market wasn't right, the way that craft beer was trending wasn't right, the real estate

wasn't good still because of how everything changed with the economy, and as of the end

of the year, we wouldn't have a license and we couldn't operate for a certain amount of time without also brewing.

So we just decided that at the points we were at in our lives, and we had gotten what we wanted out of it and didn't really want to construct an entire new business. So yeah, that's what happened there. That's the long story medium.

The long story medium. I like it. Yeah, I remember turning 18. I was like, "I can smoke now. This is the coolest." I've always thought smoking was visually cool. But obviously I know that totally destroys your insides.

But I've always thought it was cool, so when I turned 18 I was like, "This is great."

I went out and bought some Swisher Sweets, like grapefruit.

- Oh, yeah? (laughs)

- I was like, "I'm so cool."

And I had this edgy phase, 'cause I'm older than most of my friends, so I was like, "Look at me, I'm so cool, "I can smoke, you can't."

I was a terrible person, I have an awful friend.

But I had a few nice cigars, and actually at New Year's Eve, some friends brought some cigars.

I was surprised that I was the only one in the group that had smoked a cigar in any shape, way, or form.

- Yeah.

- And I was like, I shouldn't be the most experienced one here, 'cause we have a bunch of us in real estate, and other guys, construction, fishing, just very more masculine kind of energy.

I was just like, how am I the only one here?

So they all look to me, and we didn't have the tools.

I think we used a kitchen knife to cut off the edges.

- Oh yeah, I mean, we've all been there, right?

- But we just had a poker night, and we were, someone stopped at a cigar shop, had them pre-cut.

It was a bit more of a mature experience.

But you're into it, it's a passion of yours.

Obviously if you run a business, right?

- Yeah, I mean, I am someone who has always been, whenever I'm into, I'm into it full force.

And if I've made a commitment to do something, I'm gonna be into it and I'm very interested.

But now that I'm not actively engaged in that business, it's not, I still like to smoke cigars.

I still like to drink good beer, but it's not something that I'm interested in.

I don't know.

I'm not gonna go out of my way to sink into it now because I like have other focuses.

So I'm into it very much.

And I'm, what I like to think is pretty knowledgeable about the subjects, but at the same time,

like I'm not going to turn up my nose as someone who isn't, because I'm, you know,

It's just not my thing right now, I guess.

- Yeah, okay, I can see it.

Pivoting, pivoting around whatever life throws at you.

You seem to have had a lot of,
I was browsing your LinkedIn,
which has been a surprisingly useful resource
in the past couple of episodes,
but you seem to have done a lot of different stuff.
You've worked at colleges and the brewery
and all that sort of stuff.

You're a very diverse skillset, it seems.

It's pretty cool.

- I am.

Yeah, my issue is, some people look at it,
and they're like, "You've had so many jobs."
and I'm like, yeah, but I've never only had one job.
Like this is maybe, and I kinda actually have two jobs
right now, I guess technically, but I'm the kinda person
who's always needed more than one thing to do.

- Yeah.

- Not just for finances, although that certainly helps,
but just because I like to be busy.

- Yeah, I've, really, I think probably 'til I started
working at Disney a couple of years ago,
and even then I was doing freelance stuff on the side,
I've always had at least two or three jobs.

It feels like it.

I've never, I've actually never had just one job.

It's always two, and then I drop the older one and replace it with another one.

That's always been a bridge of transition.

Right.

You've got to keep—you've just got to be doing things.

You've got to fill your time with something probably productive, more helpful to society.

I'm not sure.

Sure.

But one of your jobs for four years, you were the mayor of Butler, like we talked about.
I think people could go listen to the Collin one and your mailbag recently that you did
another Patreon exclusive, hear more of the nitty gritty, you know, like where the bodies
are buried and different things that you did and things like that.

I'm more curious about the lessons that you learned being the mayor for these four
years and how you maybe have brought that into other areas of your life, particularly
Last Stand Media, but I mean, I'm sure being, I would think being the mayor impacted all
or other areas of your life, not just the city of Butler.

Yeah. I think you are probably correct. And I'm sure I could extrapolate some things,
but I will say that it is hard. I don't know if it's just my personality or the style of
city that it is, or if it's... I don't know what it is, but for me, it's like... I feel
like I didn't learn anything new. I just understood the things I already knew better. And most
of the things I think I learned from being mayor were things about human nature and the
nature of public service and stuff like that. And I think it's things I conceptually understood,
but they don't really sink in until you like are actively doing them or seeing them in
theory, I guess, or in practice as opposed to just theory. So patience is something I
had to learn a little bit more, I think. Not that I'm an impatient person, but just that
I'm used to things move at my pace because I can dictate that pace. But, you know, in
a position like that, you are kind of bound to the pace of other people or just, you know,
legalities of things. So just because you want to change something doesn't mean it can
happen.

I mean, and some of the things I can't even talk about, but there are things I put into place like within my first year in office, and now over a year out of office, they're just starting to come to fruition. And of course, you know, sometimes that means other people get credit for them and you don't. And that's fine, because I'm sure I got credit or punishment for things that people did before me. And that's always the way it's going to be, I think. But yeah, Yeah, so that was one thing, is just understanding that process a little better.

And I guess, you know, I've always been someone who, I think all of my jobs I've ever had, with the exception of like one in the country club when I was in high school. I've been some sort of manager or overseer.

But I just think, I can't put them into words, but you learn, you just learn different strategies for handling people.

And I don't mean that to sound like manipulative, but, you know, just how to work with people and how to, you know, for lack of a better way to say it, reach across the aisle and get things done. Compromise is important, obviously, although it's much different in small town politics than of course we see on the national stage. People ask me, like, what do you think about this giant national issue? I'm like, I help handle which roads get paved, man. I don't, you know, I'm not here focused on gun control or something like that, It's just much different.

So yeah, I guess it's hard to put those things into practice, but if I really were to examine it,

I could definitely see some areas where I grew in areas I was already familiar with and understood things differently for sure, yeah.

- That's cool, I like to hear it 'cause really every job and every interaction that we have, It's all about relationship in the end, I really think.

Any, on the job side, every job I've gotten is through some sort of relationship, ultimately. Whether that's someone I know really well or someone I don't.

And then real life, friends, people, the person you interact with at the grocery store, it's all relationships to dynamics and understanding how to get along with people and work with people is,

probably the most important thing I would one of one of the most important things I'll say - yeah have a skill in you can't be

So stubborn my wife's a middle school teacher. So I hear about the children

Right, and I'm just like yeah, how please how do they not understand but they write their 12. They're learning

Yeah, they're growing. They are learning. I look at they're growing. Well, hopefully I mean some I've seen some of them

just like at school functions, and they're taller than me.

They look like full adults.

I don't understand that at all.

I was like, that is never this grown at your age.

It was very tiny, so.

- Yeah, that was me.

I was, I had a full beard by the time I was like 13, so I understand.

- You sound like a guy I knew in middle school.

Like the dude just was bearded,

and I'm talking full, full beard, five o'clock shadow.

I was like, holy cow, man, what are you eating?

What kind of eggs are you eating?

It's nuts, man.

But during your tenure as mayor, you join LSM,
last day of meeting, I'm just gonna keep saying LSM,
and then actually a few months later you join Lilymo,
which Colin owns half, 49%, half of?

- I think it's like 49, yeah, I don't, yeah.

I don't know all the legalities there, but.

- He owns a sizable-- - Part of it at least, yes.

of it. So you've, you know, at one point you're the mayor, associate producer at two
companies,

and you own a brewery, cigar bar, speakeasy type, a whole deal. Five jobs at once. And

I kind of wanted to use this all to pivot into your production work, being a producer.

Editing podcasts, where did, where did that all start with you? I, your LinkedIn once
again, Volongo Live? I mean, you guys DJ'd weddings possibly? If my research is accurate,
the correct Volongo Live in Pennsylvania. Yeah. Wow. Is that where this audio, you know,
production kind of work began? I would... It's funny because that doesn't feel like
it should be that long ago when I look at the date. But that was probably 2007, 2008,
somewhere in there, and I think about that and think about how long ago that really was.

Anyway, I think I was either late high school or early college, and my buddy was like, "Hey,
I've got all this equipment." Because we used to have little garage bands and stuff, and
he had all sorts of equipment. He's like, "I've got all this equipment. Why don't we
do something with it?" I was like, "What do you want to do?" He's like, "Let's DJ." I'm
And I'm like, I don't know.

I don't know.

Like, would we just play an iTunes playlist or something?

And it actually is what we started out doing,
like DJing high school dances and old people birthday parties
and stuff like that.

And eventually, I mean, we continued
to do that kind of stuff and then eventually moved
into slightly more club-oriented things.

And then we kind of got to the point where
we didn't want to do it anymore because we were both like--

we had steady girlfriends, or we were in college,

we were trying to get jobs or whatever, and we just kept saying, like, anytime somebody
would call us, we'd be like, "Oh, well, actually, the price is this," which was twice as much
as we used to charge, because we didn't really want to do it.

And people were like, "Yeah, we want you.

We've heard you're the best wedding DJ or whatever."

We're like, "Oh, okay."

And so we just kept escalating our price until it got to the point where we felt it was ridiculous
for what we were charging.

And then we just decided, like, "Okay, we can't - I don't want to do this anymore,"
basically.

It was good and bad because it was a lot of good experience.

It helped put me through college, helped pay for my wife's engagement ring, stuff like
that.

But at the same time, I was like, "I'm tired of this."

And we started other projects at that time, too.

He and I did.

So that was also taking us away from that, like other projects together.

We were like, "Well, we like this more than that now, but that makes more money."

So yeah, but that's probably...

You know, I used to run the soundboard at church and things like that, but as far as anything like actually for an income, that would certainly be the beginning of it. Yeah, that same sort of thing used to do like camera work and stuff at the church and I still do that actually today. It's, you start dabbling in things you find interesting and then I was making YouTube videos at 12, 13 years old, I guess like a tiny middle schooler and that's where I started. It's pretty fun to see where people get into it, but I think, if I recall correctly, at the time of the mayor interview, you were doing, you were editing another podcast, there was Handsome Phantom.

So you've been doing shows and podcast production and stuff before.

How did you pivot from hobby to, I'm gonna, side hustle, I'm gonna start making money, which ultimately leads to one of your jobs.

- Sure.

I think the first podcast I ever edited or was on was in 2009. And again, that feels like so long ago, but in the scheme of podcasting, I guess that actually is ancient history in the scheme of podcasting. My buddy and I started that same buddy that I did the DJing with, we started a podcast and then ultimately a website. And it's not like we were gigantic, but at the time there was almost nobody doing it. And so we were in the space pretty big and we ended up, you know, actually hiring a staff, and we were able to occasionally pay them and give them other benefits, free games, all that kind of stuff, back in, you know, the early, early to late 2000s, or mid to late 2000s. And eventually, he ended up getting a job at another gaming company. I kept the site alive for a little while, ended up selling it, paying off part of, you know, well, we sold the domain name. I don't remember how that all worked. But anyway, it benefited us in a financial way, in some way. And then, I started doing some, like, freelance podcast editing just because it was still new. People knew they were supposed to have a podcast, but they didn't know what that was, so it was like, it was a way for me to get in there and do something I knew how to do and enjoyed, and still make a little money, obviously. And then, probably in about 2016 or 17, no, 2015 my but my cousin and I started a podcast about election history

And that actually became way bigger than I expected

but I did all the the you know the editing for that he and I did the show a couple times a week and

Just a way for us to hang out because we weren't close

But also just a way for you know us to talk like we felt like it was a product that was needed out there, too

so that you know that also became in a

Not much, but some money-making and then Dustin had me had me go to PAX with him one year

He just wanted to go so we went so he had just become friends before that recently

And we went to PAX East and then he was like, why don't we just like do this do this?

I was like, alright, he's already been doing a podcast

so I jumped on with them and then together we worked and you know, we built that site up and the podcast and then

Yeah, it kind of went from there. I don't I

I don't know when there was a shift. That's the weird thing. Like, I know my history, but you're asking me questions that's making me think like, "Hmm, I don't know when that actually happened. I don't know when that turned in from this to that."

I think it's so fascinating to hear people's stories. I recently did a big Super Smash

Bros. Brawl Celebration episode because it just turned 15, which feels very long ago.

Because that's what got me into talking about games publicly online, and my big inspiration was a podcast at the time, Show Me Your News.

And so I did this whole deep dive

with the host of that show, Peter.
But looking at Peter's history and then my own,
lining it up and it's like,
well I started doing YouTube videos about Smash Brothers
and then I did a Nintendo podcast with some friends,
like spread out, like I met, this is,
maybe it's more common today, actually,
it is more common today, but this was back in 2008.
My parents were letting me talk with strangers online
and do a show with them.

- They actually even let me, my one friend
was an only child and they were going on a cruise
and his parents wanted him to have a friend
until they invited me.

And like I had never met them
and my parents just let me go.
I feel like today you would never ever do that.

- Yeah, I think you're probably right, yeah.

- Well it also probably would be easier to like
actually see and communicate with these people too.

- True.

we met at the airport in Louisiana, you know?

It's just like this crazy thing.

And then my history from there would go on to other stuff
and freelance writing, but it's cool to see the inception
and at least try and follow the trail all the way through.

I love that stuff, I love hearing people's stories
and how they get into things and learn and grow
because from shows about the election process
previous elections, the electoral college, which imagine if that show was still going
on today, that'd probably be pretty dynamic.

We stopped doing it just because of scheduling stuff. We did it for a few years, had a few
hundred episodes, and we stopped doing it right around the time. And it was mostly about
history, so we approached everything from a pretty non-political, biased standpoint.

We stopped doing it within a year after the 2016 election.

And we did that episode because technically it was history, like a couple weeks afterwards.

And I listened to it a couple weeks or a couple months ago.

Like I just happened to find it in my files and I was like, pulled it up and I was like,
"Wow."

There's so much we talked about that apparently we thought was true at the time that we now
know like a little more background to it.

Just on that alone.

I can't imagine, especially back in the early days
of elections in the country,
when everything traveled by horse and buggy.
Imagine how long it took for everybody
to get their facts straight then.

- Imagine how long it took just for everyone
to learn who the president was.

- Yeah, exactly.

- Like across the whole country, up and down.
East to west eventually.

This is nuts, man.

Crazy how news used to disseminate.

And now, I just talked to someone about that
with video game news.
It used to just be a magazine,
show up at your door once a month,
and that's how you knew what was coming out.
It wasn't check Twitter or here's what's leaking.
It's crazy, man, and how fast that's all changed, too.
Back to podcasting.
I love editing.
I've been editing shows I've been on, honestly,
for most of the time.
I've just always loved this process,
and that grows and changes.
So I'm curious about how you edit shows,
because Sacred Symbols is no slouch.
It's like a four-hour podcast, meticulously edited.
At least that's what Colin says,
and I believe it, listening to the show.
So I'm just, I'm curious what you use, how you edit it,
what that time commitment, that process is like for you.
- Yeah, it's funny 'cause if you,
the video version obviously has some kind of edits
and it gets things thrown together,
But it's not edited for content, you know
It's not edited for um's and ah's and for for you couldn't basis, right?
Yeah, right and especially with at the pace we go if we had a week to do it then sure but you
know overnight
It's not really feasible
but
with the audio people have actually a couple people have told me that they went and listened
to the audio and the video at the
Same time and we're like, holy cow. This is a different show
Not one to the other not to say one's that's like it's just depending on what you like, right? But
yeah
It's just yeah, there's a lot of other thing you're right, but so as far as my setup I use I use
premiere predominantly
for
For editing and I know that that's mostly a video software obviously, but for me it works. Well, I
used to use audition
And of course before that I used I used audacity, but that's so far in the distant past
I don't remember how the setup looks honestly everyone started with audacity
I still have some original Audacity files and tried opening them and it was like, "Well, how did
we use this?"
Yes, yeah, I know.
So, I mean, I still have it because occasionally I'll get a file that I need to somehow manipulate
in there,
but for the most part I can do everything I need to do in Adobe products.
Yeah, so I primarily I bring everything into Premiere and I run a bunch of
filters on them, put some gates in, etc.
I just edit the show. I mean, I take out any kind of pauses. I... not any pauses, obviously,
if there's... if it's the way someone speaks or if it's for comedic effect, that's gonna
stay. But the appropriate pauses, mouth clicks, weird sounds, excessive umms or ahs.
Sometimes
people will stop and say, um, and then continue. And other times people say, um, I don't know.

And you can't cut that out, so sometimes those stay in there, sometimes they don't.

The most important thing is to make it sound natural.

If it doesn't sound natural taking it out, leave it in.

And that's my philosophy, is if I can make it sound natural without it, then I will.

And that's rendering the shows, doing all the timestamps, typing those up is pretty time-consuming for the shows to have them and export them, upload them, send them off to, for Dustin to upload to Patreon. I used to do it on Patreon, but Patreon changed some things, and it's now like, if you save a draft, it gets, it's a whole mess over there at Patreon. They're great in some respects, and in other respects I'm like, "Come on, guys. You're the biggest deal in the world right now. What's your deal?"

Yeah, the back end's always, there's always criticism for a back end of anything.

Yeah.

Always.

- And then our free feeds, that gets a separate audio file that has different things tacked onto it for advertising.

- Yeah.

- And that gets sent off to the people who handle those ads for us.

Yeah, from there I guess,

I guess that's the predominant editing thing, but I'm happy to get more into nitty gritty if you want.

- Oh, I do.

- You just have to lead me, okay, cool.

- I, let's, ads.

Ads in particular.

I wanted to ask about dynamic ad insertion, which is something that you guys use over at LSM.

And quite honestly as a consumer, something I don't enjoy at all.

Not from a advertisement perspective, more from a, and you tell me where I'm wrong, but a company, you've partnered with some sort of production or advertising company, and they just use whatever information they can get from us, generally IP address or something, and start plopping in relevant ads. just like you would see on Facebook or Instagram or Twitter, what have you.

Same thing, just for your ears.

And I just don't like it 'cause it feels creepy.

And to a degree, inauthentic.

Now sometimes, the host does read the ad and it could be for whatever hot internet underwear or mattress is the thing right now.

And so it's Colin or Dustin or whoever your host is is telling you, go buy this thing.

But then sometimes it's just someone I've never heard before in my life and it pulls me out.

So I'm curious more, is that truly the process?

Just you give them the file and then they pop it in?

Or is there more to the back end of getting these ads to fit into the show?

- It's changed a little bit over the years.

When dynamic ads first came around,
at least when I was first involved with them,
as a podcaster, not an editor or anything like that,
it was very much like, you know,
we're going to insert an ad for whatever their local college is.
And over-- or whatever their local supermarket chain,
or whatever, because they could just
tell the region they were in.
And it didn't seem like there was as much data there.
And over time, I feel like whatever--
I'm sure it's mostly through Spotify,
because they seem to be buying up all the ad companies
and all the podcast distribution platforms, that they're able to scrape a lot more info.
And even if you're not listening directly on Spotify, they still have a decent idea
who, like, the makeup of who's listening to the show, right? So they've honed that in.
And in some respects, I think that's better, because I might actually listen to the ad
rather than skip through it, if I'm totally not interested in it. At least if I'm getting
an ad and it's somewhat honed to me, I'm interested most likely in the product. Whereas
it used to be like, well, I'm, for example, I'm 40 and they're advertising me a daycare
center. Like, not a daycare, because that would actually make sense with kids, but, you
know, a college that's for brand new high school students or whatever. And it used to
make a lot less sense, those dynamic ads. And now I think it makes a little more sense.
But with that said, I agree, it's very creepy.
But I'm also of the opinion, like people are like,
"Oh, I don't want them having my data."
I'm like, "You have a Gmail account?"
I've had a Gmail account since I was like
in seventh grade or something, I don't know.
They know everything about me.
The internet has all the information about me
that they need to have.
So I want to protect privacy, but at the same time,
I know that it's kind of an illusion at this point.
- I think for the creepiness aside,
and yes, they do just have all of our information,
especially the advertising,
and when you dig into just how they figure it out,
it's nuts.
I'll be at a get together and someone's like,
"I just talked about this beer the other day
"and now I'm getting ads for it."
But that means Facebook's listening.
I'm like, actually, no, it's far more scientific and creepy
than just your microphone being on.
They actually can't and don't do that.
And then you try to explain it
and their eyes glaze over and they're like,
"They're listening."
I'm like, alright, whatever, you can think whatever you want,
I suppose.
To me, I think the part, and this is a max thing,
it's when I get ads that aren't spoken by the hosts.
Those are the ones that I'm more likely, I think, to skip.
Because when I go to a show, there's a relationship

that develops between you, the listener, and the host.

And for example, Sacred Symbols, I'm there for Colin, Chris, and Dustin.

But when I hear someone else, it totally throws me out of the zone I was just in with the show.

And that's, I guess, the part I don't like the most about it.

Yeah, and I think a lot of that, I totally understand that for sure.

I think a lot of that comes down to, well, there's a few things.

One is that the people that sell the ads, you know, so for instance, we, all of our shows are hosted by megaphone,

which was actually just something the last year owned by Spotify. It's like an invite-only thing. So they bought them a couple years, maybe a year or two years ago. But anyway, Megaphone is just a platform, kind of like Libsyn or Anchor or any of those. And our, I don't know, our ad people, I don't really know what to call them. The studio that owns the rights to sell ads on the show is called Studio 71. And that's like publicly on the the listing and everything.

- Yeah, you see that in the free feed version of Sacred Symbols that says like Last Stand Media or something and Studio 71.

- Right, yeah, so they put a little bit of their branding on it, but that's very unintrusive.

But they go out and they actually go out and buy the ads.

Like, or not buy the ads, sell the ads.

So I don't know their exact process.

I have talked to them in a different capacity previously and I know a little bit of some things and some I don't,

but basically they're going out and saying to these,

know, multi-billion dollar companies, "Hey, we've got x amount of shows with x amount of impressions

or with y amount of impressions, and we'd love to get your show on them." And so that company,

a lot of times, can say, "Okay, well, we'll pay this rate for one person to read it and then you to put it on all of their shows." And then, you know, Studio 71 might say, "Okay, great, we'll do that,

But if you pay x times 2, we'll have the host read it, which the data proves that the click-through rate on that is going to be this many times higher.

So I think part of it is the actual advertiser

and how much they want to spend, because obviously, a host read ad costs more.

You get a higher amount back as the podcast producer, as the host of the show, and you also get a higher return

as the advertiser. So I think people recognize that. It's just a matter of if you hear an ad

that isn't being read by the host, there's a potential that they just, you know, it's a cheaper ad campaign. Doesn't mean they're cheap, just means it wasn't what they opted for.

Right. Okay. That's, it's interesting to hear that and think about the process. Do you,

I know you're not the boss of LSM. I guess this will be another Colin question ultimately, but but do you feel cool with that level of,

do you, I guess first, do you get a say in who buys ads

or is it a blanket, whoever Studio 71 says yes to

gets an ad spot on the show or is there a,

we, this is a terrible example 'cause they host,

they sponsor every podcast known to man,

but we don't want a Squarespace ad at all on LSS.

- Right.

Is there any say back on the creator of,
even though you're partnering with an ad seller,
is there any say on that end?

- Well, I know from my experience
with a very similar setup,
through Megaphone and everything,
just not through Studio 71,
from my history podcast and another network
I was part of at one point,
that when we signed up on that network,
they basically gave us a document and said,
mark off the subjects that you do not want advertising about. And so automatically, like if you
are
a podcast and you want to be more, you know, you're a podcast that wants to be educational.
Like for example, my election podcast, very clean, very just matter of fact, we surprisingly, you
know,
we didn't want political ads on there. We didn't want things for, you know, adult intimate
products.

We didn't want, you know, just you can choose those things that you don't want because you
know
it will alienate your audience. And then everything else is pretty much free game for them,
unless

they want you to endorse it, which again, the advertiser is paying more for. And then
they will generally approach you and say, "We have an ad for this. Are you cool with
it?" And you can sign off yes or no. And most of the time, I think people are going
to be fine with that. And you can, you know, I know this too from LSM, like there are things
that we will get ads for, and the advertiser will say,
here's the basic outline, whatever,
we need a personal endorsement.

And we'll respond and say, well, we haven't received
the product, so we'll give an endorsement,
but not a personal endorsement.

Or like an informational endorsement, but not a--
because it's all about what you're comfortable with.

If you're comfortable with saying, yeah,
I've tried Casper mattress.

I've been sleeping on one for five years,
and it's the best thing I've ever had.

And meanwhile, you're sleeping on a sleep number
bed from 1997, then that's up to you, I suppose. But as for LSM, at least, and me personally
on other ventures I've had, I'm not going to personally endorse anything. But that's
a decision that you get to make. And like I said, we've rejected-- and I say we, but
that hasn't been my decision. But LSM has rejected ads before, because we didn't want
to promote the content. And one time specifically, Colin's talked about this publicly, but there
was an ad for a documentary series that Ubisoft, or Ubisoft depends on, I did a video recently,
a YouTube video recently, and said Ubisoft, which is how I've always said it, and I got a couple
comments that were like, "Is it Ubisoft or Ubisoft?" I'm like, "I don't know, but it doesn't
matter."

Anyway, they were funding this documentary series, and Collin was like, "I don't want to do this
because we don't want to take money from publishers. That's just our personal stance."

So they were cool with that.

So, yeah, that's the basics is like you have
pretty much all the control in the world.

And if there is an ad that comes through,

even if you don't read it that you don't want on your show,
you can still turn it down.

At least with the people we have our ads through.

- Right, okay.

That's good to hear at least.

'Cause I, in my brain, I've never had ads on any of my show
and it's not 'cause I don't wanna make money.

It's just I've never had anything big enough, I suppose.

But the idea of just giving up your,

for lack of better terms,

just like your right to whatever

they're gonna start popping in my ears

or some person in California's ears

or Texas or Maine, whatever.

- Sure, yeah.

- I've always liked control over my shows

and that's probably more, I'm an oldest child

and I always like to have control in everything.

And so the idea of not having that over something,

- Right.

- Wigs me out a little bit as the creator side of things.

But it's good to hear that.

- I'm totally with you there, yeah.

- Back to editing.

- Yes.

- You're using Premiere, the thing that I think actually

my friend Peter Spezia uses,

at least as far as people I'm familiar with.

Is that simply just because familiarity with video editing

and that just translates down to audio

'cause it's the same interface just without footage above it?

Is that why you use it?

Yeah, I generally, just as far as the footage thing, I generally, when I'm just editing
audio, make the audio full screen, and I'm only looking at that anyway.

So it almost feels like you're not even in Premiere sometimes.

But I think the reason I chose Premiere over Audition, or I generally choose it over Audition,

I'll go into Audition to do something sometimes, but is that even though Audition is meant

for audio, I feel like the tool set in Premiere is more conducive to what I need to do for

this specific show. And Audition may have very well updated some things since then,

and is better now, I don't know, but I've been using Premiere for years now to edit

audio specifically, and it just... I don't know how to say that, and it just works for

me. I mean, it... I know Premiere, and obviously there's always things you're gonna learn,

and they change things all the time, but I know Audition as well, and I just... when

And I switched from using Audition to using Premiere.

I was like, this immediately feels better.

And I can't tell you why.

I just know that it does.

And I think that's very much a personal preference thing, because I know other people who are
like, I could never do that.

And it's interesting, because all the tool sets that are in there for video are also

in there for audio, because they know that if you want to have a good video, you need
good audio, generally.

And so there are also many tools in there for audio that are very good.

And I just feel like the audition flow for me was...

I don't know how to say it really.
It just didn't work anymore all of a sudden.
And I don't know that there was anything wrong with audition.
It's just that once I found Premiere to be...
Once I got out of the mindset that, "Oh, Premiere's for video.
Therefore, I can't do audio in it."
Once I got out of that mindset, I was like, "Oh, wow, this is perfect for me. This works.
Great. I'm fine." And Premiere has its set of bugs, of course, but it's, in my opinion, the best
editor, the best DAW, as many people call it, out there. And yeah, it's worked for me. I don't
know
if it works for everybody, but it does for me. Yeah, I couldn't. I couldn't, but that's mostly
because I find I don't use I use audition for one thing and one thing only and
that's a match loudness and I just yeah I match loudness on all whoever's on the
show's tracks just so we're all closer it doesn't blow people's ears out that's
the only thing I use it for the rest of it I just find it ugly like I just don't
want to look at it for however many hours right yeah I don't think it's
particularly appealing aesthetically for sure yeah it's it doesn't look nice to
So I use Logic to edit my shows.
- Okay, yeah.
- And I actually just made a video on my YouTube channel
of how I edit a podcast.
I go from the raw files all the way to the finished product.
So that was kind of a fun process to examine my own,
the way I do things and then share that with people.
So I do hope that's helpful.
But coming up, learning video editors
from Windows Movie Maker to After Effects
to Premiere, to Final Cut, and that's where I've settled,
I totally get the familiarity and the comfort of just,
well I know how to do all this, this is,
here's cross fades, here's levels,
all the stuff's right here.
All it's missing is pictures moving across the screen,
it's just sound.
So I do get that familiarity.
I'm curious though, you mentioned you put gates in,
and I don't know actually if you said compression,
but I did hear gates for sure.
So those tools I assume are built into Premiere.
Did you, are these custom made for,
say Colin has a gate, Chris has a gate,
or is it just one thing that you've come up with
or downloaded somewhere that you just apply
across the track?
- It's a little both.
So sometimes depending on the person
and the specifics of the audio,
I will actually use iZotope RX7.
I don't know a lot about it, but I know enough to fix a couple things.
I use iZotope as well. I just snagged RX10 because they had some stupid sale that made
it actually affordable to just buy like the standard, but I use iZotope to clean up all
sorts of stuff. It's so powerful.
For the most part though, the majority of the filters and everything that are applied
is in Premiere, and it's actually the gate and compressor that I mostly use. It's like

the effect that's called dynamics, I think. And I use an auto gate, a compressor, and then a limiter. So generally, I will boost everyone's audio up way higher than I want it to be. And apply the, you know, I have specific settings already, like, mapped out for the gate and the compressor. And for some people's voices, I have to change the gate slightly, depending on their specific intonation, I suppose. And then the limiter, of course, to bring that all back down. And what that does is, it's basically doing the same thing as the match loudness. It's just I don't have to go do another program for it. Is that by bringing all that audio up to an inconceivable level and then pulling that limiter back down, it brings everybody back down to the same loudness. And some people are like, well, For instance, on our other show Defining Duke, people are like, "Cog sometimes sounds louder than Matty."

I'm like, "That's because Cog has a man's voice."

Not that Matty doesn't, but Cog's voice is very deep and very...

So he can say something quieter than I would, and it sounds louder because it's full, and it's masculine, and it's, you know...

And I'm like, over here, even though I think I have a pretty deep voice, I'm kind of like, "Oh man, I feel kind of wimpy here."

And so like, there's certain people's voices who are just going to fill the ear space more than someone else's and make it feel louder, even though the level, the actual volume level is the same.

So I don't know how I got there, but yes, I use the dynamics effect in Premiere for the majority of what I do, and then I just, you know, raise and lower the volume here and there if I need to, if somebody dips out or there's some background noise.

And then iZotope for things like mouth clicks and whatnot.

I don't always use that.

- Isotope I generally use just as like a pass through.

Mostly, most of the shows I do,

Chapter Select is my other show and I do that with Logan.

And so Logan, I know his setup, I know what he's doing, so there's consistency with both of us.

It's the other people that we have on as guests that can totally change a show.

And when I have someone like you or Dustin, Someone who's more, has more professional equipment or just better than your earbuds, that's generally not too bad.

But I've had some guests just come in with headphones and they're in a big tile room with no furniture and so it's like this echo madness.

And so, actually iZotope did say, did fix some reverb on one particular track that, I don't know how they do it, man, it's a wizardry, but it sounded good to me and I was like holy smokes, this makes it so much better for everyone else.

- I might have to check that out because, so I recently, for the last few months, I moved to a new place and the room I was in before was very good for sound.

And the room I'm in now, like the floor is still just, it's a nice wood floor, but it's just, I don't have a carpet down.

I don't have my sound paneling up, my ceiling's higher than it used to be.

And I'm like, I'm sure you can hear it a little echoey.

And so I've just been using the simple de-reverb in Premiere.
But I should, I'm not on enough shows
to really make it matter,
but I should probably try a little harder,
but I also probably should just get like a rug
and some wall coverings too.

- Yeah, I'm getting ready to move
should everything continue to go well.
And my office is about to move from office slash nursery
to an attached garage with air conditioning.
So I'm gonna go from carpet and all of this
to what we'll start out as a concrete blank slate,
and I'm so worried about the acoustics.

- Yeah, yeah.

- I'm gonna fill it with as much soft stuff as possible.

- Right, it's certainly a struggle finding,
when you get into a new space,
figuring out exactly what works.

I was like very eager to quote,
"Fix this space as soon as possible."

And I was like, "No, I should like figure out
how it works first acoustically."

Because I also do streaming and I do some YouTube stuff,
and I'm like, I just want it to sound good,
but I don't want to rush and spend a bunch of money
I don't need to spend until I know what I need.

- Yeah, well, I know at the very least,
I'm gonna need carpet.

- Yeah.

- I'm gonna need something.

It's gonna be a fun journey to figure that out.

But you should definitely try the isotope.

- I will, I'll look into it.

- It's pretty stupid neat.

I don't know how they do it.

Witchcraft over there.

I want to take the production outside of the house,
your new office with your higher ceilings and wood floors.

- Yeah. (laughs)

- You don't only just edit shows at LSM or host
or do anything like that.

You also, based off what Colin says and having Dustin on,
you plan, coordinate the trips to live shows
and make sure everyone gets there.

At least you do everything you can
to make sure everyone gets there on time
in the same space, hotels and all that stuff.

And so, there was just this big show in,
I'm sorry, not Austin, Houston, different part of Texas,
where we talked about the most overrated video
you've ever seen in a long time.

- It was almost in Austin.

- It was, here we go.

- I tried, yeah.

- I wanted to ask what that whole process is like.
Just A, finding venues, coordinating,
I don't know how many different people were there,
as far as the crew, but I don't know, seven plus, seven to ten people, if not more, merchandise,
venue, flight, like all this stuff. I'm curious how, I guess, it fell into your lap or you were
assigned this job and what that whole process is like before we get to the actual more
technical
side of a live show. Yeah, so a couple years ago, actually before Dustin may have just started
working for Colin. And I don't think I was working for Colin yet. I mean, we would always
talk about stuff and he knew, I was interested in the... Dustin and I had been fans of Colin
for a long time before we ever met him or started working for him. But we'd always talk
about like, "Oh, it'd be so cool to do it for, if Colin would do another live show,
like people would love it. It would be great." And then one day, I don't remember how it
came up or whatever, but one of us said to the other, "We should do a—tell Colin we're
gonna do a live show, and he has to be there. Like, he has to be there because he's the
reason people would come, but also we want to do it." And so we talked about, you know,
how we could make that work, and eventually we kind of came to the decision of, "Well,
let's do it here," here meaning where he and I live in Butler. And we pitched—we, like,
kind of came up with a rough plan, went out and I went out and you know scoped out a bunch
of places
and found out what things would cost and everything and pitched it to him and he was like,
"Yeah, do
it." So Dustin and I, we worked a little more closely on that one because of, just because it
was in our town and went and planned you know the whole thing and had the show here and
then after
that I said, "Okay, Colin, I want to do more of these." And he's like, "Well yeah, I do too." I
I was like, "Okay, let me do it and pay me."
And he's like, "Okay."
So that's how that kind of, it kind of like fell in my lap
and also kind of had to prove ourselves to do it.
- Yeah.
- So yeah, you asked how it happened.
You asked me something else though
and I don't remember what it was.
- Just the--
- What's the process?
- Yeah, the process of doing it.
So there's been a few, there was the Butler one,
Virginia, Richmond, right?
- Yes.
- Was last year?
- That was--
- Or 21. - About a year ago.
Almost exactly a year ago, yeah.
- And then most recently, Houston.
- Yes.
- If my record is straight.
So I'm just, you know, there's two in the East Coast,
one down south, middle of the country, I suppose.
- Sure.
- I would think it is easy when you live in the town
to scope out venues, get prices,
but when you're planning something out of state,
I assume you're not traveling to Houston

like check out venues, you're more looking online, talking to people. What's the process like?

Yeah, that's one of the main hurdles honestly, for good and bad I think, because like you said when you're familiar with an area you know like, "Oh, there's that little theater down on the south side of town that nobody ever talks about but it's really cool." And you know those little places like that, but when you're far away you just have to rely on what the internet and maybe a couple locals say. So we started out, we pitched the idea of going to Vegas. I say we, I don't know who it was. The idea was pitched to go to Vegas. And once I started looking at Vegas for the timeline that we wanted, it just wasn't going to be feasible because one, either everywhere was already booked up for that time period.

I don't remember what time period that originally was. Or two, the places were too big. Or it Vegas so they were also like either 10,000 person venues or 150 in a little basement underneath a casino kind of thing. And so it was really hard to find the right size.

And then once we did find a couple places that were the right size, and I'm using We Here, once I scoped the mouth. It's a royal thing.

Yeah, yeah, you know. I gotcha.

Once I found a few places that would work, I started calling and just found that the prices in Vegas were specifically for that time of year way higher than what I thought was smart.

And not to say that we, like Colin has said before, like, I don't care if we make money, I just don't want to lose money. And even with that, I think he's also like, as long as we don't lose too much money, you know, like, it's very much like, it's not a moneymaker, but my goal, since it's my job, and like, if I'm, if we're not doing it, I feel like I'm getting paid for something I'm not doing, obviously. My goal is to make money and help the company and stuff like that. So I said, basically, I don't think Vegas is going to work this year. Let me look somewhere else. Let's go to Texas. Austin's hopping right now. That'd be awesome. So I looked in Dallas and in Austin and kind of ran into a similar issue there with spacing, the sizing. The cost wasn't too bad except for one particular venue that that wanted more money than we would have even made from selling tickets to rent the place out, which I understand the reasons, but I won't bash them online or publicly.

I can tell you offline sometimes.

Then I said, okay, well, I still wanna go to Texas 'cause I know that a large portion of our audience is in Texas.

- Do you know that from analytic data?

Is that what it is?

Is that how you targeted in this kind of Western area,

Vegas, Texas type stuff? Well, we honestly, since all of LSM lives on, well, Chris did, but he doesn't anymore, but all of us lived on the East Coast, it's easier for us to do shows here,

but we know that people want us to come other parts of the country. And so I was just trying to think of like a place that would be good. We tried to go to Vegas, which is a little further west, but couldn't do that. And then to get to California, it was going to be even more money and less time. So again, it was just kind of a, and so yeah, we have some analytics that show us

general areas of the country people are in.

And then of course, just like I'm in, we have like 5,000 people in our discord.

I communicate with people there and here and see the things they're talking about and also see feedback on posts

when we say where we wanna go
and you see a lot of feedback
and obviously that's just the loud people
and I don't mean that derogatory,
just the loud people who are talking.
- Vocal minority within a community,
it doesn't necessarily have to be a minority of people.
could be a very maybe Texas is either way I don't know right well if
everything's bigger there so it makes sense they'd also be louder yes yeah so
yeah it's um basically that's I mean it just kind of came down to well I know we
have a lot of people in Texas and also it's easy to get to Texas from almost
everywhere so let's do it there yeah and so yeah finally found a venue that would
work and basically from there I mean it just goes like you know communicate with
the venue, get dates, communicate that with the team, confirm a date that everybody can
make it,
put a deposit down in the venue, start working with their production manager to plan out,
you know, timing and lighting and microphones and what the setup's going to be and, you
know,
how the the green room's going to be set up, whatever. And just everything that goes along
with booking a venue and doing a show, and then having to book insurance because you
need to have event insurance required for many venues and most venues, any good venue.
You need to have event insurance. I assume that's not calling Geico.
You could, I suppose, if you want to use Geico. Does Geico do that?
I don't know if they do event insurance. Is flow progressive, you know, bundle your car,
home and rent insurance. Yeah, I have a feeling if you called Geico and got an agent and said,
"I would like to pay you money for this," they would figure out a way to do it. Whether it was
through Geico or they like went through a third party and then charged a little bit of a, you
know,
whatever. I'm sure they could do it. Anybody who sells insurance can probably figure out. Yeah.
Yeah. And then booking all the, you know, flights and hotels and everything like that. And then
moving on to ticketing and getting that set up with a venue and getting an announcement out.
So
there's a lot to it. I'm happy to dive into any specific piece of it if you want or just to say
like it's pretty much anything that could possibly be involved with the show. Somebody has to
do it.
Somebody has to set it up. So it's a long process for sure. Talk to me about the production
side,
coordinating with the production people over at whatever venue it is because Dustin said you
guys
hired another crew to film it. I forget the company's name, but they filmed it and Dustin
edited it and that's up for \$5 patrons right now. I'm curious about actually sounding good
in the space for the people that are there. And then I know there isn't an audio version
of this particular show, but you know, it's all got to sound good. Everyone's got to look
good on stage. What is that like? Yeah, well, one of the nice things about not doing these
DIY is that generally when you're renting out one of these spaces, you know that you're
also hiring professionals that are oftentimes either full-time at the venue or they're union
employees who work there full-time, you know, part of a union, whatever. Just that they
have some credentials that they've done this before. And so, for the most part, like, they
need to be told how you want lighting. And not specifically, like, they do the two professional
venues. I've booked venues before for other things, but for LSM specifically, the two
venues I booked so far, they give me, like, a full engineering schematic of their lighting
rig, a full engineering schematic of all their controls, a full schematic of all of their
sound and everything and show me exactly what they have. So I can kind of go through there
and pick out what we want to use and how we want lights to be. But for the most part,

I'm like, "Hey, we're going to have a person standing here while other people sit here, and we need that to be lit, and it could be in this color scheme." And it's not like I actually have to go through and tell them, "Okay, well, left can four, I need to be pointing 90 degrees." No, you generally don't have to do that. If you're doing a Broadway show or something you would, you'd want to do that and have your own people. But for the most part it's like, our shows aren't complicated, but they do need to have a little bit of organization behind them. So generally I'll fill out like a schematic, which is just a fancy way of saying a diagram where I draw some circles on it, and give it to them to tell them about where I want the lights to be. And then still once we get there, they're going to go up and adjust them and everything on the catwalk. And then telling them how many mics are involved

giving them a rough schedule of when those mics are going to be used, when they should all be on,

when none of them should be on, when one in the crowd is gonna be on, that kind of thing. And then, you know, you still have to run over that with them before the show actually starts, like in a kind of a sound check situation. But for the most part, like, that's the benefit of working with people who that's their living, is that you don't have to babysit them and be like, "I think the gain needs to be a little higher and the bass is too high." Like, they that's their job they do that right that you you talking about like how many mics make sense but like when they should be on like that kind my baby was like their mics are on all the time so is there's like rehearsal of any kind we did like us we do like a soundcheck yeah we're basically it's just to make sure that nobody's voice is gonna boom too loud or anything for the most part a good sound person can, if they know their equipment, can do that stuff on the fly.

- Right.

- Especially for a show like ours.

Again, a musical or something more crazy, they might need to get a little more toned in.

But for the most part, it's just like, this person is going to be speaking.

Here's a pre-prepared video

that we need to have the volume already, know where the volume already needs to be for that, that kind of thing.

But for the most part, yeah, we do a sound check briefly and just get everybody mic'd up and everything to make sure that everything's working correctly.

And then give them some cues, a rough outline, or a very detailed outline if you're me, of the show.

And yeah, I over prepare probably.

Like I could go in there and be like, okay, we're gonna have these people talk, and then we're gonna have a video at some point.

And the person would probably be like, cool, I got it.

But me, I like, seven o'clock, this happens.

705 this happens and Mike one two and five are on this that you know like I'm much more over-prepared

Kind of person for that kind of stuff because I've been the sound guy many times in my life

For many years at a time, and I'm like I want to know exactly what's happening

So I try to afford other people that same opportunity. I love that, but I definitely be over prepared that totally

Is how I would want to do something. It's like this is the plan here's the

the schedule of how the whole show's gonna go.
How do you plan for more,
spontaneous doesn't feel right, but like natural moments?

A joke could really hit,
and maybe it's the, or someone goes off script possibly?

I know these evening with last stands
are keynotes essentially of a presentation,
and people are up there and they have jokes,
and the surprise is A, for the audience,
and then my understanding is the other members
don't know what one person is going to talk about.

Maybe that's all a lie, I don't know.

- No, that's true, yeah, that's 100% true.

- So how do you plan for the actual spontaneity of it?

- I think that's--

- Or is that just, we trust the crew on the fly to be good?

- Yeah, I mean, we're working with people here

who are on multiple podcasts a week,
and some of them, it's their literal profession,
most of them, it's their profession.

You know, Matty, he wasn't at the last event, but the fact that he constantly is talking
to the public and making videos, and Cog is on all sorts of podcasts and he works in a
professional setting, and Dustin, Chris, and Colin are all podcasting all the time.

Really the content of the show, other than the fact that I need to put together all the
presentations and PowerPoints and stuff like that, the content of the show is not something
I have to handle.

If I'm asked for feedback or something like that about something, then I'm certainly happy
to give that feedback before or after the show.

But pretty much, I just need to get everything set up and then kind of give them a run of
show and maybe occasionally need to keep things on track time-wise.

But as far as the actual content of the show, we don't prepare for that.

And when I say we don't prepare, I don't mean like we literally show up not knowing what
we're doing.

whatever somebody says they say, whenever they say it, they say it. That's just what
happens. You let the talent do the job. Right? Yeah. Because I mean, while I would like to
do that a little more, that's not my role. So pretty much it's just like, okay, I'm
going to tell you the order of when people are talking. But what you talk about and how
you do it is not any of my concern at this point. So you knew the whole presentation
before him. Mm-hmm, yeah, I get everything in advance and put it together. So, when you're
preparing all of this, are you, are the jokes hitting with you? Sometimes, but like, for
instance, you know, Kog's presentation, for instance, on this last one, I guess I won't
say what the game was because there may be, I don't want to go check it out later, but
let's say Kog's presentation, he picks a game and I get to see his slides, but if it's just
a slide with a picture on it, I have no idea what he's going to say. I just know there's
a slide with a picture on it. Whereas other people, like Chris for instance, and he doesn't
read off of it, but in the Google slide or PowerPoint, you actually can put in presenter
notes. And he will put those in for his own sake, but he doesn't actually use them during
the show. He does that so he can look through it and memorize it, and then he just goes
off memory. But like, so that, when I see, I'm like, "What the heck is this slide? Like,
why is this picture on there?" With Chris, at least, I know. So like, yeah, there is
some sense in which I know and the jokes are hitting, but sometimes I think that's better,
because there have, has been at least two instances of me being like, "This might not
be good to say," or something like that, you know, like, "This comes across a little differently
than you think it's coming across.

So, but for the most part,
whatever their presentations are,
as long as I can get them to present
on the screen correctly,
I don't interfere or give feedback.

It's their thing.

- Cool, I like it.

It sounds exciting, quite frankly.

It's so different from doing this,
what we're doing right now.

It's, there's an energy to that.

And just listening to how it goes is exciting to me.

And I can only imagine being in there. Is that what it feels like or is it more the
we've been preparing for this for so long and you know people have paid to come out and like
it's more of

We got to get this done right or does that excitement that I'm feeling does that something you
feel as well?

Maybe excitement is the right word and maybe it's not I'm not sure for me. It's more of a
I'm fueled by busyness and anxiety.

So for me it's much more of a "I need to get all of this perfect before we get there
so that when we get there, it's perfect."

And it never is.

I mean, nothing's ever going to be the way.

I've planned enough things in my life to know that you make plans just for them to
be changed.

But the hardest part, honestly, the most exciting part is that I've spent months planning
these things, and everybody else is thinking about their presentation, whatever, but then
they get there and they're like, "Oh, what about this one thing?" And I'm like, "Yeah,
I've already got that worked out." And meanwhile, they're like making preparations because
they

think it's not worked out, and I'm like, "I planned, I like figured that out two months
ago. It's fine. We're good." And then they've changed it, and then I have to be able to
roll with those punches. And then sometimes they need to be able to roll with my punches
because I need to change things because the projector is in a different format than I
thought it was going to be or something, you know, something silly like that, that that
wasn't a real example. That was just a speculation.

That's something I've dealt with. So yeah, I know. Yeah, I have to not with this particular
situation, but so it's a high energy thing for me. And sometimes I'm like, why isn't
everybody else as concerned as I am? And I'm like, oh yeah, because they literally just
have to walk out on stage and talk.

I have to make sure that the floor is there.

I mean, it's just a joke, but yeah.

- I gotcha, I feel you.

So that kind of leads me, I guess, to the next evolution,
I suppose, of this type of planning of a live event.

Colin has openly said that he wants to go to Europe
in some capacity.

I'm not looking for the scoop here of when or where.

I'm just curious, so I assume him saying,

"I want to go to Europe," means you've at least done
some initial research on that.

And it being across the pond from us,

I'm sure there's more dynamics that you have to consider
besides people having their passports not be expired.

- Right.

- What can you tell me about dabbling in international venue research?

- Well, the first thing I'll say is, that I've told Collin too, is I would really like for Collin to not tell people where we're going next before we have it figured out.

When we were going to Vegas or when I said I wanted to go to Vegas, I was like, I want to go to Vegas, but I don't want to tell anybody yet. He's like, yeah, yeah.

And then like 10 minutes later, he's like, I think we want to go to Vegas next.

I'm like, call him. But that's just, I mean, that's fine.

It's his company. He can do whatever he wants. I was just like,

But as the editor, you could just remove that.

Maybe, yeah. It's not that big of a deal. It's more just a joke. But I'm like,

I think that would be awesome, you know, to go to London. But at the time he started talking about it, we hadn't done any real research on it. And that's, again, like,

where there's a will, there's a way. We'll go. But now, no, we definitely have started,

I started looking at places specifically in London because that's like, if we're gonna go over, that's the place to play, right? So, there are a lot more things involved.

When you talked earlier about how, like, when you're looking at a place, I'm in Pennsylvania, I'm looking at a place in Texas, figuring it out is, figuring out where is even more difficult overseas because sometimes you may be reading, not in London or England necessarily,

but you may be reading a different language or they're measuring things in different forms than you're used to, so you got to go convert it. And their time zone, they're five hours ahead. So by the time, because I work at night, by the time I'm getting up, they're almost done with work by the day. So everything takes a little longer. And it's just, there's a lot more details to consider. And then of course, yeah, like you said, making sure everybody has their passports. Organizing international travel is always a little bit more difficult.

You're in a new place in a new city. Will my cell phone work? Will Uber work? Traveling is easier now than it's ever been internationally, but at the same time, many people haven't extensively traveled overseas, so they don't know what to expect. And just trying to make sure that everything is as foolproof as it can be, and giving people all the information, and then hoping that they read that information.

So you have to give them enough information that they know what's going on,

but not so much that they just zone out and don't read it.

So that's a hard balance for me sometimes.

And just, yeah, just making sure everything is as coherent as it can be.

So we're hoping to go there.

I think Colin has said publicly, we're hoping to go there this year.

I will be totally honest and say at the,

on what's today, the 6th of April,

I do not have a venue lined up,

but I have a few that I'm actively talking to.

- Okay.

- Yeah, so it's, yeah, there's a lot of hurdles that go into it, but we're--

- I would imagine, yeah.

- We're working for it.

And we'd like to do another show in the States this year as well, but that's very dependent

upon the timing of the Europe show.

- Well, you know, you could just throw a show together here in two weeks for Chris's boxing debut, you know, you could--

- Yeah, yeah, that's what, 10 days or so.

- I'm going, I'm gonna go.

- Are you, you're going?

- Oh, that's right, 'cause you're close, yeah.

- I am close, Tampa's only a few hours away.

- Right. - And to be honest,

when Chris said he was boxing in Creator Clash,

I was like, oh, that sounds cool, it's in Tampa again.

And then he was fighting Froggy Fresh at the time,

and I was like, I remember Froggy Fresh,

that's just silly to me.

Now unfortunately, Froggy has been removed from the card for, I tried looking into it. - Whatever.

- It seems like some dramatic, I don't know.

- Yeah, some kind of internal issues, yeah, it seems like.

- So Chris at this particular day of recording

doesn't have a publicly announced opponent, but he will have someone to fight. And so I'm still excited to see him and other people on the card. It'll be great. But I am slightly bummed that it's not Froggy Fresh because I really wanted Chris to win that one.

I think Dustin and I are going to get together and get the pay-per-view and watch it. So

it should be fun. Yeah, well, it should be a lot of fun. I'm excited about it. The trip

stuff sounds really exciting from just so many new things to try. I don't know. It

sounds exciting to me as if I was gonna plan these types of things. That's fun to

just think about and explore new audience potential and venues and places

and do all sorts of stuff. It's pretty neat. It's kind of interesting because we know we

have a large European audience but we also know Europe isn't one city. Yeah. So

So it's like, well, let's say we do a show in London. Is our audience from Germany and

Africa and wherever else little pockets of our audience, are they going to come? Are

we going to end up with 75 people there or are a thousand people going to try to buy

tickets? So that's another aspect of that, just being in a different place than normal.

Will that be feasible or not? How will that go? So there's a lot of unknowns there, but

exciting unknowns to me. Yeah and then you can use that to plan future

international shows see what kind of response you get I would imagine and

everything's more condensed over there as far as geographically speaking you

can get right people from all over coming to one spot seems much easier

that's my understanding yeah yeah which is cool that's really neat before before

Before we wrap everything up,

I wanted to ask about your other production job,

which has nothing, well, I won't say nothing.

It could involve audio, I'm not sure.

- Yeah.

- But you're also an associate producer over at Lily Mo,

which, as we mentioned earlier,

Colin owns a sizable chunk of,

and I'm blanking on the other person's name who owns it,

what's his name?

- Barry Johnson.

- Barry Johnson.

- Is the founder and majority owner, yeah.

- Yes, of Lily Mo.

So I was curious how publishing or associate producing video games is different than podcasts.

In every conceivable way possible, I guess. It's like a totally different thing. It's interesting because I would imagine an associate producer at Lily Mo is much different than an associate producer at Naughty Dog or something like that. Like my, yes, my workload is quite

different, I would imagine, and the types of things I do are much different than that.

So pretty much with Lily Mo, it's, you know, the production team, the development team, which is majority Barry, but of course we have some contractors who do, you know, anything from art to music to writing, stuff like that. Just depends on what Barry needs at the time.

They kind of work with their pace, and then Barry lets me know when things need to be handled. I think generally a producer would kind of dictate that schedule, but since it's such a small team and it's Barry's team and he's the lead, like, it's his pace, basically.

So, pretty much just when things are coming to storefronts, when things are going to need to be put on sale, when things, you know, we need to get a trailer uploaded, that kind of stuff, like, I handle all of that and organizing, getting that information to myself and then to the different platforms.

So working with Steam and Nintendo and Xbox and PlayStation, all of them have vastly different storefronts.

And they're all a little bit different to work with.

And some of them you communicate exclusively through email.

And other ones you do everything and never hope to talk to a person.

And some of them have ticket systems.

And so it's just figuring out what they all want.

And then because we're not putting out a ton of games,

we're not a big publisher or something,

a lot of those policies and things change from month to month and year to year. And because I'm not in it every day, those things are easy to have to relearn. So that's another little intricacy of it. But yeah, it's an interesting perspective on the industry for sure and seeing some of those things come through the back end of the PlayStation Network.

When they were coming out with game trials, I knew all that information a month before it hit, you know, the the news cycle and we're in the back like thinking this is not a like this is not something we thought would ever happen and here it is and then you get to see the media react to it a month after you already had time to process the information.

So interesting perspective for sure. Yeah, that reminds me of when I was working at Disney and as a technical writer, I'd be privy to company plans of attractions being planned out years in advance. So then like D23 rolls around and Disney goes, "Oh, we're gonna do Princess and the Frog redo of, oh my gosh, Splash Mountain or the Tron roller coaster here in Disney World." And so those things obviously are public and happening right now, but you know, when they announce new stuff I'm like, "Ah, I knew about that a year ago."

And there's stuff that I still know about that isn't out yet. And so I'm waiting for my knowledge to actually lapse and so something new can actually be announced and I didn't know about it in some way shape or form. So it's fun to have that perspective be like I wonder what everyone's going to say when this is finally announced.

Or you're like when's this thing getting announced? Meanwhile they canned it two years ago and

you didn't know about it.

Oh that's true because now I'm out of the circle so I've you know there are projects that have probably definitely been nipped and tucked since I've left because money, budget, whatever, Disney does all sorts of stuff.

Yes, oh gosh.

I'll probably be sworn to secrecy forever by the mouse.

- That's probably true.

- Yeah, they'll come after me eventually.

- And they will know if you tell.

- Well then they'll have to listen to the show.

- I mean, that's the funny thing though is that I wouldn't put it past Disney, for better or worse, to actually like go and listen to former employees' side projects or something like that.

That's crazy.

- Probably to a degree.

Are they worried about the technical writer?

- Probably not as much, but a former imagineer leaves and maybe starts a podcast or works at a different theme park or design firm or whatever, probably a bit more keeping eyes on things to protect copyright and all sorts of stuff 'cause Disney controls it all.

Don't worry Disney, I won't share my secrets, too many of them.

The Star Wars Hotel.

I took pictures of that, I can say that.

I took pictures of the hotel with no one in it.

That was fun. - Nice.

- That, duality feels like the wrong word, but like having one foot in and one foot out of the publishing, production side of things, and the reporting, covering, video game side, we kind of talked about it at the top of the show with your being the mayor of the town, and you gained new perspective or insight on things like you knew beforehand, but then you actually did them, so you maybe learned a bit more.

I'm curious how that applies here to video games.

And you've helped release some video games out into the world,

but you also still talk about games on a regular basis and work for a company that does so weekly quite extensively.

So what is that like for you?

- It's interesting because my, since 2008, 2009, I've been making, in various forms and at various times, content about video games, and sometimes much more in-depth than others, and sometimes with much more frequency than others.

But I've always just--

I've been interested in not only talking about games, but also the actual development of games.

And I think the more I'm on the back end of the games, the more I'm realizing, like, I don't necessarily

like the production -- I like the productions work on podcasts and stuff, but I don't love -- I don't dislike it either, but I don't love the production work on the back end of video games. I think with video games I want to be a little bit more creative, but I also don't know that that's actually something I want to do. Like, that's just -- I think

if I had to choose something in video games production, I would probably choose more creative than anything else. Now, with that said, I'm not an artist, and I don't know how to code. writing would probably be my thing, which is something I've had some experience with in the past. But so it's just interesting seeing what I like and don't like. And then with -- it's really hard because with producing content for video games for so long, and by producing I mean like actually being the content, making the content, as opposed to just editing it, I've -- that's something I've always been interested in. And that's -- it is difficult sometimes to feel like I don't have a lot of creativity. Because if I were doing like audio documentaries or something like that, then being able to inject like my own flavor, I guess you could say, into a show is much easier than just editing words that someone says. I think it's still important and I think it's still necessary. But that's one, like, that's one of the reasons that I stream and I do YouTube, both just as a hobby, but because I need to have that little bit of creative outlet. And I feel like I don't have almost any creative outlet in my professional stuff, which is why I, again, for the 9 millionth time in my life, have extra hobbies that I turn into work somehow. Because you know how that is. It's just, I can't help myself. I need to do that. So, I really enjoy all the things I do professionally, but I think everybody, including me, needs those hobbies on the side to do the things that you really want to do and you don't have the opportunity to do professionally.

I totally, I'm totally feeling what you're saying. Because I, when it dawned on me listening to podcasts beyond when I was a Kmart stock boy, and I was like, "Oh my gosh, people get paid to talk about video games. How do I do that?" Like that set me on the career path to the journalism degree to ultimately doing the show.

And when that dawned on me, and I started working at outlets, you know, freelance and then other stuff, but at a point I just kinda hit burnout and was doing like three or four different shows at a time and writing for sites that just, I had no passion for the site or what we were doing and so I would just, I took like a break for a little bit. And it dawned on me that I really needed to just have my own space, my own thing pour into, not be dictated by, here's the SEO trends we need to be chasing right now of, you know, here's the Diablo 4 beta, how to buh buh buh buh buh. 'Cause I used to work guides, and so like you're inundated with Google Trends. For example, my experience with Red Dead Redemption 2 was actually getting to play the story on my own pace, 'cause I ended up having to do all the side stuff of, here's all the legendary animals. So I spent so much time just hunting a legendary cougar, a legendary moose. And so part of my memories of that game are just chasing gold animals on a map. And it warps it to a degree, and I don't know how useful that information is to people. I guess people care 'cause they pursue it, but--

- Sure.
- Part of me will never be able to separate Red Dead, burning my PS4 on a Christmas trip, and just hunting a legendary cougar in the hotel room

'cause it had to get up and I had to do it.

But then there's also the,

I got to play this game earlier or that game early and separate things.

But now that I have my own space, my own show,

I mean that's kind of the whole point of the name

of this show, the Max Frequency Podcast.

It's podcasting at my frequency.

Last year, I think there were five episodes.

I included one with Colin.

This year, I've already surpassed that

and will definitely double if not triple that.

you know it's just but it feels good because there's no pressure and I get to do what I want right and that's the thing like with the YouTube channel like I'm my goal for myself is to do one video a week and if I can do more than that that's great but I'm not shooting for that I'm shooting

for one video a week and I've had a couple people who are buddies of mine who are big in the YouTube

space be like you got to get up to three you got to get to three and I'm like I don't want to do

three because then it's a job yeah if it starts actually being a job if it starts actually

benefiting me financially in a significant way, then sure, I'll increase. But like right now,

this is for me. I have other things that I do for money and for other people. I want to do this

because I want to do it. And I totally understand what you're saying there because, yeah, I

think

it's really important to be able to have... It's awesome to do what you love as your career and as

your job, but I think that it's just as important to have things that are only for you.

- Yeah, I totally, same page, Ben, you and me, same page.

- Yeah. (laughs)

- And I think with that, that'll wrap it up.

That's everything that I have for you today.

Thank you so much, Ben, for joining me on the show.

Where can the people find you online?

Of course, Last Stand Media, we've talked about it

the whole show, but where else?

Where can people find you in your work?

- Probably the best place to start is on Twitter.

I post everything that I do there,

but Ben Smith, 2588 is me there.

And then my new venture, again,

the side hustle is my YouTube channel.

I just started it in January.

Very happy with it so far, but I'm at Ben is Handsome.

I don't remember my exact tag name.

I probably should figure that out at some point, but--

- Ben is Handsome YT, YouTube.

- There you go.

There you go.

- There'll be links to all of this in the show notes.

You can check Ben's work out there on YouTube, on Twitter,

And of course, you edit every show on Last Damn Media.

So anything you listen to on Last Damn Media,

Ben heard it first, edited it all.

- That's true.

That's true. - I love it.
So thank you all for listening.
If you'd like, you can find my work
over at maxfrequency.net.
You can listen to my other show, Chapter Select,
the seasonal podcast, where we bounce back and forth
between a series exploring its evolution,
design, and legacy.
Season five is going on right now, Resident Evil.
We actually had Dustin Furman on that for Resident Evil 4.
for the original.
Right now I'm playing five and four remake at the same time
and that is an interesting, interesting comparison.
So you can check out that show.
You can follow me on Twitter if you want,
[@MaxRoberts143](https://twitter.com/MaxRoberts143), but all I do there now these days
is just tweet when work goes up.
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Thank you all so much for listening
and until next time, adios.