



Meet Jimmy Pardo: Never Not Having Fun

“Everything came together at the perfect time,” said comedian [Jimmy Pardo](#) on his unlikely combination of fun jobs.

Pardo’s Monday-through-Friday gig is “The Tonight Show”’s warm-up comedian, where he cracks up the studio audience before Conan O’Brien does more of the same. He’s also one of the few financially successful podcasters, hosting the award-winning weekly show, [“Never Not Funny”](#) (“*The Pardcast*,”) alongside co-host Matt Belknap.

“I’m the luckiest man alive, as far as both of those things go,” said Pardo.

This all stems from a particularly humorous skill-set which is surprisingly rare in the world of comedy: being funny off the cuff, beyond a script. It’s this strength which has allowed him freedom from the rigorous schedule of a touring comedian, and given him plenty of time at home with his wife and new son.

“Every other week I was on the road. Just grueling. I was getting a little burned out.”

Pardo had performed on most of the standard late night programs, had a Comedy Central special, was a favorite guest on popular morning radio programs, and popped up on a variety of sitcoms.

“I’d done everything you could possibly do as a stand-up.”

He had even started podcasting, which seemed especially crazy four years ago.

“Everybody told me I’d fail: ‘Nobody’ll ever want to pay to listen.’ It turns out they will, when you put something out there which is consistently funny, and has good guests.”

All of this success stems from locating his fun-loving, in-the-moment comedic voice, which comes from just wanting to have a good time.



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Finding His Voice

“I did a lot of crowd stuff in my open mic days,” he said on getting into stand-up at 21 in Chicago. “When I started getting paid, I felt like I had to be a ‘comedian.’ I had a rigid act, which if I ever saw a tape of it, I probably would throw myself out of a window. It was just awful.”

Then his act moved closer to his personality.

“I don’t know what happened. One day I started doing what I’m doing now. I started going up on stage, and talking, and being the guy that everybody enjoyed being around. It clicked.”

“Jimmy loves to talk. Not to hear himself talk, but to converse. You can tell he loves the rhythm of it,” said [Jesse Thorn](#), host of public radio’s “The Sound

of Young America,” a show on which Pardo’s appeared as a guest.

“Jimmy’s really interested in other people, he enjoys what makes them different.”

“If I show up to a comedy club, I want to laugh,” said Pardo. “I want the other comics to make me laugh, and I want to make them laugh.”

Pardcasting Is Always Funny

The show began when Matt Belknap ([LAist Interview.](#)) who runs the comedy website A Special Thing, suggested that Pardo was a perfect fit for podcasting.

“He was hosting a live talk show at the UCB at that time, and I really felt, along with a lot of other people, that he was a great host in the Johnny Carson mold,” said Belknap.

The two quickly formed a partnership; Belknap produced the show, and would later evolve into a co-host.

“He’s a funny, smart guy,” Pardo said of Belknap. However, Belknap doesn’t take much credit.

“I used what was at my disposal: the Internet and audio recording equipment,” said Belknap.

“The podcast really lets Jimmy expand his persona beyond what a talk show format would. It’s more like his stand-up in that way, conversational instead of a monologue.”

After its first two years, and 100 shows, the program was a Top 5 hit on iTunes, but Pardo wanted something more.

“I’ve never been a guy about making money, I’ve been a guy about trying to be funny,” said Pardo. “But, I’m a professional. It was either stop doing it, or try to make money from it, because at some point you’re just an idiot on cable access.

“If nobody subscribed, or if ten people subscribed, we would do a season, then stop doing it, and say it was an experiment that failed.”

They elected a business model known as *Freemium*. It’s used by popular photo site Flickr. It’s where *premium* subscribers pay a fee for access to the full ninety minute show, while everyone else can download the same program’s first twenty minutes for *free*.

The show is now in its fourth year, and sixth season, and has seen great guests like: Jon Hamm, Adam Carolla, Patton Oswalt, Rob Corddry, Greg Behrendt, Maria Bamford, Paul F. Tompkins and Chris Hardwick.

“So here we are today, and I’m a successful, professional podcaster,” he said with a laugh. “Is that possible?”

Conan The Not-So-Barbarian

Despite sharing many stages across his twenty years as a professional entertainer, Pardo had never met Conan O’Brien until he was first invited to take a meeting at “The Tonight Show.”

“I guess they wanted someone with the same sensibilities as Conan, and not a guy throwing out candy, t-shirts, and all that stuff.”

Being “The Tonight Show”’s warm-up comedian is a job Pardo loves, on a show he loves as well.

“The monologue is terrific every night. Those jokes are sharp and wonderful,” said Pardo, who sits on the steps with the audience for the monologue each evening. He then migrates to the Green Room, where he watches the rest of the show.

“I’ve hosted my own TV shows where I wasn’t as respected as I am on this job. I think it trickles down from Conan. Any interaction I have from him is wonderful.

“Boy am I grateful for that job,” he said, even though he doesn’t always see eye-to-eye with Conan. Literally. O’Brien is 6’4”, a full foot taller than Pardo.

One Big Weekend

On Friday, November 27th, from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m., “Never Not Funny” will be holding their first “Pardcast-a-thon.” It’s a live webcast to raise money for The Smile Train. Pardo, Belknap and regular guest, Pat Francis, will spend nine hours making each other, notable guests, and a studio audience, crack up.

The Smile Train is a charity focused on repairing the cleft lip and palates of children in developing nations. When not repaired, those with clefts have trouble eating and speaking properly. However, the surgery costs as little as \$250 and takes only 45 minutes.

Then, the next night, Saturday November 28, at 10 p.m. (probably after sleeping the day away,) Pardo heads to the [Upright Citizens Brigade Theatre](#) to host “[The Writer’s Room.](#)”

“It’s a stand-up show but there are three writers on stage. I, as the host, kind of treat it like an awards show, and everything I say is from the writers. They write all the in-between stuff, and I read them off like they’re cue cards. It turns a little roast-y.”

The night will feature comics Greg Behrendt, Jen Kirkman, Dan Kaufman, and writers: Jarrett Grode, Joe Wagner, and Boris Hamilton (the show’s creator.)

By [Caleb Bacon](#) in [Arts & Events](#) on November 24, 2009 10:30 AM [0 Comments](#) [4 Likes](#) [Likes](#)