

**You're listening to Imaginary Worlds, a show about how we create them and why we suspend our disbelief. I'm Eric Molinsky.**

**I recently went to a live show in Brooklyn called The George Lucas Talk Show. I didn't know much about it, but the title alone was intriguing. The crowd was buzzing with excitement. The lights went down, and we heard:**

*PATRICK: Please welcome to the stage, Watto!!*

**The actor Griffin Newman walked on stage. The crowd gave him a standing ovation. As a Star Wars fan, I could tell that he was dressed like Watto. Watto was a CGI creature from the Star Wars prequels. In the movies, he looked like a big gnome that floated off the ground with flapping wings.**

**Griffin Newman was wearing a skintight blue bodysuit with a fake pouch in his stomach, a leather vest, a blue snout on his nose, and on his back were fairy wings. He immediately drew attention to a wardrobe malfunction on his low budget costume.**

*WATTO: We seem to be running through this issue. and I need to explain, this is very complicated CGI. Let's just say there's a technical glitch we keep running into where it looks like my zipper broke on my skin <audience laugh>. And that's not what it is because this is my skin. I have no zipper.*

**After warming up the crowd with a very funny monologue, he introduced the host of the show: George Lucas. It was the comedian and actor Connor Ratliff. His beard and hair were spray painted white. He was wearing little spectacles. He jogged through the crowd giving everyone high fives until he settled into his desk.**

*GEORGE: Hello, I'm George Lucas, creator of Star Wars.*

**He and Watto bantered for a little bit.**

*GEORGE: Forbes reported that I am the number one celebrity billionaire.*

*WATTO: The wealthiest celebrity they said.*

*GEORGE: 5.5 billion. Number two is my buddy Steve with less than \$5.5 billion.*

**And eventually they introduced the guests for their talk show: Adam Scott, Britt Lower and Zach Cherry. They're all actors on Severance, which is a sci-fi thriller**

**on Apple TV. Adam Scott is famously a huge Star Wars fan. And he was quick to play along, pretending he was star struck to meet Watto.**

*ADAM: I can't believe we're finally meeting. This is crazy.*

*WATTO: Well, I'm such a big fan of yours.*

*ADAM: Oh, thank you. Me too.*

**Britt Lower on the other hand, did not know Star Wars. She asked Watto:**

*BRITT: What are you? <audience laugh>*

*ADAM: Oh my God.*

*WATTO: Britt, you asked me this backstage, the way you do when you meet anyone in person for the first time. What are you?*

**I had a bigger question. What is this? What am I watching? I mean, I had a blast, but I kept wondering, how did this come about? Well, there's a new documentary called I'm George Lucas: A Connor Ratliff Story.**

*TRAILER: What is The George Lucas Talk Show? It is important. Fundamentally, it is a talk show that George Lucas hosts. So, Connor plays George Lucas. I don't know why he does it. Does it make sense to you that Connor pretends to be George Lucas every month?*

**I wanted to talk with Connor Ratliff about why he created this show and how the show reflects the experience of being a Star Wars fan. As a lifelong fan myself, I feel like we're always trying to recapture a sense of childhood wonder. But a lot of Star Wars which has come out in our adulthood has not lived up to our expectations. So why can't we ever let go of Star Wars? And why – after 10 years -- is Connor still addicted to playing George Lucas?**

**AD BREAK**

**The name Connor Ratliff might be familiar to you. He's done many comedic roles in TV and film. But he's best known for a podcast called Dead Eyes. When Dead Eyes came out in 2020. It got a lot of media coverage, which was overwhelmingly positive.**

**And this is the backstory of Dead Eyes. In the early 2000s, Connor got a small role on the HBO miniseries Band of Brothers. It was a very ambitious TV show about World War II. Tom Hanks was an executive producer and he directed the**

**episode Connor was supposed to be in. Connor thought this would be his big break but he was fired because -- he was told -- Tom Hanks thought he had quote dead eyes.**

*DEAD EYES TRAILER: And that's the name of a new podcast. Dead Eyes. It's an investigative series, a completely true story, and a show business mystery that has haunted me for nearly 20 years. Why did Tom Hanks fire me?*

**After interviewing people connected with Band of Brothers and talking with friends about how they handled their big show business disappointments, Connor finally got Tom Hanks on the show. Not surprisingly, Tom Hanks was very nice. He had no memory of meeting Connor. But he wasn't surprised. When he was making Band of Brothers he was under a lot of pressure, he was very stressed out, and he may have said that in private, but it never should've gotten back to Connor.**

*TOM HANKS: If your podcast listeners could see my face now. It'd be, you'd be such, I'd be such a grimace.*

**Making the podcast was cathartic for Connor. He was so devastated from that experience, he stopped trying to be a professional actor for ten years. During that time, he discovered improv comedy. The George Lucas Talk Show evolved out of his improv work.**

**But he said the character of Lucas that he plays goes way back. When the original trilogy was re-released in 1997 with new scenes and special effects:**

CONNOR: My friends and I didn't like the new stuff, and rather than getting mad about it, oh no, we're betrayed by George Lucas. We were amused by it. And we would, my friends and I, you know, a lot of what we would do in high school is we would play characters with each other. We would sort of just invent characters and interview those characters. And George Lucas became one of those characters where, you know, one of my friends would be like, Hey, George, um, what new ideas do you have for, you know, new scenes to add into Star Wars? And I would say, oh, okay, well, I would have an idea. We're going to do this. And, you know, uh, I would just, you know, if we were in a hanging out in the mall or something like that, we were in some store, I would just start talking about whatever was on the shelf and say like, we're going to add some of these into Star Wars.

**<laugh>**

CONNOR: Uh, you know, just be like a, you know, it could be like a can of fruit or something like, this is going to be a new character and we, we'll get a sponsorship deal. You know, because we also, we were also inoculating ourselves in advance because we knew if we don't like these new, you know, 30 second, 2 minute, you know, additions to the classic, original movies, what are the odds that we're going to love the full length new movies by the same filmmaker? Because, you know, when enough time passes, you know, I don't remember that thing about how, how many years go by where all the cells in your body change, you're essentially physically a new person, uh, every seven years or something. You know, they're coming out with these prequels, and this is not from the, it is from the creator of Star Wars, but it's being made by the person who made the young Indiana Jones Chronicles and Radioland Murders. You know, it's the, it's the person who has not delivered a really satisfying, um, product entertainment wise in a while. And so we were never mad about the prequels because, because I had this George character that we would play with for our amusement, the movies were almost sort of like, they were like bonus content for this character that we played with in the same way that when I was a kid, my favorite part of Star Wars, I love the movies and I love the, you know, the records and the music and the books and things like that. But the thing I loved the most was playing with the toys, because that's when you could make up your own Star Wars stories. And that was when you really, the movies were a thing that sparked my imagination as a kid and made me interested in telling stories and coming up with characters. I liked playing with the characters that didn't do, or, or say a lot in the movies. Like any, any action figure I had that didn't have any lines of dialogue was great because I could create that character's voice. I could create all of that character's behavior, what they want. I, and I usually would make those characters like ridiculous. I'd make them like overtly like weird comedy characters, but I couldn't do that with like Princess Leia or Luke Skywalker because unless I, I would know, I was not playing the characters correctly, but there was no incorrect way to play some of these like bounty hunter characters who never say a word, you know?

**Yeah. So George Lucas became like an action figure that you were playing with.**

CONNOR: Yeah, and that's something that I didn't even fully realize until I started doing it as a comedy show later that I'm like, oh, this is the thing I liked doing as a kid. But that, that was the thing, like the prequels came out and we'd go see the prequels and then, you know, we'd have fun talking to George about like, why did you do this? And I'd be like, well, because I think George Jar is a, you know, a grade a, uh, comedic character. And I'd talk about all the, I'd talk about all the scenes that were on the cutting room floor, and I would just make up these ridiculous scenes.

**Yeah. I mean, one of the things I was thinking about too when I was watching the show was that, um, you know, that this was, this, this was tapping into the sort of bafflement that a lot of fans have that George Lucas will talk about *The Phantom Menace* and *The Empire Strikes Back* as if it was the same creative process. The**

**results were the same, the quality is the same. And the problem is with the fans. And I, you know, I thought about Dead Eyes, but then also in the documentary too, a lot of your friends were talking about how you're fasted by success and failure, and many people think he's, he's failed creatively on an epic level, and yet he has zero self-doubt. Is that something that kind of fascinated with you, fascinated you about embodying him as a character like that?**

CONNOR: Yeah. Well, because, you know, Forbes Magazine just, uh, ranked him George Lucas, the number one celebrity billionaire. And his failures are more successful than any success I will ever have in my life. In terms of like global box office, even, even some of the things he's done that he would regard as massive flops, you know, they made millions of dollars and, you know, millions of people went to see them. And, you know, or even if they failed in one regard, you know, the innovation in the making of something like Radioland Murders or Young Indiana Jones Chronicles paved the way for almost everything you see in film and television. This was a digital sandbox that, like George Lucas was playing in for the benefit of many things that are of higher quality dramatically.

**Well, when did, when was your sort of aha moment where you realized, you know what, this could be a talk show?**

CONNOR: I did a one person show at UCB that it was sort of, they have these things called Spank Slots, which is where you audition a new show. And I had done this show where I played a bunch of characters and I sort of threw myself into it. It was, it was, it was set at a, it was called Local Authors Night at the mid-Missouri Public Library. So I did this whole show and I put all this effort into it. I actually wrote and published one of the books, and I had created these like, Twitter accounts for all the characters. And I was like, this show's going to be a big thing. And then it didn't get, it wasn't going to get a run at the theater. It wasn't going to play again. I'd have to like rewrite it or change it. And I looked at all the work that I'd done, and I thought, you know what, like the, the performance I did went over really well, but I bet 50% of the people who were ever going to come see this show probably came to that first show that we did. So I started thinking, I need a hook. If I'm ever going to do my own show here, I need a hook. And I was like, I should do something that's like, I don't know, like Harry Potter themed or something. What do people like, I'm like, I don't know anything about Harry Potter. That's the wrong generation for me. And then I was like, what if I just do my George character and just make a, a talk show? And, and I tried it once without really knowing what it would be. And what I realized immediately was like, I would book guests who really had no connection to George Lucas or Star Wars, and I would find in the interview, I would make it about, I would make it as if George had only the points of reference that were from his career, his life. And which is not the function of a normal talk show, a normal talk show host normally has to be like funny. But then they have to, you know, they don't just bring up their interests. I would make everything about George

stuff. And that was immediately enough of a hook that I thought, yes, this works as a show.

***I watched a bunch of the shows on YouTube, and one of the wildest things to me is when you interview people who actually know George Lucas in real life. Like, uh, during the pandemic you were doing the show on Zoom, you guys interviewed Ahmad Best, who played Jar Jar Binks in the movies.***

CONNOR: Yeah.

***But you have to be George and he's got to talk to you like you're George!***

AHMED: And, and I don't know if you remember this, um, and you can chime in because you know, sometimes my memory goes off.

CONNOR: Yeah, me too.

AHMED: Um, first day of Clones.

CONNOR: Ugh. Yeah.

AHMED: The, uh, first AD kept screaming, check the gate.

CONNOR: Yeah.

AHMED: And as you know, there are no gate...

CONNOR: No gate

AHMED: ...on digital cameras.

CONNOR: I was thinking, did, did they mean Bill Gates? Because I, I remember thinking like, this is all, this is digital.

AHMED: Maybe that's just thought somebody left the door open.

CONNOR: Right? Yeah.

***And the expression on your face, you looked almost giddy, like what was it like talking to him?***

CONNOR: It's one of my favorite things, like, my preference always is the, the less the guest has a connection to Star Wars, the better.

***Yeah.***

CONNOR: Like, people always are trying to be like, oh, you should get this person, that person. You know, there's, so, there's a handful that I'd be really excited to get, but I would rather get a guest that you would not expect to see on a George Lucas talk show. I would rather get someone who's a million miles away from it and figure a way to like loop them into that world.

***Well, when I saw with a cast of Severance, Britt Lower did not know it at all. And it was actually really funny, like how much she didn't know Star Wars.***

CONNOR: I like, and the fact that she had auditioned for a Star Wars movie

***And couldn't even remember which Star Wars movie it was!***

CONNOR: <laugh>. Yeah.

ZACH: *Britt. Do you, do you remember if you had to hold Babu Frick?*

*<audience laugh>*

BRITT: *Are you, are you saying English words?*

WATTO: *I mean, Galactic Basic <laugh>.*

CONNOR: But I, I do really enjoy whenever it's someone who has met George has interacted with George, because then I'm on my heels in a way that's exciting to me as an improviser, because I always tell them backstage, don't tell me anything. Save it all for when we're in front of the audience. Surprise me. Because, you know, for one thing, George is, you know, uh, uh, about to turn 80 actually. Yeah. Uh, I think today as we're recording this, and you know, I am 48 years old, and Lord knows there's plenty of stuff that I don't have a great memory about, things that I've forgotten. I always have the excuse of, oh, refresh my memory. But what I love to do is just to bluff along and be like, yes, I remember this. Why don't you tell it? For instance, we had Amy Irving on the show, who was, Steven Spielberg, was married to Steven Spielberg at one point, and at a point when, you know, George and Steven were making the, you know, original Indiana Jones movies. So I knew she had a lot of personal experience being around George. And when we were doing the show, uh, this was last year, she told us a story about going on, what she said was a very awkward plane ride to Hawaii. I think it was when one of the Indiana Jones movies came out. And it was Steven and Amy and George and Linda Ronstadt, who were a couple at the time. And she said that George and Linda spent the entire plane ride. This is this is her phrase for it, sucking face. They were making out the whole time, and that it was extremely uncomfortable.

AMY: *Remember?*

GEORGE: *Yeah.*

AMY: *And, and you remember who else was on that plane?*

GEORGE: *Oh, no. I was focused <laugh>.*

AMY: *No. You remember who else was on that plane?*

GEORGE: *Who was on that plane?*

AMY: *Amanda.*

PATRICK: *Your daughter, George?*

GEORGE: *Yeah, my daughter.*

AMY: *Your daughter was very confused.*

GEORGE: *Kids have to learn these things. Kissing is part of life.*

CONNOR: So immediately we have this new piece of character lore, which is that George loves kissing, and then Amy Irving gets up and stands up, walks over to me and kisses me on the stage.

<Applause>

AMY: Was that okay, honey?

CONNOR: And I'm just like, this is not what I thought was going to happen during this show. It's completely unexpected and the audience went crazy for it. And, you know, stuff like that, it's exciting to find out something new about a character that you've played for hundreds and hundreds of hours.

## AD BREAK

**Let's get back to my conversation with Connor Ratliff.**

***So what were some of the, um, what were some of the, maybe some of the most awkward moments in the show where you kind of sort of like, wow, this is kind of going sideways. How do we come back from this?***

CONNOR: Um, we did a show in London, uh, also last year, and we had booked someone who had done multiple voice characters in the prequels. Been in a lot of Star Wars movies, and he showed up backstage and he was like, I want to, I don't want to say drunken, but he had this very kind of like actor-y energy. He had a big scarf, and he was like, twirling it. And he was just like, oh, Everything was very, oh, this, oh, he was just like, oh my, we're going to do this. We're going to do that. Oh, what do we do? Oh, very good. Very Good. And we just tell this guy is either going to be amazing or it's going to be a disaster. And it turned out it was a disaster because every time we would try to do the delightful thing of me talking about working with him, like, I would say, like, I remember when we cast you in this part and we thought this. And he'd say, no, You didn't. You are not George Lucas. You are an actor pretending to be George Lucas. Let's be real! And you could tell that he thought this was going to go over really well with the audience, not accounting for the fact that the audience was made up of people who had bought tickets to see The George Lucas Talk Show. They knew what they were coming to see. They were fans of what this was. His, like, subversive breaking of the reality just made the audience instantly hate him. In addition to that, every opportunity he got to turn anything into a double entendre. He would, and they were not clever, they were just exhausting. And at a certain point, you know, you have a, an obligation to your guests to, you know, welcome them into the show and make sure they have a good time. But at a certain point when a guest has really, uh, taken a turn like that, you don't owe them anything because they're essentially sabotaging or attempting to sabotage your show. So you kind of have to deal with them. Like you deal with a heckler, which is that you turn on them and the audience enjoys watching you turn the tables on them.



***How did you handle that as a performer, though? I'm really curious when he's trying to break the reality of the scene and you were trying to stay in the reality of the scene, how do you handle that?***

CONNOR: You have to dominate them. You have to be better than them. Funnier than them. And it's not hard to do that. Like, basically, I just started lecturing him that like, part of being an actor is learning how to commit the, and I would deny his reality harder than he would deny mine.

*GEORGE: Jerome, Jerome, I want you to look me in the eye. I want you to look me in the eye. Jerome, I want to see if you can commit, because I know I'm George Lucas. And I want you, I want you to, I know you can do this.*

CONNOR: The weird thing about it was I don't think he realized how badly he was being received. I think he thought he was being like a wrestling villain where people were like loving to hate him.

***So, um, you know, you're talking about we, and we haven't talked about, uh, Watto yet, because that is such a huge and fascinating part of the show.***

CONNOR: Yeah.

***Um, it wasn't your original sidekick. It was, it was, uh, Shaun Diston as Jar Jar. How did this evolve your relationship with Watto?***

CONNOR: Yeah. Um, I mean, as I said, it started the show as Shaun distant as Jar Jar. And that was a character that evolved. He started off doing like a really broad, like, imitation of the character. And then I, I just gave him free reign. I said, do whatever you want with it. What he did basically was show by show, he started stripping away the imitation aspect of it and talking more in his own voice. So he start, he still uses the language of Jar Jar Binks, but he, by the time we were, you know, half a year into it, he was no longer doing the accent or the voice, but he'd come out and say, Hey, uh, meesa Jar Binks, you know, he would just like, he'd still say mesa, yeah, meesa liked that, meesa liked that a lot. Mooie mooie. I love it. And you know what, what ended up happening was he booked work out in Hollywood and had to move. And then for, for a moment, I was like, am I going to replace him? I wasn't sure if I could. And Griffin was a fan of the show and had been a guest as himself on the show. He had this impression and he sort of volunteered it. I kind of wasn't too enthusiastic at first, I think, because I thought it would only be a short term. It'd be another, it would, it would just be like kicking the can down the road a little until Griffin got too busy. But then Griffin booked the lead role on The Tick pretty quickly into his run as Watto. I thought, well, this is the end of it. He's going to miss a ton of shows. He is not going to want to do this anymore. But very often what would happen is, you know, we would do one the show once a month on a mid, Friday at midnight. And very often he was filming on that Friday, and he, if he was wrapped in time to get to the East Village by midnight, he would show up

even if he'd been film up since like 4:00 AM filming. Then Griffin and I really became just like a, a, a double act in the sense of, in the same way that I'd been with, with Sean, we, he, he fit in right away in terms of, the characters are different, but they're both George's like beloved CGI creations. They're both the, the two fully digital characters from that first prequel. And I think they hold a special place in George, in my version of George's heart.

*GEORGE: Watto turns 25. We're celebrating. <applause> Hashtag Watto 25, let's get it trending, we want everyone to spend the next month celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> birthday of Watto.*

*WATTO: People don't think of me as Gen Z, but clearly.*

*GEORGE: Yeah, it's true. Anytime anyone does a profile about what Gen Z's up to. Yeah. They have a little collage of public figures that are Gen Z. You are never included in the, in the photo collage.*

*WATTO: But I was making hit movies before I turned one. You know what I'm saying? Like I hit the ground running.*

*GEORGE: Yeah*

***What also kind of gets to the heart, I feel like by, by having both those characters, you're continually focused on the Phantom Menace, which kind of gets to the heart of like, it's the ultimate example of the movie that, that so many Star Wars fans over a certain age despise that he has to be the most defensive about, you know, I feel like that's kind of, the comedy keeps coming. It's a, it, it just keeps renewing every time you keep coming back to that.***

CONNOR: Well, it's also one of the things I like about The Phantom Menace is that there are so many versions of a kind of Star Wars movie that George Lucas could have made as episode one that would've been very well received. And a lot of them, it sort of has to do with, you know, imagine if he'd hired a really good screenwriter, like a world class screenwriter. It, it's one of the most sure things that ever existed. There were a new Star Wars movie after so many years without one, and he, George chooses that moment to, for the first time ever in a Star Wars movie, really center stage put like the main new character who doesn't fit the mold of a traditional Star Wars character is this overtly comedic slapstick character that just never stops. Like even in the final fight, it's a slapstick comedy. All of the things that George does in the final battle are mistakes like a Roger Rabbit cartoon, you know? He's winning by mistake because he's so, he is clumsy and he is knocking things over. And the confidence of George Lucas centering comedy, that that particular strain of comedy at the heart of that movie, it's as if he had booked 10 stadiums to do standup in. You know what I mean? It is just like, what are you doing, George? Like, this isn't, like, this isn't your thing. This kind of thing is not really, you've never had, you've had success with doses of comedy, sprinkles of

comedy here and there, and this is like closer to like, Who Framed Roger Rabbit or something, the way George is, uh, in that movie. And so to have George hosting a, a talk show as a, as a comedian, it does feel like Phantom Menace is the, is the heart of that, which is like, it's one of his big comedy moves, you know?

***Hmm. That's really interesting.***

CONNOR: Yeah.

***Yeah, in the documentary, you were sort of, you know, you're asking yourself, you know, why, why do, why am I doing this? You know? Well, you know, there are times you've thought about stopping doing it and then you kept going. I mean, where are you at with that right now, that question?***

CONNOR: Well, last year we, we wrote a, I wrote a play for George and Watto to be in, called The Baron and the Junk Dealer. And it was basically like a Samuel Beckett play. It was a, an existential drama. It doesn't mention George Lucas Ardo in the text of the script at all. They play these two characters who are stranded and a a, a spaceship crashes on a, a desolate planet. And we're waiting to be rescued. We're sending off a rescue signal, but we're two characters who are both on the run. So we don't know if our signal is going to be received by people who are hunting us or people who are coming to save us. And we each have our own different reasons for, we have our secrets. We did the show at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, and then there were some shows at the end where Griffin had to leave early, and we still had these slots. And I did this, um, I did George-prov this one, one person improvised show as George Lucas, or as a, it was actually like a digital recreate. I told the audience that I was a digital avatar of George Lucas and that I was interactive. I had already done all the improv and a motion capture studio, and now the algorithm was just going to interact with the audience, and that would decide which parts of this improv you would see. And it went over really well. And then it, it hit me, I don't need a, another show where I have to buy cans of white spray paint and spray my hair and get dressed up in my silly George Lucas costume. I'm like, what am I doing designing another show where I have to do this? So there is a part of me that's like, learned enough to know that like everything I like about doing the George Lucas Talk Show, um, I also want to be a little bit sparing with it, not do it too much to the point where I get sick of it.

***You know, you mentioned the digital avatar, and this is kind of an uncomfortable question, but, you know, we mentioned that Lucas is turning 80.***

CONNOR: Yeah.

***Uh, have you thought about like, one day you're reading the news, oh my God, he's passed away. Is it conceivable that you would do be like, well, yes, I motion captured myself and here I am as a hologram?***

CONNOR: I've thought about this, and it, when you're a little bit younger you have certain hubris about certain things, and it used to be that I thought if it happened, I would just keep doing the show and we would just acknowledge that I had passed

away. But I'm not going to stop hosting the talk show. But I mean, I hope he lives to be 115, to be honest.

***Oh, yeah. Yeah.***

CONNOR: Yeah, I don't know whether I would feel like going on because I think it, I think, uh, if and when such a thing would happen, I think it would probably depress me too much to feel like making jokes. I, I, I think the one thing that I would say is that like any world in which we would continue with it, it would definitely change the show in a lot of ways. And it would probably become a show about exploring legacy and mortality and, and the meaning of life. It would probably become a, it would probably deepen the show if we continued doing it. And that would be the only reason to keep doing it, is because it would open up a larger idea. Because I do think that, like George Lucas is someone who has some element of, you know, he is building, he's building this museum in L.A., The Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, he's definitely has an eye towards creating, you know, a, a, a legacy that will live on and, and a notion that these stories and these worlds that he's building and, and the things that he, he's done for film preservation, that he is someone who's building a world that his children can continue to live in and that their children can, can live in. And that would be the, that would be the area in which the part of me that thinks we would continue doing the show, we would have to find the right tone for it, you know?

## **AD BREAK**

**Connor's latest project is not connected to George Lucas. But it does relate to Steven Spielberg.**

**His new podcast is called Tiny Dinos. It's a talk show but it's also an improvised sitcom. His co-host is an actor named James III. They met a long time ago doing improv in New York.**

CONNOR: And he was one of my favorite performers. And I was sort of thinking like, ah, I'd love to, uh, James and I should come up with, with a show to do together. And at about the same moment that I thought that he moved to L.A., and I thought, oh, well, okay. And James is a big fan of the Jurassic Park movies in a way that I really like, because he's sort of unashamedly just enthusiastic about, not just the original by Spielberg, but he really, I think his second favorite one is Jurassic World, which is, that's not, it's not like a film snobs opinion. There are a lot of people who really don't like the posts, uh, the, the second era of, of Jurassic Park movies. After the third one, I always just really liked how into it James was, and we were talking about we should make a dinosaur comedy like a Jurassic Park comedy. It would be like Jurassic Park, where you didn't know what had happened, but just dinosaurs were suddenly appearing and you

just had to deal with it. And we thought that was funny, but we thought, eh, it would basically be as expensive as making a Jurassic Park movie. And then I kept thinking about it. I thought, what if we did a thing with dinosaurs where we brought dinosaurs back, but we brought them back really small. And that way, originally I was thinking of it as like an Adult Swim show where they could just be tiny little stop motion animated things that you'd see. Um, and I thought, well, that would take care of the expensive part, because we could just have them be small and kind of fake looking. And then my friend Harry Nelson, who's one of the producers on Dead Eyes, he called me and said, Hey, listen, I've, I've got this, I've got a little budget at Hyper Object, which is Adam McKay's company, to make some comedy podcasts. Do you have any ideas? And I thought, you know, we could probably do that Tiny Dinos idea, and it'd be even better as a podcast, because you don't even have to do the stop motion animation. You can just do it with sounds. You can, and it's funny that my, in my brain, I'd already kind of fallen in love with the idea of bringing back dinosaurs small as a, as a way of, uh, as a comedic device, that it didn't occur to me that we could've just made the big dinosaur thing because it's an audio format.

**<laugh> That's true!**

CONNOR: The idea was basically that we're, we're two best friends who are scientists. And I surprise him that I've taken some of my research and some of James's research, and I have brought back dinosaurs, but don't worry about it, because the real problem with Jurassic Park was that the dinosaurs were too big. If you make them really small and keep them in a self-contained thing, it's a secret, then they won't cause any problems, and we won't have any of the Jurassic Park type issues.

*JAMES: That thing's full of dinosaurs. It's a vast world of prehistoric beauty. And it's, how big are, how big are the Dinos.*

*JAMES: The Dinos aren't big at all.*

*CONNOR: They're tiny. These are, these are, they're tiny.*

*JAMES: These are tiny. These are tiny Dinos.*

*CONNOR: And now we've done it. We've made Tiny Dinos. And look there. They're And they're beautiful.*

*JAMES: They're beautiful.*

CONNOR: So in the first episode of the podcast is the episode where James finds out about the Tiny Dinos, and he also finds out that in addition to me doing this experiment as a secret surprise behind his back, I'm also making a podcast about it and using the podcast to help fund the research and, and the, uh, the maintenance of the Tiny Dinos, and which is a counterintuitive, if you're also trying to keep it a secret. But part of the conceit of our show is that podcasting is such a niche, uh, operation, that you actually can reveal a secret on a podcast, and it doesn't get out to the wider world, and only it

only escapes to the people who are your listeners of your podcast. We thought that would be a great frame for an ongoing series where we would both have guests who would come on the podcast as themselves, and also characters, uh, that we're interacting with in our lives in the world of the show who dropped by, or who in some way, uh, interact with us.

*LAUREN: But what if they, what if they multiply?*

*CONNOR: I mean, even they'd have to multiply a lot. It'd just be like little bugs. You know?*

*LAUREN: What, what's your game plan? So you're just going to like keep these in your apartment like little dinosaurs.*

*CONNOR: Yes. Yes. That's what's been happening. And there've been no problems at all. And I just told James about it and I probably should have spaced out you coming over. I should have done it on a different, on a different day.*

*JAMES: You should have people come over at all!*

CONNOR: When I was growing up, my dad used to play me like old time radio shows, like the Jack Benny Show and things like that from the 1940s. And as a kid, I remember thinking like, oh, it, it kind of sucks that this is like vaudeville. It's like a dead medium. There's no radio stations that play like comedy sketches really. And podcasting has really brought that back. And, and it actually an improved way. It's weird because the technology of what you can do in a, in a narrative podcast now, just in terms of like sound effects and stuff, even, uh, and editing as an improviser, it's very thrilling to be able to say something and know that it's going to happen in post. Because you can literally say like, oh my God, what's that? Ah, it's fire ants. Oh, they're everywhere. And then you suddenly now have this like, musical score that could come in and the sound of all these, these things like crawling on the floor, it's so easy to make quick thinking. Improv moves suddenly sound even more impressive because they're backed up by these great support moves in the, the post-production you can layer in.

***Huh. I have one kind of last question, which is a bigger question. Um, I assume that most people probably know you through the podcast Dead Eyes. And when I saw The George Lucas Talk Show I kept thinking about Dead Eyes in terms of this idea of how do you measure someone's career in terms of successes and failures? In the documentary, a lot of your friends said this is a big theme that runs throughout your work. So I was wondering, have your feelings about success or failure changed because Dead Eyes became such a big hit?***

CONNOR: A little bit, because the success of Dead Eyes is very satisfying. It's very, um, fulfilling to be able to do something more or less exactly the way you wanted to do it, and have it be well-received at just about every metric that I could have imagined for it. At the same time, it doesn't solve any of your problems. And I think a lot of times

that's a lesson we just keep having to relearn, is that success is good and it's nice to have success. And sometimes success, you know, financial success can solve money problems and creative success can solve certain kinds of problems. But there are some things that no matter how successful a person gets, it doesn't change any of the fundamental things that you might feel about yourself that feel wrong or off. Like, those are things that you, you have to find the answer somewhere else. I think a lot of times people chase success because they think it's going to be the answer. You know, if you could just get this one thing, if I just get that golden trophy and that million dollars, then I'll be happy. And there are a lot of people who've reached that million dollar mark, or they've gotten that golden trophy, and it's, in some cases, you can see it in their eyes, the real, the moment where they realize like, this isn't going to fix me. It's not going to fix everything. It doesn't bring people back. It doesn't undo mistakes you've made. You know, it doesn't change that, that ache that you have. I think a lot of us have that feeling that like, oh, there's something wrong and I got to figure out what it is. And sometimes success becomes the placeholder for like, I'll be, I'll be really successful. And then that, that feeling will go away. That empty feeling will go away. And when you achieve success and you realize it's still there, that can be a horrifying moment for people. Thankfully, I already knew that before doing Dead Eyes. So I was able to just enjoy dead eyes for what it was, because I knew the one thing, it absolutely wasn't was an answer to my prayers and my problems. I think one of the things about the original story, the original, uh, like the origin of it is that I thought, if I can do this little part on Band of Brothers and Tom Hanks is on set and he likes me and says, Hey kid, you're good at acting, that that would mean I would get other work and my career would be on track and I'd be, uh, it would be smooth sailing from there on out. It would've solved everything for me. When I was fired from that part of my sort of spiraling out was not realizing that it actually was just a very small thing that had happened. I reacted at the time as if it was the end of the world. And for me, creative success, it's something I aspire to have. It makes me feel better, doesn't solve everything, show business success, which is, to me there's overlap, but it's a very different thing. You know, I need it for my health insurance, but I'm very aware that like there's no amount of show business success that I could have that would be enough. If no amount is enough and you can really process what that means, then you can kind of be like, oh, okay, this isn't the holy grail that it seems like it was. George Lucas is as successful as you can be as a person by any measure. And he's still, he's turning 80, you know, he, he's not going to live 80 more years. And it's a problem that it comes to us all, you know, we have to reckon with it.

**Well, that is it for this week, thank you for listening. Special thanks to Connor Ratliff.**

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