Deadair Dennis (00:00):

Thank you so much for downloading this episode of, So What Do You Really Do? The podcasts where I, your host, Deadair Dennis Maler, speak to artists and entertainers about their day jobs. And on the podcast today is not just a comedian, not just an actor, not just a writer for TV, but he is also the probably I'm going to, I'm going to give him the title of the best comedy historian out there. Mr. Wayne Federman, author of the History of Stand-up. Wayne Federman is a comedian you would recognize his face if you saw him, he's been on a lot of things, small roles on movies and TV shows here and there. You would definitely recognize him. In fact, we even opened up the podcast talking about some of his acting roles. I'm so glad that I got to talk to him on here because he had a podcast about the history of stand-up and it was delightful to hear. And now that he's written a book about the history of stand-up, that expels expands expels, no, it doesn't expel. Cause that would be throwing things out. It expands more of the history that you would've heard on the podcast. So if you're a fan of stand-up comedy and you want to know the roots of stand-up comedy or where things came, or you just want to get more knowledge about other comedians, the book is a perfect place for you to start reading on that. Especially if you're a comedian or a comedy fan. I am both, obviously, if I'm going to be a stand-up comedian, I'm also going to be a stand-up fan, one would think. Speaking of a stand-up comedy, I basically just had to turn off Clubhouse just so I can record this intro. I have been on Clubhouse nonstop since I got the app. And it's been, *sigh* it's basically Reddit for the illiterate. That's basically what it is. It's, you're going into different rooms and talking to different people, but instead of typing back and forth, you're, you're listening to them talk or you're talking to them, but it's been a fun experience. I've been in a lot of stand-up comedy rooms and some writer's room for TB writers and stuff, and just, you know, just hanging out with other people and getting to know the social part of social media. And I am enjoying it. I dunno if you're on Clubhouse, or if anybody else is out, getting there, maybe I'll try and talk Wayne into doing a history of up or a stand-up history, Q and A Clubhouse. Maybe we'll see. I don't know. But I had a good time talking to Wayne Federman this again, of course, I did this in conjunction with DigBoston. So you can read our conversation at DigBoston.com or have it delivered right to your mailbox. Now that DigBoston is it's been a while since I wrote for something for Dig, because let's be honest during the pandemic, what is there to write about? There's very little to no stand-up comedy happening. There's a lot of stand-up comedy happening on zoom and I'm doing a lot of it. I am a fan... I don't hate zoom comedy. To me, you're telling jokes in front of people. It's not that different than any other medium of stand-up, if you ask me. You're just in a different place, in a different environment, you're telling it to a webcam, but you're still telling it to people it's best when the people were un-muted and participating in laughing. But it's still no different than being, you know, telling jokes at a bar or a club. Except if you, you can hear those people laugh. At least in live they're laughing. Well, sometimes, I mean, there's plenty of comedy shows I've been on where people are watching. They're paying attention, but they're not laughing. They're just sitting there staring at you. They're not reacting. And then after the show, they come up to you, he's like, "Hey man, you're really funny. I really enjoyed it." I'm like, did you, did you really? Because you didn't look or sound like you were enjoying it. So, but on this subject of virtual comedy, I am enjoying it. At least it's better than doing nothing, I guess. Anyway. So that's why I haven't written a lot of articles because there's not a lot about comedy to talk about right now, especially here in Boston, where there are so few like Boston comedy basically just gave up during the pandemic. You know, there was a lot of shows in that list and everybody pretty much was like, no, it's not the same. No, I don't want to do it. And they just sat around and waited for months and months thinking that this was going to end quickly. I mean, don't get wrong. I was a believer that this was not going to last past Memorial day of 2020, boy was I wrong. I'm willing to admit that I was wrong, but here we are almost a year later, very close to a year later, we're almost, we're still not even opened back up at the end of the month, March beginning of April, Massachusetts might reopen some things. That's

what we're looking at. That's what they're telling us that we might reopen and go back to doing live shows. Maybe we'll see, but in the meantime there's been nothing else really to write about. And I'm glad that Wayne Federman wrote this book and put it out. And that it came across my inbox, from his publicist, because I wanted to talk to him about this. I enjoyed his podcasts. I enjoy the history of standup and, and hearing about it. And we talk about a couple of other things that I wanted an expert opinion in the history of stand-up, a stand-up comedy historian. I wanted his opinion on things. So it was a really good, fun chat. And I'm really glad that we connected. But like I said, I'm going to try and get him to do maybe him and find other comedian experts stand-up comedy historians to do maybe like a clubhouse Q & A or something one way to find out, follow me on clubhouse at debtor Dennis or on social media. But anyway, thank you again for downloading this episode and please enjoy my conversation with comedian, actor and stand-up historian, Wayne Federman.

Deadair Dennis (05:23):

Thanks for joining me. It's very fortuitous that we would be talking today because just the other day I saw you, like the day before I got the email about your book, I saw you in a movie and I'm like, "Oh yeah, Wayne Federman." And it was a, what was it that I was watching? It was Funny People. That's what it was.

Wayne Federman (05:39):

Yes. Yes, yes. I'm barely in that, but yes.

Deadair Dennis (05:42):

Well, that's what I find, one of the things interesting about you, and you make reference to it. Cause I think you have an album or there's articles about you that the comedian you didn't know, you know you've done a what 90 different TV movie appearances? Because clearly I am IMDB'd you in preparation for this. Are there, are there any of those like small you know, cameos or small roles like that, that you just completely have forgotten that you were even in it until it like shows up or someone reminds you of it?

Wayne Federman (06:11):

Not really. I sort of remember every cause it's like, that's the whole goal of my life was to do these kinds of jobs where you're like on a movie set or on a television set. But as the most part, I, I, not only do I remember them, I remember like what I was feeling when I was driving to the set and if I was late and stuff like that. So for the most part, I think that might be an early television thing that I was like, I don't even remember doing this thing, but as a rule now I S I, I remember them even, even Baywatch, even Baywatch.

Deadair Dennis (06:49):

Well, who could forget being on the set of Baywatch that's most people's dreams.

Wayne Federman (06:53):

Yeah. Well, it wasn't on the beach. It was in a bookstore, but still, Oh,

Deadair Dennis (06:58):

Baywatch the show that took place. One episode took place in a bookstore, even though nobody in the show could read.

Wayne Federman (<u>07:06</u>):

Okay. All right.

Deadair Dennis (07:07):

Well that's I I'm, I admire that. You can remember all of those cause 2018, 2019, I did a lot of background work here in Massachusetts on movies and TV shows. And I have a hard time remembering which projects I am in. Granted my entire role is just to show up, get two free meals, wait for a paycheck and not look at the camera. That's all I have to do. I don't have to memorize lines. I don't even need to know what's going on. I'm just standing somewhere and making sure I don't fall down. So it's easy for me to forget what projects I'm on because half of them don't even have real names when I'm working on them.

Wayne Federman (07:42):

Gotcha. Gotcha. No, to tell you the truth, I'm part of that world. I've also done background work many times.

Deadair Dennis (07:48):

Excellent. In addition to being a stand-up comedian and acting, you're also a writer and a lot of things. And I'm always curious, because in comedy, there's so many different avenues for writing. Like there's, you know you know, long form writing, there's monologue writing. There's you know what we're doing right now, which is, you know, talking about, you know, interview writing, talking about the business of comedy there's writing for shows, there's writing for movies. And then

Wayne Federman (08:12):

You're saying, what we're doing right now is writing. Is that what you just tried to do? Am I supposed to not just ignore that statement?

Deadair Dennis (08:21):

I am very open with the fact of what my writing is as a writer for a newspaper. What I do is I record my conversations, have a computer translate, translate it. I give it to my boss who edits it and grammar checks it, and then they mail me a check. I am, I am, I'm stealing from a nonprofit. As a writer.

Wayne Federman (08:39):

How, how accurate is your computer translation of trans of those transcripts of the audio? How, how good is that? Is it gotten better?

Deadair Dennis (08:51):

I think it's great. I use a service called Temi, T-E-M-I.

Wayne Federman (08:54):

I'm writing it down.

Deadair Dennis (08:55):

They've raised their price to 25 cents a minute, which is a little pricey, because it used to be 10 cents a minute. But I think for the price of even at that higher price, I think it's well worth the money. I still have to go back and do tweaks and edits here and there. But for the most part, I mean, if I released just the unedited version, everyone would completely totally understand the conversation that's going on. Like it tags our voices and it's pretty accurate. And it's only gotten better over the past two or three years that I've been using it. So.

Wayne Federman (09:23):

I love it. The computers are doing these jobs.

Deadair Dennis (09:25):

Yeah. But so on the question of, of writing, what is for someone who has written for award shows, what's the difference between writing for award shows and writing like on Jimmy Kimmel as a monologue writer?

Wayne Federman (09:39):

Well, first of all, it was Jimmy Fallon. So I wouldn't know what it's like to work on. Jimmy, we can cut that out if you're too embarrassed.

Deadair Dennis (09:46):

My bad. I had a 50, 50 chance of late night. Jimmy's in my brain went to the wrong one.

Wayne Federman (09:52):

Cool. so it's Jimmy writing for late night is a Groundhog day job. So you do it, you wake up, *ring* "I Got You, Babe" comes on the radio and you're like, I just did this job yesterday. *ring* I just didn't, it's the same job every day. It's really very grind. It's a grinder that is a grind job. Whereas writing for an award show, it's like, Oh, you're doing all this work focused on one day in the future. And then when it's done, it's over and then you, you know, drink or something like that at the after party. And, and you're done. So it's just a whole different mindset of writing for those two things.

Deadair Dennis (10:36):

Now, since you've done so many of those award shows, you're an expert in writing for an award show. Have you brought in other writers from other mediums, like say a sitcom writer, who's coming into award show for the first time and have you had to coax them into that's great for a writer's room, but that's not going to work in this medium?

Wayne Federman (10:54):

No, because usually I am not the guy hiring someone. So I really haven't had that situation. When I was at a late night with Jimmy Fallon. We had a lot of stand-ups on the staff. So I, I love that. So we had Anthony Jeselnik, believe it or not was writing jokes for Jimmy Fallon and Morgan Murphy. And it was just a very fun environment. It's just a fun environment just to go to work

Deadair Dennis (11:20):

Now as the head writer at Fallon, were you in charge of hiring?

Wayne Federman (11:25):

Head monologue writer. Yes. He did hire some monologue writers there. Yes. But that was, again, those were guys who just were sending in jokes and like, "Hey, can you, it was, can you see if these are good enough to be on the show?" And so when it's my slot opened up, we had a competition and, I did hire a guy who was actually living with his parents in Massachusetts when he got the gig.

Deadair Dennis (11:49):

But so what I'm curious about as when it comes to hiring comedians for writing for late night, what exactly are you looking for from comedians in like a submission packet or in the outside world? Where you're doing a show and you see somebody you're like, he's got what it would take to be a writer on a show. What are the things as somebody who's been doing it such a long time is looking for from comedians?

Wayne Federman (12:13):

It's very simple. It's good punchlines. It's everything else is not important. So every joke is sort of a misdirect. Like you think you're talking about one thing, but you're talking about something else, or you're taking two ideas and you're putting them together, or there's just a million formulas. But if somebody has a punchline that catches my eye and I'm like, Oh, this is making me laugh. I didn't see this coming or wow. That is a smart take on it. That's all it is. It's, there's no like, like, Oh, these, this setups have to be totally in the voice of Jimmy Fallon. It didn't, it didn't matter. But it was just, it was all about the punchline.

Deadair Dennis (12:51):

No. So it's more, you're looking at more of somebody who understands joke structure, then the content of the jokes itself. Good. That's good to know. I think that's very promising for a lot of comedians because I'm a big fan, especially when I do like workshops with other comedians, I always try to focus on what the structure of the jokes are. So that's good to know. Not that I'm going to be a monologue writer or anything like that.

Wayne Federman (13:12):

It's a good, it's an, it's the really tough job, but it takes a specific kind of person. And I only lasted a year in that job. Like I couldn't, I couldn't do it, but it takes a specific kind of like get up early in the morning and go to work kind of guy. And I'm asleep till 11, then take a nap, then get up. You know, I'm that kind of guy,

Deadair Dennis (13:33):

It's definitely monologue. Grinding is definitely more the business of comedy type, personality, unless the art of comedy kind of person.

Wayne Federman (13:40):

I don't know if that's true because I've met some very creative people that they just can do it. They just have this, they go into this mode and it's just crazy. There was, I was once writing jokes for a show called Politically Incorrect. There was a guy, Chris Case was his name, and Bill Maher was like, "can we have any, can we please have a joke about Bill Clinton in Ireland? How hard is that? Ireland. Drinking. Come on!" So we closed the door. It's just the two of us. And I'm like, frozen with fear. And Chris is like, *typing

sound* Which was making it impossible for me to write any of this. Like how many jokes is he already come up with? And like within 10 minutes he had, he had about eight jokes. And it was like, Oh my God, okay. Okay. This is, this is a machine.

Deadair Dennis (14:30):

As someone who is both worked in the late night TV show realm, and the person who has also performed on late night TV shows as a comedian, do you think... And as a historian of, of comedy, because there was a time where being on The Tonight Show was the, was going to launch your career.

Wayne Federman (14:48):

We could launch your career. A lot of people did The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson whose careers were not launched. Just saying, oh yeah. That's like a common myth that I talk about in the book that yes, there was the Roseanne and Garry Shandling and Seinfeld, and obviously Freddie Prinze was a famous one, but there was dozens, dozens of comedians that would do the show. And they, yeah, they may be able to raise their rate on the road a little bit, but for some reason, or even do the show multiple times. But for some reason didn't break through at all. And just doing The Tonight Show became, as I write in my book like a great thing for your family and friends, like, you know, it's like a bucket list accomplishment, but just ultimately a wonderful line in your introduction. When you go up on stages,

Deadair Dennis (15:39):

See, that's fascinating to hear because we keep, like, I love that you're debunking this with this book because that's all we keep hearing is like, Oh, The Tonight Show was what everybody wanted and The Tonight Show was going to make you. And that's what I'm wondering now is because there's so many more late night outlets for stand-up comedians and there's tons of other outlets for them to hear people like everyone right now, the big thing is, everyone's like, Oh, Joe, you get on Joe Rogan Experience and that's going to make your career. You get on this show and that's gonna make you, you get on AGT and it's gonna make your career. So with all these other avenues, does the late night set really matter that much for her,

Wayne Federman (16:16):

Not as much as it did during the days of Johnny Carson. I mean, that was the height of it in the seventies and early eighties, definitely the height of it. But even in the sixties, Carson had some sway. But at the point when Carson started, don't forget, there was still the Ed Sullivan show. So that was three times, four times. As many people were watching the ed Sullivan show, then we're watching The Tonight Show out of New York. But now no, it's so diffused. Like most people, I think a lot of people might more people might see your set, if you do, let's say Colebert when you post it on YouTube and then it lives there for a little bit. So now it's a whole different situation. And I know some comics who don't even try to create, like that was a that was an assignment when you were starting out as a comedian, when I was like, you have to have these six minute tight sets ready to go for The Tonight Show, or for anything else. And now I know comedians are just like, now I'm not even trying to think about breaking up my act into little six minute things. I'd rather, I'd rather just like concentrate on doing a special and put it up on YouTube and, and take it from there.

Deadair Dennis (<u>17:28</u>):

So do you think that there are more advantageous platforms and outlets for comedians?

Wayne Federman (17:35):

Oh my God. Are you kidding me? Yeah, of course. There's look what happened over the pandemic. Look, look at two people. Ziwe I don't know if you know, I don't know if you're familiar with her. She had an interview show on Instagram live. She now has a Showtime variety show that she's hosting. Okay. That's from, she also did other things, but she did that. And obviously Sarah Cooper did a lip sync of, into her phone, into this thing. And then next thing you know, she has not only a Netflix special, but a CBS sitcom pilot as well. It's just been green lit. So that's as powerful as anything that's happened with Johnny Carson.

Deadair Dennis (18:21):

Yeah, no you're right. So do you with that, do you think that's been because of the natural progression of comedy and technology, or do you think the pandemic has made that thing go up made that, that the, the different platforms come to fruition faster and earlier?

Wayne Federman (18:41):

That was almost a sentence I liked the way you kind of struggled with it, but you got it out. I'm the same way. I'm like in the middle of saying something all of a sudden, like, ah, I'm going to be able to get to the finish line. I'm stumbling people like, Oh, falling. My pants are... Okay. This is the way it works. Yes. A hundred percent. Of course. Great question. Yes. All of these platforms, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, especially, I don't know much about Snapchat because I still don't understand what that is, and why people would want something that, and then go is gone. So, but yeah, so all of those, all of those platforms, you can, you can reach the world. People will, if they like it, they can retweet it. So it's in a way, even more powerful than what happened with Freddie Prinze on The Tonight Show or with, you know, Roseanne Barr or Steven Wright. So it's, I don't, yeah, it's just, and this is one of the themes of my book. Sorry. I keep talking about, I don't have to, like, we can talk about anything else. I don't care,

Deadair Dennis (19:46):

Please. I'm going to ask you questions about the book later on work. We're leading into the book conversation.

Wayne Federman (19:50):

The themes of my book is that comedians, since they started, and again, we go back to Mark Twain era in my book, have been adapting to technology. So this is a new, this isn't a new story. This is just now there's. I mean, who would have ever imagined that you could broadcast a show from your bedroom to the entire world, to the entire world? So that's what, that's where we're at now.

Deadair Dennis (20:20):

Broadcasting from your bedroom to the rest of the road who knew Wayne's World was ahead of the curve on that?

Wayne Federman (20:24):

I think it was a basement. I think it was her basement.

Deadair Dennis (20:28):

But yeah. So I'm glad to see that because during the pandemic, obviously pandemic, comedies, zoom comedy, and stuff like that is a subject that has come up in a lot of my interviews. And so far know, I'm glad that you're someone who's pro, seemingly, through conversation right now is pro kind of stuff, because some comedians aren't, they're just like, especially at the beginning of the pandemic, a lot of comedians are like, "Oh, it's not real comedy. It's not the same thing. I'm not going to do it. It's not going to stick around." So it's nice to talk to somebody who is also embracing that comedy, especially someone who's a historian of comedy, because you know, you're someone who has looked through the atolls of stand-up comedy history. And it's very easy for you to do some Gail, Hey, this is when comedy was the true truest and realist art form. And you're not that. And I, and I'm happy about that.

Wayne Federman (21:20):

Not even close it's evolutionary period. Yeah, no question, no question about it. And I agree with those comics. It's not stand-up the way you remember it. It's definitely not stand-up, but I remember a time, or I've certainly read about a time when record albums came out, and all the nightclub, comedians, Joey Bishops, and stuff like that. And we're like, well, this isn't a stand-up. What, you know, Shelley Berman is doing, or Bob Newhart is, do you know, that was Bob Newhart's first time in a nightclub that recording. And it ended up, you know, winning the Grammy, winning record of the year. So like, there's always sort of an, a person who's like, this is the way it was when I started. And now it's morphing, and I don't want to have anything to do with it. And, but all you have to do is look at those two people. Yeah. Ziwe. I'm not sure how to pronounce her name, and Sarah Cooper, just two of many examples of, of that.

Deadair Dennis (22:19):

That's excellent. Now, as someone who is a comedian you, you teach at a, at a university, comedy at a university you're a writer, Cami historian. How do you address the issue of, because we're in this time and age, cancel culture versus PC, or the conversation of PC is killing comedy? Because I remember the movie PCU, which with Jeremy Piven, which stood for Political Correct University, and the whole movie is about riling up against PC culture. And it was like, Oh, you can't say anything anymore. And I'm like, that movie was 1993. That was almost 30 years ago. Are we just perpetuating the same, same thing over and over?

Wayne Federman (22:59):

No, no, no, look, look, it's definitely a real thing. There's just no doubt about it. There's people that are super sensitive about certain words or certain subject matters, and they will come after you and try to destroy your career if they can. That is for real, I've seen it happen. But my feeling about this whole thing is like, it's terrible. I feel like it's anti-comedy. It's anti-free speech, but it's like an annoyance. Like it's not going to kill comedy. It might slightly adjust it a little bit, a little bit, but it's just not going to kill it. Comedy is too strong, but it's like that it's like an annoyance as opposed to the roadblock and we're done doing stand-up, you know, I, I just feel like stand-up comedy is stronger way stronger than that.

Deadair Dennis (23:52):

Do you think that there's at the same time, two different things going on where between a.) Cancel Culture and also consequence culture? Where people are trying to hold people accountable for their bad actions. But while also at the same time, there's people who are trying to cancel comedians for taking things that are out of context and doing it erroneously. Do you think there's both things happening at the same time?

Wayne Federman (24:14):

Yeah. It's like, look, I'm a free speech advocate. Like I'm one of those, I'm old school ACLU. Like I'm a big believer in it. I think it's healthy. I think it's uncomfortable sometimes, but the, the other side of it I think is worse. So, and people are like, I'm like, yeah, once you say something, you have to deal with the consequences of what you say, the person that is upset with you also has free speech. They also have free speech. So it's I I'd just rather see it out in the open like that, but yes, I've never heard of consequence culture. Is that something you came up with?

Deadair Dennis (24:52):

It's kind of the new word right now is when they're like, Oh, instead of looking at it as cancel cost to look at it as canceled consequence culture, because I had, when the conversation comes up, I leaned towards, we've been fighting these kinds of battles for a long time. This is not going to kill comedy. PC's not killing comedy. People could still do and say what they want, but the people who are doing real harm are finally having their feet held to the fire. Example: You know, the most recently was crystal. Leah would come out crystal Leo, when you look at it was objectively as a 30 year old man, private messaging teenage under age girls and saying, "Hey, let's get together. Hey, I really like you." And it was being, you know, his feet's being held to the fire for the things that he did. I have a hard time of thinking of someone who's been canceled. Who've been right properly canceled for not doing, you know, for not doing the thing that they did. Like Bill Cosby. You can say bill Cosby is a great community. Part of the reason why I got into the comedy is because I grew up on Bill Cosby's specials and telling his jokes. But I also told Dennis Leary jokes when I was in middle school too. So I can understand, you know, I can really put away the art and the person, but when you 37 people have come out and said, "Hey, he drugged him and did sexually inappropriate things." That's not the conduct. There's no context there. This is a man who did something bad and he's now being punished for it. So like, did Shane Gillis really get "canceled" when he's making more money now as a headliner, after the controversy than he would have as a writer on SNL? You know? So personally that's the way I look at the two things is like, I don't the only people who are getting canceled are the people who did something to earn those consequences. Personally. Yeah.

Wayne Federman (26:36):

I love it. I'm not going to jump into this because it's too fraught and I don't want people to comed after me.

Deadair Dennis (26:41):

Well, let's, let's ask this because your current not do you know, are you a comedy historian? You're now currently working on a documentary about George Carlin.

Wayne Federman (26:47):

Charlie. Yes. Yes. You heard about that?

Deadair Dennis (26:50):

George Carlin, who's an incredible credibly famous voice for both free speech and riling up against the system and riling up against pop culture. In your opinion, you don't have to say, this is. What is your opinion on someone who by now probably knows a lot about George Carlin. If George Carlin was alive today, seeing things going on with PC camp, a PC culture cancel culture of freedom of speech, but also, you know, woke-ism. Where do you think Carlin may fall in those things?

Wayne Federman (27:18):

What's that movie we were just talking about PCU. Was that the name of that movie? Okay. Well, there was, this debate was happening in the nineties as well. And so Carlin was alive during he died in 2008. So he talked about it quite a bit and he was like myself, a big believer in, it's not the word, it's the intent. It's the intent behind the word. Like, if you can show someone, who's like, Oh, this is a horrible racist using these words. And then you're like, Oh, okay. I understand that. But he said, and this is, this is what I've always loved. He said the political correctness, I want to get this right. I want to get it's, it's going to be a paraphrase. It's going to be a paraphrase now is especially insidious because it comes under the guise of tolerance. It comes under the guise of, Oh, we're just trying to make this a nicer thing. But in the weird way, what you're really doing is you are controlling how other people speak. You are being an authoritarian in that regard with this. So I think he would be obviously horrified at anyone who was a racist. And he dealt with those people all the time. I think at his core, he was all about words. That guy, he was all about the language, and he hated the euphemisms. He hated even not being able to say like the R word, like retarded, I'm saying it now. I hope I don't get canceled. Like he, he would, he was like, we can handle it. We can handle calling the kid fat as opposed to, you know, physically challenged or whatever, whenever euphemisms, for them. As I mean was, he would say he did a whole routine. Just look it up. It's on YouTube. It's called euphemisms. He hated it. He hated the people who use the language to disguise and create a different world. He's basically like we can handle it. We can handle it again. I would never, ever be so bold to speak on behalf of what I think George Carlin might say, but I'll tell you what he did say under similar circumstances. But I love the way he thought about it. He liked, he liked, he thought the idea of controlling someone's speech was insidious because, I don't know if even as insidious, it was a word even stronger than insidious because it came under the guise of being polite and tolerant.

Deadair Dennis (29:44):

I mean, I grew up, I live in Boston and I find this town to be incredibly racist, but in a different kind of racism. Where, I grew up in Baltimore, born and raised for 31 years in Baltimore, I lived amongst people of color because you couldn't not live amongst people of color. And I never realized how much I was until I moved to a city here. That's so incredibly white. But I find it liberal...

Wayne Federman (30:05):

Can I talk about Boston for a little bit? One of the great comedy towns in the history of stand-up, obviously huge. But I find Boston whenever I go up there, even the neighborhoods today, I feel like are very segregated. And you're like, Oh, you're in this town. It's white. And you're not, you're not obviously Roxbury. And, but it's really interesting what goes on up there. And it's a crazy blue state.

Deadair Dennis (30:30):

Well, it's blue on the Eastern side. Like if you look at Eastern Massachusetts, like Boston and Cape Cod, it's very blue. Yeah. But when you start going like central mass and Western mass, it's very red. Yeah. It's like new. I keep saying that New England. It's just the South with a different accent for the most part. That's hilarious. But yeah, I I like my friends from DC in Baltimore when they come up here, they come. They, when I meet up with them, they're like, "where are they hiding the people of color?" It's very uncomfortable here. And they're white people too. It's just, you don't realize it. It puts the, the racism I find here is to be very insultingly sympathetic to people of color.

Wayne Federman (31:05):

Right. Patronizing.

Deadair Dennis (31:05):

Which annoys me. Yeah, the patronizing. That's the perfect word that I usually use. And thank you for reminding me of it. So on the subject of Boston, I was going to ask you about this because, I am a big fan of the history of stand-up podcast, that you and Andrew Steven were doing. Listen to every episode, loved it.

Wayne Federman (31:23):

Ah, thank you.

Deadair Dennis (31:24):

You went into deep dives into Nerd Melt. Went into deep dives in the Chicago scene, you did the, you know, the, the Chitlin South you know black comedy scene. And what I was waiting to hear was the Boston new England comedy scene episode. And I never got it in the book or is there, is there a conversation or a chapter?

Wayne Federman (31:41):

I mean, I mentioned it, I say, I say that San Francisco and Boston are the two were the two biggest outside of New York and LA, comedy hubs during the comedy boom for a number of reasons. I just feel like there's an incredible documentary called "When Stand-up Stood Out" that tells the story better than I can. And it's so complex. And it's like all of those guys, Lenny and all of those dudes that were up there. And even Dennis still does that once a year. Does he need to do that big cam Neely.

Deadair Dennis (32:11):

Comics Come Home.

Wayne Federman (32:12):

Yeah.

Deadair Dennis (32:12):

For other fans of the podcast, what are we going to be getting in general with the book we werent getting with the podcast?

Wayne Federman (32:18):

Great question. I, I think the book is sort of based on the podcast, we don't really talk about Artemis ward. Basically we talk about those four, fore fathers. We did it on the podcast. So it's just in written form. And I think it's a little breezier than the podcast. You know, we really like in the podcast, we really didn't go into the nightclub era much, or the Catskills, which I talk about briefly and specifically Miami beach would a big comedy scene that was in the forties and the fifties during the summer, excuse me, during the winter. There was horse racing down there, all the young comics, or would go down to Miami beach and play these clubs down there. And it was just a wild, incredible scene. Yeah. So there's, it's just more than what's in the podcast, but everything that's, I think we covered in the podcast is in that book.

Deadair Dennis (33:08):

That's good to know. So it's, if you're a fan of the podcast, the book has more of the things that you were a fan of in it.

Wayne Federman (33:14):

Right.

Deadair Dennis (33:14):

As a man who is well-versed in all genres and timing of stand-up comedy. You personally yourself, which era of stand-up would you most like to havebeen in?

Wayne Federman (33:25):

That's a great, well, I am someone who, I mean, if I could say the future, it would be that obviously, because I'm super curious of whether this moment right now, where comedians, there's something called front facing comedians. Do you know what that is?

Deadair Dennis (33:42):

No. I never heard of Front-Facing comedians.

Wayne Federman (33:43):

Okay. Front-facing comedian is like Sarah Cooper. Is someone who just uses the front facing camera on their phone and does comedy directly to it either a monologue or a rant or something like that and sends it out. That's no audience, no club, no cover charge, no drink. Just this. Okay. So those are called front-facing comedians. And obviously a couple of them are now on Showtime and CBS. So, and it is a very direct, probably the most direct way, yet devised by humanity for comedian to showcase their talent. Right? Here's a perfect example. If you've ever had to make a tape for somebody to submit, like how hard is that? It's never always, there's somebody heckling you the moment or the guy who went up before you, it was like throwing around F-bombs and kind of ruins the whole room. So just to get a tape that showcases you at your best in a club is difficult. So that's all taken out of the equation with front facing comedians. You do eight takes and you're like the eighth one. Okay, this is good. And then I send it out and we'll see what happens. So I don't know if we're at an inflection point right now where it's like, Oh, it's stand-up comedy. You're going to be seen as like, ah, this is kind of like this old fashiony way of communicating with people. Like a old timey from another century, from the 20th century, they were really into this. And now we're into something much more direct. And I'm still, they're still in front-facing comedians are still entertaining people. They're still doing it. So it's like, what is the goal of it? Or will it be like once fans who are used to watching their comedy on their phone and stuff, go to an actual club and feel the juice of, Oh my God, this is a communal experience. This is, this laughter is contagious, this is like, I'm in something real, that's real and organic because the comedian is responding to our laughter and he's riding that. And it's a give and take situation. You've obviously been on stage and watch comedians when it's working. And you're like, okay, this is kind of a magical thing. It's like a real, so I don't know. I don't know what people are going to decide. Or it's going to be. I have a hunch. It's going to be a combination of the two, right. Because it already is a combination of the two. So I don't know if it's going to be a 60/40, I don't know if it's going to be a 20/80. So that's where I would love to be in the future. I'd love to see in 10 years where this is.

Deadair Dennis (36:19):

Since e're talking about the future. Are you currently taking notes on the world that we're in now, or have plans on taking notes of historic comedy events and achievements to write the next book or to write the next episode?

Wayne Federman (36:32):

Probably not. Probably not. In fact, the end of my book, I sort of phrase that question is how the book ends. And I say that that's for the next comedy historian too, because I just want my book to be like, Oh, this is the base knowledge. You have to have to know the history of stand-up. Like you've got to know about Steve Martin. You've got to know about Jack Benny. You're going to have to know about Moms Mabley. You're going to have to know like who these people were and as important where they work, like, was it in a vaudeville theater? Was it in a nightclub? Was it in a little coffee house in Greenwich village? Was it at, you know, started in the sixties at a comedy club? Which never existed before then. Like and or is it a rock club or is it at Madison square garden? So it's a combination of knowing where this comedy took place and who these, the main comedians were in each era.

Deadair Dennis (37:32):

Well, what I want to know is as somebody who's a historian of comedy and knows a lot about comedians and who, you know, I'm sure you saw and can identify the people who helped birth the change and that we're seeing now are there, is there a Mount Rushmore, so to speak, of comedians of the past couple of decades that you think are the reason why we were able to pave a path to people like Sarah Cooper and Ziwe and more front-facing comedy?

Wayne Federman (38:01):

Oh, who were like a hybrid comedian? Who were like onstage and also online? Well, if you really think about it, think about Netflix for a second. Okay. You had these huge Netflix specials that totally made John Mulaney, Ali Wong, Bill Birr. Okay. Let's just take those three guys. Let's leave Chapelle and the rest of them out of it. So what, what are we watching there? What, like, why is that so popular? Like basically the film version of a comedy album. And then in a way that's not, it's sort of halfway between what comedian live cause it's a live show and you watching it on, you could, you could watch that special on your phone. You could digest that comedy through your phone by yourself. So I'm saying already, once you put your comedy online, or make a film of it or something, it's already become a slightly different thing than, Oh, that moment in the club. In the same way that Peter, Liz, Sally, from the front of The Tonight Show, coming to Boston, to look for colleges, for his kids, dropping into one of the comedy clubs, watching all the great Boston locals and picking Steven Wright out. And I have one quote, I don't have many quotes in my book, but he says that experience changed his existence on the planet Earth. That one Tonight show.

Deadair Dennis (39:24):

On the subject of this book and as the comedy historian and an expert in comedy,

Wayne Federman (39:28):

I would just say that I'm an expert in the history of stand-up, not maybe an expert in comedy, cause there's a lot of people who were like really know comedy theory, like, and they talk about it for out. Like that's not me. I'm a very intuitive sort of comedian. So, I know it's a slight little thing, but I just want to, I don't want to overstate where I think my skills are.

Deadair Dennis (39:50):

More of historian and, and knower of the comedy industry in stand-up industries, as someone who knows about all of it, is it stand-up one word, stand dash up, or stand-up two words?

Wayne Federman (40:06):

Great question. That's the best one. Of course, this is how I do it. It can be either or either, or those are again, I, we do it for the book. It's stand dash up.

Deadair Dennis (40:18):

So throughout the bucket's all stand dash up, were there times where you wrote different ones and an editor had to come back and say, we need to decide on one or the other?

Wayne Federman (40:25):

Because the logo of the podcast is stand-up one word. So it's like, I live in this very ambiguous world. It's not great. Thank you. That's my Achilles heel. And thanks for noticing.

Deadair Dennis (40:40):

Awesome. All right. Well, the book comes out March 15th and of course the paperback version, a physical copy is available anywhere that you can get books in the world. And of course, if your bookstore doesn't have it go up to them, ask what, they'll get it for you. And of course it's available online as a Kindle or non-printed version. I don't even know. Do we have a name for, for digital books? Is that just it did. I just went up?

Wayne Federman (41:03):

I think they call it eBooks.

Deadair Dennis (41:05):

Ebooks. Okay. Yeah. So it's available in ebook version, everywhere Ebooks are available. Which is the internet. Right. And is there any hopes of putting an audio book?

Wayne Federman (41:14):

Yes. That's going to have to happen. We'll be out if not the 15th, definitely by the end of the month.

Deadair Dennis (41:19):

Okay. So its already being worked on.

Deadair Dennis (41:21):

Guess who's doing it.

Wayne Federman (41:22):

That's what I was going to ask you net. Oh, you're recording all of it. Okay.

Wayne Federman (41:24):

It's going to be me and my stupid voice.

Deadair Dennis (41:26):

Okay. I like your voice.

Wayne Federman (41:27):

Okay, if this sounds annoying to you just do not buy that audio book. I'm just going to be a couple hours.

Deadair Dennis (41:32):

It, someone, I find myself to be a student comment. That's one reason I became a comedian because I grew up in between the, you know, just the, you know, I grew up, I was born in 81, so I coming up of age right when the bubble ended. And I've been a part of the beginning of the new bubble. And I love comedy in between those two areas. And to answer the question that earlier that I asked you of what era of comedy would you like to be in? That's where I would have wanted to be in, in right between the end, the end of bubble and the new bubble, just because...

Wayne Federman (42:01):

Showing him at the late, early nineties, late eighties?

Deadair Dennis (42:03):

Yeah. That's why I would love to, because I feel like you had a better opportunity. You know, there wasn't as many opportunities out there, but the ones that were out there were more significant in that era growing up. Cause like I grew up and I could see stand-up on TV all the time and then mid nineties, it just all went away. But as someone who yourself is a historian of comedy and myself who I feel as well as a historian of comedy, unofficially. Nowhere near on your level. But do you see jokes where you're like my, my, my big pet peeve for example, is when I see somebody come out with an like 23 year-old kid. Come out with an OJ Simpson trial joke. And it's like, that trial was 20, 30, almost 30 years ago. How do you commonly think that you're going to tell an OJ trial joke that no one else has told over 30 years? Do you see that sometimes where people are retreading topics and you're like, how can you really think you're the most original on this? Or do you see it as, Hey, they're not doing an original topic or joke, but they came up with something and that the learning the structure of a joke is more important than the originality of it?

Wayne Federman (43:10):

I mean, it's, that's, there's a lot to unpack there, but I'll, I'll say this. I try, I love stand-up from open mic to Mulaney. Like, I love the whole, the breadth of it. Every level of development, I can enjoy comedians who are just starting out. So I don't look at it that way. I look at it more like, Oh, this comedian is going through a development and he's trying to figure out, and I don't know why he would want to tell an OJ joke. I mean, it doesn't have any kind of topical juice to it. No pun intended. So, but it does. That was good. I'm not, I'm a natural, I'm a natural. But I will say this and I find most comedians. And I think this wave will change are now very much about themselves. Like that is their topic. Is this, this body a thing "I'm Asian." And "I'm a Muslim" a thing. "I'm a girl." That they like, that seems like identity comedy seems very strong these days. And a lot of comedians sort of filter their comedy through that. So that's just one way of doing it. But that, to me, that's more, what I'm seeing these days. Is it's very autobiographical and what I like to call confessional also, I dunno, what kind of stand-up you do, but a lot of comedians are like something that was like embarrassing or humiliating about themselves is now fodder for comedy. Is the thing I write right at the beginning of the book. And I think is crucial, is that comedy is generational. It's for the people you're doing it for right now at this time. So Jack Benny, isn't

trying to entertain people in 2021. He's trying to entertain people in 1932. And so the jokes and the style that he says may not translate to you. Same true with Lenny Bruce say might be true with Steve Martin. It doesn't matter. It's like, that's just what it is. So it's very important to like when you're, if you're interested in the history of stand-up, I mean, there's enough stand-ups now where you can be into comedy and not care at all about Sam Kinison. Couldn't care less about Jake Johannsen, which is fine, or Demetri Martin or any comedians from the nineties that you might've seen when you were a kid. So that's, that's a key part of the whole thing that the styles change, the rhythm of the jokes change. The misdirects become, I think, a little better to tell you the truth is as time goes on, and then ultimately you get to decide who you want to listen to. So, so that's a really important thing. So I'm just surprised this kid wants to do an OJ joke, I guess.

Deadair Dennis (46:03):

Or sometimes I also see like memes that are like a joke that I came up with or a joke I heard in middle school, but then it's in meme form. It's like, how is anybody? Like, I just see jokes often recycled, recycled jokes like that, that just make me go. *sigh*, and sometimes I have to realize that my knowledge of comedy is not representative to everybody. So sometimes, you know, just because I heard a joke before doesn't mean everyone else has already also heard it. Those are, I hear those things. And it's like, I just sigh loudly to my son. I was like, how could you have gotten this far in your life? I've never heard this joke and that you think that it's so great that you're great? And that you're the first to think of it? Clearly. You're not generational parallel thinking sometimes disappoints me. That's what I might be trying to say.

Wayne Federman (46:53):

I tried. I know exactly what you're saying. And my advice to you is just like, that's what it is. That's what it's always been like, that was going on in the seventies that was going on. So it's always like that. That is part of it. Just try not to sigh. Try to be like, okay.

Deadair Dennis (47:11):

Thank you for helping me walk through my own personal issues with that.

Wayne Federman (47:13):

It, it be a bundle of anxiety because some kid did a meme that you're like, Oh yeah, I remember this from middles.

Deadair Dennis (47:21):

Well, now you can add a new title. You're a comedian actor, comedy historian, and now comedy therapist for helping me through my comedy issues.

Wayne Federman (47:31):

Have I been helpful?

Deadair Dennis (47:31):

Well Wayne, it was great talking to you. Thank you so much for doing this today. And I wish all the success for the book because...

Wayne Federman (<u>47:39</u>): I look forward to doing a sh

I look forward to doing a show with you, right? So let's do some gigs.

Deadair Dennis (47:41):

Yeah. Hopefully we'll, we'll cross paths when we're allowed to actually cross paths with humans again in the real world.

Wayne Federman (47:46):

I, yeah, I think it's going to be sooner. I think it should be sooner than you think. Okay. Tell me about your sweatshirt. What is Laugh Boston?

Deadair Dennis (47:53):

Oh, that's the comedy club out here. That's the A-level room.

Wayne Federman (47:56):

Where is it? Where is it? Was it at an old comedy club? Was it? Yeah,

Deadair Dennis (48:00):

It's it's in the Western hotel.

Wayne Federman (48:03):

See those eighties clubs still around constant comedy. Is that right?

Deadair Dennis (48:07):

Nick's [Comed Stop] is still around. The comedy connection has moved to Providence. There was a version of it up here. And then

Wayne Federman (48:15):

There's the Ding Ho still around is that

Deadair Dennis (48:18):

The comedy studio is still around. In fact, that's moved to Somerville

Wayne Federman (48:21):

Catch. I remember catch. They had a catch up there for a while, right?

Deadair Dennis (48:24):

Catch a Rising Star is no longer around either now. So basically the two oldest institutions are Nick's comedy stop, which has been around since like 77, which is basically just a, pop-up a pop-up in a nightclub. They come in, you do, they do the show and they literally push people out the door before, so they can just turn over the place to turn into a dance club. And then you have the comedy studio, which was birthed out of the Ding ho. So that's Rick Jenkins and...

Wayne Federman (48:52):

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Does Chance still play up there?
Deadair Dennis (48:53):
Chance Langston still does the comedy studio.
Wayne Federman (48:58):
*claps*.
Deadair Dennis (48:58):
And he's still doing, I don't know how long he's been doing this joke.
Wayne Federman (49:00):
Who is the rat? Go? What? Wait, what, go tell me, tell me, sorry to interrupt.
Deadair Dennis (49:05):
Langston still does this joke where he's like, "shut up." Like it was whole punchline is him going "shut
up." And then he calls back to just "shut up", over and over and people eat it up and I'm like, all right. I
mean, if it still works, do it bro.
Wayne Federman (49:18):
Who else from this? Who else? From the, like the eighties, nineties is around is well?
Deadair Dennis (49:22):
Crimmins was obviously,
Wayne Federman (49:24):
yeah. Yeah. I had a great time with him right on, when he was doing this screening of his movie out
here, we hung out quite a bit. It was really fun.
Deadair Dennis (49:35):
Sad to see him go. Cause he was...
Wayne Federman (49:37):
Tingles? Tingle still around.
Deadair Dennis (49:39):
Jimmy Tingle? Not only is he still around and doing comedy, he ran for Lieutenant governor of, of
Suffolk's County.
Wayne Federman (49:45):
Right, right, right, right, right. That's right. Cause it was in the politics.
New Speaker (<u>49:49</u>):
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The club he used to own in Davis square, has since turned into a different theater club called the Rockwell. So they do like mostly music, but they occasionally do a comedy there and stuff. And it's a beautiful place. And awesome. It's just hard to find because it's like, you have to go down, down a set of stairs, which, what comedy club is not in a basement, but when you go down the stairs, there's this really hip new bar to the left and then the theaters, the right. And most people don't even know that theater is there to the right. And they mistake it for the SomervilleTheatre.

Wayne Federman (50:19):

No, that's funny. I, of course it's just comedy. It's like, it's so humiliating. Sometimes. Let me ask you something else. I write in the, about the Boston comedy scene briefly and they said, what made it special was it was a, a weird combination of townies and a bunch of college students. Like that's what kinda makes this like that whole scene, like go crazy

Deadair Dennis (50:47):

Transplants. And it is townies now it's far more transplants than it is townies.

Wayne Federman (<u>50:54</u>):

Interesting. Wow. Yeah. I mean

Deadair Dennis (50:56):

A lot of the townies still around like Tony V. is still around and crushing it. Lenny Clark's back here. You know, he, I guess he gave up on LA.

Wayne Federman (51:04):

He's a legend.

Deadair Dennis (51:04):

I don't know if you've seen him, but he has lost so much weight. He is ripped. Like, Lenny, Lenny Clark is ripped. He is ripped. Like he is buff as a mother. Like it is weird to see. And like he'll still do. Yeah. He'll still do you know, he still does the the route one Saugus clubs, Kowloon and Giggles mostly well Giggles. I don't think he does Katelyn because his brother books giggles, which is like princess pizza Giggles comic club. And they did, they tried to do the like outdoor tented comedy. Which is like, if you have a tent that has four walls, you're still indoors.

Wayne Federman (51:46):

Okay. Okay. All right. Well, this was so fun. Thank you for letting me reminisce and ask you some questions. I really enjoyed it.

Deadair Dennis (51:51):

Anytime. Anytime you want, you can reach out to me and be like, Hey, what's up with that now? Granted, I've only been in Boston eight years, right?

Wayne Federman (51:59):

Right, right. You're from Baltimore, right?

Deadair Dennis (52:00):

Yeah. Born and raised Baltimore? Started there, moved here and was like, Oh, it's so much better here.

Wayne Federman (<u>52:04</u>):

What's the scene like in Baltimore? I'm always curious about all of this stuff. What was, it was just 30 days. That's still there. Which one? What's in their Cap Cities. Wasn't that in Baltimore for a while?

Deadair Dennis (52:15):

Is it cap city, Austin? Oh, okay. Okay. Maybe I'll make it a mistake. Baltimore. We have Magoobys. You have the Baltimore comedy factory, which is where I started, which is mostly an urban club. But occasionally, actually like three weeks after I moved here, I used to work at the Baltimore comedy factory. My roommate was a doorman. I used to be a doorman. I would occasionally come back and help like DJ or do stuff. So about three to four weeks after I moved here to Boston, I see a tweet from Bill Belamy talking about how people are, are stabbing over the price of chicken wings. And I look into it. Bill Bellamy was at the Baltimore Comedy Factory. Somebody had a bill Bellamy show on like a Thursday night, got mad about the price of their bill and stab three doorman. Like luckily it was not serious. They were all minor injuries. Everyone was fine. And I knew one of the three guys that got stabbed. Cause I hadn't really been involved with the club. And I'm like, that's just, that's Baltimore for you. Like, there's nothing else to say, but that's Baltimore. You go to a comedy show and I'm like,

Wayne Federman (53:12):

Why did you move to Boston?

Deadair Dennis (53:13):

I burned. I ran out of bridges, the burn in radio. So a job opened up. I worked for iHeart radio for 15 years, and a job opened up here. That was full-time, benefits, the whole nine. My buddy had moved up here and he's like the job's yours. It's a good, it's an easy go. And so I did and five years later they fired me.

Wayne Federman (53:32):

Same thing for you to maybe look into is, do you know about the George Carlin Boston radio situation?

Deadair Dennis (53:39):

No. The George Carlin Boston radio situation. No. What is that?

Wayne Federman (53:42):

Yeah. Yeah. He was in that's where he met his comedy partner was up here. I don't know the call letter to the station, but I'm going to say maybe 58 or 59. He was briefly up here in Boston and then got in trouble for bringing like a news van down to New York to buy pot or something. It's like, it's insane. You know, he was such a stupid rebel that dude. But he did Boston radio.

Deadair Dennis (<u>54:10</u>):

I did not know that. I hadn't really, like there was like.

Wayne Federman (54:12):

Johnny Carson impression "I did not know that."

Deadair Dennis (54:12):

I think shortly before his death, I kind of just, for no reason, stopped paying attention to the George Carlin what he was doing, I don't know why. It just, he went out of like, just what he was doing a couple of years before just before just kind of just moved out of my, my zeitgeist vision. And.

Wayne Federman (54:30):

Of course, of course. Well, he was, you know, an old guy.

Deadair Dennis (54:35):

But I'm going to look into it right now.

Wayne Federman (54:36):

I'm going to get back. I'm going to get back to work.

Deadair Dennis (54:38):

You've been super generous with your time. Thank you so much doing it.

Wayne Federman (54:40):

Of course, Dennis. I love it.

Deadair Dennis (54:42):

We'll talk soon. Thank you for having me pleasure. Be safe. What a nice guy. I thought he was super cool. I'm so happy.

The Dirty Dottys (54:49):

ending song plays "Better jobs! Better jobs! Ooooo, we're getting sick of living in a box. In a box. Oooo, poke some holes in the top."