

PODCAST Episode 431

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SPEAKERS

Steve Barclay, Lis Malone, Ryan Fleury, Kelly MacDonald, Rob Mineault



Rob Mineault 00:16

Hey and welcome to another episode of AT Banter.



Ryan Fleury 00:21

Banter, banter.



Rob Mineault 00:24

Hey this is, of course, the podcast where we talk about disability and cowbells of all sizes and shapes to educate and inspire better conversation about disability. Hey, my name is Rob Mineault and joining me today, Mr. Ryan Fleury.



Ryan Fleury 00:42

Hello everyone.




Rob Mineault 00:46


And hey, look who else it is. It's Miss Lis Malone




Lis Malone 00:51


I am so tired.


 Ryan Fleury 00:54
Oh, you need an energy bar.


 Lis Malone 00:57
Listen. Getting my microphone to work kind of zapped me. That was too much work.


 Ryan Fleury 01:03
Yeah, yeah. Well, we've been trying to upgrade your microphone for what, three years now. Four years now,


 Lis Malone 01:11
This is a new microphone. Shut up.

 Ryan Fleury 01:13
Nobody told me.

 Lis Malone 01:19
God, you know what? Just for that to prove how good my microphone is, I'm gonna feed my dog right now a treat and make it really noisy.

 Ryan Fleury 01:29
Do you guys hear the teacher from Peanuts?

 Lis Malone 01:37
I'm gonna just make this an episode where I make as much microphone noise as possible so that I annoy and also cause a lot of editing.

 Rob Mineault 01:46
Yeah, listen good. Yeah. Grab some potato chips.



 Ryan Fleury 01:50

It's like a two-fer.

 Rob Mineault 01:53

I like it. I like it. New concept for the show. Well, how's everybody? How's everybody doing?

 Ryan Fleury 02:03

Fine.

 Rob Mineault 02:05

Are we? Are we still reeling from the news that that I won the hockey poll? Is everybody okay now? I guess I need a real quick update, because I know that we're, it's a bit nebulous, and we kind of, we kind of ordered some of the episodes that we released weeks past out of order. So, can we go over the final results?

 Lis Malone 02:26

Oh well, okay, so technically, Artie won by one point. But as far as the AT Banter crew goes, Rob was the surprise pony coming in from out of nowhere.

 Rob Mineault 02:40

Yeah, yeah, with this random pick, thank you. Thank you.

 Lis Malone 02:43

But I do think that I'm really the actual winner, since my second favorite team won, that wasn't part of the contest. I'm just listen. I will take my I will take my opportunity to gloat.

 Ryan Fleury 02:57

Any given opportunity to gloat for 400, Alex.

 Rob Mineault 03:05

Well, okay, so what lessons did we learn, though? So I guess we should we include Artie?



L Lis Malone 03:09

Okay, if we're gonna include Artie, Artie has to join from the beginning. Because, yes, Steve, when he put in his prompt, he said, you know, disregarding the actual standings of the current state of the playoffs, like, who do you pick? And it's, it was all awesome, because I'm sorry Artie did, disregarded that part. Yeah, so already is a big cheater, cheater, pumpkin eater.

R Rob Mineault 03:36

Well, so, I mean, listen, it's good to know this is, it was an experiment. Is this an experiment that answers the question, Can artificial intelligence cheat? And it certainly can, yeah, yeah, it can, and it will, yeah, it did. So, yeah,

L Lis Malone 03:50

But I'm very interested to see what happens next year. We will start from the very beginning. Artie can join in, and I'm assuming Artie will go by just the odds. Sure, probably I'm willing to bet that it would mirror the Vegas odds.

R Rob Mineault 04:07

But you know, who knows?

L Lis Malone 04:10

We will see. So, yeah, Rob, I hope you're enjoying wearing your ugly sweater.

R Rob Mineault 04:15

And I did not. Full disclosure. I did not break out the sweater at all because it was way too hot. And plus, yeah, you didn't want to get that's what I suspected would happen. I figured that Artie would take it. But, yeah, I will take my second, second place spot with pride ready to go picking. I'll probably just pick Edmonton again next year. So you already have my pick for next year, because I have the sweater.

L Lis Malone 04:46

You can take opportunity to gloat for 400.

R Rob Mineault 04:51

no gloating. I am the bigger man. Ok, enough of that. Let's get on with the show.

R Ryan Fleury 05:06
Yep, let's do it.

R Rob Mineault 05:07
All right. Well, Mr. Ryan.

R Ryan Fleury 05:10
Yes, sir, Rob?

R Ryan Fleury 05:11
What the heck are we doing today?

R Ryan Fleury 05:13
Today we are speaking with someone who is returning to AT Banter. He has worked with AMI for over two decades, first starting as a studio producer. He is an avid sports fan who unfortunately follows the Toronto Blue Jays and the Raptors. Kelly McDonald, welcome back to AT Banter.

K Kelly MacDonald 05:33
I should be in on that Florida boat, right? I mean, the reality is, everyone in Canada hates them so much as guys, because that's a really complete team, and we know we're going to see them again and again and again. So I do understand that being a second favorite team, even though you got to stick with your what your Hurricanes?


L Lis Malone 05:54
Devils.

K Kelly MacDonald 05:56
Thank you. I was afraid. I was I was actually correct. So, yeah, that's, that's, I not even sure how come they're just one of those teams that gets on your nerves. But wow, throwing Edmonton out there at the beginning of the season, you must have to start during the season, because rather, those times where they were like, oh, we're not just gonna carry on here. We're just

fumbling. We're stumbling and and they did that. Really amazing. It was great having all the Canadian teams in there, and then having all the warm States teams from States that that were warm. It was really interesting.

 Ryan Fleury 06:29

Interesting. I never thought of it that way.

 Kelly MacDonald 06:34

I mean, Dallas Stars Florida, like it was wild. Oh, LA popped in there too again.

 Rob Mineault 06:39


Yep. So we listen. We'll have you back on next year in time to join in on the hockey pool next year.

 Lis Malone 06:44

Yeah? Well, yeah, we'll give you, we'll send these brackets, yeah?

 Rob Mineault 06:47


Because these guys need actual competition. Because the way that I'm picking the teams is just based on a thrift store sweater that I bought once.

 Kelly MacDonald 06:57

I was going to say, I didn't even think you were a real sports fan. I thought, yeah, yeah. It's funny. It's like the horseshoe just happened to land next to, you know.

 Rob Mineault 07:08

There's a reason when they get, like, try to get a chicken or a monkey or something to play the hockey pool, and it ends up winning. It's, yeah, it's the same concept.

 Kelly MacDonald 07:17

It was funny because I'm more of a basketball, as you said, baseball kind of fan, the hockey I love is Junior Hockey, and that's because my home is London, Ontario, which everyone knows the big hockey team of Junior Hockey in the world is the London Knights.

R**Rob Mineault 07:32**

Yep, yep. Well, there you go see and you know, we can invite you on anytime that we're talking about sports. These guys want to talk about sports, because you're going to be a much better foil for them than than me.

L**Lis Malone 07:42**

So well, you know, Kelly Rob coined the phrase 'go sports'.

K**Kelly MacDonald 07:48**

Yeah, exactly. Let's call and he's gonna claim it's inclusive, yeah, but I'm not just singling anyone out kind of a person.

R**Rob Mineault 08:03**

All right. Well, listen, just for those people out there in our audience that have been living under a rock for quite a while, let's give them a little bit of a just a sort of a brief overview of who this Kelly McDonald fella is and what what you've been up to.

K**Kelly MacDonald 08:19**

Well, I've, as you guys coined off the top man, I've worked at AMI Accessible Media Inc for over two decades. Coming up, I'll be 24 years this September, at the company, and everybody I know in media elsewhere says to me, nobody stays anywhere in that long. So I I've been very lucky when I've hung out with any of my, uh, school mates from Fanshawe College, where I went to Broadcast Radio School, about 33 of us passed. I think there might be three or four of us still working in broadcasting at all. And a lot of them got out of it in really, about eight, nine years after we finished college, or were pushed out of it because of the market, the way it's been. And even in school, we were told it's it's a something people do out of love, or they've been told too much by their family, oh, you're great, you're funny, you should be on radio, or the whole face for radio kind of thing. In my account, I have really been privileged to work there because I didn't want to work at AMI. I originally thought I don't want to work for the blind broadcaster, which is what, of course, coming out of college, I pinned it as and it wasn't because of anything to do with what they were or weren't doing or the work. It was credible. It was important to our community. It was that whole business of, well, I would really like to make it easier to get jobs at other broadcasters so that we aren't put into well, why don't you just go work for that AMI? I want to do, do on air, and I wanted to have a day shift. I didn't care if it was mid days overnight. I wanted to be an on air personality for a commercial local broadcaster. Fast forward a few years of looking bugging the people I started to at AMI, and I had an opportunity to do some summer fill, which led into a technical producing job. And I did that for a number of years. Became a coordinator in Toronto over some internet based stuff we were creating, then using local papers. So the reading service that AMI audio was at the time, that was kind of where I cut my teeth. I we worked on accessible software. We started to learn a lot

more about that. Had readers in to interview, to record stuff, and I did a little bit of interview stuff on the side, but I wasn't a journalist, and I kept telling people that, so therefore they didn't pay me for it. It was just something I did on the side. So as that progressed, as we got better at that, the idea came to get an accessible TV channel. Fast forward, go to the CRTC, get a license to do that, full service channel, which primarily would be a resource for audio description to be on. People wouldn't have to go fiddling around trying to get it turned on through SAP. We would become the world's first 24 hour a day audio described channel and of course, with closed captioning and programming that as we started to produce our own content, targeted more and more the disabled community, which is where we find ourselves now, doing more of that and being very proud of the content. So the idea is, for the TV side, let's, let's take this content, make it evergreen. At one point, I had a show called Blind Sighted. You can find Seasons two and three online, actually, if you search them. Had fun doing it. I certainly was out there getting a chance to do lots of stuff, as well as working on the AMI This Week program. And I even pitched a show idea or two, and that was kind of fun as we started to really embrace television. Me always saying that I'm a radio guy. I got asked to, would I be interested in doing an afternoon show? Now, this came on the heels of the Morning Show being launched in 2016 of which I was told before that when I heard about the show, which was a couple of years before, that way, we'd like to do a, you know, a morning show on the audio service, but we're reading service. We're not really supposed to do that. So we decided to give it a shot. We got the CRTC blessing to do so to make that little change, because we really wanted to point out as much as a lot of the stuff that our reading articles were were very were fairly timely. They were most recent papers that were out, and, you know, their most recent publication, we were able to pull stuff out of there, turn it around, get it, get some of the articles on air. But there's nothing like having that show where you can talk about something, debate it, discuss it, bring people on who are the people who know? And that's where the idea came of these live shows, what they might be able to do for the community. Bring community reporters out there that will talk about things in people's region, people from the community. And of course, the thing that we had the challenge of is we didn't have enough people skilled in broadcasting. These were going to be people that were raw and had to learn on the fly, that we had to help and convert into broadcasters. Oh, boy, was that a lot of fun, but I'll save that it. It was one of those things that, when I first heard about it, the idea was myself and DJ Damaris. Damaris, the comic, get him to and I who he was working with, ami at the time, as a reporter, like I was, get maybe the two of us hosting a show. Well, as it got closer and DJ left and went to LA to work and do comedy there, I was told that I couldn't audition. And I said, what are you talking about? You put me on TV that I never went to school for. I know nothing about it. I'm managing okay, but I did go to broadcast school. Maybe I could lend something useful to this. No, no, no, no. And I understood they didn't really want to go taking from the cookie jar of TV and moving any of the people who were doing TV stuff and upsetting the apple cart, I did understand didn't love the idea, so I closely watched what was going on. Anyway, once it went on the air, I found myself, on the third day being a co host with Michael Ross and it was a lot of fun to go back to radio. Now, at that point, when I started working at AMI, I had been working for CJCS radio in Stratford, Ontario, and it was through a program. So I was only there for eight months doing a nighttime show in 2001 that was my last on air until 2016 when I sat beside Mike Ross in the studio. Did that for a few weeks, was taken out to lunch and asked if I'd be interested in an afternoon show. And by that hosting it, I think some of the people who hired me at AMI forgot I ever went to broadcast school for radio. And I had took a couple of months and got an apartment in Toronto, and meanwhile, I was commuting back and forth, always waiting for us to do something in London and open an office. And that kind of went by the wayside. And when it went by the wayside, I started to work from home a bit. So when I started doing Kelly and Company, I had to be in Toronto five days a week. And of course, this wonderful thing came, the pandemic. And by then we had made a shift. We had some money in the kitty, so we set up

a studio at my home in London. I started to broadcast from there, which I think really sold, because we all know, I'm sure you guys will totally agree. Everybody hates Toronto. So people would hear, hey, he's in London, Ontario. Well, that's not too bad. That's okay. Then he was still in that Toronto. Oh, my God. It seemed to work for the show. It seemed to work when we started to roll out special weeks that we would do, such as back to basics, one of one of our, well, our current Senior Producer at the time was our technical producer, and he was always curious. Matt would ask all sorts of blind related questions of myself and Ramya, the host of the show, and, you know, we do our best to answer them. But Matt was always so curious about this, about that how does how does tech work that way? How? Well, tell me a little bit about Braille or whatever. He tried very hard to understand things, but one of the things that puzzled him was when we would say the medical field isn't the greatest when someone gets a diagnosis of blindness, he said, What do you mean? Well, they're basically told they're blind and we'll see you next month for your follow up. Not okay. Here's where you could go to for assistance. This is the store that is one of the things that we in our experience with people that we know who have entered the sight loss community. This seems to be a repeating theme. Well, we got talking, and Matt came up with an idea for a what we call Back To Basics week. I point this out only because that week, as far as we can chart back to seem to be the week that people discovered Kelly and company discovered what we do. This the way we do things. I always say to people, Kelly and Company was like going to school, learning a whole bunch of stuff from these contributors. We had about six different people on the program a day in a two hour period, and they talk about different subjects, from pet care to lifestyle stuff entertainment. We had external guests that we just come on to promote something or just to have fun talking to us. Some of the Sports people out there around Canada would come and talk different things. It was a joy to learn that way about stuff, and not to mention we could play class clowns if we wanted to, as well in that time, and hopefully feel that people were with us anyway, guys, that's kind of the deal that I've been lucky enough. And God bless I will say, because this was my dream as a kid, not necessarily to do a talk show hosting gig, but to do the job of of being on radio or the closest thing to it at the broadcaster I originally didn't want to be at. And I will say I've probably done it well, I know I have had more cool experiences at AMI than I ever would have in any other broadcaster.

R

Rob Mineault 17:55

So, you know, as as we all know, and especially since COVID, the media landscape has been changing quite a bit. Can you kind of speak a little bit about that, about sort of your your viewpoint from from AMI, and just how you've kind of gotten affected by it?

K

Kelly MacDonald 18:15

I used to feel so comfortable and safe at AMI, in the sense of, we had a lot of staff. We had our Montreal office open. Once we had the full service TV channel going, we made some changes, because we did have offices across Canada, but we felt that wasn't really prudent to do so before the pandemic, when streaming started, that was our first sign of could be trouble in paradise. And when I say that, it's the fact that so many people, especially our younger people out there, have no interest in cable. When am I went on the air originally with the audio service the CRTC said, here's how you will survive. We will allow X number of cents off of everyone's cable and satellite service to to carry you. And over the years, we've done our best when we got the TV channel and AMI-Tele out of Montreal, same kinds of things, the CRTC applied an

amount of money that allowed us to have an income. Since people have been cutting their cable, turning to other means, online, we have seen our money that we received dwindle get lower and lower, and again, it was predictable. We knew this was going to be an issue. The company has done what they've can with the finance people to make things work. But over that time, we knew we'd have to approach the CRTC and discuss either raising what we get from cable and satellite, but also recognizing that won't be enough, like there's that would be just be ridiculous. We aren't the only broadcaster out there that receives money this way, as a must carry service, a 911 service, a carriage, is what they call it, 911 carriage. So how do we manage that? When do we ask for it? What's appropriate? We don't want to bite off more than we can chew and make anyone say, well, how do you deserve that more than we think we bring great product forward. We think there's a reason for us to exist when it comes to the disabled community, but then we're biased. So as the pandemic came, a lot of broadcasters, all broadcasters that were coming up for their licenses had been put off, as we know, the world basically came to a screeching halt. Now we're not able to go and ask for that money. We were all glad to get extensions on our licenses so we could stay broadcasting and doing what we do, status quo. We are quite happy with that. AMI is in a struggling position now, because this has become an issue, we have made a lot of changes, including downsizing, moving our office Don Mills & Lawrence in Toronto to downtown. We are in the Chorus building now, where they broadcast from in right downtown for multiple reasons and something that is so many of us through the pandemic and since then, work from home. Our AMI audio team is pretty well 99% of the time remote. We all work from home and do what we do from from our home setups. You know, be in town maybe once, once a month, if we have to be but everything is done that way. A lot of the TV people have their days working away. And we work so much now with production companies across Canada, which is what we were supposed to do when given the license, because you want to father that kind of business out there, make sure that we are supporting the broadcast industry, but the production industry mostly, and they're making some fantastic content to us in accessible form that we need and have asked them to do and train them to do. So thumbs up, getting plus points there. That's for sure. And but all this is translated to where we're going to get money. What are we going to do? How is that going to look? Can we do something with streaming services and the income? So for us, we're always watching what our government says, Google, we need you to do this, or we want this. You know, Netflix to do that. All that in time, we will see how that falls out. I myself, personally, I'm not going to speak for the company. I think the CRTC is pleased with what we do. I think we will be renewed as a broadcaster. But when it comes to programming, it definitely has affected the AMI audio team. We have programming shows that we're losing. We won't be able to travel as much due to the tightening of the belts. We were simulcast Kelly and Company, and now with Dave Brown on the TV side, so you had us on both. That had to come to an end for again, some outside of financial reasons, some of it just, it just wasn't working the way the network wanted to, whether it be the way our shows were coming off the look of them, we felt things should have been a little bit better, and they just weren't attracting on the TV side, the audience that that we had hoped and there's other plans to do other things, create content that is more evergreen. These are some of the things we'd like to do. We'd love down the road to be able to make stuff more available, like on the AMI app or AMI plus, where people can go and stream things at their leisure. We know that's what the world is. That's not let's sit and watch Kelly and company for two hours on television, necessarily, it's pull up the podcast if we were going to do that, or go on YouTube and check it out. So a lot of these made the decision to take us off TV. A lot of us, thank goodness, were moved over to the AMI audio side, so we didn't lose jobs. Unfortunately, some people did, and that's where we were able to put a Kelly and Company up since last October until this point. And at this point, we will be waving by to the show. We are saying goodbye. Or we have said goodbye, depending when you're listening to this. And it's a tremendous run eight and a half years. Some of this, most of this, is financial. The show costs

quite a bit to do. Then also we can allocate the staff resources elsewhere. We will be launching a new show on AMI audio only that that will be happening in September, and that show will be documentary based. Other shows at the network will be affected as well, and it'll be a different look come September, when we get into the next fiscal so that's kind of where we're at a sad time. I certainly have said to people, for me, Kelly and Company was the culmination of a dream. I always wanted to be on air since I was about 10, years old. It's what I love to live for, not necessarily a talk show host, even though I talk very well and very long i i always wanted to do it, and Ami gave me the opportunity. I. Which I'm very lucky and really appreciative, but I really feel we delivered with a wonderful show that had a lot of things, something for everyone, even if you only tuned in once a week to listen to your favorite segment.

R

Rob Mineault 25:13

Yeah, it's, I mean, it's, it's tough out there right now, right like, you know, a lot of people don't really think about that and the effects of doing things like, you know, cord cutting, which, of course, has been something for years. But yeah, I think, I think, yeah, COVID really, it really changed the way that we consume media these days, and how we and how we consume media, and especially for who you think about who the main demographic is, definitely in this technological flux right now. You know, even though there is certainly pushback from streaming services, you hear stories all the time about people getting fed up with just being nickel and dimed with multiple different streaming services, and many of those streaming services are struggling themselves.

K

Kelly MacDonald 25:59

Well, there's got to be a cable format that's going to come back in my head. You can't keep having people pay for Netflix, pay for Disney, plus pay for there's some company that's going to make a deal with them and be the first that comes out and says, we have all of them pick your favorite for and for this price, you can have an inclusive as well as TV cable and your internet, and I believe, honestly, that is what's going to it's the only thing that makes sense, because people can't keep doing in their environment, especially whether we have talked tariffs or anything. It's just ridiculous. And unfortunately, we do things over and over again in our society as human beings. Just think it's the first time that it's been done. But this would have been what was done when cable first ever came to be. Yeah, it is.

R

Rob Mineault 26:42

It's very ironic, isn't it, that we're going to land right exactly where we were, when this all started.

K

Kelly MacDonald 26:49

It will be delivered differently. It'll be that little device you plug into your television and right there. You know your you know your little Dongo, or I always make fun of say it wrong, but it'll be something like that, that that you said a stick you put in there, and the way it goes, and you'll be able to do so many other things, pull up your YouTube and everything.

R

Ryan Fleury 27:10

Well and we have to get to that point, because you look at the streaming services that many of us are subscribed to, it's the same as our what we're paying for our cable at the current Yes, right. How can you consistently do that month after month?

K

Kelly MacDonald 27:22

But we laugh and pretend we're saving money. I have so many people say, hi, don't need that cable. I don't need to waste money on that. No. But you will on five streaming services all at once, right? Which adds up to more.

R

Rob Mineault 27:34

The big benefit, I think, for people too, is that you know when, when we are talking about streaming, you can consume that content on your own, on your own schedule, right? That's, that's also the main thing, like, you know, the days of --and I'm as guilty of this as anybody I don't think I haven't watched live TV, and I don't know how long, and you just get, really get used to just being able to be this is when I want to watch whatever show that I'm that I'm currently working on. I don't want to have to wait till eight o'clock on a Wednesday night to watch this show, or I want to be able to just watch them all and binge watch them.

K

Kelly MacDonald 28:11

Or even record and skip commercials, right? Yeah, I don't watch sports live anymore. Why would I just avoid hearing the final score? But I because I can't stand the commercials.

R


Ryan Fleury 28:21

Yeah. The only problem with that, though, is you get into a show and then it's gone right when you have to know what the termination dates are. These shows and seasons.

K

Kelly MacDonald 28:29

It used to be at least over September through April, you had something to look forward to. Now, you watch it in a week, and where is it? I gotta wait a whole year, and it's like a new but then people go back now and re watch stuff like it's the first time, and I find that really interesting. The other thing that that this is funny to me is we have no patience. And I don't know if that was just always been the way I probably was like that even as a teenager, but people get their news from Reels, from social media, stuff they want, and they think they know the whole story. So we all become experts on the four lines we just read off, off of x.



- L** Lis Malone 29:06
Well, that's pretty true. Just to quote my president, you don't know what the fuck you're talking about.
- K** Kelly MacDonald 29:14
I was waiting for one of you to do it.
- L** Lis Malone 29:18
I'm the American.
- K** Kelly MacDonald 29:20
I was waiting. I was waiting for the, you know, because it's just that was the emphasis, intentional emphasis he put on that too. I'm trying to say these people are effing it up.
- L** Lis Malone 29:33
That's as good as my Trump gets. That's all I got, folks.
- R** Rob Mineault 29:38
It is a really interesting landscape right now, and that's not even you know, I think that you have to factor in as well the other big elephant in the room, which is YouTube. I know a lot of people that don't even bother with subscription services anymore. They just, they can consume all their content, news, entertainment, whatever. Just stop watching things. Like YouTube, Twitch, like, there's all kinds of other platforms out there that can keep you busy for for many, many hours of the day, so that, you know, you don't even need to touch any sort of a cable or subscription service. So you know that also factors into it as well.
- R** Ryan Fleury 30:17
Well, you look at automation too, right? How many stations are still manned 24/7?
- K** Kelly MacDonald 30:17
And that's how we have to think when we go in front of the FTC over the next year or so. I think it is that discussion has to happen. I had to talk to the other way to look at it. That's very interesting. Going back to the how come there's just not as many people? We see all these broadcast schools closing my alma mater, Fanshawe, stopping its broadcast radio course completely. It's absolutely ridiculous and heartbreaking. Had a talk on our show one day with

Dan Showman, the voice of the Toronto Blue Jays, on TV. He was on the show, and I really wanted to talk to him about when he volunteered at Radio Western in London, Ontario, here at the University. This goes back years, and he said he just walked in and I want to volunteer. And he volunteered as a student at the school, and what it's left him into being a national broadcaster for Canada's National Baseball Team, being the Sunday Night Baseball broadcaster for ESPN for a while. So this is someone who really elevated their game, and would give so much credit to the fact that he was able to go and volunteer. Well, stations now aren't allowed letting people do that stuff. They're not allowed to ride on the backs of volunteers and meanwhile, not paying them poorly, paying their on air people or the people at the bottom of the ladder, while the execs up at the top are raking in the, you know, raking in the money. So you see this as a reflection of the industry, but also less people being interested. Some will say, Well, I don't need that. I can go on YouTube, and if I pick the right topic, I can become well known enough, get enough hits and be paid for it, and never have to spend a day in school. So that when it comes to the broadcast industry, it's becoming very scary. It's no longer just terrestrial radio, as people would say, oh, it's in danger. It's going now all of it's, in my opinion, yeah, has to be fearful.

K

Kelly MacDonald 31:46

Yep, yep. And not many, no.

K

Kelly MacDonald 32:14

And the ones that have people, a lot of them are getting someone to voice track content for five or six or more stations. I've heard like nutty numbers. I've heard of people doing it who are put on stations not, you know, nighttime. You used to have that broadcaster that was on 120 stations, you know, syndicated. But now you can sit there and get someone in Toronto to record for all the the CHUM, what are they called now? I better say CHUM. I'm sorry. I'm dating myself, but all of these stations, for any for Rogers, I'll say Roger. I'll pick on them like I do Bell - the Rogers stations in that in Ontario, and they could say, we don't need a midday person. We're just going to, you know, have this person do voice tracking for all 10 of these stations, or whatever it might be, it's really sad.

L

Lis Malone 33:04

Has there been any talk about having Artie?

K

Kelly MacDonald 33:10

They're worried about Artie too. I think that's really the whole business of the strike, right? The actors, the writers strike and everything like that, because they know people are going to come up with a concept for a TV series, get writers to write it for a year and then get an Artie type friend to sit there and write the next five seasons. That's what they're trying to protect. Because, you know, people keep saying, Hey, that's my jobs. Well, you can't just send that to AI. Sure we can. Oh, that was a good AI episode written by AI.

R

Ryan Fleury 33:43

And we're getting to the point where you wouldn't even know it was written by AI.

K

Kelly MacDonald 33:47

No, and voices. I get into this. I started in on our show with our chatty bookshelf host Ryan Hooey, when he was on the program. I like to get him where it wound up by saying, Yeah, you love all those narrators, right? Oh, yeah, they talk about who their favorite narrator was, and I'd say, wait till AI takes over. Wait till they go to these celebrities pay them a million dollars and from that one celebrity, get them to voice 100 books. Oh, it'll never be like that. I said, You guys are fooling yourselves. You know better, it'll be, won't be, you're right. It will never be like that for at least two years.

R

Rob Mineault 34:21

They're, you know, they're cataloging Morgan Freeman's voice, oh, yeah, because he's going to be, he'll be the, the official narrator forever.

L

Lis Malone 34:30

Yeah, it's, it's nothing to create a voice print.

K

Kelly MacDonald 34:34

Yeah, take that profile, and away you go. And, and who's, who's going to say no, when, when a publisher says, we will pay you this amount of money, and we'll pay you that in five years, when we want you to do more if you're still with us.

R

Ryan Fleury 34:47

Yeah. And I think with the amount of content as well, having live describers record the tracks and the scripts just isn't going to be feasible. There's going to be too much content developed too quick. Ly for any person to keep up.

K

Kelly MacDonald 35:01

Well, we already know that the percentage of books that have audio in the world has only gone up because sighted people have grabbed right onto them and are very interested in in the content, which is fantastic. But the one thing about not just sighted people, they're not not all blind people are that oh my god, that narrator. He can't be out of a job. I love that voice when it comes to the fact that someone says so, you have a choice here. We can find a way to produce a billion books within a year that you no longer that would have access to right now, or we can

just do it the old fashioned way, and throughout the world produce a million books this year with audio, and that's that is the proposition where we're all going to say, hey, there's not enough narrators out there to battle that in the world. And we really only think of, oh my gosh, to have any book I could want. As soon as I hear about it, I can get it at the same time. Everyone else is no nonsense. Oh, what narrator. And I hate it, because it's scary to think of anyone losing their jobs. I don't even mean to jest about it, but I also see the same thing for audio description. I mean, hey, if you gave me the choice that every single thing was going to be described and they could do it easy with AI, no problem, no cost to to it, to make it something that all broadcasters should want to have, content that that's available that way. Of course, I'm going to raise my hand say, please, yes, please.

R

Ryan Fleury 36:32

Well, and we're still fighting the battle of educating people that audio description is a thing, right? So we're still fighting the battle when publishers will just be able to create this stuff on their own at the same time, we're not gonna have to worry about the education side of things. Or is the class being taught a 15 minute segment on accessibility? Hopefully it's just gonna be baked in.

K

Kelly MacDonald 36:56

It really looks like it, too. For a while I've had conversations because I've done a couple of pieces for for Netflix of audio description and the idea of getting low vision blind people, something like that, to do or or other areas in the industry to start us moving, as we see a little bit more movement on that aspect of actually using people with lived experience for something like they did with with the movie C, Series C, and I get it. I think at any way people can get in. And that was the one thing I always found when I did television. I loved when people walked up to me on the street, hey, I see on your TV show. And it wasn't all about the ego of yes, yes, you sure did. It was more about they wanted to know that stunt you did. Were you scared? Like, were you crapping your pants on doing that? They didn't want to know because, oh, you're blind. That must have really they wanted to know because they would have been scared crapping their drawers if it were them. And I thought, and I remember going back and telling people at work, this is a really cool thing, and they'd say, well, that's nice. Somebody recognized you. I said, No, no, no, that's not the point. The point was, they watch our stuff and blind people are on TV. Is no longer a surprise, right? It's just part of life. It's whether they're watching Murdoch Mysteries, which we ran, you know, a lot back then, they still saw our promos and they we weren't a surprise. They weren't calling the rest of the family in to say, hey, look, a blind guy on TV. Oh, you're full of it. There's no blind guy on that set. Oh, there is. It. Really was wonderful.

R

Ryan Fleury 38:28

it's about the experience more than the person and the disability.

K

Kelly MacDonald 38:32

They got used to it and that's what we all want. We say we want and I understand at times it's

they got used to it, and that's what we all want. We say we want, and I understand at times it's an inconvenience, because people say, Oh, geez, I forgot you were blind when they've run you into something. But it's really we have to always fight for and the low vision blind committee has always been weaker at it than other communities. I mean, look at closed captioning. I don't recall any time in my level of memory of them not saying this. This show has closed captioning. It's been there since the 60s, at least.

R

Rob Mineault 39:02

Well you bring up a really good point. And, you know, I we talk about this all the time on the on the show, why is it that that education is so slow to to really creep into the the general mindset? And, you know, I always look at, I always think about autism as the as sort of the gold standard of something that people knew nothing about. And then one day it just the the tide turned, and people became really aware of of autism and how was the spectrum.

K

Kelly MacDonald 39:32

It's faster now, and I think social media is doing it because no one wants to be preached at. When I've had people grab me to guide me or pull me along somewhere, you know, if I say, Oh, don't do that, if you do that to a blind person, now I'm lecturing them, they're embarrassed. They don't want to hear that. But if they see that on on on YouTube, somebody grabbing some blind guy and dragging him along. Oh, my God, what an idiot. You can't do that to someone and just grab them like that. We learn better, just learning in our own way, in our own time. And I think that's what's happened when it comes to certain disabilities have gotten out there. They have been really good at and not being a bash it, at saying, This is me, this is what I do. This is the things, this is how I do this. Oh, and they whether it's got the warts on it and all things that people Oh, I'm uncomfortable to see that. Wow. They keep watching, they keep learning,

R

Rob Mineault 40:22

Yep, yeah. And, I mean, I would, as much as I hate to do it, I mean, I would give credit to things like streaming platforms. I would, you know, there's that show, you know, Love on the Spectrum, for example. I mean, these, these are the things that people watch, and they enjoy watching, and they learn, you know. And that's, you know, as long as these shows continue to portray whatever disability community is involved in in an accurate light, I think that it can't hurt, but it's a slippery road, especially when you're talking about things like reality shows or dating shows or whatever, because so much of that stuff is manufactured, right? But I think that that's kind of what it takes to really seep into the sort of the cultural zeitgeist is that you have to the content needs to be being consumed somewhere and somehow.

K

Kelly MacDonald 41:10

And I think it has to seem normal and not frightening. We don't like anything that we don't understand. So instantly we become, oh, I don't really understand why that person does that, or how come they have a twitch, or how come they're their eyes, they know they don't make eye contact with me. I mean, if people for people who are afraid to carry a cane, they they're low vision, they can get by without it. But there are still those moments where someone looks

right at them, or if they bump somebody, or they're doing something, trying to maybe grab a door handle, or something like that. Or there's a contrast they can't deal with, and someone's watching them, that the first thing we think, Oh, they're drunk, they're high on something, they've got to be what would be the reason they'd miss doing that? Well, they're sight impaired, what? Yeah, and like you say, it's just there's not enough. I love shows where characters are there with a disability, or whatever you may want to call it, but there's no particular reason. It's not the arc, right? Of the arc of the story, right? I think that's what promotes the normalcy.

R

Rob Mineault 42:04

100%. And again, a show that I absolutely love, that I think that did that amazingly, was Breaking Bad. If you remember that show, you know the main character, his son had CP, cerebral palsy, and it, it wasn't part of a plot line. Really, it was just, it was just a fact of the matter and that's how they treated it. And I thought this is a stellar example of how you want to portray disability in sort of a mainstream show.

K

Kelly MacDonald 42:32

And it would be interesting to chart which, if you could draw a line from that character to knowledge base and what it does for the audience members to awareness of the disability and find out where. I bet you, there's certain things that we would say now and as we were talking with autism, that people just have more of a grasp on other worlds. Maybe blindness, being one of them, are more of a that's in the shadowland. I don't know anything about that. I mean, we've certainly gotten away from all blind characters on TV having to wear sunglasses and being, you know, some kind of smart person that can hear everything.

R

Rob Mineault 43:11

It does kind of make me think that there's, there's a very interesting, I think, conversation around the idea of of advocacy and entertainment, and how to sort of marry those two in a way that is going to be most effective to really sort of drive drive things forward for the for the disability community. Are those types of conversations that would happen a lot at AMI, I

K

Kelly MacDonald 43:36

We talk a lot about on our show. We've always discussed, I mean, the places we would go were like conversations like this. Every day, it was somebody would and again, we didn't live constantly in our disabled world, because we all know we don't want to do that. But I mean, if I needed to know a little bit more about something, you know, we didn't hesitate to say, tell us what that looked like. What? What is that? Well, I don't really know, because I haven't been able to see I don't quite know what that is, fill us in for some of our listeners that may not know, or our perspective of something you know, such as fears of being, you know, grabbed or whatever, but we talked about everything. So the reflections of so many topics over eight and a half years has been just amazing. And you get people who, I mean, there are times I'd love

when somebody convinced me of something, something I may have disagreed with, that's dumb, I'd never do that or whatever. And by the time they're done talking, yeah, maybe I should think of it that way. It they've opened my mind.

R

Ryan Fleury 44:32

And your theme this week is on reflections, isn't it?

K

Kelly MacDonald 44:36

Yeah. You know, in all honesty, we've been doing it for the whole month. One of the things when I was first told the show was being canceled, I asked for us not to do with the knee jerk reaction of, okay, guys, you let the audience know when the show's coming to an end, that this is your last episode, or whatever, I think, the idea that somebody's, oh, really cancel my show. Even if we're out of a job, they want something that's not going to happen. And the company was gracious enough to allow us a month to reflect on what we call the live show era at AMI, it really was special to us. So we've been talking to everybody, but it's interesting, because the new show that we're doing in September launching is called Reflections. So I kind of made a little bit of a remark about that on a show the other day, and we'll be, you know, sharing that kind of information more openly now about what that show looks like and what who's kind of involved more so in that show, I'm going to be becoming a senior feature reporter, for example. So I'll be bringing a documentary story, along with a few others to the table every every week. That will be the goal of what our new jobs will be, and this will be audio only. A lot of us, I always say we're CBC wannabes. Oh, we love the idea of documentary, not the background. We don't necessarily have the background. But then we stop and look and say, What the hell have we been doing for the past 1415, years? Yeah, we have the background. We certainly do. We just may not have the 20 producers hanging around like CBC shows do, and I'm sure they'd argue that.

R

Rob Mineault 46:19

So so with the new show, then where is it going to be, and how can people make sure that they that they're catching it?

K

Kelly MacDonald 46:27

On AMI audio. I am going to guess a time, and I think I'm right at this. I believe it's going to be, it's currently scheduled for 1pm eastern time on AMI audio. It will be four days a week, and we'll be repeating a previous episode after it. I will also be producing some columns, if you want to call them for YouTube and for AMI audio that are my own reflections, my own whatever opinion column on whatever I might want to talk about, you know, dropping an F bomb on this show, or, you know, Trump drop whatever it might be, I going to do that a couple of times a week. And there are some of the different things that are happening, and a bunch of us are going to get our hands wet creating these documentaries. So that starts September 2.

R**Rob Mineault 47:16**

And this must be kind of exciting for you guys as well, because, you know, eight years is a long is a long run. And it's a long run to be doing a daily show, but doing these, these documentaries, it's, it's very much a shift. How are you guys pivoting into this new format? And what are some of the things that are that are kind of really exciting to you, that that you're going to be able to do now that there's not all that work in producing a daily show?

K**Kelly MacDonald 47:44**

Well, and I'm glad you said that it's the grind. I mean, I said to you guys, I had some stuff I wanted to have organized here to bring up we've been saying with Kelly and Company, it's a legendary run of the, you know, eight and a half years from spooky Halloween, when we started in 2016 to now nine years of daily talk, which informed everybody, entertained and empowered Canadians with disabilities out there, looking at some of the stats. Okay, I'll tell you this, we aired nearly 2000 full shows in that time period. So we really probably shouldn't be too sad and whine about that. That's about 133 days non stop listening if you ever listen to the whole back catalog, we welcomed over 900 unique guests to the microphone, which is more than the population of some maritime villages out there. With the community reporters, we were able to amplify voices across the country. We had 1300 community reports from that that came from Halifax all the way through downtown or the downtown Vancouver, Real Stories From Real People, Buzz with Bill. One of our features that we did on we had over 850 Buzz with Bill segments, 500 round table talks, where we had hot takes and interesting conversations. And of course, these clowns took any opportunity they could on those to roast me any way they could. We were so happy with being able to get out and travel. We got Screeched in Newfoundland. And we would go to the CNIB Grant Hubs when they started kicking those off. And we would get involved with doing a show from there. We did try it weeks where we went out and tried things such as marksmanship. So we all fired off guns and we record it and brought it to the show. So we really tried to show up and get ourselves involved with people the new show, with its restrictions and stuff like that. As we try to go through this period, we will hopefully get some audio ambient from the field to lend itself to these documentaries. That's something I'm excited for with such equipment like zoom recorders that are now accessible, and will allow the the feature reporters to go out and do these things. We will bring voices to the show, as we call it, reflections. We want those people to talk to us about their pasts and stuff like that. So we will have a basically four weeks to produce each of the pieces. So I would pitch it today. Yeah, and in four weeks that, in theory, that particular pitch would have become a documentary and be on air. But in the meanwhile, I'm still working on next week's one that's supposed to land and be on the air. I'm still into a quarter way into the pitch I made last week. So yes, it's not the day to day grind, but it's going to be as we take the summer off, our way of trying to learn how the heck we're going to do this, how we're going to make this look, how we're each each with the producer and and feature reporter working on it, and then handing it off to our senior producer, Matt Agnew, to do the finishing, put the music in, and some sound effects and stuff like that. All from all that landing to where it gets on the air with a beginning of the with a pitch meeting me, saying, Hey, I'd like to do a story on this, and this is where I'm at with it. What are your thoughts? What do you got for me in in connections, contacts, or ideas? And that's going to be, as you said, new, invigorating. I think for some people, I struggle with the fact, on a personal level, that I've been a host doing really living out the Kelly McDonald dream. Being on air. I'm still going to be on air. I love anything to do with broadcasting, but it's going to be a very different feel, even down to chatting out on social media. I've been

promoting this show, Kelly and company for the past eight and a half years, and now, you know, it's going to take a different take, and gonna take time to mourn that show and embrace our you know, reflections program.

R

Ryan Fleury 51:31

Who else is going to be part of that team for that show?

K

Kelly MacDonald 51:34

The other feature reporters are Grant Hardy from Vancouver, Nasreen Abdul Majeed, who lives in Mississauga, and of course works out of the Toronto office. And Beth Dear, when she returns, she's been away on a leave, but I think Joey Deguta is going to work with us for a little while in her absence, our producers, Ramya and Grace. Grace works right now on AMI today, and is producer there, Ramya, you guys know, she was my former co host, and produces Kelly & Co and she will actually be host producer for the show. So she will be interacting with us as we come in to talk about our piece and ask her questions about it. And our senior producer for that show will be Matt Agnew. With that being said, other shows, there will be changes in the other content. I can't go into too much of that stuff for the big reason of any shows being canceled, any shows being kept on, deserve their time to be able to do what we've had the month, to be able to do.

R

Ryan Fleury 52:36

well, it sounds like it'll be an easier transition then with familiar personalities that you've already worked with for many years.

K

Kelly MacDonald 52:42

And fun, because, yeah, as you say, working with people we've worked with, we have a good sense of what we all can do. And Andy Frank, the manager of AMI audio, he knows his people really well. Um, I mean, let's face it, Andy was the one that said, Yes, I can work with these folks. And took us from possibly being unemployed last September to being employed still on AMI audio, of which we're very lucky, and so many of us were happy, because Andy's always been our favorite manager, and he really wants people to be able to enjoy what they're doing. It's very important to him. And one of the things that you know again, and not to slight the live shows, but that grind you talked about every day. Oh, finish that show. Okay, what do we have for tomorrow? Yeah, it's just continuous. I enjoyed it, but, you know, and I did a mix of, I mean, I wasn't a producer, where I felt maybe some of that heat in this different way, but I certainly produce segments. Certainly also brought guests to the show. And had to, you know, it's pretty tremendous, as you guys know, lining up guests and making sure people can follow through. They're not getting back to me, guys, we've got a hole tomorrow. What are we filling with? It's scary and tricky. This show. We know if something by chance happens and something falls through or something doesn't get done, then I guess there'll be three episodes that week.

R Ryan Fleury 54:04
Wait, you can do that?

R Rob Mineault 54:05
No, no, Ryan, you can't.

K Kelly MacDonald 54:08
I didn't say that month, they're gonna be free this month. Never mind.

R Ryan Fleury 54:13
New format for AT Banter!

K Kelly MacDonald 54:15
Hit and miss. We'll call it the hit and miss format.

R Rob Mineault 54:20
We'll release when, whenever the hell we feel like when we can.

K Kelly MacDonald 54:23
That's right. Well, we're thinking of doing that with Kelly and Company. Maybe if we go off on the side, we'll just drop a one episode every two years, or something like,

R Rob Mineault 54:32
You already got a plan for the reunion show.

K Kelly MacDonald 54:35
In five years just as I retire.

R Rob Mineault 54:39
Always got to anticipate those reunion tours. Yeah, the greatest hits. Well, listen, sir, best of luck with the new show. I'm Is it from all, all accounts, I'm excited, and I will certainly be

listening. Once again, just let people know just where they can find you online. Find the new show and, yeah, anything else you want to plug.

K

Kelly MacDonald 55:07

Well, I will say people can go back and check out the Kelly and Company podcast still going to be there for people who want to check the back catalog of stuff that might be there. I know not everything is from day one. Of course. You can find the YouTube page where we have different content. Look for me in September doing whatever we call it. We haven't officially come up with a name for my opinion pieces, but they will also be available on YouTube, possibly off of the Accessible Media YouTube page and on social media can be found at AMI, Kelly Mac on X and that's pretty well where I am. I haven't drifted off to the others yet. We'll see what I feel like doing. I kind of have a Bluesky account, but I forget what the heck it is.

R

Rob Mineault 55:50

And Mastodon?

K

Kelly MacDonald 55:51

Yeah I know that's where most a lot of people go, I have so many people twisting my arm go over to Mastodon. I know it takes me years to learn anything, but I do think Bluesky may become something we'll see, especially for the media people. But that's kind of the best ways to find me, of course. And people can always reach, always love to hear from people, love to talk and anything, whether it's sports or broadcasting or Old Time Radio. That's one of my other favorite things that I spend a lot of time and do a group for the CNIB during the winter seasons, playing old time radio shows and talking about it in a conference. So those are some of the things I dabble in and really enjoy and speak for. And guys really appreciate being invited here, being able to talk about Kelly and company, and your indulgence of letting me go off like that. And as you said on one show, it is nice at AMI to have people producing and working, where hosts can just sit back, not like you poor devils. That's right.

R

Ryan Fleury 56:51

Talk to Mr. F over there. Yes, even get AT Banter over there. Yeah.

R


Rob Mineault 56:56


Well, yeah, there you go.


K


Kelly MacDonald 56:57


That's the way to go. Oh so and you know what he'll say about the budget, or shall I say, lack thereof?

 Rob Mineault 57:04
Yeah, exactly,


 Kelly MacDonald 57:08
Maybe in the next fiscal, or the one after, or the one after, that's right.


 Rob Mineault 57:13
Well, listen, sir, best of luck to you. Keep in touch. And hey, yeah, anytime you want to, come on, please. Please come back.


 Kelly MacDonald 57:19
Anytime. Guys really appreciate always. Love laughing along with you all the time. Lis, love hearing you and Ryan, Rob, well, you know Rob, guys really appreciate. Thanks a lot guys,

 Rob Mineault 57:34
All right. Kelly, take it easy, sir, and we'll talk to you soon.

 Rob Mineault 57:39
Talk to you later. Guys, take it easy.

 Rob Mineault 57:41
Alright, but hey, listen, we're running late, so we should get the hell out of here. What do you think?

 Ryan Fleury 57:45
Yep, let's do it.

 Rob Mineault 57:47
Alright. Well, hey, Lis?

L Lis Malone 57:49

Hey, Rob, just

R Rob Mineault 57:52

Where the heck can people find us?

L Lis Malone 57:55

They can find us at www.atbanter.com

R Rob Mineault 57:59

Oh, oh, sorry, I got distracted by whistling, We Are The Champions over here.

L Lis Malone 58:07

Shut up. Dang.

R Rob Mineault 58:10

Earlier, I was drinking some beer out of the Stanley Cup.

L Lis Malone 58:16

That cup is in Florida.

R Rob Mineault 58:19


Oh, yeah, okay, that's fine. It's fine. It was, it was, it was a Stanley mug.


L Lis Malone 58:26


There you go. I'm sure your Oilers were crying in the locker room.


R Rob Mineault 58:30


Sure and they're not my Oilers.


 Rob Mineault 58:33
And we'll see when hockey season starts next week.

 Ryan Fleury 58:39
In about six weeks.

 Rob Mineault 58:44
There you go.

 Rob Mineault 58:51
They they can also email us if they so desire at cowbell@atbanter.com. Big thanks to Kelly McDonald for joining us, and

 Ryan Fleury 59:21
we'll see everybody next week on atbanter.com.

 Rob Mineault 59:26
There you go. See that's teamwork, right there.

 Steve Barclay 59:33
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