

## FULL AUDIO TRANSCRIPTION

With Everyone (by myself)  
Episode 0001: 15 Years of Podcasting  
Host: Shawn Thorpe  
Web link

00:00 This month marks my fifteen year anniversary of podcasting. I am pretty sure I published my first episode January twenty seven. It's not a terribly exciting story. But I don't know that I've ever told the in depth story of how I started.

00:26 In summer Two Thousand Four, I launched my first real website with a domain name. That's phantom power dot org; still exists but doesn't really do anything other than handle my e-mail. I had this idea at the time of just recording radio shows as MP3 files and just posting them on my website and just kind of see, "Hey if anybody find some, great." That idea grew out of the fact fact that I'd been publishing music on the internet for a few years and really in one way or the another, publishing on the internet since ninety seven and I had this idea to do radio shows. I had enough gear already. I had the know how to record audio because I've been doing it with music for a few years and you know I had a cup of coffee in radio back in nineteen ninety six, because I went to broadcasting school from ninety five into ninety six. Got an internship at WABT FM. Eventually worked on air there. Up until the point when the radio station went off air. It was bought out by a Spanish radio conglomerate and they pretty much turned it into a robo station.

02:19 Of historical noteworthiness: ninety-six is the year that the Telecommunications Act was modified to highly deregulate radio and that gave the rise of these massive mega radio companies. So I really got into radio at the right time just in time to have all of the small stations that people would usually start out in bought out and automated across the country.

03:04 So two thousand four, I had this idea, and clearly the idea of somehow publishing some type of internet radio show that wasn't just streamed over some sort of streaming protocol like Shoutcast or Icecast which I believe those existed then. Just something you could download and listen to when you wanted. Clearly that idea was circulating amongst the people of the world. Later that year, before I had published any of these so-called radio shows, I was part of a Yahoo! Group that that was dedicated to the Nick Digilio radio show. Nick Digilio was, and I believe still is, a host on WGN radio out of Chicago, and Nick was a weekend warrior guy who would work all these weird shifts, but he developed a following, including me. This Yahoo! Group was really run by fans. Though Nick and some of his producers eventually did join the group, and one of the conversations in late two thousand four in this Yahoo Group, I mentioned that how I used to work in, well I barely worked in radio. Another member of the group, George Smyth said, "Well maybe you should start a podcast," and I was like, "What is that?"

and I think I might have said, "I'm not sure I know what that is," and he said, "Yeah, you should look it up. It's kind of a new thing. It was started by Adam Curry who used to be on MTV."

05:08 So I started researching it and immediately I was just really taken with the whole thing. So it was probably in November two thousand and four, I started just listening to podcasts. And the first show I listened to was Adam Curry's Daily Source Code and I listened to Dawn And Drew and Yeast Radio. At that time, there weren't any dedicated podcast directories. There were places that were kind of aggregating podcasts on a very loose basis. One of them was audio dot weblogs dot com. You could set up your publishing system to ping that URL, and if your podcast feed had media enclosures, it would just show up there. So that was one of the early, maybe the earliest, type of podcast aggregator. Later there were directories like iPodder.

05:29 But I don't know, I kept finding these shows and I would do my best to keep up with them. There weren't really many good podcatchers back then. I remember there was one called Playpod where you can subscribe to podcast feeds and you know it would download the media files. Often, you had to manually move them from Playpod over to iTunes or something like that. It wasn't a great system but it kinda worked.

06:59 At that time, late two thousand four and early two thousand five, I picked up a retail job in a shopping mall kiosk called Glass Gallery and this was Christmas time so a lot of days once it really started to pick up a lot of days, I was just coming home dead tired. So I didn't really have much time to getting this podcast started, but I felt like for the first time, it felt like there was a path to go down if you wanted to do, you know, this so-called internet radio show thing. By mid-January, things had slowed down enough at this job, which was only a seasonal job, and wasn't going to last much longer. Then I could really start to dig into actually publishing a podcast.

08:02 And I got a real rudimentary set of gear together. I was using a Realistic brand, which is one of the old Radio Shack brands, a Realistic mixer that my Dad bought me some years ago. I think he found it at a thrift store or something. It wasn't a great mixer. It was really one of these things that was designed for, you know, if you wanted to DJ your backyard barbecue or you know, your kid's birthday party or whatever. It had three quarter inch, not XLR, but three mic inputs, quarter-inch mic inputs, and it had, I believe three stereo RCA channels and two of the channels were specifically for turntables. And the reason I believe this mixer was built for backyard DJs is the turntable channels had cross fade switches on them and you know, if this was something that was just going to sit in somebody's stereo or something at home there wouldn't be any reason for cross faders. I plugged some cheap mics I had into that mixer. And really when I started, it was only me, so it was one mic. I took the audio out of Jen's iMac. She had a G3 three lime green iMac, and I put some music and stuff, sound clips onto her iMac and I ran that audio cable out into this Realistic mixer. And God, I had a name for that. I called it something like the sound-a-tron two thousand or

something, some stupid thing I called it. I tapped the audio output from the mixer and ran that into, I had a Tascam US-122 connected to my Mac, which another long story but I had a G4 iBook at the time. It was kind of weird. But I took the line out from the mixer into the US-122 which was probably a USB one, you know, a USB one point two interface so it could only do one stereo track. It didn't have a lot of bandwidth but it was enough. And what I would do is I would load the sound clips I wanted into the iTunes library on the iMac and I'd put them in a playlist so I could effectively control them with the keyboard and I would kind of do a, you know, a "cue sheet, man," like a playlist, well it was a playlist inside the Application. And with the keyboard, I could start and stop the clips in cycle to the next one and it was as close as I could come up with for replicating a cart deck. And to my knowledge, I didn't really check, but to my knowledge, there really weren't any cart wall style applications back then, you know so it worked okay. And you know, I took the US-122 into the Mac and I recorded with GarageBand and I really wanted the whole thing to have a live to drive kind of feel and I mean I was mixing everything live so if I did a music bed or something, I'd roll the music bed and bring the, you know, I'd bring it down with the fader and talk over it as opposed to doing all that in post. I really wanted it to be live.

12:52 You know, I recorded a few episodes. They were short. You know, probably under a half hour each. I had my website. I had figured out in two thousand four how to roll my own Movable Type installation and Movable Type is kind of a precursor CMS to WordPress. I'm sure it's still out there but I think once WordPress came around, Six Apart, the company that made Movable Type, they just went, "Okay, they ate our lunch, breakfast, dinner, and all our snacks. So we're just going to focus mostly on enterprise stuff. But I rolled this Movable Type installation and I knew that it generated RSS feeds. But I didn't understand the, I didn't understand how to modify RSS to handle the media enclosures. So I was poking around online and I found what I'm pretty sure was the Podcast Alley forums, which I think was really the, one of the first, if not the first, kind of online forum where podcasters were talking to each other. And somewhere in there I learned about FeedBurner and FeedBurner at the time was a startup. And there was kind of this magical mystical period from about two thousand three to maybe two thousand six where it looked like RSS was going to be the the glue, you know, the thing that was going to make publishing on the internet truly decentralized, publishing on the Internet somehow work and FeedBurner was this, you know, RSS feed publishing and stats service. They were a startup and when they saw podcasting was becoming popular, they added their Smartcast feature so if you wanted to turn any FeedBurner feed into a podcast feed, you just had to go and put in a few settings, and then when you would publish an episode in your source feed, you had to have one, you know, naked or direct link to a media file and FeedBurner would wrap it in the enclosure tags and that would, you know, turn your source feed into a podcast feed. You know, thru FeedBurner. It didn't edit the source feed. It just made its own second feed through FeedBurner because that's what FeedBurner does.

15:55 And all I wanted was to just do it. I just wanted to get it out there, and when I

talk about the tags, here's one for podcast nerds. The only podcast tags in feeds back then were just the enclosure tag and any basic, you know, meta data that, or any basic extensions to the media enclosure, which was really just a file url and, oh man, length and size? I think duration and it's kind of confusing because duration was the total length, I think of the media so if it was thirty minutes, you had to put it in, I believe the duration tag has to be the total number of seconds and then length was actually, still is, the size of the file. It's kind of confusing and that has to be in, I believe, kilobytes? kilobits? Kilobits. There were no iTunes or Apple podcasts tags. There were no Google tags. None of this other stuff that's been added to make podcast feeds work was even there yet.

17:30 So once I had FeedBurner up and unning I was like, "Cool. I got everything I need." And I figured out how to make my Movable Type installation, or maybe FeedBurner did this, I don't know, ping audio dot weblogs dot com. So you know late January, I go to publish my first episode and, you know, it's funny now thinking about this, because in my job where I do podcast support, one of the things we constantly deal with is, "Well, why isn't my latest episode, and then, you know, name your favorite podcast app slash directory. Usually, it's Apple or Spotify but, "Why=y isn't my latest episode published. It was twenty minutes, two hours, two days ago. Why isn't it there?" And I remember going back to audio dot weblogs dot com, which was just this very random cascade of podcast episodes that was, you know, coming down this digital pike. back and You know I would go back and refresh it every now and then and finally I saw my episode there and I was like, "I've done it! I've published a podcast." And you know, people that are paying attention to this one single thing, this audio weblogs dot com presumably could find it and listen to it, so it felt like a real achievement.

19:20 And the podcast itself was called The Phantomfeed and it's obviously not online anymore. And I was publishing maybe two episodes a week. And they were, you know, thirty to forty five minutes a piece. And at this point they're still weren't a lot of robust podcast publishing tools. Libsyn existed. But I don't know if I knew about it, and if I did, I wasn't gonna pay them another fee on top of my web hosting fee so you know, like you might do in two thousand five, I was self hosting the media files and fortunately, for better or worse, I never, I never pulled enough resources on the server that they shut me down or sent me a big bill. Which, that happened to a lot of podcasters early on.

20:34 You know, you hear people from back then kind of talked about the spit and chewing gum methodologies that they used to keep their podcasts online but I never had that problem as pretty much a condition that's stayed through most of my podcast endeavors. A couple of weeks later and I kinda think coincidentally perhaps it was on Valentine's Day or was close to it. It was the fourteenth or fifteenth of February. I talked Jen into doing a podcast with me and she was reluctant. And you know we shared a microphone. You know we did the show pretty much the way I normally would and you know, I don't even remember what we talked about but I had been asking for For

feedback, just somebody send an e-mail. Because I could tell based on what very minimal stats I had that some people had downloaded the episodes I published, so I knew somebody was out there. And finally after, you know, weeks of solo podcasting, I do the one show with Jen and we finally get an e-mail from someone that said something along the lines of, and it was more or less addressed to me, and it said, "Yeah. You're fine but she's really good." I was like great, makes me feel wonderful. So pretty much from that point on, you know, it stayed the two of us. Occasionally, I would still do a solo show.

20:40 Eventually, the iPodder, Adam Curry's iPodder directory went online and the iPodder Directory, it was interesting because it wasn't really broken out just by say genre of show. And one of the things you could do was you could submit a show to iPodder under a geographic area. So you know, I picked Illinois, Chicago and submitted my show. And you know, a little while later, it got added. The most notable thing really that happened during that period was Daily Herald newspaper, which was a suburban Chicago area paper, did an article about, you know, locals take up podcasting and they talked to hosts of, I don't know, maybe four or five different Chicago area shows including me. Jen was at work when they called me. They talked to me and there was another show that I really liked that's long long long gone called The Unemployment Line and that was done by three guys who you know, were unemployed at the time. So that was cool to just kind of, hey get a little bit of coverage in the media. We kept producing episodes on a fairly regular basis and then in April we decided to move to California and pretty much ended The Phantomfeed for all it was worth. We really had to switch gears into just, you know, getting things packed and figuring out, Okay what are we going to keep? What are we going to get rid of? And I actually sold that G4 iBook. You know that whole period of time which was from April of two thousand five until like February or March of two thousand six really turned out to be kind of podcasting's first milestone in the sense that that was when Apple launched the podcasts directory in the iTunes store, which was really like the first kind of big mind-blowing moment and I followed along as best as I could.

25:34 I didn't, I didn't have any way really to listen to podcasts. But I would try to follow all the forums and any source that was a decent source for news. I would go and look it up and see what was going on. We didn't get settled into the place we're in now until February oh six. And that's when I started recording my first audio blog and that was really an experiment to just try to have an understanding of, kind of, all the new stuff in podcasting. As far as, you know well, how do you make an iTunes feed and all that kind of stuff. I think by then FeedBurner had actually added the iTunes tags in to its SmartCast feature so I just used FeedBurner again. It was funny, in the coming months, Jen would constantly ask me like, "When are we going to podcast again?" So her going from the reluctant cohost to the one who was, you know, really anxious to get going again was amusing and she bothered me enough about it, and I don't know, it was, it was a weird time for me and I was kind of freaking out about money and I knew that, you know, 'cause I sold the US-122, I knew I was going to have to get a new

interface so I finally just bought an Alesis MultiMix, the Firewire eight Firewire mixer on credit because it was the only way I was ever going to be able to afford it. You know, not long after that, we started doing Hyper Nonsense the first version. We kind of decided that you know, The Phantomfeed was fine but it didn't really need, you know, it's just kind of felt like it was, it wasn't a brand that had, you know, really caught fire and really that's kind of how podcasting was back then.

28:13 You know, I don't know, there wasn't any plans. Nobody even knew if this was even gonna last as anything noteworthy, recognizable beyond a year or two or if it will just kind of fade into the background. Kinda like blogging did. Jen got the idea for the name Hyper Nonsense because she had seen some piece of art on LiveJournal and I don't know if it was some poorly translated piece of manga. Or if it was someone's ironic attempt at making a poorly translated piece of manga, but it's an image of a very, you know, manga looking girl and it said Hyper Nonsense Tabasco shower on it and it was like, well, what the hell does that mean? Hyper Nonsense was kind of a cool name for a show. So in June of two thousand six we published the first episode of that and again, I started with Movable Type and FeedBurner and now I had the MultiMix. You know, the Realistic mixer went back in the, back in the drawer.

29:46 It was a different experience. You know, we had to start, our our, our place was just not really set up yet because we just, we had to kind of move in a hurry. And you know, it Kinda sucked because I had the MultiMix on the end of my desk. The microphones were on floor stands in the corner, so every time we wanted to record we had to set them up, which was a drag. But we still did it, and it, it was fun. I figured out how to trigger music beds and audio clips from my new, at that time, Mac Mini. I basically created an audio loop where I could take the analog output of the Mini into a channel on the MultiMix. And then just record everything back into the Mini via Firewire and that's one of those just, things that you feel like shouldn't work. So kudos to The Apple Audio Developers back then. They actually made a pretty dynamic audio routing system at a time when it wasn't necessarily really a big call for that. Recorded, edited in GarageBand and you know, it was again a very live to drive kind of thing. We didn't do a lot of post, a lot of work in post, man. That was fun. I think the most fun I ever had with podcasting was doing Hyper Nonsense circa two thousand eight up until when it ended the first time in two thousand nine because you know, social media hadn't taken over everything so we had just built a nice community of people that would interact with us over our website. There was a plugin, by now I had moved everything over to WordPress. There was a plug in that would, you could, you could use to make a comment leaderboard so you, you know, people would have contests to try to get to the top of the leaderboard by leaving comments and it spurred a lot of discussions, not just between listeners and us, but the listeners themselves, the audience themselves. Sorry, not supposed to refer to podcast listeners as listeners, they're the audience.

32:48 I don't know, two thousand nine, I was just feeling like I needed to do something different. I felt like the show, it kind of taken, it had gone as far as it needed

to. And it was clear by then that there wasn't going to be, there wasn't going to be a monolithic force that was going to create a sea change in podcasting and I think we really believed up until around that time, two thousand nine, two thousand ten that something was just gonna break loose and it never really did. The shows that had managed to become financially successful by that point, were just doing it all on their own. They were doing some combination of advertising and they might have been working with some sort of broker like Podtrac or something. They're doing some combination of that and merchandise sales and just direct fan support. You know, there wasn't a, I don't wanna say YouTube moment but, you know, all of the, the only company that really tried to build a podcast, you know, network, I guess we'll just say that was really based on old media ideas as far as well, "We'll just get a bunch of shows. We'll throw a bunch of ads on them and collect the money was PodShow later Mevio. By two thousand nine two thousand ten they were starting to burn out and it was clear that podcasting was just going to kind of coalesce into this thing where, you know, if you're lucky, if you did good work and you're lucky and you built an audience you might be able to turn that into something as far as money's concerned. But you probably won't do that.

35:13 And I think at its peak, Hyper Nonsense had an audience of maybe four hundred. And it's probably an overestimation but I just felt like, you know, it was time to move on to something else which, you know, ten eleven years later I still haven't really done. Of course Hyper Nonsense two point oh has occurred now three times. There was GeminiDragon, No Market Radio and return of actual Hyper Nonsense. And the psychologist's read on this is just the actual insanity of trying to do the same thing and get different results. The thing is is that every time I would stop doing a show like that I would really really miss it and try to restart it and do, I would do things slightly differently every time. We'd always get to the same point. We just always get to kind of the same base format so it was really kinda pointless. I guess that's just how, for some reason when me and Jen would try and do a show, that's just what it would always kind of organically go back to. You know it's over now, it's done for good. There's not never going to be a Hyper Nonsense three point oh. It's really truly run its course and, you know, that's how these things operate. You know, I think about it now and fifteen years is a pretty long time. I wish that I had more to show of it in terms of some kind of success. I really don't. Probably the biggest thing that's come out of it for me personally is i. I work in podcasting now and I am grateful for that. But I'm not producing a show that makes money and barely producing anything. So you know it's like yeah I'm just a cog, I'm a tiny cog inside of one bigger than medium sized wheel and if my cog were to fall out, the whole machine would continue to move forward with really no trouble at all. I have a lot of thoughts on that. But that'll maybe be for another blog, either text or audio or something else.