



Pop Culture

Jimmy Pardo is 'Never Not Funny'

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This Friday night, comedian Jimmy Pardo—host of the popular show—*Never Not Funny* (one of the most downloaded podcasts on iTunes) is raising money for Smile Train, a non-profit that fixes kids' cleft lips, with a Jerry Lewis-style web telethon. It's an all-night affair, from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. (Pacific). "Who the hell knows what we're gonna be talking about," Pardo says. "That's what makes it fun."

The Verge talked with Pardo about Friday's fundraiser, what he thought about GQ's recent Men of Year party, (Pardo worked the room for a series of GQ web videos), and his show's frequent guest Jon Hamm.

Did you enjoy yourself at our Men of the Year party?

What's more fun than being a jackass with celebrities?

The guests were good sports, mostly. Highlights?

Gotta be Clint Eastwood. He's one of the five most famous people on the planet, and, well, he's terrifying. But the thing with Clint Eastwood is you *can't hear anything he says*. He talks at a volume that normal people can't hear; he basically mumbles in this hushed tone. I really had no idea what he said. I'm pretty sure my follow-up questions didn't make any sense.

It's similar to what you do on *Never Not Funny*, which I love, by the way. You have these long conversations with guests where you let them show some personality. It's not just the PR talking points.

We're in a room and it's just three, maybe four people tops. Everyone forgets we're talking to the world wide web. For the most part we're all either really good friends, or I'm friendly with them, so they don't have to go into the usual interview mode. Celebrities are so used to people asking them stupid questions like, "What's it like to work with this guy?" Has anybody ever said, "Well, he's an asshole. It was the worst experience." It's always, "He's a great guy. We have such a good time. Blah blah blah." But if you can be irreverent and have fun and get them to play along, then it's gonna be so much better. You get a good conversation and interview out of that.

Did you expect that it would catch on like it has?

No way. At first it kind of felt like we were doing a cable access show, just a couple nerds in a basement talking, like *Wayne's World*. The craziest was when Jon Hamm did the show. I ran into him one day at a stand-up club in Los Angeles. He tells me, "Hey man, I love the podcast. I listen to it in my trailer between takes." I'm like, "Holy Shit. Seriously?" Luckily, he's on *Mad Men*, so I can say how great he is and really mean it.

You're Conan's warm-up act on *The Tonight Show*. How'd that happen?

I go and improvise for eight to ten minutes before the show, have fun with the audience, ask them where they're from, stuff like that. I hate the term *warm-up* comedian. It reminds me of a guy throwing t-shirts and snicker bars at the audience. My job is to set the mood.

You're a journeyman comedian. Have you seen the upstart funny kids change? Are they still working the road?

Too many young comics just want to put clips on the internet and become famous and move out to L.A. and get a TV show. I don't think there are any short cuts.

Any advice you'd give would-be comedians?

Be willing to bomb. Dennis Miller used to say, "What doesn't kill me makes me funnier." I think every young comedian should drive 12 hours and bomb in front of people in a variety of states. All of this might seem like a pain in the ass, but it truly does make you funnier. So, listen to Dennis Miller.

That's it?

And listen to our podcast fundraiser. If we're totally exhausted and delirious and not making any sense at 4 in the morning, I think



that'll just breed comedy. That's the plan, at least.

— *Matt Schwarzfeld* photo: Jimmy Pardo

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