

Discussion 27

Everything Creative CLEAN COMEDY – KEITH STUBBS AND RYAN HAMILTON

[MUSIC BEGINS]

DIETER F. UCHTDORF: The desire to create is one of the deepest yearnings of the human soul. We each have an inherent wish to create something that did not exist before. The more you trust and rely upon the Spirit, the greater your capacity to create.

NANCY HANSON: I'm Nancy Hanson, and this is Everything Creative. This program explores a wide range of creative ideas, talents and experiences through interviews and group discussions. Join me today for a fun discussion with creative comedians Keith Stubbs and Ryan Hamilton.

[MUSIC ENDS]

NANCY HANSON: Welcome to Everything Creative. I'm Nancy Hanson, your host. I'm here today - I'm really excited, this is going to be a fun interview - with Keith Stubbs and Ryan Hamilton, who are both comedians! We've already started laughing and the show hasn't even started. [Comedians laughing] So Keith and Ryan, thank you for joining us today on Everything Creative.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah. Thanks.

KEITH STUBBS: Thank you.

NANCY HANSON: Good to have you here. We're just going to run through your bios and give our listeners an idea of your experience. Keith Stubbs - Keith, in 1991, set aside a career working as a stockbroker to pursue his lifelong dream of being a stand-up comedian and has never looked back. It didn't take long for Keith to get noticed by talent agents and producers. He became the definition of a road comic, and on an average, spent 44 weeks out of the year performing at clubs all across the country. So a road comic is just someone that's out on the road, just working hard.

KEITH STUBBS: Nonstop, on the road, road-dogging it, tough life. Tough life to live, but yeah. You know, in comedy, to make money, especially when you're getting going, that's the only way to survive. Is to stay on the road.

NANCY HANSON: You gotta do it.

KEITH STUBBS: Mm hmm.

NANCY HANSON: K, we're going to come back and talk about that. Keith performed twice on A&E's "An Evening at the Improv" and on Comedy Central. He's also been on numerous National TV and radio programs. Keith was selected to perform in the Boston International Comedy Festival, Funny Fest, and the Calgary Comedy Festival. In 2002, he was selected as one of only ten comedians to perform for the Olympic athletes at the 2002 Winter Olympics and at the Olympic Village in Salt Lake City, Utah. Now a resident of Ogden, Keith has twice been named the best comedian by the City Weekly and funniest comedian by the Standard Examiner newspaper. He was also a semi-finalist in the Comedy Central's "Laugh Riot" comedy competition. Wow. Comedy isn't Keith's only strength, however. He is also an accomplished musician and actor. I did not know this.

KEITH STUBBS: [Laughing]

NANCY HANSON: Keith currently lives in Utah with his wife and four children. Well we've got a lot to talk about with you.

KEITH STUBBS: Yes we do. And that's all pretty much true!

[All laughing]

KEITH STUBBS: You know how bios are, right?

NANCY HANSON: Right.

KEITH STUBBS: Sometimes they sound better than the actual reality of it all.

NANCY HANSON: K, Ryan. Ryan Hamilton. And this is funny because I've, you know, I've looked at your website and I've watched some of your comedy and I feel guys, so we're just meeting today, but - yeah. I feel like we already know each other.

RYAN HAMILTON: We go back.

NANCY HANSON: We do. Ryan was recently named as one of Rolling Stone magazine's five comics to watch and appeared at the Montreal's prestigious "Just for Laughs" festival. He made his national TV debut when he appeared on Comedy Central's "Live at Gotham," followed by NBC's "Last Comic Standing" as a semifinalist. Previously, he won Sierra Mist's "America's Next Great Comic." Wow. Search. Next great comic search. He was a finalist at the Boston Comedy Festival competition and appeared at HBO's Las Vegas Comedy Festival as an up and coming talent. He's a regular guest on the nationally-syndicated "Bob and Tom" radio show, and is a favorite headliner in many of the country's top comedy clubs. Ryan! Nice! Thanks for being here.

RYAN HAMILTON: Thank you for having me.

[Ryan and Keith laugh]

NANCY HANSON: So you - you're just visiting us, actually, from New York, where you live.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yes. I live in New York, but I started comedy here in Utah, and this is my comedy home, really. And I lived here for a lot of years.

NANCY HANSON: So you're here for a couple of days for some gigs and then you're back to New York and then you're back here again.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah. I work here a lot.

NANCY HANSON: Busy guy.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah.

NANCY HANSON: And Ryan, did you - you went to BYU.

RYAN HAMILTON: I went to BYU, yes. I went to BYU Idaho; it was Ricks College when I went there -

NANCY HANSON: Mmm. Me too.

RYAN HAMILTON: - dating myself a little bit.

NANCY HANSON: Nice.

RYAN HAMILTON: And then I transferred to BYU in Provo, studied public relations.

NANCY HANSON: And now look at you.

RYAN HAMILTON: And now I have - I can't even handle my private relations.

[Nancy and Keith laughing]

RYAN HAMILTON: I'm working on my public.

KEITH STUBBS: Someone's been writing!

[All laughing]

NANCY HANSON: Well let's get right to it - I want to know how each of you came into comedy, which I know is probably a long story, but give us your answer on that one.

KEITH STUBBS: Uhh... how I got into comedy.

NANCY HANSON: Keith! Yeah, how did you get into comedy?

KEITH STUBBS: You know what? I always enjoyed standup comedy - as a kid, I used to enjoy watching, like, the monologues that Johnny Carson and people like that would do, even as a young fella. But as far as actually getting into stand-up comedy as a profession - I was working in California for a company a few years ago, and they took us all to Hawaii for an event. It was a company event, and they asked me to host this event at the time. So I hosted it, it was just a fun night out for all the employees and their spouses. And in the audience was a cousin of an employee - if this makes any sense - but she was an agent for Sinbad, the comedian.

NANCY HANSON: Okay.

KEITH STUBBS: So I hosted the event, just had some fun with it, and she said when I - after I got off stage, she said, "You ever thought about doing acting or comedy?" And I said, "Well, yeah, a little bit." And she goes, "Well, you know what, when you get back to LA" - cause I was living there at the time - "come see me, and let's talk." And I said, "Are you serious?" She said, "Yeah!" So she gave me her card and I sat on it for a few months, and I called her and I said, "Hey, this is Keith Stubbs, I met you in Hawaii. Is this for real? Were you serious or were you just talking to me at the time?" She said, "I'm dead serious. Come meet with me." So I met with her, and then she suggested I take some acting classes, and then I started getting into stand-up comedy, did open-mike nights in Los Angeles, and that's kind of where everything started. So it was kind of through an interesting relationship in Hawaii, just by chance -

NANCY HANSON: Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: - that she happened to be there, and I happened to be the person on stage that really probably shouldn't have been on stage but I was at the time.

NANCY HANSON: So do you sometimes think had that not happened that you maybe wouldn't even be doing this now?

KEITH STUBBS: That's probably the case. That's probably the case - it's something that I always wanted to do, but I didn't do it, and I think her saying "Call me!" and then actually responding when I did call -

NANCY HANSON: Right.

KEITH STUBBS: It was like, "Wow, maybe there's a shot at doing this - cause I do enjoy it." Now at the time I was a stockbroker - so it was like, "Wow, that's quite the leave, being a stockbroker and then going into comedy."

NANCY HANSON: Absolutely.

KEITH STUBBS: So I started dabbling in stand-up comedy, did open-mike nights, as I was still a stockbroker, and did a few more open-mike nights, got more confidence, started getting a little bit of money doing it, not much - you know, 25 bucks, 20 bucks, a free meal - cause that's what you get when you start.

NANCY HANSON: [Laughs] Right.

KEITH STUBBS: When you first start doing anything as far as entertainment, a meal is like, "Wow, they're going to feed me!"

[Ryan laughing]

NANCY HANSON: Yeah!

KEITH STUBBS: "Are you serious? Wow!"

NANCY HANSON: "They're paying my gas!"

KEITH STUBBS: Yeah! That's the truth.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: So that's kind of where it started and it kind of just grew from there, so that's how...

NANCY HANSON: Were you married?

KEITH STUBBS: Yes.

NANCY HANSON: Oh. [Laughing]

KEITH STUBBS: Yes. That was my first marriage.

NANCY HANSON: Ok.

KEITH STUBBS: So that's a whole other story. If you want to go there, we can go there, but I don't think you want to go there.

NANCY HANSON: Well, I imagine that would just be kind of a difficult -

KEITH STUBBS: It is a difficult, uh, time.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: Very difficult.

[All laughing]

KEITH STUBBS: It's tough. But comedy and entertainment - anytime you take a chance, like this type of business - it's very difficult.

NANCY HANSON: Sure. Well, it's like anything that, you know - like when you go and you marry a musician, knowing from the beginning that's what you're getting into, you kind of realize "This is the life I'm going to have." But I think, you know, having your guy wake up one day and go, "You know what? I'm going to bag this stockbroker thing and I'm going to go do stand-up comedy!"

KEITH STUBBS: Yeah.

NANCY HANSON: That would throw you for a loop.

KEITH STUBBS: It wasn't that shocking, but it was more gradual than that, you could kind of see it coming, but yeah, that's where it ended up.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah. Wow. K Ryan. Give us your story.

RYAN HAMILTON: Well, I started - I always loved comedy too as a kid. I never thought of it as something that I would do professionally - I just, I grew up in a small town, and it wasn't something that crossed my mind. Where I grew up, everybody became a farmer - really was what you would do, or -

NANCY HANSON: You grew up in Idaho.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah, I grew up in Idaho. But I always loved watching comedy as a kid. I didn't really - in college, my freshman year of college, I did a couple of shows with some friends. We didn't know anything about comedy but we just put together some shows around campus, and I didn't touch it again for years, until after I graduated. I was doing an internship outside of Boston, and I would go into the city on the weekends, and I saw this comedian's head shot when I was walking by a comedy club that I just really respected and liked, and I just went in and caught the show. And I'd seen other shows in Utah a couple of times, but I saw this show - this was some of what I'd seen on television - and I just watched the show and I thought, "I really want to try this." It made me go, "I'm going to give this a shot sometime." At least I - not even as a profession, I just wanted to get on stage. So, I came back and graduated, and right after I graduated, the day after my last final, I went to a comedy club, and they gave me a few minutes, and I went up. So I started doing that, and right about that time, I actually met Keith - right about then. And he was getting some comedy stuff going around, and it opened up some doors for me to get up on stage a little bit more. And so, I was working at an ad agency for about a year, just kind of doing that, so that's at night every once in a while on the weekends, and just kind of putting together 5-10 minutes, and I lost my job. I got laid off - we lost a bunch of clients - and I was kind of - I wasn't - I was kind of disillusioned with my job anyway. I was happy there, it was the job I really wanted; then I got there for a year, and I realized - I don't know if I wanted to be in an office all day, and I wasn't pushing myself in the direction I wanted to be pushed - so it was kind of okay that I lost my job. But I never - I was still looking for another job.

NANCY HANSON: Right.

RYAN HAMILTON: I wasn't - I didn't have the - I don't know. I just didn't know if I could do comedy, I just didn't know. So then, while I was looking for another job, I was working as a parking valet, just temporarily, and then people started offering me some little road dates, like out on the road, to fill in for people. And I started kind of making a little money. And then I like paid my bills one month, while I was looking for a job, and then I just kind of never found another job.

NANCY HANSON: Wow. I watched something where Keith was talking about you in those early days, and he was kind of rude -

[Ryan laughs]

NANCY HANSON: And he said, "Ryan - he doesn't look like he has what it takes to do this."

RYAN HAMILTON: I'm sure I didn't.

NANCY HANSON: Wasn't it? I mean, I'm putting words in your mouth, Keith.

KEITH STUBBS: You know, that's true. I remember when I first saw Ryan on stage, and I told him this. And I said, "I don't know man. I don't know." And I've seen a lot of comedy. And you don't know where things are going to end up. I will tell you this - I do have my opinions, but I also know - you never know! Cause people do evolve and they get better -

NANCY HANSON: Sure.

KEITH STUBBS: - and some people get worse. It kinda goes both ways. But I remember when I first saw Ryan on stage, it was like, "Man, I don't know. I don't know." And then he found his voice. And that's what you have to do in any type of entertainment - you have to click into who you really are. In entertainment, as a comedian, I believe that most comics and most entertainers, especially when they first start, they emulate someone else or they try to BE someone else, because being yourself is really difficult. Cause you're laying it out there. It's just you. But when you get rid of that and you're kind of in touch with who you are, and you can express yourself, and if you are funny and have some talent, it'll shine through. And that's what happened with Ryan. And until he got some confidence and felt secure about where he was as far as where he wanted to go as a comic - man, he just took off! And I think that happens with most professionals and most comics that really go somewhere, and that can happen - it's a gradual process, it may seem like it happens overnight - but it can happen. And I did see that happen with Ryan. And until that point, it was like, "I don't know." And I'm sure he was thinking the same thing.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah, I didn't know.

KEITH STUBBS: But then once it does click, and you are comfortable, and you get validation, and a taste of success - you go, "Ok, I can do this!"

NANCY HANSON: Little bit more confidence.

KEITH STUBBS: And it changes the whole game.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah. Definitely. So, let's talk about that - I'm curious, when both of you were growing up, little boys, were you funny? Were you always the funny kid at school, or not? Were you shy, were you...?

KEITH STUBBS: Nah, I was fat.

[Nancy and Ryan laughing]

KEITH STUBBS: I was the fat kid, and my brothers - I was the youngest of four brothers - and they used to call me "Maya," which was an old African elephant that was on a cartoon, and I used to cry -

NANCY HANSON: Aw.

KEITH STUBBS: But no! We had a funny family! My dad had a great sense of humor - I used to do impressions as a kid. I used to like Rich Little a lot. So as a little 12, 13 year old kid, I was doing Richard Nixon, and Muhammad Ali, and Howard Cosell impressions -

[Nancy and Ryan laughing]

KEITH STUBBS: Actually, I did a gig - when you brought that up about BYU Idaho, Ricks - I did a talent show right before my mission. I was at BYU for one semester, which was probably best for both.

[Nancy and Ryan laughing]

KEITH STUBBS: But I was at BYU, and I was staying in the dorms at Hinckley Hall, in Helaman Halls, and there was a talent contest. And I was broke. I had no money. And there was a talent contest in the cafeteria area, and I entered it, and I did stand-up comedy, and I did impressions. I did a man-on-the-street interview with Howard Cosell, and Richard Nixon walks by, and he says hello to Richard Nixon, he does - "Hello Richard!" - and then he does a Richard Nixon impression, and I say, "Hey, there's Muhammad Ali!" And so I did that, and I won 75 bucks.

NANCY HANSON: Sweet!

KEITH STUBBS: I got second place - I got beat by someone who sang a song from Saturday's Warrior, so that's cheating, right?

[Nancy laughs]

RYAN HAMILTON: Shoo-in.

KEITH STUBBS: Yeah! How are you going to beat that?

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah. [Laughs]

KEITH STUBBS: You're not going to beat that. So I did that, and I got 75 bucks. And it was like, "This is kinda nice!" And then I went on my mission. And that was kind of it for that.

NANCY HANSON: What about you, Ryan? Were you a funny kid?

RYAN HAMILTON: I was pretty shy growing up, and I used to think funny, I think - but people, like in high school, when they later found out that I was doing stand-up comedy, were kind of surprised.

NANCY HANSON: They're like, "That kid that never said anything?"

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah. I was - you know, I was friendly, but I wasn't super out-there. But I would do things, like - this is an appropriate place to share this - I was on this seminary group, and we would talk in all the wards in our stake -

NANCY HANSON: Yeah.

RYAN HAMILTON: - like once a year, and all I would do for the talks - I would just focus on my - you know how you tell a joke for the first minute of your talk?

NANCY HANSON: Right.

RYAN HAMILTON: And I loved that.

[Nancy and Keith laughing]

RYAN HAMILTON: That's what I would do. I would work on the joke relentlessly. And then the rest of the talk was whatever, but the joke - I was like, "Yes! I'm going to kill at church."

[All laughing]

RYAN HAMILTON: So it was things like that, where I was - you know. I've always kind of been comfortable in front of a group and uncomfortable one-on-one.

[Nancy and Ryan laughing]

RYAN HAMILTON: I don't know why.

NANCY HANSON: We're talking today on Everything Creative on the Mormon Channel with Keith Stubbs and Ryan Hamilton, talking about comedy. How do you guys come up with your material? I'm sure it's just, you know - the stuff that everybody loves is just everyday common things that people think about and can relate to in their lives. How do you, you know, find that little twist that makes it so funny?

RYAN HAMILTON: I don't know. I don't know. I never know what's funny really until I try it out on stage.

NANCY HANSON: Really.

RYAN HAMILTON: I'll have a thought, and I'll go, "I think this is funny." And it's funny to me, but I don't know if it's relatable to a wider audience, and a joke is such a - like, so many things can go wrong.

NANCY HANSON: Right, there's so - well really, I mean, it's all about your timing and your delivery. Cause we all know, you could hear two different people tell the same joke, and it just doesn't have the same effect, you know?

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah.

NANCY HANSON: So there's that, but then there's also just - your material, what you're talking about. I mean, are you always thinking in potential joke mode as you go about your day, and your life?

RYAN HAMILTON: I always feel guilty that I'm not. Like, I should be thinking more that way, cause I need to be producing more material - there's always that pressure to produce more material - but I don't think that way. Really. I mean, I - often I'll be in a conversation, and something funny will happen to someone, and they'll say, "Don't put that in your act." [Nancy laughs] And I'll say, "I didn't even think about it until you just brought it up."

NANCY HANSON: So everybody thinks you're thinking that way, but you're not.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah. So really, you don't know? I mean, when you're getting - because you're constantly having to come up with new material, right? So, do you write stuff down?

RYAN HAMILTON: I carry a notebook with me, and I'll write down an idea, and I'll go and try and work on it a little bit, and then bring it up on stage and just talk about it, and see what's funny, and the funny parts I'll keep - and often, the part that I think is really funny won't be the funniest part of the joke. And another part will become the essence of the joke.

NANCY HANSON: So it just kind of has to develop.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah. It develops over time, and you keep things, and throw things out.

NANCY HANSON: So you don't sit home and practice in front of the mirror.

RYAN HAMILTON: No.

NANCY HANSON: [Laughs] How do you rehearse?

KEITH STUBBS: You do it.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yup.

KEITH STUBBS: You go on stage and you do it.

NANCY HANSON: You just get out and do it.

KEITH STUBBS: Yeah. I don't write anything down anymore.

NANCY HANSON: You don't?

KEITH STUBBS: I used to write everything down, and now I don't. And I base my material on life - where I am. I talk a lot about my life - like, I'll probably talk about THIS on my next show. This experience. And I think that's where I come up with my material. I talk about my family a lot, my kids, what I do for a living, things that I observe - but that's really where my comedy comes from. But I used to write everything down, and -

NANCY HANSON: Cause you have to sort of be prepared and -

KEITH STUBBS: Nah. I think that for me, I needed to write it down at the beginning, and I think I don't now. I think I'm more - I think I'm a better writer, I'm more creative, and I'm more, I think, expressive, without the notes. And without too much structure.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: And it comes out better that way. I used to over prepare, I believe. And when you're thrown into a situation as a comic, and sometimes the environment is horrible, or maybe the sound doesn't work, and you're really locked into your material - it may not go over. [Laughs] You might want to be a little flexible to what's happening.

NANCY HANSON: You kind of have to be ready.

RYAN HAMILTON: [Laughing] Yeah.

NANCY HANSON: You're laughing. Any stories? You can relate?

RYAN HAMILTON: Oh, countless stories.

KEITH STUBBS: Yeah. As a comic, you remember the bad shows.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: The good ones you don't remember so much. There's been a lot of great experiences we both had, but the ones you really remember are just - man, they're tough.

NANCY HANSON: Do you want to talk about some of your worst...?

KEITH STUBBS: You want to hear a great story?

NANCY HANSON: Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: Here's a great story. I was doing a show at the Marriot in Ogden, Utah, right up there, and I was invited to a show for a high school reunion. And I was running late, and so I got there, and they said, "You're on! Go, go, we need you, you're on right now!" So I said, "Ok, great." And it was in a banquet room. Couple hundred people were there. So I went up there, and I was doing about ten minutes, and I was killing. It was going great. Just laying it out, laying it out. And behind me was a wall with some pictures of people from the student body on the wall - from, like, the high school yearbook. And it was about, like, a 20-year reunion. So I looked up on the wall, and I go, "Oh! So -" and I had all this confidence, so I was really just going - so I go, "Hey, well where's Betty now? Where's Betty? Betty, you don't have that haircut anymore -" you know, I was trying to make fun of the pictures?

NANCY HANSON: Right.

KEITH STUBBS: That was the wall of people who had passed on.

NANCY HANSON: Oh no.

KEITH STUBBS: In the last year.

NANCY HANSON: [whispers] Oh no.

KEITH STUBBS: And they had just done a tribute, and I didn't know.

[Ryan laughs]

NANCY HANSON: And you missed it, cause you just showed up.

KEITH STUBBS: I had no idea.

NANCY HANSON: Oh, are you serious.

KEITH STUBBS: So they had just done, like, a "Cats in the Cradle," the song, or something, and a moment of silence, and they said, [cutoff noises]

NANCY HANSON: Oh.

KEITH STUBBS: And then, so I - I didn't even know what was happening, so I kept going, and I go, "Hey, there's Steve! What's up with Steve and his sideburns? Steve, come on! Where's Steve?"

NANCY HANSON: No. Oh no.

KEITH STUBBS: And I looked down at a guy who was at one of the tables, and he looked up at me. And he didn't say anything. And I went, "Oh no. Oh no." And I knew. And I just - I could feel the pores in my body open, and the sweat -

NANCY HANSON: Oh.

[Ryan laughing]

KEITH STUBBS: - and it was horrific! And they were nice - I said, "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I had no idea."

NANCY HANSON: Yeah. I didn't know.

KEITH STUBBS: And it took me a couple of minutes, and I was able to finish all right, and they apologized to me - but that's one of those environments - you cannot prepare for that. And you hope that it never happens again, but it'll happen to somebody. Somewhere. And it's not -

[Keith and Ryan laugh]

KEITH STUBBS: But that's comedy! And - but you still have to pull it off, and you still have to do the show, and people still want to laugh. Even though that was a horrible, horrible situation.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah. Wow.

KEITH STUBBS: If I ever do Leno, that'll be my story that I'm going to tell.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah.

NANCY HANSON: It was a good story. It's kind of funny, but you almost don't want to laugh.

KEITH STUBBS: It's dark. It's dark. And there's more where that came from.

[All laughing]

NANCY HANSON: Ryan, what about you?

RYAN HAMILTON: Oh, well – here’s one that just came to mind when you say that. I did this gig in Mesquite for a bunch of drug enforcement officers’ annual banquet – and I think maybe Keith even...

KEITH STUBBS: I’ve done that. Yeah.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah. So, I’m there and I’m in the back, just waiting to go on. It’s their annual banquet – they have a big dinner, there’s a lot of announcements and things happening – and so the person who’s hosting the event is one of, maybe, their sergeants, or something, I don’t know, but he’s hosting the event. And he calls up the partners and the family of two officers in the past year who had fallen in the line of duty – who had died. And he has this presentation where he gives their sons a shadow box with the American Flag, and the partners say a little bit about their partner, and there’s not anybody in the room who isn’t crying. And that goes on for about 15 minutes. And they stop and they go sit down, and then, with tears in his eyes –

[Keith and Ryan laughing]

RYAN HAMILTON: I’m waiting in the back, and I think, “Oh, I have time. There’s no way I’m going up.” And with tears in his eyes, the guy hosting says –

NANCY HANSON: Oh no.

RYAN HAMILTON: “And now, next we have comedy from Ryan Hamilton.”

[All laughing]

RYAN HAMILTON: And I couldn’t believe it! I had to run cause I couldn’t believe I was up there.

[Keith laughing]

RYAN HAMILTON: And I run from the back, and I get up on stage, and the minute I'm on stage – I can feel the entire room go, "We've made a terrible, terrible mistake."

[All laughing]

NANCY HANSON: Oh. That is bad.

RYAN HAMILTON: And fortunately, everybody knew that it wasn't my fault.

NANCY HANSON: Right.

RYAN HAMILTON: And so, I just didn't try and be funny for a long time – for the first five minutes.

[All laughing]

KEITH STUBBS: Probably longer than you wanted!

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah. So it was awkward, but I just tried to thank them and be genuine.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah.

RYAN HAMILTON: It ended up going okay after that, but – yeah. It's just funny that people don't think about how fragile comedy is, and how many things need to come together for it to be successful.

NANCY HANSON: Exactly. I'm hearing from you guys both that you just have to be spontaneous, you have to be good on your feet, and be able to just get up there and take whatever going to come – because you maybe, you know, playing to a group that, your jokes just aren't going over, so you have to change it, or you have to turn it back to them – I mean, you just have to be ready to – I mean, you can't come with this agenda and think, you know,

“I’m going to go here, then I’m going to go here –“ necessarily, because it’s a give-and-take with the audience.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah.

NANCY HANSON: Right?

KEITH STUBBS: And sometimes, no matter what you do, it’s just not meant to be. It just may not work out.

[Ryan and Nancy laughing]

RYAN HAMILTON: That’s true. That’s true.

KEITH STUBBS: Sometimes you take your lumps.

RYAN HAMILTON: But you need that too, I think.

KEITH STUBBS: Oh yeah.

RYAN HAMILTON: You need that, yeah.

NANCY HANSON: So when you’re playing to a group of people, though, it usually seems like – I mean, they know you’re a comedian, they know that they’re going to laugh, they’re ready to go, they’re ready to be entertained, they’re ready to laugh. So, in both of those instances, you know, when you made the little faux pas about the – you know, people are just like, “Ok, so now it’s a comedian, now we’re going to switch gears and now we’re going to laugh.” Do you feel like, sometimes, you could get up there and just sneeze or, you know, do whatever and people [Nancy laughs] because they’re ready to laugh? Do you sometimes get that from an audience?

KEITH STUBBS: There's times when that happens, but I think that unless you're well known - unless they know who you are – you have to earn it.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah, that's true.

KEITH STUBBS: You have to earn it, I believe. Unless they know who you are, and you have credibility – there's something to be said for being famous. I mean, these guys that are really famous can walk on stage – we did a show the other night, and the guy got a standing ovation on the way to the stage.

NANCY HANSON: Right.

KEITH STUBBS: I've never had that happen.

[Nancy laughing]

KEITH STUBBS: Ryan?

RYAN HAMILTON: [Laughing] No.

KEITH STUBBS: So, it's tougher – you have to kind of earn all of that. If they're really bubbly at the beginning, that's nice. But usually, you have to get them.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah. And on the other side of that, I've heard the guys who do have that – who have the right up front – they also say, “You get a little bit up front, and then you have to earn it too.” I think if you're not funny, it'll show after a while.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah. So let's talk a little bit about, I don't know, being LDS and being in comedy, and trying to keep it clean, and if there's any pressure, maybe, to not. Because so many people think it's funny to be dirty, or to be, you know – to swear or to talk about things that are kind of inappropriate. How do you manage that? And do people that you work with generally know that you're LDS and know about your standards?

KEITH STUBBS: You want to go first?

RYAN HAMILTON: Ok. I think most people do know, but it's not because I tell them. I think it just comes out, and it's such an odd thing for them that they remember. And it's a small community, so word gets around that there's a Mormon.

NANCY HANSON: Like, "He's the Mormon guy."

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah. But as far as feeling pressure – I really – more from audiences than from actual comedians. I think in the industry itself, if you're funny, that's the most respected. Just being funny is what matters to them. So if you're funny, then you fit in, kind of. Even if you're different. Like, it's – comedians come from so many diverse places. So the thing that everybody has in common is comedy.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah.

RYAN HAMILTON: And no matter where you come from, you have that in common. So everybody comes from someplace odd, and nobody fits together except for comedy. So in terms of, like, the industry, I usually feel pretty comfortable, but even with maintaining my standards, most people are – I mean, I guess sometimes – it depends on where you are – but you know, out on the road, every once in a while, everybody will be drinking, or whatever, and then you feel like odd-man-out. But I think that happens for anybody who lives certain standards in our society.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah.

RYAN HAMILTON: I don't know that it's any different for me as a comedian than other people.

NANCY HANSON: Do people ever tell you just, you know, "You look – You're really clean cut, and –"

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah. People sometimes figure it out. I don't talk about being LDS on stage. I used to a little bit every once in a while – I don't anymore, but maybe sometime I will. I talk

about it in press stuff a lot, in interviews it comes up - I just haven't written a lot about it. But when it does come up, it's sometimes fine. But even if I don't talk about it a lot of times, people will figure it out – just because of where I'm from, and, I don't know, I have a look? I have a look. [Laughing]

NANCY HANSON: You do. [Laughing] You do. And Keith, you've mostly been around here in Utah, and done a lot of stuff, actually, for the Church, and –

KEITH STUBBS: Yeah. But I started on the road.

NANCY HANSON: Oh, that's true.

KEITH STUBBS: And I worked on the road before I even moved to Utah – cause I moved to Utah in '96 – before that I was on the road all over the place. I've been to Canada, and New Orleans, and Minneapolis, and Seattle, and – you name it, I was there. But I work clean. And the reason I work clean is really simple. First of all, I know it's tougher to get laughs clean over dirty. There's no doubt about it. I've done hundreds of shows, and I can tell you – I just know the response from a typical audience – it's easier to get a laugh. It just is. I do it – I've got kids. I want my kids to be able to come see my show. I have a boy named Jake - he's ten, he'll be eleven years old next week, actually – and I want him to get to go sit there and see Dad perform, and not go, “Oh, I can't take it, it's too much.”

NANCY HANSON: Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: I want – and I have a six year old, and a three year old, and I have a one year old. And I want them to be proud of what I do, and not have to go, (in an embarrassed tone) “Oh, he's a comedian.” I know that's a weird job. I know that everyone else in the neighborhood, their dads are accountants and lawyers and doctors, which is awesome! I've got the weirdest job of everyone, doing standup comedy. And I want my kids to be proud – and I don't want to feel like I have to edit what I do for a Church group, or playing just a regular gig – I just keep my material consistent, so if my kids are there, or if there are younger people there, it's still funny. And if there's older people there, or people that aren't LDS, it's still funny.

NANCY HANSON: It's still funny, yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: And that's a tough balance to – it's tough. You have to really – and I've done a lot of comedy – it's really tough to pull that off and to be consistent, and to have a certain amount of success. But the main thing for me is, I want my kids to be able to go, "That's my dad right there. And that was funny. I love being there."

NANCY HANSON: Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: And my son – my wife will tell me that my son will sometimes be in the back of the room just laughing. Just laughing, having the time of his life watching me. And when I hear that, that feels better than the laughter in the room – which, believe me, that's good too. I'll take it. But, you know, knowing that your son, who gets the jokes, and he's not having to cover his ears, or go "What'd you mean by that, Dad?"

NANCY HANSON: Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: There's none of that. And that's – that's important to me. But it wasn't always important to me as it should have been. I mean, I've changed.

NANCY HANSON: Kinda had to figure that out.

KEITH STUBBS: Absolutely. And you start having kids – and Ryan's a single guy – you start having kids – not that you'd have to change anything that you do – but it does change. And it does make you think about your legacy, as far as – you know, what do you want people to say about you when you're done?

NANCY HANSON: Sure.

KEITH STUBBS: You know, "What did that guy do?" And then also, you want your kids to be proud of you, not go "Golly, my dad was a flake!" or "He was dirty!" or just "A creep!"

NANCY HANSON: Right.

KEITH STUBBS: I don't want that. And I don't want my kids' friends' parents to think that – I mean, you look at all the – it really reaches out there. Stuff like that really does matter. And I think it takes an awakening on a personal level, especially for me, to go, “Wow. Uh-uh. No way. I'm not going down that road.” And I wasn't even that bad. But man, it's absolutely – the same show you'll see me do, I did a YSA group Saturday night.

NANCY HANSON: Young Single Adults.

KEITH STUBBS: Yeah. And I did the same stuff – someone saw me at a club a few weeks ago. They said, “You did the same stuff!” And I go, “That's what I do.”

NANCY HANSON: “That's the way I am.”

KEITH STUBBS: So I don't have to change my act entirely, or change my persona, or who I am with different groups. Which, I tell you – it's a lot easier.

NANCY HANSON: And you know, we parents of kids appreciate this so much that there's places you can take your kids, and they can watch stuff that's funny that's clean! You know, they can be a part of that too – it doesn't always have to be censored. So we appreciate that. I'm talking to Ryan Hamilton and Keith Stubbs, comedians, today here on Everything Creative. I just wonder if you think that being funny is kind of contagious in a way – or if someone can learn how to be funny – or if it's something you're just kind of naturally born with in your personality. I know I had a roommate I lived with for a while that was just absolutely hilarious, and she did all these voices - and one of my favorite things would be when we would go into a hat store and there would be all these hats, because she would put on a different hat, and become this other person – just hilarious. And I felt so funny when I was with her – I felt like I was the funniest person ever – and I probably wasn't – but when I'm hanging around funny people, I feel like I'm funny, and I want to be like that, and it seems contagious. What do you think about that? And do you think you can learn to be funny, or is it kind of, “That's just how you are”?

KEITH STUBBS: I think being a comedian and being funny are two different things. I think.

NANCY HANSON: Talk about that.

KEITH STUBBS: Like, someone that's funny like you're saying – your friend in the hat store – that's one thing. Now put that on stage tonight at 8:00 with an audience who doesn't care who she is.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: Now make it work and make them laugh. Not saying she can't –

NANCY HANSON: True.

KEITH STUBBS: But there's a set of skills, I think, involved in the delivery, and setting it up, and writing, and – but I do think, to be a successful comedian, you have to have some funny-ness in you. There's people that read books and say, "I want to be a comedian." And I think that you'd get a little ways with it, but I don't think you'd go too far with it.

NANCY HANSON: Well, why would you be even drawn to that if you didn't feel like you were kind of funny? I don't know.

KEITH STUBBS: The same reason people audition for American Idol.

NANCY HANSON: [Laughing] Okay, you've got a good point. Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: There's people that haven't found their way.

[Nancy and Ryan laughing]

NANCY HANSON: That's true.

KEITH STUBBS: How does that sound? Is that diplomatic?

RYAN HAMILTON: I'm in that group.

[Keith and Nancy laughing]

NANCY HANSON: Well, we all know people that – there's just that one kid in the family that's the comedian – just the class clown. You're right – not that they can necessarily get up there and deliver that to an audience and have them catch on. Any thoughts on that Ryan?

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah, definitely. I do think it's different to be a professional comedian than just a funny person.

NANCY HANSON: A funny guy. Yeah.

RYAN HAMILTON: Definitely a difference. It's just a whole different set of rules that apply to being funny in that environment. Like, you see new comedians, often the first time they get up on stage, they'll come up and they'll share a story that always kills when they're with their friends.

NANCY HANSON: Oh yeah.

RYAN HAMILTON: But no one in the crowd can relate to any of the details of their story because they don't know any of the people. So it fails. And I see that a lot at open mikes. And yeah, it's definitely – there's definitely a difference, I think.

NANCY HANSON: And there's a lot to learn once you start learning about how to present your comedy and how to deliver and how to relate to an audience, and what I hear you saying is just that that comes from getting out there and doing it. And falling on your face a lot.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah. I think that there are a lot of really funny people out there who will never – don't have a desire to get up on stage, who are just genuinely funny, or – a lot of being a comedian, you have to be funny, but I think a lot of it is learning how to live in that

lifestyle, you know, and make things happen. Cause it's hard! Just the life of a comedian is really hard. So being funny is just a part of it, I think, you know – you can be funny, and there's a lot of other things you still need to accomplish.

NANCY HANSON: Right. Do you guys have people that just want to be your friend and hang out with you all the time, because you must always be funny, and you're like, "You know what, I'm not always on." Or are you?

RYAN HAMILTON: No, I'm not. And I constantly feel like I'm letting people down, actually. [Laughing]

NANCY HANSON: They're like, "Let's invite Ryan!"

[Ryan and Keith laugh]

RYAN HAMILTON: Yes! After shows, you know, people will be like, "Come hang out! Let's go hang out!" then I'll go hang out, and I'll be myself – and I'll be funny sometimes, but I feel like –

NANCY HANSON: They're all looking at you.

RYAN HAMILTON: About after half hour, they're like -

KEITH STUBBS: "Where's the show?"

RYAN HAMILTON: "This isn't what we paid for!"

[All laughing]

KEITH STUBBS: You're over there, eating chips and just doing your thing!

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: Now, I think that's a misconception.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: I think the thing about comedy, too, the reason why – you were talking about people that are funny that may never get into comedy – and it's just like anything you ever do – it's tough. And there's more disappointment and more failure than success, especially at the beginning of anything. So can you withstand that much rejection from groups of people on a nightly basis to battle through to where you can actually be successful and get the kudos and the accolades and actually get the laughter - so how can you battle through that? And a lot of people – not that they can't do it – they just go, "I'm not going to put myself through that." Cause it's tough. It's very difficult. But once you get yourself through to the other side, it's okay. But it's tough. A lot of rejection.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: A lot of disappointment.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah.

NANCY HANSON: How do you deal with that? How do you deal with the rejection and criticism? Do you just let it roll off your back?

KEITH STUBBS: No. I let it eat me up, basically – until I get back on stage again to cleanse the pallet, until then it just leaves a sour taste in my mouth, it bugs me – it's very tough on me whenever things don't go well. Even though you endure an entire show, which is an hour, you may have a great show overall, but you remember the several times it just tanked. And until you can either fix that or get back on stage to cleanse the pallet – it eats me up.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: It doesn't roll off my back that easily.

RYAN HAMILTON: I've become more and more – the longer I do it – I've become more and more okay with when it doesn't go – like I can come off a show now, and if it – I mean, it doesn't go horribly wrong very often.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah.

RYAN HAMILTON: And I try and take it and go, "What can I do to make that better?" you know, every time. And I've kind of got to the point now where - unless it's an important show that would change my career or something like that, then I beat myself up, because then I think, "Oh, I didn't prepare enough." or "I should have done this differently." or –

KEITH STUBBS: Or choice of material.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah, choice of material. Oh yeah, I choose wrong material a lot.

[All laughing]

RYAN HAMILTON: See, I'm doing it right now!

[All laughing]

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah. It never really goes away completely. And I think no matter what level you're at – even when I'm with comics who I consider very, very successful – there's an element of that in them. I think it never goes away, really.

KEITH STUBBS: I agree. I agree.

NANCY HANSON: Well, and maybe that's kind of good. Because it keeps you trying, you know.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah. Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: I think it keeps you from coasting.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah. So how do you – you know, I think about this in relation to – cause I'm a songwriter – and when I write a song, and I finish it, and I love it, and perform it and get a good reaction, I know that I've got that in my pocket and I can pull that out every gig for the rest of my life and I'm going to get a good response. But you guys – you know, jokes get old. Like, we go, "Oh, I've seen him before. I've already seen this one." You almost don't want to hear it again, because you want some new, fresh stuff. That's got to be hard, because you continually have to reinvent things – how do you do that? And how long can a joke last?

KEITH STUBBS: Well, I think certain jokes can last forever; just ask me at the end. [All laughing] No, I think that jokes evolve, too. I think that you can have a joke that maybe – or premise – that you started with that, eventually, maybe evolves as you evolve as a human, as a person, as a person that's growing up or changing. So that happens – but I think people want to hear the greatest hits, too.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah.

NANCY HANSON: I guess they do – they come and they're like, "Ooh, I hope he tells the one about -"
Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: Right. And people bring people, going "Oh, you gotta come see Ryan, cause he does this thing!" And then if you don't do that thing, they're going "Hey wait, I brought my friend to see the thing, and you didn't do the thing!"

NANCY HANSON: Oh, that's true.

KEITH STUBBS: So people do want to hear the greatest hits – but as a performer, you always want the next golden joke.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: And you're always looking for it, which is –

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: I think you're always in search of it.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah. [Ryan laughing]

KEITH STUBBS: The great joke.

RYAN HAMILTON: I have a lot in my pocket that I never use. [All laugh] No, how would you never use the greatest joke? I think I'm always trying to build the material – I think there is a lot of pressure just in the industry. For me, as a working comic, to go – I feel kind of guilty sometimes if I have people who come to see me several times and I'm doing the same stuff over.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah.

RYAN HAMILTON: There is a weird thing where they do want to see some stuff, but I think they don't want to see all the same stuff, you know?

NANCY HANSON: Yeah. Because they want to hear about what you're thinking about, and how your life's been going, and how, you know, how you've created this funny thing out of that.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah. And I do feel like I outgrow jokes – you know, like I’ll be talking about some things that seem silly now. Even some jokes now, when I pull them out, I’m kind of like – I’ve changed a little bit as a person from when I’ve started doing this joke, so my momentum and my cadence and my delivery shifts, specifically for that joke, you know.

NANCY HANSON: Mm-hmm.

RYAN HAMILTON: And I don’t think that’s – it’s always constantly going to change and move ahead, you’re always changing. So I think I’m always trying to get new stuff out there. I’ve been to big concerts with big comedians where they’ll come out for an encore and people will shout out jokes that they want to hear.

NANCY HANSON: Oh, funny.

RYAN HAMILTON: So it’s a mix, I think. Yeah.

NANCY HANSON: Huh. So do you sometimes find yourself driving to the gig and thinking, “Maybe I’ll try this”? I mean, is it sometimes that fresh?

RYAN HAMILTON: Almost always. [Laughing]

NANCY HANSON: [Laughs] Really.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: Oh yeah.

NANCY HANSON: Hmm. Just spontaneous.

KEITH STUBBS: I also, when I go to a gig, I observe things – where we are, the environment, who’s there, what it was like getting there – and that’s incorporated in what I talk about.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah. Yeah, I do that a lot too.

NANCY HANSON: Wow. So you just have to stay on top of it all the time.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah. I think it's more pressure, though, to try to build something before, like, beforehand, sitting alone at home, going "How am I going to be funny eight hours from now?" That's harder to me than just showing up and going "What's happening in this moment that we can make funny?"

NANCY HANSON: K, that's what sounds so hard. You know, cause usually you want to show up to something totally prepared and ready to go, and you guys kind of live on the fly.

KEITH STUBBS: But you know what you still know, and just like you said, you've got your stuff.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah. Oh yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: You've got your material. And it's there.

NANCY HANSON: That you can fall back on. Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: So you go up on stage, and there's a couple, and the guy's sitting there with a funky sweater on or whatever – you can trust yourself and just go have fun with that – and if it really doesn't work, you've still got your stuff. You've still got your material. So, it's kinda there. So that's kind of like the net – the safety net. It's nice having it.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah. So what is it that drives you to keep doing this? You know, you get that first – just think back, early on – what is it you love so much about doing stand-up comedy?

KEITH STUBBS: I don't know why I do it. [Nancy and Ryan laughing] I sometimes think, "Why do I put myself through this grief?" It's tough. It really is tough, and it's stressful - when I

know I have a gig that night, I think about it for the whole day – it’s in my mind at all times, because I’m thinking about it, and I think that’s part of my focus. And if it’s a big gig, or something that scares me a little bit, I’ll think about it a week or two out. It’s - even though I have the shows in the end room, I may be thinking about that. I did a gig for BYU, at the Y Awards, and my stomach was in knots for a month. At least a month! And it was at the Wilkinson Center on the BYU campus, and everyone’s there, and there’s some General Authorities in the house, and everybody, and I’m in a tuxedo! How’s that going to work? I’m not a tuxedo guy!

[All laughing]

KEITH STUBBS: So – for a whole month! In knots, just knots! So why do we do this?

RYAN HAMILTON: I don’t know, I mean – [Keith laughs] – when I’m really honest, I’ll think about stopping comedy quite frequently. Like, people will say – I think people will come up to me and talk, and go, “Oh, this is great! You’re doing really well!” But often I’ll think, “I don’t know how long this will go.” I don’t like saying that out loud, cause I feel like I’m jinxing myself. I want it to work out, you know, I want it really bad.

NANCY HANSON: Right.

RYAN HAMILTON: But it’s hard. You sacrifice a lot to do it. So you kind of go – but it’s enjoyable. There are those moments where you’re like – makes it worth it. And it’s really fun, and it’s rewarding, and you go “I created this thing that people enjoy.” And that feels really good.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah, that’s what’s pretty cool about it – that you’re just this one person standing on the stage, you generally don’t have any props or any instruments with you, you know, you maybe do – but all you’re giving these people is just – you’re creating something with your mind and it’s coming out your mouth, and they’re going to sit there for an hour and be entertained by that. That’s pretty incredible.

KEITH STUBBS: It’s pretty strange, really.

RYAN HAMILTON: It is weird.

NANCY HANSON: It really is strange when you think about it.

KEITH STUBBS: Doing comedy for – especially when you see an audience of people that never – you can tell they’ve never seen comedy – their reaction – and I can sit in the audience and watch a comic – and their reaction to a comedian the first time they see a comedian – that’s just weird. They don’t know what to think, or how to react, cause it’s so foreign to them! I remember the first time I saw live comedy in a comedy club – it was in Los Angeles at the comedy store. And I remember sitting in that comedy club, and I saw people laughing – I think Arsenio Hall was on stage or someone like that –

RYAN HAMILTON: Uh-huh.

KEITH STUBBS: And I was just watching other people laughing, cause I’d never been in that environment. And it was funny – he was really good – but it’s a weird business.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: It’s a weird thing we do.

RYAN HAMILTON: It’s odd, yeah.

NANCY HANSON: But it’s a payoff – you get up there and, you know, it goes well, and people are right with you, and they’re laughing, and it’s just this ton of energy – and that’s what it’s all about, right? Isn’t that? I mean, you come off stage; you’re going, “That’s why I do this! That’s why I’m going to drive all night to the next gig.” Or “I’m going to stay in this yucky place.” Or “I’m going to -” Right? Is that what it is?

RYAN HAMILTON: I – yeah. But if it was that way all the – if I knew I would never get past that level – I don’t think I would do it, you know. I do this hoping that, someday, I won’t have to do those gigs anymore.

NANCY HANSON: But those carry you through.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah.

NANCY HANSON: That's why people keep at it?

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah. I mean, I don't know. I spent a lot of years doing really terrible gigs – a few years. If that was my life, the rest of my life?

NANCY HANSON: Yeah. Yeah.

RYAN HAMILTON: It's not worth it. It's not. But, you know, like last night I was able to do a big fun theater show in front of like a thousand people opening for a group, and it was fun! And you know, that's a good time, and when you do that, you go, "Oh, this is great!" And if you can make it fit with the rest of the life that I want, then I think it's great. You know, that's a good life. And if you can't – it can be miserable.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah, you both have said several times over the course of this interview, "It's hard! It's miserable!"

RYAN HAMILTON: [Laughing] I knew you were coming up on that.

KEITH STUBBS: Well, now you mention that, the reason I got off the road – cause I was full time off the road, and I was living in Los Angeles – one of the reasons I moved up to Utah was just to get away from L.A., and find a place where I wanted to stay and perform, and not travel on the road consistently – cause that's what I was doing.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: It's a tough life, it's a lonely life – it was a means to an end, kind of, but it had reached its point –

RYAN HAMILTON: Mm-hmm.

KEITH STUBBS: – for me, where I had to stop. And that’s what Ryan, I think, is saying – if that’s what comedy is, if that’s it – then no thanks.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: If that was it.

NANCY HANSON: It’s not worth those few glorious moments on stage.

RYAN HAMILTON: Right. But – you know. I think if I thought that was going to be it, I probably wouldn’t have started.

NANCY HANSON: Right. Well I’m talking to Keith Stubbs and Ryan Hamilton today on Everything Creative. Keith, you have done – so you do radio now, you also – didn’t you open up Wise Guys?

KEITH STUBBS: Mm-hmm.

NANCY HANSON: Right? So, a comedy club here in Utah, couple different locations. What else do you do? So you regularly do stand-up?

KEITH STUBBS: Yeah, so I have a radio show – it’s a morning show – that I’ve been doing for about five-and-a-half years on a country station, and it’s fun. I enjoy it.

NANCY HANSON: I listen to you. I enjoy it.

KEITH STUBBS: Oh, do you really?

NANCY HANSON: Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: Oh, thank you!

NANCY HANSON: You're great.

KEITH STUBBS: Well, that's nice of you. I kind of got into that through my comedy. I was just doing stand-up, and I got a phone call from that radio station, and they were looking for a comedy element to the show, and they asked me if I wanted to come and audition. So I said, "Yeah! That sounds good!" I'd done some radio, as far as being a guest a few times. So I sat in for a week with this particular show, and this really nice guy that liked me, and it stuck, and I stayed. And I've been there, and I have no plans to leave, I don't think.

NANCY HANSON: That's funny that you enjoy it. And it's steady – it's something that you can count on.

KEITH STUBBS: Yeah, and it's a nice outlet for my comedy. Because I'm able to try jokes out, or try out ideas, it's really – so as far as not being on the road creatively, it's a nice outlet.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: Cause I can talk about what I want to talk about – I can talk about the gulf thing, I can talk about Tiger Woods, or whatever I want to talk about that day, every day, without even going on stage – and I can still write the material that I can use on stage through my radio. So it kind of – what's the word – symbiotic's not the right word – what's the word? One of those words.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah, one of those words.

KEITH STUBBS: It's one of those words! It works out, it's mutually beneficial. [Ryan and Nancy laugh] Oh geez. Synergistic! It's synergistic!

RYAN HAMILTON: That's the one!

KEITH STUBBS: That's one semester at BYU, by the way. Honestly.

[Nancy and Ryan laughing]

NANCY HANSON: So, why Wise Guys? How did you come up with that idea, and how did that kind of develop?

KEITH STUBBS: There wasn't a lot happening comedy wise in Salt Lake City, and I wanted a place to, hopefully, make money and perform without having to go on the road. Once again, I didn't want to be stuck doing the road gigs, especially the gigs I was doing. I was doing a lot of bad gigs. Ryan's doing some good gigs now, but I wasn't doing those when I got off the road. And so, I wanted to kinda create my own scene – and then the radio happened. So I have radio, I have Wise Guys comedy clubs, and then I perform all over.

NANCY HANSON: What do you think you would be doing if you weren't a comedian? I mean, it sounds like you're kind of an entrepreneurial type of person – you've got these ideas, and –

KEITH STUBBS: I enjoyed being a stockbroker. I really did. I liked the numbers, I liked the fast pace of it, I like business, and I think I'm pretty quick on my feet, and I'm a risk taker. So I think that that was – leaving that was difficult – to get into stand-up comedy. But I could see me being in that industry if I hadn't done all this other stuff.

NANCY HANSON: So when you bring comedians to Wise Guys, are you kind of careful about who comes?

KEITH STUBBS: I'm not as careful as I should be.

NANCY HANSON: Well, I'm sure it's hard. It's a business.

KEITH STUBBS: It is a business. And you kind of have to cater to all tastes, and they're not always my favorites.

NANCY HANSON: Right.

KEITH STUBBS: I've got about five favorites. Ryan's one of my favorites.

RYAN HAMILTON: Thank you.

KEITH STUBBS: And I'm not saying that just cause he's in the room – he's great.

NANCY HANSON: [Laughs] He's become one of my favorites, too. [Ryan laughs] So Ryan, you seem to be in a good place – I mean, really, you seem like you're having some really great success. And this is a tough question, but where do you kind of see yourself – I mean, Keith's kind of set up – he's got all of these other little things going on, you know, that keep him active. Not that you're not active, but –

RYAN HAMILTON: No, I want to be like Keith, that's great.

NANCY HANSON: I'm just saying – you're a young guy.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah, I would love to have that in my life. I want everything, you know. [All laugh] And hopefully, I can get there. I feel like I've given a lot to comedy – hopefully it pays off, you know? I don't know. But I'm trying – I want to have a family, I want to just be secure doing this, you know?

NANCY HANSON: So your dream would be – in comedy – to –

RYAN HAMILTON: I would – if I could just have anything, I think, you know, having a following of people who really enjoyed what I did, and I could go out on the road one or two days a week and perform for those people and make enough money to be comfortable – oh, that would be great.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah.

RYAN HAMILTON: You know, and just to keep working, and to kind of have some security in that – that would be amazing. It'd be great to do TV stuff, and I've kind of been dabbling in acting and doing more of that, but really, even when I'm honest, I'm kind of doing acting so it will push my stand-up career a little bit. So I think ultimately I would love to – working in a theater, even in a small theater, with just a group of people who can come to see you is just really fun, and I would love to do that.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah. So as we close up here, just some final thoughts – what would you guys tell people who were thinking about going into comedy?

[All laughing]

RYAN HAMILTON: I don't know. I think you've got to be really honest with yourself when you start doing comedy – when I started, I tried to look at what I knew I was capable of and how far I thought that might be able to carry me. And I didn't know. It's still risky. I still don't know. It's risky. So I tell people that, and I also tell comedians when they come to me for advice, I say “Try not to compare yourself so much to everybody.” I feel like there's a lot of that in comedy that creates a lot of anxiety – because it's such an individual career path that you have. I mean, you look at comics who are successful – nobody has done it the same way, ever. And so, when you start comparing to what other people are doing, it doesn't help people really – because you're going to have your success in a different way.

NANCY HANSON: Mm-hmm.

RYAN HAMILTON: And it just makes you crazy, I think. So I try to think in terms of that for myself, too, like “What can I do to achieve my own potential – that I know I'm capable of at this moment in time – what can I do to reach that level?” No matter what else is going on.

NANCY HANSON: Right.

RYAN HAMILTON: But it's hard – you know, it's an individual thing, and you're alone a lot, so it's easy to let things get to you. So you gotta be strong in mind. [Laughs] Sounds like something Denzel Washington would say to me right now.

[Keith and Ryan laugh]

KEITH STUBBS: If someone wants to get into comedy, I think being realistic is a great way to look at it. But you know what, everybody – not everyone wants the same thing in comedy. Some people want to be Seinfeld; some people want a sitcom, and be Seinfeld; some people want to be George Carlin; some people just want to be a road comic; some people want to do corporate gigs. And you can make a living doing any of those – obviously with Seinfeld – but even at your own level. So you have to decide what you want to do. I've been able – and man, I'm happy about it – to take my comedy in a direction of radio and comedy.

NANCY HANSON: Mm-hmm.

KEITH STUBBS: So that's cool. That works for me. There are a lot of comics that are in the radio business. So you can take what you have, as far as your skill goes, as far as a comedian – and everyone's not going to be Seinfeld. Cause there's one Seinfeld. But you have to be comfortable where you are – be realistic and find a nice level where, like I said, you can be a comedian for the rest of your life and have success, and make a living and support your family and not be ultra-famous. You can still be a successful professional comedian. So I think it depends on realistic goals and where you want to be – I'll have comedians tell me, "Can you believe that guy? He's just working the road all the time." I go, "You know what? That may be what he wants. He might be happy with that."

NANCY HANSON: Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: I mean, you may look at that as failure, but he could be as happy as could be – this could be like "Wow, that's what I want to do!"

NANCY HANSON: Right.

KEITH STUBBS: And I think your goals do change – I bet when Ryan first started, the first thing he wanted to do was make 25 bucks at a gig.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah.

NANCY HANSON: Mm-hmm. [Laughs]

KEITH STUBBS: You know what I mean? And the next time he wanted to do 30 minutes, and the next time he wanted to headline. So you have your big picture, but you also have your small picture too, and your small goals and steps that you take along the way. So for me – I'm never going to be Seinfeld. But I know I can be funny. I know I can be successful. And I know I can be proud of what I do. And I know that I can perform as a comedian – hopefully for a long, long time. And still feel fulfilled.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: And not feel like, “Ah -” and not compare myself to Ryan or whoever. Cause really, it is an individual sport – you're kinda on your own.

RYAN HAMILTON: Mm-hmm.

KEITH STUBBS: And even if Ryan gets a sitcom, the people hanging around Ryan – they don't get a sitcom. [Nancy laughs] And if Ryan's friend gets a sitcom, Ryan doesn't get the sitcom. So it's that way. So I think being realistic with your goals and being happy with what you actually achieve is key – or get out of the business.

[All laughing]

NANCY HANSON: Are there places for up-and-comings to go and try out their stuff? I mean, how do you even get started?

KEITH STUBBS: Open mike night. Amateur night.

NANCY HANSON: Open mike. Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: Trying to make your friends laugh. Working on a bit – doing one minute, doing two minutes at a time – and hopefully, writing your own material. At the beginning, a lot of people lean on other people’s acts. I’ve seen shows where someone will do five minutes of Cosby – and I’ll go, “That’s really good, however -” I mean, it’s not like music where you can sing someone else’s song.

NANCY HANSON: Right.

KEITH STUBBS: In comedy –

NANCY HANSON: “I’m going to cover this joke.” Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: Doesn’t work that way. So – but open mike night, amateur night – that’s where you battle it out, and that’s the toughest part, I believe.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah. Yeah. That’s it – just wherever you can get on stage, that’s what you do.

NANCY HANSON: Figure out if it works or not. Yeah. And I like what you said earlier, Keith, about how, you know what, instead of trying to copy everyone else, and be what they are, or pick up on their style, or compare yourself to them – find what’s original about you that maybe is different, and just be that – and be that really big – and you know, hopefully people respond to that, because it’s genuine.

KEITH STUBBS: And it’s difficult.

RYAN HAMILTON: Yeah. It takes a long time to figure out.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah.

KEITH STUBBS: Cause it's like bearing your soul. It's like, "Man, this is who I am." [MUSIC STARTS] And to be able to say that, and mean it without apology, is tough.

NANCY HANSON: Yeah, but when you see people doing that, and they're good at it – it's so good.

KEITH STUBBS: Yeah.

NANCY HANSON: And that's what really works. Yeah. Well you guys, this has been fun. Thank you so much for being in the studio with us today, and best of luck in all your comedy and everything else you're doing in your life.

KEITH STUBBS: Thank you.

RYAN HAMILTON: Thanks. Thank you.

NANCY HANSON: This has been Everything Creative. I'm Nancy Hanson from the Mormon Channel.

NANCY HANSON: You've been listening to a discussion with creative comedians Keith Stubbs and Ryan Hamilton on the Mormon Channel.

[MUSIC ENDS]