

EPISODE 167**[INTRODUCTION]**

"DW: Michael Jordan's assistant is here. Turns out, that morning – Michael Jordan is supposed to shoot on January 16th. The morning of the 15th, when Sarah had been there early starting to set up, Michael Jordan's assistant came into the space and was asking what was going on. Where was everybody? Why wasn't everything set up? And Sarah goes, "Well, we are setting up. We'll be ready in the morning." And his assistant goes, "Oh, no. We're supposed to do it today." And Sarah goes, "No. You told us the 16th." The assistant goes through her phone and goes, "Oh, I sent you guys the wrong day. Can you do it today? Can you do it this afternoon?"

That obviously sets off Sarah to start sending text messages to me and try to figure out what's going on. We now have – instead of having 24 hours to get this thing ready for Michael Jordan, we have like three hours to get this thing ready for Michael Jordan. And I'm literally on the plane, again, we've been chasing this guy forever and never got him. I would equate it to like getting ready to record Halley's Comet and then you just set the telescope up. And just as it's coming by, the power cord gets kicked out or something and you're like, "This thing sucks. This thing is not coming back for 76 years. Somebody do something."

[00:01:20] LW: Hello, friends. And welcome back to the Light Watkins show, where I interview ordinary folks just like you and me who've taken extraordinary leaps of faith in the direction of their path, their purpose or what they've identified with as their mission. And in doing so they've been able to positively impact and inspire the lives of many other people who've either heard about their story or who've witnessed them in action or people who've directly benefited from their work.

This week on the show, I'm in conversation with someone that I've known for his entire life. His name is Drew Watkins. And I know him because he's my younger brother. As you may remember I grew up, in Alabama. I've got three brothers. One older. Two younger. And Drew

and I are three years apart. We both attended the same college, which is Howard University in Washington, D.C.

And anyways, I've been wanting to have Drew on my podcast for a while because I'm such a huge admirer of his work and of his creativity for very long time. And you're probably familiar with some of his work as well, especially if you are a sports fan. Drew has been working as a creative director at Turner Sports and Bleacher Report, two huge brands in sports. And he's been doing this for over two decades. He's created some of the most popular trailers for major sports events like the NBA Forever piece which featured current NBA players playing in games with some of the most iconic former players.

He also wrote and directed a piece that aired just before the Chicago All-Star Game in the same year that Kobe Bryant passed away. And for that spot, he shares his crazy story about how there was a scheduling miscommunication. And Michael Jordan who was featured in that spot showed up a day earlier than he was expected and how Drew was able to still pull all of that together for MJ.

All in all, Drew has written and created popular sports trailers and pieces with everyone, from Jay-Z, to Jamie Foxx, President Barack Obama, Chadwick Boseman, Kobe Bryant, Snoop Dogg, Bryan Cranston, Kevin Hart, Dave Chappelle, Billy Crystal, I mean, the list of people he's worked with is wild. And he has amassed 30 Emmy Awards over his 25-year career, many of which came from his work with Inside the NBA on TNT, which, as you know, is hosted by Shaquille O'Neal, Charles Barkley and company.

And over the years of prolific writing and directing, Drew has developed what I believe is a very useful way of thinking about the process of creation. In fact, every time I see one of his pieces on television, I'm so inspired by the heart and soul he puts into his work that I'll often get him on the phone and I'll start asking him a million questions about all of the different nuances in that creative process. And it's not unusual for him to start one of those kinds of projects even a year before it airs.

And so, that's why I wanted to bring him on my show to talk about. Not so much about his dozens of Emmys or the celebs he's worked with. Although that stuff is interesting, too. But how he approaches his own creative process and what we can learn from that and apply to our lives.

We'll start like we always start by going over Drew's backstory to give context to how he ended up where he is and what inspired him along the way. And then we'll break down the pillars of his creative process, which will often involve pairing seemingly unrelated elements together. And we'll use real-life examples of problem solving that he employed on set while working with very big names in sports and entertainment. And after hearing Drew's story, I suspect that you'll think about the creative process differently as well.

Without further ado, let us dive into to my fascinating conversation with my dear brother, Mr. Drew Watkins.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:05:31] LW: Drew Watkins, welcome to my podcast. It's good to see you.

[00:05:35] DW: Yeah, thank you. Thank you for having me.

[00:05:40] LW: Normally I like to start these conversations talking about childhood. And usually, I don't know anything about the person's childhood. But I'm intimately familiar with your childhood. But I'm going to still ask you questions as though I'm not as familiar considering that we grew up in the same house.

[00:06:02] DW: Right.

[00:06:03] LW: Talk to me about your earliest childhood memories as it relates to whatever your favorite activities or toys were as a young person.

[00:06:15] DW: Earliest childhood memories. That's a good one. Early childhood memories are a lot of television. A lot of watching television as you probably remember. That was a pretty – I'd call that a staple activity in our house. It was very interesting because it was a source of a lot of

joy and entertainment at times. It was also a source of a lot of friction at times. Because I remember us, we had an age gap. My younger brother is 18 months younger than me. You and my older brother, there was a three-year gap from me to you and a four-year gap for me to my oldest brother. Sometimes we didn't want to always watch the same thing. Those were the days where you're fighting over the remote control. That was part of the experience, four boys in the house trying to figure out what to watch.

We all liked watching stuff. We all liked watching movies. And we all like to have in control at times. I just remember a lot of fights kind of generating from that. But my earliest memories were just watching shows, watching movies. Our mom was a huge movie person, as you know. That was the thing we did a lot.

And I would say that fascination with movies and TV was something that stuck with me as a young child. And that was something that kind of was definitely a factor in me starting to want to play with cameras as a kid and do things like that because I was fascinated with these movies. I was fascinated with these TV shows. I was fascinated with where that stuff came from and how it was being generated. Who was doing it? When I got the understanding that, "Oh, it's done by people and it's done with cameras." And I start to make that early, early, early connection. It was a very natural thing for me.

[00:08:03] LW: Hmm. Do you remember when Donald – we call our dad Donald. Do you remember when Donald used to come in and we'd all be watching television in the living room at seven o'clock? And it'd be like the end of the show. We were just about to get to the big reveal, the big resolution, and he'd come in from work and just pick up the remote as if no one else was in the room and just flipped to the news? Do you remember that happening? Or is that just me?

[00:08:23] DW: I remember that. What I remember more, I remember us all staying up late to watch HBO or something. And generally, it was you and my older brother, our older brother, Donald Jr., who was controlling the TV.

And I remember you guys kind of guiding us into stuff on HBO that was adult, young adult stuff. And I remember occasionally our parents would come in the room and we would all have to like

run, and scatter and hide because it was like Porky's or it was Risky Business or, yeah, stuff like that. People running around naked on TV. And we weren't supposed to be watching that.

And I just remember everybody scattering running out of the room different ways trying to hide. Pretending that they weren't the ones in there watching it. But I remember that happening over and over and over again. That was pretty funny.

[00:09:23] LW: You mentioned in another interview you got this video camera. Was it called a PXL2000 or something like that?

[00:09:30] DW: Yeah, PXL2000. Yeah.

[00:09:32] LW: Do you remember asking for that camera? Or did they just decided to give it to you?

[00:09:35] DW: Yes. I do remember asking for it.

[00:09:37] LW: How did you find it? In the Sears catalog or something?

[00:09:40] DW: No. No. There was a commercial for it on television. And one of the things we used to do – this is an old school thing that people don't do anymore because toy stores aren't a thing anymore and Toys R Us is like out of business now. But as you recall, periodically, our mom would take us to a toy store, Toys R Us, partly as an activity, partly just to let us run around. We didn't always get stuff. But partly just to kind of run around and see cool stuff.

I remember I had seen the commercial for this camera, PXL2000, and we were in Toys R Us. And I was running around looking for regular toys and I passed by it in the store. And I could not believe that I was seeing this same camera that I had seen in the commercial on the shelf. And our mom was there. And I immediately called her attention to it. And I was like, "This is amazing. I would love to have this." You know, however a kid asks for whatever they asked for, "Oh, I love this camera."

I think it might have even caught her a little bit off guard. I'm pretty sure it was a higher priced item. It was a video camera. And at the time, if I remember correctly, there was two models of it. They had one model that was just the camera. And then they had like the combo model. That was the camera and also like a little crappy five-inch, seven-inch black and white TV that came along with it. It was like the combo where you could play back the stuff that you recorded. And the PXL2000, it was this little crappy camera that records video on audio tapes. It was a very basic kind of kids' starter camera.

I just remember going on and on about this thing, "I got to have this thing. Can you get me this thing?" I can't remember if she got it for me then or if it was later, like a birthday or a Christmas thing. But I remember just seeing it in the commercial and then seeing it in the store and just being amazed at the thing I saw on the commercial was now actually in the store right in front of me and I could like touch the box. It's gotten so close to me. It was amazing.

[00:11:49] LW: What did you plan to do with the camera? Did you have a vision? Like, "I'm going to do movies. I'm going to just —"

[00:11:54] DW: No. I knew I could record stuff with it. I just wanted to get it and start recording stuff. I didn't know really what that even meant. I didn't really have a concept that I would make movies or put stuff together. I just knew I could get it and I could record stuff. And I could control what was on the TV. That was the part that was fascinating by me. It wasn't necessarily making movies. We watched a lot of TV. And I love watching TV.

And the idea that the next thing I could watch on TV would be something that I did and I controlled and a shot that I set up on the TV. The TV is like this thing in your house that everybody comes around and sits around and has everybody's attention. And it's very important. And everybody gets quiet and they watch it. And it's the TV. it was very important. And the fact that like the idea that I could put stuff on the TV and people could gather around and watch that was just like mind-blowing to me.

[00:12:48] LW: Did you have any recollection of any ideologies or philosophies that our parents echoed in the house when you were growing up? For me, for instance, I remember just hearing

our dad talk about hard work and being an entrepreneur. And that's kind of what stuck with me. I'm curious to hear what stuck with you.

[00:13:06] DW: Yeah, I remember that. I would say of the two of them, of our mom and dad, our dad was definitely the inspirational mantra type. Repeating mantras. Finding things. Hard work. I remember one of the ones he used to use was we'd be sleep on the weekend and he would come in and like wake us up and be like, "What are you sleeping for? Don't you know? You're already behind. The black man's behind. You got to get up. You got to start doing stuff. You got to be productive."

And it's like these little kids trying to sleep in on the weekend and he's coming in like turning the lights on and throwing the covers back and –

[00:13:42] LW: Giving us errands to do.

[00:13:43] DW: Yeah, give you stuff to do and telling you how far you're behind. I'm like, "Who am I behind?" It was stuff like that. And he was a repeater. He repeated the mantra. Things that he thought were important. Stuff about being a leader. He would repeat that. If you're around him, you're going to hear those things over and over and over again. He's driving you somewhere, you're going to hear that stuff over and over and over again. He just repeated these mantras. But it was all very, I would say, positive, and all very encouraging and inspirational. And he was relentless with it. I do remember that.

I don't know if your memories are exact same as mine. But I just remember him just like drilling stuff in your head over and over again. That repetition.

[00:14:23] LW: Mm-hmm. And what were some of your other inspirations? Because we grew up in Montgomery, Alabama. It was not exactly the film capital of the country or anything like that. What was inspiring your creativity?

[00:14:34] DW: Yeah, you're right. I mean, it wasn't. It wasn't the creativity capital of the world. It probably wasn't even the creative capital of Alabama. I think what I've learned about myself when I think about those times and what was inspiring me, I think you try to find inspiration from

what you can see, from what you have access to. And this is obviously pre-internet. Pre-social media. Pre-computers really at that time. Very, very, very, very, very early computers. But kind of pre for the formative years, for my elementary school years.

You kind of learn about what you can see. Obviously, we had a large family. I had a younger brother growing up with me and two older brothers. You and my oldest brother, Donald Jr. Honestly, you two guys, my older brothers, were my first real creative inspiration. In a sense that, first, you see something, you see people doing things and it starts to create the definition and the examples of creativity and outside the box thinking.

That takes form. And like you guys were – I thought you guys were great artists. You were drawing all the time. And from what it looked like to me, as a guy who was three, four years younger, it looked like it was almost like a competition even of, "Oh, I'm going to draw a cartoon. I'm going to make a comic book. Oh, I'm going to draw a cartoon. I'm going to make a comic book. Oh, I'm going to draw this. I'm going to draw – oh, look. Look, I'm going to draw that." That's what I saw you guys doing. But I don't know if it was like cooperative or like one-upsmanship. But it was like this constant cycle of these two guys kind of just expressing themselves not even necessarily for school. Or nobody was telling you to do it. It wasn't projects. You guys were just having fun drawing stuff, drawing these cartoons and these comic books.

And for somebody like me who occasionally like to read a comic book, to have a store-bought comic book and be amazed by it. And then to go in the next room where your older brothers are and see stuff laid out on the bed of comics being drawn by people you know, it really starts to like make you think, "Oh, wow. This stuff that I like comes from people. And I think I know some of these people who can do some of this stuff. I wonder if I – do I have that ability?"

You guys were early inspirations for me for sure. Just the stuff you were doing. And again, I would love to know your perspective on it because I don't know why you guys did that stuff. I don't know what got you into it. I don't know what was pushing you guys along. But I loved it.

[00:17:22] LW: You couldn't draw?

[00:17:24] DW: Well, initially, I could not. I didn't even have a concept for wanting to draw. Nobody said, "Hey, start drawing." And then once I saw you guys draw and like let that soak in for a few years, in my own time, yeah, I started drawing. I just started copying what you guys would do. I would see you sit down and I'd see the techniques. I'd see how you would draw. I would watch you draw. I would watch how you would model a person or how you would draw boxes for the individual story points of a comic book. How you would do dialogue? How you would put it all together? How one thing – I would watch you guys do that.

And, yeah. Eventually, I just started doing it. And after a little while I was like, "Oh, okay. Wow. I've developed the ability to draw." But that was purely like from watching you guys do it and being three, four years ahead of me and having that chance to kind of study it. That was what kind of pushed me into it.

[00:18:23] LW: It's funny because we drew a lot because Noki and Kevin Jenkins also were great artists. I thought everybody would know how to draw because it just came so naturally to us. But we would all like be in competition to draw these different comics and come up with our own characters and stuff like that.

And as you were talking, something that occurred to me, is even though Montgomery, Alabama is not the creative capital of maybe even Alabama, because it's so incredibly boring, you have to kind of find your own creativity. And I think that's one of the outlets that we had was creativity. And it sounds like creating these videos, these movies, these tiny movies. No pun intended.

We had a dog named Tiny. And I remember that was the first movie that I remember that you shot or edited or put together or whatever. But you also had your own sort of friend group. Were these guys creative like you were creative? Or talk a little bit about your peer group and how that influenced your creativity.

[00:19:19] DW: I mean, not in the sense and not in the pursuits that I was interested in really. The thing about my friend group is, a little background, once I start transitioning into junior high and high school level, which is where my framework that I'm still friends with today. Where I started really developing those, those early friends. We were all kind of in this track, this educational track that was the gifted programs.

And there's this thing that you know, of course from our high school, academic motivational program. That was part of our high school.

[00:19:53] LW: I got kicked out of it.

[00:19:57] DW: That's probably a whole – another chapter of the story and explain that. Because you guys were, again, three and four years ahead of me. High school was three years. I was not really familiar with your experience in high school. We didn't have the overlap that me and you would end up having in college where we were in the same school at the same time.

I really have no understanding or no information about you guys' experience in high school. But I do know you guys, we went to the same high school because the academic program was nested with just a regular public school. Even though you left the academic program, which I don't have no details on, we both did go through the same high school.

[00:20:39] LW: I didn't have a choice. It was like I left that. I got demoted to the regular school. But anyway, go ahead.

[00:20:47] DW: But in that environment, the stuff that we were doing, the stuff that we were talking about outside of class, the stuff that my friends were into, it was much more on the standard academic track. Even a lot of like the extracurricular stuff was clubs and activities associated with that.

It's Scholars' Bowl, and Model United Nations, and Trivia, and Spanish club, French Club. Things of that nature. A lot of my friends were very active in a lot of activities and it was more stuff along those lines. I was doing things related to making videos. I won't even say filmmaking. I'll just say making videos starting from that early, early 11, 12-ish age through junior high and into high school. I was just kind of carrying that on on my own because it wasn't part of our day-to-day life. We didn't talk about it in school.

I was the guy who, when they come over my house, I would interview them and we'd make our movies and run around in the yard and I'd record them. And we'd do silly stuff, and we'd make

parodies, and little silly music videos and things like that. But I was kind of more just kind of doing that as an extension of stuff that I've been doing at an earlier age. While my friend group was more on that academic track of not really focusing on that because it wasn't really part of the day-to-day outside of their one friend me who was kind of making it a habit.

And again, this is early and mid-90s. It was not the way it is now where everybody has a camera. Everybody has 4K. Everybody has editing software, whether they know it or not, on their phone. Everybody is a filmmaker. Everybody's a content creator. Everybody knows how many views they got last week. It wasn't that kind of thing. To have a video camera was a special thing. You had to go out of your way as a household to have a video camera. And you really only busted it out for maybe a birthday party, maybe a wedding probably. And that was it.

I was looking through my son's – I have a son and a daughter. I was looking through his videos from the first year or two when he was born. And I'm looking through, scrolling through and I'm counting dozens and dozens and dozens of videos. I don't have any videos of myself probably until maybe college. Maybe later. Like an actual video of yourself doing something as a kid. An actual video.

There might be something that exists somewhere like a birthday party or something. But just think – I was just counting all his videos and I was just thinking about how I just don't have any. But that it wasn't so common. That maybe was the other thing that kept my friends from also getting their own camera and making their own little clips. It was just the time that we were living in. It just wasn't – it wasn't that prevalent of a thing.

[00:23:35] LW: That's a good point. I don't know if I have any videos. I'm trying to remember the earliest video I had. Probably giving the high school speech is the earliest video I remember.

[00:23:46] DW: I literally watched the video of my son like two seconds after he was born. I have the video of that. I have the video of my daughter literally as she was pulled out and they put her on the table. I have the video of that. And I was thinking, "I have a picture of myself maybe as a kid, as a baby. But that's about it. It's crazy."

I remember that speech, by the way. You gave that speech. Was that graduation?

[00:24:12] LW: That was graduation. Yeah.

[00:24:14] DW: Yeah, I remember that. That was cool. And that was the other thing, too. The art and the drawing was cool. The thing that was underrated was like you guys would do captions, and dialogue and little stories, which, from an inspiration and like creativity standpoint, was just as impressive to me as the actual pictures of the characters. You would have their dialogue. And you would have the little scene descriptions. And you would have – I mean, this was storytelling. Not just art and not just drawing.

I mean, I liked the drawing. But I think, looking back, I think the larger appeal was the storytelling behind it, too. Because it was funny. The jokes were funny. The characters said funny things. I laughed when I read, when I would sneak in and take those things. Or when you guys were out of the house and I would go into your room and search, and find them and read them. Push past the playboys that y'all had hidden under the mattress, find the comics, read the comics, laugh, put them back. That was part of it, too, you know?

[00:25:16] LW: Yeah. As you were in high school now thinking about going to college, what was your idea of success at that time in your life would you see for yourself?

[00:25:27] DW: Leaving high school, going to college, I was having the realization that I could focus on production. That I could focus on it. That I was aware. When I was going to Howard, I was aware that they had classes for television production. I knew that's something that I was interested in. And I was excited by that because it was kind of mind-blowing that having come out of high school, again, this academic program where it's calculus, and AP English, and physics, and chemistry and all this stuff, the idea that, "Oh, I can actually pick classes that focus on stuff that I'm excited about."

I was excited about that because it did represent taking a real step towards getting closer to a goal of maybe having a job one day where I could focus on that like full time. That was kind of the early plan. Or at least that was in my head that this path existed. I wouldn't call it – I don't know if I had an idea for what success looked like. Because it was also new. And nobody was really – I didn't really have anybody to talk about that in particular, focus. I didn't really have a

production mentor or a guidebook. There wasn't a lot of resources about that. I was actually kind of just trying to do it. And hopefully, I would have some success with it before anybody realized what I was doing.

[00:26:55] LW: That's what I was thinking. You didn't have any. There was nobody who we knew who was in production. How did you know you wanted to do that? There was no example.

[00:27:03] DW: I did it a lot. I did it in some form or fashion from when I got that camera, that first play camera, the PXL2000. And eventually kind of wore that one out and then got a better – a real VHS camera.

From that point, I was using it and doing things with it and becoming proficient at it a lot. I knew I wanted to keep going with something related to capturing imagery and manipulating imagery. I didn't really have anybody to talk to about it. But it was probably close to people say stuff like follow your passions and stuff like that. I wasn't thinking about it in those terms. I wasn't thinking in terms of like following my heart, following my passions. But it's what I did. It's what I did whenever I had free time.

There's a couple of things in your life, especially at that age, a 16-year-old kid, 16, 17-year-old kid. The things you'll stay up all night for without being told. You'll stay up all night if you're forced to write a paper or if you are on the borderline of that C and you really need to B. And the only way to do it is sit up and memorize all this stuff on this chart. You can kind of gut your way through an all-nighter.

I would do all-nighters on my own all the time just to edit stuff all the time. Just not go to sleep. And the excitement of it just doing it and making a breakthrough and using a mixer from RadioShack for the first time. Or thinking about an edit and having to do it manually and trying it and it working when I do it. These were the days where you have to do edit manually. Take the tape. You didn't have a digital system that you could make a mistake. You had to – it was like typing on a typewriter without the white out. If you make it all the way through a paragraph without messing up, it's exciting. If you're making a crappy little video editing tape to tape on two VCRs, if you make 10 edits in a row without messing up, it's exciting. You feel like you're doing it, you know?

The fact that I would spend so much of my own time on it, the fact that that's the only thing I thought about when I had free time, made it like a no-brainer for me once I realized that you can major in it. And that then maybe, if you go to college and major in it, you can maybe get a job in it. It was like a no-brainer.

[00:29:14] LW: Did you have language at the time for what was it becoming your creative process? Did you have any idea about storytelling that you adhered to in these early, early days? Were you just trying everything?

[00:29:25] DW: Not really. I was trying stuff. You pick things up every now and then. You pick up words. You pick up phrases. You pick things up mainly by doing it and learning the language and learning how to communicate. Learning how to learn how to put what you're doing into some kind of thought if you had to explain it to somebody. But it was mostly just try – it was a lot of trial and error. It was a lot of trying stuff out. It was a lot of just doing things that were only for me really that very few people would see.

I had a couple of things that other people saw. I did a project in high school. We had the state science fair or social studies fair, one of the fairs. But we had a project. And for the fair, you could enter in all these different categories. And I saw video. Video project was one of the categories. I went to my teacher and I said, "Hey, I want to enter the fair in the video category." And he thought it was completely ridiculous.

I was an okay student. But I think he took it more as like, "Okay, that means you don't want to write the 20-page paper. That means you don't want to go out and do research. That means you don't want to do this stuff that everybody –" he had approved everybody's projects for this fair. And it was research, and the tri-fold little thing that you do where you cut out stuff, and you do your paragraphs, and you talk to people, and make phone calls, and do research, and go to the library and all this stuff. I think he thought I was trying to kind of get out of doing all that. And I was like, "No. No. No. I like to make videos. I want to do a video."

He said, "Yeah. Sure. I'll let you do the video." I said, "Well, look, I'll do the video. If I win the fair, do I get an A in the class regardless of whatever else goes on? Can I get an A?" He goes, "Yeah. Sure. Whatever."

We did the video. It was on automotive safety was my topic. I think it was around the time when airbags were just becoming like standardized in cars and stuff like that. Me and one of my buddies literally took my camera around to every automotive dealership in the city and we interviewed car dealers. And we talked about technology. And we talked about airbags. And we talked about – and I shot all this stuff. I got some b-roll. Put it all together. Had some music. I think I used the theme from Shaft as like my old intro song. And it won. It won the video category.

And full disclosure, there was probably only like two other entries. Because, again, this was like 1990. 1993, I think? But it won. And I went back to the guy and I was like, "Hey, man. I won. Do I get that A?" And I think he was like, "Yeah. I guess I got to give you the A." You know? But it was a really cool experience.

It was good because I got to utilize some of the stuff that I've been doing for myself to me in official form. For school. For grade. For this fair. It was judged. People saw it. My teacher was aware of it. It worked out. That was a huge thing for me mentally.

[00:32:42] LW: Okay. So later on, you're at Howard University. You're minoring in film. You do this exchange program at USC. When you get to USC, do you realize that the work that you had done earlier on your own prepared you for that environment? Did you feel like you were kind of ahead of the curve? Kind of in the median range? Or where'd you fall in terms of your peers?

[00:33:02] DW: That's a good question. I will say, just to back up a second, it's important since I'm talking to you. When I went to USC, I had switched my major from radio-TV-film production to political science. And mainly I switched it on your recommendation. I don't know if you remember that.

But after my first semester, I don't even know if you knew what I was majoring in, but you asked me what I was majoring in. I said I was majoring in radio, TV film. And you were like, "Why are

majoring in radio-TV-film? I know a bunch of radio-TV-film majors, they're all bike Messengers in New York." You're like, "Why don't you broaden out or something?" And I was like, "Oh, that's a good point." I don't know if you remember that or if you remember saying that or whatever. But I remember it.

[00:33:51] LW: Yeah.

[00:33:51] DW: It made sense to me because the background of doing all this stuff on the side, I didn't actually have to major in it once I did the investigation of like a minor and a major and how many classes you take and all this stuff. I was like, "Okay, I could just minor in radio-TV-film. Take all the classes I want. And, yeah, I will change my major. I will do something that's maybe a little more nice for the transcript or whatever or for the job interview."

I did make that switch and then I did the exchange program to USC to answer your question. And when I got out there, I wasn't necessarily comparing myself in my mind, I wasn't anyway. I just felt like in a weird sense it's like I was around people who had the same passions and the same desires to a degree that I did. Because that was the first time I'd been in rooms with people who wanted to talk about that stuff who wanted to talk about production everywhere all the time.

I just remember sort of like feeling like I belonged. And that meaning I didn't feel like I belonged before. But it's different when you go into a place and the entire environment is tuned to the thing that you're interested in. You walk into an auditorium that's made to show films and clips from films in an auditorium hall with hundreds of students. And there's a professor who's going to come out who's once an Oscar or something and he's got his bid all down. And it's funny. And it's clever.

And then you go to another class and there's all this editing equipment that's high-quality and you can have access to all of it. And it was crazy. It was a little bit of like a Willy Wonka-ish feeling walking in. It's like you like candy and somebody goes, "Hey, why don't you go through that door?" And you walk in and it's Willy Wonka's factory. You're like, "Oh, shit. I like this place. These people get me." I had a great time there, man. I just enjoyed being in the environment.

There's one or two people that I still kind of sort of loosely keep touch with text message every now and then from that time period. But I just remember being there enjoying the classes. Every class I took out there that semester was a film-related class. Most of the time, for a minor, you take a film-related class or two a semester over the course of four years. But over that semester, every single class I took was film-related, film theory, editing, production, this, that. That was an amazing, amazing semester where I got to totally be immersed in the stuff that I thought about all the time.

[00:36:24] LW: Why would you not just go to USC? Why did you even bother going to Howard?

[00:36:28] DW: I wanted to go to USC. I wanted to go to USC. My first choice was NYU. And my second choice, close, close, close second, it was a coin flip between these two, was NYU's film school. The Tisch school. And USC's film school. And I applied to both of them.

And I wrote the essays. I think I sent a copy of that project that I told you about that I was so proud of. And I think I sent like little copies of whatever I had at the time. And I tried to get in there. And had I gotten into one of the other in the film school, I would have gone. I would not have gone to Howard. And I got rejected. I got rejected from both of them. I still have the letters actually. I read them from time to time. They're in an envelope in my closet.

And not like what was me kind of thing. But every now and then, it's also the same folder where I keep my social security card and stuff like that. Whenever I'm looking for that some old paperwork, I'm going through this, one of my old folders in the old shoebox, and I'm flipping through. And I'll be like, "Oh. That's that letter." And I'll open it up and I'll read, "Every year we get a lot of candidates who try to come – unfortunately, we're not able to provide you with a – sorry."

I did not get in. And Howard was my third choice really because of the connection and having been out there and visited with you and knowing a little bit about the school and knowing a little bit about D.C. But yeah, I wanted to go to USC, which is one of the reasons why I sought it out in the exchange program was when I saw – I didn't know that Howard had an exchange program. But when I saw they did and I saw USC was listed. And actually, looked for NYU, too. I

don't think they were listed it. But when I saw it USC was listed, I was like, "Oh, I can go out and experience it and see if it was a little bit of what I thought it was."

And it was. But I think things work out for a reason. I love the way things worked out. I wouldn't change it. If I could go back in time and change that letter, I wouldn't change it.

[00:38:30] LW: Sounds like that was like a Michael Jordan *Last Dance* moment for you where you took it personally. You I took it personally. That's why you keep reading the letter for motivation an inspiration to go further to your creative potential.

[00:38:42] DW: Yeah. I mean, I don't hold any grudges. But it's just crazy to me because I just remember how disappointed I was.

[00:38:52] LW: Was that your first major disappointment in life?

[00:38:55] DW: I would say so. I would say so. The combination of getting rejected from both of those schools probably within a week of each other or something. Again, as a guy from Montgomery, as a guy who's been working on making movies and doing videos since he was 11 to apply to those schools, I was academically inclined. I was in the academic program. I had decent grades. I wasn't 4.0. But I was a pretty smart dude.

To get both of those rejection letters at that time when that was all I did. That was all I did was do these movies. As you know, I was always running around with that camera filming stuff around the house. Yeah. I mean, that was a little bit of a disappointment. It was a little bit of a disappointment. I wouldn't say it crushed me. And I certainly wasn't bitter about it. But that was definitely one of those early like things don't work out the way you want and the way you hope.

[00:39:50] LW: Did you have any of like maybe I'm not as good as I thought I was compared to these other people who are applying? Or did you think they just don't know what they're talking about? They missed an opportunity.

[00:39:59] DW: Not for one second. I had extremely high self-confidence. Extremely high. I didn't think it was me. I just thought that, yeah, it is hard to get into those schools. Yeah. Well, I

wouldn't necessarily say I thought it was a stretch. But again, it didn't crush me. Because I was like, "Okay, I knew there was a chance that I wouldn't get in." I knew those were popular schools. And again, think back. Every place in the world has something that can teach you content creation these days. Everywhere. There's online schools. There's people. There's homeboys that used to work for the Spielberg. These days, there's a million places to go and get guidance.

Back then, USC film school, that was pretty much it. NYU's film and arts program was – for a college student, that was pretty much it. It was like wanting to be the best lawyer, back then, where did you apply to? You applied to Yale and Harvard. That's what you do. I was also like, "Okay, everybody in the country is trying to get into these schools who has an interest in this." It was like, "Okay, I know it's going to be tight. I know there's a bottleneck. I hope I get in. If I get in, I hope I can go." But I didn't get in.

[00:41:16] LW: Mm-hmm. All right. You're finishing up college. People are applying to Wall Street and all kinds of places. How did you connect with ESPN?

[00:41:29] DW: Great question. That connection goes back to my junior year. I was on campus on my way to a protest at the administration building. Walking to the process with – I believe I was walking with my girlfriend at the time. And a block away from the administration building there was a news van getting ready to cover the story. You know the deal. They're sitting there parking and it's going to pop off in a second. So the reporter is in there getting ready.

I stopped at the news van and knocked on the door. And the reporter was in there getting touched up or putting the makeup on. Opened the door and I said, "Hey, I'm a student here. My name is Drew. I'm on my way to this protest. I think you guys may be covering it. But I was curious if you guys had internships." And she said, "Yes, we do." I said, "Is there someone I can talk to about it?" She goes, Yeah, there is. Take this card and call the station manager."

She gave me like the card and either it had the station manager's number on or she wrote the station manager's number on it. And I said, "Okay. Thank you very much." And I went to the protest. And a day or two later I called the station. It was Fox 5 WTTG in DC. And the guy answered and I said, "Hey, I met your reporter at the protest at Howard. I asked if you guys had

internships. I would love to come and see what you guys are doing in the station." He said, "Yeah, sure. Come on by. You're a college student?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Come on by."

So I went by and met with the guy. And he said, "Yeah, we're taking on interns for the summer. What are you interested in? We got a lot of stuff. News, weather, sports." I said, "Sports. I'm interested in sports." He goes, "Okay. You can be a sports intern." He explained it to me. Gave me another number or somebody to talk to kind of get the ball rolling.

And sure enough, when the time came for summer, I was the intern, the sports intern for – the summer sports intern for WTTG Fox 5 in D.C. the summer of my junior year. Unpaid. Went in there. Learned what a TV station was. Learned what sports highlights were. Started to learn how they were put together. It's my first time seeing a real editor working in a TV station. Hung out. Had fun. It was cool. It was not a ton of hours. It was summer and I was unpaid. But I would do that and then I would go to my real job, "Which was I was – I worked at Banana Republic in Georgetown. And Fox 5 was in Bethesda. It was pretty close. I could get over there going up Wisconsin. I had that experience.

Fast forward to a year later, senior year. I was aware that they were doing a career fair on campus. And this was like January-ish. Early in the year. And our second semester was just starting, senior year. And I didn't have a prospect for a job. But I would be graduating in May. A little bit of pressure. You've been in that situation.

I'm aware that there's this job fair. I go through the job fair. And luckily, I don't even know if I was going to go. But our class got out early that day. I went home. Got a suit. Came back and went to the Blackburn Center and went to the job fair. Sure enough, I walk in, look around. No clue who's in there. Just know there's a job fair. Now I have a job.

ESPN has a booth there. They have two recruiters. Unbelievable. Again, this is 1994. ESPN is the game in town for sports television. The only one really. The only one. Huge. This is the Stuart Scott era. This is the heyday. I'm like oh, "Oh, shit. I want to talk to these people." I start to make my way over there and I realized that everybody in the job fair is in line for ESPN. There's like 200-plus people in line for – I can't just walk up there. There's like 200 people. I'm like, "Shit. Clearly the best company here. I'm just going to stand in the line."

I'm standing in the line and then I realize, I look again and I realize that there's actually two lines. There's one line with about 200-plus people and then there's one line that has like two people. And I'm like – I tap somebody, I'm like, "What's going on, man? What's the deal?" Just like the person that happened to be in line with. Turns out they have two recruiters. One of them is a black guy and one of them is a white guy. Everybody is in line to talk to the black guy.

I'm sitting there and I'm sitting – I'm in line for a good 20 minutes. Just I'm going to take the ride, too. All right. These people must know something. I'm taking the ride. Eventually, something clicks and I'm like, "There's nobody waiting to see this other dude. I got to go talk to this other dude. Literally, there's no one in his line."

I get out of the line and the guy who was next to me is like, "What are you doing?" I was, "I'm going to the line with nobody in it to talk to the other dude." And he goes, "Dude, you the other guy's not going to hook you up, man. You know the brothers are going to hook you up. Man, come on. Don't be dumb dude." I was like, "Look, man. There's 200 people here and there's like two people in the other line. I'm going to get in the other line. All right?"

I get to the other line and talk to the guy. He asked me if I have any experience in television. I say, "Yes. As a matter of fact, I was an intern at WTTG Fox 5." He goes, "Oh, okay. Do you have any experience – you like sports?" "Yeah." "Do you have any experience in sports?" "Well, actually, yeah. Well, I was at WTTG. I was in the sports department. I was the intern for the sports department." "Oh, cool."

We talked a little sports. He asked me a couple of kind of cursory questions, "What do you think about this? What do you think about that?" Whatever the storylines were at that time. Great little conversation. And at the end of the conversation he goes, "Man, that was really cool. You have some decent experience. Would you be interested in maybe coming out to Bristol, Connecticut and maybe having a real interview?" I'm like, "Oh, yeah. I would. Sure. Absolutely."

We exchange information and I leave. It turns out that the other guy, the white dude who nobody was in line for, was this guy named Al Jaffe. Now if you don't know that name, Al Jaffe is the famous talent executive for ESPN. He's the guy who hired everybody. He's the guy who hired all

the talent. He's like the big-wig, mack daddy, talent guru who helped kind of build the place finding nuggets and putting on camera. I think he may have hired Stuart Scott and a bunch of other people. But he was the man. He was the man. And I talked to him and it was great. And he liked my experience. And it was cool. So he invited me out to Bristol.

That's how I got connected with ESPN. I flew out to Bristol, Connecticut two months later in March. Met him again. Same guy. We had a real formal interview. He asked me more sports questions. This time it was deeper. This time it was more like trivia just to see if I really knew sports. There's like kind of known sports and then there's like do you watch it? Do you follow it? He asked me those level questions.

And I did pretty well. I knew just about everything he was asking me. And he goes, "Okay, I'd like to offer you the job." Right? He's like, "You're graduating, right?" I was like, "Yeah, I'm graduating May." He's like, "Okay. I'd like to offer you a job. It starts this summer." May 26th, I believe. And I believe our graduation was May 16th that year. I accepted it and started working for them 10 days after we graduated.

[00:49:27] LW: They put you in this truck as a PA. Is that how they start everybody or what's that about?

[00:49:33] DW: They start you as a PA, which means entry-level. And you're not necessarily in the truck. When I started, I was in the studio building. The building where SportsCenter is produced. Down the hall from where Sports Center is produced, they have rooms where every sporting event that's happening every day across the world is being recorded. And your job is to go in there and watch one of them that day and take notes on what happened. That's basically the PA job. To go in and watch a sporting event. And if five great things happen, write them down. Go into a little edit room and make a highlight of those five things and then communicate that stuff to your Stuart Scotts, your Rich Eisens.

When they go on SportsCenter, when they're reading the clips, they're given a sheet of paper that you wrote with the little things that you picked out as the top things in that game and that's what they're reading as the highlight. They put their own style on it. But they've got an army of people who are doing that. Stuart Scott couldn't watch every single event every day. Yeah,

there's an army of people doing that. I was one of those people for two years. I was a production assistant working on SportsCenter, ESPN News, NBA Tonight. Basically, just watching games, learning sports and learning how to put shows together.

[00:50:51] LW: What'd you learn from that experience?

[00:50:53] DW: I learned a ton, man. I learned just about everything in terms of –

[00:50:56] LW: In terms of like highlights. Is that something anybody could do? Sit down and watch a game and come up with five highlights? Or how do you become the top person who does that?

[00:51:03] DW: No. No. That is not something that anybody can do. It's illustrated by the process that was in place when I was there. When you're hired there, you're not hired full-time. You're hired almost like – at this time anyway. It may have changed now. But you were hired as a temporary employee.

Imagine they bring you in as a production assistant and you've got six months to prove that you can do it, that you can handle it, that you can watch these sports, that you know what a highlight is, that you can write a thing, that you can cross check, that you can look at a roster and write one guy and not write to the other guy, that you can work under pressure. The game just ended 30 seconds ago and SportsCenter is starting in two minutes. Can you finish the highlight? Can you get it out there on time? Are you going to melt down? Nobody's helping. You're doing all this on your own.

You have six months to be in those situations. Every situation possible. Huge game blowout. Nail biter buzzer beater. Somebody gets sick, you take over their game and have to catch it up and go in and edit it. Running down the hallway. I mean, you've seen the TV shows where people are running down the hall to deliver the script at the last second just as the count is going up. Like all that stuff happens every day. It's not like a cliché. That's the environment.

You've got six months to be in that system and demonstrate that you can do that job. You can handle the pressure. You've got the attention to detail and you know the sport. Just knowing sports ain't going to get you the job. You got to be able to like help put the show together.

After six months, they bring you in in groups, and after six months, your group of people. This is like four or five people. They tell a portion of that group, "You can stay. You can be full-time." And they tell the other portion of that group that, "You can leave. We're moving on from you." They told me that I could stay after six months, and I ended up staying there for a couple years.

[00:52:50] LW: What did you develop a reputation as, with your work? What made your work unique to the other four or five guys in your class?

[00:52:57] DW: Well, I felt that I was thorough. And I felt that I would try to pick out things at times that were interesting that other people might not pick up on. Example – I'm not sure of this exact example. But I'll give you an example. You're watching a baseball game and it's a three-and-a-half-hour baseball game and you're waiting for something to happen. Obviously, you'll know if somebody hits a home run. Obviously, you'll know if somebody gets a triple play. I'm not like talking about that kind of stuff. That's like the no-brainer stuff that anybody off the street could find.

But if every person, if the first batter of every inning grounds out to third every single time every inning, and then the person who's running the highlights operation comes over and goes, "Anything in this game? Any home runs? Any triple plays?" "No. No." "Anything good?" "Yeah, I got something. The first batter in every inning has grounded out to third. I don't think I've ever seen that happen." He goes, "Really?" "Yeah. Yeah." "Every single inning?" "Yeah. Yeah." "Every first batter?" "Yeah. Yeah." And then you go, "Okay. Make a highlight out of that." "Okay. Cool." Now you go in and you don't have the home run. You don't have the triple play. But you've told them this crazy thing that's been happening in this game that's a funny little thing that you don't see all the time and blah-blah.

So you can distinguish yourself by being somebody who can pick those things out. Can see those things and go, "Oh, did you guys see that crazy Twins highlight?" "Oh, yeah." "The one where somebody grounded up every inning, the first batter, every inning the third? That was

crazy. Who did that?" "Oh, Drew did that." That's one of the ways you can build a reputation in a place like ESPN. In a place where it seemed you're at the mercy of you only got a good highlight if Michael Jordan scores 50 points that night. Otherwise –" No. No. No. You can have a good highlight if the guy on the bench does this crazy thing. If you see it, if you pay attention to it.

I tried to do that. I tried to like have a lot of those moments. I tried to have attention to detail. And it took me a good year-and-a-half to actually start to get good at getting an assignment and like doing something with the assignment that got people's attention. That actually took a while. At first, it's just your attention to detail and if you can spot things and if you can communicate those things that you spot. And if can talk your way into making those into a highlight.

[00:55:16] LW: I'm not sure what the trajectory is going from a PA at ESPN and where you were going with all of that. But at some point, you jump ship to Turner Sports, which is down in Atlanta. And I'm curious why? It sounds like things were going well at ESPN. Why leave there? Why not just continue to be there, and be inspired and influenced by the Stuart Scotts and the AL Jaffes?

[00:55:41] DW: Yeah. I mean, I don't know if I would necessarily say things were going well. I would say I was learning a ton. I had nothing to compare it to. That was my first real work experience. I didn't know if I was having enough of a life. I didn't know if I was having enough off-time. I didn't know if I was getting the opportunities that I should have been getting. Everything that happened to me, I was like, "Okay, that's just the way it is." "Oh, okay. That's how you do it." "Oh, okay. That's how you work."

I got a sense that there was something else out there when some of my co-workers at ESPN left ESPN and went to work for Turner. And then I kept in touch with them. And they told me, "Hey, maybe you are on a good –" I'm starting to do good work. I was starting to do some stuff there. But they told me, "Hey, there's another opportunity. Turner Sports does NBA. Does cool stuff. We know they're going to have some positions open. You should check into it. It's in Atlanta. Bristol's cool. But it's kind of in the middle of nowhere." For a young person who's trying to have fun and hang out and do stuff relative to Atlanta, relative to that same person being in Atlanta trying to work but also hang out have fun and do stuff.

They put me onto that. I didn't even really understand that that opportunity was was out there. I was connected to some people at Turner through that connection. And then once I talk to those people and once I met them, I actually came out and interviewed them and came to the studio building. The same studio building that you know I worked out of now. And I saw what they were doing. And this was a completely different vibe. A completely different feel. A completely different environment. A completely different mentality and philosophy.

Once I saw it, I was like, "Oh, okay. ESPN's been good. I'm learning a ton. I'm doing stuff. I'm starting to kind of get a little bit of a groove here. But, man, this represents something interesting and something different." That's the reason why I made the jump.

[00:57:43] LW: All right. At Turner, you end up winning what? 28 sports Emmys?

[00:57:50] DW: Yes.

[00:57:50] LW: Over a span of 20 something years. 23 years or something like this?

[00:57:53] DW: Yeah. Yeah.

[00:57:55] LW: You're averaging almost one Emmy a year. And they basically handed you the keys to be as creative as you want. And you started creating these iconic – what do you call them? Trailers before like the All-Star event? And what's the –

[00:58:11] DW: We call them opens or teases.

[00:58:16] LW: Okay.

[00:58:17] DW: Opens because it's the first thing that opens the show usually.

[00:58:21] LW: Mm-hmm. Yeah. And is that something that you just fell into doing the opens and the teases? Because I imagine there's lot of jobs for a guy like you coming out of ESPN. How did you get into opens and teases?

[00:58:34] DW: I started doing them at ESPN. Opens and teases have always been a prestige thing everywhere. At ESPN, it was a prestige thing. You have X number of people working on a show. But someone has to do the open for the show. It's kind of a cool thing. It's generally thought of as a cool thing to be the one to do the open for that show. Because somebody's got to do it. And usually, to do it, that means you got to know your way around the edit room. You got to be a little bit of creative. You got to come up with new ideas all the time.

It's kind of a cool – it's generally – I'd say, industry-wide, it's seen as kind of a cool thing to do. I did some of those at ESPN. Like smaller versions for smaller shows and I really, really liked it because it was non-standard. It wasn't highlights. It wasn't too – a highlight is like a 20-second pilot for baseball game. Or you can do this minute, minute-and-a-half open where you can write it, you can pick the music, you can decide what the shots are, you can give it a little flare and you can do a different one a different way to tomorrow or next week. That flexibility and freedom and the idea that it was a little bit of a special thing in the show drew me to it.

I started doing them at ESPN, when I got to Turner. I kept going. I wasn't necessarily assigned to them but I would find opportunities to do them. The department that I oversee now, the creative department that does the opens, did not exist when I started at Turner. It didn't exist until 2004. Between 2000 and 2004 we were still doing opens and packages for games and for studio shows. But it was more of like, "Okay, draw straws. Who does the open this week?" And I would raise my hand to be the guy to do the open.

The thing about doing the open is it requires you to come in and do those edits. And sometimes that's weekend work. And as a PA, you don't get assigned them. But as a PA working on the crew, you know the people who do them. And one of my things was like, "Hey, you want the weekend off? I'll do your open. I'll come in and work those edit sessions a couple days, Saturday and Sunday." I would do that a lot. I would just ask people who was doing the open. Ask them if they wanted to do it or if they wanted to like take those days off and I would go in and do their opens for them.

The people and the guy who ended up starting the creative department became familiar with me because he saw the opens that I was doing from like the PA position. And I wasn't supposed to

really be doing them but I was just kind of doing them so. That's how, when they started the creative department, the guy who would end up being my boss and who ended up starting the creative apartment was like, "Oh, you've been doing those opens? You want to do that full-time? Do you want to do that all the time?" That's kind of how I got into that creative department.

[01:01:18] LW: It sounds like the opens for people were kind of like grunt work. You're kind of having to work overtime to get these things.

[01:01:26] DW: It was extra work. It was extra work. And again, keep in mind, before there was people assigned to do the open, if you like are working on a show and your job on this show is to direct the show or to be the associate director, your real job when the show is going on is to keep the timing right. Just make sure you disseminate how long all the packages are. Talk to the director. Commercial breaks. Coming in and out from break. You have an actual job.

If you were doing your actual job and somebody goes, "Oh, on top of that, I need you to come in this weekend and edit this open because it's just another piece of tape. And so, can you do that, too, on top of your job?" There wasn't people doing it. It was an extra bit of work. I wouldn't necessarily say it was grunt work. It was just like, "Oh, okay. I've got to do these games. I got to do this travel. I'm aiding these shows. Oh, and now they want me to do the open, too." It was like an extra thing.

That's why if you raise your hand, if you volunteer to do it, people would just let you do it because it was like, "Okay, I've got a full-time job. I've got a stuff that I'm doing for this game. Now you guys want me to spend my prep time doing this open on top of it." It was an easy situation to be given those opportunities.

[01:02:38] LW: Right. And also, you had a unique advantage, I imagine. Because you had a whole catalog of highlights in your head. And a lot of these opens and teasers are full of – after you get past the main theme of whatever it is, you have all the highlights and the footage from past games.

And if you win two Emmys, that's kind of considered, "Okay, you're lucky." Or if you win 10 Emmys, that's kind of like, "Okay, you're very competent." But someone who wins, I imagine, 28

Emmys, you're at guru status. You're at master status. I want to just spend the rest of this conversation talking about your creative process. Because I'm sure at this point, now that you're starting to do these opens on a regular basis, you're starting to develop that process. And it's going from maybe a weekend lead time, to a weekly time, to up to a year lead time. You're working on these things and coming up with ideas.

Talk a little bit about how that process unfolded for you in terms of inception. Because I know you were producing. You're pulling together all the talent for the – literally, the DPs and the people creating the music. And you're thinking about the whole thing from beginning to end. What was your process like has it evolved.

[01:03:50] DW: Oh, man. That's pretty broad. I can answer that a couple of different ways. Are you asking more of like – are you asking more of –

[01:03:57] LW: Where did it start? And then where is it now? And just kind of give us a little montage of what you learned along the way. What works? What doesn't work? How you can be more efficient?

[01:04:08] DW: Right. I'll put it this way. Here's the way I think about it in terms of how I developed my philosophies of how to do these things. At first, you become aware that, the more you do, you become aware of how little you knew, you know?

Again, coming from ESPN, having done a bunch of opens and teases, it was easy for me to do them at that level when I came in. Then I started doing more. And I'm like, "Okay, having to be compelled to do them differently. First, it makes you exhaust all of your standard go-to's. All the things that you've been hanging your hat on." You know what I'm saying? Like, "Oh, they loved it when I did this in that last open. I guess I can't do that again because I know I did this. So I got to come up with something new." There's that whole period of getting all that stuff out of your system. That's like the first thing that I had to kind of get through, was all the stuff that, "If I only had a chance, I would do this. Or if I only had a chance, I would use this kind of music." All that stuff you got to get out of your system.

Then it starts to focus on what I have control of. That becomes a huge thing in terms of your ability to story tell. And what do I mean by what do I have control of? That means for somebody like me who's working in sports doing pieces or doing opens for sports, you have what is given to you from the games. They're recording the games you have a pool of footage from those games and you use that, right? You can do a lot of cool stuff with it.

But then the question is what if I had other things? What if I was generating my own footage? Instead of just using footage from the games, what if I was interviewing people, too? And what if I was interviewing people with questions that I asked? And then what if I was mixing that into this game footage?

Okay. So now you've gone from just having a pool of game footage to now going, "Oh, I could do interviews, too. I need to get them, too. Let me go do these interviews." And now I have another pool of things to use as tools to story tell. And it's like, "Oh, what if I wanted to do some kind of effects or creative effects or CG effects?" I could see a place for that like it.

To me it was more about developing the different types of storytelling. Because at first, all I was developing was the ability to work with a pool of footage from a game that someone gave me. That was it. For years, that was the only thing I had. After doing that to a certain level, then they trust you and go, "Okay, if you had little more resources, what would you do?" "Oh, I would go and interview these players." Okay, now you're starting to add to the pool stuff that you're generating.

Then after that, it's just more and more, "Okay, what if we gave you a little more, what would you do then?" "Oh, I would do CG." "Okay. We'll put you with some CG people you play around." And you do that for a year or two. You just play around with you know doing stuff and getting all that stuff out of your head that you've always wanted to try. Learning what works. Learning what doesn't work. And now you're good at that, too.

Then it's like, "Okay, I'm going to start focusing on writing. I'm filling the narrative with the sound bites from these interviews. But what if I wrote my own narrative and wove that in, too?" Like, "Okay, I'm not really great at that yet but I'm going to try that." So you try that for a couple years. And now that's another thing that you're adding on top of. It just keeps building and building.

Every successive project, you have the benefit of having worked on each one of these types of things and then adding it and adding it and adding it to the point where you get to a situation where you can do just about anything you want. And now it's not about what can I do with what I've got? It's I have just about everything available to me. What's the best idea?

For me, my development was going from just learning how to just use the basic tools and adding more basic tools to having all of the basic tools at my disposal for just about everything I did and going, "Okay, now let me step back for real and just focus purely on what the best creative solution would be." That's a big deal.

[01:07:56] LW: Are you finding that, as you are going through this process, your boss, Craig, is expanding the budget because he sees all the Emmys? And he's like, "Okay, this guy is like freaking Steven Spielberg of opens and teasers. Let me just let him get free will and do whatever he wants to do."

[01:08:11] DW: Well, yeah.

[01:08:12] LW: Or are you still having to come up against those sort of restrictions where you're having to work within those confines and find extra creativity?

[01:08:20] DW: Yeah. I mean, there's constraint. I mean, there's limits to everything. They may let you go shoot four players, five players. They won't let you shoot 25 even though you – you know what I'm saying? Everything you're trying to do, yes, there's a limit, there's a level. The question is, number one – and like you mentioned Craig, my boss. Who, again, is somebody who was doing this job before I was doing it. I was learning the same way that I watch you and my brother draw those comic books and learn what you were kind of doing by watching you draw those comics and starting to understand basic storytelling.

I was watching him do a higher-level version of like teases and opens. And same thing, watching what he was doing. Learning the same things. Learning creative sensibilities. Getting those lessons. When it gets to the point where now I'm more doing them day-to-day, he's more

higher-level executive responsibilities. And now I'm more of the day-to-day person. And he's maybe more in control of the budgets and oversight and stuff like that.

Yeah, you have to compel the people who have oversight of your work with the vision, with, "Hey, we've had great results." "Hey, if you like what we were able to accomplish with this last one, here's a plan and here's a vision for something that's going to cost more, going to cost double or going to cost triple. But proven that we can do this lower version, let's go out and do the bigger version." And they'll roll the dice and let you go out and do a bigger one. And you execute and you do well. And then you do another one. And then you do another one. And do another one.

Yeah it definitely builds. There's always a limit. But part of the practical reality of working in television or working anywhere really is, at some point, one of the layers of Storytelling I was talking about adding, one of the layers is your budgetary constraints. One of the layers is it's like that game on the internet where you build your playoff team with players and you can spend \$5 on this player, \$4 on these players, \$3. It's very similar in production.

You have X budget. Yeah, you can spend most of it on equipment and then not have money for travel. Or you can spend a little less on equipment and more on travel and get more interviews in more cities. Or you can spend all of it on CG and don't do any travel or get any – like you have to run that same kind of calculation in your head up against the concept that you're trying to execute and then try to project out which one is going to have the most impact. Will it have more impact to have 20 interviews and not as many cameras? Or will it have more impact to have fewer interviews? But this killer CG effect that I really want to do that's like equal the same amount of money. Those calculations are always part of it.

[01:11:02] LW: From my own memory, you have created openings, and teasers and story lines for people like Michael B. Jordan, Kanye West, Jamie Foxx, Vice President Harris, Obama, Ava DuVernay, Jeremy Piven, Michael Jordan, Jack Harlow and just dozens, and dozens and dozens more people. And obviously, all these start off as an idea.

What have you learned over the years about selling creativity? How do you sell an idea? Because there's always politics involved in any organization. What did you learn over those

years about, "Okay, if I had to say this or do that, then they're going to be on board and we can move forward with that?" And even selling it to the talent. Because sometimes, I guess if these people are big enough, you have to convince them that this is worthy of their time and attention.

[01:11:53] DW: Yeah. That's a good question. I've learned a lot. I'll tell you exactly what I've learned. I haven't worked with Kanye in person. He's been in some of our pieces but I haven't been in the room with him. But here's the one thing that I've learned that is a reality of these interactions. The power of communication and the power of communicating your idea is not to be underestimated. The situation that I'm in more often than not is having to present/sell, to use your phrase, the idea without being there. Meaning I've got to create a document. I've got to do a write-up. It's going to get shuffled through five people. It's going to go through a rep, through an agent, through reminder or through a sign-off person, through a homeboy, through the hookup man, through their cousin. It's going to go through somebody. And maybe it'll get to the person unfiltered as the document.

Sometimes it'll get to them as their homeboy's recap of the document. That happens more often than not. Very, very, very, very, very, very rarely does it come down to like me in a room with President Obama trying to get him over the finish line to show up at that shoot, blah-blah. Almost, I'd say 98% of the time, it is a document, a PDF or whatever that has been shipped around. You hit the send button. It goes off into oblivion. And then you sit back and wait for a couple of days and somebody comes back and goes, "Yep, they'll do it." Or, "Nope, they won't do it."

What I've learned is you have to be able to describe and present your idea in a very, very clear, very, very concise, and in some ways, inspirational way. It's got to feel like it means something. It's got to feel like they're the person that completes this idea and this concept. And that's not cookie-cutter. Even if you're going to go down the list if they say no. Of course, you're going to go to somebody else maybe to help bring that idea to life.

But the way it has to be presented – and this is not like in a slick way. But like this is actually gets to a little bit of like how you really have to put people's DNA into the project that they have to feel in some way that their DNA is put into the project. That's a hidden thing that I wouldn't even really think about that unless you asked me this question. But that's something that I try to

intentionally do. I try to make the project feel like it only works with this person. It only works with this person.

By the way, I write it by the little nuggets I put in the description. And hopefully, it's a pure enough, concise enough, clean enough, inspirational enough summary of the vision that they see it and they go, "Oh, okay. I get a thousand requests a day. This one's interesting. I like the way this is written. I understand it. I can see it. And yeah, this does kind of work. It works with me. It works with my personality. This seems like something I would want to do. Yes, I will do it."

Because oftentimes you're making people do stuff in their schedule or you're making them travel sometimes. They have to jump through a hoop or two every once in a while. You really want them to feel invested. And by the time I talk to them, we are much farther down the line. There's always sort of a rope – maybe there's a rough agreement at that point. We've gotten their attention. They're interested. And maybe they need one or two details specifically from the person who's going to direct that shoot about clearing up exactly what we're looking at here. But that's the one thing I've learned, man, is how to be concise and how to present your vision to people who may never meet you or won't meet you as the first step.

[01:15:36] LW: Okay. Beautiful. We're at time right now but I still have a few more questions. Do you have a little bit of leeway to go over?

[01:15:42] DW: Yeah, let's go. Let's go.

[01:15:56] LW: Okay. I want to finish with a rapid-fire round of questions about your work. Not that you have to give one-line answers or anything like that. But I'm curious to hear about what you consider to be your finest moment as a creator. Meaning a moment where you realized that everything that you had had to learn and overcome kind of came together on that project? And then I want to hear about your luckiest moment. And I want to hear about your proudest moment. Let's start with the finest moment. Your finest hour.

[01:16:31] DW: Where it all came together? Finest hour.

[01:16:34] LW: I'm thinking about the Jeremy Piven project. But maybe there's another one that –

[01:16:37] DW: No. I mean, that was an interesting moment. I would not classify that as my finest – the one where – the phrase you use where it kind of all came together. Meaning, to me, that means you're using everything you've got at its fullest. And if you didn't have everything you had and if you didn't have the ability to use it at its fullest, the whole thing collapsed.

That's to me – I did have a moment that was kind of like that. I've talked about this a little bit. We had a huge project that was a baseball campaign starring Bryan Cranston. It was for our coverage on TBS. He had just finished the run on Breaking Bad and hadn't done anything since then.

[01:17:16] LW: I was there that day. It was incredibly hot in Los Angeles. There was no air conditioning in the theater.

[01:17:21] DW: Yeah. Yeah. We shot it in that theater downtown. And when I say it was a large project, that doesn't necessarily equate to a lot of people and a lot of equipment. That's one aspect of a large project. The other aspect is the sheer amount of stuff that needs to be captured to get you to a high enough percentage of what was scripted and what is expected to complete the project.

It was a lot of stuff that needed to be captured that day. And we only had one day. We only had one day. We had to get everything done. It was a lot of equipment. It was a lot of people. And it was a lot of things happening conceptually. Because the thing that messes with your mind on situations like that, we're shooting these things – these are promotional elements. We're shooting them well ahead of the event.

Not only are you trying to capture this stuff. But we don't know what's going to happen in these games. You have to capture scenarios. You have to do alternate takes. You have to do things to represent teams that aren't in the picture now that might be in the picture later. You have to cover all – it's a baseball thing. You literally cover all your bases. So by the time it airs, it's supposed to feel like – conceptually, it's supposed to feel like you shot it five minutes before you

saw the commercial. It's supposed to be up to date, especially in sports. People know in sports if something feels a week old or a month old because things have changed in the world and things have changed in the sports. That's one way to get a project to tank is to not be aware of that.

You've got all of the possibilities and all the storylines that you need to potentially cover that you have to be mindful of. You've got all the equipment. You've got all the stuff. You got all the script things. You got all – it's huge. We have all these setups. We've got a huge star. A lot of pressure. A lot of money. And I was directing it and I was also the person who was going to be sitting in the edit with it making sure that the stuff that got captured was shaped into the full vision of the thing that would end up on the screen.

It's one thing to direct and try to have a good day directing and then walk out after the final shot and go to your next project. It's another thing to direct and then know that I have to direct things that are going to be used in the edit that I'm going to be in. I'm not handing it off. And I've worked with a lot of people on this and a lot of ideas coming in. The original concept of him doing this one-man show was from a co-worker of mine named Deaton Bell. And he was there. And so, I've got all these people. They're chiming in and giving you thoughts and ideas.

At one point, we're about to start shooting. And we had done this huge setup. We had a set day where everything was built. And the guy who was serving as the AD, the assistant director, who is basically the schedule keeper for the day who tells you, "Hey, we've spent 15 minutes on this shot. Now, in order to make the day and not be overtime and not be late or not lose our extras or lose Brian, we've got to move on to the next setup. And we have 12 minutes to shoot that. And then we have the next setup. And we have eight minutes to shoot that." He's the guy that makes up the schedule based on your shot list and based on what you think you need to get.

At the beginning of the day, the shoot day, he walks up to me and goes, "Yeah, man, I couldn't make the schedule. There's too much going on, man. I have no idea what we're going to do first." And I was like, "Okay, got it. Just keep me on track. Let me know how long we're spending shooting each shot. And we'll just keep moving."

The fact that like we didn't have the schedule on paper, it was just like – I had to like keep it in my head everything we had to do. Thinking ahead to the edit. Thinking about the order that things were going to go in the edit. Thinking about what shots we – that level of keeping things on track while directing, while thinking about the edit, while working with Brian, while trying to make sure everything got done, while trying to cover all the storylines.

To me, that was like – personally, when it was over and we got everything captured, I told people that was my favorite day directing a shoot. And it was just from the directorial experience working with Brian. But just the fact that I was so aware of all of those things. It was like you juggle balls and I'm going to juggle four or five. It was like I was juggling 78 balls and I didn't drop any of them. And I was like more amazed that none of the balls dropped even more so than everything else that happened that day. That was the day where everything came together.

[01:21:54] LW: Yeah. It's like flying at night without instrumentation in the airplane. You don't know how high you are. You're just kind of eyeballing the whole thing and you have a perfect landing.

[01:22:04] DW: Yeah. Yeah. And somebody comes up to you and goes, "Yeah, the airport we thought we were – I don't know where it is. Just look out and find a place to land. You just feel it out, you know?" That was a pretty cool day.

[01:22:14] LW: Okay. Talk about your luckiest moment.

[01:22:16] DW: Lucky? Man.

[01:22:17] LW: I'm thinking about the Michael Jordan. Maybe this is a different one though?

[01:22:22] DW: That was pretty lucky, man. I'll go into that one. Because I've had a couple that might be maybe a little luckier. But that one, that had a lot riding on it. That might bump it up in the lucky category.

The story behind that is I was doing this massive, massive open for All-Star Chicago that I've been working on. NBA All-Star game when it was in Chicago in 2020. I was putting together the

open for it. It was like this five-and-a-half minute, six-minute open. I had been shooting it for over a year. Working on it for over a year. It had a lot of moving parts. A lot of interviews. It was based around conversations from known, notable Chicagoans taking place around this model of Chicago.

I had this hyper realistic model, a Chicago-made. And that was the set piece. And the set piece was taken around to all the interviews. I would travel the actual set to the people and then build the set at their location and make it look like they were all in the same place at the same time. Or of cutting back and forth.

Michael Jordan was on the list. Obviously, he's one of the more known Chicagoans. Impossible to get the guy. We've never got him. We've been chasing him for years. Somehow, somehow he agreed to let us interview him for 10 minutes. We're like, "Yeah, sure. Wherever. Whenever." He was in Florida. Great. Got it. Lock it in. Let's go get him.

We were on the home stretch. He was one of the final stretch of interviews. He was the next to last huge interview. Obama was the one after him. We get everything ready. And we're flying out to Florida to interview Michael Jordan. We have a space booked, which is a storage space above Tiger Woods's restaurant in Florida.

We're in the storage space. We got a storage space. I'm on the plane the day before the shoot and just trying to get there a little early. We're going to spend the whole day setting up this set. It's a massive set. Three, six people act out room. The whole deal that we have to create from scratch.

I'm on the plane and I get a text message from my production manager, Sarah Meneely. And she's like, "Hey, where are you?" I'm like, "I'm on the plane." She goes, "Yeah, Michael Jordan's assistant is here." Turns out, that morning – Michael Jordan is supposed to shoot on January 16th.

The morning of the 15th, when Sarah had been there early starting to set up, Michael Jordan's assistant came into the space and was asking what was going on. Where was everybody? Why

wasn't everything set up? And Sarah goes, "Well, we are setting up. We'll be ready in the morning."

And his assistant goes, "Oh, no. We're supposed to do it today." And Sarah goes, "No. You told us the 16th." The assistant goes through her phone and goes, "Oh, I sent you guys the wrong day. Can you do it today? Can you do it this afternoon?" That obviously sets off Sarah to start sending text messages to me and try to figure out what's going on.

We now have – instead of having 24 hours to get this thing ready for Michael Jordan, we have like three hours to get this thing ready for Michael Jordan. And literally on the plane. Again, we've been chasing this guy forever and never got him. I would equate it to like getting ready to record Halley's Comet and then you just set the telescope up. And just as it's coming by, the power cord gets kicked out or something and you're like, "This thing sucks. This thing is not coming back for 76 years. Somebody do something."

Luckily, I happened to be on the plane. And luckily, I booked an earlier flight than usual. And luckily, my DP, director of photography, was on the plane with me. And luckily, he was traveling with all of his equipment, all of his camera equipment on the same flight. I let him know what was going on and was like, "Hey, we got to shoot this thing today. We got to hustle to the set. We got to set up."

We call back to the set, tell Sarah start setting stuff up. Try to narrow it down. Instead of doing the full set, we do a small version of the set. The space had not been cleared out. It's a storage room. They were supposed to clear it out for us. There're these 400-pound carpet rolls in there that they were supposed to move that they did not move.

We finally get to the set. It's T-minus an hour and a half or something. And me and my DP are rolling these carpets and getting stuff out of the way and clearing the room. And it's like a cinder block concrete storage space. Just an empty storage space with a bunch of carpets in there. We're moving stuff out of the way.

Power through. Get stuff set up. The set piece that I've been traveling around was in traffic. They had to find it and get it to the set. They found it. They got it to the set. It's like a giant

jigsaw puzzle. It has to be pieced together. It comes in eight crates. It weighs like a thousand pounds or something when you consider all the crates. And we were able to get everything done and set it up and got the final pieces together. Got the lights together and got the cameras on about five minutes before Michael Jordan walked into the building.

[01:27:12] LW: Was he on time?

[01:27:13] DW: He was on time. Although I had asked the lady, his rep, I was like, "Hey –" she was aware that something had been miscommunicated. I was like, "Hey, if you can –" I'm texting her. If you can – whatever you can do, tell him you left something in your room. Like, whatever. Just any minute, 30 sec – like whatever you can give me, we'll take it." I think she had delayed him 20 minutes or so or whatever. She was doing her part.

[01:27:40] LW: Was she aware that the assistant gave you guys the wrong day and you were scrambling?

[01:27:43] DW: No. No. She was the one that gave us the wrong day.

[01:27:46] LW: Okay.

[01:27:48] DW: She's Michael Jordan assistant. The's the one that conveys his schedule. She conveyed to us the next day. When in reality, it was today. She was kind of aware of that. But again, it was also like, "My bad. You guys can deal with it." Yeah. Yeah. "Y'all are good, right?"

We did get it. He came in. We got our 10 minutes. And she was funny. She was like, "See? It worked out. Y'all didn't need a whole day to set this up."

[01:28:17] LW: And you almost had a heart attack.

[01:28:20] DW: No. No. I'm telling you, like, when we were finished, everybody on set had this look on their face like –

[01:28:29] LW: They've been in Vietnam.

[01:28:31] DW: That combined – imagine going to Vietnam and then imagining like, "Oh, we'll let you leave Vietnam if you hit a half-court shot on the first try." And you hit the shot. You know what I'm saying? And in a second, you're snapped out. Everybody had to look like they had been sent – snap their fingers, you're in the middle of Vietnam and somebody gives you one half-court shot to get out and you hit the half-court shot. Everybody had that look on their face and was like it was a complete exhilarating thrill ride. And it was so fast. All of that for 10 minutes of interview time. It was crazy.

[01:29:03] LW: That's fantastic. All right. Finally, your proudest moment. Your proudest piece of work that you look back on and think to yourself, "Wow. That's incredible."

[01:29:13] DW: A couple of proud moments. I would say it's a tie for proud moments for different reasons. You'll understand when I explain it. One, for people who follow basketball and follow sports television, there's generally like one piece that I'm kind of known for, which is this piece called NBA Forever, which aired on Christmas Day 2011 out of a lockout. It hit really hard. The concept was old players from bygone eras sharing the court with current stars and looking like they were playing together, talking to each other, interacting, having fun, enjoying basketball. And the whole piece was just a trip through that universe of old and new together.

And again, it was coming out of the lockout. It was a time where people were unsure how they felt about basketball. And when that piece aired, it changed a lot of people's perspectives. It changed a lot of people's minds. It sort of elevated the sport in the kind of small ways that a piece of content can hope to do.

And it got a really great reaction. And obviously, you're the person who does that piece. You get a good amount of credit for that. And that felt pretty good for myself, for the entire team that worked on it. That was a great moment. I'll remember that for a long time.

I didn't realize – I thought it was a cool piece. But I didn't realize it was going to get such strong reactions from people. I heard from people that I hadn't heard from in years were hitting me up asking about it and telling me they were crying when they saw it.

[01:30:47] LW: And it started as a song, right? You heard a song in a hotel or something like this? And then you look it up online later?

[01:30:52] DW: Yeah. What prompted me to think about what ultimately became the visuals for that piece, these old and new players, was this song that I had heard in a hotel lobby in Oklahoma City. I was going to shoot something with Kevin Durant and I was waiting for the crew. And I was the first one in the lobby. And they had lobby music going. And this song was on the lobby music. And I never heard it before. It was this folksy, soft rock, ballad. Not exactly what you would think when you're thinking like come up with something for an NBA piece. But something about the song just struck me.

I just was listening. Really listening to it. And it was really powerful. It really struck me. And I jot it down in my phone, the lyrics that I could remember. And then later, when I went home after the project, I looked it up and downloaded the song and listened to it on a loop for a few days and just let it wash over me thinking about it.

And when I was trying to come up with that piece or come up with a piece, that song prompted the imagery visually. And that song was the backing of the piece. It was like a good harmony between that music, between those images, between what was going on at the time in the sport and just between a lot of different things that all kind of converged. And it was a piece that a lot of people maybe wanted or needed and they didn't even know it at the time. It scratched an itch that I don't even know a lot of people knew was there. That was a proud moment. Just seeing what became of it and being associated with it and being creatively behind it.

The other moment that's tied with that I would say in my mind in terms of just being proud. I was very fortunate to work on some projects. This was like a collection of projects that were honored with an Emmy for writing, which is a pretty cool thing to have and a cool distinction. Stuff that I've been pretty proud of. But what really struck me on that one was at the ceremony, it's the whole bit. You go up on stage and give a speech and all that. That's cool, too.

But that was the one year and the only year that I had invited my mom to come and not knowing what was going to happen. Most of the time, when you go to those things, you end up losing. People always talk like, "Oh, Drew, you got all these Emmys." I've lost a lot more than I've won.

You're expecting kind of the lose the deals. It's like the odds are against you. There's like people nominated and you're just one of five or six or whatever.

But luckily, that year, it worked out. I won that year. She happened to be there. And it was a cool moment to go up there. Win that award and look down into the audience and not just see old co-workers, former co-workers, other people in the industry. To actually see this person who you're related to, who you love, who has been with you from the beginning. Who is seeing you have, at that time, a moment that from a professional recognition standpoint I guess would be like a peak moment in your career, that's amazing.

[01:33:50] LW: Yeah. The person who bought you that PXL2000 camera.

[01:33:53] DW: Yeah. Yes. Literally, the person who bought me the PXL2000 is sitting in a chair watching this dude who used to be a kid who was running around with the video camera. Standing up there accepting this award. Thanking her. Raising it up, the whole bit like you see on TV. That's a personal moment that I'll never forget. And I hope everybody at some point in their life has a moment similar where they have those similar feelings for whatever they do, whatever they're passionate about. I hope you can have a moment like that where you are able to share it with people you love and create a shared moment like that.

[01:34:27] LW: That's beautiful. Last question. If you could go back and give 22-year-old Drew some creative advice? Some advice about creativity? What would you whisper to him and his dream?

[01:34:43] DW: Hmm. 22, huh? Where'd you get 22 from?

[01:34:45] LW: Yeah. Well, just after college. You're starting off in ESPN and all of that.

[01:34:49] DW: Okay. Yeah. Man, that's a good question. I'm trying to think. I'm trying to think what would be useful. I'm going to answer the question. But part of the learning experience, the mistakes that I made and the time that I wasted was part of what ultimately helped shape me. I wouldn't want to cut those things out. Those are important.

I don't want to say anything that's going to keep me from making that big mistake that ultimately ended up making me learn that great lesson. I would just tell him to continue to trust in yourself. Continue to trust in your instincts. I would also tell him – this is kind of important. I would also tell him, as far as creative expression, to try things and not become captive to your own preferences.

Meaning, it took me a while to get out of that. And it's probably – if you ask me what's the number one thing that I see in other people who are in the creative field who are trying to be creative what is holding them back? What's the one consistent thing that's holding them back? It is very, very difficult for people to do things counter to their own personal preferences. It's very difficult for people who are doing pieces like me. They like a certain type of music? They're going to try to use that type of music for everything. They have a certain type of writing style that they personally like? They're going to try to use that writing style for everything because it always feels right to them. That music always sounds right to them. That style and pacing that they like always feels right to them.

And it's hard to do stuff that's counter to that because it feels right. My personal preferences – so that's the one piece of advice that I would try to get to me so I could do that earlier. Trying stuff and stepping outside of your own preferences is not a cop-out. It's not a sign that you don't have ideas. It's actually getting closer to connecting with other people. Because nobody has your exact set of preferences. The things that resonate with you aren't the things that resonate with everybody. You have to create things for other people. You're creating things for other people. So think outside of yourself. Don't hem yourself in. Don't cross things off the list just because that's not my shit, you know? I hate when people say that. "That's not my shit." That's not important, man. If you're creating stuff for other people, get a little bigger than that. Get a little broader than that. Have a little more perspective from that. So that's the one thing I would tell him.

[01:37:13] LW: Excellent. Thank you so much for sharing your story with us. And I personally learned a lot that I didn't know before. And what I've observed from you from a distance is just your ability to really lean into your own intuition and trust it. With the NBA Forever song, for instance. When you first heard that song and it was a very unconventional song to use in an

opener for the season. But you trusted that and you went with it. And so, it's been a pleasure to watch that and get reminded of the power of trusting your intuition from a creative standpoint.

Thank you very much for coming onto the podcast, man.

[01:37:55] DW: Yeah, appreciate it, man. Appreciate it.

[OUTRO]

[01:37:57] LW: Thank you so much for listening to my interview with Drew Watkins, my brother. For more inspiration, you can follow Drew's work on Twitter @Drew_Watkins. And of course, I'll drop links to some of those pieces that Drew and I discussed in the show notes on my website, which is at lightwatkins.com/podcast.

And if this is your first time listening to the Light Watkins Show, we've got an incredible archive of past interviews with other luminaries who share how they found, their path, their purpose their mission. People like Marianne Williamson, and Zachary Levi, and Ed Mylett and so many more.

You can also search these interviews by subject matter in case you only want to hear episodes about people who've taken leaps of faith or who've overcome financial struggles or people who've navigated health challenges. And you can watch these interviews on my YouTube channel if you want to put a face to a personality. Just search Light Watkins podcast on YouTube and you'll see the entire playlist.

If you didn't already know, I always post the raw, unedited version of each podcast in my Happiness Insiders Online Community. If you're the type who likes to hear all the mistakes, and the false starts and the chit chat in the beginning and the end of the episodes, then you can listen to all of that by joining thehappinessinsiders.com. You'll also get access to my popular 108-day meditation challenge.

And finally, to help me bring you the best guests possible, it goes such a long way if you could just take 10 seconds to rate the podcast. All you do is glance at your device, and click the name of the podcast and scroll down past the first seven or so episodes. You'll see a space with five

blank stars. Just tap that one all the way on the right if you found these conversations inspiring and you've left us a five-star rating.

And if you want to go the extra mile, leave a review with the one episode that you recommend a new listener should consider starting with as an introduction to the podcast. It could be the one that had the biggest impact on you personally.

Alright. Thank you so much for that. I really look forward to seeing you back here next week. Same time with another story about someone just like me, just like you who took a leap of faith in the direction of their purpose. And until then, keep trusting your intuition. Keep following your heart. Keep taking those leaps of faith. And if no one's told you recently that they believe in you, I believe in you.

Thank you so much. Sending you lots of love. Have a great day.

[END]