**6INF0102.mp3**

[00:00:26] **Unidentified** Show you guys, let's do a huge. What's wrong with going right out here? Mr.. Right. What do you.

[00:00:38] **Speaker 1** Rory junior.

[00:00:39] **Speaker 2** How you been?

[00:00:40] **Speaker 1** Good man. Good to see.

[00:00:41] **Speaker 2** You, man. Been a.

[00:00:42] **Speaker 1** Minute. So, full disclosure, you and I do know each other.

[00:00:45] **Speaker 2** Oh, yeah.

[00:00:46] **Speaker 1** And, I had to do this. I was looking through my archives. I pulled up this. Take a look at that.

[00:00:52] **Speaker 2** Wow, bro.

[00:00:55] **Speaker 1** You remember that?

[00:00:55] **Speaker 2** Hang on. Don't tell me. I already know from the shirt. This is before I moved to Los Angeles. This is before. This is pre 2007.

[00:01:05] **Speaker 1** I want to say that's 2008. Great American comedy.

[00:01:08] **Speaker 2** Great American. That was in Omaha, Nebraska.

[00:01:11] **Speaker 1** Johnny Carson, Johnny Carson.

[00:01:13] **Speaker 2** Outside of Omaha to Norfolk.

[00:01:14] **Speaker 1** Lincoln. Was it.

[00:01:16] **Speaker 2** Lincoln? North Norfolk? It was Norfolk, Nebraska.

[00:01:18] **Speaker 1** Of all the places you could dig. You want comedy on state? How you end up here?

[00:01:22] **Speaker 2** Comedy on stage is a legendary club. You start learning the markets that have the rooms that really curate comedy in the right way, and create an environment that's conducive to laughter. It's a basement. The ceiling is low, the lights are all like, it's just a great place for comedy.

[00:01:37] **Unidentified** It's all around downtown Madison. All I saw was college students and like, grown ups looking like they're looking for their college student. Is that why downtown is just as. And just pay off. So what are they?

[00:01:53] **Speaker 2** Madison and this club. It's a legendary town and a lot of big names come through here.

[00:01:59] **Speaker 1** And when we talk Wisconsin, we know that there are other good clubs in the state. We talk skyline. We talk about the old Comedy Cafe. There's an improv, over in Milwaukee now. So what do you look at in terms of how do you determine what a good club and what's the difference between these clubs across the state?

[00:02:14] **Speaker 2** This club is still to me, the best you know of that whole lot. They're big laughs here. Also this is a college town because it's a college town. There's also a higher level of intelligence in the business. We call it comedy IQ. And this city has a high comedy IQ. Also because it's a capital city, it has a different feel. So you can come in and address certain topics that are relevant here that connect to the rest of the world. The morning of my funeral, three hours before is to start. The entire family finds out that Uncle Derek still has a flip flop house.

[00:02:48] **Speaker 1** What's funny about Wisconsin?

[00:02:53] **Speaker 2** For me, what was funny about Wisconsin is always been y'all just act like it's not cold. Like, even on the way in, it's just people ice fishing, like. Why do you have to think of stuff to do outside when it's cold? Just inside. Find inside. Things to do.

[00:03:13] **Unidentified** Go inside Madison and there's this key in the house. I'm standing on the lake looking for fish. Fish at the grocery store. How much pressure do you need your fish to be?

[00:03:27] **Speaker 1** But what comes to mind when you talk Wisconsin politics? Anything stick out?

[00:03:31] **Speaker 2** Well, Wisconsin is a different place. You know, when you talk about politics, I'm not overly familiar with everything on a local level, just on a day to day. But it has been interesting with The Daily Show to be able to look at issues that have happened here and as they connect, you know, to the bigger conversation to see it in action. We headed to the Madison, Wisconsin Police Department, one of the few in the country that has an extensive anti-bias program. My first ever Daily Show piece we shot in Madison. We spoke with the, Chief of police, Mike Koval, about the police bias training that they put in Madison police through. And, you know, with, with regards to the the horrible, horrible tragedy where, you know, an officer shot an unarmed black man. And so I don't think that Wisconsin is that different from anywhere else in the world, where you have issues that are happening at a local and state level that can still be used to help have that conversation about what's happening nationally.

[00:04:28] **Speaker 1** How difficult is it for you to joke about politics? In this, in this new environment?

[00:04:33] **Speaker 2** I don't find it difficult to joke about politics. I just think I just think some people find it difficult to laugh about it. The comedians job has never changed. You know, we love to act like all of a sudden, the difficulty level of the occupation of comedian has been turned up to ten oh oh. No, I can't play it. It's like they put it on all Madden and now you can't beat the computer. It's the job. It's the same. My job is to talk about things, hopefully from a perspective that you may not have considered or make light of it all together with no solutions in hand. And either you laugh or you don't. I live in New York now.

[00:05:10] **Speaker 1** If people have noise canceling headphones, how do you live? Like in this world? You don't need to hear a lot of noise.

[00:05:20] **Speaker 2** At the end of the day, we're living in a society now where people have opportunities. You know, people don't live in vacuums, opinion vacuums anymore. They can say that they don't like something. That's only difference time. And it's not harder. It's just everybody has a phone, they have a social media account. There's people that are willing to listen. There are groups that organize against people who go, hey, that I don't like the way that joke made me feel. I don't like the way what you're talking about makes me feel. And those people have every right in the world to say and position themselves as such. And I think as a comedian, we've always been saying these things.

[00:05:56] **Speaker 1** Doesn't matter to you, who you poke fun at.

[00:05:59] **Speaker 2** For me, funny is funny. You know, I'm just more of a policy person when it comes to the things that I choose to talk about on stage. I don't really talk about people specifically. Like if you go through my three hour specials, there's not a lot of indictments of persons. It's an indictment of systems and policies because the people change the policy, stay the same. The policies are what are the standing racist legacies of, you know, our forefathers, this country's forefathers. Right. Rather. So I'd rather poke at that and little it back. And when you do that it tends to rest a little bit more in a middle ground.

[00:06:36] **Unidentified** I don't know how many good times we need either, because the cost of doing a job which when given tickets, matters and I'm pulling nobody over since 2008, that's.

[00:06:46] **Speaker 2** If you talk about police reform, there's always going to be somebody in the audience who feels like you're talking bad about the police. But if you just calm down for a second and listen to what I'm saying, I think you'll find that there is a little bit of a middle ground in my POV, so I can't go on stage to talk about that and concern myself with what someone who's opposed to any type of reform. Oh, okay. Care what you think about that.

[00:07:09] **Speaker 1** How is, speaking of what people think, how is the cancel culture affected how you approach the thinking?

[00:07:15] **Speaker 2** Cancel culture hasn't affected how I put anything together. And, you know, I really push back against this concept that cancel culture exists. You know, there isn't a comedian that has told a joke in the last 5 to 7 years who is in jail. There isn't a comedian who has lost the opportunity or the space to perform, and there are tons of people lining up to pay money to see all of their favorite comedians see the things that they enjoy in. So if you still have a place to come and do this as an occupation, I don't. I don't believe there's a concept of being canceled.

[00:07:56] **Speaker 1** Is it just about a laugh? Or just as every thing you talk about have to have some sort of a point?

[00:08:05] **Speaker 2** I don't feel like every joke I make has to have a point. But it's good if it does. You know I'm not. I'm not here to lecture people. You know, my last special and perfect messenger. You know, there was police reform stuff, but then it was also prison reform. And at the core of it, that story was more about me and what I was going through than it was about, hey, not everybody should go to jail forever. That's implied and it's understood. And if you leave with that, great. If not, hopefully you leave with a better understanding of how you choose to discard people who've made mistakes. If you're talking about things that are relatable and things that people can connect with on an emotional level, inherently it's going to be worth more than just a laugh to a lot of folks.

[00:08:56] **Speaker 1** In the work you do on The Daily Show, do you feel like that has an impact on voters? Does it move the needle?

[00:09:01] **Speaker 2** I'd say yeah, in some regards. I think so. I don't think that's the goal of the show. The goal of the show is to make you laugh and make sense of this. So you're not yelling at a wall every day. That's it. That's. Did you laugh? Yes. All right. Great. See you tomorrow night at 11. That's the goal of the show. But, you know, I would be. It would be in disrespect to the people that watch the show if I didn't acknowledge this sometimes, you know. Here's what's weird about working at the Daily Show. When I started, you know, as just a comedian, wrote comic, a little bit of sitcom stuff, but for the most part, I was a road comedian. I didn't do a lot of acting. I wasn't cast in a lot of stuff, so people would know me from TV appearances, doing comedy and even go, hey, you're very funny. When I started at The Daily Show and as things matriculated year after year, people would come up to me who saw me on The Daily Show, who knew me from The Daily Show, and they would say, hey, thank you. And it's a different type of compliment, and there's a level of appreciation from a lot of people for what we do and the things that we talk about, and that we're able to kind of bring a little bit of a light to whether or not these things affect policy every single day or every single year. You know, that's a metric that's hard to measure based on one news package or whatever. I can't prove that we change policy, but I do believe that we, you know, make people's lives a little better.

[00:10:33] **Speaker 1** And as a comedian, what do you think your role is in the conversation on race? How do you think you're impacting race?

[00:10:40] **Speaker 2** Oh, I don't know what my role is. You know, when it comes to solving racism. Like I'm just here to talk about it a little bit and hopefully we laugh about it and somebody is able to take a deep breath and go out to work the next day and endure it. And hopefully together we all come up with policies or to give you a little bit of energy to keep fighting, to try and make the world a better place, you know? But I've never written a joke about race and in like, oh yeah, this one. Not a white folks gonna stop hating us like I've never written. I don't know if that joke exists, but, you know, I've always enjoyed just being on stage and being able to talk about things that are difficult and make people uncomfortable. And hopefully, you know, for me, the perfect joke is the one that a black person hears and goes, that's what I've been trying to tell you in a white person goes, wow, I never knew that. You don't have the same degree of freedom of expression as you may have had 20 years ago in standup comedy and a lot of traditional venues that, again, if this is about commerce, culture, and we're talking about a club wanting to keep the doors open and not being pressured by local groups who don't like the style of performers that they're booking, sooner or later the club has to decide whether they want to stand for free speech or stay open, and most businesses are going to choose to remain open. So if you want to do something that stirs the pot, you're going to have to find different pots to go and perform that stuff in. I think that's inevitable.

[00:12:08] **Speaker 1** Is anything off limits to you comedically?

[00:12:13] **Speaker 2** I try not to do jokes at the expense of any marginalized communities in middle school. We made fun of some special needs kids, and the principal put us in the special needs class with those children for two weeks, and we did all of the schoolwork in the special needs class, and that moment lives with me forever. I appreciate you coming out and risking Covid in a basement.

[00:12:37] **Speaker 1** Have you noticed a difference in the audiences since Covid?

[00:12:40] **Speaker 2** You know, I was wild about comedy since Covid is that I feel like the audiences are more electric. I think that the people that are out really want to be out, and they really want to laugh. Comedy is a release. Comedy is about like when you think about the idea of comedy just as an occupation, you've made a decision. That I need to laugh. I need to laugh so bad. I need a professional. The TV can't help me. TikTok is not enough. I need to go to a room where there is a laugh man. A laugh person on stage. I can't call it two times. I call home crying and wake up when I call. I called off original recipe.

[00:13:27] **Unidentified** I don't know if that's the name of it. Yeah, I know that Delta. Delta was the upgrade. It was one of the.

[00:13:36] **Speaker 2** I'm not going to say the comedy they do on comedy now feels like 2019 again, but it definitely is close. And it's definitely. We're in a time where people are dealing with a lot of pain, a lot of suffering, that everyone has lost someone to Covid. So at this point, it really does feel like the people who are coming out to laugh are coming because they need to laugh, not because they just, you know, it was either this a bowling, it doesn't feel like that anymore. Feels like they specifically came for laughter.

[00:14:06] **Speaker 1** What do you like most about Wisconsin?

[00:14:08] **Speaker 2** What do I like most about Wisconsin? Cheese curds and a burrito place in Appleton. I can't remember the name of La Bamba Farm.

[00:14:15] **Speaker 1** But I don't know.

[00:14:16] **Speaker 2** If they're still open. I hope they survive Covid bill Obama was amazing.

[00:14:19] **Speaker 1** Yeah, it was good. Other than yourself, who makes you laugh?

[00:14:22] **Speaker 2** My son makes me laugh. My son and my mother. Easily the two funniest people I know.

[00:14:31] **Speaker 1** You've got a chance to have a 30 minute conversation with anyone. Who's that going to be?

[00:14:35] **Speaker 2** Charles? This.

[00:14:39] **Speaker 1** What actor plays you in a movie?

[00:14:43] **Speaker 2** Kenan Thompson.

[00:14:48] **Speaker 1** That's a good one. At least you didn't say Denzel. And, last question. If you weren't in the business of making people laugh, what do you think you'd be doing?

[00:15:01] **Speaker 2** Firefighter. That's why I was headed to the firefighting or sports center. Firefighters get the same. Hero loves cops. They get none of the public scrutiny. You never looked at a firefighter and wanted to yourself if he's.

[00:15:14] **Speaker 1** One of the good ones. A junior. Thank you for being you, man.

[00:15:20] **Speaker 2** Thank you brother. Good to.

[00:15:21] **Speaker 1** See. Good to see you doing.

[00:15:22] **Speaker 2** Oh good stuff.