Michael Surrey Transcript

Michael: Even during *Aladdin*, and then on the *Lion King,* we were more exposed to story. Like you would go into story meetings. We would be in those meetings to say, "okay, these are the cuts that we're doing. We're going from a single shot to a double shot, to a wide angle, and we're going to pan over." So, you're getting to see all of that. And I was like, "wow, this is kind of cool." You're actually seeing the building blocks of what I'm about to animate.

[00:00:24] **Bryan:** Bryan Smith here and welcome to the dream path podcast, where I try to get inside the heads of talented creatives from all over the world. My goal is to demystify and humanize the creative process and make it accessible to everyone.

[00:00:40] Now let's jump in. Michael Surrey is on the show. Michael is an animator who cut his teeth in animation, working on the *Care Bear* series in the 1980s. But after seeing Disney's *The Little Mermaid,* Michael knew he had to animate for Disney at Disney. Michael worked on the most iconic films in the history of animated cinema, including *Beauty And the Beast*, which was the first full length animated movie to be nominated for an academy award for best picture.

[00:01:07] No other animated feature was nominated for best picture until *Up* received that honor*,* nearly 20 years later. At Disney, Michael went on to animate the title character in *Aladdin,* Tymone in *The Lion King*, one of my all-time favorites, Clopin in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame,* Rourke in *Atlantis: The Last Empire* and Buck in *Home on the Range*.

[00:01:27] Given Michael's success at Disney, it should come as no surprise that he was named one of the 50 most influential animators in Disney studio history. After 18 years at Disney, Michael began working for DreamWorks where he worked on *Shark Tail ,Tangled*, and the Oscar nominated *How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World* among others.

[00:01:48] Last year after working for DreamWorks for 10 years, Michael was hired on as creative director at Spire animation studios, where he's working on some exciting projects, including an animated feature called *Trouble* with Danny McBride. In this interview, we cover a lot of ground, including how he broke into the world of animation, what it was like animating on films like *Aladdin*, *The Lion King*, *Shark Tail*, and T*angled,* what he loves about being an animator versus what he considers to be the grind of the job and why he feels more inspired as a creative when he's involved in the story aspect of animation, as opposed to simply drawing characters.

[00:02:26] So let's jump right into my chat with Michael Surrey. Thanks for being on dream path podcast. And welcome.

[00:02:32] **Michael:** Thank you very much. Great to be here.

[00:02:34] **Bryan:** So, Michael, where are you located right now?

[00:02:37] **Michael:** I am located in Santa Clarita, California.

[00:02:41] **Bryan:** And how close is that to los Angeles?

[00:02:43] **Michael:** Let's see. It's probably about, I guess, on a good day, maybe 30 minutes on a bad day, an hour, hour and a half.

[00:02:50] **Bryan:** You're pretty much right in the hub of the action down there, right?

[00:02:54] **Michael:** Yeah. Well, it's, it's on the fringe of like on the Northern part of the city. So usually where I'm at is sort of the point where you're driving north on the five freeway, you go, okay. I'm out of Los Angeles because you see magic mountain on the five and you go, okay, I'm out now it's the rest of California. Yeah, I'm right on that fringe right on that edge.

[00:03:15] **Bryan:** So, you're from Canada, right?

[00:03:16] **Michael:** Originally. Yeah.

[00:03:17] **Bryan:** What called you to California and specifically Los Angeles?

[00:03:22] **Michael:** Well, it'd been 30 years ago, it would have been, Walt Disney, Walt Disney studios called me here. I applied, for their training program and got rejected three times from multiple Disney studios.

[00:03:35] One was, twice in Florida. And once here in California, and at that point, I was based in New York going to school and, I needed to get, I needed to kind of, I want to get back. I wanted to get into the animation industry, big time. And Disney had just released, I think, *The Little Mermaid* at the time. And that was sort of like, okay, I need, I want to go there because that's where they're animating. And so I, I applied, eventually got in and sort of, it was a weird situation if not to go down the rabbit hole too far, but it was a case of me applying everywhere to get into the animation industry from school. I got, accepted at, for Universal to go work in London. So, I signed the contract because, everything else had rejected me.

[00:04:14] So, I signed this contract back to Canada for Christmas, came back and saw that I received a letter from Disney saying, "congratulations, you're welcome to the training program." And I was like, but "wait a minute, I signed a contract for Universal." So how do I, so I had to call like Disney and say, look, I really want to be with you, but I signed this contract, and, you know, back then before the world of emails and, you know, take a photo and send it to me, I had to like mail it to them and, you know, and say, this is what I got. And then they said, "okay, you can honor your contract for three months and then, and then you should be able to leave and come to us." And I went, okay, that was cool.

[00:04:50] So, and I have family and my mother and father English. So, I thought, well, this is a good excuse to go to England and hang out with relatives. So, I did that for about three months and then made my way to Disney. And I was there for about, over 18 years, 20 years.

[00:05:03] **Bryan:** So, let's go back to the eighties and *Little Mermaid*. What was it about that film that inspired you to get into?

[00:05:08] **Michael:** Yeah, well, at that time, animation at least feature style animation was really kind of dying in Canada, coming out of college in 87 out of Sheraton college. There wasn't a lot of, if you wanted to animate, you'd have to travel for it. Meaning most of the people I knew in school were either going to Europe anywhere in the world, but it just felt like the United States or Canada wasn't the place to do feature animation.

[00:05:35] So, it was, it was a surprise when I saw first was a *Great Mouse Detective* and it was like, oh wow. Disney just did a feature animated brand-new feature animated movie in it. Oh, that, that was, and it was kind of a nice mix for me because I'm a bit of a Warner Brothers fan. So, *Great Mouse Detective* had a little bit of a Warner brothers feel to it, but it was done with the Disney quality.

[00:05:58] And then about, I dunno, I don't know my timeline too well, but a couple of maybe four years later, all of a sudden *Little Mermaid* comes out and I'm just like, wait a minute. Like, what's it like an animated musical? And may it be just because I was, I was living in New York at the time, and I'd gone to Broadway musicals and that musicals in general were just pretty popular.

[00:06:17] They were, you know, I think I went, saw the Broadway play C*hess* and *Phantom of the Opera* and I was just like going, wow, what a great structure for an animated movie or for a movie, or for telling a story. And sure enough, Disney's like making *Little Mermaid*, which is kind of in that world. Right. So, I was just, I was just blown away by that, and I think that's what sort of drove me to say, okay, I want to, I need to get there. If I'm going to do this for a career, I think that's where I need to go. Yeah.

[00:06:46] **Bryan:** So, it sounds like the musical part of it, which for me as a fan of Broadway, that's what brings me into the story. So emotionally.

[00:06:55] **Michael:** Yeah.

[00:06:55] **Bryan:** But it sounds like that was a big part of why you were attracted to feature animation.

[00:07:01] **Michael:** It was, I think I annoyingly, I didn't, I, I really didn't have like a, this burning desire to be animating musicals or doing that. It just, there was just some perfect chemistry. I think, between what Howard Ashman had done with *Little Mermaid* and was doing with *Beauty and the Beast*. That is just a great story telling tool.

[00:07:22] I mean, it was just so well, I, at the time I had no idea what it was. I didn't understand the structure of like, why I liked it. I just thought, "oh, that was cool. I went, wow. It just flowed real nicely." And I did know, I didn't know why until many, many years later that you just go, well, you know, it's, it's part of the, it's a great tool to use, to forge your story, meet characters, understand characters, and be entertaining all at the same time, and it was, I mean, as the history will show, the model worked pretty well for Disney for the next 10 years.

[00:07:54] **Bryan:** I think they've done okay with it as they would say. So where were you when you were working on *Care Bears*? That's a, it's an interesting line.

[00:08:08] **Michael:** *Care Bears* was my first official animated paid gig was *Care Bears* and I was at Sheridan going from my- going into my senior year, so it was a summer job. And up to that point, my summer jobs, like a lot of people, you work at a gas station or, you know, you work at your father's garage or something, you know, it's washing dishes. But then I actually wait a minute, I got a summer job doing what I've been going to school for? Okay. And it was *Care Bears*. And I just, it was, it was how hard can that be? Its character like the same. Right. But then you sit down, and you have to do it and you just realize, oh my God, I can't draw these characters. Like, like the way they want me to. And, and it was a massive sort of a learning curve for me, but I had, what I would call the Glen Keane of Canada was, Charlie Bonifacio, who was super helpful in teaching and nurturing, you know, kids like me coming out of school.

[00:09:07] Does this look good? And he goes, oh no, it looks great, but you just need to, and his drawings would be beautiful over mine. I'd be like, "oh, okay. Oh my God. How do I, how do I do that?" You know, and it was, it was just, an amazing experience, but it was just for the summer, but I bought my first car with it with *Care Bear* money. With *Care Bear* money. I bought my first car, though. It said to me, wait a minute, animation can actually, you know, feed your life. So maybe that's not a bad career choice.

[00:09:33] **Bryan:** I I'm guessing that at the time you had no idea how culturally impactful the care bears were, or did you have some idea of that?

[00:09:41] **Michael:** No, not at all. I knew that there was a movie, and I knew that they were, I mean, I guess at the time I'm guessing 20, 19-20 and I mean, *Care bears* was not for me, it was for my nieces and my nephews, you know, I mean, I'm not watching *Care Bears* at 20, but right. But it's, yeah, I was just, I guess the popularity of them was just massive at the time and that hence the reason they did a movie or maybe they did more than one, but they did TV shows.

[00:10:06] **Bryan:** Yeah. Figurines and toys. And I mean, it was a very, very popular series with my sister and a lot of the folks that I knew, I, I was, let's see, an '86. I was probably 14 at the time as my younger sister was still into it. But that must have been a formative experience for you to be thrown into such a popular series at such a young age.

[00:10:31] **Michael:** Yeah. I guess if I really, if I really knew how, how much you're going to impact you, it was, it would have been a little bit more terrifying, but I guess ignorance is bliss, I guess in that moment, because I was just like, "okay, I just," again, my brain was all like, I can't draw this bear. Like he can draw the bear.

[00:10:46] I got to do that. So, my, my vision and my, I guess my scope of what I was doing was so focused on the drawing part of it. And it was very surreal because again, this is the first time I'm doing anything professionally to see your drawings and back then you're just doing poses and you send them, they're being sent to Korea.

[00:11:05] I think they're being animated in Korea at the time. So, they're following your poses. So, all you're doing when you watch the TV show, actually being put on TV is, you're just, you're just trying to find, see if they used your pose and if you see it, you're like, oh my

gosh, that's mine. You know? So as a kid coming out of college or still in college and seeing your work on TV, kind of, and your name flying by real fast, you know, you can go, oh, wow that's pretty cool. That's a pretty cool experience. It's yeah, I don't really, I don't really know how to frame it and more than it was just sort of like surreal.

[00:11:39] **Bryan:** When did you know that you were talented at art and drawing? Like at what age?

[00:11:45] **Michael:** I guess I knew I was; I was pretty good at it. Meaning, or, you know, could do it or love to do it was maybe like in elementary school only because like, maybe between classes or moments where I would draw something and I was always drawing by as early as I can remember, I was always drawing, but there was a moment I think, where I was drawing something and I don't know who it was and my class "oh that's really cool. Can you draw that for me?" Oh, no. Okay. And I just. And then three or more, three, four other students. Well, "can you draw, I want one of those, can you" then it was like, take the, we, we, in school, it was like a big deal to get an ink pen, you know, back then it was like you learning how to write, but if you learn how to do cursive, the teacher say, okay, now you get a pen pencil.

[00:12:30] So I was like, oh, you got a pen. And then he was like, oh, can you do a drawing on my arm? Like a tattoo? And I was like, sure, so much people's care down at, I was, I can't remember what it was, but just drawing stuff on their arms because they just thought it was cool.

[00:12:43] **Bryan:** That's awesome. You get your own little prison tat operation going, going on.

[00:12:48] **Michael:** Tagging my fellow students.

[00:12:51] **Bryan:** So you have this, innate skill, this talent for drawing and a love for it. It sounds like. And then you go to school for it. What did you learn in school that made you a better artist? And in hindsight, do you think that school really was imperative art school for you to become the animator that you are today?

[00:13:11] **Michael:** Yeah, it was, it was probably everything for me to become the animator that I am today because going into Sheridan, I didn't even know how to animate. I had no clue how to do it.

[00:13:22] **Bryan:** So, you're talking about a distinction between drawing and animation.

[00:13:25] **Michael:** Well, they were one in the same back then. They're one in the same. I mean, well, I shouldn't say that because there, there are a lot of people's drawing abilities that are certainly not, you would consider the Disney style or the classic, you know, being able to draw characters realistically, or, you know, anatomy being very like on the nose, you know, it makes sense when you watch a character move around that, oh, that looks like a real person because there's plenty of other types of animation that was being done and still is, does that show different kinds of drawing styles, flatter, you know, more graphic styles. But for me, it was just, I knew I loved animation. I had; I literally had no clue how to do it. I

didn't know. Like, how do you do it? Like, what is the, like, what are you draw, but how does that paper move? Like how does it move? I just, there was nothing about it. The only thing I had in Canada was there's on Sundays, Disney would have their wonderful world of Disney. And I would see they had a documentary thing where they show guy animating. And I was like, oh, well, what are those? What are those holes at the bottom? He's got like paper with holes in it. And he's like, wait a minute. How does that, you know, where do you get that paper?

[00:14:36] Again, I had no clue. So, I was literally taking nails and taking a whole punch and trying to figure out like watching it, like how do you do it? And so I had no idea. So I learned everything on how to animate. And also, as an artist, I'd never taken life drawing classes before. So that was a whole world to me that I just never had before.

[00:14:58] Like, just learning how to do anatomy, learning, how to draw the human figure. It's one thing to sit there and just draw from your brain from your memory. But it's another thing just to sit there and look at somebody and go, okay, well, you know, you know that he's seven heads high and you measure using your pencil and you hold it up and you know, you're doing like, you're going like this and you're putting your thumb.

[00:15:20] And you're saying, okay, he's that big? Okay. One, two. And you count down. And just all the stuff that was involved, I just had no, no knowledge, but it was just so exciting to me because I didn't know. And I was learning and right. It became everything.

[00:15:35] **Bryan:** Well, it sounds like there's a pretty big learning curve when it comes to the mechanics of animation that you really need school for. I mean, you need classes and instruction to know how to do that.

[00:15:46] **Michael:** Yeah, I think so. I think there's, I mean, today there's so many ways to learn, you know, kids can learn from multiple platforms now, but art school art school does offer that ability because there's something that you're paying for somebody to be a mentor to you.

[00:16:03] You know, if it's not in drawing, it's in painting. If it's not in painting, it's in animation. If it's not animation, it's in story or writing, like there's just you, can't, that's a hard thing to sort of not, I think, to skip over that, unless you're super talented, like just off the charts. I mean, from a lot of us. I mean, I, I, my journey has been not easy. I mean, it's, it's been a struggle to get through where I had the, you know, sort of, as I said earlier, you know, having to apply over and over again, it wasn't like I applied once and they went, oh yeah, she's a superstar. Yes. Bring in. Oh my God. Why quick? I wasn't that guy that's like.

[00:16:40] **Bryan:** Keep this guy out.

[00:16:43] **Michael:** I was like banging on the door. Like, Hey, can I, no, not now. Okay. I'll come back. Okay. So schooling, I think is important. I think it's; I think it, it helps a lot to sort of get your brain. At least for me, it allowed me to think about what everything is in this new world of doing this stuff that I loved when I watched it on TV, just what's involved, like, how do I, how do I do it? How do I navigate through this world of the physical act of doing the job? And then how do you get a job?

[00:17:11] **Bryan:** Yeah. When you made your way to Disney and you were working on, for example, *Beauty and the Beast*, it sounds like your first major feature animated film. At Disney. How similar or different was animation at that time from say, you know, the old Mickey mouse films that we remember from like the fifties and, you know, the, the *Snow White* film, the old, you know, kind of dated looking *Snow White* film, but how different are the techniques from the early nineties from back then?

[00:17:41] Were they basically the same or where they dramatically improved and modified?

[00:17:47] **Michael:** Not, you know, you'd think with all the time that it would have evolved, but they almost said if it's not broke, don't fix it. And it was not that different. The biggest difference that sort of crept in certainly, which is a massive help, was the ability to animate something on paper and then what you want to do is you want to see it. So, you would back in the fifties or even the forties, it's like animated, animated, you got a stack of paper, you give it to the camera. People, they shoot it. You wait like a day and then they show it to you the next day on a movie Ola. And you you're looking at it going, "oh, I made the arms move too much. Okay. I got to fix that." So there's a day, two days. Now it's or back, even when I started, it was like, I want to, I'm going to go shoot my scene over a computer is like '90, 1990, but we still had something there where you could test it and look at it really quick in the minute, you know, and be able to change the timing and go, okay, I gotta move the arms more.

[00:18:42] And then you go back, and you do it right. I mean, that pretty much the big, the biggest technological jump. It was all very much paper. Got it. You gotta learn how to draw. You gotta learn how to draw better. It wasn't. I mean, back then it was, this is all pre-CG. I mean, there was some CG introduced in other departments, but not in animation yet. Not in character animation.

[00:19:08] **Bryan:** So, how time consuming was it to create, say, you know, five seconds of animation of one or two characters interacting together. Like how many individual drawings are we talking about and the time, and also the horsepower that it takes in terms of like the number of people that are working on that scene. I just have no concept of really what is going on to create that five seconds of screen time.

[00:19:31] **Michael:** So, you, you are like me just before I went into college. That's exactly what the questions. It's it, you know, for five seconds, the math here is going to be horrible, but it would range. You would be able to save five seconds, maybe a couple of weeks.

[00:19:47] **Bryan:** Whoa.

[00:19:47] **Michael:** If you're, if you're, if you're good, if you're like in like in rhythm and you're moving maybe a couple of weeks and, and that's probably somewhere in the area, at least for me when, maybe over 2000, like 2000 drawings, but probably about half of those would get thrown away.

[00:20:04] **Bryan:** Oh, my goodness.

[00:20:05] **Michael:** So, you would draw it and go no, then you go, I'm going to try it again. No. Oh, that's it. And then you would do it. You'd look at it and go, this isn't working. Let me throw that out. So, it would take you, you know, maybe there's about 1200. Drawings for about five seconds and then it take you about a couple of weeks to do, and that's wow. Starting it. Then I'm giving it to somebody who either might help me fill in some drawings to help solve some sort of problems with drawing his shirt or some overlap kind of thing or whatever.

[00:20:39] And then you, okay, that looks great. Then it gets passed onto another department who has redrawn everything that I did by cleaning. Beautiful, nice, and clean. And that's what usually would be the one that would be seen on the screen, and they would colorize them. So, it gets done twice. And that process, you know, changed slightly because they used to, they used to draw it, then they would ink it and then they would, you know, paint it.

[00:21:04] So it's, it's.

[00:21:06] **Bryan:** So, drawing is more like a sketch maybe. And then the inking is maybe like a, a more defined drawing or-

[00:21:13] **Michael:** Yeah, it's, it's this it's the best way to put it as it is. Yeah. It's a sketchier line. An animator will do a sketchier line and that would be something that you'd say, okay, the scene works fine. And you would have a person called a cleanup artists. And their job is, is to know what the character looks like finished. So, they would be able to know that, okay, I just drew a jacket with three buttons, but they'll draw the buttons exactly the way they supposed to be. They'll make the jacket look exactly like the model was intended to. Because a lot of times animators might just go, okay, here's where his jacket is, and he has a pocket here and I'll draw, you know, a pocket and move it around properly, but it maybe won't have all the details on there. So, they'll, they're the ones that go in there and make it look really pretty.

[00:21:59] **Bryan:** That's interesting. I never thought about that concept of, you know, when we see a live action film and we see someone with a jacket on them where there's a pocket, that jacket is always going to be a jacket with a pocket that's never going to change. And, you know, with, with animation, you have to be cognizant of every single detail to be consistent throughout the entire film.

[00:22:21] **Michael:** Yeah. I mean, that's, that's a lot of reasons why, like, when we would design early stages, when you'd be designing characters, you know, you get all crazy and you go, I'm going to have him have this and he's going to be wearing this and it'll look like that. And, and everybody, well, wow. It looks great. And then eventually they'll start going. Well, it's going to be really hard and time consuming to do that with, you know, having to match that in animation. And is there a simpler form of that? And then you. Sometimes you sort of you're limited, you know, in 2d animation, you were limited by those, that kind of things.

[00:22:49] Complexities of, of what a shirt looked like or hair or things like that you had to sort of, you had to be a little bit more graphic with it so that it was easier to manage going

down the line because every step down the line to getting to the screen, there's somebody there that's going to go, okay, wait a minute. You gave him curly hair; I've got to match all those. I got to draw all those curly hairs like and move, like, it'll take someone forever to do, so then they do the math on that and go okay, to do that kind of hair, it's going to look like it's going to take us six months to just do that. We can't do that, so you got to go back and simplify those curls and a more graphic. And that happens all the time where you pull back on the lines. So, they would, they would measure it by line mileage. So, they would say, oh, this character has like a whatever degree of line mileage, meaning it's just. It's just going to be time consuming, to draw everything that's needed to make that look like that character.

[00:23:45] **Bryan:** That makes sense as I look back on Disney films, why the hairstyles are the way they are, you know, even, even going back to *Little Mermaid* where you know, her hair is, I think it's pretty straight and long.

[00:23:55] **Michael:** Yeah, it was a bit curvy, but it's, it's easier to manage as far as drawing it's, but it's not like, it's like, yeah, she's not like got a like full curly hair. They're, you know, complex, you know, it's, it's manageable. It's you push it to the point where you can think, okay, we can do that. And I think as we started wanting to do more with characters like that that's when you start going well, is there a way we can do that? Is there some isn't as technology around us was starting to get more apparent and you just go, well, is there any of that we can use, can we use any of that?

[00:24:26] So, any that can help us?

[00:24:28] **Bryan:** Yeah.

[00:24:28] **Michael:** You know, and that wasn't until years, years, years later,

[00:24:32] **Bryan:** So, what were you thinking when you were working on *Beauty and the Beast*? Were you aware of the fact that Disney was about to go on a terror in terms of like the most impactful culturally massive films in the history of cinema?

[00:24:48] I mean, this is just an incredible run you had on Disney.

[00:24:52] **Michael:** I was, I was completely, no. I had, no, I don't think any of us had really that much of a clue that it was going to do what it did going through that nineties run. I think it's, it could be said about any, any sort of art form or sports team or, you know, anybody that goes on a run and just was able to sort of hit it. It's just, you just look back and you go, why was that? Like, what, what did, what happened? And it's a lot of times you just think it's just because everybody was just so committed to doing it. And maybe there was just everybody was there. Like I was, which is just like, I- this is like, they're all into it. They just really wanted to do it. And it, because animation is not something you just do for money or do for, you know, you gotta love it 'cause it's tedious. It's a lot of work. And, and I think there was just a mass group of people there that just loved it. And I just can't believe anybody really said, yep, this is going to be a hit. We're going to make a lot of these. These are going to be like a hundred-million-dollar movie, you know, Oscar nominated. Yep. That's going to happen. I think again, the mermaids and the things sort of set the ground for that, that run because it opened up an audience of people that went, "oh, wow. Wow. That's kind of fun. I

like watching an animated movie with music." It was great. It was kind of fun to watch. And so *Beauty and the Beast* coming out. Classic story. Disney's name on it. And Howard Ashman, Ellen Mankin it was just like so perfect storm, right? I mean, it was just. You know, again, all that is oblivious to me, I'm just sort of like, I gotta learn how to draw this candlestick. How do I draw this candlestick? You know, that's great.

[00:26:34] **Bryan:** That is awesome. So, at the time, and then we'll, let's move on to, *Aladdin* too, because it looked like you went from animating assistants to animator on *Aladdin*. How cognizant were you of the story aspect of animation at that point? Because you mentioned story as another element of becoming a fully formed animator.

[00:26:57] When we were talking about the school you went to, but. For me, Disney films are known for their stories. The animation's great, but the story is what really drives everything that is happening. And so here you are very talented animator, obviously hired by Disney to work on their most important films.

[00:27:17] That how tuned in were you to the story at the time when you're trying to draw that candlestick or you're trying to get, you know, Aladdin's hair, right. Or his magic carpet. I mean, that has to be kind of a myopia where you're just laser focused on doing something exactly. Right. But you're doing it in the context of a bigger picture, a story.

[00:27:40] **Michael:** Yeah, well, yes, and I, and it it's, it is very much that because your first priority and, you know, starting at the Walt Disney company, just in general, it was, that I just want this to be right. If this is right, then, then I, I can, I can really look at other things I can, I can probably relax a little bit, you know, and just take in other aspects of where I'm at.

[00:28:05] And the stories aspects of it weren't really apparent to me beginning. I mean, there were probably there, but I just, again, I was just so like, I need to, I need to draw this candlestick. I need to draw Aladdin, right? How do I do that? You know? So you're, it's the physical act of, of getting your brain and your hand to coordinate, to be able to do it the way it needs to do for the movie.

[00:28:25] But meanwhile, I'm probably still like going, oh, why is Aladdin going into this parade? Or why does he meet Jasmine here? You know, don't worry about that. I need to, I need to get him to look right. So it's, it started, it started about *Beauty and the Beast*, maybe near the end and the beginning of *Aladdin* where I started to ask those questions to myself.

[00:28:45] Right? I wasn't openly going, hey, why is Aladdin, you know, going into that parade, that doesn't make sense. Like I'm not, I'm not that person yet. And I don't have the, you know, the, the whereabouts of media to realize like, hey, I've been here two years. I got some questions. I'm just not that guy yet, right?

[00:29:04] I'm just too busy, just going, wow. Disney. These people all worked on these movies that I loved. So, it was getting the confidence to sort of get there. You know, each movie kind of showed me the next door to sort of like. Go wait a minute. I want to know more about that process. You know, how does that work and, and not to jump too far ahead, but after *Aladdin*, even during *Aladdin* and then onto *The Lion King*, we were more exposed to story.

[00:29:30] Like you would go into story meetings because the process would be story would be going into the department layout, which does all the background stuff, draws it all out for animators, but we would be in those meetings to say, okay, these are, these are the cuts that we're doing, where you're going from a single shot to a double shot, to a wide angle, and I'm going to pan over.

[00:29:51] So, you're getting to see all of that. And I was just sort of like, wow, this is kind of cool. You're actually seeing the building blocks of what I'm about to animate and then confidence. And, you know, you just feel more comfortable to say. Don't you think it would be good idea to have a shot of so-and-so here and not cut to her or whatever.

[00:30:08] And they go, "oh, good idea." And people are drawing and then they're just taking little drawings and putting them up on the wall. Like you you're, they're just holding up drawing like this. This is what you want. Yeah, okay. Put that up. And it's very organic, which was super exciting to me. 'Cause it was all these artists in a room and people's heads are down and they're going, what about that?

[00:30:26] No. Okay. All right. Let me try this. And then they pin it up and you're moving stuff around. And I was like, man, what a, what a cool job this is, you know, to be able to, to be able to just be so free flowing with 'cause animations, you know, so singular, right? You just sit at your desk and it's listening to the track of whatever you're animating and it's just you and paper.

[00:30:46] So there's a little bit of a different world for me.

[00:30:48] **Bryan:** As you may have noticed, there are great resources and advice mentioned in all our episodes and for many of them, we actually collect all of these resources for you in one easy place. Our newsletter. You can go to dream path, pod.com/newsletter to join.

[00:31:04] It's not fancy. Just an email about each week's episode, featured artists and resources to help you on your journey. Now back to the interview. So, was that a brand new approach for Disney or was that just you being brought into a process that they had already been already been doing and you were new to that?

[00:31:23] **Michael:** Yeah, I was new to that process that, that had been in place for way back, even when well malt was running the show. I mean, it was. That's just been the process where you, you know, you have your story and you'd bring animators in, you know, or story people and you would just put it up on the wall and pitch it and then people will go, ah, it doesn't make sense, why would you do that? And, okay, well, do you have something better? Yeah, I do. How about this? The great thing about the Disney films, story-wise was that they were very open and to making it better. So, if somebody had an idea, you'd have to sometimes fight for it, but if the idea worked, they would consider it and put it in, and I think it's that, that back and forth in that very organic way of working, I think is why the stories got stronger from the concept stage to the screen. I think it just got to be a better, better product because they were willing to all go, okay, well, let's not get too precious about this idea. You know, let's really make this work and they spent the time to do it.

[00:32:22] **Bryan:** When you were animating Tymone on *Lion King*, did you know that Nathan Lane would be the voice of Tymone?

[00:32:28] **Michael:** At the beginning. I think if I remember correctly, they, he was one of the voices that they had mentioned. And I can't remember the others. No, I'm running a blank on it. It was by the time I think I was sort of locked in to work on it. I think he was sort of.

[00:32:46] **Bryan:** Yeah. Did you have his voice though? I mean, did you have his voice for T-bone in your head as you were drawing?

[00:32:52] **Michael:** Yeah, once I started, I mean, again, the process sort of when animators were being brought on, sometimes some of those things have already been started, so they may have done like some quick recording sessions with Nathan and Ernie Sabella who did Pumba, who were on *Guys and Dolls* on Broadway at the time.

[00:33:09] So, they would maybe have them just do like, hey, can you just, you know, like an audition tape, but it would be something. So, they, hey, we did this recording session with Nathan and Ernie. Here's something for you guys to listen to. It's not in the movie, but here's an idea of what, what we're looking at for these characters.

[00:33:25] So, you would have that in your head as you're drawing and designing the character, which was, you know, helpful thing, because you're trying to get, if I can make the character kind of a meerkat kind of look like Nathan, then I think I'm thinking the audience is going to buy a little bit more, that this voice is coming out of this animal.

[00:33:42] So you steal what you can.

[00:33:43] **Bryan:** Yeah. It's an interesting concept of how important is it that you know, what the voice actor looks like and sounds like when you're drawing, because I've seen over time on Disney films, for instance, on *Shark Tail*, that it was intentional that the animators made the characters look like the voice actors in some of the characters, at least.

[00:34:07] **Michael:** Yes, 'cause the caricaturing of, of a character to look like whoever is doing the voice, I think was helpful. Certainly, if the voice was a famous person. But if you go back and you look at like, and Disney's, Great *Mouse Detective* and they Radigan, the villain was Vincent Price now Radigan doesn't really look like Vincent Price.

[00:34:28] I don't think Glenn then when he animated, it was thinking he just, he was feeling who Vincent Price was, but I don't think he was purposely trying to find elements of Vincent Price to put in. Not to say that he didn't try that in the development stage of the character. I'm sure they went, oh, let's give him a little mustache, let's give, let's try making them look like, and they just would probably go now, and it looks kind of now it looks weird. And then Glenn being as good as he is, he's able to sort of take the essence of what he's hearing of that actor, that actress, and be able to make you believe, whatever he's drawing.

[00:35:01] They work together, they are together and that's, that's a massive talent if you can do that successfully because I, I- you know, it's again, it's not to say it's an easy out, but I

mean, if you're going to caricature a famous actor and everyone's going to go, oh, that's, so-and-so, that's definitely so-and-so because I could see it in the eyes and the, you know.

[00:35:26] **Bryan:** Angelina Jolie's lips.

[00:35:27] **Michael:** Yeah. Yeah. You can tell that it's that it's her. And then you hear her voice, and you go, oh, okay. It's her as a fish. I get it. So, there is elements of that, that I think everybody tries to put in there, but how far you go with it? Is it like a literal caricature of somebody as a human person being put into a fish body or a lion or a dog or whatever, you know?

[00:35:49] But sometimes there's, it's catching the essence of who they are and let that just sort of, you know, be the voice. I mean, it's, it was a Craig T Nelson. Who does the voice of, you know, Mr. Incredible, you know, you just hear the voice, and you go, I've heard that voice before and it works so well coming out of that guy, but he looks nothing like Craig T Nelson, you buy it, you know, you just, it's just proper casting, I think, to really get the match that makes it work with the character that you're trying to develop?

[00:36:16] **Bryan:** Yeah.

[00:36:17] **Michael:** So, when it happens, it's magical though. It really just makes you just go ding! That works.

[00:36:23] **Bryan:** So, as you're clipping through all of these amazing films, tell me the parts of your day that you loved the most and the parts of the day that you could really do without. And the reason I'm asking this question is that folks that may want to get into animation, I want to know for their sake, what the grind is, what are the things that maybe bugged you about the business and the things that really you loved doing every day?

[00:36:47] **Michael:** Oh, well, the loving part will be, will be easier to, and it's bigger. I mean, it's way bigger than, you know, the pros are way better, bigger than the cons of being an animator in my mind, well, I'll put it this way. Every day I would drive into work and never felt like I was going to work. Never felt like I had a real job, you know, I never you know, I remember times, this would be around, around *Aladdin*. I was driving into work and got caught in traffic and I'm looking beside me, and I see, you know, I would see somebody shaving. I would see somebody putting makeup on, I'd see somebody reading something like they're reading, like some reports that they have to do for work, you know. And then some guy adjusting his tie and he's driving. And I would just be like, "oh man, those guys have real jobs. You know, they, they, they really go to work." I go, I don't think I go to, is my job a job? And I remember just driving and going. It doesn't feel like a job. And I, all I could think is like, man, I didn't just, I just don't. I'm so happy. I'm not sitting in that car. That car. Because I could go, you know, t-shirt, didn't matter. There was no crazy dress code for going into work as an animator. And it was really all about the work. Not to say that they were all relaxed and like, come in whenever you want, whatever you want to do. No, no, no, it wasn't that it was just more like "we hired you. You can do the work. You're talented enough. So just do it." And then they trusted you to do that. And so on the plus side of it was that I just never felt like I was at a real job. And the hard, the hard part of, of, of that is that you never want

to leave it. It never leaves you. Right. So even if I drive home at six or seven, you know, you're sitting at home and my, when my kids at that time, I had two kids and at that time, and yeah, you're playing with them, but the whole time you're like thinking about like, "so if I moved his arm." It just doesn't shut off, right? I mean, it's hard to shut it off. Yeah. And you could bring your work home with you. So, if you just get stuck and you just like, oh, I just, I don't know. Ah, I just can't figure this out. Ah, I'll just bring it home with me and then you'd leave it.

[00:38:48] You know, you'd wrap up your paper, your scene. And they would come in. Like, if I may, I know it's a podcast, but so we come in like this, right. A big cardboard.

[00:38:57] **Bryan:** Yeah.

[00:38:57] **Michael:** You've wrapped us up and you would come home with this, and you put it on the table and then you play with your kids or eat dinner. And then I would look at it and say, "oh, I need to go over there and open that up." and then you start working again and it just doesn't shut off. So that's bad side of it because you know, you need to have that break. I didn't understand that early on. Certainly, you need to have that time away from it. The grind of it can be hard. I mean, certainly when you're working for Walt Disney and there's demands for it to be like, we need this to get done by this date.

[00:39:31] You know, we have to get it into the theaters by here. And there's a lot of moving pieces and if it falls behind a little bit, it can get not ugly, but people, you know, everybody's just wanting to get this stuff done and, and you fight that urge to just go "whatever, okay. There it's done. You're happy? It's done."

[00:39:48] Right. Put it up there. There I'm finished. You want to do that, but then there's a party. He goes, no, I can't do that. So, you get caught in this battle of, of fighting yourself. You're tired. You know, the hours get long near the end. Again, I only know animation as a creative outlet, as far as the process, I'm sure music. I'm sure. Any kind of creative outlet is kind of the same. You think, oh, six months, you know, I'm going to, I'm going to figure out what I want to, what I want to write. I want to figure what, what music I want to play. And let me just really let me really explore and you take your time and then you realize, oh shoot, I've got like eight weeks, and I got to deliver all this work, and then you start cramming. Yeah. You know, animation is kind of the same thing where you just think, oh, directors will like go, "Hey, you have his arm go up. Can you just make his arm? Like maybe, maybe his arm doesn't need to go up. Can you animate it with it? Not as arm up?" And you go, okay. Yeah. "You know what? Maybe if you bring up his other arm" and then you go okay. And you're doing all these like small little, like changes in a scene will take you weeks. You should have got done in like five days. That's at the beginning of the process, by the time the movie gets, you know, near the end, you know, you're now cramming, like, "ah, we've got to get that scene where she's going to cry and say, she loves her mother, and we need to get that done now."

[00:41:05] And you know it's, and it becomes such a grind because everybody's trying to get everything finished by the end.

[00:41:12] **Bryan:** And always takes longer than you think it's going to take.

[00:41:14] **Michael:** Yeah. But it's, it's definitely, I mean, getting to draw for a living, my mother didn't believe that it was a good idea to do it early on until I showed her my first paycheck. And then she was like, okay, that's all right. You can do that then.

[00:41:27] **Bryan:** So, tell us about your recent career move. What inspired you to make such a big change?

[00:41:33] **Michael:** So, going back and forth between Disney and DreamWorks over the last, 30 years, you know, and I moved from animation into story eventually. I just said, okay, I just want to do story. And I, and I found it to be way more rewarding for me. It was just that I, you know, in any, when you're animating, like I was saying earlier, you get so focused on the moment. Like, "how am I going to move him across the room?" Moment where a story's like, well, why are we even in the room? Like, who are the people in the room? Where is the room? You know, what is all this? I mean for the overall story. So that, that sort of drew me to wanting to be in that department. And I think as time goes on in your career and having done this, so for over 30 years now, the big thing for me is, is that sometimes you get into these plateaus where you're not learning, and people assume because you've been doing it long that you already know it. So, you don't need to learn it. Like there's nothing for you to read, learn more. So, they know you're talented. They know that you can do the work. But they just feel like, well, why don't we just, just let you do the work, and they don't push you. And they don't, they don't want, not that they don't want it, but they just feel like you're you're, you're great where you are. So, if there's a need for you to want more, it, there's not really an avenue for that. That makes sense. So, it became a, it got to a point where I had met Brad Lewis. Who's our co-founder of Spire on, How to Train Your Dragon 3. He came on as a producer at the end. Great guy. Very, very easy quick. One of those people you meet real quick and you just go, I really connect with him. I like him. He's a great guy. And as a producer, he was fantastic. So, he, I moved on to another movie and he was going to leave the studio and he goes, "I want to talk to you about something. I got going on. Oh, sure. Months pass nothing. And then does email. "Hey, do you want to meet me for a drink? I want to talk to you about what I'm doing." Sure. And he goes, oh, it's going to be this. And he had this real rough skeleton of what Spire was going to be. And I was just like, "oh, okay. That sounds, do you have anybody lined up?" Not yet, but I'm just, I'll let you know." there's all this like mysterious every three or four months, I would get this call out of nowhere from Brad.

[00:43:49] And he finally had gotten together with, PJ Gunsagar, who's our CEO and his partner. And they figured out a model of how to make a studio and what he wanted and, and people like myself, Sean Krauss and, group of others that are all have like what I do, which is a lot of experience in the business, but maybe want to want to have a bigger piece, like wanna want to be able to let our experience, you know, be used and, sort of make a, try, make a group or a studio situation where we can make a movie. That's, again it's not like we're trying to reinvent the wheel here, but it's just, you just trying to find a way, like, you know, I want to learn more about how to make an animated movie or film in general and this as a platform in which is going to allow us all to play in sandboxes, we just not really, I

didn't get a chance to play with and it's been for that it's been great because it's been giving us a chance to talk with people and meet people and, and look at stuff that a lot of times in the process of making an animated movie that we inherit we don't really get to see or be a part of.

[00:44:49] **Bryan:** Yeah.

[00:44:50] **Michael:** So, that part is super fun, you know? And so now I'm learning again, and I just feels like, oh, this is really exciting. It's nice to get up and okay. I'm not going to be drawn care bears today. And I was like, oh, okay, good. What are we looking at? Oh, it's something new. Oh, wow. How'd you do that?

[00:45:06] **Bryan:** Right. I mean, everybody evolves as an artist and is a craftsman and it sounds like maybe Disney was not the place to become everything that you could become, but when you're part of Spire, it sounds like you're going to have your hands in a lot of, you know, the creative director.

[00:45:24] So you're going to have your hands in a lot of different projects in various roles, and maybe that's a more fulfilling prospect. I don't know.

[00:45:33] **Michael:** Yeah, it is. I mean, it's, it's just, it's a sandbox again, to use that term is just that we just never- not everybody gets to play in and you can't have everybody.

[00:45:43] It needs to have only a select group of people have to be at the top. You can't have, you know, nine, nine chefs. You just need one, one, guy's going to make the, and he's just gonna dictate. Who's going to do what, but right. And that's fine, you know, and I think that's that's, this is just, a platform. I think that's to Brad and PJ's credit they've been able to grab people from all these different studios and they're all great people, you know, cause again, you're going in kind of blind. I mean, I mean, during the pandemic too, you're like, you know, there's some people we work with. I haven't physically ever met, you know, it's just through zoom, you know, we were so new and you're hiring people as we're going. So, it's been a little bit like surreal in a way of like, oh, these are my colleagues now, you know?

[00:46:27] **Bryan:** Right. I can't think of a better time to start an animation studio than 2020. Yeah. For a lot of reasons. But primarily it has to be a new Renaissance for animation at this point because it's just an easier production to put together.

[00:46:45] **Michael:** Well, and I think the model's been there for a long time, it's just people, certainly the big studios, ignore it. The idea of working remotely or not having to, you know, it's okay for so-and-so to live in, you know, Ohio, you know, we can talk to her, be able to just connect with her. It's not such an alien thing to them to do that on a large scale and they've, and it's shown that they can get movies done. Is it ideal? No. I mean, moving forward, I think as we start to get a physical space, here in LA that the pandemic has sort of said to us, "well, wait a minute, what do we need as a physical structure?"

[00:47:23] Like, what is our model going forward? We want to have a space where we have, certainly our leadership is in one area, so you can connect physically with one another, but we all, so don't want it to be what we've all experienced, which is that nine to nine to five or

nine to nine grind, five days, six days a week. You know, we don't want to put people in and bring them in and make them just have to work like crazy like that. Burn them out. Yeah, exactly. And it's what happens. And then there's so many options now with people in the animation world, from streaming services to online to, I mean, to theater, to TV, I mean, there's just so many different companies that, that, an animator, an artist can go, you know what, you guys are burning me out. I'm going to go work over here and, you know, over there means nothing. Cause they're still sitting in there. Right, right. It's an easier sort of like "I'm done with you guys. I'm going to go work over at this other company." But they're just sitting in their same chair and different faces pop up.

[00:48:23] I think the culture that we're trying to develop is a place of that. You're able to come into work. And not be like, you know, we trust that you're going to do the work. You know, what the work needs to be done. If you need to go home and work because your family, a family is things that you need to take, go ahead, go home.

[00:48:37] Like, we're not going to be like, well, where are you? How come you know your desk?

[00:48:40] **Bryan:** Right. That sounds like a very progressive work culture. And I respect that because I am a trial lawyer by day. And in terms of the work-life balance, that there is none in my business, but there has to be though. I mean, if you look at how we connect with our children and how we raise our kids and connect with our spouse, you need that time away from work. And you also need an employer who understands that. So, I'm glad to hear Spire's thinking about that.

[00:49:10] **Michael:** Yeah, I think we're understanding. I think, you know, because we have the luxury because we were moving slowly into this company, as far as expanding and building it to making movies. It's the understanding that many people will say, "oh, it's amazing. I work at home. I get so much more done at home." Well, yeah, because you're not racing to get to your office and then you're not probably working for the first hour. You're probably checking your sports cars and what have you. And then go, "oh, I'm going to go down and get a coffee and then you go down to your - Oh, Hey Bob, how's it going? Oh yeah. Talk, talk, talk. Oh, well I better get up. I gotta hours has passed and you haven't worked, you know? I mean, that's just the natural flow of a workday in a workplace. But not to say, we want to get rid of that. But the problem is that when people work at home, there is no off. I mean, you, you have to be pretty disciplined, right. Because I mean, depending on your setup, I mean, a lot of people don't have the luxury of having a space, a door, an office to put their, their work area in, it's in their house. So, it's always there. And it becomes a little bit of an easy thing to trigger if you want to.

[00:50:15] So, we're just going to be very mindful of that and try not to get people to feel that we're, we're going to look to hire people that are, that are solid people young and old, you know, and just, and not be looking to beat them down and make them sort of hate the experience. Because I think our, all of our experiences has been positive for the most part, but we've also seen the negative and we want to be able to, you know, pay it forward in a way of, of showing, you know, all the good stuff that can come out of being a part of an animated team.

[00:50:46] **Bryan:** So, is one of the sandboxes at Spire that you are currently in the *Trouble* project with Danny McBride?

[00:50:54] **Michael:** That would be one of them.

[00:50:55] **Bryan:** Can you tell us about that?

[00:50:57] **Michael:** It's well, I can tell you that the, the, the idea came from Brad, was one of the ideas that he had going into, I think, just wanting to make a company to make animated movies.

[00:51:07] And it was just kind of an exciting, easy to get idea in a way that everybody's, I'm certainly has been in trouble. I'm sure everybody has been told you're in trouble by their parents. And then there's an idea of you're in big trouble, so there's levels of trouble. Right. So, I think as an idea, that's a very relatable concept.

[00:51:26] So, you take that and then make it into like a physical place, you know, like, like *A Wizard of Oz* or so it actually exists. So, if you get into trouble, you you're going into trouble. Right. And that's our, story's sort of based around a boy who, who like many boys and kids, you know, they don't know better, or they get into trouble.

[00:51:48] And then he really sees that there is a place called trouble, and then you sprinkle in the idea of Danny McBride and his type of humor and, and just who he is as a comedian and an actor you just go wow. This is going to be really funny. I mean, it has potential to be funny, not edgy movie, but I think we're, it's sort of allowing us to play a little bit edge but know that we're not going to cross the line at all.

[00:52:12] You know, we're not going to be trying to do anything that's going to make parents and kids freak out or anything like that. Yeah. I think it's just a nice combo because getting to work with him briefly on some of our meetings and his writers have just been great and we've just been really collaborative, and they've just got great ideas on how to build this world and make it unique.

[00:52:32] Try to make it so that it's not like he just, you know, our main character, doesn't just break a window and now he's in trouble. It's like, you know, there's a bigger things involved. There's bigger stakes for this kid and they're bigger life lessons to be learned. So you put that in a fantasy kind of situation and then sprinkle in some Danny McBride, I think it's, I think it's a good recipe for a movie.

[00:52:53] **Bryan:** Yeah. I think he's a comic genius.

[00:52:55] **Michael:** Yeah. He's quick. He's so fast. I mean, he's just like you talk with, and you go, Hey, maybe he can. And he's just like, well, maybe this could happen. This could happen. And that will happen. And you're like, oh wow, no, that's a good idea.

[00:53:08] **Bryan:** It must be great to work with someone that has that type of charisma that can just translate into everything that he does, whether it's just a voice, if he's going to be a voice on the animation or not on *Trouble*, but his voice is so charismatic and also has just as physical presence is so charismatic must be incredible to be working with that type of talent.

[00:53:29] **Michael:** Yeah. I mean, it's, I'm excited. I'm excited for what the movies. I mean, again, the sandbox that we're in is being able to stand in that sandbox at this stage early and see it being actually, you know, formed is super exciting because you see the pieces, like you're saying, oh wow. We just got great talent.

[00:53:49] Good comedic timing and skills. And then we've got this solid script coming in. You just, you can see that it's a perfect storm in the way of, in a positive way. Yeah. And I, and it's just knowing that he's sort of going to be along for the ride sorta not this like, okay. I think I helped you guys out, see ya. Like, I mean, he's going to be, he's going to be involved. At what level, you know, that's up to him, but it's, but the know that he's, he's there as a soundboard for us to throw stuff off. I mean, it'll be great because he's not, he's not going to be shy. He'll say, ah, it doesn't work. And he'll, he'll explain why.

[00:54:26] **Bryan:** It's an interesting time too, to start an animation studio, when I think there is more than ever, and I I'm 49 years old. So, I grew up with animation, Saturday morning cartoons, and I've watched almost every Disney film with my kids. But I think now is a time when animation is mainstreamed for adults. So, adults have accepted animation as an adult storytelling device that they connect with.

[00:54:54] It's not just like, "okay, I gotta watch this with my kids now."

[00:54:56] **Michael:** Right.

[00:54:57] **Bryan:** For instance, the movie *Soul*, they're very sophisticated in the stories that they're telling to the point where it appeals to everyone.

[00:55:06] **Michael:** Yeah.

[00:55:06] **Bryan:** It's cool to see that you are starting a studio where there's just so much possibility in terms of the audiences that you can reach, and it's, it's no longer just for kids.

[00:55:16] **Michael:** Yeah, I agree. I think it's; I think adults are now seeing the benefit of storytelling through animation and there's such a, a growing audience for that and different, and not just, you know, the traditional big studio movies. They're also looking at a multitude of different styles and platforms for which animation is being used. And I think it's, that's exciting. That's an exciting, you know, as a new studio, you're going, oh, well, "what can our look of our movie?" Be like, that's another whole aspect of like, you don't want someone to look at a movie from Spire and go, "oh, it's sorta like a Disney movie?" Oh, it's kind of like, eh, sort of like you, you want to be able to sort of.

[00:55:54] Get into a, a spot where people just see you for what you are, but still enjoyed as much as they would enjoy a Disney movie or DreamWorks or Pixar film, but they can sit there and go, "wow that was really, really fun, enjoyable movie to watch." And it goes back to your point earlier, which is it is the story, that's what grabs you. That's what makes you want to revisit or watch that movie again? I mean, I'll roll the clock back. I remember on *Aladdin* that parents were bringing their kids it's to see a Latin and they thought, well, it's an animated movie, it's Disney. Like to your point, I'll bring the kids to the theater.

[00:56:30] Hello, let them watch it. And I'll just zone out. And then all of a sudden, now they're watching it and getting entertained by Robin Williams, which they didn't expect. You know, and they see this crazy guy that they all know who that's, where I Williams and he's doing Robin Williams things, and it's funny and they're jokes for parents, not jokes for kids.

[00:56:47] **Bryan:** Right.

[00:56:47] **Michael:** So, it works on two levels. You know what I mean? That's that opened a lot of doors. I think for an audience to say, parents felt like, "oh wow, *Aladdin* was so much fun for me. I can't wait to see their next one." And, you know, they had to wait a year and a half for it, but it was *The Lion King*. So, then, you know, that element of it became a big fun experience for them as well, is that they just start to buy into it. And I think that has just snowballed over the decades, I think, to where we are today, that there's, there's many options for us as, as, as new studio to, to entertain, not just kids, but adults alike, you know,

[00:57:21] **Bryan:** So where can listeners find you online? I see that you have an Instagram @michael.surrey. S U R R E Y. Are you on Instagram much?

[00:57:32]**Michael:** I am. I am more now I think in the last couple of years. Yeah. My, my digital footprints probably very slow small, but it's growing. I get reminded by a friend of mine constantly. Like, oh, you need to get stuff out there. And like, yeah. No, but I have a Instagram found on there as well as, LinkedIn and, which was funny, 'cause when LinkedIn, when I was on that early, I mean, it seemed to overlap maybe in the last two years, it's really kind of grown a lot more. I don't know if it's because I'm on it more, but it just seems like I'm going there more because that's where we're obviously finding talent out there that are, there's a lot of artists that we find through LinkedIn or Instagram, you know?

[00:58:11] People we don't even know you just go, oh wow, check this out. And we just share it with each other. Yeah. So those are, those are the two platforms I'm using the most. I'm not on Twitter and you know, Facebook is what it is, I just use it for just viewing friends and stuff. So, it's not really a platform I use for work or anything like that.

[00:58:28] **Bryan:** Well, Michael, it's been a real pleasure talking to you. Thanks for sharing your story

[00:58:32]**Michael:** Bryan, thank you. Great to talk with you.

[00:58:35] **Bryan:** Hey, thank you for listening and I hope you enjoy today's episode. If so I have a favor to ask. Can you go to wherever you listen to podcasts and leave me a review? Your feedback is what keeps this podcast going.

[00:58:48] You can also check us out on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook with the handle @dreampathpod, and as always go find your dream path. .