



A newsletter  
about podcasts.

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Welcome back, folks. A less dramatic start to the week so far, but then again, the day is still very young. Let's get to it.

**First of all...** I'm not sure if you're listening to [The Line](#), the Apple Original podcast led by Dan Taberski about the case of the Navy SEAL Eddie Gallagher, but I think it broke some news with its series conclusion that came out today.

If you haven't checked out the show, you should do so. It's stellar. [YouTube star Markiplier](#)

[to launch weekly podcast.](#) The show will be called

*Distractible*, and it will feature Markiplier — real name Mark Fischbach — collaborating with fellow digital creators Wade Barnes and Bob Muyskens to host what's being pitched as “a space to have thoughtful discussions about funny, out there, or otherwise interesting stories from everyday life.”

*Distractible* is scheduled to launch on May 17 and will be available on all platforms.

For reference: Markiplier is one of the bigger digital creators to come out of the YouTube ecosystem. His YouTube channel currently clocks around 29 million subscribers, and he's said to have an overall reach of over 60 million followers across a broad range of digital platforms. Aside from his core YouTube operation, cultivated over the years through a mix of “Let's Play” gaming videos and comedy sketches, Fischbach has also created and starred in a YouTube original series, *A Heist with Markiplier*. In 2018, Fischbach expanded into apparel, collaborating with fellow creator Jacksepticeye on a clothing brand called Cloak.

Business diversification is a key theme of the story here, and while *Distractible* contributes to a broader trend that sees the digital creator class increasingly building positions in the podcast world (more on that in a bit), this isn't Fischbach's first foray into audio. In 2019, he starred in the lead role for *The Edge of Sleep*, a fiction podcast from QCODE [that's currently being adapted for television](#).

Fischbach is attached as executive producer and is set to reprise his role in the adaptation, a development that will mark his debut in scripted television.

*Distractible* will be produced by Wood Elf, a new audio company formed by a group of digital creators, including Fischbach, MatPat, and Rhett & Link (who make *Ear Biscuits*), among others. Wood Elf is considered a podcast label under QCODE, interestingly enough.

Markiplier is repped by WME, Daylight Media, and the law firm Hansen, Jacobson, Teller, Hoberman, Newman, Warren, Richman, Rush, Kaller & Gellman.

**A curious wrinkle in the Apple Original podcast story.** Apple TV+, the company's streaming entertainment division, [announced a new original podcast project last week](#): a Siegfried & Roy audio documentary series executive produced by the filmmaker Steven Leckart and At Will Media. What's distinct about this production [compared to \*The Line\*](#) — which, again, is stellar — is the fact that it won't be attached to a larger streaming video project slated for the Apple TV+ service. In other words, Apple TV+ is producing its first standalone original podcast.

What's the significance of this development, given my prevailing interpretation that Apple's original podcast projects seem largely meant to serve as marketing vessels for its various non-podcast services? Perhaps nothing all that much, as this Siegfried & Roy podcast would still perform the same function of driving greater awareness around the Apple TV+ brand as a storytelling business.

Still, I do get the sense it brings us closer to an arms race narrative between Apple and Spotify, albeit in a slight reconfigured form. Spotify competes with Apple by directly integrating its publisher role into its platform distributor role. This may well be read as Apple decentralizing the competition: Apple TV+ competing with Spotify as a podcast publisher while Apple Podcasts competes with Spotify as a platform.

**Sticking with Apple...** The iOS 14.5 rollout last week has apparently caused some

amount of chaos with the updated Apple Podcasts app experience. [MacRumors has a good overview](#) of the various messes. On a related note, I've heard from a fair number of people on the podcast-publishing side who experienced considerable issues with the platform last week, with some reporting extensive delays. It's my understanding that things have cleared up somewhat since then, but it's unclear to me if everything is fully back to normal.

**Speaking of Spotify...** Another round of [Joe Rogan controversy last week](#), but this one comes with the novelty of [an actual rebuke from White House officials](#). I thought Lucas Shaw's [take on the matter over at Bloomberg](#) was basically spot on — headline: "When Joe Rogan offends you, Spotify profits from it" — and to frame things specifically, it's not as if any of these Rogan-related controversies have resulted in any negative material outcomes for the company. Indeed, it seems quite the opposite. The Swedish audio-streaming giant [reported quarterly earnings last week](#), and they posted subscriber gains, active user gains, podcast listening gains, and strong advertising recovery, some portion of which was attributed to Rogan.

Sticking to Spotify, but a separate story: *Reply All* [posted an update last week](#), and among other things, the show noted that it will return on June 10.

**Happy fifty years, NPR.** Another dozen more, and you get to draw sweet, sweet social security.

**This Week in Sports Betting.** Two notable deals at the intersection of sports betting companies and podcast publishers to clock from the past seven days:

Meadowlark, the new podcast-heavy media company led by ESPN vets Dan Le Batard and John Skipper, struck a distribution deal with DraftKings worth at least \$50 million over the next three years, [according to The Wall Street](#)

[Journal](#).

Yesterday, The Ringer announced a new year-long partnership with FanDuel where the latter will serve as the exclusive sports-betting partner on all of The Ringer's output, including podcasts, video, and its website, through to next February. This deepens FanDuel's sponsorship of The Ringer, and the deal is said to be worth more than three times the online gambling operators' previous investment in the digital media company, now owned by Spotify. Both these developments take place amid a "sports betting content frenzy," or so described by Axios' [Kendall Baker](#), which also includes The Action Network being sold to the Danish sports betting media group Better Collective, [a deal that was announced yesterday](#).

**New York Public Radio lays off 4% of its workforce.** The cuts affect fourteen staffers: four from the newsroom, with the remaining ten spread across other departments. One of those laid off was [John Del Signore](#), the editor-in-chief of Gothamist, which was acquired, along with its sister sites, [by WNYC and two other public radio stations in 2018](#).

According to an internal memo by NYPR CEO Goli Sheikholeslami, the layoffs were one of several cost-saving measures to address the organization's sizable deficit, driven in large part by the pandemic. Other measures include suspension of merit increases and significant reductions to performance-based bonus payouts for senior leadership and other eligible employees, plus temporary restrictions to employee benefits.

As part of its discussion of financial challenges, the memo noted that NYPR's sponsorship revenue is down 27% from pre-pandemic levels. "We knew sponsorship revenue would take a hit, but we planned for the advertising market to begin rebounding in the second half of this fiscal year," wrote Sheikholeslami. "That

didn't happen, and recapturing the lost revenue will not happen in one fiscal year.”

Also noted: The organization had a strong year for memberships, aided by a particularly heavy news cycle. But they're not planning on sustaining the same level of membership revenues for what is expected to be a comparatively quiet year. A \$8.9 million PPP loan also factors into the equation.

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## CLASSIFIEDS

**Macmillan's** Quick and Dirty Tips network is looking for an Audience Engagement Specialist to edit scripts, manage SEO, and develop new podcasts. Apply [here](#).

**The Financial Times** is hiring an executive producer to work on its flagship U.S.-based shows from our NY bureau. The EP will provide creative oversight for our long-form narrative and news formats as we grow our ambitions in the U.S. market. ([Link](#))

Build your podcast membership with **Supporting Cast**. Own your listener data and get help with content, marketing and funding. Plus — with Supporting Cast, your fans won't

be stuck using a single app. Learn more. ([Link](#))

**Tumble Media** is a children's educational audio company & kids' podcast pioneer. Now offering full-service podcast development, bilingual production and consulting for companies interested in the Kids & Family space. ([Link](#))

**Blue Dot Sessions** hosts a library of minimalist music for podcast and radio. Used daily by NPR, Gimlet, Radiotopia, and others. Blanket licenses cover all the music for your show + multitrack stem files and variations, starting at \$25/mo. ([Link](#))

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Nick Quah

## THE LIVE EVENT STREAMING EXPERIENCE, WITH SOME TWISTS

The live-performance business has long been a powerful economic engine for many, many kinds of artists. This is as true for musicians in the streaming age as it is for comedians and, yes, [podcasters](#). (Let's set theater aside for this discussion. Different bag altogether.)

The pandemic, of course, brought live performances to a halt, [pushing the business to a cascade of Zoom calls](#) and, to some extent, [underground](#). I can't speak for everyone, obviously, but my sense is that success in such efforts has mostly been modest at best, chiefly functioning as marginal stop-gap measures as opposed to true virtual adaptations.

As the United States inches towards relative normalcy — though within a global

context that remains tenuous — the live-performance business in the country appears to be gingerly preparing for the light at the end of the tunnel. Bands are announcing dates again. Some venues are starting to hold very small, socially distant performances. Music festivals are poking their heads back up.

Still, the full bloom of reopening will take some time. For now, there remains some room for a little more tinkering and experimentation.

One such experiment worth tracking is a "music, podcast, and comedy streaming experience" organized by *Chapo Trap House*'s Chris Wade and *Wolf Parade*'s Dan Boeckner in collaboration with [FRQNCY](#), a new platform that's hoping to inject more life and innovation into the virtual-performance arena.

The virtual festival is called [FRQNCY1](#), named after the platform, and it's scheduled to take place on June 5. Headlined by *Chapo Trap House* and the band *Every Time I Die*, the lineup runs the gamut, including comedy/podcast acts like *We Hate Movies*, *Throwing Fits*, *Episode 1*, and *Tinder Live with Lane Moore*, along with the music acts *Zola Jesus*, *Pom Pom Squad*, *Downtown Boys*, and *Stay Inside*.

As Wade tells me, the thrust of FRQNCY1's design revolves around having all the acts perform in the same physical venue — you know, as if it was a normal festival — where they will be live-streamed to ticket buyers watching at home.

Considerable attention is being paid to the production value of the streaming infrastructure; to that end, high-end camera equipment is being brought in for the occasion.

The venue in question is Elsewhere, located in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Williamsburg, so chosen for its capacity to support a multi-stage arrangement. "We're structuring the festival around two separate stages that we can trade back and forth without having to take time to strike one down and build it back up for the next act," said Wade.



Central to the experience is the FRQNCY platform itself. This is incredibly reductive, but think of it as a glossier cross between Twitch and Zoom. The product features a main screen over which the performances will be broadcasted, with an overlay on the side for groups of viewers to see each other, virtually congregate, and take in the show as a collective — the big idea being to recreate the feeling of many little social bubbles and clusters forming within the context of a larger show floor. There are some interactive elements involved, including a feature that lets viewers applaud (literally, into a computer mic) and have that applause be visually communicated to the performers. The festival is also implementing a take on the “backstage experience” to the proceedings: A camera will be set up somewhere in the venue for acts to connect with a portion of the viewership between performances.

Several ticket packages are available, some of which will contain the aforementioned backstage experience as well as merch. Prices range between \$20 and \$75, and a cheaper presale lot has been sold out.

One noteworthy production aspect of the festival is the way the organizers are approaching revenue splits. FRQNCY, the company, is putting up the money to shoulder the budget: They’re covering venue cost, production expenses, and guarantees paid out to the acts. I’m told that once the event breaks even in sales, the resulting profit will be split between the performers and a centralized pot for future FRQNCY festivals, with a percentage going to [Save Our Stages](#), the [NIVA](#) fund dedicated to supporting indie live-event venues at risk of going under due to the pandemic.

Now, you might be wondering about the timing of it all, given that we’re supposedly in the waning days of the pandemic and the likelihood that FRQNCY, both the festival and the platform, will soon be progressing in a future where the live performance business has opened back up. I’m told that the company was originally created before the pandemic, and that the platform was principally

designed as an add-on solution meant to help live venues even in the best of times — the key idea being to structurally broaden the pool of who can enjoy a given performance without providing a less-than experience for those watching virtually.

Zale Schoenborn, FRQNCY's Chief Executive Officer, tells me that the overarching goal was to build something that could help festivals, venues, and acts navigate the balance between scale and experience. A useful biographical point of note: The founding members of FRQNCY also created the [Pickathon](#) music and arts festival held annually in Portland, Oregon, and as with most things like this, the platform was initially developed to solve a problem they had. "With Pickathon, we usually capped the number of people who could attend," said Schoenborn. "It's always been an issue, trying to maintain what's special while still being able to economically compete on a much bigger scale."

But all that comes later. For now, there's the FRQNCY1 festival, which marks the beginning of a return to the road for its many acts, including *Chapo Trap House*. "This will be the first time the Chapo Gang is in the same room in fifteen months," said Wade. "Everybody's excited about that, but we haven't really addressed the possibility of organizing a full-on tour just yet. I imagine that's something that will come up after we do this show."

[Aria Bracci](#)

## HOW ONE COMEDIAN USED PODCASTING TO RESET

As [comedy clubs open back up](#) in New York City, comedian [Casey Balsham](#) is relishing a return to the stage. The city scene missed out on lots of personalities and content over the past year, but if it weren't for the strangely opportune lull that lockdown provided, it might've lost one permanently. Because if the pandemic hadn't happened, Balsham still would've up and left. It just would've been out of exhaustion, and she wouldn't be going back.

“Before the quarantine, I was so close to quitting,” says Balsham. “I was crying before sets, crying after sets, regardless of how they went.” She couldn’t stop performing, though, since it was how she made the majority of her income, she says. “I just wanted to collapse.”

When the world began to shut down, it gave her a break she wouldn’t have given herself. “It was really, really nice to know that nothing was happening,” as well as to have fewer opportunities to compare herself to other comics, she says. “I needed that to just go away.” And when it did, when it denied her an in-person audience and left her only with herself and her ideas, she remembered something: “I like the act of telling jokes.”

Before, performing meant being on a stage for fifteen pressurized minutes at a time, in front of spectators and under hot lights. Peeking at Balsham’s life as a comic throughout the pandemic, when she hasn’t been gesticulating for a Zoom show, she’s been alone with a mic, creating comedy remotely, such as for her [new podcast](#), *Shady Shit*. And she’s been comfortable.

By separating the act of exploring ideas from the direct response of an audience, she’s been able to create more honest material, she says, which, ultimately, feels good to her. “When you’re just kind of talking with no immediate reaction,” she says, “I find myself surprised by what I say or think.” Feedback only comes later, which allows her to review and incorporate it more thoughtfully, if she chooses to do so at all. “I really enjoyed getting support on things that I didn’t realize I even said.”

Balsham has always mined her personal life for content. (Listing all the topics she avoids: “I’m not great at topical humor; I can’t really do politics...”) Quarantine was a time for both living through personally challenging things and figuring out how she could make them funny. One of those things was deciding, after looking at her circumstances, to try in vitro fertilization, or IVF.

Speaking about this process privately or with one other person — and recording it so that other people could hear it later — softened the blow of introducing this personal struggle into her routines. “It definitely made it a little bit easier to approach,” says Balsham, who was intent on addressing it but needed some time to first do it herself. “Anybody going through it deserves to laugh, because it’s so heavy.”

She’s since worked out some jokes about such things as the cost of the process and certain worries she’s had about the outcome. “IVF is your best baby,” explains

Balsham, saying this naturally makes her concerned that a kid, made up of the “best” parts of herself, might not even be that great: “What if it’s a JV volleyball player or something?”

Balsham has introduced the topic of IVF during Zoom performances as well, citing this as a lower-stakes way to try on a joke than her previous, mostly live standup career. “I’m adjusting back to being in front of a live audience,” she now says, and “saying ‘IVF’ on stage in front of a hundred people is definitely a different feeling.”

But it’s a feeling she feels prepared for, one she almost certainly wouldn’t have embraced as readily before the pandemic. Lockdown brought pensive, independent time, in which she really thought through what comedy meant for her. The turn to remote work also brought greater options — and opportunities — for collaborating with people she wouldn’t normally work with, which has developed her craft even more.

Balsham has had other funny folks like [Heather McMahan](#) and [Amanda Hirsch](#) on [Shady Shit](#), which she launched with [Dear Media](#) last October, and she credits such women with helping her realize how compelling honesty can be when connecting with an audience. Within the pandemic context, collaborating with a friend in L.A. has also felt much more normal, as has working with one in

Minnesota.

“My friend Bradley, we write really well together,” Balsham says. “Whenever we do, we’re very creative. He helped me with my other one-woman show.”

She says “other” because she’s currently working on one, for her piecemeal return to the stage. “I’ve gone on a few podcasts to talk about my issues with fertility and got a lot of positive feedback about that, so I’m actually turning it into a one-woman show,” she says. Details are forthcoming, and podcasting, she says, was the “catalyst.”

Time spent away from a standup mic was instead spent speaking into a handheld one under the covers in her bedroom. “I think I needed to strip it down,” Balsham says, because only then was she able to reset.

On a [recent episode](#) of *Shady Shit*, Balsham opens by saying, “I could be, fuckin’, completely naked! Or I could be wearing every piece of clothes I have, like Joey in *Friends*.” She calls this the best part of making audio: that, regardless of how she looks or whether she’s lying down or standing up (ba-dum ching), she can do the work. In fact, it might even be how she does her best work.

“It feels like it hasn’t felt in a long time,” she says. “I feel like a new comic.”

**Aude White**

**ILLUSTRATION: "LITTLE BIT HERE, LITTLE BIT THERE"**

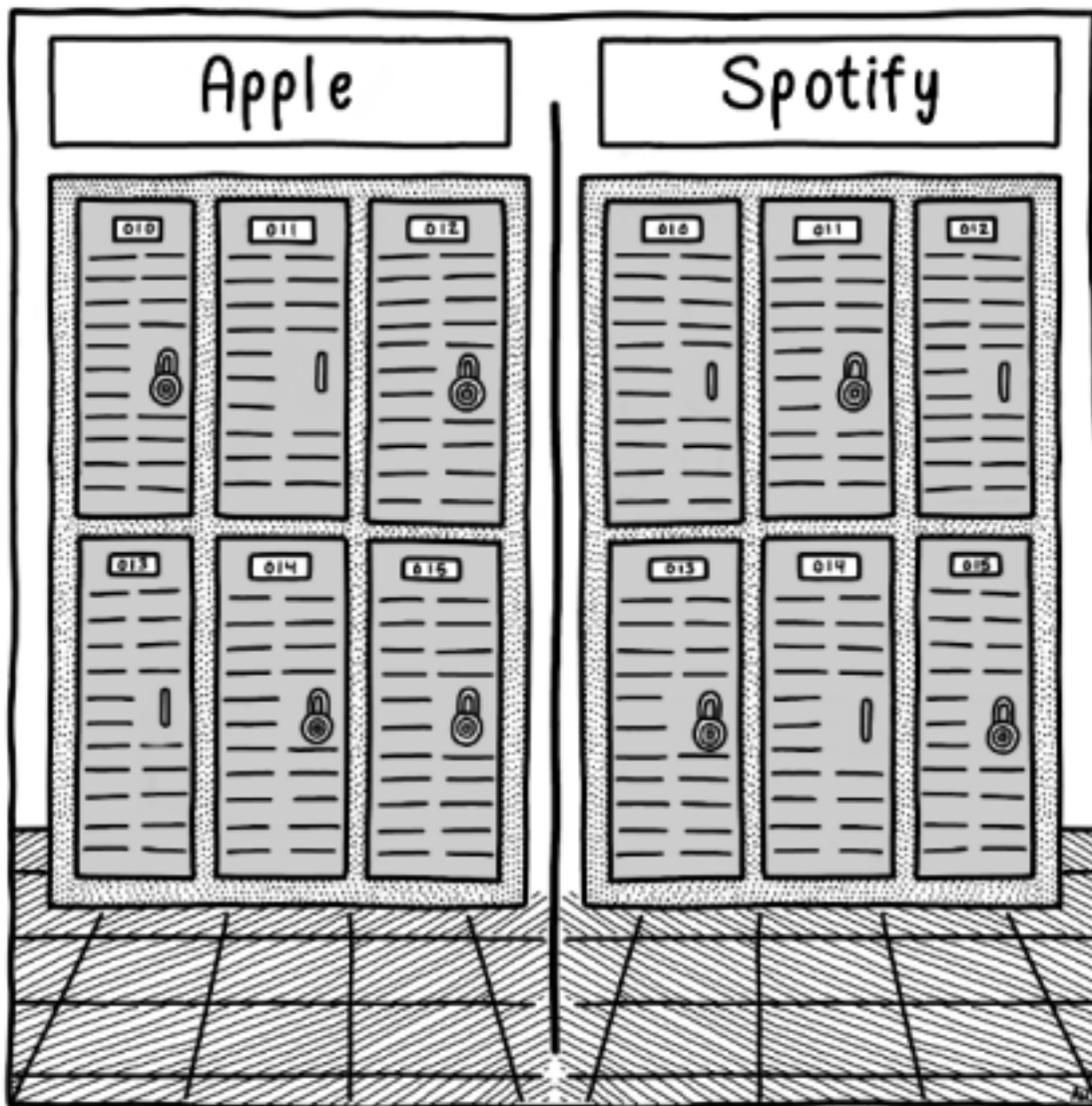


Illustration by Aude White, who went to high school on a Saturday once. Sigh...

Nick Quah

## PODCASTING AND "THE CREATOR ECONOMY"

The words are often ambiguous in what it actually encompasses, though it typically retains a specificity in connotation: “creator,” “influencer,” “social media star.” A distinctly modern and digitally derived celebrity, mostly on the younger side, always emergent from the ever-evolving frontier of new media. Whatever the terminology, one thing’s for certain: This class of digital-first creator is a steadily growing force, and these creators are increasingly present in all possible media contexts.

Podcasting is no exception, obviously, as the Apple Podcasts charts, the Spotify discovery rails, or the curation pages of any third-party podcast app would easily tell you. The podcast universe is increasingly rich with shows from such digital-first talents coming in from worlds as varied as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, or, hey, let's toss reality television in there, too.

To get a better sense of this in-flow — the incentives, the trend line, the approach, and so on — I reached out to Stephen Perlstein, the VP of Podcasts at Studio71. The Hollywood Reporter probably has one of the better descriptions of Studio71 out there [in a recent piece about leadership changes at the entity](#): Part of Red Arrow Studios, it's "one of the last companies standing from an era when YouTube multi-channel networks ruled the digital landscape." These days, the company is owned by the German conglomerate ProSiebenSat.1 Media, and its podcast division operates a fairly wide portfolio of audio shows led by celebrity and digital creator types, including *Waveform* with YouTube tech star Marques Brownlee, *The Bald and the Beautiful* with drag queens Trixie Mattel and Katya Zamo, and *Worst Firsts* with Brittany Furlan.

Here's our chat from last month, condensed and edited for flow:

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**Hot Pod:** How would you describe Studio71 and what you do within it?

**Stephen Perlstein:** So, Studio71 is a big media company with fingers in a lot of pies: television, digital, OTT, and so on. But our podcast work is pretty simply focused, and I try to keep it that way.

We focus on working with great digital creators — which is a broad, encompassing term — to help them make a podcast and expand their business around that. Sometimes that means we assist on the production side, and sometimes that

means we help on the ad-sales side, which is a big part of it.

**HP:** How do the creators you work with generally view podcasting?

**Perlstein:** Some creators tend to think of it as a way to expand their business and to connect with their audiences a little bit more. There's also a sense it's more stable: You're not necessarily responding to platform algorithms like YouTube or Instagram or whatever. If you've spent any time in the influencer space, you know they spend a lot of time talking about the algorithm. I think they like to be free of it and forge deeper connections with their audiences in a way that's genuine and authentic, while making money at the same time. Our job is to support them however we can.

**HP:** Tell me more about that relationship with algorithms. Do they view podcasting as not being similarly tied to the whims of platforms?

**Perlstein:** Some of them definitely recognize that the YouTube algorithm can be a finicky beast and that, relatively speaking, a podcast subscriber or follower has a more direct connection that doesn't waver in the same way.

I can't speak for every creator, but I've definitely heard rumblings along those ideas. But it's also just the reality that a lot of top creators have to do certain things on YouTube — whatever that means — to stay relevant. That's not always the case with podcasts. Obviously, it helps to have a big guest or a surprising, fun episode, but you don't have to worry about losing 50% of your audience video over video in the same way.

**HP:** So, my interpretation of YouTube or TikTok life is that it works a little bit like a slot machine. To some extent, you're pulling the lever with every video or clip and hoping things work out. Am I off base?

**Perlstein:** Well, we tend to work with people for whom it's more like poker and who



are playing a game that works really, really well for them.

At a certain level, yes, there's a slot machine aspect to something like YouTube where you're hoping to hit the right search terms, titles, thumbnails, trending topic, whatever. There's a natural variation in the way some of these video platforms drive engagement versus the way podcasts drive engagement, which has a stability that's nice.

**HP:** From your experience helping digital creators build podcast businesses over the years, what has the trend line been like around interest among creators and podcasting? Has there been a gradual increase, or has interest exploded within the past year in particular?

**Perlstein:** I do think there's been an acceleration, particularly since the beginning of COVID. Not only among digital creators, but also among traditional celebrities — anybody who's in a position to think, "Well, I can't do the same things that I did before. What about podcasts?" Especially in May or June of last year, we found ourselves in a situation where we see, like, 10 new opportunities in front of us at any given point and have to figure out which one to pick up.

That said, there's always been a steady flow of interest from people in the "creator economy," if you will, who are big and visible and attract strong followings and who looked at the podcast space and see it as a possible leg on the stool of their business, for lack of a better metaphor.

**HP:** So, when you're looking at those 10 opportunities in front of you, how do you make choices in terms of what to pursue?

**Perlstein:** First of all, we have a pretty broad range of things we get into, and we work with a wide range of creators. People like Trixie Mattel, Marques Brownlee, and LaurDIY, who's got her HBO Max show and does crafts and also talks about relationships, among other things.

It's hard, because whenever people ask me that question, they're often thinking in terms of genre or audience. In some ways, when I have conversations around pitches and development, I'm less interested in that and more interested in creators who are genuinely excited about the format, who believe that they're ready to chat with an audience for an hour every week, and who are naturally prolific about what they want to talk about.

From a business perspective, yes, we look at audiences and followings, but mostly we look at how to help them convert them. I think we at Studio71 are pretty adept at targeting social strategies to take sizable followings and convert them into podcast listeners. In some ways, it can be easy, but it's also fraught in other ways. It's such a different medium than YouTube or Instagram, because it involves engaging with a lot of people who have never heard a podcast before.

**HP:** Can you tell me a little more about those social strategies?

**Perlstein:** I don't want to give away too much of the secret sauce, but I'll just say the podcast space often discounts how hard the journey can be for someone to become a dedicated listener. The notion of how to even listen and engage with advertising... that's all comparatively new and different from the YouTube space.

One thing our friends at Apple and Spotify talk about a lot is how they don't love it when you say, "Subscribe to my podcast wherever you listen to podcasts." I think that's a totally fair criticism, because if you're a person who hasn't listened to a podcast before, you might go, "Okay, wherever I listen to podcasts. What does that mean?" They get lost in that journey, and that's a real friction point. So we try to do a number of things to mitigate that friction.

At our company, we regularly do deep dives where the 17 or 18 of us as a podcast team go through a show and ask, "What's the deal with this podcast? What's working on it, and how do we do this more and better?" We'd spend an hour

dissecting everything we can from the social media posts, maybe find that somehow someone got the wrong link and posted it out there, and clearly confused the audience, and then we help them adapt to that.

**HP:** I imagine many creators who approach you tend to already have major operations on other platforms or contexts. How do you deal with creators that may treat their podcast as being a side project or a cash grab?

**Perlstein:** I don't worry about our creators treating podcasts like a side project. It comes down to our process of signing podcasts: We try to vet for that, for a lack of a better way to put it.

We're aware of the notable stories that see networks or companies throw money at famous people thinking that will somehow get them enthusiastic and drive an audience and make a good podcast. And some of those stories result in massive failures.

We try not to follow that approach. I say this a lot when we onboard new team members at Studio71: Our job is to help creators expand their business and build it up. If we're not doing that within the podcast context, we need to reassess what we're doing and try to do a better job and offer more to our creators.

And of course, sometimes, podcasts don't work. Not everything works. It's tough to say that as a person who runs a network and, obviously, as someone who wants everything to work. But not all of them do. What's great then is that these people are often quite successful somewhere else, and so maybe this podcast, this idea, this moment, perhaps it isn't quite right just yet. We'll stop the show, find a graceful way to end it, and maybe come back another time with a different format or whatever. We just try to be a good partner, both for the successes and those less successful.

**HP:** How do you think about advertising?

**Perlstein:** Our approach is about figuring out how we can partner creators with brands that make sense for them, and in that process, helping those brands grow. We try to be strategic about it, and we try to be helping make clear packages around our podcasts that we can sell effectively. We can be very turnkey, and we can be very fast, which is important, because sometimes advertisers in the podcast space will be like, “We need to get something up on Monday — can you do it?” And it’s great to be able to say yes to that and provide a really good solution for the brand. Overall, they’ve been really receptive.

We also play around with simultaneous releases for some of our podcasts on YouTube. Not all of them, maybe 60% or 70%. For those podcasts, there are video elements, and something we’ve found is that advertisers are seeing those video spots as potentially, in some cases, being more effective than just the straight audio release, which was surprising to me.

I think I kind of knew that to a certain point. Video versions of a podcast tend to be devalued, or at least are made to feel a little less valuable to brands. And we’re working really hard to realize value there, to maybe show it can be as good, if not potentially better, as a product for advertisers.

**HP:** Let’s look forward a little bit. There’s some amount of stuff on the way, between the United States — and eventually, the world — opening back up and everything that’s happening with the podcast platforms. What do you think we’re going to see in the years to come?

**Perlstein:** So, I don’t try to prognosticate very much, because I just don’t know.

Podcasting has changed a lot, and it keeps on changing. What I like, and I hope keeps on building up, is the free and open nature of the medium. As often as there is hand wringing about platforms taking over the space and paywalls for every podcast and all that stuff, I don’t think that fits into the spirit of podcasting and what

audiences, or at least a sizable portion of audiences, really like about it.

I think there will still be more free and open things that aren't tied to platforms, where you can still go directly to people's ears. I also think there's going to be interesting ways that creators are looking to connect with audiences within their

own sort of "walled gardens," enabled by stuff like premium feeds where engaged fans can have their own self-selected gardens in the moments they really want it.

I don't really know where it's all going, but we will be championing the free and open side, for sure.

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Again, Perlstein is Studio71's VP of Podcasts.

**Post Note.** So, *Shadow & Bone*. Turns out, very much my shit.

Competently written YA epic melodrama? Yessir. Russian/Eastern European influences? Uh-huh. Winter clothing that absolutely rips? You got it. Slightly incongruous gore and violence? Why yes, yes indeed.

My only beef with the world building: Needs more food detail. Yum yum.

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