# Really Specific Stories: Casey Liss

Duration: 1:13:13

**SPEAKERS**
Martin Feld, Casey Liss

**Martin Feld** 00:21
Welcome to *Really Specific Stories*, Casey; it's fantastic to have you on the show.

**Casey Liss** 00:25
Well, thank you. Thank you for having me. I am very, very excited and honoured.

**Martin Feld** 00:29
I'm honoured too! We're double honoured. Now, first question for every guest, and it's the same for you: Casey, how did you get into podcasts?

**Casey Liss** 00:38
Yeah, so um... it's probably covering a tiny bit of who I am, because it's going to make the story make a little bit more sense. So my name is Casey Liss. Uh, I've been podcasting since 2013, and I started with a dear friend of mine, who I'd known since I was like, 10 years old. And this is a gentleman by the name of Marco Arment. Uh, we met when we were kids, and we hung out when we were kids. And then we kind of fell apart and you know, fell away from each other, just as... you know, we didn't live close to each other. We would occasionally see each other over summers. We went our separate ways, not an angry sense. And then, um, shortly after we both graduated college, uh, we got back in touch with each other. And we each of us blames the other for having done that in a good way. And I'm not sure if we ever really properly figured out which one was the originator.

**Casey Liss** 01:26
But anyways, Marco was, again, a friend of mine when I was a kid. And then we rekindled that friendship shortly after college. And then a few years after that, he started a podcast with Dan Benjamin, called *Build and Analyze*. And that was about, you know, doing development work, and that was the kind of work that I do as well (or is the kind of work I do as well). And so I started listening to that, and that was the first podcast I really listened to. And then once I started listening to *Build and Analyze*, that got me into the greater 5by5 and you know, Marco Arment podcasting universe. And so that's how I started listening: was because my old friend was was

doing a podcast and, and I thought, 'Well, shoot, I should pay attention to that—see if I like it!', especially since it's about things that I tend to enjoy. And like I said, it spidered out from there.

**Casey Liss**  02:11
And then in terms of becoming a podcaster, um, he ended *Build and Analyze* in late 2012. And I had said to Marco, you know, 'Hey, we should do a show about cars, because we're both really enthusiastic about cars... neither of us know that much about cars, but we're really enthusiastic about it'. And so I said, 'We should do a show about cars'. Marco had the presence of mind to ask a friend of his, who I'd become friendly with over the prior year or two, a gentleman by the name of John Siracusa, who had also just ended a podcast: the absolutely phenomenal *Hypercritical* at 5by5 (also with Dan Benjamin is the co-host). That while both of the, both *Build and Analyze* and *Hypercritical* had ended, and Marco said, 'Well, you know what? John likes cars! Let's, let's ask John to do it!' And so the three of us started a short-lived show called *Neutral* in January of 2013, which holy poop is almost 10 years ago now!

**Casey Liss**  03:02
And then, very briefly, after that, finished recording, you know, we would just goof off and talk about nerdy stuff, because that's what three nerds do. (John does similar work to what we do.) And Marco again had the presence of mind of releasing this on SoundCloud as, as just like, 'Oh, listen to this stuff we talked about after *Neutral*' (the car show). And it turns out three computer dorks talking about cars, nobody really cared; three computer dorks talking about computers— that actually had some legs. And so that was how the *Accidental Tech Podcast* was born, hence the name as well. And uh, we started taking that seriously in like March or April of 2013 and we're on episode like, 507, or something like that. I don't know what we recorded last night (something like that). Uh, we are up to many, many, many episodes of *ATP*, um, and it's still going strong, almost 10 years later. And I'm hopeful that that will continue. (Uh, 508 was last night!) Uh I hope that will continue for 10 more years, if not more than that, but we shall see. I don't know, that was probably a very self-involved answer to the question, but I felt like it's, it's kind of me in a nutshell, both in the consumer and producer side. Hopefully that's OK.

**Martin Feld**  04:08
Well, you don't have to worry about sending self-involved because you are the guest and it is your story, so that's what it's all about!

**Casey Liss**  04:13
Still, still! You know, I want to be I want to be cognisant that, uh, that, you know, I'm just a regular, I'm a regular schmo. I'm, I don't feel like I'm anybody special.

**Martin Feld**  04:21
All, good. Now, that's a great summary.

**Casey Liss**  04:25
Mm-hmmm...

**Martin Feld**  04:25
I'm really interested in this early stage where you said 2013, because 2013 is, you know, a good while ago now, in terms of podcasting—you said you've had over 500 episodes, that's a great milestone, a great achievement.

**Casey Liss**  04:38
Mm-hmmm...

**Martin Feld**  04:38
But no doubt you were aware of podcasts before this time and your entry through 5by5 and *Build and Analyze* and everything you said with Marco. What was your appreciation of podcasting as a medium at that time, and what were you kind of listening to? Was it tied to the community of tech that you're still into now or was it something else?

**Casey Liss**  05:00
Yeah, so I was aware of podcasts before I started listening to *Build and Analyze*, but it just, there was never any podcasts that like grabbed me and said, 'Oh, you should listen to this'. And not to say that that didn't exist, it's just I was never, I guess I was never exposed to one. Um this is many years before, like *Serial*, for example, was a thing. And not to say the true crime is like my particular flavour of podcasting...

**Martin Feld**  05:25
Mm-hmmm...

**Casey Liss**  05:27
...but nevertheless, you know, it's something that was universally popular. And like, I don't know, I don't remember when *99 PI* started (*99% Invisible*), which is a really, really great podcast. Um that, that's probably of around that era. I'm quickly trying to look... oh, in 2014, never mind... 20... yeah, so 2014 it began its fourth season. So yeah, I think *99 PI* could have grabbed me in a way, because I still listen to that to this day, in a way that *Build and Analyze* actually did. But again, it was one of those things where I just never found anything that I that I felt like, 'Oh, I need to participate or consume this'. And you know, when I was at work, I would listen to music—and I still often do listen to music when I'm working—but it was having a person that I knew, and talk with, that was doing a show. That's what made... that's, that was my entry point. That's what made me really, really interested in it.

**Casey Liss**  06:16
And then once I started listening to a tech show on 5by5—and 5by5, whether or not you feel like there there's as much to it now, certainly in its heyday, which was right around this time, for nerds on the Internet, especially nerds on the Internet that were interested in Apple and, you know, peripheral companies and technologies, I would say that 5by5 was like our stuff. It was it was where we wanted to be, to participate in the chat room to listen. Um, and all of these shows were so so so good, you know, *Back to Work* with Merlin Mann, uh, *The Talk Show* at this point was with Dan Benjamin on 5by5, again, *Hypercritical*, uh even though it was a sorta kind of a new show, it holds up. You know, every great once in awhile, I'll listen to an old episode, and, and it holds up to this day. And this was from 2012, if I'm not mistaken. These were all phenomenal shows and once you start spidering into things that are kind of ancillary to your core interests, like *Back to Work* is a great example of that. Like, I'm not a super productivity guru or anything like that. In fact, I'm a procrastinator by by by trade, if you will, but you once you start expanding into these other universes, you start broadening your horizons, and you start realising, 'Oh, there's a lot out there'.

**Casey Liss**  07:34
And even in 2012, 2013, there was a lot out there. Obviously, today, you know, everyone and their mother has a podcast and that, there's a lot to be said that's good about that. Um, but it's also saturating a market where you know, how do you know what's good and what's not? And I think that's part of the journey, but nevertheless, it was just once, I once I broke the seal of being a podcast consumer or podcast listener, then it was easy and fun to add a new show to the mix. And you know, this is, in the same way that you would like, go to the App Store early on in like the late aughts, and you would just go see what's new, because there was a handful of new things every day or you know, maybe 10, or 20, or 30 or 40 new things every week or something like that. And it was manageable, and you could grok it, you know, you could understand it. And, and again, this was at a time where podcasting was certainly a thing, but I don't personally think (and maybe your research says otherwise) but I don't personally think that it was, it was a thing, but it wasn't A THING, if that makes sense.

**Martin Feld**  08:35
Mmm... mmm...

**Casey Liss**  08:36
You know, and I feel like it wasn't until, you know *99 PI* really took off, *Serial* in particular really took off that it became *a thing*. And, and I feel like I (as a consumer anyway), I feel like I came in just before all that happened. Again, this is all just my gut feeling...

**Martin Feld**  08:52
Mmm...

**Casey Liss**  08:53

I would assume that you've done plenty of research that will either confirm or deny, but that's the way it felt at the time, was: yeah, this has been a thing for a while, but it's kind of taking off now. And I'm not in on the ground floor, but I'm on the second or third floor. You know, I'm still in there early and and there's there's something fun about that, especially when you're a dork like me.

**Martin Feld**  09:13

What you just said does, in fact, perfectly line up with the research. It was around that time...

**Casey Liss**  09:17

Oh good! OK!

**Martin Feld**  09:18

...with *Serial*, particularly, *99% Invisible* is another big one, and of course, Apple adding its own separate Podcasts app broken out from the then iPod app, so yep, totally correct. Now you've self-identified as a nerd and a dork (which, fair enough, that's great!) but this tech podcasting world that you're consuming and very actively, uh, contributing to now, that's based on a tech fandom, right? You have this interest in technology. Can you tell me the story about how you actually came to be so committed to or involved in technology? Where does your tech fan story start?

**Casey Liss**  09:58

Birth! Um, I say that, I say that somewhat flippantly. Um, there's a picture which I don't think I'll be able to dig up quickly, but if you remind me I will at least try.

**Martin Feld**  10:07

Mmm...

**Casey Liss**  10:08

But there's a picture of me using—I don't know how to describe it—it was an IBM computer, but it it resembled it was like an all-in-one, not too dissimilar from a Mac, but with like a crummier, more bulbous design and probably a few years before the before the Mac, I think.

**Martin Feld**  10:26

Mmm...

**Casey Liss**  10:26

But there's a picture of me, as a toddler, standing on the front stoop of somebody's house—I don't even know whose house it was, presumably ours, but I don't recall—like playing with this computer, and there's a cord going inside. So ostensibly, maybe it was plugged in, I don't really know or at least that's my memory, the picture. And I'm like, you know, a year-and-a-half old or

something like that. Now, at that point, I'm sure I'm just mashing on keys and not really thinking about what I'm doing, but uh, but there's a picture of me doing that. And again, that was when I was a toddler. I presume I wasn't able to speak at that point. But when it really clicked, uh... when I was a kid, I would say like late grade school... wait, I'm sorry, I'm talking to not an American—so like age 10, 12? Something like that... I think it was around then that, that I started really getting into computers. This was, so my memory is garbage, but maybe a more accurate way of thinking of it is: I remember Windows 3.1 was like the most modern version of Windows. And I was born in '82, so at 10, this is '92. So yeah, I think this lines up, I think I'm not completely full of garbage. But anyway, I I wanted to play games on our home computer. Um and we always had computers in the house because my dad worked for IBM for effectively my whole life. Now he wasn't, he wasn't a software dork; he was a numbers dork, and uh, he did a lot with finance and stuff like that. But he always had computers in the house, because he worked for IBM and often would hold onto old computers.

**Casey Liss** 11:54

And so around the time, I think we had a 386 of the time. So again, I'm not sure exactly what year that is, but that can help you date if you care enough. And it ran DOS. And I remember I would ask dad, 'Oh, how do I do this? How do I do that?' And my dad is a very, very good man, but for all of his many good qualities, patience is not on that list. And so, um, after a while, he eventually just said, 'Just just just just... read this!' And he hands this like 10-year-old, the DOS, like user's manual (or owner's guide, whatever it's called). I happen to have one sitting nearby and of course, that's not very interesting for the listeners. But um again, if you remind me, I will forget. But if you remind me, I can either scan it or send find a link and send you a picture.

**Martin Feld** 12:38

Mmm... mmm...

**Casey Liss** 12:39

But I read the DOS 3.3 (I think) uh user's manual. And I didn't totally understand it, but I got enough that it was like, 'Oh, OK! This is interesting!' And so I was able to start running these games and getting in and out of these games via the command line, you know, via DOS, without needing quite as much help. And then eventually, around this time, Dad took an old 8088 PC, so this is like an 8283 (I'm like one year old when this came out). He took one of those and put it in my room, and this was, you know, before the Internet was effectively a thing. I mean, I think it is it was literally a thing, but not *really* a thing. Um, and so there was no there's no phone connected to this, there was no Internet connected to it, so it's hard to really have to worry too much about what's going to happen when it's like a 10-year-old computer that's not connected to anything else in the world. You know, I say all this because I... imagining sticking a computer in my son's room who is eight years old, like 'No! No! Mm-mm... No, not doing that! Not doing that! Too dangerous—uh-uh!' I don't think I'm cool, th-... cool with that idea, but this is a very different time.

**Casey Liss** 13:46

And so anyway, so he put this computer in my room, and I think I had a 10-megabyte hard drive if I'm not mistaken, which was like added in after the computer had come out because it had a... it was five-and-a-quarter-inch literal floppy disks. And so, I remember vividly, I wrote like a menu system in the DOS AUTOEXEC.BAT, that was like hideous red background with yellow text, which when you're nine or 10 years old, was like so frickin' rad. And so, I wrote this whole, like menuing system, so I could go into like, you know: hit one for games and then hit two for (I don't know, whatever applications a 10-year-old might have, like a word processor, I guess for schoolwork or something). And I did this whole menuing system in ab-... in one or more batch files, and I thought I was so cool. And so, around this time, is when I really got into technology. Um, and dad has always had an interest in technology. Um, some of the things we share some of the things we don't, but he's always been generally interested in technology, in technology thi-... technological things and always had fun, like adult toys, if that makes sense. Oh, that's that... poor phrasing! Had fun toys *for grown-ups*. (Hopefully that's a little bit better.) You know, like a stereo or in, he was he was a mechanic briefly in a in a prior life, so to speak, so he always was working on a car and always had fun tools for that. Um he had a Discman before anyone I knew had a Discman and, and silly things like that.

**Casey Liss** 15:13

And so, I'd always, I don't know if I was as much a tinkerer in the physical sense, but I was always a tinkerer in the electron-... mmm... in the computing sense, because I always wanted to mess about with what was going on on the computer. And, and then around 12-ish... something like that, it was around this time, 10/12 years old, that I met Marco, and we met, um, his family had a house on a on a lake in Upstate New York, as did mine, and he would go there for the summers and I would come in from time to time over the summer, and much to the dismay of our parents and our and my grandparents, instead of going outside and playing in the water or in the sand or whatever, we would sit there with whatever ancient IBM laptop dad had given me, that's probably like four years old at this point. And we would do dumb stuff on the laptop, sometimes play games. I vividly remember that one of us (and I think it was him), brought, brought Visual Basic 1 on like two or three floppy disks. And we wrote, we started to write like a choose-your-own-adventure game in Visual Basic. Um, that was our task for one week over the summer and I think we made it through like a screen. But nevertheless, it was just fun. It was just always... I was always tinkering. And I was not a very good physical tinkerer, like when I would when I would help dad in the garage, I wasn't very good at mechanics. I'm still not particularly gifted at that—never been good with like woodworking or anything of the anything of that nature. But I've always been pretty OK at tinkering with stuff on computers and, and especially at this age, this is when computers were starting to, like, really take over the world.

**Casey Liss** 16:41
And all the grown-ups in my life, needed tutelage, tutoring, you know, needed someone to tutor them on: how do I accomplish the things that that society is now expecting me to do? And I remember, you know, I would, I would sometimes go to grown-ups' houses and like, they would pay me 50 bucks, like install a new router or something like that, or whatever the case may be. And so, this was a constant thing, from like, you know, late grade school up through, you know, I studied computer engineering in college, and I was a traditionally-employed professional developer, up until a couple of years back. Um and I still do professional development work now, but I'm doing it for myself instead of somebody else. And so it's been a constant throughout my entire life, arguably one of the most constant things in my life other than like family, and a real appreciation of music, again, from the consumption side of things, I, the only thing I can play with any efficacy as a stereo, but uh, but you know, sort of like family music have always been constant. But a lot of my other interests other than technology will come and go and, and but technology has always stayed true.

**Martin Feld** 17:43
That is very comprehensive; thank you for that.

**Casey Liss** 17:45
Sorry! You gotta, you gotta stop me from running my mouth so much!

**Martin Feld** 17:49
It's perfect. The name of this show is *Really Specific Stories* and you're living up to the brief!

**Casey Liss** 17:52
Ha! Very, very specific! Right!

**Martin Feld** 17:54
That's the idea. Now along that story there, along that continuum that you've shared with us, there's a transition from IBM and Windows to the Mac.

**Casey Liss** 18:05
Hahaha yes!

**Martin Feld** 18:06
...which is ultimately the thing that...

**Casey Liss** 18:07
Indeed!

**Martin Feld** 18:08
...I think you could say fairly fuels your current show with John and Marco.

**Casey Liss** 18:12
Yeah!

**Martin Feld** 18:12
Can you tell me about that transition, and how technologically you moved to now fuel the content that you produce?

**Casey Liss** 18:20
Yeah, so when I was in college (this was 2000 through 2004 at Virginia Tech), I needed to for a couple of classes run a distribution of Linux. It was something that was odd that almost nobody else used and for the life of me, I can't remember what it was now. But I, my machine, my main machine was a Windows machine, and I think I like dual-booted into Linux from time to time to do schoolwork. So I was exposed to Linux and the kind of Unix ideas, although I didn't have any freaking clue what I was doing. And then I graduated, and I got a job. And I was doing my first job out of school was writing C++ on DOS, which at that point in time was very unusual because it's 2004: nobody was really using DOS anymore. And then my second job was writing stuff in .NET and in C# and .NET, and a little bit of C++ as well (it kind of went back and forth).

**Casey Liss** 19:13
And at that point, I really, really, really loved the Microsoft stack in terms of development, like C# I still (to this day) kind of miss. Visual Studio was very, very, very good, or was many years ago when I last used it. And then I got, I moved from from Charlottesville, Virginia to where I am now in Richmond, Virginia, and got a different job doing web development. And that was fine... I was still used to doing stuff on Windows and that was fine, but I met a friend, a a friend at this company (or a co-worker became a friend) and he started needling me, 'You know, for web development stuff, you really probably want to get on a Mac, like, you really should consider a Mac'. And then, a different friend at the same company, who was a designer, 'What are you doing with that PC? Like, get, just get a Mac! Be a grown-up! Get a Mac!'

**Casey Liss** 19:57
Meanwhile, um, this guy Marco Arment, that I knew, he and I went back and forth on Tumblr (and you can still dig this up). Uh, he went back, he and I went back and forth publicly on Tumblr, uh, about like (and I'm needling him) like, 'Why would anyone buy a Mac? They're overpriced. They're not as good as PCs. Like, why bother? Like, there's just no point to it!' And I was running, I, my primary machine at home was a ThinkPad. And I was... you know, an IBM laptop because of course, and uh, and I was running Ubuntu on it. And I want to say it was going from Hardy Heron to or, Gutsy Gibbon to Hardy Heron. I did, you know, an upgrade and just everything crapped the

bed—everything crapped the bed! And at this point, I'm like, 'I'm out! I'm out!' I don't like Windows, because that's why I was running Ubuntu full-time because, 'I'm, oh, I'm over Windows. I use Windows all the time at work and I don't like it. Ubuntu and Linux, like they're super-fiddly, and you can fiddle to the point that they're nice, but they're super-fiddly. And I just, I can't, I can't with this anymore!'

**Casey Liss** 20:55

And at this point—hehe, this was many years ago, now—Apple stuff really did just work. Uh, that isn't really the case anymore, but at the time it was! And so I remember vividly, I watched—I want to say it was the 2008, I think that's right—the WWDC of 2008, to make sure they weren't gonna release new hardware, because at that point, it was very up for grabs, whether they would or not. And then I believe was either that night or the next day, I ordered a polycarbonate MacBook as my first Mac. Um, I'd already had an iPod or maybe even a couple of iPods at this point, and so I knew Apple stuff was pretty good. But I'd been needled from Marco, I'd been needled from my friend Jamie, I'd been needled from my friend Chris. And I just was like, 'Alright, fine, let's give it a shot! I'll buy the cheapest Mac that I can get my hands on (that's brand new) and we'll see what happens'. And if you go through those Tumblr posts, for the first week or two was garbage, like, 'Oh, where's the control panel? I don't know how to do anything', like, 'None of this works the way I expect! This is trash!' And then after two weeks, it was like, 'Well, I'm never going back again!', like, 'I never want to touch Windows again!' (And I'm still a professional Windows developer at this point, mind you.) 'Never want to touch Windows again! I am good! This is this is the future, this is the way I want it to be.' And... and that was again, roughly 2007, 2008—I forget exactly what it was. And that's what started it.

**Casey Liss** 22:11

And then once I went down that path, as one is want to do with Apple products, you know, the more the ecosystem you buy into—and that's, that's not fair, that's not unique to Apple. But I was perhaps more unique to Apple at this point, you know, than it is now. Once you're in the Apple ecosystem, like you want to go all in baby. You want to, you want to get an iPhone, you want to get an iPod, or if you don't have an iPhone, you might even consider an iPod Touch, then fast-forward two or three years: 'Oh you bet your butt I want an iPad!' Like, you know, why not? And so I just got deeper and deeper and deeper into it. And then like I said, you know, come 2012, you know, Marco and John ended their podcasts, and I'm needling them about the car show. Next thing you know, in 2013, this is you know, all of four or five years after I went into the Apple ecosystem, um, and now suddenly I'm hosting (or one of the three hosts of) the *Accidental Tech Podcast*, which we are very lucky to have become, I think kind of a big deal within the Apple podcasting sphere. Now, whether that pond is a little, teeny-tiny, you know, little, teeny-tiny pond that nobody knows about, or if you consider it to be some big ocean, I'll leave that for the listener to decide. But whatever it is, I think we're a relatively... we're one of the larger fish in that pond, which we're very lucky to be.

**Martin Feld** 23:20
I love your characterisation of the pond or the ocean. Either way, maybe it doesn't matter, but...

**Casey Liss** 23:25
Yeah...

**Martin Feld** 23:26
...that idea of audience or community, I'm fascinated to ask you this question, because you really put quite nicely that once you enter that Apple ecosystem—and it may be other tech environments for other people, but for you, it's been Apple—you start to accumulate or gain more or enter more of the product spaces.

**Casey Liss** 23:43
Mm-hmmm, mm-hmmm...

**Martin Feld** 23:43
You just keep adding to that family of products. You're also entering a community of people, whether that's...

**Casey Liss** 23:48
Yeah, oh very much so!

**Martin Feld** 23:49
...Apple fans or, uh, the podcast audience or kind of co-hosts that you have. Can you tell me about your entrance into that community, Apple fandom and podcasting, and what it has kind of become for you?

**Casey Liss** 24:06
It's a very interesting question. So, and I kind of entered it in two different ways, right? I entered it as just somebody likes this stuff as a fan and then I entered it as someone who (whether or not I deserved it) kind of demanded authority about it. And so, as a fan, it was it was fun to, in a way it was really fun to be publicly wrong. Because again, you can you can find, you can find all this stuff still on (the last I looked, I haven't looked in years), but last I looked, this stuff is still all on my yeah... I think it's there, it's still all on my Tumblr. And you can watch this journey happen. And it was one of those times where, uh, what is what is the turn of phrase? Somebody, uh, I forget who it was, but somebody said: 'What you really want to have is very strong opinions held very, very loosely'.

**Casey Liss** 24:52

I'm not saying that's right or wrong necessarily, but I think it's a very interesting perspective. Like, you believe what you believe and believe it strongly, but be willing to be wrong. I'm not necessarily very good about this for the record, but this was one instance where I was! I believed devoutly that Macs were overpriced, Apple people were pretentious losers and there was no way I wanted any part of that. And then I experienced the the Apple ecosystem and suddenly I became one of those pretentious losers. I think it was very fun to discover—and at this point, I'm 23 years old, 24 years old—to discover something new to me. You know, it's, it's not that common, once you reach adulthood (or maybe it's just not common for me) but it's not that common to find something that's just truly new and really friggin' exciting. And, yes, again, it makes me a super-nerd: a different computing platform is really exciting, but it was! Like, as much as I snark, it was genuinely very exciting. And it was so cool to have (to steal you know, Steve Jobs's line): to have 'a bicycle for the mind'; to have a tool that was just there, it was there in all the ways I wanted it to be; it was there where I needed it, how I needed when I needed it; it would, just made my life so much better and easier. And again, like that sounds kind of kooky when I'm talking about a freaking computer, but it really did make my life a bit better.

**Martin Feld** 24:52

Mmm...

**Casey Liss** 26:23

And so, to find this community and to make friends amongst as they call them, the 'jackals' on the 5by5 chat room, to make friends and become a part of this community as a fan was super-duper fun, especially because at this point, you know, Apple was definitely on the rise. But, but again, I think I caught this one not at the ground floor, not at the third floor... I was maybe like 20th/30th/40th floor of this, like 100-storey skyscraper that's still adding floors to this day, but to beat this analogy to death, but um, but I was there early enough that it was not that common to find professional developers using Macs. Like this is around the time that all the professional developers said, 'Oh! Maybe this Mac thing ain't so bad!' Now, like designers were way ahead of us, and like, print people were way ahead of us...

**Martin Feld** 27:12

Mmm...

**Casey Liss** 27:12

...but developers were just really embracing it. And so it was just cool to be able to be there and to like adva-... evangelise to friends and family that were like, 'Oh, wait! You really like that Mac? Like isn't that a fortune?'

**Casey Liss** 27:24

'Well, it is kind of expensive, but you know, you don't have to reload it with a new version of Windows every six months.' You know, there's something to be said for that. And then, you know, again, fast-forward to 2013, and suddenly I am (by force, by will or by by earning it—I don't know, or some combination of the three), I'm an authority on it! You know, again, I feel bad because I don't want to s-..., I don't want to sound like I'm really tooting my own horn, but whether or not I deserve to be on that show, which I still 10 years later for carry a little bit of guilt about, I was in a position of authority in this little pond in which we swim. And that was a very weird and kind of chilling and unusual and awkward experience. And I think, had I stopped to really think about it, it would have been far more distressing than it was, but because it did happen, accidentally, as silly and cliché as that is, I was able to just kind of back my way into it by accident; and that, I think, was what kept me sane and what kept me from really freaking out about the whole thing.

**Martin Feld** 28:27

Accidents are interesting and what I am interested to know, though, is this transition to becoming an authority, as you said, or having a voice in this community and having a successful podcast that people listen to. What has it been like to have this long-running show, and can you give me an insight into the making of it and what you get out of it?

**Casey Liss** 28:49

Yeah, well, yes. It's been surreal. I mean, when I when I started *ATP*, it was just my wife and me. We we had no children. I was working...where was I at that point? I was working as a consultant (as a part of a consulting firm) as a consultant doing Windows web development. And I had known John for a couple of years. And Marco again, I'd known for quite a long time. Now 10 years later, almost, Erin and I have two children, the elder of whom is eight years old. I've been self-employed for... was it four years now? Yeah, just about four years now. I don't do any consulting of any sort anymore. I have a couple of apps in the App Store, which I briefly had something really silly in the App Store many years ago, but these are like legitimate—I like to think decent apps. Again, I don't... it's hard, it's hard to say what I'm going to say without sounding... I can't... ergh without sounding like unappreciative. But ultimately, I get to for a living, in order to put food on the table, I get to talk to two of my best friends for three hours a week. How unbelievably, impossibly lucky and blessed am I, that that's what I get to do for a living? Other, other, other things happen as well, I have another podcast with another dear, dear, dear friend of mine, I have a couple of iOS apps, like I just said, but what puts the food on the table is the *Accidental Tech Podcast* and the sponsors and the listeners and the members of that show. And to be able to say that, 'Well, what do you do for a living?'

**Casey Liss** 30:29

'Well, I talk to my friends, and I make a OK living off of that.' Like, when I ask... when I get asked what I do, it's hard to answer that because I almost feel like I'm a lottery winner that's just cruising,

like I take the show very seriously. I don't mean to paint it otherwise, but I still remember very vividly what it's like to go to a nine-to-five job. And there's nothing wrong with that I did it for a long, long time, but it's nice not to have to do that, you know?! Like, it's a pretty, it's a pretty cushy life, to be able to do what I do and choose how I spend my day or what I'm working on during the day. And I'm incredibly, incredibly lucky that I get to do this at all, and that I get to deal with two incredibly, incredibly close and dear friends. And I hope that I never ever, ever lose sight of that, because not a lot of people get to say these things.

**Casey Liss** 31:25
So what does it mean, to me? It means freaking everything, because it's provided freaking everything. I mean, not in the literal sense, of course, like *ATP* didn't provide my children, but it certainly feeds my children, and that's such an incredible gift. And I hope that I never get jaded about what a gift that is. And I always in the back of my mind, I always worry if today is the day that *ATP* just [clicks fingers] disappears, or, you know, one of us gets hit by a truck, or suddenly one or all of us get cancelled for something we maybe legitimately did wrong, or maybe didn't—I don't know. But it weighs on me because I don't feel like it's fair for me to be as lucky as I am. And I hope that I'm putting enough good in the world both through *ATP*, through my children, through my wife, through my interactions with everyone. I hope I'm putting enough good in the world that I've earned it, if that makes sense at all. I don't know, I can talk about, you know, the production and the nitty gritty of it. But is there anything? Does that make sense? Like, am I am I adding... is this adding up at all?

**Martin Feld** 32:28
It makes perfect sense. Uh, I'm really registering from you that there's a lot of positive feelings in how it's enriched your life or essentially funds your life now as well.

**Casey Liss** 32:36
Oh, absolutely! Mm-hmmm...

**Martin Feld** 32:36
You've also shared, and I'm appreciative that you shared this, that more not negative, but more maybe self-aware or reflexive feeling of guilt.

**Casey Liss** 32:44
Yeah.

**Martin Feld** 32:44
Because you know, there is fortune, so I understand what you're saying. I suppose tying into that production element, you've mentioned that you get to talk to your friends as your job, which is great.

**Casey Liss** 32:55
Mm-hmmm...

**Martin Feld** 32:55
That's an element of fun or enjoyment or time to your fandom, but then it's also putting food on the table. So, whether you characterise it as work versus leisure or obligation versus fun, how do you wrangle with that idea of balance? How do you think about your identity in your day-to-day undertakings when you're doing this?

**Casey Liss** 33:16
Yeah, again, it's interesting question. Um, I mean, it is still work. It is easier work than a lot of other people have. And I'm not trying to say that to show off, I'm just trying to be, again, appreciative of what I have. But it is still work. And all three of us take it very, very seriously. And 500, what did I say? 508 episodes? In 508 episodes, and again, we didn't... the first handful, the first 10 or 20, were not weekly, but whenever we decided to go weekly, which I want to say was about April of 2013—ever since that time, for nearly 10 years now, all three of us (with one or two minor exceptions), all three of us have released an episode of *ATP* every week without fail for 500-ish weeks. That doesn't happen if you don't give a crap. And we very much give a crap. I'm not saying the way we handle it is the only way to handle it. Obviously other shows that are excellent, like *Connected* is a great example. The hosts on *Connected*, they're in and out each week. And I'm not trying to say that there's anything wrong with that at all, but we kind of \*accidentally\* fell into this routine of all of us will be there every week. And that oftentimes is easy because we record at about eight o'clock at night, on Wednesday nights every week.

**Casey Liss** 34:34
But what happens if somebody's on vacation? Well, we're either going to, like, double up on a week or somebody's going to have to take podcasting equipment on vacation and they're gonna have to find a place to do it that's quiet, that's alone and you're just gonna have to deal with it. And I've had to do that many times. And that's because we really, really give a crap. Marco was extremely reluctant (when we added membership and when we trip we're trying to figure out the membership perks), Marco was extremely reluctant to add what we call the bootleg, which is, you know, moments after the show was done recording, we'll upload a version of the show that is completely unedited. It has some of us (usually me) swearing, it has coughs and burps and things like that. Uh, it has where one of us will say something and say, 'Oh, let me try that, again'. All of that's in the bootleg. And I think it kind of killed Marco, to be willing to release that. And I say this, because Marco cares that much about the edit. We do too, John and I do too, but we're not doing the edits, so that's Marco's baby. And it absolutely destroyed him, I think, for a little while, to let this unedited mess into the world.

**Casey Liss**  35:45
Now, I like to believe that Marco isn't editing the show within an inch of its life, you know, it's not a *Serial*, it's not a *99 PI*. For the most part, what we say ends up getting released, but Marco takes it seriously enough that he will clean it up as reasonably and with as as deft a hand as he possibly can. And he's proud of that and he should be because he puts in a lot of work, because he gives a crap.

**Martin Feld**  36:12
Mm-hmmm...

**Casey Liss**  36:12
John, and I, you know, John has been kind of has, since he went independent, has kind of become the merchandise king and has made incredible designs for t-shirts and mugs and things like that. He worked with our dear friends at Studio Neat to create this thing we call 'Chicken Hat', which is some winter hat that he had from 30 years ago that he hasn't been able to find a duplicate of, so he made one. He's been doing a phenomenal job with the merchandise. And I've been handling a lot of the, like, the show notes are typically my work and Marco will edit them. Um, I'm doing a lot of the liaising with our ad salesperson, and trying to insulate John and Marco from that, so they don't have to deal with it. And we all kind of backed into these roles *accidentally*, but we take them very, very seriously and we don't mess about and, you know, John sat out for one episode deliberately because we had a host swap with *Rocket*, which is another great program on Relay FM. And we had Christina Warren, who is now at GitHub, but at the time I think was at like Mashable or something, um she came in and did an episode with us.

**Casey Liss**  37:15
Uh, one time Marco lost his voice and so there was a combination of his wife Tiff sitting in and also the like speak or say command on his Mac also getting dubbed in from time to time. But other than those two, those are the only times to the best of my knowledge and 508 episodes that all three of us weren't there. And we have released every week for you know, 490, 500 episodes. And we do that because we give a crap. And sometimes we're later in the week than than others. Sometimes we're recording two or three episodes in the same week. Our summertimes are a mess, because we never coordinate when we're going on vacation. And so, summertime is always a disaster for us, but we make it work because we care and we care that much. And I like to think (and I hope) that that comes through in the finished product. Even in the bootleg I hope that that comes through, because we'll reboot something that maybe some other podcaster wouldn't really think twice about but we'll reboot it because we want to get it right. We'll reboot it because we realised, 'Oh, I think we've misgendered somebody', and or something like that. And maybe other people wouldn't care but I'll, I'll do it, John'll do it, Marco will do it. We'll say, 'Oh-d-d-... just let me, let me, let me do that one again'. And Marco will find it and we'll put it in, he'll put in the right one in the release version of the show. And it's just because we care. And I

think the success story for the *Accidental Podcast* [sic], if there is one, is just really, really giving a crap—a lot. Giving a real... now this is already g-... this, maybe I should phrase it differently. (Giving a real big crap is probably not the right way to phrase this.) We really, really care. We care a lot. And, and I again, I hope that that shows.

**Martin Feld** 38:56
I think it really does, and over 500 episodes is a huge commitment. What you said in there was very interesting to me about: you do the show notes; there's ad sales liaison; there's merchandise; there's a bootleg and a membership. You're called the *Accidental Tech Podcast*, because it's a podcast and audio is arguably the core experience. That's what you're making and that's what people come for, but there are all of these other things that contribute to the experience or that are hyperlinked to etc., etc. How do you think about the role of all of these things in your mantra of giving a crap? What's the importance of all these extra things that you do?

**Casey Liss** 39:34
Yeah, I think I mean, to some degree, this is a business, so I don't want to I don't want to pretend, sit here and pretend like we're not thinking about: how can we make money? (And more money because it's a business.) Like it's not altruistic or anything like that, but keeping in mind that it's a business, there are ways that we can make money that are kind of jerky ways and there are ways that we can make money that are kinder ways. So a great example of this is when we decided— and I believe it was the spring of 2020, if memory serves—we decided, OK, you know, ad sales are absolutely tanking because, you know, coronavirus is real (as it turns out, despite what some Americans think). Uh, coronavirus is real. Um, of course, everyone, every company, when they're under financial pressure, the first thing to go away is their ad budget, their marketing budget. So our ad sales were tanking and we didn't know if this is going to last for a day, a month, a week, a year, 10 years, whatever, so we decided to do membership.

**Casey Liss** 40:30
Our good friends at the *Do By Friday* podcast, which is one of my favourite podcasts, the way they handle membership (and they do it through Patreon), is they have a released version of the show every week. And then they have what they call the after-show, which is basically a second entire show every single week. And you only get that second show, if you are a member of their Patreon. And so when we were thinking about doing our own membership, and it wasn't through Patreon, but it was effectively the same idea, well, the obvious answer is well, you know, in our show you, we do an hour, an hour-and-a-half, two hours, and there's a theme song, and then we'll go another anywhere from five to 50 minutes in what we call the, our after-show. So the obvious answer is, well, obviously we charge for the after show, you know, we tell people, 'Well, sorry, the after-show is now for pay-only'. And I think one of us said that to the other two, and immediately all three of us were like, 'Nope, that's not going to work'. It's not going to work because then we're taking away something we've been giving away for free. We're taking it back and saying now that's that's

ours now and you can pay to have it but that's ours. And that's, that would be a real jerky thing to do. See Twitter as we're recording this, which is a total mess right now, but um, you're taking something that was free, and you're asking for money for it. And, and I don't think that's fair.

**Casey Liss** 41:48
And so we decided, OK, we need to be additive with all the things that the membership provides. So membership provides a new version of the show that's without ads; membership provides the bootleg; membership provides a small discount on merchandise; and as of episode 500, the membership will provide a very small run of completely out-of-the-timeline one-off episodes. And so to celebrate episode 500, uh the three of us recorded three individual episodes where we, one of us picked a movie, and all three of us talked about that movie. So we did these three, like bonus episodes. But we could have done bonus episodes on Swift or Swift UI, we could have done bonus episodes talking about, I don't know, the newest Apple stuff. But we didn't want to do that, because that felt like we were taking away from our bread and butter. And our bread and butter is *the show*. So again, we wanted to do something that was additive. And occasionally we'll talk about, you know, pop culture and media and stuff on the show, but that's not our bread and butter. So we didn't think it was unreasonable to charge for this thing, that first of all, not everyone would necessarily find interesting, and second of all, is completely out of the quote unquote, timeline, like I said. We felt like that was the right way to handle it, and I think that's been the case with all of these different roles and things that we've done.

**Casey Liss** 43:07
With the show notes, I don't know how to verbalise it, but I try to make sure that anything that I think your average listener may or may not know about, we'll have a link in the in the show notes. Oh, and especially the things that we're actively talking about, like your web pages, or tweets or what have you—that should all be in the show notes. And there's a bit of an outline to it, and I think that that's important because for me as a consumer, I don't generally care (for this kind of a show anyway), I don't care for just a list of links, just a single depth list of links, where every link is peer to every other link. That's how we handle it on *Analog(ue)*, which is the show I do with Myke Hurley, but that's a very different show where I don't think it's a problem. For a show like ours, I really think it's nice to have a bit of a hierarchy and a bit of a, a, a... more than just a just a list of links. And so I take that seriously.

**Casey Liss** 43:59
With the merchandise, we always want to do something that we think will be fun for our listeners that we think would be appealing enough that they would want to give us, you know, more of their hard-earned money. And we want to do it with, we want to do it with a partner that makes nice stuff and Cotton Bureau does really great work. It stinks for non-Americans because shipping from Cotton Bureau to anywhere else in the world is a fortune and and the products are not cheap either. And if I were a listener, I would assume a 35- or 40-dollar t-shirt, well we must be taking

home 20, 30... 20 or 30 bucks of that. We are not. We are getting *quite* a bit less than that, like, well under 10 dollars of a 35-, 40-dollar t-shirt. We are, we're taking very slim margins because these things are so darn expensive and we respect our listeners enough that if we if we're expecting you to part with 35 dollars—and again this is for Americans, for Australians, it's even worse; for Europeans, you know, it's just as bad—uh, if we if we expect an American depart with 35 dollars of their money for are a freakin' t-shirt, then we're not going to put another 10, 20, 30 dollars of our own profit on top, you know, we, we will take a little bit because it's a business but we're not going to take a tonne.

**Casey Liss**  44:24
And so, with all of these things, we really try to make the decision with respect for for our fans and for the people that give us their time because ultimately, money is a precious resource, but there is nothing more precious than time, and our show is not short. If you're going to spend two to three hours with us every single week, we better put together a pretty good show, and we better put together pretty good merch and a pretty good membership program, like... eh, this better not be a waste of your time. Because if it's a waste of your time, you're not going to keep listening. And both as someone who produces something that I'm proud of, in that I want people to hear, and as someone who is a bit of a business person, like, I want you to keep listening, I absolutely want you to keep listening. And so yeah, it's again, it's just about giving a crap and really, really caring and trying to put forward the best product that the three of us are capable of doing. Now, other people may be able to do it with video and you know, do fancy stuff on YouTube or Twitch or what have you. That's not necessarily us, but for us, we're doing the best product we possibly can.

**Martin Feld**  46:15
You talked about having different roles there: you've called yourself a business person; you're a podcaster; you're a tech enthusiast; you're a producer; you're a listener.

**Casey Liss**  46:24
Mmm?

**Martin Feld**  46:24
These are different personas and roles that you have in different spaces.

**Casey Liss**  46:27
Yes.

**Martin Feld**  46:28
And you've also said that, just then, at the end of your response, that YouTube and Twitch isn't really you, or the three of you, right?

**Casey Liss**  46:35
Mm-hmmm...

**Martin Feld**  46:35
You've chosen this space through RSS-delivered audio files.

**Casey Liss**  46:40
Yep, yep.

**Martin Feld**  46:41
Can you tell me a little bit about maybe what that technology means to you and how you end up thinking about interaction with fans and your audience given the technology that you've chosen to use?

**Casey Liss**  46:52
Yeah, it [sighs] it, RSS and, and, and pod-... traditional podcasts—not the podcasts you find that are exclusive to Spotify, or whatever—traditional podcasts—and I think X-... Sirius XM, which is satellite radio here in the States, I think they do similar stuff—traditional podcasts that just use RSS, it's a very limiting technology and form factor isn't really the right term for it, but for lack of a better way of describing it, it's a limited form factor. But that kind of forces you to get really creative. Um, we know almost nothing about our listeners, and I kind of prefer it that way. And that sounds obnoxious, but hear me out. I don't want to know that a 25-year-old in Sydney is listening to our show. Like I personally, I don't want to know that, I think that's creepy, and I'm not interested in that. And to some degree, you know, just by virtue of where these files are downloaded from, we have some amount of analytics, but the three of us never look at it. Um, we look at how many downloads we have, because that's kind of the currency of podcasting, but we don't look at where they're coming from, really, we don't really do any of that.

**Casey Liss**  47:55
And RSS kind of prevents you from getting too creepy. Obviously, there's technologies that people have come up with that allow you to get somewhat creepy, like dynamic ad insertion is a great example of this. DAI is where, you know, you have a podcast, and it's using some server-side software; you know that at 14 minutes into the show, that's going to be an advertisement. Well, when I download it from Richmond, Virginia, they look at their list of, you know, advertisements that have been recorded, and they say, 'Oh, oh! We have a hospital system in Richmond that has recorded a sponsorship with us'. For Casey, or well, for you know, 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10 (whatever that listener is), 'You know, we're going to we're going to insert dynamically this ad, or we're going to dynamically insert the say ad at 14 minutes'. And so, you know, I'm listening to *99 PI*, it's talking about, you know, generic national advertisers, and then all of a sudden, 14 minutes in, 'Hey, have you gone to such and such hospital in downtown Richmond? It's great!', you know, says Roman

Mars, of all people. And that's, that's gross. Like, that's really gross. I understand why people would do it, because that's how you make more money. You know, the better the, the more targeted an ad is, the better the chance that the person listening to it will act upon it. But it's gross. I don't like it. I don't like it as a consumer, I don't like it as a producer. It's just gross.

**Casey Liss** 49:15
And RSS, for the most part, makes that either hard or impossible. Dynamic ad insertion works via RSS, so it's not completely out of the question, but it's not like Spotify, where they know all the things I've ever listened to (both music and podcasts). They know where I am. They know how often I listen or for how long I listened. Like the, I don't know any of that is one of the producers of *ATP*. I know nothing of that and I prefer it that way. It's hard for me to verbalise, and I think Marco would do a much better job of this because he feels this in his bones, but I'm not a super zealot for the open Web. I think there's a time and a place for it, and I think that there's a time and a place for something like a Twitter or a Facebook or what have you. But I think it has been an extremely happy accident (not to beat that word to death) that RSS has been the underpinning of, of podcasting as an industry, because it's kind of a great equaliser. You don't really need anything to start a podcast, you need a server, where you can stuff a file that will be able to emit an RSS feed; you don't even need a website, technically, you just need a server that will spit out an RSS feed and files when they're requested. That's it.

**Casey Liss** 50:34
That's why you have your brother and your uncle and your sister and your aunt, and everyone under the sun has their own podcast, which, as someone who makes a living from podcasting, I don't love that, because that's more competition for me. But as a listener, and to some degree as a producer, I love that, because it's very freeing that anyone gets the opportunity to do this. And one would hope that those who are very good at it, maybe they have five listeners when they start but if they stick with it, if they're consistent, if they get better and better, that five listeners can become 500, 5000, 50,000, 500,000... and suddenly, you're making a living from podcasting. And the fact that there are so few gatekeepers to this, I think is extremely, extremely powerful, and very... maybe this isn't the right word for it, but very democratic, because it lets, it lets everyone have a chance. And I really, really, really dig that.

**Martin Feld** 51:33
As a producer, you mentioned earlier that you've gone independent. I don't know if you would use that word, but...

**Martin Feld** 51:39
...but you said that you're released from the strictures of nine-to-five. What does independence mean to you in terms of running your working day or the creative stuff that you put online?

**Casey Liss** 51:39
Yeah, yeah!

**Casey Liss** 51:40
It's freeing, but it's also terrifying, because you don't have a master to please and so you.., the only person you have to please is the person in the mirror, strictly speaking. And depending on the day, the person that I see in the mirror can be super-forgiving about spending a little too long reading the novel that you were reading yesterday or a little too long going shopping on a Tuesday morning instead of you know, on a Saturday morning or something like that. But ultimately, being independent frees me up to take *ATP* and all my other endeavours, *Analog(ue)*, my apps, to take it so much more seriously, and put the time and effort that I think they deserve into it. And that's always changing.

**Casey Liss** 52:33
Like, a few months ago... I don't think I've shared this publicly, but a few months ago, I was talking to my, my dear friend, Myke Hurley, who again, I do *Analog(ue)* with. And I forget exactly how he phrased it, he was very gentle about it, but he basically said, 'You gotta take *ATP* more seriously, and you say too often, "Well, I didn't get a chance to read this"'.

**Casey Liss** 52:53
And at first I was like, 'Oh, piss off! Like that, that's not true at all'. And then I got thinking: no, he's onto something here. And it occurred to me that I was being a bit negligent. And I wasn't doing that deliberately, but ultimately, I was being a bit negligent, and I wasn't giving enough of a crap. And so being independent left me, afforded me the ability to treat Wednesday as: that's *ATP* day; I am recording that evening, but in the morning, I am going through the show notes, and I am making sure I am pretty darn familiar with everything I'm potentially going to be talking about that evening. Now this has been ruined by John being independent, because now at all times during the day, he's going in there and rearranging things and moving stuff around adding new stuff on Wednesday afternoons. And it drives me bananas, but I'm trying anyway, to give a crap to give more of a crap. And I wouldn't be able to do that if I was working nine to five, I wouldn't be able to take the Wednesday morning and afternoon to just sit there and browse the Internet and make sure I'm caught up on all the things that we might be talking about. And so having that luxury is an extreme privilege that I can spend the time to hopefully make a better product and a better show for our listeners.

**Casey Liss** 54:04
But, you know, in the years and years and years and years before I went independent—and what was it, five-ish years before I went independent?—I didn't have that luxury, you know? I could look a little bit during the day here and there, but I didn't have the luxury to really do that. And so the time I had would be after work, when I'm supposed to be a husband and a father, and so I often

legitimately just didn't have the time. But Myke was absolutely right to call me out, and and that's the mark of a very good friend and confidant that he did so, and I think he made the show better by having pointed that out, because I think again, I wasn't doing it deliberately, but I think I was being negligent. And I like to think I've been much much better about it. After... it took me probably a few days or a week to really give him the credit he deserved and understand that he was right and not just being a jerk. But uh, but once once it occurred to me how right he was, I like to think that this show is better for it.

**Martin Feld** 54:57
Look, I appreciate that honesty and transparency in that story that you shared, because I think you're right, I mean: doing a podcast for so long, maybe you could get comfortable—not that you weren't getting comfortable, necessarily—but it's good to have that feeling...

**Casey Liss** 55:10
Oh totally!

**Martin Feld** 55:10
...of aspiration or goal or improvement, wanting to improve stuff.

**Casey Liss** 55:14
Mm-hmmm!

**Martin Feld** 55:14
So, given even what you said before about the changing nature of the community and the open Web, you alluded briefly to changes at Twitter, which are very fun and disturbing at the same time to watch. Where things are going technologically, within the medium, the communities themselves... you talk about this, you know, wanting to give a crap and do better. What are some things that you feel like you still have left to do, or maybe places you want to take your own career or hobby or the show itself?

**Casey Liss** 55:41
Oh, with regard to the show... I'll answer in a roundabout way. I really, really love *Upgrade*, which is, uh, again, Myke Hurley and Jason Snell. Um and they've been around near as long as *ATP* has; I forget exactly when they started, I want to say it was the end of 2014. I might be selling them short, accidentally, but they've been around effectively as long as *ATP*. But Myke and Jason are, in my eyes, uniquely good at reinventing themselves, and they do it—reinventing may be a bit dramatic or overblown—but they're willing to, to mess with the format in a way that I think I am willing to and I think that Marco and John are willing to, but we're not as creative, and we don't come up with these ideas, I think as well or really just as well as Jason and Myke. I mean, look at #askatp, we totally ripped that from #askupgrade, like 1,000 per cent. That was a straight rip from

#askupgrade. I think we treat it a little bit differently because sometimes we get to it, sometimes we don't. And that's honestly not really deliberate; it's just the way the show goes. But I think things like that, like they're, um, they have Rumor Roundup, that's been a newer segment where they talk about, you know, the rumours of, of the week. And they have all of these different things that they do: the SUMMER OF FUN!—you know, all these different things that they do. And I hate them for it because I wish I was better at doing that same thing.

**Casey Liss** 57:11

And so aspirationally, I'm always thinking about: what can we bring to the show to make the show fresh and new? Because I worry deeply that 10 years in that we're getting comfortable; you were saying this earlier that we're getting comfortable, and we're not willing to shake things up. And I don't feel like that's an active choice from any of the three of us. But I worry about it, I worry about it quite a lot, because 10 years, even have a good thing, I can understand that being too much for anyone. And so I really, for *ATP* specifically, I aspire very much to try to be... flexible sounds negative, but inventive... maybe it's a more positive way of looking at it? To be willing to try new things and do different stuff... and maybe that's just for membership, maybe that's for the main show... I'm not sure. We've had a lot of really, I think genuinely interesting ideas of member specials we could do, but a lot of them take a lot of work and in some cases, a lot of money. And I'm not sure if that's, if that juice is worth the squeeze, but I hope that we can come up with something that is, again, additive, but also interesting.

**Casey Liss** 58:27

For me personally, here, I guess this is the 'name your hero' segment, even though that's not what you asked me, I look at my dear friend Underscore David Smith. He's nicknamed 'Underscore', because his Twitter handle is @_DavidSmith, and so we all just call him Underscore now. But um, I look at Dave and he is one of the most prolific developers I've ever known in my life and very good at what he does. And he's released like 60 different apps over the span of 10 years or thereabouts. And it wasn't until app, like, 58 or 59, that he really had a massive hit. He's had hits before but like a true proper massive hit. Because he's the guy behind Widgetsmith, which is very genuinely popular even amongst regular-people circles. And I don't think I'll ever get to that point by any stretch of the imagination, but I aspire to be more like him when it comes to my development work. I aspire to try things and throw them against the wall and see what sticks, which I guess is really what I just said about *ATP* as well. But I'm a man of routine and I'm a man of habit, and I don't want to be, even though it's super-comfortable I don't want to be. And I guess in summary, I just want to not get complacent and I want to not just sit on my laurels and let life or work or anything just wash over me. I want to be an active participant who is actively tweaking and fiddling and trying to do what I can to make everything I do as good as it can be.

**Martin Feld** 59:55

And when you reflect on your history of podcasting, whether it's *ATP* or the other shows that you've done, what's a moment, either on the show or contributing to a show, that you feel particularly proud of? A key memory...

**Casey Liss** 1:00:10

Um, it's a really excellent question. I think there's a few. With *Analog(ue)*, I want to say was episode five, it was one of the very first episodes we did. Um, but we had Stephen Hackett, the the other co-founder of Relay; we had him on, and we talked about, like, really monumental times in all three of our lives. And for Myke, if memory serves, it was the loss of a family member; uh, for Stephen, it was when his son was diagnosed with cancer; and for me, it was finally having our son, because we had incredible troubles with getting pregnant. And that episode was really hard to record for all three of us, especially so early on in the run of the show. And I haven't listened to it in a long time but I think it is one of the best single episodes of a podcast that I've been a part of, because it was really powerful and we talked about stuff that really mattered. Whether or not Twitter is melting down, whether or not Apple is putting too many ads in their iOS software, like, that doesn't really matter. It's interesting, and it's fun to talk about, but it doesn't really matter. This stuff mattered. And I got a lot of feedback from people who were struggling with infertility, saying, 'Oh, my God, thank you for talking about this, I'm not alone'. And I'm really, really proud of that.

**Casey Liss** 1:01:21

I'm really proud of us being asked if we could have Phil Schiller, who was the former (still kind of their) head of marketing for Apple appear on *ATP* once. At the end of the show, I asked him a question about cars and it was immediately evident within just a moment that, 'Oh, I'm getting absolutely dunked on by Phil Schiller right now, because he knows so much more about this than I do'. And in a weird way, that was actually a career highlight for me: getting absolutely dunked on by Phil Schiller, but, and he wasn't trying to be a jerk or anything, it was just he knew so much more than me, and it was so obvious so fast, but it was fun. That was a real highlight.

**Casey Liss** 1:01:57

Another one, this was I think, episode 96 of *ATP* (something like that), but John, John started talking about his window management, like, how he manages the windows on his computer. And for the longest time, in the in the chat room that we have when the show is being broadcast live, everyone would would recommend titles, like the 'something of Siracusa County', because I believe *Hypercritical* had an episode titled that (if memory serves). And for years—for forever— every episode, it would be the 'something something of Siracusa County'. And every time I was like, 'No, no, no, no', and I think, I'm pretty sure Marco was on the same page on this. No, if we're going to do this, it's going to be at the right moments. Well, whatever number it is, it's again, I want to say was 96. It is called the 'Windows of Syracuse County', and it was because that was—it

was 96, the Windows the Siracusa County, December 19, 2014—that, that was the time that we needed to deploy the 'of Siracusa County' title because it was one of those things that we couldn't have planned it if we tried. But he started going deeper and deeper and deeper into his like window management strategy, and Marco and I are getting more and more and more dumbfounded and confused and frustrated with like, because John devoutly believes that his is the one true way of, of managing windows. And it sounded like utter lunacy to Marco and myself. And it was just such a hilarious moment—and one that I like to think really stands up. Again, I mean, this is the end of 2014; that's eight years ago, uh actually eight years and a month ago, so we're getting close to the eight-year anniversary. But it was such an incredible moment and it was so hilarious. And, and I'm proud of that, because I think that, that was *ATP* at its best. Not to say that, you know, we topped out at 96, it's all been downhill from there, but that's a great example of *ATP* at its best, where it's just three people with, I like... who, I like to think have really great chemistry, just completely dumbfounded with each other. And it was just really, really fun and funny. And so, off the top of my head, those are, those are three of my favourites.

**Martin Feld** 1:04:01
Well, I have to say, uh, not only was that also comprehensive, but I'm impressed that you managed to pull out specific episode numbers with some level of confidence.

**Casey Liss** 1:04:09
Well, only a little bit, only a little bit! I couldn't tell you what the Schiller one was actually, but I, 96 has been drilled into my head because it's such a... just incredible, incredible episode. I'm not sure if I got the *Analog(ue)* one right. Ummm... yes, I did! Episode five! So hey, look at that. But it's just because they, they were drilled into my brain because they were such, such pivotal moments in my career and my life, because they're, these episodes are so important to me. I I really think they stand the test of time even all these years later... I mean, the *Analog(ue)* episode five was September of 2014. Apparently late 2014 was my time baby! But, maybe, maybe I've gone all downhill from there, but uh, but anyway, they stand out is just such phenomenal, incredible moments. And, and it's not, you know, because of me, it's because of maybe me a little bit, but but particularly all of my co-hosts, it's because of Myke, and John, and Marco and Stephen on *Analog(ue)*, um, and Phil, when he was on *ATP*, you know, it was because of all of us that these were such shining moments.

**Martin Feld** 1:05:13
I think you've given such a fantastic overview, and also a really specific account of your history in podcasting. You've covered aspirations, you've covered reflections; is there anything that I haven't asked you about your experience, what you do, where you're going that you would like to share with listeners?

**Casey Liss** 1:05:31
Oh, goodness, that's a great question I should have been prepared for. Um, I don't think so, but if you'll permit me to be the obnoxious American...

**Martin Feld** 1:05:38
Go for it!

**Casey Liss** 1:05:40
What have you learned from your journey? Because what you're you're quite a few episodes in now.

**Martin Feld** 1:05:45
Mmm...

**Casey Liss** 1:05:46
And I think (I believe) it's been made public and plain that this is, this is a research project, but it's also an entertainment project. So what have, what have you gleaned from this? Has there been anything that surprised you about, you know, all of these conversations that you've had, or have, they mostly been kind of what you expected?

**Martin Feld** 1:06:04
Uh, I'm more than happy for you to turn me into the interviewee for a sec, so we can go into that briefly! All of these episodes that I'm building up here, with you included, as a participant, are building to a final project, a final thesis, right?

**Casey Liss** 1:06:17
Mm-hmmm...

**Martin Feld** 1:06:17
So it's hard for me to say exactly that this is the set of findings, because we haven't done that yet.

**Casey Liss** 1:06:22
Sure, totally!

**Martin Feld** 1:06:23
Along the way, uh, along the way, it's been very interesting to me just how much of the human aspect shines through when we're all talking about technology here, right?

**Martin Feld** 1:06:33
There are certain things that we reveal about yourselves, and you've been very transparent and honest about things on this show. And I'm grateful for that, grateful for previous participants who've done the same thing. But I suppose maybe the key thing that I've learnt along the way is that willingness to shed this idea of perfection, right? This idea that we're all learning along the way—you know, I haven't been a podcaster for as long as what you've been, I've been practising in public...

**Casey Liss** 1:06:33
Mm-hmmm...

**Casey Liss** 1:07:00
Mm-hmmm...

**Martin Feld** 1:07:00
...largely spawning from the origin of this project. My own two supervisors said, if you're going to research this, you should try your hand at it yourself. You've been listening, why not do it?

**Casey Liss** 1:07:09
Yep, yep, yep!

**Martin Feld** 1:07:09
And it's apparent in what you've been saying that, you know, there was a level of being *accidental* in what you did, there's learning along the way. So, in making this hopefully open and accessible resource for fellow fans of tech podcasting, or the medium at large, I hope that people walk away listening to you with this idea of: 'I could do it as well'.

**Casey Liss** 1:07:29
Yeah, I think that's extremely important and powerful, and ultimately, all it takes is a microphone, and again, you know, a server and a place to put your files, and something to talk about, I think you, you struck... something you said a moment ago struck me and I don't think we've talked about it too much.

**Martin Feld** 1:07:49
Mmm?

**Casey Liss** 1:07:49
And maybe this is this is my parting thought, if you will: one of the things that I think is so powerful about podcasting is that most podcasts, at least that I can see, and maybe this isn't true in general, but for the podcasts that I consume, most of them are not short. And that can be

difficult when you're trying to listen to all the great shows, you know, that you want to that you want to enjoy, and sometimes you just don't have time for all of them. But because it's not YouTube, where you only have the attention span of like 15, maybe 30 minutes at most, it's not a full-length movie, which is different in its own regard. It's as long as a full-length movie, but it's not typically as manufactured as a full-length movie. And so what I'm driving at in a roundabout way, is that you get to really intimately know the people you're listening to. And what struck me about what you said was, and you said it's 'the human element'. I am in some people's ears for, you know, maybe 10 hours a month, and 10 hours a month doesn't seem like a lot, but that's a lot. Like, it's a lot a lot.

**Casey Liss** 1:08:48

And, I like to think that I'm the same person privately as I am publicly, I mean, obviously, some things are more, are turned up to 10 and some things are turned down, but I'm by and large, the same person. But what makes podcasting so powerful is that you get to really know the people you listen to week in and week out and, and you get to bond with them, and you feel like—or certainly I feel like, for the shows that I listen to, not all of whom I know, you know? I've never met Roman Mars, but I feel like I really understand Roman Mars. And that's, and that's actually a fairly manufactured podcast. I don't mean to sound derisive when I say that; it's just a different kind of kind of show than what I'm used to. But there's so many podcasts that I listen to that are that are more like the *ATP* conversational kind of podcast. And I feel like I know these hosts, like I feel like I know them. And I don't, but I do. And that human element that, I don't know if I would go so far as to say is unique to podcasting, but I think is extremely strong in podcasting. I'm not much of a Twitch viewer, but I would, I could imagine that Twitch has a similar feel to it because you're watching and listening for so long as these people are playing games or whatever the case may be. But podcasting is semi-unique in that regard. And, and I think it's extremely, extremely powerful. And here again, you know, I'm inviting listeners who in a way, in a roundabout way, you're kind of sort of friends into my world for, you know, two hours, three hours a week. And I want to treat my friends with respect. And I want and I hope that they see that. And I hope that comes through in the work that I do.

**Casey Liss** 1:10:23

But ultimately, it's so cool to be able to have on either side of the table, so to speak, is to be able to have that kind of relationship. Now negatively, it's parasocial. You know, it's, I know nothing about the listeners, they know everything about me, but it's still cool in a very different and weird way. And I think that that's one of the most powerful and awesome things about podcasting: is that just by virtue of doing it and doing it regularly, and having listeners who listen regularly, you get to have these incredibly intimate relationships, even if they are one-way. And I've been lucky enough that I have never in my life felt terribly alone, but imagine if you're the only person in your town that really cares about Apple, or, and I know nothing about what this is like, but what if you're the only gay person that you know, and you're listening to a show like *Two Headed Girl*,

where, where gender is explored in such an incredibly powerful and wonderful way. And I think having that feeling of community and togetherness, even if you're not actually together, is such an incredibly powerful, wonderful, incredible gift that humans have bestowed upon each other. And I hope that whenever podcasting goes away, because they will eventually one day, I hope that whatever replaces it brings that same communal feeling to it, and that same (to your point earlier) human aspect to it.

**Martin Feld** 1:11:50
Well, I think that's an excellent conclusion for this episode—if you agree?

**Casey Liss** 1:11:54
Oh, absolutely!

**Martin Feld** 1:11:55
That idea of community and whatever comes next, the human is at the centre. So, if you're happy to end there...

**Martin Feld** 1:12:01
...I uh, think we'll wrap up so everyone listening, I think, no doubt, knows who you are and can find you at uh, atp.fm.

**Casey Liss** 1:12:01
Indeed.

**Casey Liss** 1:12:05
That's right.

**Martin Feld** 1:12:05
And there's also of course, in the song, you know, where they can find you on Twitter.

**Casey Liss** 1:12:13
Indeed, well, who knows if there'll still be a Twitter by the time you hear this? But yes, I'm @caseyliss on Twitter and on Instagram, my website is caseyliss.com. You can find *Analog(ue)* at relay.fm/analogue, spelled the correct way or the the way that you would spell it, um or Myke, for that matter. Um, but anyway, yeah...

**Martin Feld** 1:12:30
I won't even bring up temperature; I know that's very controversial!

**Casey Liss** 1:12:31

Oh, that's a very sore subject. Let's not go there! But yes, no, it's been an absolute pleasure. I really appreciate you having me on and I can't wait to read a few words of your thesis and then realise I'm not smart enough to understand any of it. But when the time comes, I hope you send it to me because I'm very, very intrigued by it. And I hope, I hope I'm able to understand even but but a tenth of it.

**Martin Feld** 1:12:54

That's very lovely, and I'm sure you'll understand. I'm sure many will! So thank you, Casey.

**Casey Liss** 1:12:57

Thank you, Martin. I appreciate it.