

[“Why don’t we work autistic people into inherently fantastic scenarios like a space opera or a globetrotting adventure story?” Interview with comedian Michael McCreary](#)

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Transcribed by Julie Ann Lee

(Theme song – soft piano music)

ABK: 23-year-old, **Michael McCreary** began stand-up comedy at age 13. He has performed stand-up shows, keynote addresses and panel presentations in every province in Canada, plus the Yukon, and across the United States. He just published a book entitled *Funny, You Don’t Look Autistic*, and recently delivered a TEDx Talk on the topic of Autism Acceptance. He has also consulted on the television show “Ransom” to ensure authenticity of an autistic character. You may have seen him on CBC’s “The National” or heard him on CBC Radio’s “Laugh Out Loud” or in so many other places, or you may follow him on Facebook. I’m pleased to interview him today.

Thank you, Michael McCreary, for being here.

MM: Thanks! I’m glad to be here, Anne.

ABK: Michael, I’m gonna ask – you’ve been doing comedy in real life and also online (which we’ll get to later) for some years. I’d like to ask if, really broadly speaking, do you think there is an *autistic sense of humour*, or sensibility?

MM: That’s difficult to say. ...I know it’s cliché at this point to crib from **Stephen Shore**, but it’s like you see one person with autism, you see one person with autism. I think with any comic they write what they know, and it’s more extreme with the case of a comic or with an author because it’s not collaborative in the way that say music or film might be. There’s not an assembly line process to reach a final product. You’re just kind of plucking from your own experiences and trying to make that as empathetic or sympathetic to other people as you can.

So I don’t know if there’s like something specifically autistic to stand-up comedy, but I think it’s a perfect forum for it, because stand-up is all about sort of cutting through the BS to get through what is innately strange about the world we live in, and something that we can all get behind and laugh about.

ABK: Mm-hmm. Right, because you said that “People on the spectrum tend to think outside of the box and that’s where some of the best observational comedy happens.” Do you think then that you’re able to get yourself out of the box maybe easier --and why is that?

MM: I’m really lucky that I have a niche here...the hardest thing about [stand up] is you’re constantly justifying why people are paying attention to you right now because it’s not like visual arts, there’s an excess of distractions there, but stand-up is just one person on a stage, narcissistic enough to assume that you should be paying attention to them. And so you need to justify *why* people are paying attention to you. And if you have something that’s unorthodox or unfamiliar to... neurotypical audiences, audiences that aren’t conscious of their own divergences, then that can be to your advantage by virtue of it being unfamiliar.

ABK: Mm-hmm. That's interesting and it brings up another question because I think it must be a tricky area for you since you are talking to audiences that are mixed, like neurotypical and neurodivergent, and you're talking about being autistic. How do you talk about it in a way so that people are really connecting and laughing *with* and make sure that nothing kind of gets misinterpreted so that people end up laughing *at* autism...

MM: My strategy is that you always couch it in something familiar. So, you don't talk about autism in a vacuum. You talk about autism in relation to something that everybody is afraid of, or interested in. So like a bit that I'm developing right now is about how the reason autistic people commit less crime is because everything they do comes back to their fixations and if they did commit a crime, the police would just go, 'Oh gee, I wonder who broke into the museum last night and changed all the Latin names of dinosaurs.' Like, it's...

ABK: (Laughter)

MM: We have a short list. You know what I mean? So, my whole thing is about going *Ok, what can people understand? So, you go OK, we have employment, we have family life, we have small town* – like all these very accessible premises but then you add that little spin.

ABK: Right, right. That makes sense. You've talked a bit about comedians and some of them are sort of open about being neurodiverse, but you're one of the only ones who's the most open. And then there are people that kind of give us pause like **Mitch Hedberg, Andy Kaufman**... we can't sort of retroactively diagnose them but...and I don't know what that would even *be*, but I'm wondering if there's some kind of overlap, or almost like a cousin-relationship between comedians and autistic people...that somehow just being a comedian is on the continuum of neurodiversity.

MM: That's an interesting observation because while I wouldn't say that those guys are necessarily autistic (I think that Andy Kaufman had a few more things going on) but, again that's just me projecting. I think that what might make people think that a comedian is on the spectrum is that- to be a comedian is to look for *minutiae*. Like **Seinfeld**, whether you love him or hate him, had a wonderful quote on this. He said, 'a normal person says 'This newspaper--do you believe the headline, it's crazy!' A comedian says 'This font is terrible!'

ABK: (Laughter)

MM: And that's it! So, like if to be on the spectrum is to concern yourself with the minutiae of very specific, very narrow field of interests, then I could see how that could be totally applicable or even handy when being a comic. But sorry--that wasn't your question. Your question was like what kind of overlap or way of thinking make being a comedian consistent with being autistic?

ABK: Yeah, I wonder if it's a neural wiring...like some people are just kind of *wired* to be a comedian and some people are not. I mean we've certainly heard people who *want* to be comedians that aren't really wired that way. It can be awkward!

MM: Sure, I think there's something that's kind of anarchic about people that want to be into comedy. I mean that's why you have so many people that just talk about how much they hate their job. And I think that's very sympathetic and something that a lot of people can relate to but, again it's like they hated it so much that they wrote it down, memorized it, plotted it out extensively and then yelled at an audience

about it for like 5 minutes to half an hour. And yeah, I could see why someone might look at that and go 'awesome' (sarcastically). Maybe? But yeah.

ABK: It takes a unique kind of imagination and I'm glad you brought up Seinfeld, because I want to talk about Seinfeld for a second because... a couple years ago, do you remember when he made the comment where he said he can identify with people on the spectrum and he wonders sometimes if he himself was on the spectrum? Do you remember when he said that?

MM: Yes, I did. And it was one of the most polarizing things...

ABK: Yeah.

MM: And I won't lie to you, there was enough going on in my life that I didn't care if a rich person said something weird, like you know what I mean?

ABK: I was kind of offended by the backlash. First of all, I was shocked that there *was* a backlash, because obviously I think comedians are...

MM: There's a lot of other people that have self-identified like **Daryl Hannah**, like **Dan Aykroyd** [and] no one really cared when they said it.

ABK: I don't know why someone would be offended by it--and it wasn't autistic people that were offended by it. That was the interesting thing. It was like, people who wanted to hold on to this *one idea of autism* and not be able to expand the concept, or expand into this idea of neurodiversity.

...And then he *walked it back!* People got so mad at him that he walked it back like 'oh, I'm really sorry that I said that I might be autistic.' And then it was like (sigh), dude, *could you not* ...like- now you're making it sound like it's a bad thing. Like, the whole thing really I guess was surprising to me that it became this boiler of an issue because it does seem like it would really be an okay thing for someone like him to say.

MM: Yeah. I'm sorry, I didn't think too deeply about it. That's an interesting way of looking at it. I think you really had an interesting observation there, about who is mad and why they're mad, and that's worth unpacking.

ABK: Yeah, yeah.

MM: About why he might be angry. I mean, that's the entire premise of my book was--the title came from when I was at a book signing and this woman (not for my own book, it was for a friend's) and I told this one woman I'm autistic and she said, 'no you're not, you're doing great.'

ABK: (laughing), oh no!

MM: I just thought, like why are the terms mutually exclusive? I don't think...

ABK: yeah.

MM: I think there's a lot of people that have really struggled in managing their ASD or have yet to find a way to make it work for them. But I think what's kind of difficult for me growing up, I came from a place in public school where like everyone was calling me the *r-word*, and then I was able to find a niche that worked for me.

And, almost immediately, people started going like, 'you're not autistic, you're fine.' So, it's just like, you can't win?

So, it's an awkward, in-between stage and I think that there's a lot of discounting of **extroverts** on the autism spectrum. I mean that's where I get a lot of my energy. But again, I don't think that's any one person's fault. I think that's an amalgam of what you read in the DSM versus what you see on **Big Bang Theory**. Not to blame it specifically nor was it intended to be a depiction of autism, but that's people's projection. When they hear *autism* like they think of a savant who has horrible people skills, and that's not wholly accurate especially if you look at my family situation. Like, I'm not too good at the maths...

ABK: (laughter)

MM: I don't know if you call that divergent. My little brother was non-verbal and incredibly physical – loved running, loved swimming, but again could not care less about academics, you know... He was just very...he was just, almost kind of like an id. He just kind of like, he had an impulse, couldn't control it, just did it and ... So I think that just...you live in the ASD community long enough and you see so many different faces of it that when you hear the kind of backlash about like 'oh, he can't be autistic because he's like this,' – you kind of go well, **why not?**

ABK: Yeah. There's a really great blog that I like to read, and she's from the UK. It's called, "[Autistic and Cheerful](#)." The fact that that's kind of a rebellious statement, it really says a lot because I think it gets portrayed, obviously people want to fundraise, they're going to try to really play things up as sad, and unfortunately I think that's kind of trickled to the mainstream, so that people don't always identify happiness, fulfilment, contentedness, and even humour with being autistic.

And because they don't do that then they're not seeing autistic people as **fully rounded** human beings, because no matter how much bad stuff is going on, and how many difficulties and challenges someone faces, they also want to laugh, and they have moments of joy ...and that gets brushed over. And one thing I like about your comedy is that it's comedy, so it's really in a way like that name 'Autistic and cheerful.' It shouldn't be a rebellion but in some ways it really still is¹

MM: Yeah. It's, like I think **Robin Williams** had this really good line, he's like 'Everybody farts.' (laughs)

ABK: (laughter)

MM: Doesn't matter how sad your life gets. Everybody does, and you need to do that to remind yourself that you're still part of a grand human experience – not of farting--but generally of experiencing things that other people do.

ABK: I think the **Down's Syndrome Community** has done a better job because they had that great campaign on YouTube last year or the year before that, where they had the kids talking and they had the parents talking about how when they were handed their baby in the delivery room. Oftentimes the doctor would hand them their new baby and say, 'I'm so sorry, your baby has Down's Syndrome.' And, how hurtful that was to the Moms, because they had just had *a baby* and so they decided- the moms and the kids decided to all get together with the **Down's Society of Canada**- I think it was, and they won some Ad Council awards for it.

They said, 'What can you say besides 'I'm sorry'' like that it's really important to be able to not take that approach especially as they were describing so many people saying that to them when they met their child. So, I guess it's back to that question of balance again?

And again what I like about what you're doing and the sites that I was talking about earlier is that it allows for there to be that balance and I think it really **humanizes** the population. That's certainly something that the **Neurodiversity Movement** is doing *right*, generally.

MM: Oh, I agree. I actually think there's been a couple of watershed moments in media, like in entertainment media. I think her name was **Julia** on **Sesame Street**...

ABK: Oh yeah!

MM: Here's the thing. That would not be exceptional to me if it were just like, 'oh, okay, a kids' show has a character with ASD to explain what ASD is to the layman'. Instead the Hanson Company who's been very famous for, collaboration and for being very open-minded, they had representatives from the **Autistic Self-Advocacy Network** in the writer's room to construct that character, to write that character. And to me, I hope we're inching to a point --because I served as consultant on a show for realism once— [and] to me, I don't think that's nearly good enough. I think that what we should be inching towards is having a *wholly neurodivergent cast and crew*.

ABK: Yeah.

MM: I was actually kind of moved when I saw this. It was one production, I don't know where, again you are way more well-prepared than I am, but for one production of **The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime**.

[15:14]

ABK: Oh yeah.

MM: And the lead was played by a young autistic man, and I remember someone respond to that like 'Well, I think they really shot themselves in the foot because what if he gets a sensory overload,' and I said, 'I think in *like the 28 preview shows they did*, they would have noticed something. I think when was going through....like any like neurotypical actor can tell you how gruelling an audition process is...

ABK: Yeah.

MM: ...And how miserable and calculated and heartbreaking. I think he's fine.

ABK: Yeah, yeah.

MM: I think he's perfectly fine. And to me, I thought the fact that people were kind of jumping on that, like 'no, what are you talking about?' Like they picked the best person for the job and like or who they thought was the best person for the job and it looks like they're doing well. So, hopefully we are inching towards something where that becomes a reality where you have directors, producers, writers, et cetera, composers on the spectrum. Which isn't to say that there might be those people already, they're just not identifying themselves.

ABK: That's true. That's very true too. Yeah. That's such an interesting point. I was once on TVO...don't ever watch it....

MM: (Laughter)

ABK: (Laughing) And, I...*nobody. Nobody watch it!* And we were about ready to go on, and we're sitting in the studio, and this person next to me... I'm going to say 'well-intentioned' autism services person sitting next to me says (whispering) 'Are you doing okay? Are the lights too bright?' And I was like, 'We're **in a TV studio**, like, what's going to happen if they're [too bright]? Are they going to *turn them down and do the show in the dark?* I know the lights are bright, like I know'.

MM: (Laughing) That would actually be so funny!

ABK: (Laughing) I'm not gonna like flee like, you know what I mean. I know I was going to a TV studio and I know that the lights were going to be bright and I have my own sort of resources within myself, and I think that theatre actors and people that are in any kind of work that requires a challenging sensory situation have work arounds or they work with the director or the producer.

There's a show in the UK, have you seen it, called **Pablo**?

MM: I've heard of it – I have not seen it.

ABK: It's on Netflix now, and everybody should watch it. It's so beautiful. It is produced by a guy who's neurotypical but about half the writers are autistic and--you're going to like this, Michael--every actor on the show is autistic....the real life actors and the voiceover actors. So, the entire cast are actually autistic and the topics of the show are about life as a kid, kind of dealing with the world and dealing with, sensory issues, dealing with communication, conflicts and the sort of **Double Empathy issue**, and it's just so nicely done. It even has like sort of in jokes that only autistic people would laugh at, right? It's just a really beautiful show. I think in some ways they are each of us, and we're waiting for a show that's for adults, although I watch it anyway, cause it's the only show.

But we're waiting for more content for kids and more content for adults that has like you said that kind of ethos of really bringing in, if not fully autistic cast and crew and everything else, at least bringing in elements – more than just kind of one or two advisors, although even that is better than what happens in most cases. And then the content itself actually being very relevant to the real experience, as you were saying with the Julia character too. I think it takes the Julia idea one step further, because I think they only ended up being able to go so far with Julia.

MM: Absolutely. Actually as I was watching it, my Mom and I were kind of joking that there's a scene where, she's unable to play with bubbles, and then we're just going, we're just waiting for her to put her fist in that thing, like just smash something...

ABK: (Laughter)

MM: ...But just because that's our experience with Matthew who again was awesome... he understood that he was bigger and actions speak louder than words, so sometimes if my Mom was like 'OK, keep him from getting into the fridge, we have a casserole in there waiting for company, just stand between him and the fridge.' So, I will stand between him and the fridge. I am 5' 8", my brother is 6' and I just look up at him, and say 'No!' And he nods, and he picks me up, puts me somewhere else and he opens it and he just puts his fist in it. (Laughing)

ABK: (Laughter)

MM: He likes how it feels between his fingers. But no, sorry to cut you off about the Julia thing, but yeah, exactly, the sad thing is that you still have that feeling of, focus group **palatability**, or it's like (exaggerated nasal speech) 'well, we want to communicate that she has, like certain sensory issues, certain fixations, but we don't want it to *alienate* people, you know.' And I go, "well, I don't think it's real". I mean, if you're talking about alienating people, I'm sure there's a lot of people with ASD that you're leaving out... on that one.

But what you're talking about with Pablo, that's amazing that you have a production basically almost run entirely by **self advocates**. What I think we should be working towards and again this is maybe just me, I think autistic stories as told by autistic people is really awesome. I think if we're going to inch towards something more progressive, I think we need to just be producing straightforward genre, genre-fare.

I was kind of pleasantly surprised when I found out what the true premise of **The Good Doctor** was because I thought that it was going to be another show where the main antagonist of an autistic story is their own autism. And, contrary to that, it was the bureaucratic forces that keep him from getting the help he needs to do the job to the best of his ability. I wasn't able to watch that much of it and I probably won't finish it because I don't watch tv, but the entire time I was looking at it, I thought this is kind of what we should be inching towards.

There was a **Dakota Fanning** movie that came out called **Please Stand By**, I think about a woman who enters a contest ...it's like a fan-fiction contest or something. She goes to a Comic-Con to submit a Star Trek script to see if it gets picked up as a pilot and the entire time I said, I don't care if this autistic person like gets their script submitted. I would rather watch the autistic captain of the USS Enterprise (laughing)

ABK: Yes, yes! (laughing)

MM: You know what I mean? Like talking about **integration**, why don't we work autistic people into inherently fantastic scenarios like a Space Opera, or like a globe-trotting adventure story? To me would engage the imaginations of autistic viewers even more... that's why even though I joke about like the idea of an autistic superhero, I think that there's validity to it. I think that people would really engage with it, and clearly people have to an extent with The Good Doctor, where they're like, 'Oh, cool, it's a procedural!'

ABK: Right, right.

MM: Exactly in the same way, except unlike The Curious Case, where the author was sort of...I won't say *coy* at all, I just don't think he was really conscious of it, I think like a lot of authors he just sort of took from his own experiences and people that he knew and tried to inject that into his story, and it just *happened* to relate to a lot of people. But in the case of The Good Doctor, people were like "oh, we're not pirouetting around the fact that this character may or may not be autistic." He just is, and he's engaging, in a purely external conflict, that demands him to act and make decisions that go beyond his own, like him navigating how awkward he is. That's why I couldn't really finish **The A Word**, because I thought The A Word was perfectly fine for what it was, but the entire time I was just kind of like... I want to see something that...that feels more *grand*.

ABK: Mmm. Yeah.

MM: Like a white-knuckle thriller, or a castle siege scenario. Something cool that they could do. **The Accountant**'s really trashy and stupid, but I actually sat there and I said I would rather watch this. ...I mean, it's kind of funny, the idea of an accountant power fantasy, but also the fact that you're going oh, okay, 'what if we, again, posited the autistic character within a narrative where they are a highly proficient killing machine.' I said, 'I don't know if that's necessarily the image we want to go for all the time.'

ABK: (laughter)

MM: But again, but as sad as that is, I think it will actually excite people a little bit more than just like oh, another story about like a sad guy who's kind of awkward.

ABK: Right.

MM: His niches are pretty superfluous. He is the same character as the guy from **Mozart and the Whale**, as is the character from **Adam**, et cetera, et cetera. And, I think people are ready for an autistic superhero is what I'm trying to say.

ABK: I think so too, and we certainly have a lot, something maybe coming out of the **RPG community** or something would be interesting.I haven't seen any of the shows that you were just talking about, but I think the issue that you're bringing up is kind of about treating a character like an object or like a foil-- an autistic character vs treating them like the subject...

MM: Yeah, that's the lamp test, right?

ABK: What's that?

MM: With female characters. The **lamp test** basically meant that the functionality of a woman with a narrative can be comparable to the functionality of a prop à la a lamp. So, it's like if the relationship goes as such a man really desires a lamp, he wants to acquire the lamp, he wants the lamp to be in his home with him, and the lamp has no input.

ABK: Mm-hmm.

MM: So, it's like if a woman can do all the things a lamp can do, then they go, 'yeah, who cares?'

ABK: Yeah, whether it's really just an object or like an appendage... female characters were like that for a long time--still sometimes are. But, if you go back and you look at the movies from the 80s and the...oh! It's like *so bad*. Like the women are so flat and two-dimensional in many movies (not all of them). And even in the movies when they try to make them flat and two-dimensional, sometimes the actresses will sort of try and transcend that but it is similar kind of to how women were at this point, there is an element of **tokenization** in some of the portrayals or a sensationalism, but it's not a **normalizing**.

And I think what we're both kind of getting at is ...to be truly **inclusive** to include autistic people in stories that are out-of-this-world because if you don't include autistic people in the social imagination as well as in the sort of ordinary work-a-day documentary style--we tend to see things like 'tell your story'-- but rather just kind of integrated in a normal way, like the Captain of the Starship Enterprise, that would be really a lot more satisfying.

MM: Absolutely. (laughing)

ABK: (Laughing) I just repeated what you said.

MM: No, no, no. You said it way better.

ABK: Oh my gosh. So, I'm gonna get back to special interests cause I'm especially interested in special interests right now, and I was wondering if you would relate your focus- like the kind of focus it takes for a comedian like you to get a routine going. That level of care. It's more than just a regular job or gig. You talk about doing your work, just writing things down on the back of a gum wrapper when something comes up, it's there – totally integrated into your life. Would you say that's true?

MM: Yeah. It just becomes routine. In fact, when I first moved to the city, I took some courses at Second City. That was really fun, a lot of the beginner courses in sketch and improv because I saw there'd be a lot of transferrable skills there. And they were very handy. But, after I didn't go to any like post-secondary education like, I know Humber has a comedy program but I didn't look into that because I just said, I'm already in. And it's not to sound arrogant I'm just... I was already working. I was already doing ATMs by, grade 11.

So to me, I was like I know what I want to do, and I know how to do it and I know – how to grind, and how to network, but, I needed to keep myself sane on a regular basis, and so having that schedule available where it's: okay, you designate a block of time, so you wake up at 8am every day. From 9-10am you, you work on X thing from 10-11am you work on X thing., noon-noon thirty – lunch. Back on track at 12:30 through to 1:30 you do another thing and then you just keep doing that until 4, and then after that point onward you try to, I don't know, do an open mic. And if can't do that, maybe try and meet up with a friend to try and produce something together.

But yeah, it's not so lackadaisical like "oh, write it down if it comes to me." I like to designate blocks of my day to working on something because it's kind of like when people work a day job. I'm incredibly sympathetic to them for this reason. It's like you value your personal time *so much*. So, the reason that so many great artists come out of working retail or in customer service or stuff like that is because it's not because of the material that they have to work with that they get from their job, it's because they're like *no, the time that I have to myself is precious and fleeting and I need to use it very efficiently*.

ABK: Right. Yes.

[29:48]

MM: And so, to me, I, as someone who dictates their own hours, but again it's sort of like you have seasons that work, you have conference season which is, basically – it's March through to June and it picks up again September through to December. But again, 4 months out of the year, you're grinding to find whatever you can. I want to make sure I'm being as productive as I possibly can be when I'm not working.

ABK: Right, right. That makes sense. And it's true like the old saying, "if you want something done, ask a busy person". But if it's a passion, you always fit it in, no matter how much time you have relative or not, right?

MM: Absolutely.

ABK: All right. We're getting to the end so I just wanted to get really meta for a minute and ask a big question. I often feel like I didn't really *choose* my special interests. My special interests chose me. What do you think? Do we choose our passions or how do they come to us?

MM: No. I actually think that, that's really poignant because I was talking to my friend about this in Guelph and she said, 'you know like whether it's trains or dinosaurs or the colour green or Pokémon or whatever it is, normally a lot of people with their fixations, like they just, they grew up with them and that sticks with them their entire life.' But we stress the word something just kind of *stuck*.

For me at least, I got really into movies very early on. I'm trying to remember my first what I mean by this, where **Abel Ferrara** actually had a really good quote on this, he called it 'your cinematic event' – where like you see something and it sticks in your mind and that's the thing that's almost like, you're simultaneously conscious of the artifice, but again you feel like you're in on something no one else is and you want to replicate that, and you want to recreate that. So for him it was *Bambi*.

For me it was the scene in **Batman**, the 1989 movie where Vicki Vale is in the Batmobile and they're going to the Batcave for the first time and there's next to no dialogue. She just says 'where are we going?' at the very beginning of the scene and he just says nothing. He just flicks a couple switches and he like pulls down a thing, looks through it, pulls it up – and the entire time you have this amazing track called **Descent into Mystery**, where you have this little choir--almost like *Fortuna*-esque choir, building as this car just drives through the night, and you have all these dead trees and fallen leaves everywhere and they're just flying as he goes --and it creates this just incredible spectacle and she just keeps repeating, and she'll just keep getting more and more concerned about what's happening, and the music spikes like crescendos and they burst through the wall and they're suddenly in the Batcave. And I remember, it's like a 90-second scene, but when I was a kid, I was like "that--that's going to take over my life, I figure."

ABK: (Laughter)

MM: I just want to figure out how they made something that magical.

ABK: Yes.

MM: And I know that's weird because that's film as opposed to comedy, but to me so much of my comedy is, it's not only about autism, but it's about the way I relate to and engage with media--specifically film.

ABK: Right.

MM: It's like I got to deal with a passion without the hard part of actually having to run a set or write anything.

ABK: Yeah. But, it's the same thing because that scene that you're describing sounds like it's all about *timing*. It's all about the use of silence, and being comfortable with silence and those are things you all have to have as a comedian.

MM: Absolutely. Naw, I never ...- you know I'm going to hear that frigging **Danny Elfman** score every time I walk out on stage now. That's going to be fun.

ABK: (Laughter)

MM: You know what it is, it's like when you're writing...like, I have a show coming up., when is this going to air, by the way?

ABK: Oh, probably in October.

MM: Okay, so nobody's going to see the show. But I'm doing a show tomorrow night at the time of this recording called "Don't Break the Chain" and the entire premise is that you have a week to write 5 minutes' worth of material – which again, if you're writing every day, it's not as difficult as it may seem. But again, you become really self-conscious of the fact that unlike a lot of other stuff when you're writing, I'm aware of the fact that by the end of the week, when I like to write. I like to produce about 3 minutes of material by the end of a week, where I like to refine it. And over the course of that week, I will go through probably more like 8-10 minutes of material and I'll cut everything that I don't like by the end of the week and keep what I like. But for this you're conscious of the fact again, there is such a clear deadline to it, and hey, people are going to see this and only this. You can't fall back on anything that works. So, you're really like, as you said, *conscious* of the fact that you go, okay, how many laughs per minute, where "how many pauses do I have here, how many words am I using? How many *-ing* words am I using, how many diphthongs are derailing the flow of the joke?" You really get self-conscious... "okay, did I prioritize grammar over clarity of premise?" And then you produce the least funny thing in the world, because you just walk on stage with like a white board that just has like a long division on it, and you're like *aaagh?! It took me a week to write that!* It's ...you kind of have to do it if you love it.

ABK: Right. Right.

MM: I know that sounded so pathetic, the voice crack at the end there. But again that's...

ABK: You have to.

MM: You have to like what you do. And I think that goes for any field whatsoever. Again, there's jobs that you do because you're waiting for something better to come along, but when you put yourself out there and especially in entertainment, you don't make a lot at it. And if you do make a lot, the cheques are few and far between. So, you gotta make sure that if you're in it, you're 100 per cent committed to it, and you're not doing it because you want to be famous.

ABK: Yep.

MM: You're not doing it because you want to be critically acclaimed. You're doing it because you love this.

ABK: You have the passion to...be *compelled* or whatever you'd want to call it.

We're just about out of time, but I wanted to mention that you have an online community through your [Facebook page](#) which is hilarious, and we'll put a link up to that in the blog that goes along with the podcast...I guess my last question would be about what you're working on.

MM: Right now, I'm working on a sneeze, so give me a second. I'm so sorry. Please don't go away. (Sneeze.)

I don't know if I was able to plug it earlier, but I did have a book that just came out called *Funny, You Don't Look Autistic*. You can get it in any real bookstore like Indigo, Chapters, get it online, there's an audiobook version available I'm told.

That's pretty much all I have on the burner right now. Everything else is just trying to secure gigs, trying to get into maybe a couple fringe festivals, but again nothing is guaranteed at this point in time, and ... (laughing) time is fleeting. Go have fun.

ABK: That's massive. You just wrote a book, so yeah, for sure. We will we'll put the book up in the page that goes along with the podcast and thank you again so much for coming in. It was so much fun.

MM: All right. Thank you so much for having me.

(Theme song- soft piano music)

ABK: We were speaking with Michael McCreary, a comedian and the author of *Funny, You Don't Look Autistic*. We spoke in Toronto.

You've been listening to Noncompliant. I'm your host, Anne Borden King. Noncompliant was recorded at MCS Recording Studios. Various episodes were engineered by Nathan Gravette and TJ Liebgott. Thanks to our engineers and thanks for listening.