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2023-07-19 Pit Stop Chris Ciulla.mp3

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DURATION

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8 SPEAKERS

Karen Commins
Chris Ciulla
Anne Flosnik
Rebecca Lee
Jim Franks
Speaker5
Andrea Aal
Serena

START OF TRANSCRIPT

[00:00:04] Karen Commins

It is the top of the hour. So I want to welcome everyone to Pit Stop. It's your fortnightly mid-week rest area to refuel your drive. I'm Karen Commins. I'm an audiobook narrator, and I'm the chief cartographer for [NarratorsRoadmap.com](#), and I'm your host for Pit Stop. With me in the co-pilot seat is my lovely friend and award winning audiobook narrator Anne Flosnik, who hosts the Narrator Uplift show here on Clubhouse. How are you this afternoon, Anne?

[00:00:33]

Great. Delighted to be here.

[00:00:36] Karen Commins

Well, I'm glad you're here, too. Every other Wednesday, audiobook narrators who have more one or more side hustles pull into Pit Stop, and they are sure to inspire you to follow your interests and use all of your talents and gifts. So as a reminder, the conversation is being recorded. You'll be able to relisten or catch parts you missed, and please feel free to comment in the chat and do raise your hand in the app if you want to be part of the conversation because we'd love to hear from you. So thanks so much, everybody for joining us. I am super excited to introduce you and welcome Chris Ciulla to the Pit Stop. Chris is an award-winning audiobook narrator of more than 450 titles. He's also a TV and film actor with credits in such shows as *Castle* and *Gotham*. He always seems to die. He's he's a frequent video game actor, and he's been heard voicing the ultimate history quiz on your nearest Alexa device for the History Channel and A&E. His production company, [LeonardoAudio](#), which I've got pinned in the link on the on the page, has been producing quality audio books and interactive audio games since 2013, and they recently began publishing audiobooks. He's married to his high school sweetheart, Suzanne. He loves to spend every day with his Frenchie, Leo and his Boston terrier, Coco, and he dearly misses his first born Pug Boy. Rocky and I can relate to all of that. So welcome, Chris. It's so great to have you here.

[00:02:15] Chris Ciulla

Thank you for having me, Karen. And it's been wonderful to interact with you over the last couple of years. And and I appreciate all you do. Um, you know, with [NarratorsRoadmap](#), it's just a terrific place to, you know, allow narrators to, to to not lose time and energy in their careers going going off off the path. You know, you've established a nice little nice little inexpensive place for people to gain so much quality information. So I appreciate you for that.

[00:02:43] Karen Commins

Well, thanks so much. I we'll just have a mutual admiration society. But, you know, I we've known each other at least on Facebook a long time. And of course, we've seen each other at various things.

[00:02:56] Chris Ciulla

And we met in we met in 2017 in Atlanta.

[00:03:00] Karen Commins

Yeah, it's been a while. And then I did a Meet the Producers with you, I think, last year for APAC, probably two years ago. So yeah, it's great to get to have a longer conversation. And you know, I, I looked at your LinkedIn profile and I saw you have a Bachelor's in political science and government.

[00:03:22] Chris Ciulla

I do.

[00:03:22] Karen Commins

So so what were you planning to do with that and how did you go into acting and then how did you get to audio books?

[00:03:30] Chris Ciulla

I was planning on actually running for office. Ooh. I have a you know, my grandfather was a city councilor in my hometown of Everett, Massachusetts. And my my uncle was a state representative. And so it's it's in my blood on my mother's side. And, um. And I started even while I was in in college, I was an intern for the Massachusetts State House. And, you know, pursued student government at Boston College. And then after I was after I graduated, I worked for at the time, Congressman Ed Markey, who was now Senator Ed Markey. So I was a I was a I was a congressional aide for almost three years in his office thinking I was going to go down and become a legislative aide at some point in time in Washington. And then I started to perform. Basically at graduation. I started to take Improvization and fell in love with performance. And basically while I was working for Congress, I would travel to all the colleges across New England and and be a lead actor in in shorts and in thesis films. So I was I was, um, there, you know, I would work, you know, they, they, they, they really worked us, you know, and didn't pay us anything. So I would work, say, like 60 hours a week, um, going to events after, after work. And then on the Fridays I would make sure that, okay, I don't have any Friday events and then I would head out to like Keene State in New Hampshire and shoot a film.

[00:05:09] Anne Flosnik

Wow.

[00:05:10] Karen Commins

So these weren't related. Guess it sounds like you were doing the legislative work. Going to the colleges. And I uess just passing out or meeting with students and giving them information?

[00:05:22] Chris Ciulla

No, no, no. Two completely two completely different paths. So yeah.

[00:05:26] Karen Commins

And then developing the acting is a whole different thing.

[00:05:29] Chris Ciulla

Yeah. So, so I was like, so going to the colleges had nothing to do with my, with my, uh, my congressional aide life. So what happened was I got out of, I went to the state House to be a PR director for a state senator for a year. And that was like the final straw of, okay, I really don't I'm not enjoying this as much as I thought I was going to. And I think a lot of it was the gravitational pull of performance. And I started to study with a really, um, effective acting instructor by the name of Peter Kelly, who at the time was a was working for Collinge Pickman, which was casting at the time, and he was also a professor at Bu. Um, and he instilled, you know, really some, some great tenets on how to take acting as adults, you know, when you're no longer in college and it's not your degree how to get your degree in it when you're when you're, you know, an adult getting an adult education. And um, he enabled in myself and his other students how to take it really seriously and learn the craft and and from that about eight of us all decided to move out to Los Angeles around the same time, um, to because New York was New York living in Boston.

[00:06:50] Chris Ciulla

It no it did not have a the tax incentives that they have now to bring films in. They didn't have it at the time that wasn't established yet and New York was was was pretty dead before 911 and then 911 happened. So there was no choice but to if you were going to pursue acting, television, film, commercial, you had to go to LA. And then I set everything up and I left politics and was able to fall on a job at my alma mater, Boston College. I became a retreat coordinator and a peer minister, and I lived on campus with freshmen as a 25 year old. And I had an office right on College Road where I ran. I, I, I was a coordinator for a, a a retreat program. Um, and, and so that was a great time not only to, to, you know, stockpile cash to go to LA, but to reflect on my life and to make sure that I was making that what I thought was making the right choices. And, uh, and I don't regret any of it.

[00:07:52] Karen Commins

Because it would be kind of scary, really. You've studied you've spent all this time getting a degree. You're working in this field, and then this is like a total, total switch. Yep. And learn something new while still maintaining a job and moving forward in that. Yeah, and there were positives.

[00:08:13] Chris Ciulla

From that, that the interesting thing was, you know, it enabled me to become a better public speaker. And so I was becoming a better, you know, a better, much better at delivering messages. I was I had a problem with anxiety from in my teens and in my college career. You know, I had, uh, I was just I had some, some fears that were hard to control. One of them was, was public speaking. I, I somehow just would, would lose my mind and lose where I was at a lot of times. And becoming an actor kind of solved that I, I became better at just, uh, achieving an objective and, and being able to overcome the obstacles. And so it would have been better to, you know, even though I was improving on the skills that would help in the political arena, you know, I became a legitimate performer. And and that was the life.

[00:09:11] Karen Commins

That is just so interesting and fascinating to me that you would just and then to totally pick up and move from Boston to LA, where I'm assuming you don't really know people and have connections already established that you're kind of just starting over really again there.

[00:09:31] Chris Ciulla

Yeah, The good thing is we did have a of a nice network of people that were all from the same acting class, so we all had very similar goals. So we were all able to support each other in the very early stages of us being out in LA. However, once we got there, you know, people started to, to to diverge from their original goals and some didn't enjoy it and some, um, you know, maybe got into production instead or, um, or they, you know, enjoyed LA but didn't want to be an actor anymore. Um, for me and my roommate, we were able to create a nice network of, of people and was able to get to really key jobs that allowed me to network even further. I became the head boxing trainer at Crunch, uh, which was their flagship location on Sunset Boulevard, which was full of personalities that I was able to converse with. Um, and then I also at the same time became a doorman at House of Blues on Sunset Boulevard that was doing that at night. And that became a larger job where I became a doorman for the largest nightclub in LA called Avalon. It used to be called The Palace. And then some some promoters from Boston came out and created basically, they created another version of their clubs in, um, on Lansdowne Street behind Fenway Park. They made them in LA. So, um, I had some very I got and that's all luck from a friend of a friend having those connections. And I still owe him to this day. He lives about 20 minutes from me, so I make sure I take him out to dinner every six months.

[00:11:15] Karen Commins

We'll send him the recording so he'll hear you say, "I owe him".

[00:11:21] Chris Ciulla

Sure Yep. Jay Tosny. He knows it. He knows it well.

[00:11:23] Karen Commins

But it sounds almost like magic pixie dust that these things just came together for you. And sure.

[00:11:31] Chris Ciulla

But they were also distracting, you know, like. So you go out there and didn't have any money when I went out there, so I had to earn money and at the same time try to find time to go out and audition and, um, you know, find, you know, we're all at the time, we're trying to get what we call tape, you know, to try to get scenes on a reel so that you can be attractive to an agent. And then there were so many different types of agents. You know, we had our commercial agents and our print agents and our what we call out there theatrical agents, which aren't really for theater, they're for TV and film, which they're called in the New York market. They're called legit agents. So the terminology was a little different or we're trying to be out there. It was called being hip pocketed by an agent, which means they don't really rep you, but they're willing to send you out on stuff when you're right for it. That's called hip pocketing in LA, and it's called freelancing in New York. So the terms are a little different. But once you get get to know this stuff, um, you try to find the balance between real life, right? And, and pursuing what, what you need. And so I think that was the biggest challenge. The biggest challenge was, okay, you know, I've got these job responsibilities and I've got the responsibility to the, you know, the Uber, um, pursuit here of, of, you know, trying to get credits and, and building a career. So, um, it was fun, but it was, it was exhausting. Definitely was tiring. Yeah.

[00:13:00] Karen Commins

E L Avery put in the chat. The word I'm looking for is kismet. That sure. Fate intervening on your behalf. Well, so. And I knew you used to teach in LA like, so you were talking about learning all the lingo and everything. And I know you used to teach new actors. Yeah, used to be actors, too, right? So. Yes.

[00:13:21] Chris Ciulla

So that was a program I ran for five years, um, started in oh nine and, and we ended in 13. Um, so I did it for about five years. And basically it was helping originally people in Boston because that was where all my connections were helping them at, You know, from the inception of I want to be an actor, and no matter if you have your acting background or you don't, how do you properly how do you properly enter, um, the performance market. What, what do you need in your acting briefcase? How do you properly educate yourself and in what categories? How do you brand yourself appropriately? Um, and then when it comes to how to make money while you're pursuing this other, other thing, should you go and industry centric job or non industry centric job So should you be a trainer or wait tables or should you try to be a PA and work for a casting? Uh, casting director? So there's, you know, we go through we would go through all of that. And then I was the type. I was like. You know, I'm a grinder. Nothing has ever been easy for me. So I've gone through all the pathways to find the little cookie jars of work when it comes to not only on camera or stage, but vo.

[00:14:44] Chris Ciulla

So, um, you know, we teach about, we taught about all the different categories and all the things you could pursue and to try to match up your skill sets with those, those categories as early as possible in your pursuit. And I taught that in Miami. I taught that in Albuquerque. I taught it in Boston for five years. And we did we did spot duty in LA. But I would travel back and forth and do it. And then, you know, and and it wasn't really monetizing, but that wasn't the point. The point was my dad was getting sick and I and I and it gave me a great reason. It gave me something, something to do for work while I was able to visit him and check up on him. And then he passed away in 13. So when that happened, I, I decided, you know, this isn't monetizing. I've got to get back to some other pursuits. And the funny thing is, like, that's when I started to read audio books that so I started to pursue audiobooks in late 12 and that all coincided at the same time. So the pivot was really key in my development. Um, looking back, that was a really key point to end that process and begin my audio book process.

[00:15:53] Karen Commins

And how did you start that audiobook process?

[00:15:56] Chris Ciulla

Well, I was walking through a Barnes and Noble in around 2009, and then I saw these like plastic boxes on a shelf and I'm like, we're in a Barnes and Noble, a bookstore. What are these plastic things? And I was like, I'm thinking like, they're like a monolith from 2001 A Space Odyssey. And then I looked at one and it said, John Grisham, A Time to Kill. I flip it over and it says Read by Michael Beck. I'm like Michael Beck. He was sworn in. The Warriors. As far as that that that movie about all the gangs in New York and he was in Xanadu with Olivia Newton-John. I said, but I haven't seen him. I maybe saw him in a Matlock or in the Heat of the Night in like the 80s. Where has he been? And he picked up audiobooks and as an audiobook narrator and I'm like, Oh, so that was one little ping. And then in 2011 at Voice Trax West, Mark Cashman put on a on a workshop with someone from Penguin from I'm sorry, it was Random House. They hadn't even merged yet, so it was from Random House. And I will tell you that I, I'd have to look up my email to know who that person was.

[00:17:08] Chris Ciulla

I don't know. And that's it's antithetical of what how I teach people today completely antithetical do not know yet. So I was kind of like, oh, maybe I'll pursue this still. And then in 2012 I finally bit the bullet and, um, got into a class with Pat Fraley, the inimitable Pat Fraley and Scott Brick and Hillary Huber. So whoo hoo! For two people to get your first real, um, you know, your real education, your your real impression of audiobooks. I couldn't think of two better people to give that. And, and so that was the end of 2012. We did a like a demo weekend. Um, and so I started auditioning at the very beginning of the beginning of 2013 and back when we had still had stipends for \$150 per finished hour and I booked three in the same week and I didn't have a studio. Uh, I didn't even have a setup. I had a, I had a, I had a blue microphone, a blue snowball sticking into, into, uh, into audacity. God. And I was like, Oh, boy.

[00:18:18] Karen Commins

So that's your keyword for everything. "Oh, boy."

[00:18:21] Chris Ciulla

I don't know. That's my. That's so, uh. And, you know, I got that from Richard Ferrone. He when he, uh, God bless him, when he would when he would narrate as Lucas Davenport, he would say, Oh, boy. And John Sandford wrote that in there. I stole that from him. So the the, uh, God rest his soul. So the, the, um, uh, and so I luckily got somebody from Guitar Center to give me, you know, thinking, thinking that was the place to go. Um, and luckily, I found someone who was, who was who was functional and they set me up.

[00:18:55] Karen Commins

With somebody to actually answer you and talk to you. That was a triumph in itself.

[00:19:01] Chris Ciulla

And that got me and that got me going. And, you know, my workflow was terrible. My ratio was probably 10 to 1. Um, but, but we got, we got them done and, and then we're off to the races. Um, but, but I did not have a lot of success those first years of, of audiobook narration. Um, you know, my first three years I only narrated 22 books total seven, eight and seven 7 in 2013, 8 in 2014, 7 in 2015. So. It did not happen overnight, but with one of my main coaching tenants. You got to stay if you like it and you want to do it and and you think nothing has ever come easy for me. You know, in performance, I'm like the person who who, who is very hard to brand. You know, I when I was when I was repped by agents, they would see that I'm 100% Italian. They'd throw me in the room with all the Italians. I'd be the least looking Italian person in that room. They, you know, and so I wouldn't book anything. I'd be for for the agencies that had either the modeling or the sport modeling parts, they'd be like, Oh, Chris is with our good looking guys. Let's put let's throw Chris in for the good looking audition. I'm the ugliest looking, good looking guy there is so so, you know, I'm not booking that stuff. I'm not booking it. So the, you know, these are all these are all little microcosms of the things in my journey that sometimes you have to figure out, okay, we've got to stay a little longer, We've got to strategize a little better and we've got to do a little more homework or build something in our briefcase and or build our vocal, um, uh, uh, instrument and, and we'll get there eventually. You know, we're learning about ourself while we learn about the industry as a whole, and we'll get there.

[00:20:52] Karen Commins

Yeah. When you said it was a slow start for you those first three years, Caylee. Caylee Kirby wrote in the chat, that was very encouraging to hear that from you.

[00:21:02] Chris Ciulla

Yeah, people think, you know, um, people think that, you know, a lot of us who are, you know, maybe approaching 500 credits that it was easy off the start or at least lucky off the start. I know some people who did have luck off the start. Um, that started at the same time that I did. And you know, a few of them were able to get audible back then was, was doing a lot of 13 week contracts. So they would give you, you know, a lot of finished hours to produce within those 13 week contracts. And you it was your responsibility to do it and they would pay you in a lump sum. And, um. You, but you had to submit a certain amount of finished hours a week. Forget it was 10 or 12. Um, and, you know, had a few of our colleagues that would get contract after contract after contract. And you blink and there already 100 books into their career. Right. And was still on like eight. And that's fine. You know, a lot of it it's not the you know, it's when you get that calling card or the just the switch switch turns on that, you know, okay, the journey was worth it for me. I will tell you, it was it was taking a workshop with Paul Allen Rubin.

[00:22:21] Chris Ciulla

Um, and it was simply understanding how small we can get, how quiet we can get. And I know I'm using macro terms, but these are all things that when we, when we establish something in the macro sense, then we figure out how to do it in the micro and how to make it actionable in the micro sense. But the, the give, you know, I will give credit to the to the coaches and the people along my journey in a heartbeat. Paul Allen Rubin was the one that finally explained to me, um, and it wasn't and we didn't even go over that many things that were actionable in his workshop. It was more about just the knowledge that you got to get quiet. You have to figure out like where the quiet bandwidth is for yourself and then you just raise your game. And you're and then and that's that's what people want in their ear. If we give them too much energy and too much volume, regardless if our gain is down that it doesn't translate well to long form storytelling. It exhausts the listener and it exhausts us. So we find, you know, the the quiet performance in the in that macro place is, is it ends up being the best performance.

[00:23:35] Karen Commins

Yeah. The two words Paul kept saying to me when I had a workshop with him were less voice. Less voice. Yeah.

[00:23:43] Chris Ciulla

And that's not, you know, and that's not the most complicated direction to get, you know, it's not like, how do you get there? It's not we're not going from point A to B, but sometimes that's not that's not necessary, especially when we're actors. When we're actors, we kind of know how to do that. We don't we don't most actors can hear can can make the the pathway to make it actionable in our own minds because we've done it before or we've done something similar before and can use it as a substitution. But the you know, for those who are who are not necessarily actors, that's and we you know, in our workout program, we make sure we do things. And Christina is great about this. Um, and so is Seth. But Christina was the one that, you know, said it in like two sentences to me that and by Christina, I mean Christina Delaney. Um, she just, like, put it forth really, really succinctly like that. You know, we've got to make things actionable. You know, you've got to make, make, make someone be able to like, you know, see the formula in their head and, and, and, and activate it.

[00:24:43] Karen Commins

Well, before we can talk about your workout program and your other classes, let's talk about you starting a production company in the first place. I mean, what made you decide to do that? You at some point. Narrating more than eight books a year and you decide to produce them, I guess. And. I mean, what what how did you go from just narrating to I'm going to produce and then now to publish?

[00:25:10] Chris Ciulla

I think the the natural order excuse me. The natural order of things for us narrators that have, say, over 250 credits or 200 credits is you've you've worked you've either done done enough projects you know, on as the producer of record or you've, you know, kind of figured out some of the other distribution options on the market. You've you've built some post teams that you that you trust underneath you and you've got enough contacts where you can potentially cast because you've networked with such wonderful narrators around you. When you've done that, the natural order of things to me is to develop a production company where, you know, for a a fixed amount over or over a per finished our rate or a or a fixed total amount on projects, you can be the project manager and you can effectively do that. Now, not everyone's going to do that, but if you've got a background in you that you've produced before, I mean, I've pitched TV shows before, I have, you know, produced a a budgeted sizzle for a film television show. And we almost got her on three networks. I've written a bunch of teleplays and screenplays like and tried to get them produced. I've produced a several shorts. Um, I'm in that world. I know how to do it.

[00:26:40] Chris Ciulla

It's in my DNA. And so it was a natural progression to do that. An Audiobooks just was natural, but to be the publisher is to be the executive producer is to, you know, to, to, to have more risk for more reward. And um, I think, you know, that also lends itself to, to my, to my prior life in LA as a, you know, someone who wanted to eventually do, do packaging and, and control projects and be a content creator so that this is this all, you know, go comes back. It's all coming full circle, going back to a place where you have control over over productions, complete control and you are and you were becoming a content creation company. So, so we are going to be putting out our, you know, contracting our own authors and contracting our own producers and, um, you know, coming up with concepts for ideas that we're bringing in writers to write for us, you know, that that's what this company is going to be all about. Um, and. Uh, you know, it's. It's the long game. It's the true long game. You're you're, you know, this is. This is what was meant to do. I was meant originally before I even got into performance.

[00:28:05] Chris Ciulla

I wanted to be a director. I wanted to be a film director. And so when I was at at Boston College, my last two years, I switched my major from Italian and I wish I'd stuck with some of it so I could speak a little Italian to my, my, my, my home people. But I, I, I took field and studio communication and I was only a class less than a minor in comm. So I wanted I became a shooter. I was I was I was somebody who, you know, learned how to how to to shoot film and TV film and video. And and then I was directing documentaries for my hometown while I was a peer minister at Boston College. So I had like four different jobs. And one of them was, you know, putting together these documentaries for my hometown. And so this is all circling back to that. It's all, you know, I, I, I want to be the, the, the head of a of a content creation company. And that is that is what we are steadily we are but we're steadily becoming more and more as we as we grab, you know, more rights to different types of projects. And as we, um, as we get more into that marketplace.

[00:29:22] Karen Commins

I love how your journey shows that every moment has meaning. That something that you learned in this class led to this job which led to this production company which led to this idea. I mean, I love how it things that when they happen may not have seen like they were related. You can look back over your shoulder and say, Oh, yeah, that path put me where I am now. Totally. It all ties together.

[00:29:50] Chris Ciulla

It's interesting, isn't it? Like you're and and now I'm doing this, you know, we're approaching a big number pretty soon. And so I've been doing this almost 30 years, you know, And so. And so when you're trying to get health insurance, I mean, and it's very prescient when it comes to what we have going on with with our people on strike. Like, you know, it's been a struggle for me to achieve health insurance through this industry, through through, you know, through through performance. And then when you find it, when you finally find it, right, you don't let it go. You don't let it go. You, you, you. At a certain point in time in our lives, we we have to make the choice to embrace what we're good at, even if we don't really want to do it. If if that not to say that I don't I don't want to do audiobooks. This is exactly what I want to be doing. But, but just the general idea of like sometimes it's very important to embrace, to embrace that and to gain power in that and to and to let that open other doors for you.

[00:30:58] Karen Commins

That's very true. Do your roles. I'm sure they must inform each other and like I know you go or you've been to a number of. Book festivals and different events Readercon think recently and sure, they're not all author signing kind of events. A lot of them are public facing, from what I can tell, and I'm assuming you're going there with the intent of meeting authors to yes, work with, but in either case, either you could narrate for them or you could produce and publish for them.

[00:31:34] Chris Ciulla

Yes. And it's and it's important, like at a place called like Readercon, which is, you know, a national event. But it's in Boston. I'm building, you know, what we're doing with the company that's quite unique and it's interesting. And Richardson is doing a little bit of the same thing when it comes to comes to her company. Um, we're focusing on region, not genre. So, um, Boston and New England are a very unique region for storytelling, very unique. And we all know, especially if you're a Bostonian, when it's done wrong, you know, immediately when it's done wrong. So I'm not going to harp on the, you know, when I've heard it wrong. All I'm going to do is try to do try to give other people the opportunity to let us do it right. That's all I can say. Just let me. And so the idea of of that was an event where, um, you know, they, they bring in the panelists from an from a national base but there's a lot of local local author and writer talent there. And so that's that's where I you know hopefully next year we'll have we'll have a booth there will be a vendor. But they, you know, each each of these events kind of does it their own way. And maybe that's not the case, maybe it's not possible, but at least we'll be part of a panel to be able to let them know because they did have an audio audio panel and I didn't have we've been too busy. I couldn't couldn't connect with them in time. You know, the audio panel just had authors on it. So yeah, they'll that would be informative. But how informative is that. I don't I, you know, definitely less informative than if you or I, you and I were on that panel. So you know that's, that's a fact. So let's, let's get let's next year let them have the chance of of having having us on that panel and and give them the real news and to and to keep them from having a failed attempt the first time.

[00:33:35] Karen Commins

And I want to remind everybody, feel free to raise your hand if you want to ask Chris a question or have any kind of part in the conversation. I think one question on people's minds is, are you developing a roster of narrators and how would they contact you and be part of that?

[00:33:53] Chris Ciulla

Sure. We have a roster submission form on our website on the About Us page. So the website is LeonardoAudio.com easy easy enough to find on the about us page. On the bottom there are two things people can sign up for. On the left is the submission to become a narrator on our on our talent roster. The one prerequisite prerequisite is 20 credits. And the reason why is I need to trust your workflow and your home studio. And so, you know, it's not really about your talent level because some people are savants and can pick this up and are great. It's more about your audio. I need to be able to trust your audio. So that's why we want 20 credits from people. And so they can be they don't have to be with publishers or producers. As long as they have to have 20 credits. Um, um, for us, and then on the other side of the same page, they can sign up for our mailing list. And on our mailing list we have, you know, we have announcements about the titles that we have coming out. We sometimes have casting announcements on there. We'll have public events or Zoom events that we that we, you know, any any kind of launch information is going to be going to be from there. And then it's how we communicate with our authors and narrators about potential castings, um, and potential deals that we have going on on a regular basis.

[00:35:25] Karen Commins

I see Rebecca Lee has her hand raised, so I'm going to send the microphone to her.

[00:35:33] Rebecca Lee

Hi. Hi.

[00:35:34] Karen Commins

Hi, Rebecca. Rebecca.

[00:35:38] Rebecca Lee

Hey, Chris, I know that you have a new program for some public domain projects with LeonardoAudio. Sure. And I was wondering if you could talk about that a little bit.

[00:35:49] Chris Ciulla

Absolutely. So we are we right now have a program that, you know, I am I am now just to let everyone know I am a Sag-aftra signatory. Oh, great. So everything we do, everything we do has to be under a SAG umbrella. Um, and it was a pleasure to do that contract. I'm very proud as a 20 plus year member of SAG to have done that. So knowing that what, what we, what we've set up is we're trying to get one book out about every month to six weeks, um, of a length. We're trying to keep them under ten hours. So, um, because we don't have a huge budgets for this. However, it's going to be under royalty share plus so that we can pay for your post. So, so the deal is 100, \$100. Um, that goes to you to be able to pay for your post and then it's under an plus deal. You can pitch us a public domain, work that you'd like to narrate and you'd like as a calling card. And if it's, if it looks good for our, um, as a, as a, as a potential pillar book in our library or just the classic that we'd like to have under our umbrella, we'll certainly consider it.

[00:37:18] Karen Commins

That's pretty exciting news.

[00:37:22] Rebecca Lee

And a follow up question to that, because I'm a mentor and so I'm always recommending, you know, if someone wants to do more titles. Public domain is an option. But does it's actually.

[00:37:37] Chris Ciulla

It's actually like a better option than heading to at the start of their career. Yeah, it's a much better option for sure.

[00:37:44] Rebecca Lee

But do does if someone were to work with you on their public domain, do they need to be on your roster and have 20 audiobooks?

[00:37:52] Chris Ciulla

First they need to have 20 audiobooks. Yes. Okay. It's it's because of. Um, you know, startups like our company that, that don't have all the resources that we'd like to have at the start here need to be able to trust the audio. If if the audio, if they don't have their workflow just right or they're bouncing files off and there's a mistake somewhere, we just can't afford that. So that's why in general, especially when I'm, when I'm hiring people, um, you know, but to be honest with you, uh, depending on how specific we need something. I mean, I just hired somebody on a on a very big series that had never narrated an audio book before, you know, But I put her in a studio that was not from her home studio. And it was a it was a, you know, a larger budgeted production title, not a publishing title. So there were a lot of different moving parts on that. So there is a possibility of me hiring somebody with less than that. But when it comes to, you know, if they're going to submit for a for a public domain job under our umbrella, if we're going to make it make it, you know, an A+ under a union heading, they have to have 20 credits.

[00:39:13] Karen Commins

Do you do the artwork? I'm assuming you do.

[00:39:16] Chris Ciulla

Yeah, we do. We do cover art. Absolutely.

[00:39:25] Karen Commins

Well, those were great questions, Rebecca. Thanks so much. We appreciate it. I have a question I like to ask what I call the pit stop hot seat. Sure. And so I would like to know from you what is your most trivial, useless or flat out counterproductive superpower?

[00:39:47] Chris Ciulla

Oh, my God. Um. Never shutting down.

[00:39:55] Karen Commins

I'm in. What? In what way? I'm the Energizer Bunny.

[00:39:59] Chris Ciulla

Yeah, well, it's not really Energizer bunny, but my brain never shuts off. Oh. So I'm constantly just, like, thinking of things that I haven't done and trying to, like, write down lists of things that I need to do, and then I lose the list. You know.

[00:40:17] Karen Commins

I need to teach you Evernote.

[00:40:19] Chris Ciulla

Yeah, I'm trying to do it all mean every time I, you know, I come up with something, something innovative to, to help me out with that. I then forgot that I actually found it and I forget where it is. So that's kind of that's the first thing that came to mind. Um, you know, I. I, uh, you know, worthless, so worthless superpower. Um. You know. Uh, I think. I think, well, I've always been a jack of all trades. Master of none. So, you know, like I when I was younger, I went on the weakest Link and one. But didn't win that much money because the person next to me basically chickened out and and didn't risk a lot of money after their question. They just banked a certain amount of money when I knew I was eventually going to win. And so I have a lot of worthless but worldly information in my brain. Um. The other the other thing is we've all become the other. The other is, is all us narrators are now the best proofers in the world. Right where we see. So any sign that I see I see the copy errors immediately. I see the typo immediately.

[00:41:49] Karen Commins

Yes.

[00:41:50] Karen Commins

And misplaced apostrophes!

[00:41:53] Chris Ciulla

Yeah.

[00:41:54] Chris Ciulla

And I'm. I'm, um, you know, and I can't not say it. So when I'm now at a restaurant and there are a bunch of messages in that and that and that menu, I make sure we have all our food on the table. And then I tell them, Hey, uh, you got three typos on this menu. Um, and my my ball is going to fall out of my head. So here you go. You do do what you will with it.

[00:42:22] Karen Commins

I'm glad you said I make sure I get my food first. Yes.

[00:42:25] Chris Ciulla

So, no, I had a friend. I had a friend. A former friend that would hang out with me in LA and he was a bar manager and worked at a restaurant. So he knows better. And every time we would go to restaurants together, he would wise off early and had to sit with him like, and I'm like, What are you doing? What are you doing? You know, better like have to sit with you like they might do do that to, to your thinking. It's your plate and it's mine. Don't do that. Gosh darn.

[00:43:00] Karen Commins

Well, I know you have a lot of ideas and and you're implementing them, though, like you've implemented. You mentioned the workouts and I know you do those every Tuesday. No, Thursday, Thursday workout.

[00:43:13] Chris Ciulla

We do them Thursdays. And then we have, um, so the workout program is, uh, there are three residents, coaches now that we have under our umbrella. We have Seth Pedowitz who his background was. He was a youth director before he was a narrator. He was a youth director for agencies for about ten plus years. So he not only knows audiobooks, he knows commercial copy, he knows animation, he knows video game, he knows promos. So people can come in on his nights and bring in other types of copy as well as audiobooks. Um, Christina Dillon is a coach at Tisch at NYU, so she also has like a, like a general Vo background so you can bring commercial copy in with her as well. Um, so for a lot of people who want to cross over, you can use our workouts for that. And then there's myself. And so we, um, Christina Dillon, um, Seth Horowitz and myself. And we are mainly on Thursdays. We do one, usually one Wednesday a month. So if people are busy on Thursdays, then come in on the Wednesday and then Christina is trying to do some stuff on the weekends too. So we're opening up some some unique times for people. But it's a great place for a few different reasons. You can bring in a potential new demo for yourself in a new genre and work on that Without risk. There's no risk. And you know, you can you can get some notes on it to be able to craft it the way, the way it wants it should be sounding. You can be working on a project currently and it's a very challenging scene that you need some direction on. Bring it in, play, play with it with, with one of our coaches. Um, you might just be bored. You don't have anything to do that week, but you want to keep the chain going and you're having some trouble just finding stuff and working on your own.

[00:45:11] Chris Ciulla

Bring it in so you have some energy around you. And then we can. And it's three minutes of copy, about 450 words. And then we do usually two passes on it, but you can use the 15 minutes however you want in case you want to bring in, you know, commercial copy or some other stuff. You can do that, too. And it's been really successful. We've been running it for, oh, excuse me, two years now. And and the fact that it's still going is, is a testament to to to its success. And, you know, obviously there are some other we're having some good workouts on clubhouse too. But I think the the the issue is the length of time of of the the actual like piece. So you're able to work work a longer copy with us. And if you wanted to work more copy, just take more slots. You can just take more slots. So usually those are 24, those are \$35 for 15 minute slot and they're \$25 to audit. Anybody can audit anytime they want. And then we bring in one casting producer. Um, you know, we've been a little busy, so hopefully every we want it to be once a month, but it's hard to coordinate that. Usually it's once every 6 to 8 weeks where we bring in a casting producer and then we basically, um, let them have the night. So they are, um, they're, you're able to work with that casting producer. We do a Q&A and you're able to, you know, ask them all the good industry questions and work your copy for the people who are potentially hiring you.

[00:46:47] Karen Commins

Well, that's really great. Do you, other than the two other advisors or coaches in the workouts, do you have other help? I thought I saw you had interns and you were looking for.

[00:46:59] Chris Ciulla

Yeah, we.

[00:47:00] Chris Ciulla

Have I have an intern system with, with Boston College where we got three interns on our staff, which is great. And I'm slated, believe it or not, to become an instructor on their in their theater department for the 2425 academic year. So keep your fingers crossed that we can keep that going. Yeah, that's that's that was a nice little coup. Um, so Rob Vlok is a is a wonderful narrator, but he's also someone who's taken over our educational program. So he's been spearheading the scheduling of, of our workshops, sorry, of our workouts, and then also set up a narrator support group that we have on Mondays that's in our Discord server. So we, you know, it's basically just a networking event for, for narrators to chat with each other about, about things of the day. And I believe that takes place on seven at 730 on Mondays in our Discord server. And um, and then we have our workshops that are coming up. So um, we have a, we have a workshop program that's coming up in August that, you know, implore people if they want to take advantage of the relative downtime of the summer to get better. Um, all the workshops that I teach are one offs. They are not. You don't have to take them again. I leave you with a packet, so I leave you with a 10 to 20 page packet for every workshop you do with me. And, um. And the more you sign up for, the more the more you take the the more money that you'll, you'll save. So there are four topics that we're tackling this August. There are going to be on Sunday evenings Eastern.

[00:48:39] Chris Ciulla

We're tackling the business of the business, um, just understanding everything about business concepts in audiobooks because it's audiobooks are such a business island compared to every other category. Um, and knowing that there's just some, some trepidation as far as for and then from each, I usually suggest when it comes to like, like understanding the business of it, take business from as many of us really working narrators as you can because you're going to get 1 or 2 tidbits from all those working narrators. And how about their individual journey to where they, you know, how they've gotten there? Um, and then the 102 is how to prep a book. We go through how to prep nonfiction versus fiction, how to become the author in nonfiction and who you're talking to, especially if you don't have that natural acting background. And then in fiction, you know how to prep a book with 50 characters. How does that happen? And how do you how do you handle the expectation of all these different genres? And then we coupled our one on one suite with our 201 suite, whereas the 201 is characters for audiobooks. So we talk about POVs first, second and third and all the different types of those. And then we talk about acting 101. If you don't have that acting background or if you've had it, but you want to refresh your course, Um, I came up under the Uta Hagen umbrella, so her nine questions are I think are the best guide for audiobooks because it's a fast way to create three dimensional characters on the fly. Um, and then we talk about archetypes and figure out what archetypes like you're close to.

[00:50:28] Chris Ciulla

That's all, all in the 201. And we talk about your personal experiences and we delve into and that character's class is really unique. I got to teach it for a couple of months ago and it was a really great, great group of ten people that we that we had in that class. And then lastly, it's marketing, marketing 202, getting the buyers to know you how what's the right way to approach people in the audiobook industry When you're cold, your cold calling your cold, contacting people, How do we make them feel like a person? And so what's that email look like? What what should how should it be constructed? What should your website look like? You know, what messaging should it have on you? We talk about branding. We talk about about when you have those opportunities, the elevator pitch, you know, how to how to perfect that. Um, and then we talk about just the, the right kind of goal setting and how many people you should be contacting in a particular time frame depending on how many free hours you have. And these are all things we go over. So after all that, when you couple that with the workouts for performance, we think we've set up a really nice, a nice bay for actors relatively inexpensively to get to the next level and to and to, you know, answer all the questions that they have from someone who's who's been who's been through the mill, from someone who has who has gone from doing only 22 books in his first three years to, you know, being as busy as you want to be.

[00:52:16] Karen Commins

Well, that sounds really exciting. I saw that Jim Franks had your hand up. But, Jim, do you still want to come to the mic? I can send it to you. If you want to raise. Oh, great. I'll send you the microphone. And you'll just have to unmute in the lower right corner. There you go. Hi, Jim.

[00:52:41] Jim Franks

Hi. How are you all doing?

[00:52:43] Speaker5

Hey, Jim, have you here?

[00:52:45] Jim Franks

Hey, Chris. Good. Good to hear from you. I just wanted to answer a question that, Chad, if I may, for Andrea, if hopefully I said that right. You asked about public domain books. If you're looking for titles, you know, the NarratorsRoadmap has an excellent resource regarding public domain works.

[00:53:09] Karen Commins

Oh, thanks. I didn't even pay you for that shout out. So check's in the mail.

[00:53:16] Jim Franks

And I'm taking, uh, Chris's Narrator's 101 class. And it's an excellent class. Whether you're experienced or not. Maybe you've forgotten things. And the resource package that he hands out is phenomenal.

[00:53:32] Chris Ciulla

Jim, thank you. I appreciate you.

[00:53:35] Jim Franks

I really had to say. But I do want to say one thing. Since Stephanie Nemeth Parker is no longer here, but I'm in Tehachapi, California, and the current temperature is 94°F. So that's out there. You all have a great day. Thank you, Karen.

[00:53:53] Chris Ciulla

Stay cool, Jim.

[00:53:55] Anne Flosnik

Take care.

[00:53:56] Chris Ciulla

And Karen, I'll mention this. If if people when they sign up. Okay, So for these these classes that I'm doing in in August, they can sign up for one, two, three or all four. But when they do, even if they just sign up for one. Okay. I will if they mention the pit stop in their email, in their confirmation email, I'll give them a free workout.

[00:54:21] Karen Commins

Wow!

[00:54:22] Chris Ciulla

They can have a free workout when I'm I have to run the night because I have to pay our other our other, you know, our other coaches. But I, you know, on my night, they can come in and and they'll get they'll get a free workout for me.

[00:54:35] Karen Commins

Well, what a kind and generous, wonderful offer. So people listening live and then people will be listening on the replay hopefully will be taking you up on that.

[00:54:47] Chris Ciulla

I hope they do. That's the point, because I don't know. The thing is, Karen, I will say, like, you know, for this is the reason I don't know. We're about to go into a funding round. So I'm the CEO. I want to coach. I love coaching. I want to coach people every day. I'm a director. I'm over the last three weeks, I'm directing three different projects. However, I'm the CEO. So eventually here I might have to pull off and, you know, and hand the stuff that I'm doing off to other people. So I want people to know that if they want to take advantage of me, please take advantage of me now, while I'm while I'm able to. While I'm able to.

[00:55:31] Karen Commins

You mean in terms of your workshop offer? Not just in general? Yeah.

[00:55:35] Speaker5

Yeah. In terms of the workshop offer.

[00:55:37] Chris Ciulla

You know.

[00:55:37] Speaker5

Take advantage of me, my privates. Yeah.

[00:55:40] Chris Ciulla

And I'm doing private sessions and, you know, we've got a lot going on, but we're also building an office in the Boston area. Um, so a lot of moving parts, which is good.

[00:55:55] Karen Commins

Well. Well, see? Andrea has her hand raised. I'm sending Andrea all the mic.

[00:56:03] Andrea Aal

Hello? Hello.

[00:56:05] Karen Commins

Oh, there she is. Hi, Andrea.

[00:56:07] Andrea Aal

Hi, Karen. Hi, Chris. Hello, Chris. I have a question for you. So now you're talking about any of the four, like I've got your page up. You're talking about any of the four classes, the one on one, the 102, the. To any of the four classes you're offering in August. If we take one of those, we would have the privilege of a private with you.

[00:56:33] Chris Ciulla

Is that not a private?

[00:56:34] Chris Ciulla

No. You'll get you'll have a you'll have a session of the the work, the workouts that you've been doing and you'll get one for me like so you'll be. Yeah. You'll get, get the \$35 slot that you're used to.

[00:56:46] Andrea Aal

Oh okay. Well that's still awesome. But that would be as a separate entity. You would do that on a separate night? Et cetera. When? Yeah, it'll.

[00:56:55] Chris Ciulla

Be whenever I, you know. You know.

[00:56:57] Andrea Aal

Whenever you're doing the.

[00:56:57] Chris Ciulla

Work once a month. And so you'll be able to come in and grab the slot and just give me a, send me a note. Hey, you know, this is my. This is my freebie. And then. And then you're good.

[00:57:06] Andrea Aal

Now, just as a someone who's relatively new, would you recommend one of these over the others, or is there an order that we should go in? I suppose it's 101. 102. But give me your take.

[00:57:19] Chris Ciulla

I recommend for, you know, if people have say, like under 50 credits, okay, you're still going to learn a lot from the 101. Okay. And you're still going to learn a lot from the 102, because I also suggest you want to learn prepping for maybe 2 or 3 different coaches. Okay? Because our prepping concepts and our prepping methods are so different compared to each individual person and where they came from. So I tend to, you know, um, you know, I'm trying to give as much of a complete of all the options so that you can prep minimally if you so choose. So you use like 1 or 2 aspects of it, or you may want to over prep and do everything or think, remember Tanya Eby, the way she does it, she like marks up a script and then has a completely clean script on the day when she's actually narrating. So like it's whatever you when you get further into our career, whatever you want to use. But there is the, the characters class does have a limit. That's the only class that there's a limit to it. So so because it's interactive, we can only have 12 people in that class.

[00:58:32] Chris Ciulla

So that's the one. But but you would get something from all of these classes because I know you, Andrew, You've been working on this for a little bit and you've been in these classes. You're putting your you're putting your effort and, and your, your, um, you know, your money into and to and to getting you better, right? So yes, so you know, for people like that the marketing would be appropriate for you if someone is brand new right. Some of them may not be ready for the marketing, but like for instance, I think Dom is in is in was in the the audience. Like even though she's brand new, she's like been at this for say like 6 to 9 months. So she wants to hear the marketing um pitch because you know she's going to want to know how to roll that out to the to the particular potential buyers, to those particular producers and publishers, you know, so there's value in all the classes for everyone. It's just a matter of if you you know, if you if you want to be there for all of them, you know.

[00:59:38] Andrea Aal

May I ask one more thing? Because I'm looking at the audio narration, audiobook narration, characters. Um, that sounds awesome, but it's 90 minutes. How mean can we really get something done?

[00:59:50] Chris Ciulla

No, no, it's not 90 minutes. It's. It's 2.5 hours.

[00:59:53] Andrea Aal

Oh, How come I'm. Oh, because I don't know how to tell time. Yes, it.

[00:59:57] Chris Ciulla

Is. They're all. Yeah. So they're all the same. They're all the same. And Andrew.

[01:00:02] Chris Ciulla

I'll tell you.

[01:00:03] Chris Ciulla

Like all.

[01:00:04] Chris Ciulla

My classes and like Jim would tell you all of my classes that I've ever taught. Yeah, they've never ended on time.

[01:00:13] Andrea Aal

I'm so glad I asked Chris because I literally was saying, How can he tell me I'm going to learn all this in 90 minutes. So I'm so glad.

[01:00:20] Chris Ciulla

I know. Yeah.

[01:00:22] Chris Ciulla

No, you're, you're, you know, I, I try not to be verbose, but there's just a lot of things to learn, like. Right. This is going to be. So everything I teach is going to be in two semesters at college. It's like we have that much stuff to learn. Got it. And so we're trying to condense it so that you have a packet that you can then roll out and through steps as you as you move along your journey, you check in every once in a while and change your goal setting. You know, so so when it comes to marketing, we talk a lot about that. We talk a lot about appropriate goal setting and how to how to pivot once you've once you've achieved some things and how to and things what to avoid when it comes to wanting new clients to come under your umbrella but not having the space, how do you do that appropriately? That's and that's there's some nuance to that.

[01:01:16] Andrea Aal

Thank you very much. I got it.

[01:01:20] Karen Commins

Well, thanks. Those were great questions, Chris, I want to be respectful of your time. And we're we've already rolled past the top of the hour.

[01:01:28] Chris Ciulla

Am I have.

[01:01:29] Chris Ciulla

Nothing. I have nothing. But but but my studio and a workout, too waiting for me even though I've you know, it's I've got some 70 pound dumbbells awaiting for me on a on another floor. Am I am not in a rush.

[01:01:46] Karen Commins

Well, I have I have one more question of do you have advice that you could share for other people who want to expand their horizon beyond narration? So you're doing production, you're doing publishing, you're now doing teaching at college in addition to your other teaching. Do you have advice to how somebody can expand beyond narration?

[01:02:11] Chris Ciulla

Well, it's building skill sets, you know, like so whatever, whatever you have to whatever you choose to do. Can you hear me okay? My thing is saying poor connection. Can you hear me okay? Okay.

[01:02:22] Chris Ciulla

So.

[01:02:22] Chris Ciulla

So whatever you choose to do, remember, we have to have a skill set behind it. And then once you build the skill set, you've got to have a presentation that allows people to to tell, that allows you to tell other people that, okay, am this thing now. So knowing that for, for every new thing that we're doing, there's there's no impossibilities. Everything is possible. But it is it is remembering that each individual category that we are trying to become to add to our repertoire has a skill set that you need to educate yourself on and has. You know, like for instance, if someone, you know, if someone has been doing commercial video and audiobook narration and they want to get into video games, video games are a completely different thing As far as for what they're looking for from the talent, as far as for your vocal skill set when it comes to the instrument that you have. And the choices that you're going to make for the characters that you're going to play. And then about the worlds in video games, you have to learn about the world, and you might determine that I belong in some of those worlds, but not in others. And then how do the sessions break down when I book a job? It's sort of like when actors book book a television show for the first time. It's very hard to learn how to shoot a TV show if you've never shot a TV show.

[01:03:58] Chris Ciulla

Mm. When you get on a television set. And, you know, and and and those television sets are different. Multicam versus single cam, outdoor shooting versus indoor shooting, a soap opera versus everything else. These are all different types of things where as we're actors, we pick up these little things from other people, but you're not going to learn until you're on set. So that's when it comes to the video game thing. You could go into a session with somebody like Randy Ryan and he'll teach you how to like how a session operates. And then how a cinematic scene operates and how those are different in the video game world. So that's just an example of like some of the education that we have to get. But just to know, okay, I'm just not going to wing it. You can't wing it and expect to have great results. You've got to educate yourself the right way. And then within all this, you have budgets. You've got to you've got to cap your amount. You're spending, say, per month, per quarter to make sure that, okay, I'm not overspending because I want to have I want to get my and we talk in the marketing class a lot about ROI and and in the in the 101. We talk about ROI when it comes to building your home studio. If it's a DIY or a booth return on investment, that's a very important thing for people to understand and audiobooks return on investment.

[01:05:32] Karen Commins

Well, that sounds like a very reasonable, logical way to approach building a career that you love and and a life you love to be able to. Do the things that you want to do.

[01:05:47] Chris Ciulla

Indeed.

[01:05:48] Chris Ciulla

So, you know, there.

[01:05:50] Chris Ciulla

Will be challenges, but we've just got to, you know, not get down on ourselves when things are a little challenging and just give ourselves a chance to, you know, learn that new skill set.

[01:06:00] Anne Flosnik

Back to the ROI because that's just too glittering of a ball to leave hanging. Um, is there a kind of a percentage in your mind, Chris, about what is reasonable to be putting out versus what we're bringing in?

[01:06:17] Chris Ciulla

I think I.

[01:06:18] Chris Ciulla

Think it's I think percentages are hard. It's not like, you know, like when you're an on camera actor and you're dealing with callback ratios and you're dealing with booking ratios, it's a little different. But I do think that in, in, in, you know, it's not the percentage, but it's just the look at the numbers. If you're, you know, I think once we get into a pattern where you are receiving because and I'm not going to talk about in this because is like the Wild West and I'll let everyone know if you if you allow me the the pleasure and the honor of being your coach. Okay. And that doesn't mean you can't coach with other other people, but if you allow yourself to be under my umbrella, I'm going to teach you how to use properly. Because there are there are stuff out there that is branded.

[01:07:14] Chris Ciulla

With that.

[01:07:15] Chris Ciulla

With those three letters in the title of learning an audiobook program. And there's like and, and, and it's, it's, uh, it may have the word master in it as well. You know, um, we need to use as a tool, not as the bay for where you are starting your career. It's a place to gain experience and information and how to communicate with rights holders. It's a place to learn that stuff and a relatively risk less environment. However, for you to be dependent on. If this was 2013, it's a different story because started in 2011 and lots of newer authors and newer narrators were getting on there and communicating with each other and doing some wonderful projects back then that were that were, you know, so the numbers of quality projects on there were much higher. Nowadays the number of narrators is very high and the number of quality projects is very low. So the chances of you getting, uh, you, you not only auditioning, um, in time for an appropriate project that's right for you, but having them listen to it and having them listen to it relatively early in their stack of 80 to 100 to 120 submissions that they're getting 150 submissions that they're getting are like, these numbers don't work. They're not they don't make any sense. So you want to set yourself up to succeed. So use as a tool and you'll eventually know when you bring stuff to because you'll see you'll use it. You'll use it for for with a value that it can bring your career. Um, to get back to the ratio when people are auditioning for publishers and producers, I think it's normal to expect a anywhere between a 20 to a to a 33%.

[01:09:25] Chris Ciulla

Um. Return of booking. So anywhere between 1 to 3 and 1 to 5, if you are under 1 to 5 auditioning for producers and publishers, then you probably need coaching. Because the casting personnel in audio books or at least or at least I'll say this at least you need you need more repetitions, working with copy and working in environments where you're, you're, you're actively, you know, working copy more and working on your workflow more and, and doing some, some, you know, sub subtextual narration and understanding character building, all that kind of stuff. You got to work on that a little bit more because the casting personnel in our industry, you know, it's not it's usually not 10 to 15 people that they're putting on for, for these auditions. You're probably getting between 3 and 5 for most people. Now, there are a few. Like if you're going on talent, that's a different story. That's that's that's a crowd sourcing you know site. So you're going you know you're going to go against the minimum of 30 people there when you are auditioning. If someone sends you an email from Harper or Blackstone, you're it's probably going to be between 3 and 5 people that you're that you're up against. And so normally, if those people are all good. You know, you're there. And most of the time nowadays there's the hook of bringing the author in on this, uh, in this process. Yeah. The, the, the challenging thing about that is most of the authors that are coming in on the process know nothing about audio.

[01:11:17] Chris Ciulla

They don't know anything about audio. I wish they did. Maybe 25% of them are listeners. The other 75% are not. So what does that mean? They're listening. And if the voice sounds good, sounds good in quotes, they're going to like it more than the voice. That doesn't sound good in general. And these are all macro terms. We're going to have outliers on this, but these are things that I think about a lot. And so you need to know all this stuff and know that this is part of the game and there's only so much that you can control. You can't control all of those other things. All you can control. All you can control is how much of that audition that you can. You can learn about from an Amazon link, from whatever that producer is willing to give you for insider information on the plot. They may be able to give you the whole manuscript. You might want to skim through it if you have the time. But it's, you know, time is money in our industry, so you might not have the time to do that. And that's a sliding scale of how new are you to this and how busy are you to this that will determine whether or not you're going to skim through that full that full book or not. So these are all aspects of things. Once you've done this for, you know, for a long time or you're learning from somebody who's coaching you, who's done it for a long time, these are things you start to think about.

[01:12:43] Chris Ciulla

And they all may.

[01:12:44] Chris Ciulla

Affect your booking ratio. And all you can do is just the best job you can do and control and control that. But but I hear a lot from people like it's the one thing that you can't do, unfortunately, in audio books is forget about it. Like. So there's a lot of people that say, Oh, just do the audition and and forget about it. Well, what if they're just delayed on getting back to you and you've booked up your whole your whole schedule for the next two months, and then they're like, Oh, Chris, you booked it.

[01:13:13] Chris Ciulla

We just were a.

[01:13:14] Chris Ciulla

Little late, you know, we were late getting the manuscript, and it fell through the cracks, and. But. But we booked it. It's yours. It's still available. You're like, uh, so that's why I suggest for people once a two week mark goes by, they can they can hit up that person again. It's another reason to send an email out to just say hello, but they can send an email out to go, Hey, is this project still viable? If it isn't, no big deal, no rush. Just want to know if it's still if I'm still a part of this. And most of the time you did not book it and they just did not have time to tell you. Right? But you want to clear off the board? You want to know it's off the board so that you can fill that slot with something else.

[01:13:58] Anne Flosnik

Yeah. And don't end up with surprises. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[01:14:03] Chris Ciulla

Because we live.

[01:14:03] Chris Ciulla

We live in a world, right? When I book a video game, it's a day. It's a day rate. And I'll know it's a, you know, it's 2 to 4 hours. And if they say, Chris, you know, we're going to put you say Bethesda calls me and, you know, they have a new game coming out. I can't talk about it. But they say, you know, Chris, we want to put you on for three days. You know, I know I'm going to be working for 12 hours for them right then I know the rest of the time that I have in audiobooks, we have a finite amount of time that we have, you know, to work. And so say you book for jobs and one of them is 20 hours, your months gone, it's gone. So this is the unique world where you kind of have to know when things are off the board. You have to know.

[01:14:42] Anne Flosnik

Yeah, Clear the deck. Yeah. That was a great answer. Thank you. And I think Serena has a question. Karen?

[01:14:50] Karen Commins

Yes. Are you sending her the mic?

[01:14:56] Anne Flosnik

Um.

[01:14:56] Karen Commins

Let me. I will.

[01:14:57] Anne Flosnik

Yeah, go ahead.

[01:14:59] Karen Commins

That was a good answer, Chris. We enjoyed it. Thank you. Serena, you have the mic coming your way. Since I sent it to her, but it apparently is. Okay. There it is.

[01:15:16] Serena

I just got it.

[01:15:17] Serena

You know what? I don't know how that happened. I didn't push that little button except accidentally, unbeknownst to myself.

[01:15:28] Karen Commins

Well, it's lovely to hear your voice. Anyway.

[01:15:30] Serena

Thank you so much. It's really good to be back. I was in Italy almost a month, so. Wow. Back in the swing. Yeah, One of my brothers lives there, so I'm really, really lucky.

[01:15:41] Karen Commins

Oh, how convenient it is.

[01:15:44] Serena

It's nice, but yeah, no questions. I'm learning a lot, as always. So thank you for that.

[01:15:52] Chris Ciulla

Well, good stuff.

[01:15:53] Karen Commins

Yeah. Thanks for joining us. And Chris, did you have any. Any parting words or anything you want to plug or how would people get in touch with you?

[01:16:05] Chris Ciulla

Well, they can they can. Again, let's let's you know, they they can join our email list on our website at the About us page at LeonardoAudio.com. We have plenty of stuff that we're using to have some industry reach with our our our upcoming titles. So please subscribe to our YouTube page at Leonardo Audio. That's going to be our home base for a lot of the videos that we do with authors narrators and our and our our video sizzles that we put out marketing our audio books. We also have we're on Twitter, we're on Facebook, we're on Instagram. Um, they can join at Leonardo Audio and the About Us page. They can join the email list like I just said. Um, and you know, if, if, if they want to support us, please. There's a book that is up for an Audie. Um, that called Revolution the Sol Saga Book one. And it's got some terrible narrators in it. It has a guy named Dion Graham. Uh, has a young lady named Emily Woo Zeller. Uh, another horrible narrator named Tim Gerard Reynolds and a atrocious narrator named Lauren Fortgang. And then it has the worst narrator in the world. Me. Um, and I would say if you've got a spare credit, pick that book up, that audio book. You'll love it. It's, if you like, sci fi at all. It's space opera. And it's a really they've done a wonderful job with it. So it's called Revolution The Soul Saga by James Fox. And just please, I implore you, if at least get into one of our classes that we're doing on in August, either the 101, 102, 201 or 202, I guarantee you you will not regret it. And remember, you get a free. You get a free workout.

[01:18:04] Speaker5

Yeah.

[01:18:04] Anne Flosnik

And offer we can't refuse.

[01:18:06] Karen Commins

If they mention Pit Stop.

[01:18:08] Chris Ciulla

If they mention Pit Stop.

[01:18:09] Chris Ciulla

Yep.

[01:18:10] Karen Commins

The magic two words. But it is time for everybody to get back on the road. So I'm going to conclude today's Pit Stop. The recording will be on Clubhouse later today and I'll post it with a transcript next week on NarratorsRoadmap. Anne, who is coming up tomorrow on Narrator Uplift?

[01:18:29] Anne Flosnik

Tomorrow, we've got Kimberly Wilson, who is a fabulous lady. She's a psychotherapist, a pet grief counselor, because that came up, you know.

[01:18:39] Karen Commins

I saw that.

[01:18:40] Anne Flosnik

Yeah. Um. Oh, my goodness. What doesn't she do? Um, she is a midlife inspirational list kind of lady. Oh, She has been a podcaster since podcasts were even before they were a thing. Just, you know, so many things about her. But anyway, so she's coming along tomorrow to uplift us for sure. And that's bound to be a very interesting conversation. She's just celebrated her 50th birthday. She won a prize, um, dancing some part of Lace Hill feed. And after following a hip replacement, all of these things, you know, I mean, really, she is just the most fascinating lady. So I'm very excited about that.

[01:19:25] Karen Commins

I love the name of her site, Tranquility DuJour. Yes. I mean, we all need a little tranquility. And that's at a special time, right? It's coming up at 130 instead of the usual 2:00.

[01:19:37] Anne Flosnik

That's right. That's right. To accommodate her schedule. Very lucky to have got her.

[01:19:42] Karen Commins

Yes. So I'm looking forward to that with you. And I hope all of you will take another road trip with us on August 2nd when we'll talk with audiobook narrator production company owner and now author Amy Robinette. In the meantime, I hope you find joy in every journey and live the life of your dreams. Thanks again so much to Chris Chula for this wonderful conversation. We've had a lot of comments in the chat about your workouts and the classes and people are enjoying all you've had to offer and it's just been a delight talking with you today.

[01:20:17] Chris Ciulla

Karen, thank you. Thank you so much.

[01:20:19] Karen Commins

We just appreciate your time so much. It's been a great conversation and thanks so much to Ann Flajnik for your support. And that wonderful question you asked at the end is what we were all needing to hear about the the ROI. So thanks for that and thanks for all of you for spending time with us today. Hope you have a wonderful week and we will see you soon.

END OF TRANSCRIPT



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