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SPEAKERS

Rob Mineault, Ryan Fleury, Heather Hutchison

R

Rob Mineault 00:20

Hey, and welcome to another episode of AT Banter.

R

Ryan Fleury 00:25

Banter, banter.

R

Rob Mineault 00:27

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, the only guy I need on this particular podcast, Mr. Ryan Fleury.

R

Ryan Fleury 00:50

That is me. Hi, everybody.

R

Rob Mineault 00:54

And that's it. It's just the two of us. No Lis and no Steve today because, well, as I was saying earlier, it's December and it's a crazy December.

R

Ryan Fleury 01:05

I don't know about you, but I can't wait for it to go.

R

Rob Mineault 01:11

Yeah, yeah, exactly. This year is just like, oh, man, could we please just let this be over with this year? I know it sounds like a Scrooge already, but it's just like there's too much going on.

R

Ryan Fleury 01:21

I'm just not into Christmas this year. I don't know what it is. I just want it to be past us. And let's move on. You call me Scrooge all you want.

R

Rob Mineault 01:30

Anyways. I think that covers it. Have you been keeping up on the on the giant Hall & Oates lawsuit? Do you have any updates?

R

Ryan Fleury 01:41

Honestly don't have any updates. No, I haven't been following.

R

Rob Mineault 01:45

I don't think there's anything really been released. I haven't heard anything more about it.

R

Ryan Fleury 01:49

It made the spotlight for 10 minutes and was over with?

R

Rob Mineault 01:54

Well, I don't know. I'm still I'm still really curious. I'm sure we'll hear more. It's like if Simon took a restraining order out against Garfunkel. I mean, you probably be interested in that. Alright, well, enough of that. Hey, Ryan?

R

Ryan Fleury 02:20

Yeah, Rob.

R

Rob Mineault 02:22

What the heck are we doing today?

R

Ryan Fleury 02:24

Today we are speaking with author advocate, content creator, musician, speaker and so much more. Heather Hutchison. Welcome, Heather.

H

Heather Hutchison 02:33

Thank you. So glad to be here. I could not agree more about the whole Christmas thing. I'm so ready for it to be over. I like Christmas, but I totally agree that this like lead up to Christmas has just been absolutely insane this year.

R

Rob Mineault 02:57

I am so glad that you said that because I thought I was the only one. You know, screw this podcast thing, let's just hold a December 2023 support group right here. I think we need it.

H

Heather Hutchison 03:09

Yeah, it's, it's it's been it's been tough.

R

Rob Mineault 03:12

But we'll tell you what, we'll get into that a little later. But maybe just give us a little bit of a snapshot of yourself and what you're up to?

H

Heather Hutchison 03:20

Yeah, for sure. You covered it pretty well, I'm impressed you that was a good summary. But I'm Heather. I live on Vancouver Island. I'm a musician, content creator, author, speaker you already mentioned and right now my focus is on a lot of short form video content. So I basically create content around for my own channels as well for as for other brands around mental health and disability, advocacy. And basically I just try and like show people the fun side to it a little bit. Just because I think people get we lose like the humanity and people get really like freaked out by disability. So I think when you can like approach it in, in a pretty like approachable kind of fun way that really like clicks with people and it sticks with them more. And they're like, hey, this person's just like us. And then that really kind of like, strips away the like fear and discomfort that they feel when interacting with us. So that's kind of my goal.

R

Rob Mineault 04:37

Brilliant. Now, what exactly is your eye condition? Have you have you been blind since birth?

H Heather Hutchison 04:43

Yeah, I have Leber's Congenital Amaurosis.

R Rob Mineault 04:45

I don't know where to start. See that's trouble with when we have these overachievers on the show, I really know which branch to go down.

R Ryan Fleury 04:54

Oh my gosh, bash Christmas some more if you want now.

R Rob Mineault 04:57

Well that's later.

R Ryan Fleury 05:00

Talk about Taylor Swift.

H Heather Hutchison 05:02

That she's overrated? Is that gonna get me hate?

R Rob Mineault 05:09

It'll get us hate. Well, we're gonna get you to share your socials later, it might get you hate. But who cares what a bunch of 14 year old girls say. And tell all the 14 year old girls in our audience sorry, just kidding, JK JK. But let's talk a little bit about music. So how long have you really sort of been into music? When did it really become a real passion for you and talk a little bit about your albums.

H Heather Hutchison 05:40

I think music was always a passion for me. I don't really remember a time when music wasn't part of my life. I can remember being like a couple years old and having one of those Fisher Price tape recorders with the microphones. I don't know if anybody else remembers those though. And I would carry it around everywhere and like, make up songs and stories. And I struck a deal with my brother when I was six, to lend me \$100 To record an album. Now thankfully, that did not happen. And \$100 is not exactly what you need to record an album and before everyone's like, Oh, that's so sweet. No, he wasn't being altruistic, he was charging me 30% on the loan. He's very business minded. And when I was five, I guess I started piano

lessons. And it was actually more of like a physical therapy thing for me because I was born with hypotonia, or low muscle tone. And I guess the thinking was that playing piano would help to strengthen my hands and wrists. And I don't really know if it did much good for that. But it's sort of started this lifeline that I've linked clung to for most of my life. And I wish I could say that I was like super dedicated and practice really hard. That would be a lie. I was a terrible piano student. I think my teacher hated me. Because I was far more interested in like making up my own songs or figuring out songs by ear that I heard on the radio. And the songs in my books written by like, who I thought of as boring dead guys didn't really hold a lot of interest. But then as I got more into my teen years, I actually went back to piano lessons because you know, those were like the teen angst years. And I felt really alone and like nobody understood. So I use music as kind of a way to as like a cathartic way to sort through those huge, complicated teenage emotions. And the Summer I Turned 15 very reluctantly, encouraged by my music teacher, I went into a provincial talent competition, and one of the judges for the finals of that competition was a music producer. And he came up to me backstage and gave me his card afterwards. And he was like, let me know if you want to chat about making some recordings of music. And I didn't really think anything would come of it. I was super, like, flattered that an industry professional had taken an interest in my music because it was really my first time ever performing original music in public. But he proved me wrong. And a month later there we were in the studio recording the first album when it's just kind of going on from there. Wow, that's like right out of a movie. I know, right? And so that was when you're 15? Yes.

 Rob Mineault 07:30

Okay, so how many albums have you done since then?

 Heather Hutchison 07:36

Since then, so there's been four in total. And then in the past, like, year or two, I've really been concentrating on singles, because nobody has the attention span for an album anymore.

 Rob Mineault 09:10

Yeah, which is too bad.

 Heather Hutchison 09:11

Which is too bad. Yeah, cuz you don't really get that concept, right of like the full album, but nobody listens that way anymore. It's all playlists and everything.

 Rob Mineault 09:21

Yeah.

 Ryan Flory 09:22



ryan mceury 09.22

What do you find you enjoy more in the process? Is it the playing or is it the songwriting? And where do you draw inspiration from?



H Heather Hutchison 09:31

I think, for me, it's, it's neither of the things you mentioned. It's the studio for me. And I know, like lots of musicians are like, Oh, that's super weird. But for me, like I'm a perfectionist, and it's kind of a perfectionist Haven because like what other opportunities you have in life to erase your mistakes with the press of a button like it's, it's awesome. So for me, I love like the creative process after the bones of the song are kind of worked out. And then you start working on instrumentation and everything, that creative process is so exciting to me like that moment when you get a track just right. And you're like, yes, that's the exact sound I was looking for. Or that's, you know, those are the exact, that's the exact take that I wanted to be able to capture.



R Rob Mineault 10:19

And so when it comes to sort of writing, where does that inspiration come from?



H Heather Hutchison 10:26

Life. Most of it comes, like they always say, write what you know. So I've always tried to do that. And it doesn't even necessarily have to all be like from my life. But even like the lives of people around me, I know, it's super scary, like when you know, a songwriter, and you're like, oh, they written songs about me. But usually, what I'll do is sometimes I'll even combine like multiple stories into kind of one song, and then try and make it a little bit more ambiguous so that it has, you know, wider reach, and is more relatable to more people. But yeah, I think I always start and focus on writing, what I know what I'm going through what the people around me are going through, which indirectly affects me.



R Rob Mineault 11:13

It's interesting, we've talked to it to a few blind musicians actually in the past year. And what I find kind of fascinating about it is that many of them draw their material from their lived experience as somebody who's blind and which is, which is great. But what always is curious to me, is that if at any point you sort of become afraid of people just sort of have this expectation of, okay, well, that's a blind musician, so everything is going to revolve around that. But you're also a human being having all kinds of other experiences that have nothing to do with your blindness. Does that ever sort of enter your mind when you're coming up with the material? Or do you just say, Screw it, I'm just gonna write what I want.



H Heather Hutchison 11:58

No, absolutely, that crosses my mind. And I was like, a very reluctant blind person growing up, I really didn't want anybody to know, like, I used to curate my social media feeds with like photos so nobody online would be able to tell I'm so I really kind of tried to avoid writing

photos, so nobody online would be able to tell oh, so I really kind of tried to avoid writing about blind with blindness, or I would do it super ambiguously. So yeah, it has been like a huge thing. For me even being more comfortable with being a person who's blind later in life. I, you know, I try and make it more relatable to everybody. So that it's not, because they think, you know, we all have different circumstances and different backgrounds, but the emotions that we go through based on those circumstances and experiences are usually pretty universal.

R

Rob Mineault 12:50

And there is a fine line to, as a member of the community, I mean, you want to advocate and educate and all of that, but it's also not fair that just being a member of the community shouldn't mean that you have to advocate and educate 100% of the time or be expected to. And I feel like some some musicians who are blind struggle with that.

H

Heather Hutchison 13:17

Yeah, yeah, it's tough for sure. Because you automatically, especially if you are, you know, sort of a public person, like a musician. Or even if you're not, even if you're just like going about your own business and public, you're automatically expected to be this spokesperson and advocate and to be willing to stop and talk to anybody and answer absolutely any question they want to know about blindness. 24/7.

R

Rob Mineault 13:48

Yeah, no, exactly. Whereas, you know, if able bodied people you know, they can be having a bad day, and they can be you know, flipping people off on the freeway and you know, they don't feel like that, that reflects an entire community of people. It's, you know, some everybody has a bad day, and everybody certainly should not have to be expected to be an ambassador for an entire community all the time.

H

Heather Hutchison 14:11

Yeah, exactly. There's so many people who have come up to me and they're like, Oh, I met this one blind person. They were really rude. Okay.

R

Rob Mineault 14:23

Yeah, they were really rude as I was trying to drag them across the street and they didn't want to go across the street.

H

Heather Hutchison 14:29

Yeah, exactly. Like you have no idea what was going on in that person's life. What precipitated the whole thing? Why they were rude. And at the end of the day, like we're all just people we have bad days, like you're saying, and I mean, that that would be like saying, like, oh, I met this

person with brown hair. They were really rude. What? How is that relevant?

R Ryan Fleury 14:55

Name of the next album. Leave me the F alone.

H Heather Hutchison 14:59

I seriously want a t shirt that says that. Like, I'm so tempted?

R Ryan Fleury 15:04

Yeah. And we hear it all the time. You know, I'm totally blind myself. And so you know, I totally understand what you're saying. And like I said, we hear it on the show all the time that we have to, we feel we have to wear that advocacy hat. 24/7 just because we're out and about.

H Heather Hutchison 15:18

Yeah, exactly. And I do it online a lot. And I think people think that like, oh, that must mean that I want to talk about it. 24/7 Or that I do talk about it. 24/7. And that's so far from the truth with my friends and family who I'm close to it honestly doesn't come up that much, really, in day to day life. But why I do it online is actually so I can advocate on my own terms. And hopefully, if you know, the people who watch those videos, if we were to hang out, or if they were to meet another blind person, they could just focus on the things that make them the same instead of like, all, you know, all the annoying, blind people questions are already out of the way because hey, I follow this blind person on Tik Tok or Instagram or wherever. And they told me that such and such so that's, that's really why I do it.

R Rob Mineault 16:13

Also, yeah, actually, let's talk about that too. Because, I have to admit that you know, so I've been a follower of you on Instagram for probably a year. And so I'm actually really excited that, that we managed to get you on the show. Talk to me a little bit about the social media channels, and how this sort of grew. What prompted you to really sort of lean into that advocacy and education part of that and really build them up, because it is a lot of work, creating content like you do.

H Heather Hutchison 16:43

Yeah, it's a ton of work. Um, that's a bit of a long story, I'll try and keep it like fairly short. So during the COVID, 19 pandemic, like kind of right at the beginning, I was hospitalized for psychiatric care. And it was like a really uncertain time, there were no visitors, I didn't know when I was getting out, I couldn't see any of the people I loved. And it was just, it was very

difficult, very lonely. And then this one night, the medevac helicopter arrived at the hospital, bringing a critical patient to this bigger center for treatment. And if you haven't been like up close and personal, when a helicopter lands, it is loud. And the first couple of times you're like, wondering when it's gonna come through the building. But this night, shortly after the helicopter arrived, they call the Code Blue for that patient. And I just lay there in bed, I was awake, and I was thinking about this patients loved ones and how they were having one of the scariest nights they will ever know. And I started thinking, how can I feel so much compassion for this person's loved ones? Well, knowing the decision I want to make is going to devastate my own. And then I started thinking about the patient themselves. And what a wild juxtaposition it was that they were in here fighting to live, and I was in here fighting to die. And one of us had a choice. And so that night, I chose life. And I realized that if I was going to get better, I would have to take a really hard look at the things that I was doing that weren't working. And a big part of that was the shame of being blind and the shame of the space I was taking up in the world and feeling undeserving of that. But another thing that came from that night was this urge to share my story, to hopefully save at least one person from going through that pain, and also to really strip away the mystery of what happens behind those lock doors, particularly when somebody in that situation also has a physical disability, because it's a really hard situation for anybody to be in. But it can be extra scary for a blind person, because you're suddenly in this place. You don't know it's super disorienting, you're not allowed to leave. There's a lot going on around you a lot of unpredictability, including violence that you can hear, but you can't see. And you don't know if the doctors and psych nurses and care aides are even going to be able to meet your pretty unique needs. In addition to what you're there for. You also have unique needs as a blind person that other patients aren't going to have. And when I was going through that there was nothing out there. My family searched for information, and they couldn't find anything. There were no accounts of other people having gone through this. So it was really important to me to share my story. And that's kind of how the book got written because I was like, well Why don't I just write a book because why not. Of course, I took like the hardest, most difficult, most grueling path. But then in doing so after the book came out, I translated the stories in the book into music and released kind of this music, like companion project to go along with the book. And it was in doing publicity for the book and the music that my best friend very forcefully suggested that I should start sharing short form video content, initially on Tik Tok, because she thought that people would be really interested in what I had to say, as somebody who is blind and also struggles with mental health issues. And she was very, very, very persistent. And I was like, No, absolutely not, there's no way. Because if I'm not completely comfortable with who I am, as a blind person, I'm sure as hell not going to open myself up to the criticism from the public, if I can't even be like 100% confident in who I am. Um, but she wore me down. And eventually, I started making videos. And I was honestly shocked, because I didn't think anybody would actually care about what I had to say. But within a few months, my videos, we're reaching like millions of people around the world, and it's just kind of grown from there. And there's been this amazing community of people who share similar ups and downs, but also people who want to do better and want to learn and realize that the voices of people with disabilities need to be heard their voices themselves, for things to actually change and improve. So that's kind of a long story in a roundabout way of how I got started with short form video content.

R

Ryan Fleury 22:06

There's a purity and innocence in what you were saying about laying in the hospital, thinking about your loved ones thinking about the patient and their loved ones. And the choice you had that whereas the patient, the other patient didn't have the same choice. And being able to

reach that point where you made the decision to choose life, and carry on your story. That's a powerful, powerful moment in your life, and was probably very pivotal, Pivotal. In bringing you to where you are today. It sounds like the like I said, the honesty and the purity is really what speed is what speaking to people and is appreciated by people.

 Heather Hutchison 22:55

Yeah, I hope so. I mean, there's a lot of like, you get people to your channel by kind of doing stupid things. Like I think the first video of mine that went viral was me showing like different ways of using a cane. So there was like two point touch, constant contact. And then I had the helicopter method where I basically just spun around in a circle with my cane above my head yelling personal space. And a lot of followers came from that, and those kind of like stupid videos. But also they're fun to make, and they bring people like so if, if that's what gets people in the door to stay around for like the deeper messages.

 Rob Mineault 23:40

Well, and that's what I found really interesting about your content is that you inject a humor into almost everything that you do, along with sort of an educational message or teaching about different aspects. And I think that that is a really, really powerful blend. And I think I think that's again, another reason why people really respond to it.

 Heather Hutchison 24:07

Yeah, I think so because they've actually done research that says that people remember lessons better if there's laughter involved. So I really try and incorporate that. So that hopefully, the messages actually stick with people and don't go in one ear and out the other while people are kind of mindlessly scrolling on social media, as we all do. Yeah,

 Rob Mineault 24:27

When you started it, were you really sort of intentional with that, or is this just this is just Heather? Like is this, that's just you, you have this sense of humor, and you wanted to portray your own personality into the channels? Or was just sort of happenstance that resonated?

 Heather Hutchison 24:46

Yeah, it wasn't really intentional at all. I think, you know, over the past year and a half I've sort of seen what works and what doesn't but be getting with it and how I was just kind of making videos that were fun for me to make and you know, we got good laughs doing them, my friends and my partner. So they were fun for us to make. And I put them up and people responded. So then I was like, oh, okay, people are really interested in that kind of content, or really respond to it, at least I'm gonna give them that kind of content to hopefully get them to stick around so that I can actually share some of the things I really want to share with people

but no, like social media, like I think a lot of people, when they start on that journey are pretty intentional, like, oh, I want to, I want to be a content creator, I want to get a lot of followers. For me, it wasn't really that at all, I, this was honestly, like, totally unexpected.

 Rob Mineault 25:45

I'm just being nosy, but like, so when you get that amount of followers is this able to just kind of be a full time gig for you?

 Heather Hutchison 25:52

Um, yeah, pretty much these days. I mean, not specifically, the content, per se, as the other opportunities that come with it. So, you know, sitting on committees for advocacy, public speaking, brand deals, things like that, those are sort of where you actually make the full time, like, make full time work for you, like content, like not so much because especially here in Canada, like we're very limited on the money that we can make actually from like the content itself. Like we don't have the Creator fund in Canada on tick tock, which is really too bad. But yeah, it's it's not the views so much as just the opportunities that have arisen from the views.

 Rob Mineault 26:44

We're talking about a space of three years, maybe almost four. I mean, this is this, does it kind of make your head spin when you when you reflect back on it?

 Heather Hutchison 26:56

It really does. And it's so weird for me to think like, I'll post a video and it'll get like 10 or 15,000 views, and I'm, like, disappointed. I'm like, Oh, well, that sucks. That video flopped. But me of like, a year and a half ago, like I remember when I one of my videos got to 3000. And I remember telling one of my friends about that, who works in social media. And I was like, so excited. And it's also relative, because now 3000 views would just be like, depressing. So it's, yeah, it's really like when I think about it in those terms, and where I was a year and a half ago, versus where I am now and how, like everything just it's all irrelevant. It is like really wild to think about because in the in the scheme of things it really hasn't been that much time I have to

 Rob Mineault 27:49

It does that does weird me out sometimes when I think of that, the pandemic recently, three years ago. Seems like a lot longer.

 Heather Hutchison 27:58

It really does in my book came out, I guess, like, a year and a bit ago now. So I've only really

been posting on social media for like a year and a half, I guess.

R Ryan Fleury 28:10

I was just gonna say we gotta get ourselves on Tik Tok.

H Heather Hutchison 28:14

You should. You should. It's, I mean, love hate again. Like, I don't know if you guys well, you said you're on Instagram. But Instagram Reels these days are honestly sometimes performing even better for me than Tik Tok videos. So if you're on Instagram, make Reels.

R Ryan Fleury 28:39

We have one more thing to do.

R Rob Mineault 28:42

Just a live stream of Ryan in a pink tutu and a hula hoop.

R Ryan Fleury 28:47

Swinging my cane around.

H Heather Hutchison 28:48

Yeah, wow. Well, I'm sure that would get some views. I can give you some pointers on the helicopter technique.

R Rob Mineault 28:59

For sure. Talk to me a little bit a little bit about about some of these opportunities that have presented themselves as as a result of, of the channels successes. What kind of other advocacy work are you doing and sort of other committees and stuff that are you sitting on?

H Heather Hutchison 29:17

Yeah, so let's see, I've done quite a bit of work with different brands just sort of promoting. I mean, the good and the bad is that inclusion is really a buzzword right now. So that means there's a lot of work for me, which is great. But I hope that people will continue with it after it's not like the cool thing. So there's been a lot of that kind of like promoting brands that demonstrate inclusivity. I was just at an Amazon conference in Toronto. That was all about

accessibility, which was really exciting. To see a big company like that, doing things like that. I've done work with like adoptive tech companies demonstrating some of their products and sharing them with followers. I'm on a committee right now working on developing a framework for accessibility training in the workplace. I work with, yeah, just a bunch of different companies. There's some like really exciting stuff coming up in January, that isn't really finalized yet. So I can't say much about it. But there's, yeah, a lot of really amazing things happening. And then just like traveling to conferences to speak, has been really cool. And also really nerve wracking.

R

Rob Mineault 30:51

Well, so if so, between all of that, and plus, like creating the content, like, you must be like worked off your feet, honestly.

H

Heather Hutchison 31:01

Yeah. Like, like, we were talking earlier about Christmas. Right now, like, all the brands want to have meetings about like performance this year, and what's coming up in January. And that's part of the reason why I'm just like, Oh, I'm so done with this year, I just, I want the 21st or whatever that day is to come, so I can kind of take a break, because it has been exhausting. And it's tough. Like, at the end of the day, when you're doing, you know, meetings for committees, and this and that, and brand partnerships and talking about content strategies, et cetera, et cetera, it's really hard to like, at the end of the day, especially because it like it gets dark so early now and it's so cold. And by like 4:30, I'm like, I'm ready to just like, get into my pajamas and do nothing. But I'm like, No, I gotta film content. So I gotta come up with ideas. I gotta like, be super engaged. As soon as the camera comes on, where sometimes I'm just like, you know, you don't always feel it. And I guess that's kind of the downside of doing this sort of thing full time is that you can't just do it like fairweather, when you feel like it, you always have to be making content. So that's, that's kind of tricky. But I have just like a giant list of content ideas that I keep on my phone. And every time like, during the day, if something pops into my head, I just like jot it down. So I can kind of draw from that list when I'm not feeling very inspired.

R

Rob Mineault 32:31

Right? Yeah. Well, I think that a lot of people don't really take that into consideration. You know, everybody has the dream of oh, yeah, I want to be I want to be a content creator because I think in their heads, they just think that, you know, it'd be easy just film some videos, you know, put on a hula hoop and swing it around, and boom, it will go viral. And then have the rest of the day to just watch TV and play video games. And like, that's actually not like creating content is a lot of work. And it takes up a lot of time. Even just just coming up with ideas and things to do. And I'm sure that it sucks when you come up with an idea and you film it and it just kind of falls flat. Does that happen? Do you really pay attention to the things like analytics? Do you become obsessed with it when you sort of reached this level?

H

Heather Hutchison 33:20

I try not to but I'd be lying to say if it doesn't affect me, because I absolutely do. Like sometimes I'll think I have this brilliant idea. And it totally flops and then something I come up with in like two seconds. And it's like, oh, Wouldn't it be funny if we filmed this? Then those are the ones that go viral. And I'm like, Oh, why like I'm putting so much work into some of these other videos. And that's the stuff that's just like people really like I think right now like the authenticity and the really like off the cuff kind of vibe that comes with the short form video content. So sometimes it's honestly like you have to make it look like you didn't try even if you did try and I think that's what a lot of people like you were saying don't really realize about content creation is it looks a lot more effortless than it is and especially like with brown partnerships where you're trying to like adhere to so many guidelines like some of them have so many rules and so many guidelines and you have to be creative within the constraints of that and I think that's what like people don't really realize they think we just sit down and make a video and then like you say go and watch TV for the rest of the day but there's so much so much more behind it that people don't see it's it's a lot less effortless than it looks even like the spontaneous stuff.

 Rob Mineault 34:48

Do you do like have a set schedule?

 Heather Hutchison 34:51

I wish I was better at that. I think that's another one of the downsides. It's it's it's a great job. I feel like I'm I'm knocking it a lot. And I don't mean to. But that's one of the other downsides is that you have to really like you're, you're working 24/7. Like, if you have your phone in your hand, it can be really hard not to check notifications, not to read comments, and DMS, when you're supposed to be like on downtime, so I really do try and schedule time like, Okay, now I'm gonna read and respond to comments and messages. Now I'm gonna film. But it's, I mean, it's life, it doesn't always happen that way. Sometimes I'll get down to like, a few videos, and I'm like, Oh, crap, I really need to spend some time filming. Sometimes, depending on also like what's going on in my life. Like, if I'm traveling a lot, that makes it easier, it's easier to come up with content and just shoot things as they come up. So then I'll have like, a bunch of videos to go through. And that will often keep me going for like a while, like, sometimes people will be like, Oh, my God, you've been gone for so long. And I'm actually like back home. But we filmed like, 20 videos in five days, so they just get kind of spread out over a while. So it really depends, yeah, like what's going on in my life, but I do try and keep to a schedule. But that's like something I want to work on even more in the new year is just really adhering to that. Because if you don't, it can really kind of take over your life and your personal time. And like even when I go out with family and friends, I really try not to but like sometimes I'm filming and it's it's really awkward, but it also kind of has to be done. So I try and do it in like the least intrusive way possible. But you really are just kind of always working.

 Rob Mineault 36:49

Well, and you bring up a good point. And again, I think this is something that people don't think about, content creators have to deal with. But it's a it's a huge thing is that and that's engaging the community. It's talking to people responding to people who comment, I mean, if you're a

viral video, you could have like, 1000s of comments, that you then, you know, feel somewhat obligated to sort of go through - that must be draining too.

H

Heather Hutchison 37:17

Yeah, yeah, it is. Like when I started, I was like, I'm gonna respond to every single comment because they took the time to comment. So I should reciprocate and take the time to respond. I've kind of had to make peace with the fact that that is impossible, but like, especially if you have a video go viral, and it ends up, as they say, on the wrong side of Tik Tok, and you're getting a lot of comments from trolls, it can be even more like tempting to read them constantly, because you want to, like see all the bad things people are saying about you. I don't know. Like, why sometimes that's more like, I don't want to say appealing, but like the temptation, the compulsion to like always check is even stronger when you're getting a lot of like that kind of activity, because you want to, you know, kind of stay on top of those things before because I've had videos before where it's gotten, like really out of hand and like you get, like, death threats and people hoping you die and having all these terrible things happen to you. So it's something that you want to watch out for, for sure. But yeah, engaging with the community. I try, you know, my kind of role is like the first hour that a post is up, I try and kind of dedicate to responding to comments, and then kind of after that, just as I can, and it also depends, like on how viral the video is what what else is going on in my life. But I try to make a decent effort to at least show up and respond to as many comments as I can. But the days of responding to every single comment are unfortunately, long gone. And I wish I could but it would just be ridiculous. I would never get anything else done.

R

Rob Mineault 39:01

Right. Well, I can't even imagine how hard it must be dealing with with trolls or negative comments. Because you must have, you know, over the course of the year and a half, I mean, you must have to really grow a thick skin really fast or be able to just sort of you know, expect that there's going to be crappy people out there commenting. Has that been a bit of a process for you where you've kind of had to grow to let some of that stuff just bounce off you?

H

Heather Hutchison 39:34

Yeah, and I wish I wish it did completely but there are still definitely comments that get under my skin and I'll be like thinking about them hours later and I'll tell them my partner or friend like guess what this person said about me online today or whatever and they're really good at kind of like talking me down. But sometimes I do need to like share those comments with people to get like that grounding factor of like, they don't know what they're talking about they don't know that's not true. But trolls are really good at like playing to your insecurities. So that can be really difficult and really disheartening. Especially like, I don't know, sometimes you'll just get one that just really stays with you and you have to really work through it.

R

Rob Mineault 40:20

Yeah I can't imagine. But it sounds like you do have a good support system and you know

team, I can't imagine. But it sounds like you do have a good support system and, you know, with family and your partner and stuff. What's their kind of take on all of this?

 **Heather Hutchison 40:33**

I think like my partner's always like, he's so unsurprised. And I'm always shocked. Like, I'll be like, oh, guess what, like opportunity just came up, guess what brands just reached out? And he's like, I'm not surprised. I always knew that you could do this kind of thing. And I always had a lot more faith in you and how far you'd go then you had in yourself. So he's been like very unsurprised. I think it's weird for some of my family, like, my brother, or my mom will go into work sometimes and meet somebody and they'll be like, oh, you know, recognize the last name. I follow this person on Tik Tok or Instagram. And they're kind of like, oh, yeah, that's my sister. That's my daughter. And they're like, oh, really? So it's, it kind of like does have circles out from me that that it definitely affects other people as well. But overall, like people who are really positive about it, and really excited for me, so it's been, it's been really positive with my family and friends.

 **Rob Mineault 41:40**

So, I mean, given all of this and given just how busy you are just trying to keep your head above water, what kind of things are you hoping for in the future there? Are there things that you do you want to write another book? Is there another album in the works? Like what's what's kind of what's what's your overall plan?

 **Heather Hutchison 42:01**

I really don't know. Like, right now I kind of feel like I'm just treading water. But work with like some of the tech companies that I've been doing, there's some really exciting projects coming up with those that I can't wait for in the new year, we're going to be filming some really cool things in some really cool location. So I'm really looking forward to that. And more public speaking, and basically just like doing whatever I can to get my story to reach as many people as I can and to get as many people as I can more comfortable with disability and with people with disabilities so that we can start focusing on our sameness rather than the things that just divide us.

 **Rob Mineault 42:48**

Heather, we want to thank you so much, so so much for coming on, it was an absolute delight talking to you, thank you so much for putting in all the time and effort. And because I really do feel like, you know, you're spreading a lot of really, really impactful, you know, advocacy messages out there. And that's really the key right now. So, you know, thanks for all your hard work. Thanks for coming on. And if people are interested in the world of Heather and all of this stuff of the the albums, the the book, all the social media feeds, is there a place they can go to find out more?





Heather Hutchison 43:28

Yeah, thank you so much. And thank you so much for having me. I really, really appreciate it. And it was super fun to come on. If people want to find out more information about the book and the music and there's links to all my social media on my website as well. They can check out my website, www.heather-hutchison.com.com. Everybody adds in like an extra N.



Rob Mineault 43:57

Well, listen, you have to promise to come back when you know maybe next year when something's going on with the tech stuff. We love tech around here. We cut our teeth on assistive technology. So we are into it.



Heather Hutchison 44:11

Awesome. Absolutely.



Rob Mineault 44:13

All right. Well, best of luck with everything and Happy Holidays and just hang in there for another 12 days.



Heather Hutchison 44:20

We're almost there. Yeah. 12 days. Thank you guys so much. Thanks, Heather.



Ryan Fleury 44:26

Thank you, Heather.



Heather Hutchison 44:27

Thanks.



Rob Mineault 44:28

Ah, what a lovely lady.



Ryan Fleury 44:30

Oh, it was good. Very, very cool.

 Rob Mineault 44:34

Have you have you checked out a lot of her social media stuff? Are you on so are you on Instagram?

 Ryan Fleury 44:41

White Cane Records is on Instagram, but I personally am not.

 Rob Mineault 44:46

I'm on it but just a bit of a lurker. I just I just look at a bunch of stuff. But her Instagram feeds been on my radar for quite awhile and actually I think I'm pretty sure Blind Beginnings actually follows her as well. But it's a really really great channel. I am not into Tik Tok it's is not my demographic but but I'm sure that you know, all of that is great too. So I really, really highly recommend everybody go check her out, go check out her channels and everything else too.

 Ryan Fleury 45:27

Yep, support the community, support each other.

 Rob Mineault 45:30

Yep. And she's got cool merch too, like she and her stuff is really funny. Like, that's the other thing that you know, we didn't actually talk about it enough, but it's really funny. So there you go. So anything else?

 Ryan Fleury 45:54

No, I think that covers it.

 Rob Mineault 45:56

Yeah, I think so too. We're tired. We're tired and we just want December to be over. All right, my friend. Let's get out of here. Hey, Ryan.

 Ryan Fleury 46:19

Yeah, Rob?

 Rob Mineault 46:20

Where can people find us?

R Ryan Fleury 46:22

They can find us www.atbanter.com

R Rob Mineault 46:25

They can also you drop us an email if they just so desire at cowbell@atbanter.com.

R Ryan Fleury 46:33

And they can find us on Facebook and Instagram.

R Rob Mineault 46:37

That's correct.

R Ryan Fleury 46:39

And Mastodon.

R Rob Mineault 46:40

Yeah. Mastodon There you go.

R Ryan Fleury 46:42

Yep, yep.

R Rob Mineault 46:43

All right. That is going to go do it for us this week. Big thanks, of course to Heather for joining us and we will see everybody next week.