

Really Specific Stories: Jarrod Blundy

Duration: 47:34

SPEAKERS

Martin Feld, Jarrod Blundy

Martin Feld 00:21

Thank you very much for joining *Really Specific Stories*, Jarrod; it's fantastic to have you on the podcast.

Jarrod Blundy 00:27

Thank you so much! I'm excited to talk!

Martin Feld 00:29

Now you know what the first question is, you've listened before. Jarrod, how did you first get into podcasts?

Jarrod Blundy 00:35

I have been thinking about this, and it's actually really difficult to try and think back to when I got started with them. I want to say that my first experience of podcasts was actually: do you remember the uh, the Apple podcasts, or back when they were, like, in iTunes? They would uh, upload the keynote of all their events to a podcast feed.

Martin Feld 00:56

Mm-hmmm...

Jarrod Blundy 00:56

And I think I was just kind of searching around trying to like watch old keynote videos, and that's where I would go. And then I saw that there was audio recordings, and I didn't really understand that, like, 'Why would they just have audio for a video keynote?' And then the podcast app icon always kind of threw me off, it looked like, like a person with like, waves coming out of them and it always just kind of threw me off. And I never really explored much in there. So for years, I just thought it was like a place for Apple stuff; I didn't really explore anything more of podcasts for a few years.

Jarrold Blundy 01:27

And then, when I actually started listening to a show was on a road trip, going to this ice-climbing festival back in Michigan where I lived. And I had like 10 hours of road time ahead of me with a friend that was taking me up there. And he said, 'Hey, do you wanna listen to *The Dirtbag Diaries*?'

Jarrold Blundy 01:43

And I said, 'What is that?'

Jarrold Blundy 01:44

He said, 'Oh, it's this podcast show'.

Jarrold Blundy 01:45

I said, 'I don't really know what that is, but yeah sure, put it on'. And we listened to hours and hours of this show, which was a guy just telling stories about his outdoor experiences, rock climbing, backpacking, skiing, um, all these adventures. And he'd been doing it at that point for just a few years, but this show is still going on and I still listen to it. And it's, I think, one of the earlier podcasts and just has this incredible back catalogue. And uh, yeah, that's that's where I got started, I listened to this non-tech show, and then have gotten into podcasting pretty deep since then.

Martin Feld 02:18

Wow, so your first podcast experience was actually with video in the technological area but the audio was for your other interest, which is outdoor recreation, essentially. What appealed to you about the stories in this *Dirtbag Diaries* show?

Jarrold Blundy 02:34

The uh, the host's name is Fitz Cahall; he just basically decided to do it on his own. I think he's, he was an outdoor writer for some magazines, just freelance, and then said, 'Well, I've got a phone I can record into, uh, me just start talking'. And he just started talking about these experiences that he'd been having and talking with his friends on their adventures in the outdoors. And it was just so... the way that he put the show together was so engaging, that I could like picture what was happening in my mind, and it, you know, kind of feels like you're along there with him. And these were all things that I wanted to be doing, so getting to kind of experience it secondhand, I think, was what was most appealing. And uh, yeah, they, they've expanded their crew since then, they have a lot more hosts and do a lot more in-depth kind of reporting and, like, long-term stories, but the, the uh, nut of it is still there: just telling stories about fun stuff to do outside and sometimes not-so-fun stuff to do outside, but just sharing, sharing what people are up to.

Martin Feld 03:37

And what do you remember about the experience of listening with a friend? How tied to that road trip is that show in your mind?

Jarrold Blundy 03:45

It is very tied to it, I think about it a lot. I've never really considered kind of the experience of listening to a podcast with a friend, except for when maybe I'll put a show on when I'm in the car with my wife and like, I'm... I'm almost apologetic that I'm listening to something that she may not be interested in. But I'm, like, driving, I need something to keep me focused. And uh, she's like, 'Oh no, I'll just read my book'. But yeah, having, having somebody along and experience something, like, together and sharing that show, I think was pretty special. And sometimes I still do come back to that same show, *The Dirtbag Diaries*, when I'm going on road trips with other adventurous, outdoorsy friends and say, 'Hey, if you've never listened to this, you've got to', and I'll, like, put on one of my favourite episodes and get them hooked that way.

Martin Feld 04:28

Now, on the Apple side, I think it's actually pretty interesting that you said you thought it was an Apple thing, because I remember my first experience, seeing podcasts years ago, when I was much younger, was: what is this thing? Exactly like what you said, I was like, I didn't really get it— not being an avid talkback radio listener, which was a lot of that early stuff. But it's interesting that you said you thought it was an Apple thing, and you were there because of your Apple interest. Can you tell me the story of what led you to that Apple interest? How did that interest spark in technology in general?

Jarrold Blundy 05:01

Yeah, it's funny you mentioned the talk radio because I, I always have to like, give my dad some, like, some points back for coolness when I was younger, because we'd always listen to the radio when he was, like, driving me to school and stuff. And I... I never understood why he would want to listen to somebody talk for hours and hours, and now here I am, listening to people talk for hours and hours, and I love it. But the, the tech interest, the Apple interest specifically, I can pinpoint it and it was back in, I guess, probably 2005 or 2006, when uh, my sisters, I have two older sisters, and my cousin got an iPod nano for Christmas one year. And I thought that looked like the coolest thing ever. And I got super-interested in super-obsessed with, like, going on to apple.com and looking at these iPods. And then the next year, these colourful ones came out, and I was like, 'Oh, I have to have this thing!'

Jarrold Blundy 05:54

And I was lucky enough that the next year or two, I did get an iPod nano for Christmas and I have one around here somewhere. But that was it for me: just the iPod, it came out, I thought it was the coolest industrial design; and then it was super fun with the colours and the commercials, and I

went super down the rabbit hole. In fact, I remember going online and trying to find all those skins and mods you could put onto your Windows PC to make it look like Mac OS [X]. So I did a little bit of that, and then what really, I guess, sealed the deal was: I had a friend in Boy Scouts, his name is Robert and he had a Mac; and he would let me play with it when I came over, when he came to my house from time to time, and just kind of realised it was the operating system for me, and I liked what they were doing kind of culturally with music and it just seemed cool. So, I uh, kind of followed the Apple scene since there, I remember going onto macrumors.com, like, every day in school just to see what was going on, and then got my own Mac when I went to college and I guess the rest is history.

Martin Feld 06:54

And when you started reading publications online like *MacRumors*, what was your impression of the community or what can you remember about discovering the people who were discussing this content?

Jarrold Blundy 07:06

Honestly, I don't remember getting into the community very early, um, maybe just like reading some comments from time to time, but I never, never commented myself, never made an account so I could like reply back to anybody; I would just read the article and maybe read the first few comments, but I never got into being part of the discussion or being part of the community. It's kind of hard to remember when, like, I feel like I started talking to other people (not in real life) about Apple stuff or technology, but it might have been with podcasting that I felt like there was more out there. I think one of the first tech shows I started listening to was—honestly I'm not even sure! I know it wasn't *ATP* because I kept hearing people talk about Casey, John and Marco and I didn't know who those people were for quite a while, and then like, 'OK, I finally got to figure out who these hosts that people are talking about!'

Jarrold Blundy 07:53

And I would kind of flip from one show to another until you feel like you've found all the voices that people seem to keep discussing. So it must have been like a Relay FM show of some sort—*Connected* or *Upgrade* or something—that kind of got me down that rabbit hole and realising that there's like a whole community of people that are talking about this. I guess in a similar way, you know, you'd see the links from *MacRumors* to *9to5Mac*, or to *Six Colors*, or *512 Pixels*, or *Ars Technica* or stuff like that, but because I'd never heard their voices, just saw their writing, read their writing, it didn't feel as personable. And I feel like I've picked up more podcasts and voices that way than I ever did reading blogs, until, until in the last couple years that I've gotten into more blogging, but podcasting was definitely where I found that community.

Martin Feld 08:44

Alright, so right there, I'm very interested or intrigued to explore how podcasting led you to blogging. But before we get there...

Jarrold Blundy 08:52

I think first it was just learning more, like, tips and tricks on how to use your computer better and stuff like that, but then you get invested in the people once you kind of go back to the same people time after time, and they leave little nuggets about their personal life. And then you get invested that way, just like, I guess, more 'normal' people I'd say, with air quotes, would follow celebrities of some sort, but because these people have similar interests to me and using computers and making them work better, you feel like you have stuff in common with them. And I don't know if I could, like, pinpoint any significant event. It's just like, going back to the same sources time after time, you feel connected and you feel invested and it's hard to leave those things behind. Like, I've tried to, to cull the number of podcasts I've listened to and the number of blogs I read, just to try and claw back some time in the day, but it's very difficult because you almost feel like you're letting them down or, like, you've already invested so much time, like, it's hard to give it up.

Martin Feld 08:52

...that personable element you mentioned, hearing voices and discovering the voices of the community, connecting that to the culture comment that you said, you felt that you liked the culture of Apple, or the Mac, and the iPod, and the music and all of these things that build on each other. How did you kind of connect to the culture of the people who were writing and speaking about this stuff? What appealed to you in what you were discovering?

Jarrold Blundy 08:52

Mm-hmmm...

Martin Feld 10:17

And what are the podcasts that fill your feed nowadays? Or what are the things that you discovered that you continue to subscribe to?

Jarrold Blundy 10:25

Um, well, let me pull up Overcast here, because that's the only way I'm going to remember.

Martin Feld 10:29

There are a few?

Jarrold Blundy 10:30

There are a few... I went for years and years of just, like, subscribing the shows and putting 'em into queues and different playlists, but never unsubscribing from a show. So I would have, you know, hundreds (probably) of shows that were on my device even if I wasn't listening to them regularly. I would have like a don't-miss list and then when that one got too long, I would make a really-don't-miss list and that would be a little bit shorter but eventually I'd catch up with that and then add another show on there. But the ones that I listened to kind of most regularly and that I really don't miss these days are... I have a couple news ones: *Apple News Today*, I think, does a really good job of just pulling in a few worldwide stories that are happening—with a fairly light feel to it, like, it doesn't get too heavy, doesn't get too in depth, and you can listen to it in, like, 10 minutes. And then also for a near-daily, like, optimism boost, I listen to *The Good News Podcast*, which has been going on for, like, five or six years now—it's just like three or four minutes every day.

Jarrold Blundy 11:33

Those are the ones that kind of start my day, and then I have shows like *AppStories*, and *Clockwise*, and *Connected* and *ATP*... *Core Intuition*, *Cortex*, *Dithering*, *Hemispheric Views*, *Mac Power Users*, *Really Specific Stories*, *The Rebound*, *Reconcilable Differences*, *Ruminate*, *Six Colors*, *The Talk Show*, *Thoroughly Considered*, *Under the Radar*, *Upgrade*, the *Vergecast*, and probably my newest, like ...[laughs] I don't know why I like it so much, but probably for all the same reasons that I've been talking recently, is *Your Daily Lex*. It's a short daily show of just, like, what's going on in some guy's life, and I don't know, it's fun to listen to!

Martin Feld 12:11r

Now that's a huge list to keep track of...

Jarrold Blundy 12:11

I know!

Martin Feld 12:11

...and I'm sure that you don't necessarily listen to every single second of every single show...

Jarrold Blundy 12:14

Mm-hmmm...

Martin Feld 12:14

...because you need to eat and sleep, but when it comes to following a feed of all of those podcasts, how do you keep up with them most of the time? What's the listening context for you and maybe what role do they play?

Jarrold Blundy 12:34

What role do they play? That's a good question. They are, for me, both a time-filler and a—I don't know—brainer engager? Like many people, I think, I get a lot of time listening to podcasts just in the car when I'm driving to work and doing stuff around town. But anytime I'm not like actively engaging my mind with something else, like, I can't listen to music or podcasts when I'm writing or trying to think deeply about something specific. But if my mind was just idle and I'm walking around the house, or running outside or kind of doing anything where my, my mind isn't actively engaged, I'll throw on a podcast and listen to what's new and what's going on and just keep up with what's happening. But I start the day kind of with a couple of podcasts as I'm getting ready for the day, those would be typically the news ones. And then I don't have a lot of time in the car any more, but just throughout the week as I get time I'll put on one of those playlists and they go through pretty fast with Smart Speed and I listen to shows boosted up speed, just a couple of clicks and I kind of get through them that way.

Martin Feld 13:37

Now you mentioned that you use Overcast to listen to your podcasts and that you use Smart Speed; how important is that app to your listening experience?

Jarrold Blundy 13:47

I've experimented with other podcast apps, you know, the built-in one from Apple, Pocket Casts... Castro, I think, probably had the closest run of clawing me away. But those features are super-important to me because they, you know, allow me to listen to more, more shows in less time. Um and I think that they sound good and it kind of works with my brain the same way that, like, an RSS reader does. Shows just come in, I can make folders, or lists or playlists of the ones that I want to listen to in order. Um, you can prioritise 'em, which I use pretty heavily for the shows that I really want to get to first because they're, you know, topical.

Jarrold Blundy 14:25

Yeah, I think that for another app to kind of pull me away, they would have to have similar features, and because I don't spend a lot of time like in the app pushing a bunch of buttons, the design doesn't make a whole lot of difference to me. I do appreciate really good design and applications, but since it's mostly a listening medium, I can overlook quite a lot design for good features. And although I like the design of Overcast, its queueing features, and the voice quality and speediness without making it sound weird—yeah, pretty important to the way I listen.

Martin Feld 14:57

A very clear theme there is that how you order you podcasts, or maybe the time that you save or those different queueing features, that comes down to perhaps customisation or control? How wedded is that to your technological interest? When you use tools like RSS and podcasts, how much control do you want to have over stuff?

Jarrold Blundy 15:20

Yeah, I've really appreciated in the show how you latch onto the things that maybe the guest never even notices. You're just a fantastic interviewer in that way.

Martin Feld 15:30

Oh, thank you!

Martin Feld 15:31

But you're totally right, like, having the ability to control most aspects of listening experience does relate to other things that I do, particularly in my tech life. So, the first thing that comes to mind is, uh, my website that I put together a couple of years ago. And I started on Squarespace, because, you know, I've heard millions of Squarespace ads and, you know, could get a discount by using one of those podcast codes. And uh, that was pretty good for about a year and a half, and then, you know, I just got frustrated that it couldn't do exactly what I wanted, I couldn't put things or organise it in a way that made sense to my mind.

Martin Feld 16:07

And although I didn't have any sort of coding background, uh, with HTML or CSS, uh, I decided to learn just enough to start to figure out how to build a more custom website, uh, where I could tinker and adjust and just fiddle with every little aspect, so I moved my blog from Squarespace to a hosting platform called Blot. And they have good templates that you can start with but if you are feeling adventurous, you can totally customise the the templates in the CSS to make things look exactly the way you want. So, I think that that kind of control really appeals to me, even if I don't end up using every tool in the toolbox, having the ability to learn more and do more over time, um, and make it fit with, you know, what the vision I have in my head or the way I feel like it should work, yeah, that speaks to me.

Martin Feld 16:58

Mmm... and how did you come to the decision that you wanted to start blogging?

Jarrold Blundy 17:03

Just feeling like, I had things that I wanted to say, and I'd heard and read people who said, 'You know, it's important to have your own space on the Internet'.

Jarrold Blundy 17:13

And I'm like, 'Well, I'm doing a lot of reading and I have comments that I want to say, and I've done that through Twitter and through other social networks and stuff, but I feel like I really want to start writing longer pieces and I don't have anywhere to put that. So, it was just a, a need or a feeling that I wanted to try getting more long-form with, with my thoughts on technology and things that are going in my own m-..., in my own life. I never kind of expected it to take off, like,

never would be a like a true—I don't know—substantial thing that I did in my life, but just having somewhere I could put things that I was thinking about and you know, opinions, that's what spurred it. And I'm a little surprised it's still going now, but it's been a lot of fun and still writing fairly regularly.

Martin Feld 17:57

You mentioned that when you listen to podcasts, you feel engaged or it's a time-filler, but you also said that it's something that you do in motion—so, less so with the driving now, you don't drive as much, but...

Jarrold Blundy 18:11

Mm-hmmm...

Martin Feld 18:11

...you're doing something or it's filling time while you're doing something else. Blogging or writing is a different kind of activity. How do you feel differently or what do you get out of writing and publishing your content on the Web, that's different from listening?

Jarrold Blundy 18:27

I'd say the difference is between entertainment and production, if I can kind of boil it down to that far. I feel like when I'm listening to podcasts, it's maybe a little bit more engaging mentally than, like, when watching a TV show, but they live in a similar space in my mind, um, that I'm there mostly to be entertained, somewhat to learn, but mostly just for fun. When I am writing, it's mostly because I have something in my head that I really need to get out, and the only way that I have found to be able to do that is through writing it all down and publishing it and I get this huge thrill just by pressing 'Publish' and then, you know, seeing what happens if anybody engages with it, or if it gets linked out anywhere, which is rare—but I still, you know, get that thrill every single time that I finally gets something out of my head, it's in, like, a physical-digital form and it lives somewhere where I can refer back to it and kind of feel, I guess, a certain sense of pride that it lives somewhere else and maybe other people will read it. But mostly, it's just there for me to know that I've gotten it out of myself and onto paper or onto, onto the Web.

Martin Feld 19:33

And as you've built your archive of blog posts, how do you think that you've changed as a writer or how you participate in the community in the topic that you're interested in?

Jarrold Blundy 19:43

I haven't really thought too much about how my writing has changed over time. I think I've been trying, more recently, to become less formal in the way that I write and more—I don't know, coming back to that same word 'personable'—a little bit more fun in the way, in what I write about

and how I write it. I always enjoyed the aspects of school and like, getting good grades and stuff like that was important to me growing up, so I have this like, ingrained need to have correct grammar and not use apostrophes and things like that, and that really got in, I feel like it kind of got in the way of my writing when I was first starting!

Martin Feld 20:18

It's OK, I can, I can relate to that!

Jarrold Blundy 20:20

Yeah! But now I feel like I'm just trying to be a little more informal and write the way that I would speak, because that's what I found I enjoy reading. So, I want to write something that I would enjoy reading, and yeah, I guess that's that's one major way that it's changed over time. And what I write about... for the first few years, I was fairly focused on just writing about tech stuff. My blog is named *Hey Dingus*, and it was kind of in respect to, you know, the wake-words for things like Siri and the Google Assistant and stuff like that, um, and I enjoyed doing shortcuts, so that was kind of like the theme of my blog. But over time, I've been trying to expand out into different aspects of my life that I'm, you know, interested in, like doing, like writing more about the outdoor recreation and just more personal thoughts.

Jarrold Blundy 21:07

I've actually really been struggling mentally lately with trying to figure out where certain things that I want to say should go, 'cause I have like this main blog that's been fairly tech-focused and has this whole apple kind-of-sort-of theme, and then in the last year, I've gotten into Micro.blog, just as a Twitter replacement and been fairly specifically using that for short posts, not anything long, like I would typically write on my main blog. And I feel like that's a more of a peek into my personal life and like, more personal thoughts and not tech thoughts. And now I'm trying to decide, well, do I want to keep that up or should everything just live in one place? And that's something I haven't really come to a conclusion with yet.

Martin Feld 21:47

Micro.blog is an interesting point that's come up on the show before.

Jarrold Blundy 21:50

Mm-hmmm...

Martin Feld 21:51

Can you talk a little bit about maybe entering that community? You mentioned there how the posting style might be different or has led you to do different content, but how significant has that been in your blogging experience?

Jarrold Blundy 22:04

It's been my favourite social network (if you can call it that) to date. I think going back to what we talked about before, you know, the control that you can have over the display and the way that your content is hosted on the Web. When, you know, Twitter was going downhill and, you know, I didn't feel like that was the community I wanted to be in any more, I decided that, you know, I really should have a place that I own, that I can put these things down. So you know, this, this platform goes down, like offline, or it's just not a place I want to be any more, I can take my content with me.

Jarrold Blundy 22:39

And I had heard about Micro.blog before, a few years ago, I think, maybe when the Kickstarter had kicked off, and I thought that was a really interesting concept but it was before I was ready to, like, make my debut online, I suppose. But getting back into it, as I was exiting Twitter, I've just found it to be such a more calm and friendly place to be, uh, with people that, you know, are interested in the same thing. They're there mostly because they are interested in writing online and, and having that same control and that same ownership that I do, and you know, having those things in common is, is important. Well, I don't know if it's important to me, but it is of value to me.

Jarrold Blundy 23:21

I would love to see more people in that space, but now that you can connect, uh, with the larger social web with Mastodon addresses and potentially Threads down the road, I feel like interoperability is going to be a really good thing for that community overall. You know, you can have your pockets of people in a particular space, but being able to connect with the broader Web, I think, will be really good. And I think Micro.blog kind of, it shows the best of the idea, of the original idea of the Web of everybody having their own space online that they can control and own, but still being able to connect and talk with and share with and link to other people. I think that, uh, Manton and the team there have done a really good job of making it a first-class web citizen, but with the social features that people are looking for and they're always adding more all the time.

Martin Feld 24:13

That's an excellent summary of the service and your experience, and I'm always fascinated to see where these conversations kind of go, here on the podcast, because in the course of your mention and description of Micro.blog, you've reminded me that (I think) that's where I first encountered you. And that's an example of where we meet in this kind of open-web world. And then from there, you also mentioned before, the way that podcasts kind of—thinking about the medium—are entertainment for you, and learning (maybe) secondary.

Jarrold Blundy 24:46

Mm-hmmm...

Martin Feld 24:47

Now, thinking about how that all connects to your blog and how I've discovered you, you also wrote on heydingus.net about your experience of listening to *20 Macs for 2020*, which is an interesting case study that I'm interested in exploring, because it kind of straddles that world of audio, text and video, and you wrote about having listened to that show and explored the different elements of that publication.

Jarrold Blundy 25:13

Mm-hmmm...

Martin Feld 25:14

Can you maybe go into some detail about your recollection of that show? I know it was some time ago, but it would be interesting to know: what prompted you to write about that, and what role did that show play in your fandom or experience of the Mac and technology?

Jarrold Blundy 25:31

Yeah, what prompted me to write about it is: I just feel like podcasts have such a barrier to entry, because they're hard to... hard to share in a short, engaging, actionable way. Like, I love that you can do audio clips in Overcast and some of these other podcast apps, and then share them out onto social networks or your blog, or whatever, and give people a taste of the show that, you know, that you're enjoying, and then link back to it, but it's pretty difficult to connect what's happening in your ears, and then give it to somebody else to try out. So, writing about it was one way that I felt like I could say, 'Hey, this is a really cool thing that other people should check out'. And you may not have listened to podcasts before, but this is a fun one that you can, you know, just jump into it's one episode per week, they're like 15 to 20 minutes, so it's pretty short. And if you're interested in Apple history or the Mac at all, it's one that you're not going to want to miss because the host Jason Snell has such a storied history in the, the Mac community, um, and has experience with many of those 20 Macs that he wrote about, and podcasted about and made videos about.

Jarrold Blundy 26:35

So, writing about it was just my way of sharing my enjoyment of it and hoping other people would also find it and enjoy it too. I actually did go back and listen to a few episodes, and I was really glad they did, because there was... it's such a well-produced podcast to run through both the history of each model and then people's opinions about it, who, you know, were there at the time or had significant opinions to share. It was so different from the other kind of shows that I'd listened to at the time. Most of the shows, as you could tell, are the shows... there are just a few people talking and it's that conversational view—that same type of show that I was so annoyed with, when I was young and in my dad's car, but now it really appeals to me.

Jarrold Blundy 27:16

But *20 Macs for 2020* was different, in that it was like, almost like an investigative report on these old Mac models and why they were important to Jason or to uh, Apple in general, with, you know, short interview audio clips from different pundits, the music interludes, the kind of the fast-paced nature of it that I, that I kind of picked up on. I just thought it was such a neat idea and a cool concept to put together. And I do enjoy those, like, long-term projects that people put together—something that has, like, a beginning and an end—so it seemed like something that would be easy to jump into, add to the queue, and I was really glad that I did, because it was such a neat show. And now it lives on the Internet, hopefully forever, so that people can go back to and you know, learn about old Mac models, so that's something that they're interested in.

Martin Feld 28:03

Going back and exploring that history, what did you get out of that history? Where did it fit in that balance of entertainment and learning?

Jarrold Blundy 28:12

I mean, because I had been such a nerd for Apple stuff for, you know, most of my life at this point, you know, I had gone back and kind of like, looked at the history of the iMac and the Mac laptops and stuff, at least through, I guess, my lifetime. So I didn't really have any experience or knowledge about, like, the original Macintosh or some of the older Power Macs and kind of that, that weird section of maximum between, uh, 1984 and 1998, or something like that. So it was just kind of neat to me to, like, get a more well-rounded history of, you know, the progression of computer design and like what, at the time, what kind of, like, considerations and technological advances made those computers possible, and why they became either hits or why they kind of flopped.

Jarrold Blundy 28:54

And, I don't know, I think it was just interesting to me to, to hear more about, like, the computers that I had either used or interacted with, from a different perspective, or just in general, like, learn more about this whole history of this company that I've been interested in and following for a while that I just didn't have any knowledge of and it was an easy, engaging, fun way to learn. I didn't have to go and do a bunch of research, I just kind of waited for it to show up in my queue, listen along, learn something and said, 'Oh, that was cool!'

Martin Feld 29:35

Is it fair to say that the audio was the core experience for you?

Jarrold Blundy 29:39

It was, yeah. For me, it was definitely a podcast first. Uh, and I did, like, read the articles and watch the videos. I think I watched almost everything... but it was the podcast that I was looking

forward to the most. I thought it was a super-interesting idea to try and do all three mediums for people that, you know, like to consume that content in different ways: you know, if they're a reader first, having an article and pictures and stuff to go with it is actually a concept I've thought about a lot over the last few years; and then also videos for people that, you know, just want to watch a video. But for me, I guess the podcast was the primary product, it felt like it had the most (maybe) love poured into it. I think maybe that's the way Jason saw it as well, was podcast first and the other things maybe secondary—or maybe that's just me, because I like podcasts that that I engaged with it most keenly that way.

Jarrold Blundy 30:28

But the idea of doing the same content in multiple mediums, I think, is probably where the Web is going, overall. I always thought that Ben Thompson, who writes *Stratechery*, who also has, like, an audio feed for all of his articles—I don't think he does videos, but he has audio and text for people that want to read or listen to his stuff that way—and he's been doing it making the content in both formats for a really long time. I thought that was an awesome way to make it most, more accessible and more, I guess, just more more accessible for people that want to, you know, consume content in one way or the other. Um, and then projects like *20 Macs for 2020* kind of cemented in my mind, 'Oh, this is, this is a really good idea that people, I think, should be doing more'. And all these applications that you can, like, read articles, but then also have them spoken to you, that's become important to me recently. I think that that is bridging the gap for either readers or listeners to get the same content.

Martin Feld 31:22

That's brilliant. As far as accessibility goes, how much do you think about accessibility in technology daily, whether it's for podcasts and articles, like you said, or the devices that you use?

Jarrold Blundy 31:34

I think about it most specifically when I am creating something of my own for the Web, so like on my blog or when I'm, you know, posting on Micro.blog, and I guess, the fairly narrow scope of the way that I think about accessibility, even though it is such a broad topic, but I think about most specifically, like when I'm like adding images to the articles that I post and making sure that I have alternative image descriptions and all that stuff. And I've tried to make tools that will make that easier for other people to do as well. Back when Wordle was all the craze, there was a discussion that popped up about, you know: this is fairly inaccessible for people that use screen readers, because it's just, like, 'Yellow square, green square, green square', when it's being read back to you.

Jarrold Blundy 32:18

I remember kind of building off of a shortcut that Federico Viticci had made to make it make that square of emoji into an actual image and add a, add a description of, like, how the game ended up, like, 'Oh, it was a score of five out of six', or something like that, and you know, made a shortcut that I thought made it even more accessible. And you know, that was a fun project. And ever since then I think that it's been something I think about whenever I'm writing or producing a line, just making sure that there are ways for people who are both reading text and, and you know, engaging visually with the Web, or people who are listening to it, that they can get as close to the same experience as possible.

Jarrold Blundy 32:18

I think that a lot of the accessibility features that Apple puts into its operating system are really cool. I'm super-interested in like the personal, personalised voice that's coming out in iOS 17 and the operating systems this fall. I think that kind of going back to what I was just talking about, about having multiple ways for people to engage with content and listen and, uh, consume media, I think that that could be a really good bridge. I have this idea that people who are writing on the Web, like myself, could write an article and then use that personal voice and like, shoot it through their phone or through their computer and then have it an audio file spit out that maybe they didn't take the time to, you know, physically record, but it would still be in there in a voice that sounds like their voice, and then, you know, put that alongside with the text that they're reading online, I think that would be really neat. So those are things like excessively that I think about, I think it's mostly in, like, a writing context, but there are so many awesome features out there that just make computers easier for more people to use.

Martin Feld 33:59

It's cool that you've thought about that for your own resources online, whether it's for people who need it or just to explore or try something different. You also mentioned before how much interest you have or respect you have for these long-term projects that people do like, like as you're explaining Jason Snell with *20 Macs for 2020*. What are some other things that maybe you've done to develop or build out your site or other projects you've done, or is it purely writing or is there more?

Jarrold Blundy 34:27

Yeah, I guess I have kind of, like, little side projects that live on the site and that's, that's kind of their home. But yeah, I guess I do have some, like longer-, longer-term projects that haven't necessarily had an end yet, but they certainly have their beginning. A few of them, like, I write a link round-up every Sunday called *7 Things*, where I, like, just pull together seven things that I found interesting on the Web. So that's something that I do, like, on a weekly basis. Um, I have all these, like, little lists that have lived just in my mind or, like, in the Notes app on my phone. Um, I decided, well, we should have a place on my site as well, I'll just go in and, you know, write down

cool quotes that I've heard or, you know, funny phrases or funny names for businesses that I've notice, er, noticed. And usually I just write them down, they live on my phone, but I just put these together and share them with other people. So there's like a whole projects list on my site of these like little ongoing things that I'll occasionally add to over time.

Jarrold Blundy 35:20

And then the biggest one I would say is, even though I don't do a lot of coding, I've, like, dabbled a little bit with, like, JavaScript and the things that I need to learn as far as HTML and CSS for building my website, but in that same vein, I really like and have fun with building shortcuts for Apple's platforms. I was talking with my wife about this earlier recently: she's a big video-game player, and she gets a lot of value out of, like, exploring worlds and completing challenges and, like, solving problems in video games; and I'm not much of a video-game person, but I feel like I get a similar level of engagement and, like, it tickles my brain in the same way that a video game would to solve some little tech problem that I have by building a shortcut that will do it, you know, automatically for me. And I might spend hours and hours on something that will only save me a couple minutes over time, but when I think about it as like a game, I don't feel like it's time wasted or time not well spent, it's just a fun way to solve a problem, do it in a fun way and gain these little skills of problem solving along the way. So I write about, about building those shortcuts and share kind of the techniques that I've learned over time, and I would say that's another, another side project of the site that I end up writing about quite a bit.

Martin Feld 36:35

That's fantastic, and just looking at the site, now, as you speak about it, I see that you have a store. Can you told me the story behind that? What led you to develop a store for the site?

Jarrold Blundy 36:47

So, the store is just a Cotton Bureau site where, um, you can purchase little t-shirt designs that I've made. And I guess the genesis was, you know, I had this logo that I created for my site with the Apple six colours, and there's kind of a story behind those little waves back from middle school. And, I had... some friends and I had when we'd, like, write notes to each other, we'd, like, sign it with our own little symbol and that one looks similar to the, like, what I'd use and always had an affinity for almost that yin-yang sort of look. So I found a uh, a Noun Project, I'm pretty sure, The Noun Project site, a similar design and downloaded it and picked it up in Pixelmator and added the Apple six colours, because I thought I'd be writing mostly about Apple stuff.

Jarrold Blundy 37:33

So I had this logo and then said, 'Well, I want to have a t-shirt', which I happen to be wearing today! So mostly I made it for myself, I just wanted to be able to have a t-shirt with my own logo on it and then maybe I'll try and make some other stuff. And it's just been, like, a very background process for me of like, 'Oh, what would make a cool t-shirt design?', and if I think of one and take

the time to put it together, then I'll put it up on Cotton Bureau as a potential sale. I haven't really sold very many of them. I think I've sold most of my *Ted Lasso* ones, because I was super-into that show and had a couple (I thought) pretty good ideas for t-shirts there. But yeah, they're just a, it's not really a moneymaker for me, it's just a place that I can create an idea from my head and make it exist in the physical world, and it was mostly just for me.

Martin Feld 38:22

And that's great. And taking into account all the stuff that you've said, whether you're passively listening to or watching content from this community, whether you're writing actively or running this store, or doing the gamified kind of shortcuts stuff that you mentioned, this is a very large, creative practice... like, there's a lot of time investment here as a fan of the topics that you're interested in.

Jarrold Blundy 38:51

Mmm...

Martin Feld 38:51

How do you think about that portion—if you want to put it that way—of your life? Or how does it balance with or interact with other elements of your daily life?

Jarrold Blundy 39:01

It's very, honestly, secondary in the way that I think about it.

Martin Feld 39:07

Mmm...

Jarrold Blundy 39:07

Like, I have the things that I do in the physical world and day to day and I'm always kind of, like, thinking about what I want to write about or what would make a good link post or what I might want to do next with it, just as like a background process in my mind. But it's never, never felt like a primary focus of something that I could devote time to, I always feel like I'm sneaking time in to, to write or to build it. And maybe that's because it doesn't, it's not like a business for me; it doesn't really, it doesn't pay any bills, so I feel like time on the site is more personal fun than for something that I would consider primary. But I do have, like, a lot of ideas of things that I want to implement on it, I just don't end up finding or making the time for it because it's not living on the front plate of my life.

Jarrold Blundy 39:53

It's almost like, like a hidden side of myself almost: because, like, the people that I've met online that I feel connected with, they don't see me doing things here in real life; um, and then people in real life don't really know that I have this website or that I have these other interests, like the outdoors and technology don't often connect, like, they're often seen as pretty opposite. People go to the outdoors to escape technology, um, and I do that as well, but I also kind of like figuring out where they can overlap. So it almost feels like, like a uh, hidden side of my life for like, my personality, or the things that I'm interested in. And I'm OK with that, like, I don't really need my, my family and close friends to be like asking about, like, what am I write, what I'm writing about. In fact, it's almost a little, little embarrassing when somebody who I do know, say, 'Hey, what are you doing on your website?'

Jarrold Blundy 40:44

I'm like, 'Oh, I'm still writing it'. But yeah, it's just like a fun side project that I can, you know, use as a creative outlet and um, engage a part of my brain that I don't get to engage with, you know, day to day in my job, or, you know, things that I'm doing in real life.

Martin Feld 40:59

Do they kind of feel like an escape from each other? Because there's a lot of pressure or there's certain stereotypes of 'One should monetise; it should become your main gig'. You said, you're OK with it—this is a good balance for you?

Jarrold Blundy 41:14

Yeah, I think so. I don't like, like it say it a lot but I don't actually like saying, 'in real life', as opposed to like, digital life or fake life, because I feel like the way that you present yourself online in writing and publishing and stuff is just as real as anything else. I don't think we've come up with good terminology to explain these things yet. Maybe we will down the road. But yeah, I feel like it's a fairly good balance. I do wish I had more time set aside that I could, can write and produce and, you know, tinker with the things that I want to do. You know, I have a lot of plans but you know, making the time all around everything else that I want to do is it's very difficult. But I'm happy with it for now, I feel like it could grow over time and become something that I feel like I could dedicate more time to. But yeah, there's just so many things that I want to do in life, that it's hard to, hard to find that balance.

Martin Feld 42:01

What are some of those things that you'd like to do, whether it relates specifically to these kinds of projects, or your website or writing or elsewhere?

Jarrold Blundy 42:09

Ooh, it's such an open-ended question! So I do a lot of rock climbing, that's probably the thing that gives me the most enjoyment: I just feel so focused and in tune with myself, when I'm out rock climbing, you know? You have to push everything else aside and focus on what you're doing very specifically with your hands and your feet and the movement and the way that you position your body and, and again, solve problems, but in a very physical way. So I have a bunch of climbing objectives that I'd like to do and anytime that there's good weather outside, like there is now, I'm like, 'Ooh, I wonder if today is the day that I can go out climbing!' But that's also something that you have to have, like, a partner with, so even when there is good weather, I can't always get out and do that. So if I can't find a partner to go climbing with, maybe that's a day that I'll spend inside and start writing or working on the blog. And I guess that's kind of the way that I end up thinking about a lot of time like, like I said, my writing and my website is a secondary thing, if I can't find one of my primary things to fill my time with. So rock climbing, backpacking, exploring, in general, just doing things outside is where I feel most alive, I would say.

Jarrold Blundy 43:14

And then some things that I want to do digitally, is figure out whether I'm going to have one, one website or two, whether it's all going to live on *Hey Dingus* or whether it should, uh, have that secondary place for smaller short posts. I really want to update the design of my website. I'm pretty happy with it. But I would like to be able to move from the top-bar navigation to a side navigation and I haven't learned enough to figure out how to do that yet, so doing the research and tinkering around with that. That's something that will take some time and will be kind of like the 3.0 redesign on my website at some point.

Jarrold Blundy 43:49

A project that I might work on a little bit later today is: I downloaded all of my old tweets from Twitter last year when I stopped posting to, you know, that website. And I've got them all living on like the tweet history feature of Micro.blog, but I actually feel like I want those to live alongside everything else, like as a first-class tier of, you know, these are things that I posted. So I want to migrate those from being in that tweet archive to just, like, be normal, short blog posts. So I gotta figure out how I want to do that, whether they have a specific category or tag and you know, migrate them onto the the main Micro.blog website.

Jarrold Blundy 44:28

I have a huge backlog of shortcuts that I want to create and, and write about and share. I'm in the middle of moving everything from, that I've made from the RoutineHub catalogue, where people share shortcuts and can do updates with them over time and moving those onto my own website —again, following that theme of wanting to own the things that I'm creating and being able to take them with me. There's a bunch of stuff. I've got a list and the Things app, hundreds of items

long that I'm sure I'll never get to, but you know, from time to time, I'll pick one out and decide, 'Oh, today's the day I'm gonna work on that'.

Martin Feld 45:01

So you're pretty busy.

Jarrold Blundy 45:03

I fill my time. I don't always do the things that I intend to. Like, last night, I spent a couple of hours watching Reels of, like, climbing videos on Instagram. And that's, that filled my time that I could have been climbing or could have been writing or something like that, but you fill the time with what you fill it with.

Martin Feld 45:18

But I'm sure that was a combination of entertainment and learning as well, in its own way.

Jarrold Blundy 45:22

It was. Yep, you're absolutely right. And yep, I enjoy, you know, learning different ways of building rock-climbing anchors, even if I've seen it a million times before, I feel like I'm getting something out of it, the way, you know, this person presents it or, um, the way this knot is tied and things like that. Much like with podcasting, like, people talk about the same topics, but everybody has their own history, their own opinions, their own context to put it in. I think that's why I haven't burned out on listening to, you know, this one main topic of Apple and tech, even though I'm listening, I've listened to it from a lot of different people, just different angles.

Martin Feld 45:58

You have covered a lot in this discussion, and speaking of open-ended questions, this will be my last one: is there anything that I haven't asked you that you would like to address or anything from your history or experience as a producer, a consumer? What would you like to mention?

Jarrold Blundy 46:16

You haven't asked me my favourite colour...

Martin Feld 46:18

Your favourite colour? Of the six colours or of all possible colours?

Jarrold Blundy 46:22

Of all possible colours! It's orange, by the way.

Martin Feld 46:26

What do you like about orange?

Jarrold Blundy 46:27

I don't know. It's just appealed to me. So I've been eyeing your uh, your iBook in the background there. It's a very good-looking computer.

Martin Feld 46:34

Thank you very much. Orange stands out, so it always uh, manages to capture people's attention.

Jarrold Blundy 46:39

Yeah, it does.

Martin Feld 46:40

I'm glad it worked for you.

Jarrold Blundy 46:41

I feel like orange is making a comeback, like, with the uh, the accent colour of the Apple Watch Ultra's action button, and, I don't know, seems like Jony Ive had an affinity for orange as well.

Martin Feld 46:53

Well, I believe Tangerine... was it? Was that in its history? I think actually the design firm that he worked for?

Jarrold Blundy 46:58

Yeah, you're right!

Martin Feld 46:59

There you go.

Jarrold Blundy 46:59

Yep, yep. You're right.

Jarrold Blundy 47:01

All these things come around. Well look, with that fantastic insight on the colour orange. I want to thank you, Jarrod, for joining *Really Specific Stories* and taking the time to share your experience with all of the listeners.

Jarrold Blundy 47:14

Oh, thank you very much. This has been an absolute pleasure and I thank you for inviting me on.