

ATT NOTES From Session with Oscar Nunez - September 23, 2021

ON HIS ROAD TO SUCCESS: per Oscar, everyone said it takes approximately 10 years in LA before you 'quit your day job' and that was about what it took for him. For his day job, he painted houses, worked at a phone bank, waited tables, was a teacher's aid, was a babysitter (actually was babysitter for Justine's boys), etc.

Oscar went to LA when he was in his 30s, so he had already done improv in New York. Much of his LA history originated from his time in **The Groundlings**, an improvisational and sketch comedy troupe and school based in Los Angeles. The Groundlings' Sunday Group got a reputation for being funny. Justine produced a show he was in with the Groundlings, "Smooth Down There."

Actors in The Groundlings included Will Forte and Cheryl Hines, who got *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. A friend, Greg Pitts, was in The Groundlings class and his career blew up. He got a Miller Light commercial in three months, but he was ready. He doesn't fumble; he has hits.

But, Oscar had nothing happening. His agent wasn't getting him anything. Lawrence Tierney introduced him to his agent. He signed on with him and started getting jobs right away, i.e. "24", sitcoms, guest spots, etc.

Oscar also worked at Disneyland and was in AGVA, The American Guild of Variety Artists, an American entertainment union representing performers in variety entertainment, including circuses, Las Vegas showrooms and cabarets, comedy showcases, dance revues, magic shows, theme park shows, and arena and auditorium extravaganzas. At that time, if you were a member of AGVA, you were able to buy your way into SAG. It was around \$1200.

He got *Reno 911* and had the best time ever. The director told him your episode is so good it is going to be a 2-parter. Oscar also got on *Funny Fuckers*. He was in HBO *Work Space*, which essentially provided young comics a place to hone their material.

Then, he auditioned for *The Office*. On the first audition, he did his lines. On the second audition, he started to care. He had about 2 more auditions. When he got it, he had been pitching shows to Comedy Central and *Halfway Home* was picked up. Luckily, *The Office* wrote an exit for him so he could go on hiatus and shoot *Halfway Home*. The scene where Steve Carell kisses him was written in for Oscar to leave.

And, that was about 10 years until he got a great job. He did a lot of jobs during the 10 years and he ENJOYED them.

ON NEW YORK or LA? Per Oscar, it is easier to have a nice lifestyle in LA vs NY. While the entertainment business is the main thing in LA, there are many industries. You

get more for your buck in LA. You get trees, grass, and it is not as much of a grind as NY is. Looking back, had he known, he would have come to LA earlier.

ON WORKING WITH AN ENSEMBLE: The Groundlings was an ensemble. And, he feels very lucky that he landed on a show like The Office. There was no drama with Greg Daniels and Steve Carrell. It was very calm, just the work, no studio audience. He'd rather work without a studio audience. They laugh at inopportune moments, etc.

And, Greg Daniels and Steve Carell were open to improv, although it was a slow roll out.

He remembers the first time it happened. Michael was about to give everyone some stupid surprise. After the scripted part, they were milling back to their desks and the camera kept following Brian. Completely as improv, Angela turns to Oscar and says, "I thought you were gonna talk to him?" Oscar did the "didn't you see me?" non-verbal response. And, Kevin pipes in, "What are you guys talking about?" Angela: "Nothing, Kevin."

And, the writers lost it!!! They started writing for them --- the three sad sacks stuck in that corner.

In The Office, it was very easy to be invested in the character. Basically, they were sitting working on crosswords in the corner, so if a camera showed up, the actors were actually were bugged about it!

ON IMPROV: It is tricky. Once when he was auditioning for Veep, he knew he was over the top, but he couldn't stop himself. He was too much. He was nervous and wanted it too badly.

ON THE FOURTH WALL: Ricky Gervais was breaking the 4th Wall in the British version of The Office. Regan Burns said the show was the best thing on TV. Oscar watched the last portion of an episode and didn't get it. Regan said, you've got to watch the whole thing. Oscar did and he was hooked.

Oscar watched the Carol Burnett Show as a kid and loved Harvey Korman. He was so funny physically. He remembers watching the show with his dad. Harvey Korman made an entrance and kept bowing to the audience to the applause of someone else. His dad lost it. Oscar did a great imitation of his dad laughing and being upset at skit all at the same time...and shouting in Spanish.

Oscar wanted to do whatever they (Carol Burnett Show) were doing. As far as improv, it has probably been done before, but we might not know of it.

Not only did Oscar love Harvey and Carol, he loved Tony Randall of The Odd Couple; also, Phoebe Waller-Bridge from Flea Bag. The actors would also crack each other up on stage.

Oscar is good at NOT cracking up on stage, but Will Forte is the best. He would promise \$1-100 to anyone who could make him break. As noted above, Will Forte was in The Groundlings. He was writing for That 70s Show and getting awards when they were all in class together.

ON HIS STATE FARM COMMERCIALS: Commercials are great. They are highly produced and you are fed better than in a movie. He was asked to do the State Farm commercial and it was shot in LA. He did a couple, But, he lost it due to politics. He tweeted, "Trump is a mother-fucker." His manager called him and said he needed to take that down. He did eventually, but not right away. Maybe about a week. It took him too long to remove it. And, then the contract went away.

He goes on and off social media. Adam Driver doesn't do it at all; others are making millions.

Regarding commercials, Oscar even took a class on "Commercial Auditioning." He found it hard to resist not making fun of the product.

ON FINDING YOUR LANE: "Find out who you are and double down on that." --- quote by Dolly Parton. But, don't get hung up on choosing comedy or drama. Pick one and be successful. Then, you can switch over.

He is starting to do conventions. More than once, a family has come up to him saying The Office was on the tv when she was in labor in the delivery room.

Oscar is of Cuban descent. He did not brand himself in that way, His brand is a comedic actor. He was frustrated in the beginning because he was only getting auditions for security guards, Hispanic stereotypes. It was The Groundlings that really got him in through comedy.

ON DOING THEATRE: Yes, he would do it if the material is good.

ON AUDITIONING: Back in the day when he would walk into a room and see all the well-known actors and good comedians in the room, Oscar said his shoulders would slump. But, now he sees people come into the room and see that he is there, and their shoulders slump! Be yourself.

Two stories: Bill Escudier flipped the finger during an audition. He doesn't care. Danny DeVito in a call back for Taxi said, "who wrote this piece of shit?"

"The 33" is a serious movie Oscar was in. He was the comic relief. Antonio Banderas and Lou Diamond Phillips were also in it. The film was shot in an actual mine in Columbia.

WHAT'S NEXT: A movie in West Virginia, Grave Diggers.