

Actor's Think Tank

Wednesday, 4/20/22

Guest: Aaron Shure

Actors Think Tank (ATT) slates began at 3:31 p.m.

(00:37) - ATT guest, Aaron Shure, was introduced by Justine Reiss. They met at Disney MGM Studios performing street improv. Both Shure and Reiss moved to L.A. around the same time and they also did a sketch for HBO which was called Experimental Space, which never aired. Reiss complimented Shure on the success of his career.

(00:41) – Rich Henkels mentioned the four year mark of success that Actor, Jen Lilley, previously talked about on ATT and Shure stated that it works over the long haul. His advice is to have a community , a raft of friends who rise together versus one person rising above to lift others up.

(00:42) Shure said Hollywood doesn't deserve to judge your worth. Instead, in year four ask, do I have friends who care about me; friends who will lift me over the wall?

(00:44) - Henkels said scaling the wall, pulling people over is the mentality in ATT. Shure gave the group some advice: 1) do improv; 2) do editing and 3) be on the other side of the casting table to get a feel for the decision makers. Shure said help and advice can be given easier than effecting a decision on their career.

(00:46) Henkels asked Shure to talk about the role of the show runner in production. Shure said technically the studio hires versus the show runner (SR). The SR can get fired from shows they create. He said it is mysterious who really calls the shots.

(00:51) – Shure said success is often about luck versus your talents. Sometimes there are no adults in the room. Don't live for the approval of Hollywood.

(00:52) – Henkels asked what the climate of Hollywood was during the Covid pandemic and did groups similar to ATT emerge? Shure was not sure of any groups, but stated that Covid changed the way writers work. Shure said SR don't screw around as much. He said it's harder for low level writers to be heard in general. Zoom works in their favor. He said a hybrid of Zoom versus the norm is probably here to stay.

(00:54) – Reiss shared insight into why she joined ATT, stating that she liked that the group included actors from across the country. She feels self taping gives the actor more control over the audition process.

(00:55) – Henkels asked Shure if he thinks self tapes is better than in person auditions and Shure said self tapes is now the norm and he is not sure if one is better than the other. Shure said Zoom adds more production to the plate of the performer; it also results in more upfront labor for writers and a lot more free work, though it gives the performer more control. Shure said with self tapes there is more skill, talent and time given for free to the industry.

(00:57) – Henkels asked at what point a writer should register with a copywriter?

Shure said he registers with the Screen Actors Guild . He does not leave his writing behind. Shure said to make sure your work is paid for. He said a good question to ask yourself is, “when am I using my value in a way I feel good about?” You must decide when and how to use your talent.

(00:60) – Shure said aspiring writers get to decide what to write, so enjoy it. Powerful showrunners (SR) still get told what to do.

(01:01) – Henkels said Actor, Camillia Monet, spoke of courage and that an actor is an actor no matter their latest project. Shure said one’s sense of legitimacy never goes away. He spoke of his Optometrist criticizing his show as he examined him.

(01:04) - Henkels asked Shure about memorable moments of humor and he recalled “Hot in Cleveland” He stated he has worked with many greats, including Steve Carell on the “Office” and Ray Romano. Shure said Carrell was such a pro that he set the tone for others on set. Shure said Romano was such a natural that he could deliver the same lines repeatedly, making them sound fresh. He also complimented Doris Roberts, calling her a “badass.” Shure said Carrell always did it better than he wrote it. The ending of the show was changed by Carrell based on the feel of the show. Shure and the writers gave Carrell options for the ending of the show which he worked on until he perfected them.

(01:10) – Henkels mentioned that Kate Flannery said she never changes the writing. Shure said some actors are reluctant to change the writing, as was Kathy Bates who was so respectful that she asked to change “or” to “and.”

(01:12) – ATT members asked questions, beginning with Dina Laurie who wanted to know what else professionally Shure desires to do. He replied that he desires to own his own on-air show from soup to nuts. He pitched a show to CBS about he and his wife which they did not pick up.

(01:14) – Sandra Bulk wanted to know what life is like in the writers room. Shure said it is like being in a submarine; it’s like a family. He said each show has its own culture. Shure said “Everyone Loves Raymond” was the show of shows, whereas “The Office” was more an SNL. Shure said advice for Bulk’s mom, who is also a comedy writer, is to ask: “who am I; what is my identify; how do I please the SR; what do they want from me?”, etc. Shure said group dynamics is important in the room. (01:18) Writers must balance their personal desire with the desire of other writers. SR knows how to convey that writers are being heard. Shure said he watches writers eye brows. SR sets the tone in the room. Shure said it is harder to do this now, but faster with Zoom.

(01:20) – For some shows, all script is written in the room; for others it is not. Drama is normally written alone. Comedy is more group writing. Shure said almost all of his scripts are rewritten and made better. He said, however, it is agonizing to be rewritten. Shure once submitted his version to the Guild, rather than the rewritten version, and it got nominated by the Guild. He saw this as a win.

(01:23) – Shure said there are typically 15 writers on “The Office” and getting smaller now. Luca Cundo asked how they get writers on the same page. Shure said this is the job of the SR, shot-caller or one with the vision. On “The Office” there was a struggle with hair and make-up. The best take may not be well lit. Sound is critical. Egos and vision must be managed.

(01:26) - Mariel McIntosh said she is a new writer and wants to know how to find your essence of humor. Shure said humor is personal and different. Shure said to find your own humor by trusting what you find amusing; improv helps; listen to applause, as it tells whom to cast; trust yourself; and find a good reader. 10% of the audience is a win.

(01:30) Shelley Breitling asked about single cam versus multi cam. Shure said multi cam is four cameras, as in the theater, and single cam is as if there is an audience. Single cam is a tighter shot; multi cam is a wider shot. Acting varies depending on single versus multi cam and blocking is critical. Shure spoke of playing a waiter and getting the blocking wrong.

(01:35) – Regarding laugh tracks, Raymond used real laughs. They had to adjust some laughs because they were too big.

(01:37) - Henkels asked Shure to name five of his favorite comedy series. Shure named: "Roseanne," "The Bob Newhart Show," "Larry Sanders," "Cheers," "Martin," "30 Rock" and "Sunny." He likes shows where nobody is a good person. Shure also mentioned "Frazier." Regarding newer shows, Shure said tha would include "Patriot Act", season one, along with: "Atlanta" and "Insecure." The Craig Robinson show on Peacock is another good show. Shure said he doesn't watch much television.

(01:43) - When asked by Henkels about comedy in commercials, Shure said a commercial is to sell the product. What is the joke and how to facilitate it is key. Dead pan humor is more popular in commercials nowadays, such as the Progressive spots. Shure said to follow directions and trust the writer. He said he gives the actors three takes before he changes directions.

(01:50) - Henkels reminded Shure that he would get a link to the recording and website. Shure confirmed that that he got the ATT mug and will take the mug shot for the ATT website.

Shure told the ATT team that we deserve to be stars, have friends and family and trust our instincts.

Respectfully submitted by,

Rosalyn T. Jamal