

Really Specific Stories: Greg Scown

Duration: 37:50

SPEAKERS

Martin Feld, Greg Scown

Martin Feld 00:21

Thank you so much for joining *Really Specific Stories*, Greg; it's wonderful to have you on the show and I appreciate your time.

Greg Scown 00:27

Thank you so much for having me.

Martin Feld 00:28

First question in this conversation is: how did you get into podcasts, Greg?

Greg Scown 00:33

Sure! So, I got into podcasts, essentially, as a podcast sponsor. Uh, and so this is back when Jean MacDonald was working with us at Smile; uh, she came to us and suggested that we ought to sponsor this podcast called *Your Mac Life* with Shawn King. I can't say that I had known tremendously much about podcasts or paid tonnes of attention to them to that point. Uh, so of course, she was asking us to spend some hard-earned money and therefore quickly brushed up on, 'OK, what is this thing? Who is this guy? And what sort of audience does he have?' Quite, he's quite colourful, and he had a very dedicated audience following and so, it was quite fun to get started.

Martin Feld 01:16

Having not listened to podcasts before this approach that Jean made, what was your impression of the medium at that early stage?

Greg Scown 01:24

I think that I was surprised that one could produce a sort of niche audience that was both extremely niche and very passionate. I mean, the fact was that at that time, Apple itself was super-niche—um, it was not the juggernaut that it is today—and so it was really interesting to find, sort of this collection of fellow travellers, and how, again, how responsive and passionate they were, or are, let's be honest.

Martin Feld 02:01

How did things go in that early period when you did try that for the first time? Did it perform well? How did it travel?

Greg Scown 02:08

Extremely! So what we did, if I recall correctly, was we generated a coupon code, and part of the read from Shawn was, you know, if you're interested (in probably Disklabel, I think at the time), then use this coupon code for probably 20 per cent off and it performed well beyond expectations. I mean, prior to podcasts, we had been doing print ads, and the print ads had been fairly effective, though, it was clear that they were on the wane. And it was really neat to find another spot where we could advertise, and also how specific and targeted and I'm gonna go with 'passionate' again, that audience was or is.

Martin Feld 02:56

I like that point that you made about print waning at that period, and it still is on that long waning transition out, I suppose. Were you noticing new people looking at your services and your products because of podcasting? Or were they the same people who had moved? What was the audience that you were interacting with (uh, these passionate podcast listeners)?

Greg Scown 03:19

Yeah, I think we found new people, and I think that maybe there was some overlap between podcasts at the time. So, as we rolled on a bit, the next sponsorships we did were with BackBeat media. Uh, so this is Dave Hamilton's company, and we started with his podcast, so *Mac Geek Gab*, and shortly thereafter added *MacCast* with Adam Christianson. And so, you know, this was an outfit that had more than one podcast, which was interesting, um, and also different audiences. So, the audience for *Mac Geek Gab* was not necessarily the same as *MacCast*. *MacCast* was a more general audience; *Mac Geek Gab* was a more hardcore, you know, techy audience-y. Even within the Mac nerd community, there's like, you know, a spectrum of where people fell. And so, I think that we were able to hit very general Mac-friendly audience with *Your Mac Life*, another slightly more technical audience with *MacCast*, and then hardcore tech audience with *Mac Geek Gab*. And so, there may have been a little overlap between each of those audiences, but I think there also was a core of people who were fairly specific to each of the podcasts as well.

Martin Feld 03:31

What I find intriguing about this start to the conversation is that you were absorbed or influenced to look at this medium because of a business end or an idea for a project or a campaign. At the same time, listening to these podcast episodes in this fledgling medium, how were you motivated to start listening, maybe separately in your personal life? Did things progress quickly or meander, as you discovered shows separately from the need to advertise?

Greg Scown 05:11

I did not become a hardcore podcast listener until quite a bit later than this, even, to be honest. I mean, really, I think for me, it was the advent of the Apple Watch, combined with the AirPods...

Martin Feld 05:28

Mmm...

Greg Scown 05:28

...so that I didn't have to strap a phone to my arm, when I went out running. And I could listen to a podcast while I was out running. That was the game changer, for me, it was the: I could have it in a convenient form, where I wanted it when I was accessible. So you know, in terms of history, you're talking about maybe at least a 10-year period from *Mac Geek Gab* to present. And what I was doing at that time largely was listening to segments of the show to have some sense of what the topics were, uh, listening to our reads for sure, since those were things that we were paying for, and occasionally listening to podcasts that Jean or others had identified as things that we might consider advertising on. But to be fair to Jean, the relationship building with the hosts and the community aspects, that was largely what she was doing.

Martin Feld 06:24

Now, this is something I haven't come across yet, in some of our conversations: this idea that Apple Watch plus AirPods was the real turning point, and that's great, because you're talking about that portability and mobility. Different people might enjoy it at the desktop, I think we can accept a lot of people went with it with iPods and iPhones. That discoverability of the content is interesting to me: the fact that you just said that you were listening to excerpts or segments, lots of podcast listeners may be completionist, but you're going for particular segments. Was it easy to find those things that you needed, and was there any role or how did you use things like show notes or transcripts? Was that present?

Greg Scown 07:09

For the podcasts that we sponsored, they did have (and do have) show notes, and also, in the case of BackBeat media, they had an administrative division essentially, folks (I think, actually Dave's wife), who would send time codes for where our slot appeared. And so frequently, it was: listen to the intro, listen to the ad, and then pick up if there's something in the episode. But, you know, before too long, we were sponsoring several podcasts and the amount of time that it would take to listen to each and every one of these in the course of a week was not possible, especially while running a fledgling software business.

Martin Feld 07:56

Fast-forwarding to the podcasts that you listen today, whether for business or for personal leisure...

Greg Scown 08:02

Mmm-hmmm?

Martin Feld 08:02

...what are the things that you're enjoying particularly as a listener today?

Greg Scown 08:05

The specific podcasts or...?

Martin Feld 08:08

However you wish to approach it!

Greg Scown 08:09

Sure! I mean, I really enjoy some of the Mac-community-sprung podcasts, such as *Core Intuition*, I really enjoy *Rocket*. Uh, so *Rocket* is particularly fun, because it has three strong women in tech who just do a fantastic job of the podcast (and I think also have a great deal of fun doing it). So, they manage both the depth and the, and the light as well. And I think they do it deftly, so I really appreciate them.

Martin Feld 08:44

Let's explore each of those two podcast examples that you just gave.

Greg Scown 08:48

Sure!

Martin Feld 08:48

Core Intuition first, because you brought that up... How did you come across *Core Intuition* in your suite of podcast subscriptions, and what do you enjoy about that particular program?

Greg Scown 08:58

I am trying to remember exactly how, I mean, it would have been Jean again to begin, but I think Smile was hosting parties at the developer conference. Um, and Daniel was on the invite list, and so I would have first met Daniel at one of our parties. And then I think in a subsequent developer conference, we went and got veggie burritos somewhere near the Moscone Center. So, I don't know exactly at what point along that way it came, we came to sponsor *Core Intuition*, and whether it was entirely Jean's bringing him to us or us meeting him and then doing it, so I, I apologise for not knowing the history exactly, but it would have been some blend of those things.

Martin Feld 09:43

That's OK, and I love that you remember the burritos specifically. Was that because they were fantastic or really bad?

Greg Scown 09:49

I don't remember if they were fantastic or really bad. I do remember that Daniel was a vegetarian and we needed to find veggie burritos somewhere in a couple block radius and we managed to do that. Actually, now that I think about it, they were good, they were good. I believe we went to Maya, which no longer exists in San Francisco, but uh, but at that time was doing some pretty, pretty fantastic food.

Greg Scown 10:13

That's a good memory. I like that, and uh, it's specific, which goes hand in hand with the name of this show. So, listening to that today, what do you get out of *Core Intuition*, as a listener?

Greg Scown 10:23

I get a taste of what an indie developer is thinking of what's going on in the world, um, and also evolved indie developers in the sense that Daniel is uh, you know, very much out of the MacOS, iOS, Apple world, uh, and Manton less so, uh, not that he didn't have background in Apple, but that he has moved into the sort of more general realm of microblogging and micropodcasting, and even his tech stack is, you know, is migrating as a course of doing that. But you know, so TextExpander better is around 40, 50 people now, and so I don't think we qualify as being an indie developer anymore. Uh, so it is fun to hear folks who have, you know, stuck it out as one or two folks along the way, and I like their perspective, I like hearing it.

Martin Feld 11:19

That word 'indie' is a very interesting one, because I suppose, like 'open', there's a question of where that definition or that boundary ends, you know, when are you too big to call yourself independent, but I assume you also wouldn't call yourself big tech, necessarily.

Greg Scown 11:36

Right, I mean, I'd like to think that we have the spirit still, but I understand that I don't know that that would be where someone would place us if you were sticking post-its on a wall under categories.

Martin Feld 11:46

No, very fair, and going back to what you said about Apple Watch plus AirPods, these are the devices that you're using to listen to *Core Intuition*?

Greg Scown 11:54

Yes, definitely. And in fact, it might be worth noting that I've worked from home for the past 19 years. I've never commuted in recent memory, and so, I am aware that a bunch of friends and folks that I know who do commute, use that time to listen to podcasts, and so, they have their phone in the car, and that's how they do it. Uh, for me, it's really the time that I have had to do that is when I'm out running. And so at first, I did the clunky strap-your-iPhone-to-your-to-your-arm, and you know, even with wired earbuds and did not find that to be a really pleasant experience. I mean, I did it for a bit in part, I think at one time, just so that I could make sure that I was up to date on what we were doing—uh, because it was a good time to do it—but there was not a lot of personal pleasure to it because it was clunky and inconvenient.

Martin Feld 12:53

And which podcast app or apps are you using with this combination of devices?

Greg Scown 12:59

So presently, I use Overcast and I use Apple's Podcasts app, and it kind of depends on whichever one I can coax to download to the watch (whatever it is that I want). And, you know, I feel terrible for Marco in the sense that I don't think that Apple has done him any favours in terms of that process. Uh, and I think he's designed a really nice app. So, you know, hopefully, as time wears on, they will, Apple will tackle his remaining feature requests so that it can be a little bit more reliable to download a podcast to a watch and know that it's going to be there and be pretty sure that you're not going to be stuck on 17 per cent for you know, waiting, trying to get out the door to go on that run... 18 per cent... OK... we're still stuck on 18 per cent. I mean, that, unfortunately, is the experience some of the time, but it's still way less clunky than strapping a phone to your upper arm, so...

Martin Feld 13:58

Well, I'm an Overcast user on the watch as well and I totally understand where you're coming from. There's that great functionality or potential, but that synchronisation time can be interesting when you're in a hurry.

Greg Scown 14:09

Yeah well, and it's gotta kill you as a developer, because it's almost certainly completely beyond your control. So that's just, that's rough.

Martin Feld 14:16

And what do you prefer about using Overcast? I assume, because Apple podcasts is the first-party option, you've gone to the trouble of downloading a separate app by Marco Arment, as you mentioned. What do you like about Overcast?

Greg Scown 14:30

I like the design; I like the organisation; um, I think that it is somewhat opinionated as well; it doesn't try to be everything to everyone, um, and so I find that convenient.

Martin Feld 14:42

That's great. You mentioned *Rocket*...

Greg Scown 14:45

Mmm...

Martin Feld 14:45

...as another little case study there. What would you say are some of the key differences or the different things that you get out of listening to something like *Rocket* versus *Core Intuition*?

Greg Scown 14:56

There is a significant gaming component to *Rocket*, um and I am not a gamer. In fact, I actually think I've probably told folks that, you know, I sit in front of a computer working on a computer all day long—literally, the last thing I want to do for my entertainment is sit in front of a computer. So, I get information and interesting tidbits from folks who are the exact opposite of that. I mean, Brianna had her own gaming company. And, you know, all three of the hosts are active gamers, and, you know, all the way from nostalgia as children to actively being excited about whatever's current as adults. And it's just fascinating to me! I get to be a—I don't know, for lack of a better term, sort of a—a voyeur onto a world that I know nothing about. And they make it accessible and fun and interesting.

Martin Feld 15:51

People talk about audio, like podcasts or even things like audiobooks or radio, being that kind of escape. You're listening to this while you're running. When you're listening to something like *Rocket*, how would you explain that kind of escape? Does it stay just in the fact that you're wearing your earphones, your AirPods? Or that escape element, is that extra, because it's something that you don't engage with, normally, as gaming, like the topics?

Greg Scown 16:18

Wow... uh, that's a fascinating question. I think it's probably a little bit of both. So, there's the environment and the fact that I can do this while pursuing leisure, right? So, that that works. And then, there is the dynamism of the hosts and their passion in terms of what they care about, and how they're able to convey that.

Martin Feld 16:44

And that dynamism of the hosts—have you ever been influenced to pursue things in this gaming area (or things that you haven't normally looked at)? Or do you maintain that role of the voyeur, as you said?

Greg Scown 16:56

Yeah, no, no, I haven't. I still can't... I mean, part of it's asking, I, I get to imagine how someone else can choose to do that and enjoy it. Uh, but I can't say that I've been influenced in that direction.

Martin Feld 17:09

No, that's fascinating. And I like the fact that you chose the word 'voyeur' because—maybe getting a bit too semantic here, but—it does have that idea of watching or looking from afar, but you're applying this word to something with audio, where you're hearing someone from afar. That, that's very interesting that that idea that you're dipping into someone's conversation from afar and enjoying what they're saying, and maybe not necessarily acting upon it, but just enjoying the listening experience.

Greg Scown 17:36

What is the audio equivalent of voyeur? Is there, is there, is there a word, I wonder?

Martin Feld 17:42

Maybe some listeners know; maybe I should check the dictionary, once we're finished here. I don't want to go...

Greg Scown 17:47

No, sure sure, it's just a fun question!

Martin Feld 17:48

It is a good question. Um, as a listening fan of shows like *Core Intuition* and *Rocket*, and the fact that you're already active digitally—you know, you've said that you have your own business in software—are you very engaged in speaking to hosts or people who run podcasts, or do you take more of a backseat or enjoy it purely as a consumer? How do you interact with the podcasting world beyond listening through earphones?

Greg Scown 18:15

Sure, I've done a number of podcast appearances over the course of my career. One complication, I suppose, to that is that we're very active podcast sponsors, and it's a little awkward to appear as a guest on a show that you sponsor. Um, the hosts are all excellent about making sure that, you know, our sponsorship doesn't match up with the episode that we're in, and

disclaim that, you know, we didn't essentially pay them for our appearance. But it's a tough line, and so, for the most part, uh, you know, I don't appear a tonne, because there [is] essentially this mild conflict of interest. And so my role over the years has been primarily as a sponsor, and then secondarily as an occasional guest.

Martin Feld 19:09

Yeah, on that point, I like that there's this idea of transparency (or openness) about the fact that you're a sponsor, and that you're respecting your listeners as a podcast guest that way, I think that's fantastic. How do you think about the idea of this community? Because, in the process of talking to you now, uh, there's a few different roles or personas that you're fulfilling as a listener, you've got podcast guest appearances, you've sponsored podcasts, you may even just be friends with some of the people who are recommending or hosting or listening to things. There's a lot going on here, in what seems like a relatively simple definition of podcast listening. How do you think about the role of the community in engaging with fans? Is it something that you consider primarily business-driven? Is it creatively-tied? Is it a hobby? If someone asked you to define what is this community that you're tapping into, what would it be?

Greg Scown 20:05

Wow, I think there's a bit of all of the above in that in the sense that there's the podcast itself that someone creates and produces, um and puts out into the world through their RSS feed. There's the community that they engender by doing that, so the listenership that they have, and then there's the engagement that they choose to pursue. So, for example, I would say *Core Intuition* is a high-engagement show: they have their own Slack (they're, they're quite active there); they have an audience that participates in the Slack and listens to the show, so uh, that's sort of high engagement. Then, another show with sort of high engagement in that way would be, say, *Upgrade*, uh with Myke Hurley, Jason Snell, where they have a very active Discord, for example. And contrast that with, say, a show that is a podcast because it's kind of time-shifted: so, an example might be *Hidden Brain* with Shankar Vedatam. So it is an NPR show that's time-shifted, and your engagement with the host is essentially non-existent. You're not going to go pop into a Slack and and chat with Shankar, and that's not how it works! And so, I think that there is a spectrum, and you're probably, you could rate, a show on any given axis of, you know, host engagement, community engagement, and sort of what level of involvement or opportunities are offered in those spaces.

Martin Feld 21:43

And as a listener of *Core Intuition*, you mentioned the Slack. What has your engagement been with the Slack as a listener? Is that something that you partake in?

Greg Scown 21:52

I am a modest participant, so I have an account; I have posted on the jobs board, we've actually found an employee through the *Core Intuition* Slack, so that's great.

Martin Feld 22:05

Oh wow!

Greg Scown 22:05

But uh, I have not been super-engaged in some of the other aspects of it. So there's, sort of, a programming portion, and there's an indie developer portion, that kind of thing. And that just hasn't been an area that I've engaged in.

Martin Feld 22:20

And I'm sure that you have your own other commitments and time pressures in life, so you dip in and out as you need. Is that right?

Greg Scown 22:25

More or less, yeah.

Martin Feld 22:26

No, that's very fair. Now you brought up NPR as a kind of alternative, or at least a different format or style in the sense that it's time-shifted, but not high on engagement. Separate from the world of tech, podcasting, and that community and your involvement, what other media do you particularly enjoy consuming? And that could be audio, it could be visual—what is in your media diet, beyond tech podcasting?

Greg Scown 22:53

Beyond tech podcasting would be the time-shifted NPR shows. Uh, so, you know, I might have tried to catch *Fresh Air* at one o'clock Pacific back in the day. And it's great that now I can sift through and pick the guests that I'm interested in. Um, and then in terms of maybe you asked media that isn't even podcasts: I'm known to watch TV. I think I just finished... what was it? *Slow Horses*, which was very fun, uh, so...

Martin Feld 23:25

And how would you explain the kind of escape or process of consuming things that aren't tech podcasts? What do you get out of those things that's different? Could be better; could be worse; what's different about the other stuff?

Greg Scown 23:38

That's a good question. I mean, I think scripted television is much more passive, low-engagement, uh, and and low-brain-power, I think to a certain extent—not, not to insult the creators of scripted television. I think the fact that it allows one to do that is excellent in and of itself. Um, and then so, you know, your your NPR podcasts would be higher-brain-engagement: you need to pay attention frequently, think about background, or think about what the topic is or what the host is on about. Um, and then, but for the tech podcasts or other community podcasts, that's a case where you have both the brain power and potentially the engagement as well.

Martin Feld 24:27

Just in that answer you gave then you mentioned the show *Slow Horses*, which I believe is an Apple TV+ programme.

Greg Scown 24:34

Yes.

Martin Feld 24:35

How did you discover or get into that one?

Greg Scown 24:37

If I recall correctly, it was sort of on the screen for Apple TV+, and it had an interesting title. It also had (stars) Gary Oldman, whom I like, and so that got me enough to click on it and watch the preview. Having watched the preview, I was like, 'OK, this looks like it could be very fun!'

Martin Feld 24:55

Yeah, Gary Oldman's cool. What do you like about Gary Oldman?

Martin Feld 24:57

Are there any standout movies for you or TV shows that have Gary Oldman? Because, and I'll qualify this: the reason that I pick on Gary Oldman is that I particularly love his role in *The Fifth Element*. I just think that's one of the most quirky or interesting kind of villain roles. What are some other kind of examples for you that that you love in your film collection or history?

Greg Scown 24:57

What do I like about Gary Oldman? I think that he's ridiculously versatile: he pretty much can do anything as far as I can tell as an actor; and it's really fun because you'll see him in in one thing, and he's just so completely different than what you see him in as another.

Greg Scown 25:36

Ah, let's see, trying to think of...

Martin Feld 25:38

Sorry to put you on the spot—it's my job!

Greg Scown 25:40

No, it's fine, in fact, actually, it's kind of ironic, it's, it's a little similar. And I think they even took a little, a little joke about it in *Slow Horses*, but...

Martin Feld 25:49

Oh!

Greg Scown 25:50

...I enjoyed him and *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* as well, which, I suppose ironically, is him playing very close to what he's playing in, uh, *Slow Horses*, but a much better spy.

Martin Feld 26:01

And when it comes to TV watching or movie watching, the similarity that it has to podcasting is that it's now primarily a digital medium, but it's visual, as you said, it's passive. Do you find yourself recommending media like TV and movies or talking about it with other people in a similar way to what you do with podcasting?

Greg Scown 26:22

Oh, sure!

Martin Feld 26:23

What are the different levels of communication around what you're consuming?

Greg Scown 26:26

Yeah, I mean, I think, honestly, for all media, books, podcasts and television (and movies as well), that the primary way that I would find something would be a recommendation from a friend. I mean, *Slow Horses* is the exception: by far, you know, the rule would be much more along the lines of somebody says, 'Hey, I saw *House of Cards* and it was really fantastic, and you ought to watch that!', or, 'Why have you not watched *See* yet?' You know, if I were...

Martin Feld 26:59

Mmm-hmmm...

Greg Scown 26:59

...I want to talk about something, but you haven't watched it, so I'd be spoiling it. So, that type of thing...

Martin Feld 27:04

And how does that factor into this world of digital recommendations or algorithms that we have these days? It's 'cause you just said, normally, you're talking to friends or people about what's coming up...

Greg Scown 27:14

Yep.

Martin Feld 27:14

...or what you should be watching—you said you discovered *Slow Horses* on the screen; it was placed there, digitally by a human or the computer. How do you think about algorithms in consumption and discovery?

Greg Scown 27:26

Yeah... I think that in the case for *Slow Horses*, I believe it was really just listed because it's a relatively new show. I don't think that it was targeting me, although you bring up an excellent point: was it or wasn't it? I, I don't know, one way or another, and that is maybe a little bit disturbing, in the sense that, if it is an algorithmic recommendation, it's nice to identify it as such. So you know, when you're on Amazon, for example, books recommended for you based on and then sometimes it's based on what you've read, or based on the consumer product you've just bought or taste. I mean, they're they're quite transparent about what is the source of the recommendation. Uh, so if *Slow Horses* was an algorithmic recommendation, then it is maybe a little bit creepy, but I have a feeling that that's very much static content that, you know, that they're rotating.

Martin Feld 28:20

Disturbing is an excellent word. It's very clear, very descriptive. Bringing this idea full circle about advertising and how people discover content: do your less favourable views about algorithms have anything to do with your decision to be an ongoing podcast sponsor? This idea of a human-inserted ad?

Greg Scown 28:39

Yes, OK. So, I definitely... in terms of transparency, and the import of that matters. And so, engaging with the host is really critical in terms of podcasts that we would choose to sponsor, podcasts that we will continue to sponsor, etc. Um, the best podcasts by far are those where the host already has experience with your product, likes your product, and can speak, you know, first-person actual experience to it, uh, you know, not as interested in an podcast-network-inserted ad that has no connection to the show that the hosts are doing. I mean, the best placements are ones that run straight in line, where the hosts are doing the reads while they're doing the show and will occasionally riff on whatever the read is, or will do their own read, which is also fantastic.

The sort of second best is when host will do the read and/or the riff, not so much in line with the show, and there'll be a pause and here's the ad and here we go. But if that's in the authentic voice of the host, I think that that's still is a very effective and engaging way to do a sponsorship. But the sort of algorithmic insertions less so, and you can see it in the performance, right? Like the, the numbers that you get, uh, in terms of engagement with a host-read ad that's in the middle of the show are higher than with a host-read ad that's an interruption and are higher than an algorithmic insertion, which is kind of down the bottom.

Martin Feld 30:28

And if I may ask, is that something that you've actually seen in your own performance?

Greg Scown 30:32

Yes, oh, definitely! I'm saying in terms of what we see for the advertising that we do do.

Martin Feld 30:38

Fantastic, no thank you for sharing that insight. That's really interesting, because you hear that kind of thing, you know, the tech podcasters say and sometimes it may be difficult to understand if it's something to do with a certain bias or just a personal preference, but you're saying that as someone who is actually actively engaged with both...

Greg Scown 30:54

Yeah...

Martin Feld 30:55

...one is noticeably better than the other?

Greg Scown 30:56

Yeah, I mean, if someone's new to podcast sponsorship and they're being approached by, say, an advertising representative, I think the questions you want to ask are: 'Can I get my product in front of the host?'; 'Does the host have any previous experience with my product?'; 'Can I engage with the host?' That type of thing, because if you can build that relationship, you're going to have a much better and much more effective sponsorship than just a read that gets inserted randomly into a podcast that may fit your demographic, but isn't necessarily going to achieve the engagement that you want.

Martin Feld 31:35

Cool. Now, in that answer you gave, you said for people who are new to podcasting, it is still possible for people to be discovering a medium like podcasting. And as more and more media get funnelled through this digital channel, you know, it's different formats, different styles, human-curated, algorithmic, as you were just saying, basically, everything gets funnelled through the

Internet, that there's this divergence and convergence at the same time. Is there anything that you're really yet to get into as a medium? (It might not be podcasting.) Is there something that you want to try that maybe you've been restricted in looking at due to time or other commitments?

Greg Scown 32:12

I mean, I think that video, in terms of YouTube sponsorships, or, I mean, even Tik Tok—grant, not my generation, but still might be of interest, just given its massive popularity—are areas that we are not deeply experienced with and... video has a sort of built-in disadvantage in that its production costs are vastly higher than audio. And so, it's intimidating because if you're going to make a bet, you have to make a very, very big bet. Whereas for podcasting, in particular, in audio, the bet that you have to make is considerably smaller.

Martin Feld 32:57

That's a fantastic point. Now covering everything that we've discussed, your varying personas and roles across all these different things as a listener, and as a sponsor: is there anything in your history with podcasts or connected media that I haven't asked you about that you would like to explore or mention?

Greg Scown 33:15

Uh, sure! I mean, I think historically, there's some fun stuff, uh, in that we sponsored *Mac Power Users*, uh, when they first got started. And that came about literally because Jean went to them and said, 'You have a great podcast, now you need sponsors'.

Martin Feld 33:32

Wow...

Greg Scown 33:32

'Sign us up.' And so, that was a really fun way to get involved with something where, you know, they had the show, but they didn't have the sponsors. Um, and we were able to essentially grow with them. And they've been our best-performing podcast pretty much forever. And so that's been fantastic. And then we also had a bit of fun, because we got to see additional evolution. The 5by5 network came about around the end of 2011—um and so, that's Dan Benjamin and Haddie Cooke at that time—and uh, there was a show that came to the network eventually, called *The Prompt*, which had Federico Viticci, Stephen Hackett and Myke Hurley. And then they broke away from 5by5 and began their own podcast network. And we were super-honoured because they came to us and said, 'OK, we're doing this, will you please sponsor us?' And like, 'Oh, yes, definitely!', in the sense that it's the people, right? It's, it's not the network. It's not the... I don't know, the theme song, it's not the artwork, it's the people. And, uh, you know, we knew that

wherever they were, they're going to create a show that had the same spirit and values and community that the previous show had and, and they did um, and so that that's really neat.

Martin Feld 35:02

That point is wonderful and it really resonates with me: that idea of people, because hopefully, I mean, this is what I hope that this podcast is showing that there are individual people but closely entwined that form these communities. And when you look back over the history of your involvement with podcasts, how do you feel to have been so closely entwined with these different programmes, these different people (as you put it) the influence or the role that you've had?

Greg Scown 35:30

I mean, I think it's been an honour to be able to sponsor folks and then to see what amazing things that they do with their show, with their community. I mean, consider Relay FM right now is completing their campaign for St. Jude, they've they've had their Podcastathon, and right now they're about \$39,000 short of raising \$494,000 just this year, and then \$2 million over the course of their raising money for St. Jude. And that's just amazing, and they're able to bring the power of their community and their network as well, so the network is a new phenomenon (or relatively new phenomenon) to do such tremendous good.

Martin Feld 36:15

So, perhaps as a wrap-up question, because I'm conscious of your time today, for someone who is looking at this community, what would you say to someone who's thinking, 'Is it worth my time, looking at some of these podcasts that you enjoy?'—adding it to their feed and starting to listen to some episodes?

Greg Scown 36:33

I hope so! I mean, I definitely would recommend uh, *Rocket*, *Core Intuition*, *Upgrade...* and then, you know, I really appreciate being able to listen to time-shifted items. Uh, I am remiss and that I have not checked out *Hemispheric Views* yet, so I need to get there. That's true. Um, and I'm delighted to, to have discovered more of *Really Specific Stories* in the lead-up to appearing on the show.

Martin Feld 37:01

Well, the fact that you're even kind of mentioning those two things in the same sort of realm is very flattering, and no offence taken! You're already very busy with your podcast feed, so that's totally fine. Is there anything else that you wanted to mention before we wrap up today?

Greg Scown 37:15

Uh, nothing specific.

Martin Feld 37:17

There's that word again—I love it. Look, Greg, this has been an absolute pleasure. It's been great to have you on the show and learn about your very varied experience. Of course, if there is anything that does pop up in your mind, that's what links and show notes are for and listeners can explore that in detail. Thank you so much for your time, Greg!

Greg Scown 37:33

Thank you for having me; I really appreciate it. It was very fun!