

AT Banter Podcast Episode 338 - Diane Newman

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SPEAKERS

Diane Newman, Steve Barclay, Lis Malone, Ryan Fleury, Rob Mineault

R

Rob Mineault 00:43

Hey and welcome to another episode of AT Banter.

S

Steve Barclay 00:47

Banter

R

Rob Mineault 00:52

Wow, only one "banter" today. I don't know what's gonna what's going on? Hey, this is of course, the podcast where we talk with advocates and members of the disability community to educate and inspire better conversation about disability. Hey, my name is Rob Mineault, and joining me today .. I don't even I don't know what the what order to do this anymore. Mr. Ryan Fleury.

R

Ryan Fleury 01:17

Hello again everybody.

R

Rob Mineault 01:18

Feel like if I do it fast people won't notice. And Miss Lis Malone.

L

Lis Malone 01:22

Hey there, everyone.

R

Rob Mineault 01:23

And Mr. Steve Barclay. Good day. See, that seemed to work. I do it fast. No one complains about the order. Hey, how the heck is everybody?

S

Steve Barclay 01:43

Frustrated. I already mentioned that though.

R

Rob Mineault 01:48

You did, but that was off mic. Yeah. So apparently you're having AT problems.

S

Steve Barclay 01:53

Google account problems.

R

Rob Mineault 01:59

Yeah. You know what I hate is Microsoft accounts.

S

Steve Barclay 02:03

Yeah, it's worse than Google accounts.

R

Rob Mineault 02:07

Well, maybe not in the sense that if you because you're fighting with security part of it. But I just hate how Microsoft account. They really want to make that a thing. And I don't want it to be a thing. I don't want to Microsoft account.

R

Ryan Fleury 02:15

And then sometimes they'll ask you to use the Microsoft authenticator app which I've tried, it doesn't work. Yeah, just stop making the thing. I don't want to have to log into everything in my life. I just want to be able to turn something on and just have it work.

S

Steve Barclay 02:33

Exactly. Yeah.

L

Lis Malone 02:35

I lose my index finger I'll never be able to log into anything ever.

R

Ryan Fleury 02:43

That's why I don't use fingerprint sets.

R

Rob Mineault 02:44

Yeah, that's a really good point. I do that too. And I've started to like incorporate my like anything that says oh, do you want to just use your fingerprint to to log in? I'm like, yes, yes, please. But you're right, like that's a concern now because maybe if it does ever get severed, I'm just going to tell them to put it in a baggie and so I can keep it.

L

Lis Malone 03:08

I'm gonna like start wearing those gloves everywhere. Like you know those hand models that have to protect their hands. No, I just need to be able to log in.

R

Ryan Fleury 03:18

I can see that too.

R

Rob Mineault 03:21

Yeah, forget to forget the card that says "do not revive". I'll be like if if index fingers severed, please keep.

L

Lis Malone 03:30

I'm going to will it to somebody right. The keys to my kingdom. There you go. My index finger.

R

Rob Mineault 03:36

Exactly. So Wow. All right. Well, that's off to a morbid start. Excellent. Well, how about how about Lis, are you feeling better? You were sick last week.

L

Lis Malone 03:51

I'm feeling really great because right now Florida is whipping the Canes.

 R Rob Mineault 03:59

You want to do a hockey update? Yeah, ok, fine. We haven't done a hockey thing for a while. So let's get a little bit of an update on what's going on. So yeah, what's going on?

 L Lis Malone 04:09

Well, my Devils got spanked by the Canes. So that's the whole you know, the enemy of my enemy is my friend. So I actually don't mind the Panthers so right. They're down three games. I'm loving it. This is very this is a happy Lis right now.

 R Rob Mineault 04:30

Steve, what's your take on all of this? I know that the Canucks are long gone, but...

 S Steve Barclay 04:34

Yeah, well the Canucks never made it to the show. But yeah, so we, my buddy and I decided we would be Jets fans and that didn't work out. So then then we decided we would be Edmonton fans and that didn't work out well. So then we decided we're going to be Seattle fans and that's that's not working.

 L Lis Malone 04:56

Work your way down south.

 S Steve Barclay 05:01

I think I think just to just to help you Lis, I'll become a Carolina fan there you go. Guaranteed guaranteed death.

 R Rob Mineault 05:09

The Barclay curse moving across the country

 R Ryan Fleury 05:19

The opposite of a bet.

R Rob Mineault 05:24

well I remember hearing something about the Leafs for a while? Like what what happened with them because I know that they were in the news for a little bit -- what was the significance there?

S Steve Barclay 05:34

Yeah, they lost to Florida.

R Rob Mineault 05:38

But they weren't they were really excited there for a while? Like, did they beat ...

L Lis Malone 05:41

They beat Tampa Bay. Which was like, I mean, huge. I mean, that was like their World Series. And then then the next, the next line up against Florida. They just they tanked.

R Rob Mineault 05:59

Well see, that's a little bit of everything for you. It's something for everybody. Because, you know, for the Leafs fans, they got their moment of glory. And then for everybody else who hates the Leafs, they got to watch them fail spectacularly in the next series. So I feel like that's a win for everybody.

L Lis Malone 06:12

It was still a very exciting season. It's not over yet.

R Rob Mineault 06:19

So where where are they at? Like what's going on? Like, where? What's going on?

L Lis Malone 06:24

They're in their conference finals right now. So there's four teams left.

S Steve Barclay 06:31

So what are what are the four teams?

L

Lis Malone 06:47

It's Vegas, and Dallas. And on the east it's Carolina, and Florida.

R

Rob Mineault 06:55

All right. Vegas.

L

Lis Malone 06:58

Vegas Knights. Yep.

R

Rob Mineault 06:59

All right. Well, it'll be interesting. So stay tuned, everybody.

L

Lis Malone 07:09

All right. You heard it here first. You heard nothing here first. You heard it here on a delay, on a one week delay.

R

Rob Mineault 07:19

That's right. Any guesses who'll win the Cup this year? Let's go around the room real quick before we get started. So Ryan thinks it's Vegas. Lis, what's your prediction?

L

Lis Malone 07:33

I'm gonna take Florida.

R

Rob Mineault 07:35

Steve?

S

Steve Barclay 07:38

I can't possibly pick one without them losing so I'll pass.

R Rob Mineault 07:44

Okay, that's fair. Vegas. I'm gonna pick Vegas. Because just because it'd be fun to for Vegas to win. Have they?

S Steve Barclay 07:58

Yes, they have. They won their first first year in the league.

R Rob Mineault 08:03

Oh, no kidding. Wow, they must be really good. They must have a like a lot of money or something to throw at that team to do so well, being a new team.

S Steve Barclay 08:09

No they money balled it. They picked all the guys that were you know, underrated not getting the the shifts that they thought they were deserving. And they stole them away and made a team out of it.

R Rob Mineault 08:22

Fair.

R Ryan Fleury 08:25

And I still they should bring back the Mighty Ducks.

R Rob Mineault 08:30

I didn't know they were gone.

R Ryan Fleury 08:32

Well, Emilio was not coaching

L Lis Malone 08:38

It hasn't been the same without Paula.

S Steve Barclay 08:47

I got a question.

 Ryan Fleury 08:49

What's that?

 Steve Barclay 08:50

What are we doing this podcast?

 Ryan Fleury 08:52

So our guests this week, she's been broadcasting on the air and being audio describing content for almost 10 years now. So if you've been streaming any sort of online media, chances are you've probably heard her voice talking you through the scenes, the people and the places. Our guest today is Diane Newman. Welcome to the show. Diane.

 Diane Newman 09:14

Thank you for having me. It's pleasure to be here.

 Ryan Fleury 09:16

Glad you could make it.

 Rob Mineault 09:18

So much to talk to you about. But why don't we start with giving us a little bit of a an idea of some of your background because, you know, you weren't always an audio describer. And I'm really curious to sort of hear about your career trajectories through the years. So maybe just give us a little bit of a brief overview of your career and where you started.

 Diane Newman 09:43

Okay, well, I was born at a very early age. No no, I'm a BC girl born in British Columbia, and I grew up in a rural area, just east of Vancouver. So, we didn't have a lot of a lot of entertainment in my childhood. So reading became my, my real passion. As as a kid, I was in a big family. So I had the benefit of all my older siblings to sort of read to me guide me along. And so they're my early part of my childhood was a lot of reading, a lot of music, and a lot of theater. So theater was kind of a lifesaver as it is for a lot of people. And by the time I was in high school, I was really, really into the theater scene. So that's sort of led led, the acting sort of led to two other things. And I, you know, I'll be perfectly honest, I have no post secondary

education. Okay, I'll be quite upfront about that. And so I mean, for a portion of my life, I just sort of, I worked retail, I did, whatever, I worked as a tour guide in a military museum. So but I collect knowledge along the way, this is a bit of a sponge in that regard. So I was living in Squamish BC, and they had a Mom and Pop radio station. And I went in to pitch a thing for our local theater group, and I brought my resume. I said, I can do this job. And the guy kind of looked at me, and okay, maybe he liked my voice or whatever. So, a couple months later, he called me said, Hey, are you still interested? And I said, absolutely interested. So I start, I launched my radio career in 1986, in this Mom and Pop station, and knowing zero about radio, but I learned really quickly on how everything all the mechanics worked, how to put together a break, how to do a back sell, how to do a pre sell, doing commercials, writing, news, copy, delivering the news, timing, and all these things. The timing is so essential for description. I mean, that is as as a describer. Timing is absolutely critical to everything. Because as you know, we don't want to walk on dialogue. We don't want to walk on any music that might be intrinsic to the scene. So from, from the small town, I moved into Vancouver, and then I worked full time News for just about 20 years. So the radio career was over in 2011. And I found myself at odds. And you know, it was it was very difficult for someone who had already worked in the industry for for that length of time. And despite having a somewhat decent reputation in town, I radio just left me and so I didn't know what I was, I saw an ad on TV, and it was for Described Video. So I go on Google, "described video", the first name that came up was Descriptive Video Works, I sent them an email. And Laura Davies, bless her heart, responded the next day, the following day. I went and read some material for her. And I started working for Descriptive Video Works. And that was August of 2013. So that's, that's how I landed in this. And it really is sort of a culmination of everything that I have done in the past because it involves acting. It involves the timing, and, and the more you know, the more you know about the world. Language and everything else that has certainly worked for me in the field of describe video.



Rob Mineault 14:27

But so previous to that though, have you ever even heard of the idea of described video?



Diane Newman 14:32

Yes, yes, I had watched AMI and I was aware that it existed, but I had not really explored it as a potential career. I have friends who are have vision issues, and I mean, I sort of did it automatically with my one buddy Bruce. You know would tell them what everybody's wearing at the party. It just sort of came automatically to me. But it certainly was a revelation to me to find out that it was becoming so much more mainstream than that, what it you know, my perception of it was that it was it was only certain programming that was showing it. And, and I'd see the, the disclaimer at the beginning of this program was available and described video. And I just, I was so wrapped in in the news industry, I mean, I lived and breathed news for 20 years.



Rob Mineault 15:44

It really it sounds like there's, there's a lot of skills that you would build in the broadcast medium, especially radio, and especially something like News Radio, a lot of those skills seem to be really transferable into audio description.

D

Diane Newman 16:01

Most specifically, is the cold read, being able to do a cold read, because that that happens. Every time I go into the studio, here, I am reading a script that I have not laid eyes on until I sit down and open the iPad. And I look at the script and I might, I might take a little glance ahead to see how long a piece might be. And, in news, when you're reading fresh copy that you have not, you've not written somebody else has written. And, and it's a little knack you pick up as you as you're reading, you scan ahead, and you'll pick out words, that might be a trip you up. And you can sort of see where it's going. So it's, that's one of the cool things that I really enjoy with with described video. Because I can I can read the crawl, I'll read the crawl as it's coming across the screen, I have the script in front of me. But I can also read the crawl that and there's similarities between well written news and, and the scripts that our writers produce. I can write a sentence or a news teaser headline, in three words. So it's the words matter. It's, it's not you know, being too verbose about things. And that is, is the words really matter is because it's word economy. And you aren't going to use million dollar words, when a \$10 word will do. Its being able to convey the emotion and the visual in the most concise and entertaining way possible. And because, of course, the time is very limited when you're doing audio description, is you might have three seconds to to put in a line, or describe something. And and you have to be very quick, and you have to be very fast. And you know what you're talking about. And that's part of it is knowing what you're talking about too. So it can be a bit of a challenge. If if the script is something you're not familiar with. I mean, that's why it pays to have a really diverse, you know, a broad interest group of things that you've done and and watched and paid attention to, because I mean, last week I did a - you were talking hockey earlier - I did a little documentary about Henrik Lundqvist. So, you know, I know enough about hockey, "he shoots he scores"...

R

Rob Mineault 19:20

In Steve's case, he shoots and he doesn't score. Yeah.

S

Steve Barclay 19:24

Well, Diane's from the same town as me show so she knows the pain.

D

Diane Newman 19:29

I know the pain.

R

Rob Mineault 19:32

So I'm really fascinated by by the sort of the whole process. I was hoping that maybe you could give us a little bit of insight into sort of how it all works. So you kind of already alluded to this, but so when, when you get brought on to to describe a show or a documentary or whatever it happens to be, you don't necessarily get that script ahead of time. Is that Is that right?

D

Diane Newman 19:57

Not at all. There was only one one instance where I, under the great cloak of secrecy, and it was Narcos, which I did for Netflix. I did all six seasons of Narcos and it was the first episode. And because the DVW was so, so hyped and had worked so long to get on with Netflix, that they sent me a copy of the first episode, so I could watch it and get a feel for the program. And that was really the only the first time that I had actually seen the show. Most, if I know the title, if I'm doing a movie, or it's a new series that's coming out, I'll do a little research on it. Find out who the actors are, what the premise of the show is about what it's, you know, what's going to happen? Is it action? Is it romance? Is it horror, is it drugs, sex, you know? Just to give me a little bit of a, a tip off before I go in and sit in the studio and read the script for it. But it's all fresh.

R

Rob Mineault 21:25

Wow. And so is there is there a sort of a reason for that? Is it that due to sort of time scheduling in terms of like are the writers are just like basically, you know, knocking this out, or just there's really no need for sort of the voice talent to really have that script ahead of time?

D

Diane Newman 21:45

The reason is because as a describer it has to be that I am seeing things for the first time, so I'm not going to lead the listener on if I know something ahead of time that's coming and I'm not going to use my tone of voice or something to tip off the listener as to what's going to happen. It has to be fresh for me, too. So okay, take for instance Breaking Bad. I just, that was phenomenal series. Excellent writing, Darla Beckham was the writer for this. And I had watched, I think the first two or three episodes of Breaking Bad, and then I watched the final episode. That's all I had watched at home on my own time. So when I'm, I'm describing it, it's, it's all new to me. So when I'm when I'm describing the scenes and what's going on, it's all new to me. So I'm reacting as someone who is seeing it for the first time. And there's like a "holy" factor for me. That, of course, that comes out in my delivery too. Because, you know, it's just so bizarre what I'm seeing, and that's going to come out in my delivery, but I don't know what's happening. So I can't, I can't, you know, let, I'm not going to tip people off as to what I know is going to happen next. And that that can be of course easily done with tone of voice. It's like "hey, wait for this one". That's that's why we keep it fresh, so that we don't we don't spoil it. We don't ruin the moment for someone who is who is a viewer.

R

Rob Mineault 23:42

So really, it sounds like the describer is really tailored to be sort of an impartial presence in the whole experience. They're also kind of along the along for the ride with the viewer.

D

Diane Newman 24:00

Exactly. Yes. Yes. We're just we're there to provide the visuals and... and enjoy what's

EXACTLY. ICS. I CP. WE'RE JUST WE'RE THERE TO PROVIDE THE VISUALS AND, AND ENJOY WHAT'S happening. And you know, I mean, there when I first started, it was pretty unemotional. It was just, you know, don't put too much into it. And then when as time went by, particularly with Netflix, they wanted a little more they little wanted a little more emotion, a little more action. So that that's allowed me to sort of expand my delivery a little bit. So it then it becomes more like storytelling, and in the news industry it's telling a story and helping people to care about things. So it I don't judge the emotions that a character might be having on going to describe those emotions. Like with Narcos, Pablo Escobar had had some moments where he he was very, he was overwhelmed. And he was crying. And I'm not going to, I'm not going to take away his emotion. No, he's feeling real emotion and, that's a tender tenderness for him. So I'm going to give him the benefit of that tenderness in my delivery. Just because he's feeling sad. And if it's for, you know, other people to say, well, no, he deserves everything he gets, well, then that's up to them. I'm, always aware of, of the emotions, the real emotions that people are feeling. And that that makes a difference, I think in in for the person who's who's watching the show.

R

Ryan Fleury 26:04

And it probably helps the describer when they get this script from the writer, because I'm sure the writer has to convey those emotions in such a short period of time. And that's something we can ask Darla about next week, because she's on the show. Are there any subjects that you've been not afraid of tackling, but any topics or subject matter that have been difficult for you?

D

Diane Newman 26:30

Um, I pretty much do anything that comes down the pike. You know, I mean, I have done a lot of a lot of shows in, you know, the past almost 10 years, I was doing a little bit of a tally. I mean, for series, it's around closing it on 60 different series, and I've done movies by the dozens and documentaries, and I have a vast interest in in just about everything. So I can I can get on board with with just about everything.

R

Ryan Fleury 27:09

And I have to say that's probably why, you know, you're one of the people that are still working, because you have a consistency in your delivery. You know, as someone who's totally blind, I've seen Narcos, I've seen Breaking Bad I've seen Sex Education. I've seen the Jesse Pinkman movie, I've seen a lot of this stuff or listen to the a lot of the work that you've done. And there's a consistency to that delivery, which really pulls you in as an audience member.

D

Diane Newman 27:34

Oh, that's good. Thank you very much. Yeah I like to be the person sitting next to you, who's just quietly telling you and able to laugh with you or to cry with you, or to be horrified with. I've been, I have done some pretty pretty crazy stuff. You know, I did one series that was sort of a semi reality thing Gigolos.

L

Lis Malone 28:08

Oh, I like how they all laugh because they know exactly.

R

Rob Mineault 28:10

We probably will watch this.

S

Steve Barclay 28:18

I auditioned, but I didn't hit the demographic.

L

Lis Malone 28:24

No one would pay him

S

Steve Barclay 28:28

They paid me to go away. They said well, we'll we'll authenticate your parking, get out of here.

D

Diane Newman 28:41

I've gone from that to to really tender stuff like When Calls the Heart. I did Anne With An E as well for Netflix. And those are all really very poignant and gentle. They're very gentle. So they're, you know, the complete opposite to say, Dexter. Where Dexter you know, he had to clench a knife in somebody's chest at least once during an episode.

L

Lis Malone 29:22

What kind of time investment is it to do a recording? I mean, let's just say for the average show, so how much time is it in the in the actual studio for you?

D

Diane Newman 29:32

It's it's very fast. I'm probably I don't know, maybe because I've been doing it for so long. But I'm a quick study and for a one hour program that might take a writer 15 hours to write, I can do it within that hour. I do it with him because I'm there and raring to go when I come in. So, yeah, it goes pretty quickly, it does go pretty fast. A movie, that's maybe 90 minute running time that again, we'll talk probably take about 90 minutes to do description. And, you know, we're very careful. The recordist and I work together, and I will hang on to something if I didn't like the way I presented something, or I didn't like the way I pronounced a word. I'll say, okay, I

gotta go back 30 lines, because I didn't like the way I said that. So, that's to make a mental note of a string of words or a sentence or something that you didn't like, the way it went, I made a demand. I said, okay, I gotta go back and do that again. Because I can change the cadence to better suit, the visual. And that is, that can be difficult. You know, I am a perfectionist, and I, I readily admit that. And, you know, sometimes it's crazy how one word will trip you up, where you are, like three words in a row. If there's a literary thing and it's like alliteration. I'm sorry, I got to do it again.

R

Rob Mineault 31:46

Well, I'm curious how much of a, how much of a collaboration is that? Because I can really see how, when, when they're writing the copy, sometimes things might not translate well. Like you might sit down to record it and it's just like, ah, this word isn't working. Or this, even the alliteration part. Like maybe that might be something that they might not catch when they're writing it. But when you're trying to say it, it's different. So are you sort of able, on the day, when you sit down and record it to be like, yeah, you know, what, can we make this change? Because the timing just isn't working out? Like how much sort of say in crafting the lines do you have?

D

Diane Newman 32:30

Yes, you're absolutely right, we will make edits. If, we're not sure, we will do an alternate. So we'll record it using different words, sometimes, there, if there is no time, and we will have to edit the copy. And a notice is made of that. And the writer is made aware that we've had to slightly alter the script a little bit. It doesn't happen very often. You know, and sometimes you get autofill, you know, where the writer didn't intend to use a particular word where it just, it just was autofill. And it went in there and that is wrong. You know, and, again, going back to news industry, as someone who delivered the news, you're sort of like the, it's you, you're you're hanging out there, the listener doesn't know. Everything else that went into it behind, you know, all the other reporters and people who have gone out in theory, though, the stories are, what your source is. All they know is what's coming out of the box. And all they know is what, and if you are a sort of like the final, the final piece and that makes it seamless, right? So they shouldn't have to worry about the writing and I you know, I read some of the chat groups - audio description group. And, you know, they were pretty tough. I mean, they are pretty tough and are critical of writing. And I think I work with some really good writers. And sometimes yeah, we do have to substitute words where something has been used. Word has been used in the wrong manner. It doesn't apply. So the Recordist and I agree, yeah, we're gonna substitute this word for that word just because it flows better. And, it applies more to the scene of what we're describing. So yeah, we do make small edits if we need to.

L

Lis Malone 34:48

have there been any rumblings in the industry about the possibility of voice actors being replaced with AI? I'm not encouraging obviously, but I'm just, you know, it's just, I've heard I've heard audio description with synthetic voices, and it's horrible. And, and I'm just wondering if there has been anything that sort of started to creep into the industry more?

D

Diane Newman 35:15

Yes, there are some, some studios that do use AI. And the criticism of that is because it's a cost cutting measure. And, I do believe that there is some concern for people who are voice actors, and, you know, maybe more not so much for described video audio description, but you know, in the whole realm of, say, animation and that kind of thing, to replace humans with AI, and there is a real drive for it, unfortunately. But, you know, I, I have my own feelings about AI and being replaced. So that it is a concern, I think it is a concern, probably, for anybody who does work in description.

R

Rob Mineault 36:13

But I would think that it's like a lot of other things that people are trying to sort of use AI for, which is great for some things, but it's that human element that you would lose out on. And I have a question that sort of ties into that. Because I'm curious, in, you know, your own techniques, having done this for so long, how do you slightly alter description, depending on the mood of the scene, or the mood of the movie? You know, when you're describing a horror movie, and you have a scene that's full of tension? Do you sort of alter the way that you deliver the audio description, as opposed to if you were describing something out of a, you know, a drama or something?

D

Diane Newman 36:59

Oh, yes, absolutely. The pacing changes, the pacing of the delivery changes, because, and, and the scene demands, much more intensity. And that, that has to do with the pacing of the script to and where there's, you know, the monster is going to jump out of the closet as the child walks across the floor? And you can you create that with it with theater of the mind. And when the monster does jump out of the closet, of course, it's pretty scary. So and that's, you know, the old acting background there. I rely on on that, to, to help create the scene and and create the images that that I hope are being conveyed and match the what what is happening in the scene. You know, I love chase scenes. I love car chase scenes, I love fight scenes, fight scenes, can be a lot of fun to describe. Not that I really violent person or anything, but it's, there's so much action, the action scenes are thrilling. And there they are a lot of fun to do. I gotta say that.

R

Rob Mineault 38:38

Well, and see, that right there is enough to really go well, then AI can never really replace that because that's something that AI would not be able to do. Yes, you could you could program an AI to deliver some audio description, but it's not going to understand the context there's going to be no, there's going to be none of that human element. Because really, when you think about somebody who's engaging with the audio description, who requires it somebody when you're on the blind or partially sighted community. You're like another character, you're another part of that piece. And if you just replace that with synthetic voice that has an absolutely no context and no sort of human element of how you're delivering that line, it's just it's going to be really flat.

D Diane Newman 39:31

Yes, exactly. I mean, I rely on personal experience, because I know what it's like to say goodbye to somebody. And I know what it's like to have someone die and I know what it's like to see something unfold in front of you that like a car accident, or you can't believe what you're seeing because you know, is something that just is so strange. AI doesn't have that personal connection, it doesn't have the history and then doesn't have the emotion and, and the recall of those emotions, to be able to put it in to the description of something.

R Rob Mineault 40:16

I think is a really good reason to really push back on companies that are looking seriously looking at that. Because, you know, again, it's kind of bullshit that it's a cost cutting measure, and they just want to deliver something that's the cheapest, and remove really engaging visual description or audio description, that's, that's going to be meaningful to the audience.

D Diane Newman 40:44

Yep. I mean, you know, and I have a lot of compassion and, and I am pretty emotional. And as my, my patient Recordist can tell you, there are some times when a scene will particularly hit me the wrong way. And, and I get caught up in the emotions of the moment. And I have to say, give me I need five minutes here to get over the weeping and blow my nose and go and eat some sugar. Ryan, you said you've listened to some of these, you can probably hear my voice hitching sometime, if something that is particularly sad or poignant, because I do get caught up in that moment. And they leave it in what I think.

R Ryan Fleury 41:37

That's the sign of an excellent audio describer. I'm currently watching a show right now on Netflix. And it's a male describer. And I'm not gonna name the company, but it's not local. But it's he's very monotone-ish. And he is real. He's not synthesized speech. He's a person. And I almost stopped watching the show, because he was hard to listen to. I want some emotion. You know, I don't think Breaking Bad would have been the show it was if there was no emotion. Same with Narcos, there's, there's a lot of these shows that have grit, and that emotion has to come across to the audience. So no, that's all part of the part of the process as far as I'm concerned.

D Diane Newman 42:26

Yes, I totally agree.

R Rob Mineault 42:28

And so now this is a bit of a personal question. But I'm curious now. So does it kind of suck for you to have to sort of experience - I'm thinking of Breaking Bad in particular, because that's

you to have to sort of experience - I'm thinking of *Breaking Bad* in particular, because that's such a great show, and I think we've all seen it - but like that's such a show that it's such a unique experience when you first experience it. So for you, you sort of can't watch the shows before you describe it. You're sort of forced to engage with it after you've described it. And I'm sure that the show just isn't the same. When you're watching it sort of on your own, outside of work does that ever happen to you when you're just like, man, this sucks that I had to describe this because I would have loved to just enjoy this show for the very first time on my own.

 Diane Newman 43:15

Oh, no, I quite enjoy it after. Absolutely. Yeah, I because I don't get to see all of it. When I'm I'm in the in the booth, when I'm recording. I don't get to see all of it. All I'm doing is the description part. So they're, they're chunks that I have completely missed. Yeah, I have not seen the like, every, every minute of the episode. It's it just, I'm just doing my part and and hopefully, it comes across that I know what I'm talking about.

 Rob Mineault 43:53

And so now do you do you find that you get like, sort of audio recognized by people? Or do people ever come up to you? Someone's like, oh, my God, your voice sounds so familiar. I was watching this Netflix show a few weeks ago and you really your voice really rings a bell ...

 Diane Newman 44:12

No, not so much. Now, when I worked in radio, of course that was because that was five days a week. People would you know, I had people would sort of look at me a bit sideways where they've heard my heard my voice before and they don't know where from. But not not so much. With description. It's and it's good. I think that that is a good thing. I would rather that to remain anonymous. We do put our byline in at the end now, which is something that we haven't done before.

 Ryan Fleury 44:45

Yeah, I was just gonna mention that because some of the different companies that are providing audio description will say "Audio description by Eli" or whatever the name of the describer was. And DVW has never done that. So I've was gonna ask, you know, is that something they were thinking about doing?

 Diane Newman 45:06

Yeah, we just started. We just started doing that. Not long ago, end of last year, I think that that was it's kind of nice. I mean, for sure. You know, and, and I know that some describers aren't even using their real names. Some of the writers are using pseudonyms as well. So, you know, I have no problem, I always use my, my name and that's fine. That's, that's who I am. People don't like it, I guess they always know the name, and they can look me up and yell at me ...

R

Ryan Fleury 45:50

There's focus groups, right, that are critiquing the audio description, so I'm sure we'll hear about it.

R

Rob Mineault 45:57

Sure. But I do think that that's a good thing. What I do think that that signals is that there's a real credibility now behind audio description. I mean, I'm sure that that, you know, you've been involved with Descriptive Video works for 10 years. And even in that space of time, we've really seen audio description grow to a real, you know, credible field, I think.

D

Diane Newman 46:21

It has grown and, and it's, it's thanks to the people, the low vision and visually impaired community before getting out there and being louder about it. When I first started, and this was conversation that we would have that little gatherings with the people who worked for Descriptive Video Works is that people who had hearing issues the deaf community, they were, they were more militant, they demanded closed captioning. And they got closed captioning on everything. And now from people who are blind, low vision, they are getting more militant, and they're becoming more demanding. They want it and they deserve to have that accessibility. And so it is, it's really, in the time that I started there, it has really evolved quite a bit. And you know, even in the United States, Diane Johnson, the founder of DVW, she went to Washington, and she, made pitches there, the American Council of the Blind, and they did sign, I know that they signed some, they couldn't sign it into law, but just saying that broadcasting or all all programming should have audio descriptions. And those are big steps forward. And you know, AI, maybe it does have a place if you're going to do you know, I don't know, what do you want to watch? Cheers? The TV show Cheers or M.A.S.H. with AI or would you like a person to be describing it? No, definitely. I'm very, very passionate. MASH was a very passionate and compassionate show. And, you know, if you're going to do the entire back catalogue, is it reasonable to have a writer write the show and somebody come in to describe it? And then the producers having to put it together? I don't know.

R

Ryan Fleury 48:38

But that's a discussion that's been happening for a few years now ever since synthesized audio began being used in back episodes of Star Trek Next Generation and other series as well. You know, should the back catalogue I'll be done? And do you want audio description, because we can give it to you, but it comes into price? We either do synthesized audio on the cheap, or we pay voice actors to come in and do it. And I think I think it's probably going to fall to the synthetic audio. Or we need 1000s more audio describers. Yeah. Which isn't a bad thing.

D

Diane Newman 49:16

Because every you know, there, everybody, a broad range of describers is necessary. Because

you know, I mean, I don't do a lot of children's programming. And there are other narrators who work for DVW, whose voices are much more suited to children's programming than mine is. Whereas you won't have someone who's got a young voice doing something like Breaking Bad or Dexter.

R

Ryan Fleury 49:46

Well, even just dialects and languages, right? You know, there's probably enough English, French and possibly Spanish descriptors out there, but what about the rest of the world? There's content there that needs to be described also.

D

Diane Newman 49:58

Indeed. And KeyWords Studios, which is now the owner of DVW, they are expanding. They're a global company, and they are bringing description to every country. And it's fantastic. I saw there's, it's in Turkish, and they're in Asia and the Philippines, and they're there, they're going global. South America, you know, so it's, it is really expanding in that regard. And bringing it to the world, which is excellent. Yeah, I think it's a great idea.

R

Ryan Fleury 50:40

Absolutely.

R

Rob Mineault 50:41

Well, we want to really, thank you, again, for taking some time out and chatting with us about this. I love to dive into the inner workings of all of this, because, you know, it's interesting. As a consumer, you know, we get it when it's just, it's working great. It's one of these things when, when it is working great it is it's seamless, it's almost invisible, your just your voice becomes just part of the experience. So it's really, it's really cool to start to hear about, you know, how this all happens, how the sausage is made, so to speak. So thanks again, for coming on. Anything to plug? Anything at all that you want to use to sort of put out there to the audience, if they want to reach out and contact you, or if you know where they can go to maybe find out a filmography of all your work.

D

Diane Newman 51:36

There is one website and it's American Based American Association of Audio Describers I believe it is called. And there you can find links to all the people who are doing or most of the people who do audio description, and it even lists some of the programs that they have described. Awhile ago, one of our our people was compiling a list of so he he asked me if I would send him you know, a list of some of the things that I've done. You know, I really enjoy it and it's the show is the thing, it really is the show is the thing, and if we can bring the the intense and passion and tell the story. I think that's that's what I want to do. I want to be telling

the story that goes along and with the movie or the program or the documentary, or the series, because that's that's really what I love doing and I'm and I hope to be doing it for a very long time to come.

 Rob Mineault 53:08

Well, you know what, I'm sure you are, because like I said, I don't think AI is gonna cut the mustard in terms of replacing humans in that sense.

 Lis Malone 53:16

I mean, you can't have AI describing Gigolos, come on!

 Diane Newman 53:25

You watch one of those episodes and guaranteed you'll want to take a shower after.

 Lis Malone 53:37

That's watching it, but having it described as that's just as dirty.

 Diane Newman 53:41

It was pretty dirty.

 Rob Mineault 53:46

Oh, listen now you've sold the show with this group. Guaranteed now we're all gonna get in on it.

 Lis Malone 53:51

Everyone's gonna want to check out Gigolos.

 Steve Barclay 53:53

Now, I'm just starting it on for the audio description.

 Rob Mineault 54:00

I have to reach out to them see if they'll be podcast sponsors at this point

D Diane Newman 54:02

Why not, all thing being equal, you know?

R Rob Mineault 54:07

Sure, why not?

D Diane Newman 54:09

Why not, you know, describing porn. I mean.

R Rob Mineault 54:15

We've heard of that.

R Ryan Fleury 54:16

We've heard somebody's doing it. Yeah. That's right.

D Diane Newman 54:22

Thank you for having me. I really enjoyed it. Thanks so much, everyone.

R Rob Mineault 54:30

Yep. Gigolos? I'll have to add that to my guilty pleasure watching. I'm kind of boring with those reality shows like my idea in the past of like, reality shows but like been like the Deadliest Catch.

L Lis Malone 54:48

Right? Oh my gosh, like to have the job of writing it or even delivering it but yeah, listen Diane's a pro so she's she's, she's seen it all. But I think for the rest of us it's like wow. It is it's a little like, it's very taboo. Like, how would you describe it?

R Rob Mineault 55:12

There would be a lot of giggling. You would have to tell the writer to leave space for Lis

giggling.

L

Lis Malone 55:23

Leave space for Rob's "Oh my.."

R

Rob Mineault 55:30

How does that work?

L

Lis Malone 55:32

Hey, listen, Rob. I still remember you reading the definition of what the shocker was.

R

Rob Mineault 55:40

The Shocker, I forgot about the shocker. Wow. Yeah, there you go. Sure the shocker is in gigolos as well. It's in there somewhere.

S

Steve Barclay 55:50

Almost certainly.

L

Lis Malone 55:52

Well, you let us know you report back, Rob.

R

Rob Mineault 55:54

Well, it's described, you watch it and we will check back with you. You're turning it on tonight I'm sure. I don't know where it is.

L

Lis Malone 56:04

I don't know who has. It's on one of the networks, right? I don't know.

R

Rob Mineault 56:09

I've never even heard of the show until Diane. It sounds pretty trashy. It sounds like it's a Discovery Plus ..

L

Lis Malone 56:18

It's like HBO or Showtime or Cinemax? It's one of those.

R

Rob Mineault 56:23

You're right, you're right.

L

Lis Malone 56:25

Max, whatever.

R

Rob Mineault 56:26

Skinemax. Ok, we are going off the rails. I can just tell the trains already, like, coming off the rail. No, but you know, it's really interesting, this whole AI thing. I think that synthetic voice in AI, I keep coming back to this idea of like the archives like going through and audio describing, like old shows. I mean, I guess I can see the value in doing that. Because it's it's gotta be hard because those shows, there's no money in those shows. No one is looking for reruns of Sanford and Son to be described. So maybe that is where you throw something like a synthetic voice. It should just be like, hey, it's better than nothing. And then everything else, everything current or everything, you know, say that in the past 10 years, that's what you sort of lean your efforts in to try to describe with humans. I don't know, it's tough, because I'm sure there are some people out there that would say no, you know, what, if I want to watch an old episode of Taxi, I should have a you know, a human describer just like everybody else. I don't know.

L

Lis Malone 57:52

Well, isn't it interesting to think about how somebody would go back to describe it after the fact. Are they going to describe it? I mean, because like, well, they say, oh, it was a taxi cab of the this model in this era, blah, blah, blah, you know, whereas that, like, I'm just wondering how that would be done. And if that's the case, and when you have to sort of sort of retroactively describe things to make out to the future generation?

R

Ryan Fleury 58:23

Yeah, well, yeah, like you said, would you have to remodel the language because we're so politically correct now, whereas we weren't in the 80s? In the 70s. So would the writer write it the way it was? Or rewrite it for today's audience? Which wouldn't have the same impact?

R

Rob Mineault 58:47

I mean, a lot of those shows aren't even available anywhere. Like, I don't even know where you

would necessarily go to watch..

R

Ryan Fleury 58:56

YouTube. They're all there.

R

Rob Mineault 59:00

Oh, yeah. What's it called?

R

Ryan Fleury 59:01

I think it's called FilmRise. Interesting, Greatest American Hero is up there, all the seasons, watch them all.

R

Rob Mineault 59:11

I mean, let's be honest, like, there are some 70 shows that wouldn't even pass the smell test anymore. Nobody's nobody's airing those shows because they're just too a period of their time that wouldn't necessarily fly these days. So I don't know.

L

Lis Malone 59:35

It's interesting to just sort of, you know, think about how one would go about it.

R

Rob Mineault 59:44

You're right.

L

Lis Malone 59:46

Yeah. I mean, can you imagine like shows like, I don't know, The Jeffersons. I mean, how would you describe fashion and hairstyles and you know, modernizing the language. Yeah, I mean, I don't know. I mean, gosh, even some old Tom and Jerry cartoons even.

R

Ryan Fleury 1:00:06

We could ask our script writer next week.

R

Rob Mineault 1:00:09

Yeah, there you go. That will be a good question. What, what are the challenges when you have to write copy for something that's a period piece? Yeah. Yeah. Write that down. Ryan's madly typing right now. But it's interesting stuff, you know. And Lis and Ryan, I think you do engage with something like audio description for shows very differently than then say, me and Steve. So what was that like for you to hear sort of about her process?

L Lis Malone 1:00:52

Well, I have the same experience as Ryan, that if I hear too much synthetic, I sometimes just have to shut it off and just hope for the best and you know, depending on what I'm watching. I mean, this is a very interesting, peeling back the curtain kind of moment, because, you know, I wasn't sure how much was scripted in the way of how the narrator would deliver it. Was it part of the script? I didn't even know if they actually even did it, while watching the footage. Or if they were just given like this is how much time or if in the studio, they truncated it. Yeah. So to make it fit in that, in that, whatever the time space was, so I really had no idea how it was actually being created. But I really thought like, okay, they get a script, and there's like, maybe little cues, like, like with, you know, with emphasis on this or with excitement, or you know, more, you know, mellow, and they just kind of make it fit. Yeah, but yeah, it's a very fascinating process. So much more spontaneous than I realized.

R Ryan Fleury 1:02:04

Yeah, like I said, a bad narrator can take you right out of a of a series or an episode, and just make your stop watching it.

L Lis Malone 1:02:11

The same thing with a bad audiobook. I've had some books I've just said, I just had to say, I can't even get through this book. And you feel bad, because it's not necessarily the story. It's how it's being delivered, because of the way that actors are interpreting it. And then sometimes you just go, then you do the reverse, and you go back to alright, I'm gonna get the PDF that you know, the Kindle or whatever, and I'm going to just read it normally.

R Ryan Fleury 1:02:41

That's horrid.

L Lis Malone 1:02:47

I've had to do that. Yep.

R Rob Mineault 1:02:49

The thing that shocked me the most was the fact that she doesn't get the script ahead of time.

THE ONLY THING THAT BOTHERED ME THE MOST WAS THE FACT THAT SHE DOESN'T GET THE SCRIPT AHEAD OF TIME.
Like she just sits down and does a cold read. Like, that's amazing.

 R Ryan Fleury 1:02:57

I've talked to Melissa from time to time from Descriptive Video Works. And one of the things that she had mentioned was that, like Diane said, they don't get to see the TV show or movie before coming up with the script, the writer doesn't have a chance to really watch it. They watch the scenes and stuff and write the script based on time codes. This is what we want you to say, here, here and here. But the movie producers, the houses, whatever, the creators are really worried about plagiarism, right? Like what happened with the music industry. They don't want their content, their media, disappearing and hitting mainstream. So when they give something to the Descriptive Video Works, like Diane said, she gets a script from the script writer, she goes in, she reads it, she goes home, with never even having seen a single scene in that show. So it is a cold read. And like she said, you may try to read the script a line or two ahead, to kind of see what's coming up and that can help you convey the emotion that's needed for that scene. But it's gotta be tricky. It's got to be difficult trying to remain neutral. You know, there were days when audio describers they wanted the you know, they wanted the radio announcer voice, now from what I keep hearing and reading is that they want just a more natural delivery, they want the human component to be evident in the read.

 R Rob Mineault 1:04:32

Well I did find it really interesting that the one of the reasons why they do that is so that the audio describer can be experiencing things along with the viewer so they don't have preconceived notions of what's going on. I found that really interesting. And I think that's, that's great. That's that's a sign of a really healthy, evolving industry because they're interested in creating a quality product. At least Descriptive Video Works does, I can't, speak to any other studios that are doing this because we haven't talked to them. But for them, you know, that's the key thing is that they're going to create meaningful and impactful description that's really going to, you know, leave the viewer with a, you know, a meaningful experience. So, I think that's great.

 R Ryan Fleury 1:05:24

Yeah. And when we had Melissa on last time, I'm pretty sure that she said, you know, they really believe in having the human narrator. If synthetic speech is the only option, then they'll go there, but they really want everything to be, you know, narrated by people.

 R Rob Mineault 1:05:41

Yep. Yeah. That's great. Well, I'm looking forward to next week when we talk to a writer from Descriptive Video Works, just to tickle the audience with a feather. So stay tuned.

 L Lis Malone 1:05:57

You better watch some Gigolos so you're prepared. Yeah.

 Rob Mineault 1:06:08

Yeah, need to look that up now. Well, listen. It's getting late. It is I think this needs to get the hell out of here. Yep. Steve and I have gigoloing to do.

 Steve Barclay 1:06:23

Time for us to go work the mean streets.

 Rob Mineault 1:06:29

Well, so then in that case, hey, Lis?

 Lis Malone 1:06:34

Hey Rob?

 Ryan Fleury 1:06:35

Where can people find me? And don't say on the corner of Seventh Street and Second Avenue in New Westminster.

 Lis Malone 1:06:44

Yeah, no, that's where they can find Ryan. They can find the rest of us www.atbanter.com

 Rob Mineault 1:06:51

They can also drop us an email if they so desire at [cowbell@atbanter.com](mailto:cwbell@atbanter.com).

 Steve Barclay 1:07:01

And if they're truly inspired, they can actually go on to social media and find us on places like Facebook, Instagram, and maybe, maybe Twitter.

 Ryan Fleury 1:07:14

I think we've started to kind of let Twitter dwindle. We're putting more energy into Instagram now.

...

R Rob Mineault 1:07:19

Yeah, that's right. So we didn't announce this, but I told you - I called this. I called this shot a couple of weeks ago. But the triumphant return of our Instagram account is happening. We found the password. There's stuff up there now. We're we're gonna make it go this Instagram thing.

L

Lis Malone 1:07:40

So who's posting on Instagram?

R

Rob Mineault 1:07:47

Ryan has been posting.

L

Lis Malone 1:07:49

So is just going to be pancake pictures?

R

Rob Mineault 1:07:53

Well maybe.

R

Ryan Fleury 1:07:54

What do you been doing? What have you been doing?

L

Lis Malone 1:07:57

I've been doing stuff on Twitter actually.

R

Ryan Fleury 1:07:59

Oh, good for you. Excellent. Yay. Somebody who's in Twitter.

R

Rob Mineault 1:08:07

Did Elon quit? Is that what I heard it? Is he not doing it anymore? Like, I know he still owns it, but I thought he passed the reins to somebody else.

L

Lis Malone 1:08:18

He brought in a CEO.

R

Rob Mineault 1:08:19

Yeah, okay. That's what it was.

S

Steve Barclay 1:08:21

I don't think I started yet though.

R

Rob Mineault 1:08:23

Yeah, they'll probably quit.

R

Ryan Fleury 1:08:27

Get Ryan Reynolds to buy them since he couldn't buy the Ottawa Senators.

L

Lis Malone 1:08:32

Why? He wasn't happy with Mint Mobile, or did he sell it?

R

Ryan Fleury 1:08:35

No, he thought he owned Mint Mobile, but he was gonna buy an NHL team and I think that fell through. So maybe he needs somewhere to spend his money.

L

Lis Malone 1:08:42

I thought he sold his shares of Mint Mobile and walked away with a boatload of money. That's probably why he went and tried to buy a hockey team.

S

Steve Barclay 1:08:52

I believe you are correct.

R Rob Mineault 1:08:54

You know, maybe Steve, you should buy the Canucks. I mean, the price has got to be pretty low.

R Ryan Fleury 1:09:04

Did you not hear his his like win - loss record?

S Steve Barclay 1:09:07

And that's as a fan. As ownership they would never win a game.

L Lis Malone 1:09:16

I got 13 bucks in my pocket. Give me like what a good 20% ownership right there.

S Steve Barclay 1:09:28

The best thing I can possibly do for the Canucks this season or this coming season is to become a Calgary Flames fan. Go flames.

L Lis Malone 1:09:42

Oh boy.

R Rob Mineault 1:09:43

Oh man. Alright, let's get out of here. That is going to do it for us this week. Big thanks of course to Diane for joining us and we will see everybody next week.