

00:00:00

Speaker 1: From CurtCo Media.

00:00:02

Speaker 2: There's no place like Hollywood.

00:00:10

Jenny Curtis: Welcome to another stuck at home special episode of Hollywood Unscripted. I'm Jenny Curtis. And today, I'm virtually sitting down with showrunner, producer, and writer of some wildly beloved shows such as Friday Night Lights, Roswell, and Parenthood. It is an absolute pleasure to welcome Jason Katims.

00:00:28

Jason Katims: Thank you so much. It's great to be here. Thanks, Jenny.

00:00:31

Jenny Curtis: I actually want to start with Away, which is a show that you're executive producing and a writer on, and it is coming out on Netflix on September 4th. I'd love to hear more about the project, how it started.

00:00:43

Jason Katims: Sure. Well, I'm super excited about the show. It started when I read an article by Chris Jones for Esquire, an article that was called Away. And Chris Jones is a writer who's been writing about space for the last 20 years. And this article was really incredibly intriguing to me because of the point of view. It was about what the experience was like being away from home, what that did to people. It was like I don't really think of myself as the space guy, the guy who does space shows. But I read this article and I couldn't stop thinking about it. And actually, it was originally brought to me by a friend of mine who I worked with years ago, Matt Reeves. And Matt said, "Is this is something you'd like to work on with me?" And so we met with Chris Jones, got more excited about it, and that's how the project started.

I mean, the thing that I find so wonderful about it is, to me, I felt like, "Oh, this could be a show about a marriage and about family and about nuanced human stories," which are all the kinds of shows I've always worked on, but against this incredibly exciting backdrop, this epic backdrop of space. That felt different to me and challenging to me and something that I got very excited about trying to tell a story.

00:01:58

Jenny Curtis: The show, though, was created by Andrew Hinderaker? Or how did he get involved? Did you bring him on?

00:02:03

Jason Katims: Yeah. So what happened was we optioned this story from Chris Jones. And then, so Andrew Hinderaker had been working with me on a couple of shows. So he's this amazing playwright. And worked at first on the show that I did called Pure Genius and then on The Path, which Jess Goldberg created. And Andrew took this article and found this incredibly personal way in, which is always the most exciting way to really dig into a project. He really told the story about how he had a long distance relationship with his long time girlfriend who had some pretty serious medical issues. And that was what he was using to tell the story about Emma being away from her husband and her family at a time when her husband, Josh Charles's character, has a very serious medical issue. And once he sort of came up with that premise, we all get very excited because we felt like he was leaning into what the potential of this story is. And the other thing that he brought to this, which is something that we're all really excited about, is the international crew. And the idea that while it's about this family, this long distance relationship, and really the ultimate long distance relationship between Hilary's character is trying to stay connected to her family, it's also about this new family forming in space and these people who all come from very different worlds and different religions, different philosophies, different ways of seeing things, reasons to be at odds with each other at moments. And yet the idea of these disparate people coming together to work together and ultimately form this new family together is also incredibly poignant.

So the show really just works on so many levels. It was by far the most challenging show, from a producing point of view, that I've ever been involved in. I mean, every show has some visual effects. Parenthood had visual effects. Nobody would know it did, but it did. But this show was a new level. And they took so much time in preparation to figure out how to make the show and how to make the show feel real and accurate. It's not intended to be sort of science fiction in that way, like in a Star Trek way, it's supposed to feel like what it would be like if NASA put up or when NASA does send a ship to Mars. Our production designer, David Sandefur, actually got renderings from NASA, which is what he based our spaceship on. So it was very challenging to make it this story that was speculative fiction, but to have it feel real and not like sci-fi. What would it be like going on this journey to try to do this thing that nobody's ever

been able to do before?

00:04:42

Jenny Curtis: And a journey to Mars is not going to go easy. There's a lot of drama.

00:04:48

Jason Katims: Yeah. A lot of drama. One of the things that we'd always talked about was that the drama of what happens on earth has to be as riveting as what happens in space. And that's the thing that I'm actually most proud of, of what Andrew and all of us did, and Jess Goldberg, who came on to showrun and partner with Andrew in doing the show. When you cut to those scenes on earth, you're not just waiting until we get back to space. It's really the opposite. It's like those scenes are as emotional to watch what it's like, what it does to Josh's character, what it does to Talitha's character, who plays Hilary and Josh's 15 year old daughter. Talitha's character actually, when we were in the writer's room, was the character that I gravitated to most because I thought it's so wild that this is going to be about a three year mission in success for Hilary's character by the time she sort of returns. And that's high school, that's all of the high school for her. And the idea of her being away from her mother and watching what happens to her and watching her grow up was so intriguing to me. To me, that was as exciting to me as the stuff that was happening in space. And I felt like the challenge was to make sure that as we made the show that those scenes were as riveting and even more so watching them try to stay connected and watching those essentially Zoom calls before I knew what the hell Zoom was. When we wrote them, essentially what they were trying to stay connected first by those video chats, and then eventually just with sound, and then eventually just by emails and texts that are delayed for longer and longer the further they get away. All this stuff just felt very emotional and moving to me. It felt like we could do the show and have a take on it that feels different to me than other shows that I've seen that are about space.

00:06:32

Jenny Curtis: Because she's young, going back to Talitha's character, it feels like we can connect most to her because she really wears her processing on her sleeve. Do you find that because you've also done a lot of work with characters who are in their adolescence, is that something you gravitate towards always? Or is that specific stories?

00:06:50

Jason Katims: I gravitate toward those stories. For some reason, I always have. Maybe I've been stunted in my growth or something. But I always have. The first show that I worked on was My So- Called Life. And Winnie Holzman, who created that show, became a mentor to me. And I remember her describing adolescence as an emergency. Everything is always an emergency in adolescence. And I thought that was just a great way to think about it. And of course, that suggests drama when everything's an emergency. It's a great time to write about because so much change happens in short periods of time.

00:07:25

Jenny Curtis: You mentioned My So- Called Life. And Edward Zwick, who was also on My So- Called Life, was on this project as well. Can you talk about the team that you kind of created from all walks of your life and how that kind of felt bringing in so many connected people?

00:07:40

Jason Katims: Yeah. On this show, I've worked with more people that span my entire career in doing this in a way that's never happened before. And I think in some way, it's because of the challenge of making the show. And coming to Ed, Ed hired me on My So- Called Life. And then I did the first show that I created, Relativity, with him and Marshall. And Ed literally found me, I was a playwright living in Brooklyn, and he found me under a rock in Brooklyn. He read one of my plays and called me. And out of nowhere, he literally gave me a chance to write on My So- Called Life. He introduced me to Matt Reeves, who's the person who I found this project with and started this project. There were so many other people who played key roles.

David Boyd was our cinematographer who then became one of our great directors on Friday Night Lights. He was our cinematographer and producing director on this show. And I hadn't been able to work with them since Friday Night Lights. I hadn't been able to work with Ed since Relativity and My So- Called Life. I hadn't been able to work with Matt Reeves since The Pallbearer, which is a script we wrote together. And of course, then there's Andrew and Jess who I've worked with on The Path and Pure Genius. So it was an amazing experience. It's sort of what it took to (inaudible) the show because it was just having Ed involved in this, he was the perfect director for it because he's done all these incredibly huge, epic movies with this huge landscape, but he's done this intimate storytelling in television with Thirtysomething and Once and Again and My So- Called Life. And our show requires those two things with equal attention put on both the visual landscape and the grandness of it,

but also the sort of tiny moments.

So it was a thrill to get to work with Ed again, particularly on this project that was a challenge to all of us. And it became this amazing collaborative effort to make the show. So many people had such huge parts of this. David Sandefur, our production designer, who really came up with the sort of look for the spaceship and the moonscape where they launched from. It was very exciting and a bit overwhelming to take this on. And I'm really proud of the show. I mean, I did write an episode, which I'm really proud of. It was so much Andrew and Jess who sort of took this on and did the heavy lifting and deserve the credit for it. But I'm so proud when I watch the episodes that it's everything that we imagined and more. In a few weeks, I guess we'll see what everybody else thinks. But to me, I feel like it grips you emotionally, these characters' stories. And I'm excited for people to see it.

00:10:22

Jenny Curtis: A Moment of Your Time, a new podcast from CurtCo Media.

00:10:27

Speaker 5: Currently 21 years old, and today-

00:10:29

Speaker 6: I felt like magic descended from her fingertips down to the base of my spine.

00:10:31

Speaker 7: You have to take care of yourself because the world needs you and your voice.

00:10:32

Speaker 8: Trust me, every do-gooder that asked about me was ready to spit on my dreams.

00:10:38

Speaker 9: Her fingers were facing me.

00:10:40

Speaker 10: It can feel like your purpose and your worth is really being questioned.

00:10:43

Speaker 11: It ain't going to stop me from playing the piano.

00:10:45

Speaker 12: She buys walkie-talkies, wonders to whom she should give the second device.

00:10:49

Speaker 13: Pets don't love humans. We never did. We never will. We just find ones-

00:10:52

Speaker 14: The beauty of rock climbing is that you can only focus on what's right in front of you.

00:10:56

Speaker 15: And so our American life begins.

00:11:00

Jenny Curtis: We may need to stay apart, but let's create together. Available on all podcast platforms. Submit your piece at [curtco.com/amomentofyourtime](http://curtco.com/amomentofyourtime).

Talking about the team, just to go back really quick, was it an active choice where you said, "I'm going to reach into my past for all of these people?" Or did it become kind of a reflex for you that suddenly you found yourself bringing in people from your past?

00:11:32

Jason Katims: No, it wasn't an active choice. It just happened that way. It started with Matt and I reading this article and getting very excited about it. So in a way, it did get started with somebody who I had been wanting to work with since I first worked with him. And life happens and you go in different directions. So we've always stayed connected over the years through friends and helping each other on projects that we worked on. And so that was very exciting and that's what started it. But then when looking for a director, we were trying to find who is the person to direct this? Because some things that I said of having to have somebody who could sort of take on space and also we felt like would get that this is really a show about the nuanced moments the characters had.

And so Ed was just the person to direct it. And it was very exciting in talking to him about it once he read the script and decided he wanted to do it. What's great about Ed is once he is in, he's in. And it just like, he became as invested in wrecking this as he would be in anything that he had directed or features or I think anything that he's done. And it was really lovely to have that experience of working with him in that way and watch him take this on. And while I worked with him on My So-Called Life, I got a little bit of a glimpse into his process as a director. This gave me much more of a window into that. He's a master. And it was really great to be able to work with him. And it's like you can sort of see, when you watch the

pilot episode, how much he took on to sort of create the aesthetic for the show and the look of the show and to get these wonderful performances from Hilary and the rest of the cast.

00:13:03

Jenny Curtis: Do you find that in this stage of your career you're still learning from people in situations like that?

00:13:09

Jason Katims: Oh, it's no doubt. I mean, look, it's no doubt. Every time you take on a project, you're challenging yourself in a different way. Everything has to be in some way something that you feel like you're just starting when you do it. It's more exciting when you do a show and you get a little scared when you're doing it. And can I do this? Or is this going to be where they discover that I'm a fraud? And this one more than others that I've taken on because it just was such an undertaking to do it. And you really just had to have such faith because it's also a visual effects show. I mean, so much of the stuff that happens in space. I mean, the spaceship was built, but all of the environments that were outside of that ship were visual effects. And of course, we were doing things like hanging people on wires. And especially the bigger set piece sequences, especially in the second episode, there's a huge spacewalk sequence.

And when I watched the first cut and there was no visual effects in it yet, and I was like, "Okay, I'm just going to have faith that this is going to be good." And those visual effects, our team was amazing, but it takes a long time when you have a big sequence like that. It takes a long time for seeing what that exterior of the spaceship and the moonscape is going to look like. And it takes a long time so that the details are put in so that it actually feels real, it actually feels like the astronauts are walking on the moon. It's not until the very end when you put together the sort of details and the visual effects along with the sound effects, you can actually suspend your disbelief.

So that was something that so many people that do what I do have been doing that stuff for years, I just haven't done those types of shows. And so it was exciting for me to do it. And it was a total learning experience. And working with Ed, it was a learning experience. Even though I had worked with him before, it was a different context. And I got to, on one hand, collaborate with him in a way that I hadn't before. But in another hand, I sort of got a sort of front row seat to watch him do what he does.

00:15:15

Jenny Curtis: The anti-gravity stuff wasn't just outside the

ship. It was also inside. So does that mean you had the actors on wires for all of those scenes then when they'd pop in, say something sassy, and float out of the room?

00:15:25

Jason Katims: That's right. Yeah. So there was a lot of wire work. The actors had to go through sort of pretty intense training to do that, way more intense than they imagined. When we first sat down and met with Hilary about doing the part, we talked about the character and we talked about it. She was so excited about this show because it was her dream when she was an eight year old girls to be an astronaut. So she was all in from the beginning. And we sort of brought up, because it was important to bring up at the beginning that there was going to be wire work and there's going to be training, it was going to be intense. And she was like, " Oh, I'm all in. I'm ready." That's such a big part of her life. And we were like, " Oh my God." Very excited that she was up for it.

But even Hilary, who in her regular life has an insane fitness routine, even she was a little bit challenged and overwhelmed by just how much it took for her and for all of them to do that. But not only the work that they had to do while you were wired, but to act while you're doing it. And so that was a big undertaking. But we had such an amazing crew and we spent so long prepping for this stuff. I do think the actual process of doing it was less chaotic and overwhelming than it seemed as we were planning it. And that has a lot to do with the team. Ed's work, preparation, David Boyd, again, our DP, that I've been trying to work with David since Friday Night Lights and finally lured him here between Ed and space, I got him. But because on Friday Night Lights, he was a DP who was so fearless and embraced the way we wanted to shoot that show, more than embraced the way we want to shoot it, he helped create the way we shot that show.

That was obviously a very different animal. I mean, it was a lot about shooting handheld and with no rehearsal and taking the sort of down and dirty approach. This is a very different thing, but he approached it in the same fearless way. And it was just everything that we said, can we do this? Yes, but we're on a TV budget and it's got to look like this. He's like, " Yes." He sort of planned it out. And we had so much going for us once we actually started shooting.

00:17:35

Jenny Curtis: You've said that the isolation aspect of the story has become obviously more poignant during the coronavirus times. Are there parts of the show that you



connect to now more than you did before?

00:17:47

Jason Katims: Yeah. The thing that was interesting is we shot the show and then it was that middle couple of weeks in March that were, I think for all of us, these surreal moments where we went from thinking we had a couple months left of post and we were already finished shooting. We went from thinking, "We're a small group here, we could finish up." And we went from that to literally in a 24 hour period realizing no, everybody has to go home. They have to go home right now. And we just basically, without even knowing how we were going to finish the show, we just sent everybody home. And then at this point, it was our editor, mostly our visual effects artists, post-production people, our mixers, all of those people. And of course, all of us are the sort of producers and directors who are still looking at cuts.

And we just said, "We are going to just have to figure out a way to do this a little differently." And we sort of took out that sort of human connection aspect of it. And there was a lot of watching cuts on my computer at home, emailing notes or getting on Zoom and going back and forth with notes in that way. And suddenly, I was watching cuts while this was happening and all the episodes resonated in this way that felt different than they did before because it felt like, in a weird way, working together on this show, we were going through that sort of feeling of being away that is what the show is about. And of course, in a bigger way, all of us were being separated from our friends and, a lot of cases, our family members, and had to find new ways to try to stay connected. And we're dealing with the effects of what it feels like when you're isolated and when you're not connected.

And that's the theme of the show. It's a theme that resonated us before this happened, but honestly, it just feels more moving to me, even more moving to me, watching it now in this context. So the beautiful thing about the show is that it's so uplifting and it's aspirational. That's really the beautiful thing about it. So when you're watching it, it's not like, "Oh, this is what it's like to be in quarantine." It's not that experience. I mean, the experience is one of a feeling of being connected, it says feeling of coming together and doing something for the greater good and testing the limits of what we can do as human beings.

So it's got very high aspirations in that way, but it does feel, when you watch some of these scenes of people being separated, you connect sometimes in just a visceral way and sometimes in a literal way. I mean, when you see, in the first episode, Hilary trying to talk to her husband who's in

the hospital and she can't be with him in the hospital. Well, that's a very literal connection that we can all relate to now having lived through this for over the last period of months. And so it definitely feels like the show has become something that I feel even more connected to than before this happened.

00:20:32

Jenny Curtis: The mission in the show is set to be three years long. Is that the plan for the show? Or do you have an idea of the arc of what the ideal length would be?

00:20:41

Jason Katims: We have sort of ideas about it. We've talked about it both among Jess and Andrew and I and the writers. We've talked about it to Netflix. We sort of think that the length of this mission does suggest what the length of the show might be, but we don't have any definite answer to it other than we definitely want to proceed hopefully, knock wood, beyond season one. We feel like there's a good story to tell over several seasons.

The great thing that's changed in television since I started doing television, it used to be the goal was to do a show that was going to last 100 episodes. That was the only goal in shows in terms of just what the network wanted. That was what their business model was built on. And now with Netflix and Apple and Amazon and Hulu and streamers having such a prominent role in television, that's changed. And the good thing that's come out of that is that what really is happening now is people are saying the show should be how long the show should be. And that's a great thing.

That's one of the reasons I think that television has continued to get better because it's not doing episodes for the sake of getting to a certain threshold where you can sell your show to syndication. That world is more or less a thing of the past. Now it's about what's competitive. It's like how do you make your show feel singular and important in the huge crowd of television shows out there? Compel people to watch it, right? And so one of the ways to do that is to have the show not drag on, not slow down, and to actually tell the story that's the right amount of episodes for that particular story.

00:22:31

Robert Ross: Hi, I'm Robert Ross, host of Cars That Matter. You might be wondering what makes a car matter. And I have a feeling you already know the answer. Some cars have changed history. Some you can hear a mile away. Some have lines that make your heart skip a beat. If a car has ever made you look twice, then I think you know the ones that

matter. Join me as I speak with designers, collectors, and market experts about the passions that drive us and the passions we drive. Cars That Matter, wherever you get your podcasts.

00:23:08

Jenny Curtis: You recently got the green light for a personal project that you are creating. I don't want to get this wrong, but was it Amazon?

00:23:15

Jason Katims: Yes.

00:23:16

Jenny Curtis: Okay. So Amazon gave you the green light for creating a project called On the Spectrum. And I'd love to hear more about that.

00:23:22

Jason Katims: Yeah. It's based on an Israeli format called On the Spectrum, which is an absolutely beautiful show. It's a wonderful show. And it's about three young adults who are all on the autistic spectrum, who are roommates together in an apartment. There is a sort of life coach who works with them. It's sort of a coming of age story about three 20-somethings trying to figure out all this stuff that you would imagine they would figuring out about friendship and love and jobs and all of that stuff with the added complication that they all have autism. And it's been a wonderful show to work on. We cast all three leads have autism. We shot the pilot and it was just a wonderful experience working with them. There's just something about the show that's been very, very special, and (inaudible) has been fantastic. And the only thing to hope now is that at some point we'll be able to shoot them.

00:24:13

Jenny Curtis: Finding the leads for it, was the first time they met in a chemistry read? Or how did you find them? How did you make sure they would get along? And what was the process in casting the show?

00:24:22

Jason Katims: Once Amazon gave us the go ahead to make the pilot, I said, "I'd love to see whether we can cast these characters authentically." And they were very excited about the idea. But I didn't know what the talent pool was going to be out there, honestly. So I called [inaudible 00:24: 39], who's a casting director I've worked with many times. And I know she has a child with challenges. I knew this idea

would be really exciting to her. So I called her and she basically said, "Great." And she did both all the traditional things of just sending out a breakdown to agencies, but she also scoured the country and just started calling acting programs that she could find that had more diverse actors in them, and schools, and just anybody that she can think of.

And she'd call me I think a week or two after she started doing this. And she said, "I've just had the best two weeks because this community has been so amazing." Because it's like she'll try to reach somebody and they would say, "Well, I don't know anybody, but you know what? You should call so-and-so and all this." And it became this grassroots thing. And we wound up casting three actors who are all on spectrum. They're all wonderful. Very different than the characters that they play, but still having their deep connections to the characters that they're playing. And that part of it has just been this very exciting part of the process to work with them. And when we were shooting the pilot, we were trying to make sure that we could accommodate in any ways that we want to accommodate. And some things were really important, like trying to keep the set quieter. And we were sort of thinking ahead, would this be challenging? And it was so smooth. And these actors were such pros.

A lot of crew members would come up to me and say, "Oh, I have a brother who has autism or a child or my friend's kid." You just find that there was so much good will on the show who felt this kind of connection to it. And one of the things I love about writing about these characters is they have no filter. So they say what's on their mind. And that's just generally funny. It's also very emotional. We're not shying away from the hard things that they're going through.

I have a son who's on the spectrum. And I first started writing about this in Parenthood with the character of Max. And I remember when we first started doing that, I was talking to network about the idea of making a character with Asperger's on the show. And at the time, there weren't really any, and especially on a network, a character with autism where they said they had autism. And it was really important for me that if we were going to tell the story that we were out there with this is what it is. And I remember one of the things they said was this is something that you could tell lots of stories about. And I was like, "Oh yeah, there's plenty of [inaudible 00:27:06]. We're not going to run out after episode seven."

In a way, it's this beautiful thing for me to do this show because everybody's doing these new versions of 90210, a new version of these shows. So people would say like, "Would you do another Parenthood?" And when I would think about

that, what I kept thinking about was Max, that character. And I was thinking, "Oh, I would kind of like to see what it would be like to see Max as a young man." And so in a weird way, I'm doing that in this show. The reason why this came up for me and why I wanted to do this show was my son is now 23. At the time when I started doing this, he was probably 21, I guess. And so I was kind of starting to think about, "Well, what's the next chapter of his life? What will it be like?" And I remember I did a PSA a few years ago and I found out this statistic that 85% of people with autism who have a college degree are unemployed. And I was like, "Well, that's not right."

There are people who are obviously very capable who are not being put in a position to contribute to the world in a way that they should. And that's a story that needs to change. So I'm very excited to be sort of telling the story, because I think that's a story we sort of see less of. I think a lot of times when we hear autism, we think of children with autism. And those children grow up. And my son was part of a early wave of when a lot of people started getting diagnosed with this, and it's only gotten more prevalent since then. So a lot of those people are sort of coming of age now. So I think it's a timeless story to tell.

00:28:32

Jenny Curtis: When you added the storyline to Parenthood, I read somewhere that you originally were really nervous about it because you weren't sure if that was too personal. Did that change how you feel now, or is the importance of telling the story overshadowing the fear of being too personal?

00:28:47

Jason Katims: Yeah. The idea of putting the story out there in the world overshadows my fear of loss of privacy over it. There's the Israeli show that it's based on, so this is not a show that's based on my son. Not that Parenthood was based on my son, Max was his own character. But still, this is even more so I'm basing these characters on the original characters. Obviously, I'm going to draw from my own experiences as you always do as a writer, but I'm sort of not concerned about that privacy thing because this is from a format of characters that were created not by me or original form.

The other thing is I'm so excited about the show that not only did we cast three characters on the spectrum to be the leads, but that those three actors are willing to be open about that and are embracing it. And I feel like this is the next stage that we need to get to with autism. I

remember reading about Hannah Gadsby and how she sort of came out and talked about after she did that incredible piece that wound up going to HBO, I think.

00:29:51

Jenny Curtis: I think it was on Netflix, yeah.

00:29:52

Jason Katims: On Netflix. But after she did that piece, I was so blown away by it. And afterwards, she came out and saying, "Oh, I've been diagnosed with autism." And she started talking about it. And I was like, "This is amazing that she's doing this." And it struck me as this is a very important thing right now to see a character on the spectrum wanting to date or being on a job. In the pilot, there's a scene where Jack is in a meeting with his boss and a bunch of team members. And he sort of inadvertently says to his boss, "You have inferior intelligence." And it's like you don't really say that to a boss, but it's like this is what he says.

And I think what's interesting is that, not that I want to promote people being mean to their bosses, but I do want to promote the idea that there are people who have these sort of quirks to their personalities who have a tremendous amount to offer the world. And I think if we can get past those quirks a little bit, we can see what they have to offer. We could see what they have to bring to the table. Not just in work, but in relationships and friendships and all of these many, many things. I feel excited in that way to be telling this story, demystifying it, and just showing people who are on the autistic spectrum who have jobs and relationships and friendships.

00:31:05

Jenny Curtis: So a lot of your work comes from some kind of source material, as this came from an Israeli show, *Away* came from an article. What is it about a piece of source material that sparks for you, that makes you say, "This is what I want to create something about?"

00:31:20

Jason Katims: It's a weird combination. Well, first of all, the reason why I would do anything is because I have a deeply personal connection to it. And my job, if I don't have a personal connection to it, is to find that personal connection. When they first sort of brought up the idea of having me do *Friday Night Lights*, I was like, "This is not a show for me because I'm a baseball guy, not a football guy." I had never been to Texas. And it's like the idea of small town life. It's just, this was not me. I grew up in New

York City and I was a baseball fan. And so I was like, "No, no, no. Why would I do this show?" And then I started to see the source material. I was like, "Oh my God, this is the greatest thing in the world. And this could be an amazing show." And so you start to find ways to develop yourself inside this world and these characters and find your way in. I remember when I was brought on to be the showrunner of the show, I had to do press for the show and I hadn't yet done anything to the show yet. And I'd never been in that experience before. So there's all this pressure on me. And at a certain point, one of the executives from the studio took me aside. And for whatever reason, they were concerned in some way that I was going to be able to do this. And they were like, "Jason, are you going to be able to do this? You have to do this. You have to be able to take this on." And I was like, "Oh my God, I feel like Coach. I'm just like Coach coming to Dylan, Texas, taking on this shitty team, and people expecting to bring home a championship." You know what I mean? It was like the greatest gift that was ever given to me because I was like, "This is how I relate to the show."

And of course, the thing about Friday Night Lights was it wasn't about football, it was about family. It was about a marriage. It was about surrogate parenting. It was about coming of age. It was about trying to live a better life than your parents live. And your parents wanting that for you. And it was about all the things that were just about life. And then I had people to help me talk football. And then you really love football, go figure, you know? And so you sort of to try to find ways in.

In Parenthood, I decided I wanted to do an adaptation of Parenthood, which was a movie that I really had loved. And at the time that I was going to do it, it had been 20 years since the movie came out. And I went to Ron Howard and Brian Grazer and pitched them my take on it. And I was very worried about going to Ron Howard and saying like, "I'm going to do your movie, but I'm going to change it." You know? And at the end of the pitch, Ron's ... He was so nice. He's just the nicest guy in the world. And in the end, he was very encouraging to me. And he said, "Jason, I just want to tell you, the things that I liked most about what you just said to me were the things that were completely different than what was in the movie. I did the movie. I'm happy with the movie. I don't need to see that movie again. What you need to do is bring yourself to this."

And that is the kind of wisdom that you get from Ron Howard. And I think that is what adaptation really is all about. It's about whatever the story is that you're telling whether you relate to it from the beginning or whether you have to find your way in. Sort of like in Friday Night Lights for

me. No matter what that source material is, it's about making it sort of deeply personal to you and making it your story. I mean, that's critical.

00:34:26

Jenny Curtis: So yesterday, I was having kind of a crummy day. I was in a terrible mood. And I decided last night that I was going to put on Friday Night Lights and just rewatch a few episodes because we were going to talk and why not? And I love the show. I get to the first moment of clear eyes, full hearts, can't lose. And it's just like everything melts away. What does it mean to you to have a career where you are literally changing people's days with the work that you're creating?

00:34:54

Jason Katims: Thank you so much for saying that. It's really humbling for you to say that. Of course, I don't experience my life that way. I experience my life as a writer, like every writer, and we're all just reps trying to craft stories and (crosstalk) hacks and movers to some degree, and frauds. But I appreciate that. Obviously, Friday Night Lights is a show that connected and it certainly connected with me. I'd be in the editing room watching cuts and I'd start crying in the editing room. And then all the editors would be like, "Oh my God, you're just like [inaudible 00:35:28]. Don't be such a jerk."

But I couldn't help it. And then of course I tried to suppress my crying because it was embarrassing to cry in front of the editor. And then all these weird sounds started to come out of me, these kind of terrible sounds that were really embarrassing. And so I think the greatest compliment is when people say that those characters become part of their family. I mean, it's amazing. And really, actually the greatest compliment that I've gotten and I've gotten it a bunch of times is when people say they watched it together as a family. And I've gotten that a lot with Friday Night Lights and a lot with Parenthood. And that, I don't know, there's something about that that means so much to me, the idea of a family sitting together and watching and having that be something that they do together. I mean, how can you not be touched by that?

00:36:18

Jenny Curtis: Jason, I could talk to you all day, but we're unfortunately out of time. So I guess my last question, I want to bring it back to Away, what do you hope people get from the show as they start to watch it?

00:36:31



Jason Katims: We were just sort of talking about how some of the shows that I've worked on, people have gotten emotionally connected to the show and its characters. And that's what I'm hoping for this show. God, I love the space stuff and I love the look of that. And I think that's so amazing. But the thing that I really love about the show is the relationships, the characters, the family that Hilary is trying to stay connected to on earth and the family that's formed between these astronauts in this tin can that they're stuck in together for a really long time. And so I'm hoping that people feel that kind of connection to the show. Having watched these episodes many times now, and no matter how many times I've watched them, I do feel that connection. I'm hopeful that they will feel that.

00:37:14

Jenny Curtis: The show is available on Netflix on September 4th. Jason Katims, thank you so much for joining me.

00:37:20

Jason Katims: It was great talking to you.

00:37:21

Jenny Curtis: I really appreciate it.

00:37:22

Jason Katims: Okay, bye.

00:37:26

Jenny Curtis: Hollywood Unscripted was created by CurtCo Media. This special episode of the stuck at home series was hosted and produced by me, Jenny Curtis, with guest Jason Katims. Co-produced and edited by Jay Whiting. The executive producer of Hollywood Unscripted is Stuart Halperin. The Hollywood Unscripted theme song is by Celeste and Eric Dick. Please make sure to subscribe so you don't miss any special episodes of Hollywood Unscripted stuck at home. Stay safe and healthy. And thanks for listening.

00:38:01

Speaker 1: CurtCo Media, media for your mind.