

# PODCAST Episode 353

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS


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## SPEAKERS


Lis Malone, Steven Verdile, Ryan Fleury, Rob Mineault


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 **Rob Mineault 00:19**  
Hey and welcome to another episode of AT Banter.


 **Ryan Fleury 00:24**  
Banter, banter.


 **Rob Mineault 00:28**  
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. Oh, and joining me today Mr. banter banter himself, Ryan Fleury.


 **Ryan Fleury 00:45**  
Hello, everybody. We're back.


 **Rob Mineault 00:49**  
Now, so, Ryan, so okay, hold on. I'm going to introduce Lis first. And also joining us, of course, as usual, the lovely, the talented. The stabbed, Lis Malone.

 **Lis Malone 01:04**  
Hi, I'm bleeding.


 Rob Mineault 01:07  
Yeah, okay. Well, we'll get to this quickly, but no, I just had to say, Ryan, I think Ryan derailed me. Did he not do his intro incorrectly for when Steve isn't here? Don't we typically leave a gap?


 Lis Malone 01:21  
Yeah.


 Rob Mineault 01:21  
We don't say banter, banter, but you hit the cowbell, and this time you did a reverse this time.


 Ryan Fleury 01:27  
Screw Steve.

 Rob Mineault 01:28  
Okay. Just I just I wanted to make sure I wasn't going crazy.

 Ryan Fleury 01:36  
No, you're good.

 Rob Mineault 01:37  
You're just trying to throw me.

 Ryan Fleury 01:39  
That's my job.

 Rob Mineault 01:41  
Well, you do a fine job.

 Lis Malone 01:42

Well done.

R

Rob Mineault 01:44

So now, Liz was just giving us an update. Before the mics came on. And it's a bit of a it's an avocado related story that I thought she could maybe share with the audience just so they're up to date. This is medical conditions. So much tell the fine folks at home. Just what happened.

L

Lis Malone 02:05

So ah, God, I'm calling this avocados revenge is the best way to sum it up. But I'll just say that if you're like me and you d pit your avocado with with a knife and a bear hand you may want to rethink it. And learn from my stupidity. So yeah, so are stabbing the avocado pit with a knife and I missed the pit or I think that you know what I think insect on hindsight, I think the avocado ducked. I think it did. I think it leaned out of the way and it just went right into my hand. I could see that right, couldn't you? I think that that avocado had some moves. And

R

Ryan Fleury 02:52

I told you earlier there's an easier way to eat avocado is called guacamole. But no. You got to do it the hard way.

L

Lis Malone 03:02

So yeah, my, my, my my love affair with avocado has become a little more complicated.

R

Rob Mineault 03:09

And so now you didn't have to go to the ER or anything?

L

Lis Malone 03:16

Yeah. And then I went to the doctor and make sure I was updated with my tetanus and they took a look at it my hand and they said you might have you may have nicked your tendon or your nerve. So we want you to go to a hand specialists.

R

Ryan Fleury 03:29

So you know she can't clench your fists now.

L

Lis Malone 03:42

Only open hands slaps. That's it. That's all I got right now.

R

Rob Mineault 03:49

That is gonna impact your work now. I think the burning question on everybody's mind though is did you end up eating the avocado or did you just throw away?

R

Ryan Fleury 04:01

That's the question I asked.

L

Lis Malone 04:04

Ryan asked me that.

R

Rob Mineault 04:08

And what's the answer? Did you what happened?

L

Lis Malone 04:11

Oh, I ate that little piggy. That pig is gone

R

Rob Mineault 04:16

Well it was a happy ending, sort of. Actually not really I guess we'll see.

R

Ryan Fleury 04:30

She's growing avocado plant and it was giggling the whole time.

R

Rob Mineault 04:41


Maybe it is avocados revenge.


L


Lis Malone 04:44


I think so. Yeah. I was just I was telling Ryan before. Before we when we were off Off mic I said it's so sad because there I am like creating more life with an avocado pit. You know, I didn't just like throw it out. I was like, I want to sprout this pit didn't have. And so I do I have a I have a


baby avocado tree in my home. And this is the thanks I get. And what do we say Ryan? Stabby asshole.


 Ryan Fleury 05:15  
We're gonna call it stabby Asshole.


 Rob Mineault 05:17  
And see now it's it's just a shame that our guest actually showed up today because I feel like we could have done 45 minutes just talking about avacados. However, however, our guests actually did show up. And I think we should move on and introduce our guests to the audience. would you guys say?


 Lis Malone 05:37  
Yes, yes. Enough about enough about stabbing.

 Rob Mineault 05:40  
All right, hey Ryan.

 Ryan Fleury 05:41  
Rob?

 Rob Mineault 05:42  
What the heck are we doing today?

 Ryan Fleury 05:44  
Today we are talking with editor in chief over at the squeaky wheel.org Steven Verdile. Welcome, Steven.

 Steven Verdile 05:52  
Hello, hello.

 Rob Mineault 05:57

Well, listen, we are very excited to be speaking with you. I have to say right off the off the top. I absolutely love the site. I think it's it's amazing on so many levels. So I'm really excited that you're here to talk about it. But before we get to the website, maybe we could just start off by just maybe just giving the audience a little bit of background about yourself. And then we can dive into the website and how it all got started.

S

Steven Verdile 06:37

Sure. So my name is Steven, I'm from New York City. I am a power wheelchair user, I have a disability or a spinal muscular atrophy. And the squeaky wheel was a project that I started about three years ago, sort of right at the height of the pandemic, I was looking for kind of an outlet to tell some of these funny disability stories I had, in my mind, I had been trying to figure out the right road to get across. And as I saw all these different true disability stories being uncovered in different media outlets, it all felt very silly and a little bit like they were kind of missing the point and that they're all very clearly marketed towards a non disabled audience, and that the stories of disabled people were kind of being used against them. And there's the whole inspiration porn idea. And it really just kind of resonated with me a lot and sort of how to map that and how to make fun of it and how to find humor and ableism. And all these things sort of culminated in the spooky real. In the three years since I launched the website, we've published over 250 articles, we have done speaker panels, we've had 25 or so contributing writers. What I'm very excited about is we are working on upcoming television series specifically in Canada for disabled Canadians. That will be coming out sometime next summer. So we're really excited about that. And really the project has sort of exploded, I didn't think initially would really also founded a nonprofit organization. So that all the kind of money that we're raising is being used by our riders that we can really make the squeaky wheel something that is sustainable and has a really big impact within the disabled community.

R

Rob Mineault 08:32

Yeah, basic sort of elevator pitch, can you sort of tell the audience what the what the concept of the squeaky wheel is?

S

Steven Verdile 08:41

So I'd say the squeaky wheel kind of takes a format of like internet satire that a lot of people are familiar with. But publications like The Onion, or if you're in Canada, that the Virgin, it's another big one over there. It's kind of the parity news story headlines, format, but we're taking it and applying it specifically around disability topics by disabled people writing the stories and color for the disabled audience in mind. So it's kind of combining the familiar beloved form of internet satire and then putting that disability spin on it. We talk about disabilities ranging from physical ones, neurological conditions, neurodiversity. We have blind writers, deaf writers, we don't really have time to cover the entire spectrum. And we also talked a lot about things like health care, and education and technology and kind of all these different broader topics within society that affect disabled people.

R

Rob Mineault 09:18

**R** ROB MINEAULT 09:40

So now you say the audience is is mainly for the disability community. Is there sort of like a when you started, it was sort of an underlying mandate that you wanting to fulfill or? And how did how did the humor aspect of its kind of help fulfill that.

**S** Steven Verdile 10:09

So when I first started, I wrote the first third year, so stores, myself and prior to launching the website, just kind of launched it with a lot ready to go and made sure that I really had a clear vision and tone. And while I always kind of wanted it to be, sort of, I'd have massive appeal it appeal to both disabled and non disabled people. Most importantly, I wrote what I thought was finding myself. And it's kind of just starting off that, but that, if this is a joke that I think is funny, there's probably other people like me, who said, it's funny. And if non disabled people find it funny, great, more power, and even better. And I think it really creates sort of almost an accessible way for non disabled people to learn about some of these disability topics, because it's not insulting them. It's titled Weldon, welcoming them into the community, the humor and letting them know that disabled people are funny and have a sense of humor, to their their lives lightly at times, and are comfortable sort of finding the jokes within their experiences. So it is a very welcoming and violent type of rolling. And I think that really has been helpful in kind of bridging that gap between the disabled audience and the non disabled audience. But to more to answer, there's never like a mandate or anything that it was, had to be kind of, for disabled people, it just naturally became that way. Because there was a mandate that it had to be from disabled people.

**R** Rob Mineault 11:47

It's interesting, too, because I feel like for a lot of people in the community, they will use humor, to, like you said, bridge, that connection between people, perhaps people that they're just meeting or, you know, even friends and family that they use it to sort of disarm that, that awkwardness that can be, that can be sort of built in. So humor can be a really, really powerful tool in that sense. And I think that that extends even even farther into society, which we can sort of get to a bit later. But I also tend to think that really the disability community, it's a bit of a goldmine when it comes to this type of humor, because most everybody has some sort of story, or some sort of personal experience of something sort of absurd or ridiculous that they've had happened to them, as a result of, you know, interacting with, with sort of the general population.

**S** Steven Verdile 12:48

Oh, absolutely. I think that every disabled person has like 1000 stories of kind of awkward encounters and beard discrimination and bends that are related, like, are they pinion major, like me, or Martin, there's all these types of really, really interactions that people have, all the time, constantly nonstop. And I think that's why it's kind of a very, like rape source of material for, for comedy and for humor is because it's everywhere. And really, I'd say in the last five years, there's a lot more content around it. But prior to that, there was almost nothing in any format that was disabled people telling their own awkward, funny stories. And now we have

great things on television, like, special is one that I really like, there's movies like champions, and the peanut butter felt that like, there's a lot going on in media now that is really authentic and exciting. But it's new, and it makes it really easy to kind of find all these ideas.

R

Rob Mineault 13:54

So do you find writing these humorous stories in a way helps you process sort of experiences that you may have that may like really frustrate you?

S

Steven Verdile 14:06

Absolutely. I think when I started, it felt very much like that, where this was sort of an outlet right to talk about funny things that happened to me and kind of made them not so personal by making them satire and fictional characters and stories where you're not really kind of putting your own identity out there. And that way, which was something I never really enjoyed it or wasn't as comfortable with. And now that it's grown, but it's become just even more exciting is a platform that other disabled people want to write for and look forward to revision. I think that's even more kind of empowering because when there's some crazy thing that happens out in the world of some celebrity or politician says the most heinous list shit that you can possibly imagine. I have an outlet to now go and respond to that and read through it. And it's not going to be seen by millions, but it will be seen by 1000s of other disabled people. And that's really cool.

R

Rob Mineault 15:11

Yeah. And I think that that's, that's another important aspect of this, too is that say, you know, somebody in the community reads an article, it gets a chuckle out of it, but it also like to degree, like, it's a Yeah, like somebody else has gone through something absurd, like I have. And so there's, there's, there's a real community element to it?

S

Steven Verdile 15:29

Absolutely. There's so many times that people come to me with stories. And they always say, Hey, I don't know, if this is really, you know, appropriate. This is very specific to me. And actually, it's something that I have experience and something that hundreds of other people have to like, the more specific you can get. It's almost the more applicable that becomes to everyone. It's, it's quite interesting how people can can really relate to things that are seemingly so specific at the surface.

R

Rob Mineault 16:00

So I have to say, like I And it's funny, you know, I actually emailed Ryan and lists earlier today, because I was going through a lot of the stories and I was just like, I don't know, I collected like four or five that were like my top favorites. And I sent them over to them. And I laughed.



L

Lis Malone 16:23

Still laughing,

R

Ryan Fleury 16:25

Just made me almost spit up my drink.

R

Rob Mineault 16:29

And so I don't know, I guess the more I was reading, the more common theme began to reveal itself, at least in the ones that I was reading, in the sense that it really, a lot of the stories really highlight the sort of absurdity of ableism and, you know, in accessibility and healthcare, and so many so many of these things that are real social problems. So do you find that that being able to sort of illustrate that absurdity is there a process when you're writing a story that you are trying to illustrate the problem, the underlying social problem behind that given issue?

S

Steven Verdile 17:15

Absolutely. Love that that sort of came to your as you're reading through our stories, that makes me very happy that that kind of shines through our work. And I think, really, it comes down to is a lot of the stuff that we're joking about stuff that's very serious and very sensitive for a lot of people. It's not that easy to joke about health insurance, because so many people don't have it. Tell us here in the US, I'm going to carry on with observe it the same principles kind of exist across the globe, where these topics that we're talking about often involve people being really sick people being hurt people not receiving equal treatment, people being discriminated against, and not getting jobs, and all these things are really difficult. And then when you're like, how do I make that funny? You kind of have to identify? Where is it all going wrong? Like what is the underlying cause of this, usually, systemic type issue, and then that becomes really the target that you can mock and make fun of. So there's really a little bit of a charm that we go for is, we're never making fun of the disabled person, we're kind of making fun of the ableism that is being placed upon them. And really all that all that is, in most circumstances is taking these real life situations that happen and saying, look, at what, from my perspective, to be on the receiving end of your ableism and, and look at how it mentioned UCM you've seen a little bit cartoonish or villainous, or kind of awkward. And that's really rare. A lot of the comedy comes from,

R

Rob Mineault 19:02

Yeah, it's interesting to say that because that's, that's exactly what I kind of thought about. You're you're making, you're really the site is really all about making fun of able lists, really, I mean, at the core of it, and not making fun of it. And meanwhile, but just again, it's it's isolating these ridiculous and absurd attitudes that that are prevalent in our society, and shining a spotlight on it, in hopes that, you know, people will realize that, you know, the absurdity of holding those those types of attitudes.

S

Steven Verdile 19:37

Absolutely. I hope that if anyone's reading it, and then see any of that in themselves, then that's an opportunity for them to reflect on it. And so, do I want to be the person that is cartoonishly evil, that is it. Is it natural I want to be and I think that it comes across smell better in some stories and I others, but that's always the goal is to find a targeted lism and not the disabled person.

R

Rob Mineault 20:06

Yeah, well, I think that that's, that's the really important part about using humor as as that in because when when you're using comedy as sort of a disruptor, for social change, what you're allowing people is sort of a safe entry point. People can take criticism a lot better when it's, it's in a joke, or it's as part of a humorous story. I think that that's far less threatening to people, then, you know, coming up and calling them on some sort of an attitude or behavior.

S

Steven Verdile 20:40

Absolutely. And I think you totally nailed that. I also want to say I'm thinking now about some of the listeners of this or might not be familiar with Spreker, or stories or anything like that. Do you run Sharon, any of the headlines that you were looking at earlier said that that might provide some good context for the for the listeners?

R

Rob Mineault 21:00

Let me see. Oh, my gosh, okay. Well, okay, so it was all good. They were all good. I mean, Elmo reveals lifelong accessibility needs, quote, I literally can't move without a grown man's hand up my ass. You know, on the show, we're always screaming about accessibility. So this one made me really laugh. But, you know, providing accessibility deemed, quote, slippery slope to providing all basic needs. It's so good. City celebrates disability activists after fighting lawsuit and losing.

S

Steven Verdile 21:36

I also would love to give a shout out those first two stories that you mentioned, the LS theory and the slippery slope are both written by the same writer, Lesley, who is one of our international renders all the way from Finland. And I think, again, you can see as you're going through the website, but everyone resonates with different ones. And I think that's great. And there's both a really kind of unique and specific element to each story, as well as kind of a general tone for the entire publication that's really attended.

R

Rob Mineault 22:12

So I was actually curious about the writing team, does everybody sort of have their own style

and their own sense of humor that really come out in the stories? What's the editing process like?

S

Steven Verdile 22:27

So I can talk about it from a few different angles. The first is that we have a very kind of open submission policy, meaning anyone from any country, any disability, or anything like that is welcome to submit headlines. Anytime there's a forum right through our website, where people can submit. And if they're interested in writing, they get to receive kind of a writer's guide that breaks down all the different things that go into our stories and kind of the outer industry, real story, one on one type thing. Then, as I'm getting submissions, I'm always going through them and trying to figure out, Is this something that we've already covered? Or is this something that is new and exciting? First and foremost, is it funny? Does it make me laugh? And then there's other kinds of strict real writers are often referred to and talk to and say, you know, what do you think this one, what do you think of this one, and then, as the story's been approved, and the writers are reading them, we have kind of a copy edit process on the, on the flip side, and once the story has already been drafted, and read, go through me say, okay, you know, is there anything that's to sort of TurkStream any one direction that's really off from what we came here to? Is it really tackling the squeaky wheel principles? Is it talking about some form of ableism? Is it funny is it you know, appropriate, we really try to be mindful that while we're talking about such sensitive topics, that we treat them with that type of sensitivity that they deserve. And I think you see the results in the website that what comes out is really fun, exciting stories that are from all around the world, from all different people, you

R

Rob Mineault 24:18

know, really at the core of this, you know, you guys are using humor, rather than then anger and outrage to underlie a lot of a lot of the problems with with ableism and access and accessibility and such. Do you find that it's kind of hard to maintain that balance between, you know, being being pissed off about something and then being able to take that and spin it into something that's, that's funny. Is it? Is that a hard process to go through?

S

Steven Verdile 24:45

I think it's something that comes easily to me, that I think is not necessarily that easy for a lot of people. I think that's, again, just personal discipline. version or that final thing that was never, I never wanted to be playing at random things that felt angry. It just doesn't feel like who I am and kind of my personal beliefs, but I really liked being sarcastic and being silly. And Martin, these sort of larger systems are people that normally someone like me would have the opportunity to mark. And I think that's funny, I took a lot of joy in that. But a lot of people do have that struggle. And I certainly sort of understand where that comes from. Really just something that we can pay attention to really say more sweet than bitter is the goal of trying to really be funny. And then often, as long as you get your, your joke cold, as long as you get your five or 10 jokes in there, you can really throw in one or two, like, harsh cut in sentences. And they hit so much harder when they're surrounded by a bunch of silly jokes. So that's kind of the tip I have is there to the writers is gonna take all that anger and sort of keen, so certain,

squeeze it in that it really tight, until one or two sentences that you can stick right in the middle of a bunch of silly things. And then in a really be kind of a powerful, jarring moment for the reader to read.

L

Lis Malone 26:28

I'm wondering if Stephen if you've had any instances where people have maybe found some of your, your articles doing just doing searches, and then reading and interacting with with you through your site and not realizing that it was satire?

S

Steven Verdile 26:45

I would say it does happen. Maybe not as often as I think some people think, but it happens on occasion. I do try and make it very clear in our profiles and things like that, that we are a satire publication. It's right in our Instagram bio. It's right in our website header. It's very prominent in all of our social media that we are a satire publication. And that's very intentional, especially a lot of people for different accessibility reasons. benefit from having been very clear, because we live in an era of disinformation and misinformation all over the internet. So really, for one to be confused for that much slimy or typing fake news for that result wants to be I think my strategy has always been one read that those comments to let the readers and like, I don't get involved, I won't post from your account. If someone comments like, Oh, my God, this is an atrocity and how could this be real? I know that one of our readers will go in and comment that it's a joke. It's tiring, someone will totally come to our defense. And that is very refreshing and allows us as a publication to not really have to worry about picking battles and calling people out and things like that. I really kind of temptress, on the stories and the work that we're doing. And I let the readers kind of defend us if need be.

L

Lis Malone 28:23

Yeah, cuz I always think it's interesting how, sometimes people just don't take the time to look at the profiles, or they were it just the article just comes up in a search and you don't necessarily read what is the source of this article, they just click the link and the next thing they know they're reading the content and they just take it for what whatever their mindset is, without necessarily knowing all the backstory in the context of the way your your your your site operates. And I that remember that story is sticking out my hands can it's kind of funny, the when I think was Kim Jong moon, thought that the onion was really complimenting his haircut. And he had no idea it was satire and you know, so I mean, that's to me is like one of the funniest examples ever of God you didn't you are the butt of the Joe Rogan, you totally did not know. But I've met but I imagine just on a much lower level that you know, when you're doing satire, you you always are just inherently always running the risk of just people not understanding that this is what you do. And you know, and especially sometimes in those in the disability community, they you know, there's the fuse is shortened, you know, they don't want to be attacked and you know, it's like, no, are you Who are you to say about this and whatever. So I just imagined that that there's probably like, you know, at least some instances where sometimes that could come up.

S

Steven Verdile 29:47

Alright, it definitely does happen. I think there is a combination of people commenting like, is this real, what they're just not confused. And then we also get the occasional person that comment It's like, This is so sad with like a crying emoji. Like, I don't see something in the open. It's like tragic. And I mean, I probably shouldn't get that funny. But I do find it funny when people really kind of miss misread the tone or, or if they find this satire, sort of so believable. And I think that often speaks to how a little people are used to talking about disability and like, our society has come a really long way in a lot of different areas, kind of talking about different minority groups and diversity and what that means. But I think disability in particular is so often left out of that conversation, that for people who are like well versed in disability culture and disability language and things like that, they'll send a term like inspiration porn. And now like, they'll wonder if they have to call the police and then what is going on? They just can't handle it, because it's so out of what they're familiar.

R

Rob Mineault 31:11

Right? Well, I always say that, you know, ableism is, is a very, it's a very nefarious type of ism. Because unlike all of the other isms, where there's usually usually, you know, sort of a malicious intent behind it quite often with ableist attitudes is that people don't even realize that they're able is like, they really don't like they really think that oh, well, they're just being nice, or they're just trying to, you know, be helpful, you know, that person that would you know, grabs somebody with a mobility cane, and drags them across the street without even asking them whether or not they wanted to cross the street in the first place. You know, they might think that hey, like, I'm, I'm being a good person, I'm just trying to help. Ableism is so full of those types of ideas that I think that you're right. I think that for a lot of a lot of segments of society, people don't just don't even clue in to what ableism is.

S

Steven Verdile 32:11

Absolutely. I think that even like, I can tell from speaking to our viewers, our group, we understand the word ableism. And we probably use it frequently enough that it feels normal to say, but I think for a lot of people, they've never even heard the term or they hear it. And they immediately think that it's some kind of new conspiracy, it's not a real thing. Like, right, it's it's disabled people trying to victimize themselves. There's a lot of other real like, reactions that people have just heard the term it was not invented the concept, but just the word itself to make people angry. I think that is it puts a lot of power in our hands as satire writers that we can sort of make people feel such strong things with a few syllables.

R

Rob Mineault 33:04

One, I think that that's the real importance of the website. And this whole idea is that it illustrates the absurdity of ableism without it being threatening. So I think it's a lot more it's a lot easier for people who maybe don't understand the concept to actually see when you when you dial it up just a little bit and make it super absurd and funny, you know, maybe they maybe they will reevaluate their own attitudes and and their own actions.

R

Ryan Fleury 33:34

You're giving people too much credit. They're not going to clue in. Ableism wasn't part of evoke our vocabulary seven to 10 years ago, it's gonna take years for people to have their eyes open up to what that is and what, what it all entails.

S

Steven Verdile 33:55

Absolutely, I think one story that sort of comes to mind a lot and I am talking about ableism, ironically, is there is one that I wrote not too long ago, headlined there's only one accessible bathroom stall, and they both need to cook. That's a picture of two wheelchair users waiting for you same bathroom stall. very harmless.

R

Ryan Fleury 34:30

Yeah, absolutely.

S

Steven Verdile 34:33

Not only like, it really sucks when there's only one stall you can use. Other people have five and often that one style that you can use is being used by someone that might not need it and like that. It really kind of frames it in a way that you feel silly getting hammered was because I was so tired and exhausted of people writing posts about it. Are they are non disabled people use the stall that they have to meet and that they, you know, pee their pants. So the story soap and I was tired of hearing that I was like, what's the funny angle here? And that was kind of how that all came together. But I think, Rob, what you had mentioned that really, it takes what can be very serious and make it more inviting and welcoming to people and let them see kind of what discrimination feels like in a more friendly way.

R

Ryan Fleury 35:32

So I have a couple questions that I'm curiously curious about myself before we because we definitely want to talk about the TV show also. But minor, just really quick, simple of a question. So the first one is, how often do you publish? And have you thought about releasing like an RSS feed for like the daily squeaker where we can each you know, every day get a new story.

S

Steven Verdile 35:53

As of now, the drop is usually around three stories a week, okay. And it comes into some return or some REITs or less. But something that has been one of our principles from the beginning. And something that I want to maintain as long as we can sustain it is that there's no deadlines for the writers. And I think that that's very unusual for most publications like this. Just because it's hard to produce quantity on a consistent basis, without deadlines. But I think that it really makes our process more accessible to people, if there's no deadlines. When he says that it's always at odds in that I want as many stories as fast as possible, because that's great. But to

post them all, and reserved all the love to share stories as much as we can. But I don't like to put any pressure on anyone to submit things before they're ready. Or if they need to take off nine months without writing, that's fine. For everyone writing this is kind of a side hobby. So I don't want it to become something that sort of needs to be done on any routine basis. rehearsing the way I, I try and write myself to fill in those gaps. So I notice submissions are slow. That's where I put my writer hat on, I start reading a lot. And then when submissions are busy, I'm more in editor mode, and I'm just really helping everyone get their stories to the best place. But for an RSS feed, that's that's a separate question. I do want to implement an RSS feed at some point.

R

Ryan Fleury 37:40

What is the TV show going to look like if you're not used to having deadlines? Because I'm sure that's going to change the way you're currently doing things. So can you tell us more about how the TV show and what that's gonna look like?

S

Steven Verdile 38:00

Absolutely. So I can tell you a few things about it very early on. But first and foremost, the team behind the TV series is an entirely different team than the team behind the website, other than myself, and kind of the the connection between the two. And the TV series, which is being produced by hitscan productions, and is hopefully going to air on EMI in Canada is entirely staffed by disabled Korean comedy writers. And for them, this is a job and when it becomes employment, then it's a little more reasonable to put deadlines on it. So that's really the main difference is that the TV show was is a whole different team. And for those people, it is their, their full time job at the moment. We're currently in week two of writing for the show. It'll be filming in a few months, and then it'll be releasing, like I said, probably in the summer. Obviously, it's far from now. So I don't have a ton of details, but I'm working very closely with them. They approached me with the idea because they were fans of the website and really tried to take all of the best things from the website, or the things that made it special and funny and powerful. And then think about how does that translate to video format because it's an entirely different medium. I don't want to get into too many specifics. But as you can imagine, a lot of these stories are sort of can really jump off the page when you envision them in your head. And we've come up with a really fun kind of variety stat show format. I think it's gonna be really exciting.

R

Ryan Fleury 39:58

Yeah, I was gonna ask if it was gonna be like AMI audio? Or if there was the video component to it? So that's great. That should be interesting. And is it gonna be called the squeaky wheel?

S

Steven Verdile 40:08

And it will be either exactly this reel or some slight variation on it. Okay. As I said, we're very early on. But that is kind of side of things. And also sure, I know you mentioned the auditor component, we're going to be doing integrated video descriptions. And that'll be really exciting

because the entire show will be TV series, but all the jokes, all the humor, everything will be in the audio. So for our viewers who are only listening, and they're choosing not to look at the screen, or because of a disability can't see the screen. They won't be missing out at all.

R

Ryan Fleury 40:54

Yeah, looking forward to hearing it. That was one thing I kind of noticed when I was looking at the site. You know, while just after we had you booked Steven, and then again today, when Rob sent the headlines over, just to review is that, you know, there definitely could be an audio component to that website. Right into the content. So yeah, I'm glad to see that's coming.

S

Steven Verdile 41:17

Absolutely, I think the TV series is certainly one, one project that's really bringing that audio component to life, as well as video component. But I do think separately on the website, we're kind of experimenting with some ways to make the lob content into other content as well. Very cool.

R

Rob Mineault 41:42

Do you find that you have a lot of people that that want to submit? And if do you accept submissions from anybody?

S

Steven Verdile 41:53

Yes, I think there's so many people who want to submit. And then it becomes a much smaller number of people that do submit once there are writers died, which is basically just a couple pages explaining that and how to submit. And then we have people that join and write one story. And then we never hear from them again. And then there's other people I mentioned Leslie earlier, but let's leave aside for a second or third Roger, who started basically when I launched the site three years ago, and has written probably one of the stories since then. So it really varies person to person. And my kind of duty as editor in chief is to welcome people in if they're all right for us, give them the tools that they need to write a funny story, publish it, and kind of amplify their story as much as I can and get the most eyeballs on it. And then if they're done, and they don't want to do anymore, that's fine. Or if they want to keep reading for us, that's great. Read just just recently raised enough money where we can pay our writers for the stories that get published, which is exciting. It's a small amount and still, hopefully will get bigger in the future. But our team I think, is really a mix of people who are committed heavy loads, or just doing it for a fun thing to do once or twice. And I was delighted to have them with us.

R

Rob Mineault 43:27

Listen, Steven, we want to thank you so much for taking the time out and talking with us. Love the site. If people want to read the site, if people want to submit, where can they find you guys online?



Absolutely. So our website is [thesqueakywheel.org](https://thesqueakywheel.org). And if you're on our website, I really encourage everyone not only to read our stories, but take a look at the other things we have going on. We have merchandise we have fun Patreon, we have an email list that you can get stories directly emailed to you. So really, sort of encourage everyone to take a deep look. And also a fun thing I like to tell everyone to do is if you're a disabled person, search your disability in the search bar on our website, and you'll find 10 stories about your specific lived experience. So that's kind of a fun little fun little party dinner for our disabled friends.

Yeah, and actually I have to give a shout out to your merch because the you have a whole collection of really great T shirts and hoodies and stuff that actually really made me chuckle as well. I think my favorite was there's a there's a service dog dish. And on the front of it it's like just like a food bowl for for your guide dog but it says, I'm not like other dogs. I have a real job.

Yeah, that one and it's true. I feel like all disabilities merch that's out there. It's kind of boring and sad. Yeah. And that was why I wanted to make stuff that I realized I thought was funny,

Or the or the t shirt that says I may be disabled but I'm also fairly mediocre and uninspiring.

I see I'm getting that one for Christmas.

Totally

Great holiday gift idea.

Go and check them out. Steven, thanks so much. Best of luck with the site and the TV show. And please come back. When it's when you're closer to airing the show. We'd love to have you back on.

S

Steven Verdile 46:03

yeah, absolutely. Yeah. That's fun back then to have more. More TV things to talk about. Sounds good. Thank you, Ryan. Thank you, Rob. Thank you, Lis.

R

Ryan Fleury 46:12

Thanks to you. It's been a pleasure.

R

Rob Mineault 46:15

All right. Take care.

R

Ryan Fleury 46:18

You know what I found really surprising. What? He's from New York and Lis didn't even jump on that.

L

Lis Malone 46:33

I didn't want to hijack it and get called out.

R

Ryan Fleury 46:37

A call out anyway.

L

Lis Malone 46:40

Yeah, I know. I'm like, I'm damned if I do. Okay, so yeah, you know it just for that. Steven, fellow New Yorker, I am going to ping you. I've already found you on social media. So there.

R

Rob Mineault 47:20

But such a such a great site. And it's so hard to stop stop reading, I was actually looking, looking at it on my lunch break. And I had to actually tear myself away because there's just so much really great content. And it's such a great idea. Because it's just a it's a great way to talk

about these these hard topics in a way that it's not going to threaten people. And hopefully, you hope that I know, there's some people out there that might actually grab a clue by reading some of this stuff.

R

Ryan Fleury 47:52

Ya know, they're doing great work. And like he mentioned, there's not a lot of people taking this angle, right.

R

Rob Mineault 47:59

Not at all. Because I think that, you know, for a lot of people, you know, I think people who don't know any better there, they probably be slightly horrified at the idea of satire website around disability, like, you would think that that's really taboo. I was thinking about a video component of the website and I thought, well, you know, the onion used to do the thing where they used to have like, the whole, like, fake newscast where they actually like, read the story. Like they had anchors that.

R

Ryan Fleury 48:29

Well, that's what I was thinking I was reading, reading the stories even just stop new audio without the video. It'd be cool to have an audio just click here to play right.

R

Rob Mineault 48:38

It's right. We got to make more work for Steven.

R

Ryan Fleury 48:44

Well, they're done for three years.

R

Rob Mineault 48:46

Yeah, he really has like it's a such a great site. So highly recommend the audience. Go check it out, read it share with your network. And hey, I'm excited about the TV show next summer.

R

Ryan Fleury 48:59

It is required reading for our audience and we expect email from you to tell us what your story was. favorite story was.



- R** Rob Mineault 49:09  
Yeah. Yeah, that's it right. That's a win win. We get people going to the guests website, and we get emails for things. Yep.
- L** Lis Malone 49:20  
Hey, and even Ryan our own Ryan may be in the running.
- R** Ryan Fleury 49:25  
There may be a story by Ryan maybe. Cool.
- L** Lis Malone 49:29  
I'm sensing a story. Maybe.
- R** Rob Mineault 49:35  
I want to headline Avocado Strikes Back.
- L** Lis Malone 49:39  
Avocados Roven
- R** Ryan Fleury 49:42  
able to start avocado.
- R** Rob Mineault 49:45  
Who's pitted now? Who's out? Don't know. I don't know what the what the avocado would have been saying.
- L** Lis Malone 49:55  
Well, I was stabbing me.
- R** Rob Mineault 50:00  
Stop stabbing yourself.



Lis Malone 50:02

Yeah, the avocado was just sitting there pointing and laughing.



Ryan Fleury 50:08

What are you blind?



Lis Malone 50:13

You know, it's kind of funny that when I was at the doctor's office, I was waiting for someone to kind of do the did it have anything to do with the or should you be doing a gesture like this with your you know, but no one said anything. They all just listened. So I'll tell you they know ableism at my doctor's office,



Rob Mineault 50:37

Where did it so you you went to stab the center of the avocado right to get it in your avocado or did it? Did it glance off and hit your hand?



Lis Malone 50:54

It it happened so fast that I think that my aim was just off.



Ryan Fleury 51:21

Jab, Jab, Jab, Jab, Jab.



Lis Malone 53:01

Pretty much. Yeah.



Rob Mineault 53:04

All right. Shall we get out of here,



Ryan Fleury 53:05

Let's get out of here.

R

Rob Mineault 53:07

Yeah. Hey, Lis. Hey, Rob. Where the hell can people find us?

L

Lis Malone 53:14

Oh, they can find us at [www.atbanter.com](http://www.atbanter.com)

R

Rob Mineault 53:17

Alright let's get going to do it for us this week. A big thanks of course to Stephen for joining us and we will see everybody next week.