

The Big Interview

Episode Number: 304

Episode Title: “Weird Al” Yankovic

ACT 1

Eat It by Weird Al Yankovic (SONG CLIP)

Just eat it, eat it...

Get yourself an egg and beat it

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

TONIGHT ON THE BIG INTERVIEW...

“WEIRD AL” YANKOVIC

I would put one on if you want me to...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WEIRD AL YANKOVIC.

YANKOVIC

There we go.

RATHER

Pardon me saying so, you look more ridiculous already.

Like A Surgeon by Weird Al Yankovic (SONG CLIP)

Like a surgeon, hey!

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THIS ONE OF A KIND MUSICAL COMEDIAN HAS SPENT DECADES LAMPOONING SOME OF THE MOST POPULAR STARS OF OUR TIME...

YANKOVIC

Oh, one of my favorite reactions was Kurt Cobain who said that he didn't realize that he'd made it until he heard the Weird Al parody...

RATHER

You have this talent, I'm tempted to say genius, for making fun but not being mean. How do you do that?

YANKOVIC

I like to say that I-- I'd rather, you know, poke them in the ribs than kick them in the butt

Tacky by Weird Al Yankovic (SONG CLIP)

Because I'm tacky
I will live-tweet a funeral
Take selfies with the deceased...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE ONE AND ONLY WEIRD AL YANKOVIC. TONIGHT, ON THE BIG INTERVIEW.

ACT 2

DAN RATHER

Thank you so much for doing this, Al.

“WEIRD AL” YANKOVIC

My pleasure, thank you.

RATHER

I really appreciate this.

YANKOVIC

Thank you.

RATHER

Welcome to chaos.

YANKOVIC

Thanks a lot.

RATHER

Which I know is alien to you...

YANKOVIC

Looks like my house but different...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IF A MUSIC HISTORIAN WANTED TO RESEARCH POPULAR MUSIC FROM THE LAST SEVERAL DECADES, HIS OR HER FIRST BIT OF HOMEWORK MIGHT BE TO LISTEN TO THE ANTHOLOGY OF "WEIRD AL" YANKOVIC. AND THAT'S BECAUSE WEIRD AL HAS BEEN WRITING PARODIES OF THE MUSIC WORLD'S BIGGEST SONGS FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS -- HIS FIRST BIG HIT WAS THE GRAMMY WINNING *EAT IT*, A PARODY OF MICHAEL JACKSON'S PLATINUM SMASH *BEAT IT*...

Eat It by Weird Al Yankovic (SONG CLIP)

*Just eat it, eat it
Get yourself an egg and beat it
Have some more chicken...*

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THROUGH THE DECADES, WEIRD AL HAS LAMPOONED EVERYONE FROM MADONNA...

Like A Surgeon by Weird Al Yankovic (SONG CLIP)

*Like a surgeon, hey!
Cuttin' for the very first time...*

Tacky by Weird Al Yankovic (SONG CLIP)

It might seem crazy wearin' stripes with plaid...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

TO PHARRELL WILLIAMS... TO LADY GAGA...

Perform This Way by Weird Al Yankovic (SONG CLIP)

*I'm sure my critics will say
It's a grotesque display
Well, they can bite me baby, I perform this way...*

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AT FIRST GLANCE, HIS WORK MAY SEEM JUVENILE, IT DEFINITELY APPEALS TO A YOUNGER AUDIENCE, BUT DON'T LET THAT FOOL YOU, WEIRD AL IS A SKILLFUL LYRICIST AND A CHAMELEON-LIKE PERFORMER....

YANKOVIC

This is where all the Hawaiian shirts are that I'm allowed to keep in the house...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HIS CLOSET IS AN ARCHIVE OF HIS UNIQUE CAREER...

YANKOVIC

What is that a giant --- a giant Spam, of course?

RATHER

Right.

YANKOVIC

And a giant Campbell's Soup can, as one has in their closet...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WEIRD AL HAS WON MULTIPLE GRAMMIES FOR HIS WORK --

Handy by Weird Al Yankovic (SONG CLIP)

I'm so handy...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HIS FOURTEENTH ALBUM, RELEASED IN THE SUMMER OF 2014, DEBUTED AT NUMBER 1, THE FIRST TIME IN 50 YEARS A COMEDY ALBUM HAS DONE SO.

YANKOVIC (as George Newman in UHF)

Someday, someday, they'll be sorry. They'll be eating breakfast or something and all of a sudden they'll say, "Hey! We screwed up! We never should have fired George Newman because he's got imagination."

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HE ALSO CREATED AND STARRED IN THE POPULAR FILM *UHF*...

DAVID BOWE (as Bob in *UHF*)

Aw geez, you better not let Big Edna see that. She'll have a fit.

YANKOVIC (as George Newman in *UHF*)

Big Edna! Big Edna! You sound like a broken record. Why are you so afraid of that pathetic tub of lard?

Theme Song from *The Weird Al Show* (SONG CLIP)

*Oh, this is the story about a guy named Al
And he lived in a sewer with his hamster pal...*

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HE'S HAD A SATURDAY MORNING TELEVISION SHOW AND HAS EVEN WRITTEN CHILDREN'S BOOKS.

White & Nerdy by Weird Al Yankovic (SONG CLIP)

*They see me mowin' my front lawn
I know they're all thinkin' I'm so white and nerdy*

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BORN AND RAISED IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, ALFRED YANKOVIC WAS AN ONLY CHILD. HIS FATHER WAS OF YUGOSLAVIAN DESCENT, HIS MOTHER ENGLISH AND ITALIAN. THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE, HE DEVELOPED A KNACK FOR STANDING OUT... AT THE AGE OF 7, HE TOOK UP THE ACCORDIAN AND STARTED WRITING HIS OWN MUSIC...

YANKOVIC (SINGS)

Now you won't find me braggin' bout my big green station wagon...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

YANKOVIC WAS INSPIRED BY MUSICAL PARODISTS OF THE 1960s LIKE ALLAN SHERMAN....

ALLAN SHERMAN (SINGS)

Hello Muddah, hello Faddah...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND STAN FREBERG...

STAN FREBERG

The legend you are about to hear is true. Only the needle should be changed to protect the record...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HE WAS VALEDICTORIAN OF HIS HIGH SCHOOL CLASS, GRADUATING AT THE AGE OF 16. HE WENT ON TO EARN A DEGREE IN ARCHITECTURE IN COLLEGE.

Foil by Weird Al Yankovic (SONG CLIP)

*I never bother with baggies, glass jars, Tupperware containers
Plastic cling wrap, really a no-brainer
I just like to keep all my flavors sealed in tight
With aluminum foil, foil...*

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WEIRD AL HAS WON PRAISE THE WORLD OVER FOR HIS ZANY SONGS AND OUTRAGEOUS PERSONA, BUT AS WE DISCOVERED ON A RECENT VISIT TO HIS TRANQUIL HOME, HIGH UP IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS, THERE IS ANOTHER, DEEPER, MORE THOUGHTFUL SIDE TO AL YANKOVIC.

RATHER

Well, again, thank you for doing this.

YANKOVIC

My pleasure.

RATHER

And what a beautiful home.

YANKOVIC

(LAUGH) Thanks so much.

RATHER

But you know what I'm struck by? And we'll get to some serious business (LAUGH) here. You know what I'm struck by? This is-- a beautiful home set high in the hills of Los Angeles with great views. Very modern. But a quietness to it, a tranquility to it. Could hear water running through the place. This seems in such great contrast to when we see you perform. (LAUGH) Is that by design?

YANKOVIC

Well-- you know, some people might expect that I would live in wacky land. I (LAUGH) don't know. I-- I don't necessarily look at my house as a retreat, but I guess it does provide that for me. I'm-- I'm five minutes up the hill from Sunset Boulevard, but it just feels like I'm kind of away from things.

We have-- a beautiful view of the city, but we feel somewhat removed. And it's sort of an extension of my personal preference of style. My wife's as well. We both like clean, modern things. I've got an architecture degree. And I've always gravitated toward the more modern, sleek kinda buildings. This house is not a Richard Meyer designed building but sort of a knockoff. It's very much his kinda style, which-- was one of the things that attracted me to it.

RATHER

Well, explain to me and to our audience, if you will, how you got from an architectural degree to Weird Al.

YANKOVIC

Well, I couldn't think of a better-- way to prepare myself for my current line of work than getting an architecture degree. No, it was just one of those things. I-- when I was 12 years old, I had a guidance counselor that talked me into becoming an architect. I had actually said that I would like to be a writer for *Mad Magazine* at the time. (LAUGH) And my counselor said, "Yeah, I don't know. I don't think. Why don't you do something like an adult would do? Like, you know, you're good at drafting. You're good at math." And-- I was talked into architecture, which at the time seemed like a rational idea. And-- when I graduated from college-- I went to Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and wound up getting my degree in architecture. But I-- I learned-- I think my junior year in college that-- it wasn't really my passion. It wasn't what excited me. Everybody else in my class was all, you know, into the form following the function. And they just loved the whole business. And I-- I just didn't have that fire in my belly for it. And it was kind of a scary time 'cause I didn't know really what I was gonna do with my life. I didn't-- I certainly didn't think I'd be able to make a living in show business. You know, I played the accordion for cryin' out loud. (LAUGH) So unless I was gonna be doing the bar mitzvah and wedding circuit for the rest of my life, I couldn't figure out exactly what I was gonna do. But after graduating, I, you know, knocked on a few doors. And I-- tried to take advantage of the airplay I was getting on

the *Dr. Demento Radio Show*. And-- and luckily, I was able to get a record deal. And against all odds, I'm still doing what I love to do.

RATHER

I wanna go back to the time you said you were 12 years old and you were meeting with your guidance counselor at school. Obviously, you were good in school. Your best subjects were math and what?

YANKOVIC

Probably science. I was-- I think I was my high school math and science-- plaque winner. (LAUGH) But I-- I was pretty good in all the-- the subjects. Except PE was probably (LAUGH) my least favorite subject. But all the academic stuff, I-- I did pretty well in.

RATHER

Well, pretty well understates it. You graduated when you were 16.

YANKOVIC

That's true.

RATHER

You were valedictorian of your high school class. Were you the class nerd?

YANKOVIC

Yeah. If-- if-- I guess if you had to pick a class nerd, I'd be the guy, (LAUGH) you know? By the time I graduated, I had-- gotten enough respect from my peers that I wasn't being-- locked in lockers, or put in trashcans, or anything like that. (LAUGH) But-- but yeah. I mean, I was-- I was probably the resident nerd.

RATHER

But you didn't play football, baseball, basketball. None of that?

YANKOVIC

No, none of that. I enjoyed tennis. I-- I-- you know-- a lotta the-- the more contact sports just seemed like excuses for people to beat me up. (LAUGH) So any kinda-- like table tennis or tennis. Anything where people weren't actually bumping into you was a good sport for me. But I-- I never really was-- on any sports team in high school.

RATHER

So you go to college. While you were studying architecture, whom were your favorite architects?

YANKOVIC

Well, I mentioned Richard Meyer. That was one of my favorites. Frank Gehry is-- I don't think he was as popular then as he is now. I mean, went-- I went to college in the '70s. I'm trying to think who else was big at the time.

RATHER

Frank Lloyd Wright s--

YANKOVIC

Frank Lloyd Wright obviously. Sure. I.M. Pei or Pei. I'm-- I forget how-- (LAUGH)

RATHER

I.M. Pei.

YANKOVIC

Pei, right. But-- again, you know-- that was one of the reasons why I knew that it wasn't really my calling in life, was that I-- I didn't-- I wasn't like, "Gosh, I hope I'd be like Frank Lloyd Wright one day." I didn't have that kind of, you know, fervor--

RATHER

But you were listening to the radio show.

YANKOVIC

The *Dr. Demento Radio Show*.

RATHER

Which was very popular in its time, particularly in the West. It was what, the radio program?

YANKOVIC

The *Dr. Demento Show*-- he did-- a local version on Los Angeles. And he did a nationally syndicated version. And basically, it was a radio show where he played from his own extensive collection of comedy and novelty records. Everything, you know, going back to the turn of the century. The people that inspired me from the show were people like Spike Jones, Allan

Sherman, Stan Freberg, Tom Lehrer. People like that. And that really exposed me to a lot of things I'd never heard before. And that's what inspired me to start sending in tapes and to continue doing the kind of music that I do today.

RATHER

And while you were oscillating from architecture to this I'll call crazy radio show, were your parents scratching their head and saying to themselves, (LAUGH) "What's happened to our son? He was good at math. He was good at science. He was terrific at school. He graduates at 16. He's valedictorian. We send him off to college. He's great at architecture, but he wants to do this crazy radio stuff."

YANKOVIC

If-- if my parents were concerned or worried, they did a pretty good job of hiding it from me. I-- I think they always knew that-- I had a pretty good head on my shoulders, and I wasn't impulsive, and I wasn't one of these kids that was gonna s-- gonna run off to Hollywood, and-- you know-- take my shot at stardom. It w-- that wasn't what I was all about. You know, I had-- always had a job. I mean, when I was trying to get a record deal, it was basically a minimum wage day job. But I-- I always was pretty adult minded. And I always made sure I could take care of myself. And-- and my-- my parents-- as far as I knew, never really worried about me 'cause they knew that somehow I would land on my feet. They-- they said, "You know, you can come back home and live in the garage any time you want." (LAUGH)

RATHER

Well, tell me what happened. You start sending tapes to the radio program. And then what happened?

YANKOVIC

Well, it took-- it took a few years. But-- you know, I-- I built up a cult following through the *Dr. Demento Show*. Being on the *Dr. Demento* Funny Five or Top Ten doesn't necessarily translate to a record deal. So--

RATHER

Funny Five? Top Ten?

YANKOVIC

At the end of every show, he would-- play the most requested songs of the night. For a while, it was the Funny Five. And-- and then I think it was the Top Ten. And a lotta times, my songs would be-- I'd have several songs on the countdown.

RATHER

These are songs you were sending into him on-- on audio tape?

YANKOVIC

That's correct. So this is before I had a record deal. This was, like-- you know, I-- I first-- I think 1976 was the first time he played one of my recordings-- on the radio. And it was literally recorded on a cassette tape recorder in my bedroom, just me and the accordion. Very primitive. (LAUGH)

And he told me that the reason he played that particular recording was because I was a teenager with an accordion. He didn't think-- he thought the-- the song was okay, but it wasn't anything that special. But the fact that I was playing an accordion and-- obviously thinking I was cool, (LAUGH) he thought that was pretty amusing.

RATHER

Well, one doesn't think of the accordion as being exactly cool.

YANKOVIC

Well, I'm trying to change that around. It's been a s-- (LAUGH) a long road. But I'm trying to make the accordion sexy again.

RATHER

You remember what the tune was?

YANKOVIC

The first one he played on the radio was a song called *Belvedere Cruising*, which was basically-- a love song about the family car, which was a big, black 1964 Plymouth Belvedere with push button transmission and red upholstery. So I wasn't even old enough to drive it at the time. But it was a song about the car.

RATHER

So you do this for a while, and you were making some headway, developing a cult following. That developed into what?

YANKOVIC

Well, it took about two years between college and getting the first record deal. So I worked in-- in a mailroom up until then. And we basically approached every single record label in town. And everybody said, "Oh, this is great. This is really clever, and creative, and brilliant, and funny. We're not interested." 'Cause it was basically novelty music. Any time you're mixing

comedy with pop music, it's considered novelty. And that was at a point in time where people just didn't see the value in it. They thought it was basically the domain of one hit wonders. It was a very ephemeral art form. Novelty artists have a habit of having a big hit and then disappearing quickly into obscurity. And--and they said, "You know, we think you're great, but we want-- we want to have-- a roster of artists that have long careers. So I'm afraid we're not gonna have-- be able to work with you," which is the big irony of my-- (LAUGH) my career. Because I've now lasted 30 plus years, which is considerably longer than a lot of-- a lotta the people I was making fun of in the early days.

ACT 3

Handy by Weird Al Yankovic (SONG CLIP)

*I'm so handy
You already know
I'll fix your plumbing
When your toilets overflow
I'm so handy...*

DAN RATHER

Well, I want to back up for a moment. What we call in television a wide shot.

WEIRD AL YANKOVIC

Alright.

RATHER

Weird Al, first of all, are you weird?

YANKOVIC

Well, not all the time certainly. I mean, (LAUGH) I kind of-- I'm chameleon-like. I-- I adapt to certain cir-- situations. Like, this is a very kind of low key interview. If you're-- a loud t-- you know, morning radio disc jockey bein' wacky, (LAUGH) I'd be giving you a different kinda energy. So I-- you know, I'm a much different person on stage than when I'm at home or when I'm out shopping for-- for groceries.

RATHER

Well, you have a tremendous reputation and a very big following. But for somebody who says, "I don't know who this person is," who are you? First of all, who are you professionally?

YANKOVIC

Well-- I-- I'm-- I'm known for doing-- comedy music. I'm probably best known for doing song parodies, taking popular songs of the day, and tweaking them, and-- and doing puns on the title, and-- and kind of taking them in a different direction. So I'm-- I'm probably most known for that. But my material-- is half parodies and half originals. It's all comedy though. So-- I-- I-- I'm mostly known as-- a comedy recording artist.

RATHER

Who are you as a person?

YANKOVIC

A person? Oh my goodness. Well, I-- you know, the weirdness aside, I-- I still tend to think of myself as kind of-- a quiet, withdrawn guy. I mean-- my celebrity has allowed me to-- be a little bit more-- outgoing in social situations. But I-- I still am-- feel-- always feel awkward-- when I'm in any kind of social gathering, which is one of the reasons why my wife completes me. She's-- she's-- (LAUGH) she's the outgoing side of our family unit. And-- and-- I-- I lean on her quite heavily (LAUGH) in social gatherings because she'll be the person, you know, making conversations and keeping-- keeping it going. And I'll-- I just try not to fall over.

RATHER

Well, it's pretty clear what your goals have been professionally. But as a person, what do you want to do in life? What do you want to do with your life outside of your profession, your music, and your parody?

YANKOVIC

Gosh, you know, I-- I feel very fortunate because, you know, I-- I'm doing exactly what I love to do for a living. Comedy and music have always been the things that-- I've loved the most-- career-wise. And-- you know, I-- can't think of anything really much different-- I-- I wanna be doing.

My biggest joy is being with my family. So I always make sure that I have plenty of time with them. And-- and I do. I mean, I took this entire year off touring-- partly to work on the album but mostly just so I could be with my family. 'Cause my daughter's 11. I mean, these are precious years. And I just wanted to make sure that-- I have enough time to enjoy them.

RATHER

And what do you care about? I mean, you said you care about your family. What else do you care about?

YANKOVIC

I enjoy a good burrito. (LAUGH) I sure--

RATHER

Well, you and I share that.

YANKOVIC

Well, I-- of course. (LAUGH) Of course. I mean, that's-- that's-- those are the two big ones. I-- I can't think of anything-- off the top of my head. You want-- did you have anything in mind? Is this leading?

RATHER

No, (LAUGH) I'm-- I'm trying to get-- I'm trying to get behind the mask, you know-- in-- in-- into the person.

YANKOVIC

Okay, I-- I--

RATHER

Do you like to (LAUGH) walk outdoors? You like to fish? You like to hunt? You like to read?

YANKOVIC

Well, you know, I like to read. I-- I surf online. I probably spend more time with my laptop-- (LAUGH) than my family would prefer. (LAUGH) But I'm obsessively-- you know, checking my Twitter feed and-- and-- and-- checking all the pop culture websites. And t-- you know, part of my job description is I need to kinda keep my finger on the pulse of what's happening in the zeitgeist. And I-- and I do that partly because it's my job and partly because I truly love doing that. I-- it really interests me. But I-- I like to get outside. My daughter's very into nature and being outdoors. She is very different than I was when I was her age. I'd be watching TV eight hours a day. And she's (LAUGH) like, "Come on, dad. Let's get outside. Let's go play." So she drags me out. And we have a great time. And so-- I enjoy that as well. We-- we live part time-- in-- on Maui-- which-- is such-- a blessing, to be able to-- you know, as much as this house is a bit of a getaway and-- and an oasis, when we're out there, we're really-- in one of the most remote parts of the world. It-- it's-- you know, it's paradise. And, you know, for what's it worth, I still have the-- the high speed internet (LAUGH) and the satellite TV. So I'm not totally cut off. But--

RATHER

Well, a couple of things you said really interest me. 1) You said as a child you spent a lot of time in front of the television set, maybe hours. Now, a lot of parents, I'm tempted to say most

parents, would be really worried if their son or daughter spent hours in front of the television set. But you're telling me you did that and you turned out one must say not too badly. (LAUGH)

YANKOVIC

I guess so. I mean, I still did all my homework. I was still a good student. I still-- did all the things that I was supposed to do. So my parents really were fairly lenient as far as my TV viewing habits.

RATHER

How has social media changed the music business or the comedy business?

YANKOVIC

Well-- both for the better I-- I like to think. You know-- MTV isn't really music television anymore. The internet is really where my bread is buttered-- in terms of-- a place to-- to see my material and to advertise and promote it. And social media is something f-- quite frankly that I was sort of dragged onto. 'Cause I thought, "Oh, I've already got a website. You know, why-- why do I need to be on my MySpace, or Twitter, or Facebook, or any of these other things?" Truthfully, what got me into it originally was the fact that there were Weird Al imitators on these sites, people claiming to be me.

And it's very hard to police the internet. It's hard to make them take down those websites or to-- you know, call attention to the fact that they're fake. The only real thing you can do is be on there yourself and establish an official presence. And that way, all the imitators go away. So that's what I did. But I found out once I was there I loved it. I-- I loved being on Twitter. I love the fact that, any ridiculous random thing I wanna say I can tweet it and three and a half million people (LAUGH) get to see it immediately. It kinda mind boggling.

RATHER

Yeah, it is mind boggling. But I'm thinking MTV, when MTV first started and it was music videos and music acts, really helped to make you.

YANKOVIC

Absolutely. Yeah.

RATHER

And you helped to make them.

YANKOVIC

I-- I gave it my best shot. (LAUGH)

RATHER

No, but we're talkin' now, what? Early '80s, late '70s--

YANKOVIC

Yeah. Yeah, I mean, MTV started, I think, in 1981. And-- my first album came out in 1983. So it wasn't, you know-- concurrent. But I was-- I was definitely there for the early days of MTV. And I like to-- to say that I'm sort of-- an outlier in the Malcolm Gladwell sense because, you know, MTV and I started pretty much the same time. And even though my first-- music videos were very raw and primitive-- so was MTV. So they (LAUGH) didn't mind quite--

RATHER

It's true--

YANKOVIC

--so much. And they were looking for content. They were a 24-hour music video channel. And they needed music videos 'cause not a lotta people were making 'em back then. So v-- virtually anything you gave them they would put on the air. And if it was good, they'd play it a lot.

RATHER

Do you remember what your first video was that played on MTV?

YANKOVIC

The first video-- that they played was *Ricky*, which was a parody of *Mickey* by Toni Basil. But-- my song was about-- Lucille Ball and Ricky Ricardo. And-- it was a black and white video shot very cheaply. And in fact, it featured Tress MacNeille. That was one of the first things she ever did. She has gone onto be one of the most famous voiceover artists in the world. Works on *The Simpsons* and *Animaniacs*. And that-- that might have been her first job in L.A.

Ricky by Weird Al Yankovic (SONG CLIP)

*Oh Ricky, you're so fine
You play your bongos all the time
Hey Ricky, hey Ricky*

*Oh Lucy, you're so fine
How I love to hear you whine
Hey Lucy*

ACT 4

Jurassic Park by Weird Al Yankovic (SONG CLIP)

*Jurassic Park is frightening in the dark
All the dinosaurs are running wild
Someone shut the fence off in the rain
I admit it's kinda eerie
But this proves my chaos theory
And I don't think I'll be coming back again, oh no!*

DAN RATHER

Well, as we've talked here, that you've made it from the '70s through the '80s, through the '90s, through the first decade of the 21st century and now deep into the second decade of the 21st century. And not only have you survived, but you've thrived. One could make a case that you are at the very top of your career now. You have an album that's introduced itself as being number one on the chart. No small accomplishment in any decade. How have you done this?

WEIRD AL YANKOVIC

I don't know. Partly accidental, and-- partly luck, and partly just sheer tenacity. I still have a passion for it and you know, I just haven't given up. And another big part of the equation is I've managed to surround myself with extremely talented people. I've had the same band since 1982.

RATHER

That must be an all-time record.

YANKOVIC

Well, I don't know. But it's-- you know, I'm-- you know, it's up there. It's certainly up there. But that-- that's a big part of it. Because-- you know, I surround myself with very talented people. And that-- that makes me look good.

RATHER

Also, you've kept up with the times. I mean, when MTV was getting hot, you were on MTV. Social media's now the big thing and you're deep in social media. So keeping up with the times has been a good part of it.

YANKOVIC

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, just kinda following along wherever the culture leads you. You have to-- you have to realize when the old models aren't working anymore and move onto the new--

new model. So that's-- you know, I've-- I've been very lucky to be able to-- to-- (LAUGH) to make that work to my advantage.

RATHER

Well-- you are an expert in-- in making people laugh. What makes something funny?

YANKOVIC

(LAUGH) Oh, that's-- that's a big question. You know, humor's very subjective. I mean, I'm sure what makes you laugh is different than what makes-- a lot of other people laugh. I think anybody in comedy would say that surprise is a big element-- which is one of the reasons why I always try to keep my-- songs a secret till they come out because if you know what-- what the-- what the joke is, what the hook is, it's not as funny when you hear it the first time. But-- again, it's-- it's hard to articulate. Because—everything's-- you know-- you know, different with different people. I mean, some people think that something's funny. Somebody else might think that's in bad taste or too dark. It's-- it's a personal choice. I-- I basically always do whatever I think is funny and hope that somebody else will agree with me.

RATHER

But you've described what you do as parody.

YANKOVIC

More or less, yes.

RATHER

By your definition, what is parody?

YANKOVIC

Well, parody basically is taking-- something that people are familiar with and tweaking it-- making it slightly different, and maybe taking it in-- in a different direction than it was originally. Parody is related to satire. It's w-- a very similar thing. But satire-- is used to make a comment either about-- a bigger societal issue or on the original songwriter, or the song itself.

RATHER

But you do parody.

YANKOVIC

I do a little bit of satire, but it's mostly parody.

RATHER

Well-- I've written down the dictionary definition--

YANKOVIC

Okay, let's hear it--

RATHER

--of parody and satire. And I want you to comment on it. Now, the dictionary definition. Parody is a composition that imitates the style of another composition, normally for comic effect and often applying their style to an outlandish or inappropriate subject.

YANKOVIC

I agree with the dictionary.

RATHER

That's pretty much what you do.

YANKOVIC

That-- that's pretty much, yeah.

RATHER

Now, satire, intended to do more than just entertain. Tries to improve humanity and its institutions. A satire is a literary work that takes to anyone-- trying to hold it up to ridicule an institution, a person, a way of life if you will

YANKOVIC

I would agree with most of that. I wouldn't say that all of satire is meant to improve humanity. (LAUGH) Some of it's just-- you know, making a snide comment about somebody. (LAUGH)

RATHER

So, you do mostly parody. That's what you love to do. But you mix in a little bit of satire from time to time.

YANKOVIC

Yeah, I mean, satire is fun to do. You know, there are a few times-- when I've-- m-- when my parodies are basically comments on the original songwriter-- or the original song. I-- I did that in

the case of Lady Gaga, and Nirvana, and-- Billy Ray Cyrus, and probably one or two others-- which is-- I-- it's just a thin line because I try to-- not to be mean spirited. You know-- a lot of my humor is considered gentle because I-- I don't like to step on people's toes. So it's-- it's hard to do a lotta satire and keep it friendly, (LAUGH) you know? 'Cause you're trying to make a point.

RATHER

But you do succeed in that and it occurs to me in a time, in an age, in an era marked by cynicism, negative thinking, that you've made a whole career on being nice to people.

YANKOVIC

(LAUGH) I-- I-- I don't think of it that way. A lot of people have-- have-- commented on that. And it's very nice. I enjoy being thought of as a nice person. (LAUGH) But it's-- it's not-- not-- not a calculated move on my part.

RATHER

But first of all, you get permission from people to do-- parodies of their acts.

YANKOVIC

I do, yes.

RATHER

And if they say no, you don't do it.

YANKOVIC

That's correct.

RATHER

Who's the most well known person who's said no? Maybe that person known as Prince?

YANKOVIC

That would be correct, yeah. I mean, I-- I-- I've-- only been turned down a small handful of times in my career. And most of those times have been Prince. And he's never-- never given a reason exactly. I just think he does-- does not enjoy the, you know, genre of parody.

RATHER

All right. But you-- you said you weren't sure you deserved the reputation of being kind. But you have this talent; I'm tempted to say genius for making fun but not being mean. How do you do that?

YANKOVIC

It's-- again, it's hard to articulate. I--I think it's just an extension of my personality. You know, I-- I don't like to-- to step on people's toes. I like to say that I-- I'd rather, you know, poke them in the ribs than kick them in the butt, you know? (LAUGH) It's-- I-- I think-- I think it's more of a challenge and ultimately a better laugh if you can-- if you can, you know, poke fun at somebody without-- denigrating them.

RATHER

What's your all-time favorite parody?

YANKOVIC

That is a tough one. I don't know. I usually say *White and Nerdy* just because it-- it comes close to being the most autobiographical. (LAUGH) I am drawing from a lot of personal experience from that song.

White & Nerdy by Weird Al Yankovic (SONG CLIP)

*Happy Days is my favorite theme song
I could sure kick your butt in a game of ping pong
I'll ace any trivia quiz you bring
I'm fluent in Java Script as well as Klingon*

*They see me roll on my Segway
I know in my heart they think I'm white and nerdy
Think I'm just too white and nerdy
Think I'm just too white and nerdy
Can't you see I'm white and nerdy
Look at me I'm white and nerdy*

I'd like to roll with the gangstas...

RATHER

Well, if not that, then which one?

YANKOVIC

Oh-- well, *Word Crimes* on the new album is s-- sort of near and dear to my heart because grammar is very important to me. It really irritates me-- (LAUGH) when I have to deal with-- with people that-- that don't know how to write properly. So it's-- that's always been a bit of a pet peeve. So I-- I won't say that the person in that song-- is me because I always play a character when I write these songs. But-- again, that's drawing from a lot of personal experience

RATHER

So who's the character in that song?

YANKOVIC

Well, somebody that's-- I-- I don't wanna say grammar Nazi, but somebody that really-- takes it to-- a different level. I mean-- the-- the character in the song basically is willing to hit somebody on the head with a crowbar because they're not using proper grammar. (LAUGH) And-- I w-- I maybe would hit somebody in the knees with a crowbar. But the head, I think that's going too far.

Word Crimes by Weird Al Yankovic (SONG CLIP)

*You finished second grade
I hope you can tell
If you're doing good or doing well
You better figure out the difference
Irony is not coincidence
And I thought that you'd gotten it through your skull
About what's figurative and what's literal
Oh but, just now, you said
You literally couldn't get out of bed
That really makes me want to literally
Smack a crowbar upside your stupid head*

*I read your email
It's quite apparent
Your grammar's errant*

RATHER

Is or is not this though-- a battle you are bound to lose. That with Twitter and-- all-- text, email, grammar seems to be going out of style. And-- I can foresee the time-- I'm not predicting, but I could foresee a time in which people say it was quaint to have all these rules of grammar.

YANKOVIC

Common-- the whole idea of common usage scares me a little bit. Because I know that language is meant to evolve. But-- I'm told that dictionary definitions are changing because they're

common usage. "Literally" to me has always meant literally. And because people are using it incorrectly-- apparently some dictionaries are now saying that literally could mean figuratively given the context. And that seems ridiculous to me. I mean, that doesn't mean it's common usage. That just means there's-- that there are a lot of kinda stupid people. (LAUGH)

RATHER

Well, I'm interested. I don't-- I-- I-- well, I could spend the rest of the afternoon talking about grammar. But we were talking about your favorite parodies. So you've mentioned two of them. Did you ever give any consideration to doing parodies of, say, Elvis Presley or the Beatles?

YANKOVIC

Well, I would certainly do that if I could combine it with-- a topical subject. I have certainly done some classic rock songs, and gone back-- in the archives, and-- and done songs that, you know, certainly wouldn't be considered current but I was able to pair the song with a current topic. Like, when I did-- a parody of Don McLean's *American Pie*-- that was a song from 1970 I believe. And I did that-- in the late '90s. And the reason-- why that made sense then was because I paired it with a song about the *Star Wars* prequel which had-- had just gotten released. So I-- I-- I'm more than happy to go back and do a classic rock song if-- if I can make it-- topical with the subject matter.

The Saga Begins by Weird Al Yankovic (SONG CLIP)

*Oh my this here Anakin guy
May be Vader someday later - now he's just a small fry
And he left his home and kissed his mommy goodbye
Sayin' "Soon I'm gonna be a Jedi"
"Soon I'm gonna be a Jedi"*

RATHER

What's next for you? You have this album. You are promoting the album now. But what's next?

YANKOVIC

I'm slowly getting ready for-- a world tour. We're gonna be starting in May. And it's gonna go for about five months, which is the longest tour I've done in a while.

RATHER

Oh, that's a long tour.

YANKOVIC

Yeah, it is. It's-- and it's-- it's-- it's more difficult-- with a family. I mean-- long tours like that were a lot more common in my single days. But now, it's a matter of, like, figuring out when the family can fly out for a weekend. And-- and-- you know, we-- we try to maintain some semblance of a family life even for extended tours. So that's the main thing we're working on. There is-- a few other projects here and there. But mostly, we're-- we're taking steps toward-- getting the tour started.

RATHER

Can you or can you not foresee a day when you don't do parody?

YANKOVIC

Yeah, it's hard to say. I mean, my-- my record contract is over. I don't-- I'm not obligated to do, well, really anything. (LAUGH) But I still enjoy doing the parodies. And-- you know, as long as it's still fun for me, I'll-- I'll keep doing it. As long as I can come up with-- with-- with ideas for it. So-- no, I mean, I-- I-- I think when people are completely tired of me, they'll let me know. And then I'll probably lose interest as well. (LAUGHTER)

Word Crimes by Weird Al Yankovic (SONG CLIP)

*I hate these word crimes
Like I could care less
That means you do care
At least a little
Don't be a moron*

ACT 5

WEIRD AL YANKOVIC (Performance from 2014 Emmy® Awards)

*Here come dragons galore and some boobs
Okay, to be fair, there's way more boobs...*

DAN RATHER

Well, for what do you want to be mostly known? Let me put it in another way. Your obituary, first paragraph or two, what do you hope will be said?

YANKOVIC

Well, I-- (LAUGH) I just know the headline when I die is gonna be, "Weird Al eats it."
(LAUGH) It's gonna-- somebody is gonna say that. I don't know. I-- I think probably it'll be just-- mostly a recap of my career, and my greatest hits, and-- and what I'm known for. You know, the-- the parody songs probably. And-- on a smaller scale, probably m-- my children's

books, or my Saturday morning TV show, and-- and various other things I've done in my career. And-- as-- as a footnote, they'd probably say I'm a family man and-- maybe-- (LAUGH) maybe I won the spelling bee in sixth grade. I hope that gets mentioned (LAUGH) 'cause I'm very proud of that.

RATHER

Well, you should be.

YANKOVIC

I should be. (LAUGH)

RATHER

But at your memorial service-- I'm asking you to visualize your memorial service.

YANKOVIC

(LAUGH) Ok.

RATHER

What one work of yours would you hope would be played?

YANKOVIC

Oh, (LAUGH) I don't know if any of my-- songs are really appropriate for a memorial service. I don't know. It's-- I'd say it's not really mine to say.

RATHER

Well, visualize it. It's a celebration after all. This is not a funeral. This is a memorial service.

YANKOVIC

Yeah.

RATHER

It's a celebration of your life. And so s-- we-- I-- we wanna play something that's-- that you like and that's evocative of your career and your time in your life.

YANKOVIC

I've-- I-- I have-- an instrumental called *Welcome to the Fun Zone*. So that would probably be nice-- and ironic for-- (LAUGH) for a memorial service. Let's go with that.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

FOR THOSE OF YOU NOT FAMILIAR WITH THE SONG, *WELCOME TO THE FUN ZONE* APPEARED ON THE SOUNDTRACK OF YANKOVIC'S FILM *UHF*, A CULT CLASSIC THAT HAS JUST BEEN RERELEASED FOR ITS 25 ANNIVERSARY.

RATHER

Well-- did you grow up in a religious household?

YANKOVIC

Yeah. Yeah, we-- yeah, I did. My-- my mom and dad-- went to church. And-- we would go every Sunday.

RATHER

Any hymns from your youth you remember?

YANKOVIC

Sure. You know, let's-- let's sing some. (SINGS) *How Great Thou Art. How Great Thou Art.* (LAUGH)

RATHER

Very good a cappella. Very good a cappella. So again, at your memorial service, what hymn would you like played?

YANKOVIC

You're definitely the first person ever to ask me that (LAUGH) question. How about *How Great Thou Art*? That's pretty good. (LAUGH)

RATHER

Well, that'd be very nice. (LAUGH) Billy Graham will be very pleased with you say-- to say-- say the least. Have you thought of doing parodies of political figures?

YANKOVIC

I tend to stay away from politics for two big reasons, one of which is-- when you do political humor, generally you have to take a side which alienates half of your fan base immediately. So--

and I'd prefer to keep all the fans that I've got. And the other thing is-- political humor tends to date very poorly. Usually-- a political song will be popular for a few weeks. And then it'll become very dated and certainly not something that-- that you'd wanna be playing on stage five, ten years later.

RATHER

How do you decide what to do? And then once you make that decision, the second part of the question, what's the process of developing the product?

YANKOVIC

My decisions about what parodies that I do-- entirely revolve around two things-- whether the song is popular and whether I can come up with a clever enough idea. And there are a lot more popular songs than clever ideas in my head. So I can always come up with an idea, but they're not always good. But if I do happen to by a stroke of luck come up with an idea that I like-- the next thing is I will-- ask my manager to contact the management of the songwriter or recording artist, and pitch my idea, my high concept, and see if they'd be open to it. I tend not to write song lyrics or-- or, you know, write an entire song without knowing if the artist has a sense of humor because they might not. And then it's a lot of wasted effort on my part.

RATHER

Of the people you've parodied, and you've parodied so many people, who had the-- the best reaction or the most memorable reaction?

YANKOVIC

Oh, there have been a number. I mean, Michael Jackson was-- a huge supporter. He let me do both *Eat It* and *Fat*. And when we did the *Fat* video, that was on Michael Jackson's subway set. He allowed me to actually shoot in his subway.

Fat by Weird Al Yankovic (SONG CLIP)

*Because I'm fat, I'm fat
Really, really fat
You know I'm fat, I'm fat
You know it
You know I'm fat, I'm fat, come on...*

YANKOVIC

Greg Kihn-- appeared on my video-- for *I Lost on Jeopardy*.

I Lost on Jeopardy by Weird Al Yankovic (SONG CLIP)

I lost on Jeopardy, baby

YANKOVIC

Oh, one of my favorite reactions was-- was Kurt Cobain, who said that he didn't realize that he'd made it until he heard the Weird Al parody.

Smells Like Nirvana by Weird Al Yankovic (SONG CLIP)

*Well, we don't sound like Madonna
Here we are now, we're Nirvana
Sing distinctly? We don't wanna
Buy our album, we're Nirvana*

YANKOVIC

Chamillionaire, who w-- did *Ridin'*, which I did-- *White and Nerdy* based on-- he told me that-- at the Grammys. We-- he met me on the red carpet and said that-- he felt that the reason why he won for rap song of the-- of the year was because I had done the parody. Because the parody made-- made it undeniable that-- that his song was the rap song of the year.

RATHER

Hey, that's pretty high praise.

YANKOVIC

Yeah.

RATHER

Yeah, must-- musta made you feel terrific.

YANKOVIC

It did.

RATHER

Well, what's the best thing that's happened to you in life?

YANKOVIC

Well, this interview ranks high up there. (LAUGH)

RATHER

Come on. Now that's a parody.

YANKOVIC

But, you know, no seriously, I mean, there-- there are things that have happened to me-- this year alone which I never-- ever thought would happen. Getting a number one album is something that I honestly never in my wildest dreams thought would happen. I kinda feel it's-- like, it's like the high school nerd being elected homecoming king, you know? (LAUGH) It's just like-- I keep-- I keep thinking that, you know, it's a prank, like there is a bucket of pig's blood that's gonna fall on my head or something. (LAUGH) But-- I'm very grateful obviously and thankful.

And that's something that I'll be happy about for the rest of my life. And I mean it-- w-- that's career wise. I mean, obviously, I'm, you know-- in the bigger picture, I'm so thankful that I have such a wonderful wife, and an amazing daughter. And I've just got, you know, so many blessings. I've, you know, sometimes I just can't believe it.

RATHER

Nobody gets through life unscathed. What's the worst thing that's happened to you in life?

YANKOVIC

I-- I hate to get into it too much, 'cause it's-- it's-- it's hard to-- to remember and think about, but I'd have to say the death of my parents. Ten years ago, they both-- died from-- carbon monoxide poisoning. And, it was just-- just the most horrific moment in my life-- because it was, you know, unexpected. I mean-- you know, in the-- I-- I knew intellectually, that at some point, probably, I'd have to, you know, live through the death of my parents, but I never thought it would be at the same time, and so abruptly. So, it was just-- you know-- ob-- obviously, it was-- it's a pain that I still feel to this day. The-- the shock and the horror has worn off a bit, but it's just that was definitely, you know, the-- the worst thing that ever happened to me.

RATHER

But weren't you lucky and blessed to have them for as long as you did.

YANKOVIC

I certainly was. And-- and I do still feel blessed, and-- and-- I-- I couldn't have asked for better-- support group on my-- my parents were-- were the-- were the best.

RATHER

And they lived long enough to see your success.

YANKOVIC

They did. And they got to meet my daughter, which-- which I'm so happy they were able to-- to experience that.

RATHER

Well, I certainly wanna be respectful of your pain, but was this an accident? You said they died of carbon monoxide poisoning, or something else?

YANKOVIC

It-- it's true, yeah-- the-- I-- the flu in the fireplace, I think was closed. And-- and I guess-- they-- they lit a fire and they went to sleep, and-- and that was it.

RATHER

So, it was sudden, to say the least.

YANKOVIC

Yes. Yes.

RATHER

And, what did you learn from that-- what did you take from that, that's been of value to you as you-- as you've gone on with your life?

YANKOVIC

Well, just another reminder that, you know, life is short. Things-- things happen-- thing-- unexpected things happen. You have to-- appreciate the time you have with your family. It's-- you know it, all-- all things that you know all-- already, but it just kind of really drives the point home, that you just have to be appreciative of-- of the people in your life.

Yoda by Weird Al Yankovic (SONG CLIP)

*I met him in a swamp down in Dagobah
Where it bubbles all the time like a giant carbonated soda
S O D A, soda*

ACT 6

Sports Song by Weird Al Yankovic (SONG CLIP)

*Allow us now to summarize them in a manner
That your feeble brains can understand*

We're great (we're great)
And you suck (you suck)
We're great (we're great)
And you suck (you suck)
We're great (we're great)
And you suck (you suck)
You see there's us (we're great)
And then there's you (you suck)

DAN RATHER

Well that reminds me-- Weird Al, where'd the name come from?

WEIRD AL YANKOVIC

Well, Al's short for Alfred. (LAUGH) Oh, the weird part. (LAUGHTER) W-- Weird Al was-- a name that I-- took on-- when I started doing college radio. Full disclosure, I think that pee-- people were calling Weird Al in the dorms my freshman year, before I took on professionally. I'm not sure why-- I guess they thought I was weird. But I decided to take (LAUGH) it on as a badge of honor, and-- and everybody on the campus radio station had some kind of whacky air name, like, the-- The Sheriff, or-- Macho Mike-- or-- The Captain. And I thought, "Oh, Weird Al? Yeah, sure." And I-- I played weird music. So it-- it seemed appropriate and just one of those things where the name just kinda stuck.

RATHER

This strikes me as-- whether you thought of it at the time or not-- brilliant. You take what could be a weakness, or something that hurt you, and made it a strength by saying, "Okay, I'll just call myself Weird Al."

YANKOVIC

Yeah-- as a form of empowerment. And what-- a nice side effect is, I've heard from a lot of kids over the years, where peers in school have called them weird, or called them a freak, or-- or made fun of them 'cause they were unusual, and they look up to me and say, well here's a guy that, you know, proudly calls himself weird, and he's okay with it. He's okay being different. So, it-- you know, that means a lot to me to know that, in some small way, I've been able to give a little bit of-- encouragement and support to people like that.

RATHER

The accordion. What drew you to the accordion? It seems-- an unusual instrument for you to be-- attracted to.

YANKOVIC

Yeah, I-- I don't believe that I-- I begged my parents for accordion lessons. I d-- I'm not sure exactly how that came about. But, I do remember-- that there was a door to door music teacher that came around, back in the days when people would actually go door to door. It seems crazy now, but back when I was growing up, that was the thing. And-- somebody came to our door and said, you know, would your s-- child like to take either guitar lessons or accordion lessons? I'm not sure why, but my parents thought why young Alfred would love accordion lessons. (LAUGH) Part of it-- part of it may have been because of our last name, because-- Frankie Yankovic was a very popular accordion player.

RATHER

That's true.

YANKOVIC

America's Polka King, based out of the mid-west. No direct relation as far as we could tell-- but my parents had a bunch of his 78 rpm records in-- in the attic, and-- and we were very familiar with his work, and we thought, "Oh, well, there should be at least one more accordion playing Yankovic in the world. (LAUGHTER)

RATHER

So it-- you -- begun taking accordion lessons when, six? Seven?

YANKOVIC

My first lesson was the day before my seventh birthday. And I took lessons for three years, and after that, I decided to just k-- learn on my own. Because they-- they don't teach you rock-n-roll when you take accordion-- lessons. (LAUGH) It's either-- either polka, or classical pieces. And I, you know, I wanted to play *The Beatles*, and *The Stones*, and *The Who*, and *The Kinks*. And, I wanted to, like, rock out. (LAUGH) And-- and I found that to do that, I had to kinda go my own path.

RATHER

I still don't think the accordion is an instrument for rock-n-roll.

YANKOVIC

It's-- it's made inroads. I mean-- you know-- facetiousness aside-- a lot of independent-- or a lot of -- a lot of indie bands are now incorporating the accordion into their instrumentation. It's-- it's a very sensual instrument-- in all seriousness. I mean, you know-- it's-- it's a very dynamic instrument. It-- it just kinda-- kind of got a bad reputation, I think, in the '50's and '60's as being very square, and ver-- being very unhip. But, it's-- you know, at it-- at its core, it's really not. You know, I-- you know, I-- and I'm-- I'm saying that in all seriousness. I mean, I-- I used it for

its comedic value, but at the same time, it's-- it's a wonderful instrument. And-- and that's slowly getting recognized again.

RATHER

Did you ever think about giving it up? Or was there a point when you were maybe a teenager, and someone said, "Jesus, how-- how square can you get? You play the accordion." (LAUGH)

YANKOVIC

Well-- none of my friends wanted me in their rock bands. I learned that early on. (LAUGH) And I also learned that-- you know, anytime I would play rock music on my accordion, my friends would think it's funny. So, I-- I learned that there was humor to be gleaned from the juxtaposition of the accordion and rock-n-roll.

So that-- that's something I never forgot. I n-- I never decided to put it down entirely. Certainly-- you know, I-- I've used probably less accordion on my albums as-- as time went on. My first album was wall to wall accordion. And nowadays, it's relegated to the polka medley and maybe one or two other songs where it's appropriate. But it's-- it's certainly not dominating (LAUGH) the instrumentation as it used to.

RATHER

I want to go back to the campus radio station for a moment. You've adopted the name Weird Al. Did this give you problems with the girls? Never mind that he also plays the accordion, God help us.

YANKOVIC

Right. I-- I wouldn't blame it entirely on that. I think it was more about my personality. (LAUGH) I mean, I was pretty nerdy. And also, there was the age difference, because-- I started college when I was 16 years old. So I was a little bit younger than everybody else. I wasn't probably as mature or developed. And-- and-- and I was a big nerd. You know, I was-- I was socially awkward. I-- I think I might have-- I wouldn't even say I had a girlfriend in college. I had one girl that I dated for a little while. But I mean, it was-- it was tough goin'. (LAUGH)

RATHER

Well, it-- in-- coming up in-- in mid-- middle school, were you bullied at any point?

YANKOVIC

I was bullied a little bit. I mean-- junior high was the worst, or middle school, or junior high, whatever you call it. It's-- my-- my daughter's in it right now, and she's having a much better experience than I had. But yeah, I mean, like, in PE class, there would be-- kids that would, you

know-- you know, punch me, and mock me, and-- I mean, it was-- I-- I didn't have a broken arm or anything like that, but it was like-- it was harassment.

RATHER

Well, how did you keep it from being destructive; because we know particularly at that age being bullied can be very destructive to one's personality.

YANKOVIC

Yeah. Well, it was-- you know-- you know, it w-- it was not-- a fun time. I mean, my-- my middle school years-- were my least favorite years of my life. And I'd say that was mostly because of the-- there were people in school that, you know, that would pick on me a lot-- leave-- leave tacks on my seat, you know, put gum in my locker-- stuff like-- I mean--it was not pleasant. And-- maybe that shaped my personality for better or worse. I'm not sure. But-- definitely that was -- that's what I remember from being 12 years old. It was-- it was not a fun time.

RATHER

You've been so generous with your time, and been generous with yourself, what question have I not asked you that I should have asked you?

YANKOVIC

(LAUGH) Hmm-- can I-- can I stay with you, Al? Can I live in your-- your room downstairs?

RATHER

Listen, the-- this beautiful house, I'll ask you that question with some seriousness. (LAUGH)
Can I come stay with you, Al?

YANKOVIC

Anytime. You're always welcome. (LAUGH)

RATHER

Be careful what you say. (LAUGH) Well, did you come into this interview saying to yourself, "If I don't get anything across to Dan Rather but this one thing I'll make sure I get that across in the interview," was there any one thing you wanted to say?

YANKOVIC

I wanted to make sure that people knew that at my memorial service, I want *How Great Thou Art*. (LAUGH)

RATHER

Now that's a parody. (LAUGH) Not satire, but it was parody. Thank you.

YANKOVIC

My pleasure.

END TRANSCRIPT