Transcript for Neal Brennan | 3 Mics (Episode 601)

Full show notes found here:

https://theartofcharm.com/podcast-episodes/neal-brennan-3-mics-episode-601/

NEAL:

I have to think pessimistically. The reason things worked is because, further upstream, I and Dave were worried about whether it was going to work or not. And we corrected it or made it good

.

JORDAN:

Welcome to The Art Charm; I'm your host Jordan Harbinger. Today we're talking with comedian Neal Brennan. He's a comedy writer and co-creator of The Chapelle Show. We're going to talk about the comedy writing process and how it mirrors real life. A mindset to get a more realistic handle on the potential outcome of a given project or situation and help you prepare and plan for the worst. And some tips on getting happy from a guy who's tried everything and why achievement can't be a substitute for happiness.

Enjoy this episode with Neal Brennan and by the way, if you're new to the show, we'd love to send you some top episodes and the AoC Toolbox. That's where we discuss concepts like reading body language and having charismatic nonverbal communication. We also talk about the science of attraction, negotiation techniques, social engineering, networking and influence strategies, mentorship, persuasion tactics, and everything else that we teach here at The Art of Charm. Check that out at theartofcharm.com/toolbox or in our iPhone app at theartofcharm.com/iphone. Also at theartofcharm.com/sphone or this and all previous episodes of the show. We're glad to have you with us here today at AoC. Enjoy this episode today with Neal Brennan.

My friend recommended Three Mics on Netflix, and he was like, "Have you heard of this Neal Brennan guy?" Of course I don't know anybody's name --

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- that I'm not familiar with. And so I turn it on and I'm like, "All

right." And the first thing I see is you're holding these notecards

on the mic --

NEAL: Yeah, and you're like, "This ********." Yeah.

JORDAN: My first thought was, "What the hell? You've got to have this

memorized already, like what's the problem?"

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: So what was that all about?

NEAL: Oh, why did I do notes?

JORDAN: Yeah.

NEAL: Because if I didn't do notes on that mic, it wouldn't have been

different enough from the other mic.

JORDAN: Oh, I see so it has to be like --

NEAL: I just needed to differentiate it.

JORDAN: Like a different energy type deal?

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: Got you. Okay cool, because I felt like, where's this weird crutch

coming from? It's like when --

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- someone gives a keynote but they have their notes on their

phone. You're like, "What are you doing? I've seen you do this

100 times."

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: And most comedy really is the same a lot. I mean the delivery is

pretty similar, except for the person's personality is different.

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: Like you got your Gabriel Iglesias or whatever --

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- type guys but this is a lot different. The three mics format is

different. Can you tell us a little bit about like what that is?

NEAL: It's basically -- so there's three mics on stage, like spaced out,

equidistant from each other, so I just alternate mics, basically three times. One's for one-liners, one -- I just do like three or four one liners. One is for stand up -- like conventional stand up. And then one mic is for emotional stories. And then I just

kind of go -- I do 10 minutes of standup or 12 minutes of standup, then I do eight minutes of stories, and I do two

minutes of one liners, and then I just repeat.

JORDAN: Why the break in format from just like, "All right I have funny

stuff, I'm going to go up and deliver it."

NEAL: There's so many hours now.

JORDAN: Yeah, that's true.

NEAL: There's so many stand up hours. Like, it's really, really difficult

because they have their own TV show or they did a roast, or they did something that was like, sort of, got them a lot of attention. And then people go, "Oh, you do stand up, I'll watch it!" So I knew I didn't have a TV show, and there was stuff I

to stand out. And the people that do stand out, usually stand out

wanted to talk about that I knew people found interesting, and I wanted to talk about it on stage. And I always had that idea, so I

figured it out.

JORDAN: How do you know someone's going to find that stuff -- or how

do you even hypothesize someone's going to find that stuff

interesting?

NEAL: Because I've talked about it on podcasts and everyone says

that's really interesting.

JORDAN: "Oh, that's the good stuff."

NEAL: Yeah, well and that and like, that's not the good stuff --

comedians have sort of led the movement of being revealing off stage so to speak. On podcasts mostly. And I would watch my friends, like do stuff, and if they ever got upset or choked up, I was always like, "That's so much more interesting to me than just another person doing stand up giving like a glib well

thought out recital of their material."

JORDAN: That they've rehearsed, yeah --

NEAL: Yeah, like it's their -- look, stand up is the best. Like it's better

than any movie to me, it's better than any TV show. It's the best. But there's times where it's like, "A, I don't want to watch you for an hour sort of onenote. B, great stand up is rare." So, I just

wanted to do a different thing.

JORDAN: Well, yeah. And done. I, when I saw it I thought like, why do

people recommend this one-liners with the note cards. It's like, "Who is this guy?" And then I was like, "I don't care what TV

show he wrote that I liked before."

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: Like, this doesn't make sense. What did this guy contribute?

NEAL: By the way the one-liners took 40 seconds. All this happened in

40 seconds? You had this deep of a spin out? **** this guy.

JORDAN: You know I think this -- I watched it like three times. And yeah,

I probably did because when somebody recommends

something I'm like --

(laugh)

NEAL: Uh-huh

JORDAN: "Am I going to sit down and watch this for an hour?"

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: And you know I thought your shtick maybe was, "I'm going to

pretend I'm really putzy in front of the mic and that I don't have

good delivery or something."

NEAL: Right.

JORDAN: And I was like, "Oh, wait actually, these are funny."

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: And then you went into some deeper stuff and I thought, "Okay.

Oh, that part wasn't supposed to be totally funny. I see what

you're doing here."

NEAL: Right.

JORDAN: Because, I didn't read the premise of Three Mics.

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: Before I watched it. I just turned on -- I just thought all right, --

NEAL: Yeah, yeah.

JORDAN: I think he did that --

NEAL: Right.

JORDAN: -- for the same reasons somebody calls it fluffy --

NEAL Right.

JORDAN: -- right, whatever. There's going to be a Three Mics joke at the

end.

NEAL: Yeah, exactly.

JORDAN: So you're talking about growing up in Philadelphia, Irish

catholic. As my friend Caleb Bacon says, "You're family was a little dysfunctional." So dysfunctional they produced two

standup comics not just one.

NEAL: That's right. Yeah.

(laugh)

JORDAN: That's --

NEAL: That's really saying something.

JORDAN: Highly unusual situation.

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: Were you funny when you were younger? Like when you were a

kid?

NEAL: Yeah, I was always pretty funny. I was like, you know, cute. I

was the youngest so it was like, I was sort of precocious and I

was funny, yeah.

JORDAN: Was there a time when you realized like, "I can do this stand up

thing, this funny thing. Like I got this, I should do this."

NEAL: There was no like, moment per se. My brother was a comedian

when I was in high school. I was like, "Oh, okay." Like, so I knew

I got to spend time when I was in high school with like Dave Attell and Ray Romano and guys like that so -- that were friends with my brother. It was before they were famous but I knew like -- I got to see them do stand up. They were great. And I got to hang out at comedy clubs so I just sort of wanted to do it and I was funny around my friends.

JORDAN: Did you ever think like, "I'm funnier than my brother. I should

probably get into this."

NEAL: No I never -- no. Truly will not play that game because it -- I

know that there's just as many people saying to him, "You're

funnier than Neal." So it's like --

JORDAN: Yeah.

NEAL: I'm -- I'm just not even --

JORDAN: It's always a matter of taste, yeah. It doesn't do any good.

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: There's nothing there. I'm not trying to bait you into like --

NEAL: No, no, no. Yeah

JORDAN: -- dissing your brother either. I just figured like, some comics

they go, "Well, you know, I saw other people doing it and I just thought, that timing thing, like I can do that. I can mimic that."

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: Or, "I get the same reaction among my friends or among

strangers."

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: Which is more important, obviously, than your friends. So he

got you a job working the door at a club in was it Boston? Or

NYC?

NEAL: Yeah, it's called -- it was in New York but it was called the

Boston Comedy Club.

JORDAN: Okay. That's a little confusing.

NEAL: Yeah because they wanted to make sure no one went. But yeah

it was the Boston Comedy Club and yeah -- so I was going to NYU for film school and working the door at the comedy club and then eventually I was like -- like I liked the comedy club more than I liked film school. I'm more nocturnal, I figured like, let me just work there and did and it was, you know, like I said

Attell, Romano, Jon Stewart --

JORDAN: Yeah.

NEAL: -- Chappelle. A lot of really great comics -- Louis CK before he

was famous. So all these people before they were famous. These

were like kindred spirits, way more than film students.

JORDAN: Actually, how did you start and keep those relationships? I

mean you see the guys there all the time but there's a lot of people that work at comedy clubs that don't throw jokes at the comics, that don't try to create relationships, that don't end up

being or staying friends with these guys.

NEAL: Oh, yeah I -- that's a good question. I certainly was like, I felt an

affinity for them. I would strike up conversations with them. I would, you just said, I would pitch them jokes. I didn't pitch a ton of people jokes but Jay Mohr, like, we were roommates. He did a joke of mine. Chappelle did a joke. I was useful in a way, like to them. Me and Chappelle were like same age, like we got along really well. So I didn't necessarily see it as networking per se. I guess it was networking but I didn't think of it that

way.

JORDAN: Sure. I think most people who are good at networking and

relationship development don't think of it as networking because the people that think of it as networking are --

NEAL: It's too obvious.

JORDAN: They're like, "Hey buddy!"

NEAL: "Hey can I give you a card?"

JORDAN: Yeah.

NEAL: And it's like, "No."

JORDAN: "Let me know when you need a financial manager."

NEAL: Yeah. I have people often saying like, "Hey I'm an amateur

comedian, can I send you a link for my," and sent me a link.
"Can you watch my five minutes?" and I was like, "No thank
you." People see me or somebody doing better than them in
showbiz or doing well as an opportunity and it's like, once you

feel like an opportunity, you're going to shut off.

JORDAN: That's an interesting point that I hadn't really thought of.

People send me their stuff all the time.

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: Like, "Hey can you read my book?"

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: And I'm like, "One, no. And two, even if I did, I don't know what

useful input I'm going to have."

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: "Because I do my thing totally different than you should do

yours."

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: Or even like, "Listen to an episode of my podcast, it's only half

an hour long." Or even if it's like ten minutes long.

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: My feedback would be like, "Yeah, talk closer to the mic," or I

don't know.

NEAL: If you're good, it'll get to me. Do you know what I mean? Like, if

you're good at something, somebody will tell me, like, "Did you see this thing," or whatever. Like you don't want to jump the gun. People send me scripts or whatever. I have scripts that are written by professionals that they want me to do that I don't

read.

JORDAN: Right.

NEAL: That I just don't have time or interest. So if someone says, "I'm

an amateur, read this," it's like, "Dude, okay. This is one opportunity. Do you want to waste it on this? Like you sure

you're not going to get any better?"

JORDAN: Yeah.

NEAL: Like because guess what, if I don't like this, I'm not reading

anything else you ever send me.

JORDAN: For your entire life.

NEAL: For the rest of your life until you die. No but you know what I

mean?

JORDAN: Yeah. I do now what you mean.

NEAL: Like you need to be smart about, you know, people that make

online videos. It's like, hey you don't have to put them all on YouTube. Make five of them, show them to your friends, and the

best one put on YouTube.

JORDAN: Oh, good point.

NEAL: Whereas everyone's like, "Ah, Go to my page," and it's like "Dude

if I watch one and it stinks, I'm not going to keep watching."

JORDAN: It's over. Yeah.

NEAL: I'm saying that as like a guy that people want -- see as an

opportunity but that's also the audience's take. Like you were

mad at the one-liners. There's three one-liners.

JORDAN: I wasn't even mad, I just thought -- if the remote were closer, I

would be like, I'm going to lower the volume but not turn it off. Actually if my friend hadn't recommended it, I probably would

never have turned it on. I didn't know who you were.

NEAL: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: And so, I do watch some comedy --

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: I like to watch it live. I don't care about Netflix --

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- unless it's like -- I'll go and look at Roy Wood Jr. Because he's

a friend of mine --

NEAL: Yeah

JORDAN: -- and I'm like, "Oh, you've got a new thing?"

NEAL Yeah.

JORDAN: I'm going to support you and I'll watch it and even if it's not

funny, I'll probably still tell you I watched and I really enjoyed it.

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: Which it was funny.

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: Gabriel, my buddy goes, "Look it's really funny and there's stuff

in there that you'll like." And I was like, "I assume he's not

talking about the first three lines of your thing."

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: "Of your special." So I gave it a bit more of a chance but you -- I

think about my show in the same way. My show is obviously not that funny and totally different. I put stuff in there, and if I record something, and it just doesn't go that well, I go, "I can't put that in my feed." And my tip for new podcasters is if you don't think, "Damn that was good," don't put it in your feed, because even if you're on episode 400, there's people who are going to go, 'I'll just check out that show you recommended.'

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: And they're -- that's the first encounter that they have --

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- with you. And they're like, "That Jordan guy just tried to be

funny for 40 minutes. What a dip****. I can't believe people like

this. Who is this person?"

NEAL: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: And you see that in your iTunes reviews. You'll put up

something and you're not that proud of it and like a week later,

it's like, "This show sucks. Why is everyone recommending it?" And you're like --

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: "You heard the one episode I did with that one guy didn't you?"

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: ****. And it's not worth it.

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: It's not worth doing that to people that you think might become

connections later even if you're not even thinking about that at the time, it might do well to realize that in business or in any craft that you do, you're always communicating, you're always creating a relationship, or you're warning people not to do that.

NEAL: There's also -- the thing that people don't realize is like, there's

nothing in it for me. Meaning, helping you -- I always tell people

like, "I didn't move to L.A. to do your ****." You know what I

mean?

JORDAN: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah good point. I didn't even think about that.

NEAL: Like I moved out here to do my *****. I didn't move out here to

like -- "And then hopefully somebody will just call me,"-- I moved out here because I have my own goals and my own like ideas that I want to get done. Most people will help you if they think -- if it's mutual. If there's a mutual benefit to it. That worked out for me, it's like Jay took a joke a note from my notebook. I pitched a joke to Dave. So then, when these guys started getting TV opportunities, they were like, "Well who can

help me?"

JORDAN: Who writes things that I like?

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN:

Yeah.

NEAL:

I've made a lot of money off of helping people for no reason other than the love of the game. Like, other than like my just -- Dave had an idea and I was like, "Hey do this," and then -- and then that snowballs into Half Baked, snowballs into Chappelle's Show, snowballs into everything I've ever done.

Like Schumer. Schumer before Schumer had a show, she was doing the roast, and she asked -- and we were friends, and she was like, "Can you help me with the roast thing?" I don't even think I -- she used anything I pitched. And then she gets a show, she asks me to direct it, then she does a Bud Light campaign with Seth Rogen. And I don't even like those Bud Light but whatever so --

(laugh)

NEAL: So but it's on the Super Bowl and it's a big spectacular thing, so

it's like -- and I got work with Seth and Evan and I like those guys. No one's going to help you in a way that's not beneficial to

them in some way.

JORDAN: We call it not keeping score. And we call it giving generously

for the obvious reason that you're giving generously and you're also not expecting anything necessarily in return. You're giving generously like, "Look I got this thing that maybe you can use." You're not thinking like, "If he uses that, I am ****** money,"

right?

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: You're thinking like, "If he uses that, that's cool." And then

eventually you're not thinking like, "I gave Jay a joke, so

where's my comeback?"

NEAL: This was like in the '90s so I knew that Larry David had sort of

knew Jerry Seinfeld from the comedy clubs and then Jerry

Seinfeld was like, "Hey I've got this sitcom, do you want to work

on it with me?" So I knew that that was a thing that happened, and I wanted to work with Dave -- like I always felt like we could do good stuff together --

JORDAN: Dave Chappelle, yeah?

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: Okay.

NEAL: But there was a -- not even altruism, it was just like, if I think of

a joke, I can't not tell someone. If I think of a tag for someone's act like, I haven't done it this week but there's very few weeks that go by that I don't text someone like, "Hey when you say that, maybe try saying this," like -- you know, I do it with Chris

Rock. I do it with everybody.

JORDAN: Does anybody ever get annoyed like, "Uh thanks for your

suggestion guy who works at the door, but I got my ****."

NEAL: Oh, yeah yeah, there was a ton of that. Like Chappelle didn't like

it the first time I pitched him. But the joke -- the thing that I

pitched him worked.

JORDAN: Oh, so he did try it like, "Oh, why not, I'll try it."

NEAL: Yeah. Like he knew when I pitched it that it would work.

JORDAN: But he's annoyed that you thought of it?

NEAL: Look I'm not saying like -- look there's going to be resistance.

Like there's plenty of people who don't -- who I'll pitch a joke and then they won't use it and I'm like, "****** idiot. Like dude I'm telling you that'll work." But people, again people didn't

move out here to do my ****."

JORDAN: Yeah, Yeah,

NEAL: Which I get, so I don't like begrudge them. I just stop pitching.

JORDAN: You're cut off. No more jokes for you.

NEAL: I just go like, "Okay they're never going to take my stuff so

why?"

JORDAN: Why waste your time?

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: Yeah. And the brain power. So are you thinking of jokes for

specific people in their act or are you like, "I have this generally

good thing."

NEAL: Oh, no, no, no. If I have a generally good thing, I'll do it myself.

But if I'm watching someone's act, there's a -- like a hole or they say something and they could say more, I will, like text them

like, "Hey you might want to say this."

JORDAN: That's a -- a unique skillset. I don't know how many people do

that for other people or are even able to do it for other people.

Have you seen that a lot? Is that common?

NEAL: I mean that's kind of what being a comedy writer is.

JORDAN: Just writing stuff for other people all the time?

NEAL: Well no not unsolicited, but when you write on a TV show or --

yeah if you write on a TV show or you write movies or whatever, your job is, they need to work a scene and then you -- everybody

punches it up.

JORDAN: Sure. I can see that. It feels like, if I'm working on your show,

with you and Dave Chappelle, I'm studying all your stuff and your voice and I'm watching it over and over and you're kind of

doing that but it's automatically happening in your head.

NEAL: I don't try to like immerse myself. It's like I -- you know, I can

write for Chris because -- I can write for Chris Rock because I'm

a fan of his --

JORDAN: Right.

NEAL: -- so I know his subjects. I know what he likes to talk about, I

know how he likes to talk about it. So it's not like, "Think like

Chris. What would Chris say?"

JORDAN: Right.

NEAL: It just -- it is automatic.

JORDAN: So it would be, theoretically really hard for you if you're like,

"Hey, look we're hiring Neal Brennan to write for you Jordan." You're like, "This guy -- I don't know this guy, I don't know what he does. I feel like The Art of Charm is some sort of weird thing. I want to get out of here ASAP. I don't want to -- I don't know how to write for this guy." And it's like you're getting a million dollars a week. And you're like, "Oh, God," it's going to be a lot

harder right?

NEAL: If the person doesn't have a voice, it's hard. But if the person

doesn't have like a clear comedy voice then it's harder but it's

not impossible.

JORDAN: It's not as easy -- it doesn't flow --

NEAL: Well yeah, it's like it doesn't suggest -- it's like when, you know,

somebody hosts SNL, who's like, you know an actress or

something. And they're all like -- all the writers are like, "Jesus

Christ."

(laugh)

NEAL: "What?" Like, it's, you know it's easy when it's Melissa Mccarthy

or Larry David or people that have a clear comedy voice. But if

it's like some chick who just did an action movie and is hot, it's like "Jesus Christ." So then you're just making --

JORDAN: Yeah, I bet.

NEAL: -- you're just doing jokes because they're hot but it's not

because they have a clear comedic force.

JORDAN: I think the advantage there is that people, especially guys will

laugh at anything a beautiful women says, generally if the

intent is to be funny.

NEAL: Not in comedy. Not in comedy they won't.

JORDAN: Not in comedy? Oh, really?

NEAL: At a bar they might, but not in --

JORDAN: Yeah I feel like --

NEAL: If you can't -- if you're watching SNL

JORDAN: SNL --

NEAL: -- you can't have sex with Margot Robbie.

JORDAN: I'm signing off on that one then.

NEAL: Laugh in your -- laughing at your house, she's not going to sleep

with you because of that. It's harder for -- if someone's super good looking, people are predisposed to not laugh, actually.

Women.

JORDAN: That's interesting.

NEAL: In standup.

JORDAN: In standup.

NEAL: In bars, again, guys will put up with anything.

JORDAN: Yeah. Yeah. I just figured Saturday Night Live, most of the

people watching are just dudes like me who are like, "This

better be funny tonight."

NEAL: No it is, it's all defense so --

JORDAN: Yeah.

NEAL: It's all just like, "What?"

(laugh)

NEAL: With like crossed arms and like predisposed to not like it. So if

they're hot, you're even more like, "Well **** you, you think

you're funny."

JORDAN: Oh, yeah, "You can't be funny and hot."

NEAL: Yeah exactly.

JORDAN: "Do you see the sign?"

NEAL: "I'm not giving you that." Yeah.

JORDAN: Yeah I already feel insecure around you. I'm not going to let you

be funny too.

NEAL: Yeah, exactly.

JORDAN: Get out of here. You grew up, you had kind of a rough childhood

and your dad was a little bit harder on you from the sound of it.

Or a lot hard on you from the sound of it.

NEAL: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN:

How does that kind of thing alter the way that you develop emotionally? And I don't mean like from a therapist's perspective here, but in terms of expression of feelings and stuff like that, which you kind of have to do a lot of in comedy maybe. How does it alter that? How does it get in there and mix up?

NEAL:

I mean, I don't know any -- too many comedians that are like extremely happy, as people.

JORDAN:

Yeah I know -- I kind of noticed that and I --

NEAL:

So --

JORDAN:

-- I don't know why that is.

NEAL:

Because part of it is like, comedy requires brutal clarity and you are not especially happy, you see things in a brutally clear way. Couldn't be less sentimental. You see the world in an unsentimental way and you can see things clearly. And then you -- so you'd take like a brutal honest truth and then you basically spiff it up and put a tuxedo and a funny hat on it and you've got comedy.

JORDAN:

It's --

(laugh)

NEAL:

To begin with, you start from something like brutal and then you sort of charm it up.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

JORDAN:

People are right now -- they're yelling at their iPhone or whatever they're using to play this and they're like, "The jokes make up for the sadness." And it's like that's kind of the easy, obvious -- there's more to it than that like -- Like you just mentioned, you have that brutal sense of clarity and they even

say -- they being like scientific American Mind for example, like depressed people have a more accurate outlook --

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- on reality.

NEAL: Yeah. And that it's good to have depressed people in a work

group. I've actually said that at times, I've gone like, "Hey can

we look at this pessimistically?"

JORDAN: Really?

NEAL: Yeah. Because I think you're more prone to make mistakes if

you assume things are going to go well. Like I think the thing with, it's like Jerry Seinfeld has said about stand up, "Bad audiences make you edit and good audiences make you

expand." So it's like, let's assume this isn't going to work. Why? What are the potential pitfalls for whatever this idea is? And then can we mediate that before we even start? Like when I'm

writing comedy, I can't assume like, "They're going to be onboard for this, then I'm going to say this," like I have to assume that the audience is going to drive a hard bargain.

JORDAN: Right you have to assume that they're like me and they're like

looking at those notecards and they're like --

NEAL: Like, "What the ****?" Yeah exactly, so we try and like do a few

one-liners up front but I know, like a friend of mine did a special and he put a great joke and I was like, "Is that your

closer?," and he's like, "No I put it third."

JORDAN: Oh.

NEAL: And I was like, "Why?," and he was like, "Because people will

turn it off." And I think that's a good way to look at things. Because I've actually imparted that wisdom to other people

when they go, "No they won't turn me off." Really?

JORDAN: Yeah.

NEAL: So you're the exception to human nature. It must be nice. I

think there's something to pessimism. It can **** your life up

but I think it's a decent thing to be mindful of.

JORDAN: If we're trying to apply this at home for example, outside of

comedy writing, do you think -- how does that exercise, if you will, work? Is it just like, "Let's assume that the first thing we do just bombs, and the second thing we do also doesn't work." Is

that the -- is that kind of...

NEAL Yeah I do that in everything. Because I direct stuff sometimes,

like I said, like I direct commercials and I direct TV shows and stuff and directing is all about having an offensive plan and a defensive plan. Like so I'll have a shot that I want, like then it'll be a oner, and we'll just -- it'll be no edits and da da." And I was like, "Well but also I need to get shots in case that doesn't work. I need to get like, sort of static defensive coverage in case this big idea doesn't work. And with standup, comedy writing or whatever, it's just looking at things critically and like and what if it doesn't work? You need to have a backup plan. Whenever people are like, "I have -- there is no plan B," I'm like, "Oh, you're

an idiot."

(laugh)

JORDAN: Yeah. You're screwed.

NEAL: "This has to work." Okay well then you're ****** yourself. Like,

you have to have a defensive plan. It's like in stand up, people always said like it was fun to watch Johnny Carson bomb.

Johnny Carson the old host of The Tonight show.

JORDAN: Sure.

NEAL: Like, when he bombed, it was as funny as when he killed

because his bomb -- he would like fidget and look off to the side and it was funny to watch so -- Dave Chappelle said like, "You

can tell how funny someone is by how the bomb." So it's like, do you choke or do you realize like, "Well this isn't going well," and they you're funny and you're honest and you're back up plan is you're sort of savored.

JORDAN:

That's a really good point. I hadn't thought about that before. Once I was at The Laugh Factory, The Comedy Store, I can't remember. I was with my parents, sitting at a table. They were seated kind of away from me --

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: Because they wanted to see and not crane their necks. And the

guy, who was like one of those open mic kind of short set deals

--

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- first guy, doing crowd work. The whole audience was like,

"Oh, why are you sitting with these two old people?" "Oh, they're my parents," and then he kind of played with us for a little bit. The next guy comes up and does this like really raunchy

masturbation joke --

NEAL: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: -- and he points at me and he's like, "This guy," and he goes to

town. The whole audience is kind of quiet.

NEAL: Yeah.

CROSSTALK

JORDAN: Because they know I'm with my parents. And he goes, "What

the hell happened here?" That usually just crushes it. Then he goes, "Wait, **** are those your parents? Oh, my God, I'm so

sorry," and he made a big deal out of that --

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: It was -- and everybody -- the tension had built up --

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- so high at that point that the whole room just exploded in

laughter.

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: And I thought, "He could have blown that really easily by being

like, "Oh, uh," and then just moved on to the next thing.

NEAL: When I pitch movies, or pitch TV shows or whatever, and it's

not going well, I will literally say that. Like, "Well this isn't going

good."

(laugh)

JORDAN: Okay.

NEAL: And I think if you say it in a confident way, it makes -- even

though you're still going to bomb, you're bombing less.

JORDAN: Yeah.

NEAL: If you just say like, "Oh, this isn't going well." If you do it in a

sweaty way, or if you do it in a needy way, it can backfire. But there have been times where I've been pitching movies and I've said to the person that I was pitching to, that we were bombing with, I was like, "All right, well, we're going to come back in a year and pitch another one." I think if you're pitching or

meeting people or whatever or trying to sell yourself in some way, I think if you say like, "Look I can see you don't like it. I

understand, I'll come back."

(laugh)

NEAL: Like if you're -- instead of just this sweaty thing of like not

acknowledging what's happening, I think that can make it way

worse.

JORDAN: It's like a bad Shark Tank. You ever watch that show?

NEAL: Yeah, 100 percent.

JORDAN: Where they're just -- they're just getting killed --

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- and you're like--

(inhales sharply)

JORDAN: You just, you suck through your teeth because you're like, "This

guy --"

NEAL: Yeah and you want the person to be like, "All right this isn't

working. I'm rescinding my offer."

JORDAN: Yeah. Or yeah -- or just like, "I'm just going to show you the

product because I'm blowing it, like right now."

NEAL: Or not -- I'm not even going to show you the product. This is

going so badly --

JORDAN: Just going to walk back out there.

NEAL: I would love that if someone in Shark Tank was like, "You know

what? **** you guys, this is over."

(laugh)

JORDAN: I don't know if that would make air, but it would be an awesome

episode of Shark Tank for sure.

NEAL: It'd be hilarious.

JORDAN: You wrote Half Baked.

NEAL: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: That movie -- speaking of pitching movies, I don't remember

why that movie didn't do well. Because when I watched it --

NEAL: Because it opened against Titanic, Goldeneye, and Good Will

Hunting.

JORDAN: That'll do it.

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: That'll do it. But I watched that movie, I don't know 50 times.

And I haven't watched the other ones 50 times combined. Because, I don't even know. I wasn't like a pot smoker or

anything like that --

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- when I was in high school or college or whenever that came

out. It just turned into this weird -- is cult classic the right

term? Like it was this underground college --

NEAL: That's the exact right term.

JORDAN: Like probably did a million times better on DVD then it did in

theaters.

NEAL: 100 -- almost to the number, a million times better.

JORDAN: When you're doing Chappelle's Show, did you decide, "Look I

want to be performing instead of only writing." I mean how did

the transition go?

NEAL: No, I never -- that's the thing, like, I was never watching Dave

being like, "I should be Rick James."

(laugh)

NEAL: He's an amazing performer. I was never jealous or envious of

> the attention he got. Like I was happy with the amount of attention I was getting, like, more than anything it came about because -- when the show ended it was like, "Oh, well I'm at the

whims of somebody else here.

JORDAN: Yeah.

NEAL: I need to be more self determining and do something where --

and I'd been doing stand up a bit so I was like let me focus more

on that.

When you're writing a show like that that's doing so freaking JORDAN:

> well. You mentioned, "Well we've got to look at things pessimistically and figure out if they maybe aren't going to work." Is there ever a moment when you're writing something

like that and you go, "It's definitely going to work. This is

Chappelle's Show, we're killing it," or did you always kind of go,

"Well, you know."

NEAL: Yeah there was never -- I mean I was thinking pessimis- you

> have to think pessimistically. The reason things worked is because, further upstream, I and Dave were worried about whether it was going to work or not. And we corrected it or we made it good. Because we needed a joke -- like we would go, "We need a joke here. We can't move on until we have a joke here." Like Chappelle hosted SNL a couple months ago and I worked on it with him and it was like -- there was this sketch we did and I was like, "We don't have an ending." And he was getting mad at me and I'm like, "Dude, you can get mad at me all you want, we don't have an ending." Then we figured it out. But it came from me saying we don't have an ending and him going I think we do and me going, "No I don't think we do." You know, as much as I was a pain in his ***, I was correct. And that happened and there were plenty of times where he -- vice versa. Like, where he'd say I don't think we have a joke here, I

don't think we have an ending, and I'd be like, "Uh." If someone criticizes something, even if you don't agree with them, I think it's worth maybe coming up with a solution.

JORDAN: That's a really good point and I hadn't thought of that.

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: Because even if they're wrong, worst case is, you worked out

this nonexistent problem.

NEAL: Yeah. That's like when people like, "I like this joke," it's like,

"Okay I don't. Take 40 -- how long did it take you to think of the joke? A split second? Take another two minutes and try to beat it." It becomes this ego thing. It becomes this defensiveness thing. Like, "Well no it works, and da, da, da, da, and I like it." I'll

bet you do like it. You thought of it.

JORDAN: Yeah.

NEAL: I bet you like it. Me and a buddy of mine who used to be the

head writer at Saturday Night Live would say that people, go

like. "We like that..." He's like, "Oh, I know you do."

(laugh)

NEAL: "The audience didn't like it, and we work for the audience."

JORDAN: Oh, yeah.

NEAL: "So you need to come up with a better joke here," or whatever.

So, like you said, if you try to come up with a solution and you can't, then you've done your due diligence and you can sell, do whatever you're doing with a clear head. But the good news is,

you may think of a way better joke --

JORDAN: Yeah I suppose --

NEAL:

-- Or a way better anything. Like a lot of what experience is, in my case it's comedy, like -- it's like seeing patterns, and remembering like, "Oh, this reminds me of that and that didn't go well. So how can I work against that?" That's what wisdom is, that's what experience is. It's like, "We may be making that mistake, how do we avoid making that mistake?"

JORDAN:

How clear is that image of like the pattern in your head? For example are you just going, "I feel like this doesn't work," or are you like, "No, last time we tried this and this and this and that followed that pattern and it didn't work." You know how crystal in this --

NEAL: It's pretty -- it's very clear.

JORDAN: Really?

NEAL: Like that's what experience is -- like working on Saturday Night

Live a bit this year. I hung out with Lorne Michaels a bunch and he's -- he's been a comedy writer for like 50 years, and wrote for

shows that you've never heard of --

JORDAN: Sure.

NEAL: -- literally 50 years ago and he'll talk about a sketch -- at

Saturday Night Live they read 50 sketches a week.

JORDAN: Jeez.

NEAL: So, okay so that's 50 sketches a week, 25 times a year, for 43

years. So he'll talk about sketches and go, "Yeah I've seen that sketch 10 times, I've written it myself twice," and he's not

talking about that literal sketch --

JORDAN: Right, it's just the same patterns.

NEAL: -- he's talking about that pattern of sketch. That format, that

formula, whatever you want to call it. So, a lot of it is just seeing a pattern, and going -- like we were in Saturday Night Live the

week Dave hosted, there was a sketch that somebody pitched and it was a funny pitch but I knew where it was headed and I was like -- I'd said to Dave, I was like, "That's a good idea, but something tells me it's going to be flat when we read it," and sure enough it was flat when we read it because I knew what the idea was.

JORDAN:

How do you test stuff like that? Do you have a focus audience in there or are you just like -- like in the back of your head you're like, "This is still not funny."

NEAL: Mmm.

JORDAN: "Because we're rehearsing and it sucks."

NEAL: You just can tell, like by being a comedian and being a funny

person. You're just like, "This isn't funny."

JORDAN: It seems like it would be really easy to start writing comedy for

comedians instead of writing comedy for an audience of people

who just got...

NEAL: It's the same thing, I mean comedians might not laugh but

they'll go. "Uh that's a good joke."

(laugh)

NEAL: Like, that's the thing, is you get to the place where you're like,

"Uh, it's a good joke." We all recognize like a good joke when we see it. Having said that, I have a ton of experience, a ton of boots on the ground, etcetera. I still bomb regularly. Or do a joke that bombs regularly. Like, I do a new material show, usually every Tuesday in Santa Monica, and at the Westside Comedy Theater in L.A. and I do jokes every week that don't work. There are things like, "I think this might work." That's the thing about comedy is, "This should work," but it's a fickle thing, and it's really subtle, and it's the highest level of difficulty, and if you can do stand up, or do -- you can pretty much do anything. If you look at like the things that comedians do that actors can't

****** do. How many actors do you know that can write their own show? Because I know 20 comedians that can.

JORDAN: Yeah, you kind of have to.

NEAL: Yeah. Their own show, not their act, I'm not talking about their

act.

JORDAN: No, no, yeah. Like a sitcom.

NEAL: How many actors do you know that can write their own

monologues and then write their own television show and do 25 episodes a year for eight years. Because like I said, I know a lot of comedians. And movies and then direct movies, and then --

you know it's like, comedians can do a lot of stuff.

JORDAN: It's incredible actually and it seems like the kind of thing that

you would not get good at for a really wrong time when you

start.

NEAL: Yeah it's like incredibly trying. There are people that are good

immediately. I think Chappelle was good immediately. When he

was like 14 he started.

JORDAN: Jeez.

NEAL: I've heard Schumer was good immediately. I've heard like, there

-- there are people that are good immediately. But yeah, you -- it takes a long time to get good at. And that's the thing, is that there's really no shortcut. You can be good looking whatever but, if you don't have good jokes -- ultimately the thing about stand up is, and comedy in general, whoever writes the most

good jokes, is the most successful. Period.

JORDAN: Meritocracy.

NEAL: Complete meritocracy. You know who's written the most good

jokes? Dave Chappelle, Chris Rock, Louis C.K., Bill Burr, Richard

Pryor, George Carlin, Jerry Seinfeld. Like these are not --

JORDAN: Like who? Wait what? Who's that?

NEAL Yeah, this is the hall -- you get to -- it's like basketball or it's

sports, it's like whoever has the most homeruns is Babe Ruth. When you hit 750 home runs, you get to be Babe Ruth. And stand up is the same way, it's like, whoever writes the most

good jokes, is the winner.

JORDAN: We talked earlier about trying to achieve things or trying to get

good at something in order to make yourself feel better.

Because you struggled with depression for a while. I mean do

you still --

NEAL: Still do, yeah.

JORDAN: Still do? There's a lot of people that -- that are obviously in the

same boat. A lot of people write in as well looking to apply what they learn on the show to issues like depression, other types of sadness, and things like that. And what advice do you have for people who are thinking, "Holy crap, this is me. I'm trying to achieve stuff, or get ahead or do something great in order to overcome depression. I overachieve in order to make up for something I'm lacking elsewhere in my life." I mean that's

something you've dealt with a lot.

NEAL: That's what it is. That's what achievement is. I mean I think

like, all achievement comes from feeling of deficiency. I think there are some exceptional people who are like, "I -- my father and mother told me I was great and it turns out I'm great." Like

--

JORDAN: They were right.

NEAL: Yeah, again, there are rare instances but most of it comes from

a feeling of deficiency -- and this has just happened for me recently, where I finally feel like I've achieved enough **** in my life that the voice in my head have lost credibility. Like the negative voices -- it's like, "You couldn't do it without Dave, you

da, da, da, da. You da, da, da." And then I'd done enough stuff in my life where it's like, "Okay I've written for so many TV shows, and done it well. I've -- have a standup specials that are well received. I've done enough **** at this point that it's like, 'All right voice in my head, like you're just wrong. You're wrong."

JORDAN: Yeah.

NEAL: But it took 25 years. And it may go away too, that's the other

thing. It's like, this could be a result of -- a part of me thinks it's like these things that I've finally achieved and finally like Three Mics being really well received, and me finally going like, "Hey, give yourself a break, kid." Or it could just be because I started

taking Zoloft again five months ago. I don't know.

JORDAN: That's interesting because it almost, to me as an outsider,

sounds like, that's just the voice in your head telling you, "Don't get too comfortable, because we might pull the rug out from

under you."

NEAL: Yeah there is that but, like it's also, all right there's too much

evidence at this point. There's too much evidence that I'm good

at my job.

JORDAN: Oh, yeah, no I'm not arguing against that.

NEAL: No I know you're not.

JORDAN: Yeah, I just meant the voice in your head telling you not to get

too cozy because, you know you're worried about that it could

go away.

NEAL: The other thing I've found though is that there's no real

happiness in it. Like I read a Prince quote recently that I've been telling a lot of people which is, somebody was telling him like, "Write more songs. Write -- why don't you write another hit?" And Prince looked at them and said, "Look I've been to the

mountaintop. There's nothing there." Like, I've achieved a lot of

****, any happiness I have, or a good portion of the happiness I have, is from meditation and from my own outlook on what life should be. Because I've done a bunch of stuff and it's like. "Meh." It's pretty cool to like do a Netflix special that people like and it's pretty cool to do a TV show. Again, you hear this all the time, which is, "Happiness is a choice," and I've become more aware of that in the last six months than ever in my life. It really is just a matter of like -- I can look for external validation but ultimately it's just got to come down to like, "Do I want to be happy or not?" There are things I can do to make myself happy in a way that's not outcome based. There's a term unconditional happiness. I'm not going to be happy if, I'm just going to be happy, you know? That's what I've focused more on in the last few months.

And that's been working out really well so far yeah? JORDAN:

> Yeah it has. I'm sure you'll listen and be like, "You don't sound happy." It's just because I'm fighting a cold. And I don't know how to parse out what's the approval I've been getting, and what's the medication, and what's the new outlook. But, I meditate every day and I do CBT, which is cognitive behavioral therapy, which is like a -- there's a list of 10 negative thought styles, which just Google it. It's really excellent. And I've been more aware of those thinking styles and trying to play defense against it in myself. So as a result, as much as it is like, working The Art of Charm will make you a more effective communicator but who gives a ****?

If you don't feel happy. JORDAN:

> If you -- yeah it's like, to what end? Like, I've done a ton of ****. Like I said, I have a good resume. It wasn't necessarily making me happy until I realized like, "This resume **** doesn't make a difference, you know?" Like, I went on vacation with my girlfriend -- I'm single now but we went on vacation to like Bali and we were doing nothing. And she's like, "You're so happy here," and I was like, "I love not doing ****. Like this makes me

NEAL:

NEAL:

happy." And figuring out that like, "All right go to -- do that! Do more nothing." Like I didn't do **** yesterday.

(laugh)

NEAL: It was ****** great. I didn't do ****** Jack ****. And it was

fantastic. I'm lucky in that I don't have to work all the time, but there's something too like -- "What makes you happy?" I like playing video games sometimes. **** it, play a video game. Like, do the thing that makes you happy. There's such a premium put on achievement. I'm just saying, as someone who's done a lot of the stuff and is successful, the next chapter is what makes me truly happy and what kind of life am I going to lead from the

inside out, not from the outside in?

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

JORDAN: And you tried a ton of stuff --

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- to get rid of the depression. I mean Ketamine --

NEAL: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: -- and then TMS which is like brain magnetic stimulation, I

mean --

NEAL: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: -- just like stuff that goes beyond the Zoloft or like the --

NEAL: Yeah, yeah, I'd try ****** anything. Like I've tried

everything, including achievement.

(laugh)

NEAL: Like as a thing.

JORDAN: Which is harder than Ketamine.

NEAL: Yeah I've tried everything. And just has to come to a point

where you go, "All right, it's not outside of me. It's just not

outside of me. It's not about like, making contacts and following up and sending out emails." It's like, heh, yeah that's fine. It's not that meaningful. I can work on Saturday Night Live, or I can work on Chappelle's Show, or I can do a Netflix special. If I don't like it, if I'm not happy doing it, **** it. What's the point? So I

can say I did it? I have enough **** I can say I did.

JORDAN: It's such a tempting trap for people though man.

NEAL: It's not even a tempting trap. It's our whole society. It's not even

a trap, it's -- I mean it is a trap but the whole thing is a trap. It's

all a trap.

JORDAN: Yeah, yeah.

NEAL: Like, and I'm not trying to get too like, you know, Matrixy (sic)

but it is like --

JORDAN: Philosophical?

NEAL: Yeah it's like -- it truly is all a trap. It's like people have

ambition and don't even know why they have it. It's like, where

is it coming from? What's the point?

JORDAN: It's like approval seeking behavior at that point.

NEAL: Yeah. Like --

JORDAN: Yeah.

NEAL: -- and it's just a habit. It's a habit that's like, "Do you like it? Do

you really like it? Do you feel fulfilled by it?" If you do, great. Chances are, you're full of **** or it doesn't actually fulfill you.

JORDAN: Yeah I think a lot of the stuff that we used to do -- that I used to

do personally, especially in this business early on, was just like,

"It's got to be big and we have to have like a good social media following," and all this stuff. And, "People have to really understand our mission." And then when I kind of decided that that was less important than just having conversations --

NEAL: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: -- with people that I found interesting --

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- this show freaking just took off from there.

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: It just took off.

NEAL: That's because it was like, "What do I actually like?" I like

interesting ****. That's part of what was good about Three Mics

is like, "Well who am I actually?" Because there's a lot of

comedians that are on stage and they're -- that's not you. That's not who you are. This was -- the thing about Three Mics was like, "This is who I actually am." I don't have all the charisma and charm that a lot of my peers have. And Three Mics was in some way explaining why I don't. You know what I mean and

going like --

JORDAN: Yeah I do. Yeah.

NEAL: Because I have ****** clinical depression, and I had a weird

childhood. I've been doing all this stuff, here's my story. There are people now that they know the story, will like me forever. It's not because when I walk into a room, people want to say yes before they know what the question is. Which is -- I've heard

that's the definition of charm.

JORDAN: Oh. Yeah, yeah.

NEAL: And it's not because of that. It's because I'm honest and I'm

relatable as a result.

JORDAN: You kind of nailed the whole concept behind this show which

is like authenticity in the face of just whatever sort of is going

on up here.

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: Because, that I feel like, and I know, is much more interesting

and attractive and relatable to other people. You can't have

friends if they don't know the real person inside.

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: But a lot of people are afraid to show that because they're busy

covering it up with a mask of like --

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: "Look how freaking cool I am. And accomplished I am."

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: That's the antithesis of what we're doing here. We're trying to

show people that like, "Look, all the crap that you think makes

you not as palatable as you would like," --

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- " is the stuff that makes you real and therefore is the stuff that

you should actually probably showcase."

NEAL: Right, well that's -- in my case it was like -- I took an acting

class, probably seven years ago and I would do scenes and the acting teacher was like, "You're not being real." And I was like,

"Dude, I'm such a sad person. You don't want to see it."

(laugh)

JORDAN: Yeah.

NEAL: And then he was like, "No, you have to do it." And I did it and it

was like, "Oh." And that was the first time people were like, "Dude you were really good," and I was like, "Oh, okay." It's like Republicans do it a lot, politically, where they'll go like -- they'll say, "What's our weakness?," and they'll make it a strength.

JORDAN: Oh, right. Like my weakness -- it's like a job interview. "My

weakness is,"--

NEAL: Yeah exactly.

JORDAN: --"I'm just too detail-oriented."

NEAL: I think it's more like, "Was John Kerry a war hero or was he a

coward?" You know what I mean, like -- you think he's so great, it's actually that you've got it 100 percent wrong. It's like, "Is Neal too sad?" Let me show you like way more of -- Three Mics is like a stylistically -- I do it in an artful way, I'm not just like, "Mmm." You know, like I try to -- I explain it in a way -- Yeah.

JORDAN: Mopey.

NEAL: I explain it in a way that's like -- you can understand it and it's

helpful to people but -- I'm not saying like, "You've just got to be honest all the time." I just think that there are things that people keep secret, that are unnecessary. I think, what I've

found is everyone's got a thing. And whereas, I just went first. And then everyone comes out and is like, "I'm depressed. I have a bad thing with my dad." So everyone's got a thing and -- it's like when people apologize on dates where they'll be like, "I'm sorry I'm being so serious." I'm like, "I don't -- this is all I want to

talk about."

JORDAN: Yeah, I don't need to hear about all the great things that are

going on on your Instagram feed.

NEAL:

Yeah I don't care what movie -- I don't care that you can quote Anchorman. Like, I don't give a ****. But I think that is about like, what do you actually find enjoyable and then doing that and being yourself unapologetically.

JORDAN:

You said that you did a lot of honest writing when you were in a 12 step program.

NEAL:

Yeah.

JORDAN:

Can you talk about that a little bit? Is that something we can apply at all?

NEAL:

I think it's just that thing I said about brutal clarity. It's the depression thing. In some ways, the Three Mics is like, is the Eminem thing at the end of 8 Mile, which is like, I am white, I am a ******* bum. What are you going to say about me? Like, literally, what's the meanest thing you can say about me? I'm a star*****. Okay, guess what I'm doing a monologue about? I'm a star*****. Here's why. Makes sense now that you hear it, doesn't it? Like because I have no self-esteem, I was ****** chasing celebrities around. It's like, what's the worst thing people can say about you. The reason I said it in public is the thing that I -- this is going to sound crazy but I read it in Mystery's Book.

JORDAN:

Really?

NEAL:

It's the thing in Mystery's book it says, if you're going out to pick up girls, give your buddy \$300 and say, give me \$100 back every girl I try to talk to. Right, so this was -- I would do that with stand up. I would give somebody 300 bucks and say, "Every time I smile for more than five seconds, give me 80 bucks, whatever. Give me my money back." First time I did it, I lost \$220.

(laugh)

NEAL: But this was my way of saying like, "Okay by calling myself a

star***** in public, makes it way more embarrassing to do it, for me. I can't do it anymore." Like I can't in good conscience, having called myself this in public -- it's like where people will post their exercise results online. It's a bit of that, where it's like, I'm making myself accountable. So if people see me with a famous person, they're going to be a little disappointed. Like,

"****** I thought you weren't hiding anymore."

JORDAN: Oh.

NEAL: You know?

JORDAN: Yeah.

NEAL: And that's what I kind of am doing. Like that's kind of what I

was doing. And that's being brutally honest with yourself and

figuring out a way to make yourself stop doing it.

JORDAN: How do you stay motivated to start again? And this might be

the right terminology so pardon me, but at the quote unquote

bottom. I mean, you're doing open mic stuff --

NEAL: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: Or you were doing open mic stuff.

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: You already sort of touched the brass ring with The Chappelle

show --

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: How do you stay motivated? Because I think a lot of people,

when they heard I was interviewing you, they were like, "Oh,

yeah, he's bouncing back. Like that must be tough."

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: And I thought, "Yeah maybe he doesn't look at it like that or

maybe he does.

NEAL: Everything you do is starting at the scratch. I mean, as a

comedy writer. Writing is so ****** hard that like, it's all

starting from scratch. So like, from the maker of blank doesn't

really get people in the seats.

CROSSTALK

NEAL: It does a little bit but not really. Like, especially now that there's

so much media saturation. I see it all as like, starting from the bottom. I think when you write a movie or direct a movie, it's hard for everyone. It's literally -- even being movie stars, no one

gets everything they want. There's always someone who's

better than you. For a long time it was Will Smith and then now he's kind of -- seems to have lost something. So they go, Kevin

Hart --

JORDAN: Oh, yeah.

NEAL: Well Kevin, Kevin will do it, or whatever, there's -- and even

when it was Will, there was movies that Denzel Washington

would get that he couldn't get. Like there was always

somebody. In showbiz, you have to do it every day. It is -- that's how it's like sports. It's like -- they don't win bronze place --

they don't automatically give them 30 points.

JORDAN: Yeah, good point.

NEAL: He has to score every game. And it's -- people might play ****ier

defense against him, but mostly it's because he's bigger and

faster than them.

JORDAN: Yeah.

NEAL: I see it as bouncing -- whatever you want to call it. Because I did

Chappelle's Show, people are not predisposed to like something

else I do if they don't like it. Because your friend recommended it, you gave me more time but like, everyone's defensive about everything. You don't really get the benefit of the doubt for the most part.

JORDAN: So you shouldn't play like you have it.

NEAL: No, the best example of this I can think of is, I talked to Eddie

Murphy one time about when he was in Saturday Night Live and I said, "Did you just feel like you were dominating and like you were just killing and you had the Midas touch?" And he was like, "No man, it was week to week. I just was trying to survive." And you think about all the **** he did. But he was like, "I was

just trying to get sketches on."

JORDAN: Yeah.

NEAL: And that's life in Showbiz for sure. I think the way the world is

now, I think everything is so market based. No one's going to give you money for nothing. Like, for the most part. Other than

of course, voice over.

JORDAN: Yeah I was going to say yeah.

NEAL: Which is the easiest money you'll ever make.

JORDAN: There's some of that. You do a bunch of that, huh?

NEAL: Oh, yeah, I did a bunch of stuff for Samsung like two years ago.

For like a year and a half. It was the best.

JORDAN: I did Grand Theft Auto four and three.

NEAL: What'd you do?

JORDAN: Bad guys.

NEAL: Great.

JORDAN: Like Russians, and you know explosion -- guys who were

involved in the character's life. Of course a lot of those little

side gig guys, where it's like radio DJ --

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: Or like, nerd, and like a million pedestrians.

NEAL: Great.

JORDAN: Because they just wanted to knock those guys out --

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- and you're already in there. "Can you do an Indian accent?"

And I'm like, "Not really." And they're like, "Just try it."

NEAL: Try it.

JORDAN: "Just try one."

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: "It doesn't have to be real."

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: So you just do this like really racist Indian accent --

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- and they're like, "Nailed it."

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: "Next."

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: That is kind of free money. I remember getting like \$445 for like

an hour of work.

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: And I thought I was going to get like a t-shirt --

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- or something. And I was like, "Sign me up for every video

game ever." And then I sucked at like all of...

NEAL: Yeah you're also not going to get free money for long. Like if you

had sucked ---

JORDAN: No.

NEAL: -- You wouldn't have got in again.

JORDAN: I did a couple other ones but man, doing like aliens and stuff.

It's so much harder than people think. Like you're thinking of an awesome character. They want that but 10 percent in a

different way and you just can't do it.

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: Like unless you're an actor --

NEAL: Absolutely.

JORDAN: -- you just can't do it. You had a great quote where you

summarized a little bit of this. So you said, "I'm never going to be more successful than I've been in the past two years. I have a

better chance of being eaten by a shark."

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: "I'll never be famous but I've got financial success. People in

showbiz seem to want to work with me and I get to control the

stuff I write. Fame gives you noise, which is freaking worthless. I've got a girlfriend I love so I can't use it to get women, and it's not like Dave and I got laid because of Chappelle's Show. He was married and I'm pale."

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: What do you mean by fame gives you a lot of noise? I think

that's a brilliant observation.

NEAL: What I've found with like the small amount of fame that I have,

in the last month or whatever. I've had -- always said like -- I always say I'm famous like an NBA referee where people are

like, "Where do I know you from?"

JORDAN: Mmm.

NEAL: It can get you laid for sure. But I think for the most part, it's just

like, if getting recognized is mostly an exercise in calming the person down. When someone recognize you, they just start acting crazy, like, "Dude, I've just got to say, dude, I can't believe you're here! Can we,-- " and you have to just be like, "Yeah man, it's cool. Yes, I would love to take a picture with you. Yeah, okay great, here we go. Here we're going to take a picture. Really nice to meet you." They're having a freakout and you almost have to

like give them CPR.

(laugh)

JORDAN: In the middle of The Grove.

NEAL: Yeah exactly. Yeah you just have to like, give them a little

massage --

(laugh)

NEAL: Like it's going to be fine. Fame will get you --

JORDAN: A lot of people acting weird around you?

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: Yeah.

NEAL: Yeah that's mostly what it gives you and then you might pick

up like a good like, voice over gig and you can advertise -- like

you can promote like liquor.

JORDAN: Right, yeah. Or you get like free Twizzlers at the movie theater

--

NEAL: Yeah you get --

JORDAN: Because they're like --

NEAL: Yeah not even. Yeah, I mean --

JORDAN: -- "Love that Netflix."

NEAL: -- sometimes. Yeah, sometimes you get free **** but mostly it's

like -- it's valuable for attracting -- for men to attract women.

JORDAN: Really shallow women that you just want --

NEAL: Yeah or you know, see it just makes it easier -- even if they're

not shallow, it makes it easier.

JORDAN: Yeah, yeah I suppose that's true. That would have to -- it's just a

social value.

NEAL: Yeah, you're high status.

JORDAN: Yeah.

NEAL: But it's also really ephemeral. Like you're high status now, but --

JORDAN: Yeah.

NEAL: -- like, then when you stop being high status, people look at you

like, "Oh. Oo, poor thing."

JORDAN: Yeah.

NEAL: Like people --

JORDAN: "Oh, remember when you were famous? Oh, man."

NEAL: Yeah, yeah, people feel bad for you and they kind of are ****ier

to you.

JORDAN: Yeah. Like, "How you doing?"

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: And you're like, "I'm fine, thanks for treating me like somebody

just died close to me."

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: "I've been fine for years." Like I'm good.

NEAL: Yes. Exactly.

JORDAN: People think they act normal around celebrities, it's like --

NEAL: No one acts normal.

JORDAN: No, it's like being around cops.

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: I'm driving --

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- the speed limit.

NEAL: See I'm a normal driver?

JORDAN: Yep.

NEAL: Look at me drive.

(laugh)

JORDAN: Man you've been really generous with your time. I appreciate it.

NEAL: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: There's a couple questions from listeners of the show that I feel

compelled to ask you since you're sitting here. Do you have pre-show rituals? A lot of comics have things they have to do --

NEAL: No, I have none.

JORDAN: None?

NEAL: No.

JORDAN: I usually have to have like two mugs of tea. And to be honest, if

you weren't here and we weren't doing this like in video. I'd have something probably to take a leak in, just in case.

NEAL: Really?

JORDAN: Yeah.

NEAL: Are we on video?

JORDAN: No, no, no.

NEAL: Oh, okay.

JORDAN: No, no, but you're here. I'm not going to like pee --

NEAL: Oh, right.

JORDAN: -- in a bottle --

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- in front of you. That would be a weird thing to do around

anyone, let alone--

NEAL: Yeah. Yes, thank you.

JORDAN: Yeah. You're welcome.

NEAL: Thanks for not doing it.

JORDAN: Would you ever work with Dave again?

NEAL: I work with him on Saturday Night live.

JORDAN: Oh, you do?

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: But like on a project, I guess, with just you and him.

NEAL: I don't think it's even going to be an issue.

JORDAN: You're not going to have that ever happen?

NEAL: No.

JORDAN: No.

NEAL: And if I did, I would get the money up front.

JORDAN: Yeah, yeah, make sure it's in the bank.

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: I love the comedy. You're one of my new favorites now.

NEAL: Great.

JORDAN: I don't say that everybody that comes in.

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: I know you're probably thinking like, "Yeah right." Because a lot

of people are like --

NEAL: No, I don't --

JORDAN: "Sure yeah, I'm a fan."

NEAL: Yeah, No I understand that people are now seeing me for the

first time, so I'm thankful...

JORDAN: Yeah, I dig it. And I think -- I honestly think Women and Black

Dudes, your first --

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: Is it album?

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: Is that what they're called?

NEAL: I was an hour on Comedy Central. It's an album.

JORDAN: It is really, really funny. Like I told you before when we walked

in, I was at a coffee shop and people were looking at me like, "I

hope that he's wearing headphones."

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: "Otherwise we have to call the police,"

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: And I don't normally laugh out loud to comedy because a lot of

it is just not that funny.

NEAL: Yeah.

JORDAN: Even TV so--

NEAL: No, I appreciate it man.

JORDAN: We'll link to Women and Black dudes in the show notes. We'll

obviously link to -- can you link to things on Netflix?

NEAL: Yeah you can.

JORDAN: Okay so we'll link to that in the show notes, the new one. What's

next for you man? What's going on?

NEAL: I'm doing a couple pilots and just, you know, I'm around.

JORDAN: And in the credit's it'll be like, "From the creator of," and

everyone will go, "I don't care."

NEAL: Exactly. People go, "I don't -- it means nothing to me."

JORDAN: Yeah. From Neal Brennan. "Mm-hmm that sounds familiar."

NEAL: "Where do I know that?" Yeah.

JORDAN: Yeah.

NEAL: It'll happen with the Three Mics guy.

JORDAN: All right, well thank you.

NEAL: Thanks bro.

JORDAN: Great big thank you to Neal Brennan. His special is called Three

Mics. And that is of course in Netflix. We'll link that in the show

notes. If you enjoyed this one, don't forget to thank Neil on Twitter. We'll have that linked in the show notes as well. I'd love for you to tweet at me your number one takeaway from Neal Brennan. I'm @theartofcharm on Twitter. Remember if you want to see the show notes, you can tap your phone screen and most mobile podcast players they should pop right up. Our boot camps, our live programs here in L.A. details for those are at theartofcharm.com/bootcamp.

Guys coming from all over the world. Super rewarding. I love seeing how far this takes people. What they do in the months and years after boot camp is nothing short of amazing. And remember, we sell out a few months in advance. So if you're thinking about it a little bit, you should get in touch ASAP, get some info from us so you can plan ahead. I also want to encourage you to join our AoC challenge at theartofcharm.com/challenge. Or if you're in your car right now, at a red light, you can text the word charmed C-H-A-R-M-E-D to 33444. The challenge is about improving your networking and connection skills and inspiring those around you to develop a personal and professional relationship with you.

We'll also email you our fundamentals Toolbox that I mentioned earlier on the show. That includes some great practical stuff on reading body language, having charismatic nonverbal communication, the science of attraction, negotiation techniques, networking and influence strategies, mentorship, persuasion tactics, and everything else that we teach here at The Art of Charm. I'm also doing regular videos with drills and exercises to help you move forward. It's designed to make you a better networker, a better connector, and a better thinker. That's theartofcharm.com/challenge. Or text the word charmed to 33444.

For full show notes for this and all previous episodes, head on over to theartofcharm.com/podcast. This episode of AoC was produced by Jason DeFillippo. Jason Sanderson is our audio engineer and editor, and the show notes on the website are by Robert Fogarty. I'm your host Jordan Harbinger. Go ahead, tell

your friends. Because the greatest compliment you can give us, is a referral to someone else, either in person or shared on the Web. Word of mouth is everything. So stay charming and leave everything and everyone better than you found them.