

# Not So Awesome

A record of events while working for That Guy With The Glasses

There are many different grievances that need to be shared, but the following points are what we feel are the most grievous and should be known by the public above all others. This is for record/organization and to help clarify and inform. This is not about defamation or destruction, but about clearing the air and correcting misconceptions.

For an abridged, simplified account of all grievances, please refer to the condensed version here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1d7UTXkL5HqywUqNMXwL5nVG4R84Hr1GX7Phagi15mUo/edit?usp=sharing>

## **FOREWORD**

Thank you for taking the time to read the contents of this document. Within its many pages are lengthy stories from a number of contributors airing their grievances about the way they and others were handled by working professionally with Channel Awesome and the management, namely Mike Michaud, Doug Walker, and Rob Walker. Although the descriptions are vast, this very likely does not cover every possible story of mismanagement over the course of the last ten years. There are other content creators, both those who were previously partnered with Channel Awesome, and those who continue to be partnered with Channel Awesome, who have not contributed their stories to this document, though many of their stories can be found in other places if you look hard enough.

There are numerous reasons why any of us would want to share these stories with you. The biggest one is simply a strong common belief that the public deserves the right to know about the dealings within this company. When much of this was finally becoming greatly public in the middle of March 2018, many people wanted answers to many different questions, and while it seemed like our Twitter feeds were containing all of these answers, Twitter is not an especially easy-to-read format, especially when it branches and splinters when new people join the conversation. The number one reason to create this document is to give the audience one solid

place to be able to read all of these stories, updated directly by former content producers so that you have the most accurate information directly from us.

Many may wonder what the ultimate goal of releasing the document is. That goal may be different for each contributor. Some may wish to simply get this information off their chest after having held onto it for many years. Others may want the management of Channel Awesome to answer for their many egregious behaviors over the last decade.

One goal many contributors share is the hope that Channel Awesome would both acknowledge and apologize for their behaviors, both on a public and personal level with the former and current producers. However, we do not necessarily expect that apology, as nice as that may be. Perhaps the best we can hope for is acknowledgement of any sort, good or bad. If that's not possible, then certainly, we all hope that by telling our stories, we are able to protect other innocent people from having to experience anything like this in the future. Whether that be in the form of a contributor or a fan, none of us want anyone else to go through the kind of treatment we went through over ten long years, some behavior being much worse than others. We believe that, whether you're working with Channel Awesome or another similar entertainment entity, there will be people in this world who do not actually care about who you are and are more than willing to say whatever they need to say and do whatever it takes to use you for your gifts and your talents to boost themselves without giving you a second thought. We hope that other people considering partnering with an entertainment group will take our stories as a cautionary tale and use our stories to protect themselves as they join the vast world of content creation.

As a personal note, I often regret not speaking up about things I witnessed any sooner than I did. Perhaps now is too little, too late. But if we can help you make heads or tails of this now--today--then maybe the time is right for us to do the right thing and tell you what we've been through. Thank you for taking the time to read our stories about our times at Channel Awesome, and the management of Mike, Doug, and Rob. We wish all of you nothing but the best, and to use our pages to reach your own logical conclusions for yourselves.

- Kaylyn Saucedo (MarzGurl), April 2, 2018

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# Allison Pregler (Obscurus Lupa)

- We were not employed by CA, CA simply embeds videos on their site. Outside of the anniversary movies, no contracts were involved. The only people paid are the people involved with the Chicago crew.
- The biggest of their numerous problems is Mike Michaud, the site's CEO. There were two other CEOs when they started, Mike Ellis and Bhargav Dronamraju, both of whom are no longer with the site. The name Greg occasionally appears in this document. This is Mike Michaud's brother, who handles the scheduling of producer videos.
- Mike owns the IP of the Nostalgia Critic character and is a majority shareholder in the company.
- On two separate occasions, women were confronted angrily by either Mike Ellis or Mike Michaud being blamed for something a guy they knew did. One of those instances resulted in the producer leaving (See Lindsay Ellis section).



**Master of UnLoking** @Dena\_Natali Following

Replying to @Linkara19 @Obscurus\_Lupa and 2 others

He once bitched me out because Lee "went over his head" once when he sent him an e-mail and copied Mike on it. Yes, he complained to ME about someone else going over his head. I think I might still have that e-mail somewhere.

**Master of UnLoking** @Dena\_Natali · Mar 17  
"Well after that happend, I left Lee a Skype message he will no doubt be unpleased with." (2/2)

I was like "WTF am I supposed to do with this information?" Did he think was as annoyed by Lee as he was, and I was gonna commiserate with him over it? Like that was so much TMI.

**Master of UnLoking** @Dena\_Natali · Mar 17  
Found it:  
"This irritated me, considering that Michaud and I had no other issues like this with any of the other producers. And it was definitely not cool that Lee had emailed Michaud after talking with me. (Did he thing I wouldn't find out about that?)" (1/2)

**Master of UnLoking** @Dena\_Natali · Mar 17  
Replying to @Dena\_Natali @Obscurus\_Lupa and 3 others

In case it hasn't been made clear enough already, communication was TERRIBLE and Lee just wanted to make sure that his e-mail was seen by one of the higher ups. But Ellis acted like copying Michaud on the e-mail was a betrayal of some kind. It was weird.

- Frequently if a guy spoke up it was ignored, if a woman spoke up they were labeled troublemakers. Mike would frequently try to bully them. Most of the women felt very uncomfortable talking to him; it was a repeating pattern that he would be more aggressive toward someone speaking up if they were a woman. At least 3 of us were kicked off the site for that very reason, when male producers who did the same thing are still on the site.
- More details in Sean and Holly's sections, but CA was aware of sexual harassment from Mike Ellis for at least two years and did nothing. When he was finally let go it was for other legal reasons. They were also aware of a prominent producer who was grooming female fans and coercing them into sex and failed to take action for years.
- All communication was done via a Skype group chat with all of the producers. We did not communicate through email, and Michaud would disappear for long periods of time. No one wanted to talk to us.
- The people we were told to talk to were Michaud, Rob, and Holly (HR). When Holly was fired, it was just those two. Mike was so against being involved with or doing anything that he eventually became "silent CEO," which meant it was just Rob, who also didn't want the job. Any time we came to him with complaints, he would call us children behind our backs.
- Doug is not considered anything but talent, yet frequently is part of business calls and the like (including ones highlighted here). He also is occasionally part of company decisions. He is more involved with business than he likes to let on, and is also involved as a human being and face of the company.
- They were so unaware of anything going on with the site that Rob thought someone asking for an interview was a producer.
- Communication was the WORST. They would never tell us anything, it was like pulling teeth to get answers from anyone. Frequently we would find out things after the fact and have to come to them to find out what was happening.
- Blistered Thumbs producers were never told the site was shutting down. They found out when they saw the announcement on the front page. Several producers were let go without being informed.
- When I joined the site, I was given a list of rules to follow (mostly common sense things, like don't post hate speech, etc). The section saying where to find the company policy was labeled "coming soon":

All delayed or missing videos must be reported to Holly Brown by 5 pm before their due date.

### **FOR COMPANY POLICY**

All company policy is laid out in this link:

[coming soon](#)

All questions regarding company policy should be addressed to Robert Walker.

Any concerns or issues with the company can be addressed with Holly Brown, Robert Walker, or (in emergency situations) Mike Michaud.

### **SKYPE PROTOCOL**

- At a later point in time, when I'm creating Radu Reviews, I'm randomly told I need to ask them permission to do new shows (They had a rule in place for events such as filming a new show with your friend as the host, for example, but not anything like what I was doing). So I ask Rob for permission, and he seems to have no idea why I'm asking.
- Years later, Phelan is astounded to find out this list exists, because no one who came onto the site before me got these rules or were told about them.
- The rules were arbitrarily enforced and usually if they wanted an excuse to get rid of someone anyway. At one point they sent a written reprimand to Welshy that was meant for Sad Panda because they couldn't tell the difference between them.
- Phelan received a reprimand for tweeting a joke making fun of the Demo Reel twist by saying he was going to reveal Phelous was Sub-Zero the whole time. He was told to apologize to Doug personally.
- Doug knew nothing tech-wise to the point of endless frustration. He didn't know how to record commentaries; he would just have people in Chicago sit close to the camera and record it on the on-board mic. When he had to record the Moulin Rouge commentary over skype, he asked me to sit in and record it. I was not part of the Moulin Rouge crossover, he just wanted me to press record and sit there. Phelan called him up and explained, step by step, how to use MP3 Skype Recorder, which requires a simple press of a button to use. He ended up calling Nash and having him record it.
- During my earlier days on the site, we would have to fight to get slots for the day, but especially during the holidays. Doug proceeds to hog the slots with his lazy

Disneycember vlogs.

- They considered conventions a waste of time, despite their contradictory belief that they should do all their advertising locally. They hated that we went to MAGfest because of a bad experience Doug had there once, despite the fact we all paid to go there on our own dimes.
- They never wanted to pay anyone. One of the DVDs they held a cover contest for fans where they asked for “Drew Struzan style” artwork for \$100 (plus a link to their Deviantart on the cover). They were shamed into upping the price to \$300. Skitch did the soundtracks for the anniversary movies for next to nothing, and Michaud was furious when he tried selling the music because he was under the belief it belonged to them.
- Every decision felt self-motivated and uncaring toward other producers. It was The Doug Show.

### **Pop Quiz Hotshot/Indiegogo**

- August 2013. CA uses Indiegogo to crowdfund \$90K for their pop culture game show (Retro Pop Culture Challenge--later Pop Quiz Hotshot!), a comic review show (Awesome Comics), and another game show revolved around video games (The Gaming Gauntlet). 40-something episodes were promised of Pop Quiz Hotshot.
- CA films at least a dozen versions of the pilot and test episodes. Some of them include the same questions/contestants. The refilming is due to the studio not being sound-dampened. Because of this, they film Nostalgia Critic episodes in the office where it is smaller and there's less echo.
- They tried to rig the questions so the contestant would win, but accidentally switched the cards so it went in Doug's favor. Doug splits the prize, a \$100 gift card.
- They had to be told to have prizes by Holly.
- The game show was Michaud's idea, and no one else wanted to do it.
- The Indiegogo rewards are 6+ months late.
- March 2015, a year and a half since the show was promised. After Indiegogo threatens to investigate, Michaud forces Doug and Rob to release the first episode of Pop Quiz Hotshot, which they are all embarrassed about.

Hi [REDACTED]

Thank you for sharing your concern with us. At this time, the campaign, 'Channel Awesome's New Shows and More!', is under review to ensure that it adheres to our Terms of Use (<http://www.indiegogo.com/about/terms>).

So what happens now? We will include the information you have provided along with all other information at our disposal in our review of the campaign. In some cases, we will contact the campaign owner to have them edit their campaign and it will remain on our platform. If the project doesn't follow our rules, we may remove the campaign. We may also restrict the campaign owner's future activities on Indiegogo.

To protect our users' privacy, we're unable to share the action we take. At Indiegogo, we take the trust and safety of our community very seriously, and we greatly appreciate your patience and understanding throughout this review process. To learn more about Indiegogo's Trust & Safety effort, please visit: [www.indiegogo.com/trust](http://www.indiegogo.com/trust)

Please note that you do not need to contact us again. Doing so would create a new ticket and prolong the process. Thank you again for taking the time to get in touch with us and for helping to keep Indiegogo a safe and secure platform.

Regards,

Derek

- After 12 episodes, the show is canceled because that legally covers them as an "effort" to fulfill their Indiegogo goals.
- Awesome Comics begins production, using the old game show set, in March 2016 and ends March 2017. The Gaming Gauntlet never materializes.

### **The Anniversaries**

- CA paid for travel/lodge and meals when they were during filming hours, otherwise we were on our own. They had to be told to have water on set. We were not paid for our time, nor did we make any revenue from the DVDs.



- We were paid in exposure and a free trip with our friends. When we pointed out that exposure didn't mean anything after the first time, we were told we didn't have to go to them. Mike in particular liked to state how great it was that they embedded (NOT hosted) our videos and never asked for a cut of our revenue. (Traffic on TGWTG/CA generated by other producers gave them ad revenue, so it would be ridiculous to ask for a cut of the money on our videos)
- This was the only thing they asked us to sign contracts for, which covered such things as injury liability, etc. The contract also stated that any crossovers we filmed during the production would go to them to help recoup costs. So we were asked to work for our privilege to be there, which not only went into what little time we had between filming to rest, but into our work hours at home editing them. And the anniversaries themselves took time out of our normal work, meaning it also cost us money that way. We were allowed to keep commentary tracks we did for our videos, but those got very little views.

### **Suburban Knights**

- Doug's style of directing is to tell us to do it more like him. If we pointed out we wouldn't deliver a line like that, he'd tell us "We'll try it both ways!" so he could use the take of us doing it his way. "We'll try it both ways!" became a running joke.
- It was embarrassing when we were filming in the park and Doug would start giving directions to passersby like they were part of the production.
- As it was done with Kickassia, they only have one camera with Rob at the helm. This is a larger production and with two teams, so Lindsay and Ed have a closed door meeting with them to convince them to use more than one camera. They borrow Todd's (it was the same model) and one of my SD cards. Ed, who was there to play a Cloak, is recruited to cameraman, and Liz, Lewis's guest, is asked to play a Cloak.
- Because of this, she never signed a contract. When filming a stunt with Orlando, her knee is bashed in, and they coerce her into signing a contract that says they aren't liable. She doesn't want to do it because it would give them ownership of whatever she'd filmed there.

- 4 people total were injured during the movie and no safety precautions were ever put in place. Liz and Bennett were both hurt during stunts with Orlando, and Orlando himself landed on his neck wrong. This was included in the “blooper” reel. Elisa was taped to the wall in a cross position, and because she was there for so long she passed out.
- The weather was cold and some people like Ben had pretty flimsy costumes, so the higher ups were worried about us. We had a meeting where they asked us if we wanted to make it an improvised mockumentary and shoot it indoors, but we unanimously voted to keep going. There was a sense of camaraderie there that was completely absent from To Boldly Flee.

### **To Boldly Flee (2012)**

- I point to To Boldly Flee as the tipping point between “maybe they’ll change” and “this is never going to get better.” Completely different experience reading the script vs Suburban Knights. This felt long, self-indulgent, sexist, and mean. Scenes that were just quoting other movies verbatim were embarrassing. The excessive scenes with Zod and Turrell were infuriating and ate up time that could’ve focused on the producers and not more of Doug’s shtick.
- I never received a To Boldly Flee DVD. Neither did many fans who bought them, because they messed up the orders and it was never fixed.
- The crossovers to recoup costs were not required, and during To Boldly Flee things were so absurdly overscheduled that we were too exhausted/annoyed to make them. During a meeting, Michaud/Doug try and guilt us into making crossovers to cover costs such as effects. (Phelan was half of the effects team, so this was equivalent of asking him to pay himself.) We make a stand and tell them no, eventually coming to an agreement that we can make two crossovers and keep one. I threw out the script of the crossover I was planning with Brad.
- The scripts weren’t given out until the 11th hour because Doug and Rob were fighting over it the whole time. We barely had time to read it, and most people didn’t.
- We only had about a week to film this 4 hour movie, and that’s only because Holly begged them for an extra day. Every day Doug scheduled two days worth of work, because he assumed having proper equipment/crew would make things go faster.

- No one was informed that Doug was killing off the Nostalgia Critic, most of us found out only if we read the scripts. Todd and I found out earlier because Doug called us to ask if they could conclude the love triangle storyline we'd set up in our videos and then mentioned it offhandedly.
- Doug asked if he could use the joke where Todd was stalking me in the movie, and his version of that was apparently me being a "cold, heartless vacuum" for turning down my stalker. I go on a date with him by the end.
- Other than that, we were never asked for our input on the movie scripts. There was a scene in the script where it implies Mechakara is raping her off screen, and she and Lewis had to fight with them on set to say they wouldn't do it as scripted. It's still in the movie, but slightly different. Doug did not understand that it came off as offensive.

She tries running for the door but rushes with lightning speed and closes it. He approaches her as she backs up against the wall. He holds up his hand which now has a sharp device shooting out of his wrist.

MECHAKARA  
Resistance...is comical.

He approaches with the device. Her eyes widen in fear.

107 INT. USS EXIT STRATEGY UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Film Brain approaches the door, mug still in hand.

FILM BRAIN  
Nostalgia Chick? Linkara? There's  
a meeting downstairs.

Loud, suggestive thuds beat through the walls. Power drill noises and squeaks ensue, punctuated by Chick's squeals and moans.

CHICK (OFF-SCREEN)  
No! Oh! Ungh! Ah! Oh! No!  
Don't put it there! Ungh!

MECHAKARA (OFF-SCREEN)  
Do not resist! Submit! Submit!

An embarrassed shock overcomes Film Brain's face.

FILM BRAIN  
I'll just... give you two a moment.

He walks away with a shocked face.

CHICK (OFF-SCREEN)  
Oh my God you're hard as metal!

108 INT. USS EXIT STRATEGY CRITIC'S OFFICE

The crew is assembled. Film Brain returns, horrified.

SAD PANDA  
Film Brain, you look as if you  
heard two people having sex.

FILM BRAIN  
How would you know that?

SAD PANDA  
I'm French, we know.

CRITIC  
Well? Are they coming?

FILM BRAIN  
Boy that's a loaded question...

CRITIC  
What?

FILM BRAIN  
I mean no, they're getting busy --  
KEEPING busy -- with heterosexual--  
-- EXTRACURRICULAR -- asstivities -  
- ACTIVITIES!

- Lindsay was also uncomfortable with the fight scene she and I had, and she pointed this out when we were on set. Doug had no idea what to do so his response was just to make us do it.
- Much of the dialogue included lines about the age of reviewers ending and made it seem like we were retiring because Doug was, which really hurt all of our feelings. It seemed to be throwing us under the bus.
- We were always behind schedule, and Doug and Rob would always stop the shoot for pointless arguments. For instance, there was a scene where Robotodd and I are talking to Nostalgia Critic, and when we were done with the shot Todd went to take his costume off, which took a few people to do. When I'm sitting next to Jillian, I notice they're shooting the other half of that scene with the camera pointed directly at where we were supposed to be standing, so we point that out to them. They start to argue again for ten minutes when there are only two options: get me and Todd back or change the camera angle.
- Jillian was there to keep them on schedule, and every time she brought up the time she would be ignored, so we were always way behind. They asked her to choreograph a complex lightsaber fight scene, which she did, but they ended up sending her to the hotel due to exhaustion and not using her fight.
- Whenever anything happened like bad continuity, Rob would just say "Oh well, plot hole!"
- One day the camera crew had to go home early for personal reasons, so they told Doug early in the day that would be the case. He forgot to tell anyone, so at the end of the day we didn't have enough cars to take everyone back to the hotel/dinner. Phelan, Julien, and I got left behind while everyone else went to Applebee's.
- Ed, who was a cameraman and credited as DP (he asked them not to), pointed out during a scene with Brad they were breaking the 180 rule. Cue 10 minute argument. Ed furiously says they either want it to look right or look wrong. He vows never to work with them again.
- There was a scene with a bunch of the cast passed out on top of each other on the floor, so they called a bunch of them into the basement to film it and kept them there even when they weren't shooting. Eventually someone asks Ed if they're even on camera, and he says no. They had Phelan's foot in one shot.
- One day was an 18 hour shoot, and the next day after 3 hours sleep we were asked to film the big party scene (they asked us to film 2 different endings despite

being overscheduled and exhausted). Once that is over, they want to film a green screen bit with Phelan. Phelan points out he can film it at home, which would save them time they didn't have, and after waiting forever they say yes. We're driven to the hotel to sleep and our heads barely hit the pillow when my phone rings. They want Phelan to shoot the green screen part. He is the angriest I've ever seen him. We make it to the lobby, where Rob is waiting to drive us back, and make it halfway down the road while explaining the situation, before Rob makes an "executive decision" to drive us back to the hotel.

- They never asked him to film the green screen bit and it's not in the film.
- Not a single person wasn't miserable, except Doug, who had no idea how badly it had went. He thought this was a grandiose sendoff that everyone was happy with, just completely in his own world. They had to have a private meeting with him to tell him the state of things.
- Once shooting was done for what we knew was the last anniversary movie, they weren't even planning on having a wrap party. We had an unplanned one. Doug was late. He gives us personalized goodbye letters.
- They assumed Phelan would do the 3D effects for the flying houses and such, and Phelan pointed out to them he's not a 3D animator. After the movie was done filming, they do a contest to find 3D animators.
- When Noah left the site, Phelan got the rest of his effects load. A separate team of FX folks was created in Chicago as well. They had little to no communication with Phelan.
- When Phelan finished an effect and sent it to Doug, Doug responds with "LOVE IT LOVE IT LOVE IT LOVE IT LOVE IT." Later, they ask Welshy to try and stealthily find out if Phelan was "half-assing" the effects because I guess they wanted more debris in the shot. Welshy just directly goes to Phelan and tells him what they said. Phelan's feelings are hurt. All they had to do was tell him they wanted more debris instead of sneaking around.

## **The Uncanny Valley**

- For the fifth year, they asked certain producers if they could make a short film to be included in an anthology with an internet theme. They offered no payment or resources at all, only the ability to post the shorts on their own channel in exchange for giving them the DVD rights. So basically, they were asking them to make a short film for them for free and also to let them make money off of it. Phelan was asked and said no.

## **The Spooky Incident**

- This is brought up to try and clarify some points involving CA, not to drag up old dirt. For the record, Noah and I apologized a long time ago.
- After Noah posts some questionable stuff on Twitter, I call him out and this leads to a breakdown due to undiagnosed bipolar disorder. He lashes out at fans and it gets nasty on both ends.
- I received death threats at my house.
- CA suspends Noah, the meltdown continues, so they tell him he either stops talking like that on Twitter or he must leave. He chooses to leave.
- People assume I got him fired, Noah makes a post saying this isn't the case, and CA says nothing. This leads to a conspiracy that the women on the site collaborated to kick him off the site.
- CA wants to suspend me for posting about the incident and specifically about context and rape jokes (I said nothing about CA and it broke none of their rules), decide against it because Phelan is doing the effects for To Boldly Flee and they don't want to lose him. I receive a written reprimand.
- A new page of rules is given to some producers (not all) which includes activity on social media.

## **Producer Grievances**

- In 2013, everyone on the site is fed up with the terrible communication and broken promises to the point of all coming together and giving the higher ups a list of grievances.

- This leads to a series of calls where we were divided into groups to discuss our issues with them.
- I tell them that the way To Boldly Flee was scripted made it sound like all of us were retiring along with Doug, and the site should have been informed he was getting rid of the character since it affected all of us. Rob laughs it off by saying he was only thinking of it as a story, and my point is never addressed.
- The To Boldly Flee DVD was put up on the site store with a release date before Mike even contacted Ed to get them made (I was there when he called him). I asked Mike why that was, and he responded that it takes two weeks to make DVDs. I point out that they could get them done earlier than that release date and that still doesn't make sense, and it devolves into him shouting "TWO WEEKS" at me nonsensically.
- One of the promises in their response to this list of grievances was to give us newsletters to update us on what was going on with the site. They proceeded to do 2 by email and 1 on the internal site before giving up.
- One of these newsletters hilariously tries to tell us that the anniversaries have stopped because of the weather.

### **Company Newsletter May 2013**

Written by

Monday, 20 May 2013 03:23 - Last Updated Monday, 20 May 2013 03:34

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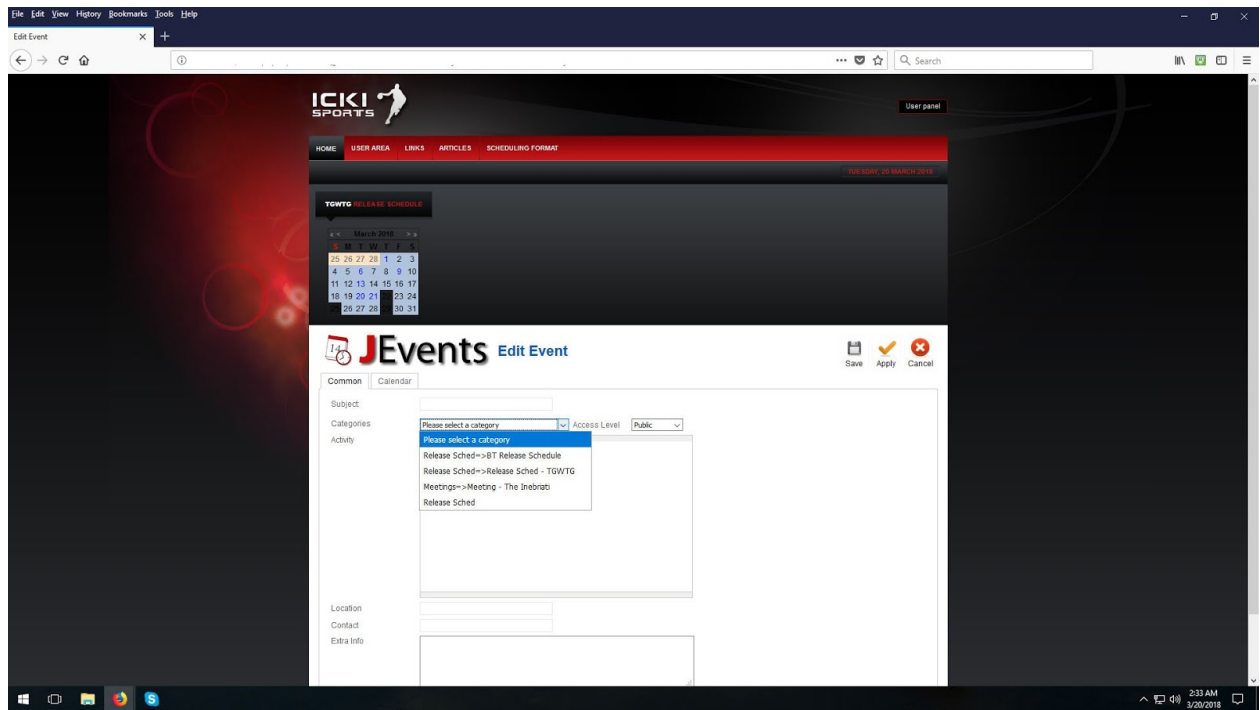
Well, spring continues to pack a punch. April weather in Chicago was atrocious, with major flooding that affected every suburb -- and even created problems for our CEO. Fortunately, we've recovered. However, it was yet another reminder that doing projects in April is just a bad idea. More on that to come.

As a side note, we are downplaying the 5th Year as an actual tie in to the CA Anniversaries of past years. After yet another weather disaster in April (which resulted in cancelled flights to Chicago that nearly derailed us), the execs have decided that "Anniversary Specials" don't make any sense. It was an accident of timing that the site was born in April -- an accident we no longer want to be beholden to. Obviously, filming these specials in winter isn't always feasible, and spring is also a nightmare in the Midwest. Instead, we will focus on group efforts to do anthologies with producers, but won't call them "Anniversary Specials" -- since we want to be able to release them in later parts of the year. So for all intents and purposes, the 4th Year WAS the last "Anniversary Special."

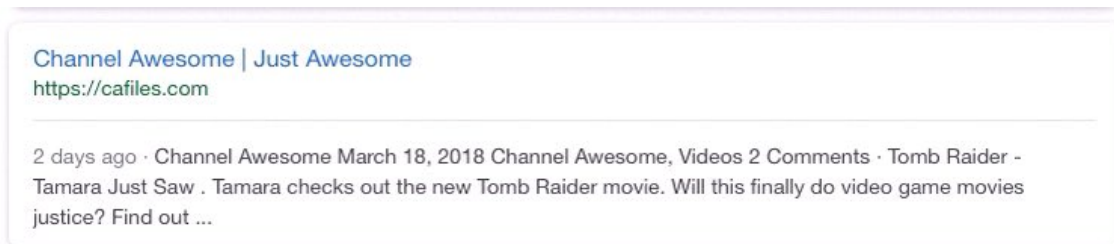
- We all knew and respected that they stopped because they were expensive and exhausting, so it seemed nonsense to come up with such an outlandish lie. It also defeated the point of being more communicative if they weren't going to be truthful.

## The Site Revamp

- They've never once updated their internal site in 10 years. To this day it's an "Icki Sports" Joomla template. Barfiesta and Blistered Thumbs are still on the scheduling dropdowns.



- They didn't turn searchability off, so their internal site comes up on Google. I can still use my access info and get in, because they never changed it.



- After years of asking to redesign TGWTG into a better looking site, they decide to revamp it as Channel Awesome. This is partially because of our request to make things more about the community and less central to Doug.
- They release it with a banner with Doug and all his characters, and also a bee from a one second joke in his Jurassic Park 3 video. We mention that this is all about



Doug again, and they say they'll switch the banner to different producers for days of the week that they post (Lewis on Mondays, etc). We point out there's more producers than days of the week. None of this matters because we know they won't do it, and they don't.

- When Mike is looking for a site designer, the first people he asks are the ones who designed the White House web page. They quote him \$50K, so he goes with a \$100 template.
- One of our requests for ages was to have a page that listed who we were and what our videos were about, instead of a massive drop down menu of just names and pages of links with no descriptions. This was promised but never delivered.
- They did ask us for show descriptions (which they lost at one point) and for us to make trailers for our shows. We did, but they were never posted.
- They set up an automatic scheduling system, which almost immediately breaks and was never fixed. At this point I stop posting to the site for a month, and they never notice.
- It took them six months to remove a cut off drop shadow from the banner.
- They brought on a MASSIVE amount of people when they set up the new site, and it was a horrible time to do it because it flooded the front page every day with producers visitors were unfamiliar with. All of our views and comments instantly tanked. Fortunately this was around when Blip/Maker went away and most of us had switched to Youtube, where we were building our audiences.

### **Chicago Crossover (Talking Cat/Shut Up and Talk)**

- Sometime in 2013/2014 I am barely making ends meet with Blip's ad revenue, so I start to use more midrolls in my videos. Around this time I go to Chicago to film a crossover on A Talking Cat with Doug in his studio.
- Rob keeps interrupting to read off IMDB trivia for their Things You Didn't Know About Ghostbusters video. No one pays us the courtesy of silence when we're trying to film, Doug has to continually tell them to be quiet and they act like we're not there.

- While I'm in Chicago I film an episode of his talk show Shut Up and Talk, which was never released since I was gone before it was edited together. They would sit on these interviews for months and months.
- Before filming, Doug offhandedly mentions one of the questions will be what I base my "funny" voice on. I tell him it's based on nothing, it's just me. When we begin filming, he again asks me what I base my voice on. I reiterate that it's not based on anything, I'm just doofy sometimes. He makes fun of me for using the word "doofy" because he's never heard it before, and doesn't seem to believe me when I say I'm not imitating someone. The concept of comedy that is not directly ripping something off is baffling to him.
- Outside of one or two, we do not go over the questions ahead of the interview. In the middle of the goofy questions he asks me what the hardest thing I've been through was and how I got through it. It's very awkward.
- At the end of the interview, Doug and his guests will improvise something as the credits play. I can't do improv. I'm doing pretty badly, so Doug says, "You'll never make it in this business!" and that's how that ended.
- Michaud waits until everyone leaves and I am alone on the Shut Up and Talk set to corner me and ask me why I have so many midrolls on my videos. I tell him to make enough money to live. He says my use of midrolls (and Phelan's use) are causing people to put on adblock and affecting their revenue (their revenue was down because they killed off their flagship show and sunk a bunch of money into a useless game show). He tells me people were complaining in the comments and he left the mean ones up as a hint to me, instead of, y'know, telling me like the CEO of the company should. He also lies and tells me other producers were complaining to him, which the others confirmed was not true.
- This is very hostile and makes me uncomfortable and upset. I go to the bathroom and cry. After I pull myself together, the only person around is Doug, so I tell him what happened and how uncomfortable I was. He says he'll look into it.
- Shortly after, Mike and Doug call me on Skype to tell me they're limiting the number of midrolls we can use. I tell them I think they're overstepping their bounds, Doug says he disagrees. No mention is ever made of Mike's aggressive actions in Chicago.

- Mike proceeds to give me tips on making more views, such as posting on specific days (I had been posting on Sundays for 3 years. I stopped doing a set schedule after that because I felt it didn't matter if no one noticed). He says I don't make enough videos, one a month (I was making 3-4 videos a month, including just completing a 2 hour retrospective. He didn't seem to think videos outside of my main show counted.).
- Doug tells me I should just make more videos like his TV show vlogs, because "that's just his work ethic."
- I nearly quit right then and there. For at least a year, I was debating when, not if, I would leave the site.

### **Getting the Boot**

- Patreon comes along, a lot of folks are using it, and this seems like a great way to make money and not have all the midrolls that annoy people. I set one up, and put a link on the internal site to be added underneath my latest video.
- It does not appear there and as usual, I have to contact them myself to find out what's up. I ask Mike why it wasn't there, and he tells me they won't link to crowdfunding campaigns or e-begging. I try to explain that it's a payment for a service, but he's already decided what it is. He eventually stops talking to me. Later on, he apologizes for not responding, which is the only thing he's ever apologized for.
- Rob messages me and tells me adding Patreon along with the midrolls is a "slap in the face" to fans. I ask about them promoting their Indiegogo, and Rob says that was "executive authority." I also point out Mike J's Nerdquest campaign was promoted.
- Suede makes a video weighing the pros and cons of Patreon, and they do not allow him to post it. After word gets out and people guilt them, they say we can do a bumper for Patreon on our videos. After I make one, they randomly tell us they have to be 30 seconds long. I posted my minute long video anyway because they never watch the content and don't notice.



☆ Official CA Producer's Chat (Primary Business Chat)

> 44 participants



Wednesday, April 30, 2014



Robert R Walker

Some updates --

2:26 PM

It's a repeat for those already in the meetings with us, but we thought we'd give you some of what we've come up with.

1) Patreon can be used. It can be advertised on your own websites, blogs, etc. And producers can put short ads at the END of their videos on TGWTG with any pertinent information. Think: Similar to Angry Joe's "GO HERE" ad for his website at the end of his videos. So you're allowed to bring it up in your video. **However, we are not putting direct links below the video.** And we will be sticking to 3 midrolls per 30 minute episode spaced out at 10 minutes apart. This is actually BLIP'S rule, and in the early days, it forced content creators to do this. What's happened is a giant loophole opened up and the forced 10 minute spaces got dropped due to Blip's typical glitches. From what we've seen in dealing with them, all signs point to Maker fixing this glitch once they get settled in. So it might end up being a moot point anyway.

2) There will be an announcement box! It will be updated once a week. People will have to contact us with what they want in there for their own promotions: cons, appearances, and stuff. Mike wants to rig it so it will actually take a video slot on the scroller. So no one will be able to miss it. This will be okay since we'll be opening up more slots with the new site.

via Skype

Type a message here



- Late 2014/early 2015. Months later, I see they're posting links to Brad's Patreon. I post in the Skype chat asking when this was okayed and why they didn't tell us, and bring up Rob's "slap to the face" message. I ask for an apology. Mike says I didn't need to bring up what Rob said because they were still "on the fence" at the time, and I point out the issues I've mentioned in the bullets above. Things get heated and Mike tells me we can discuss this in a private chat. This is a tactic he frequently used so he could bully someone privately, so I told him no.
- Mike messages me separately asking if I have time for a call. I tell him no, because I am very heated and don't want to talk in that state of mind. A couple hours later, I am away from the computer filming and he and Doug message me for a call. After fifteen minutes, Mike tells me because I'm ignoring them, they're taking me off the site.

- This is the quickest they'd ever updated anything.
- Screenscaps of the skype texts here: <https://imgur.com/a/K8Xe4>
- My exit post: <http://allisonpregler.tumblr.com/post/108008749157/bye-ca>
- Phelan, who was also planning on leaving soon, quits the site after that: <http://phelous.tumblr.com/post/108013883721/goodbye-farewell-and-amen-ca>
- CA puts up a buried goodbye post, including the exits of Kyle and Andrew (for different but also crummy reasons), which begins by saying they "would like to announce" we're leaving. They misspell Phelan's name. That's the end of his 6 years and my 5 years there.

**A Parting of Ways**

Posted by: Channel Awesome in Channel Awesome, Updates January 13, 2015 Comments Off

Channel Awesome would like to announce that Andrew Dickman, Kyle Kallgren (Oancitizen), Allison Pregler (Obscurus Lupa) and Phelan Porteus (Phelous) have parted ways with us. We wish them the best.

Tweet 0 Like

Tagged with: SITE NEWS SITE UPDATE

**ABOUT CHANNEL AWESOME**

SUBSC To RSS

SUBSC

Leagu 815 vide

SPOTLI

# Kaylyn Saucedo (MarzGurl)

This series of events covers my participation with Channel Awesome from my joining in September of 2008 to my voluntary leaving in September of 2017. Certainly, other minor irritations and moments of hurt feelings have come up besides what is listed in these bullet points. However, to list those would likely be too many and too petty for this document. These are the biggest problems I ran into directly in my nine years with Channel Awesome.

## **Runner Up in the Nostalgia Chick Contest**

- In September of 2008, I participated in the Nostalgia Chick Contest, a contest meant to pick a female critic to discuss topics that the Nostalgia Critic would not based on media that was meant to be directed at women, and thus Doug Walker would not review. While I was not chosen as the first place winner of the contest, I was contacted in a Skype call along with Doug and Rob Walker as well as Mike Michaud and notified that I, along with Krissy Diggs (That Chick With The Goggles), was chosen as a runner up and would be allowed to contribute content to the site.

## **Early Unfulfilled Payment Promises**

- I was one of the earliest contributors to the site, and thus I was one of the ones who was asked to directly transfer my video files into the hands of Mike Michaud, who would then upload my video to their Blip channel. For the first short while, my videos were not being hosted on any channel I had any control of. This was so that they would receive the advertising revenue from my video, and I was told that they would pay me out for the money earned on my videos. This never happened.
- After Lewis (Linkara) was added as a contributor to the site, he suggested that I start my own Blip channel, as he was already using one for himself. I did just that, and opened up a Blip channel of my own. When my next video was ready, rather than handing over my video directly, I told Mike Michaud that I had a direct link to my video already uploaded on Blip. This made him furious, and he angrily scolded me for creating my own Blip channel without express permission from him or any other Channel Awesome executive. Only after apologizing profusely for not understanding that I was not allowed to do this, and that I did it because Linkara was doing it, did he finally back off, and from this point forward I began contributing

videos from my own upload links. I was never paid for any of my early contributions.

### **The Mistitling of Videos**

- One of my earliest video series was titled, "Animation: A Children's Medium?" Its intended purpose was to question whether or not animation was truly meant just for children, as is often perceived, or if it has also commonly had a specific adult audience. I described this video to Mike Michaud as being "something like a history of animation," but I didn't intend for it to be called as such, I just gave it that description so that he had a clear understanding in a brief amount of words as to just what this project was.
- When the video was embedded into the site, it had been totally and completely mislabeled as "A History of Animation" when the title of my video even came up near the beginning of the video and was not called this, so I knew that Michaud had not, in fact, watched my video. This led many viewers to be misled by the title, and were angry directly at me for making a terrible video about the history of animation, when that's not truly what the video was.
- When the subject came up in the That Guy With The Glasses forums, I explained to the people questioning this that there had been a miscommunication with Michaud about what the video was supposed to be, and that I would make sure he understood what it was next time. This led to Michaud reaching out to me on Skype to, once again, completely lose his patience at me and text-shout at me something about making him look bad and/or incompetent when it wasn't his fault. Being 22 at the time and not knowing how to handle such a situation when I was so happy to have been made an addition to the team, I buckled and apologized profusely, saying this was another misunderstanding and that I meant that I was the one who communicated badly and that I wouldn't let it happen again. I went further and said that, since I kept messing up in his eyes, maybe I wasn't truly the right choice for a contributor to TGWTG. Only after making myself look like the fool to him did he back off and leave the topic be. I have since wondered if he was just satisfied that he had successfully made me feel ashamed.

## The Perceived Rivalry With ScrewAttack

- Mike Michaud was frequently uncomfortable with the knowledge that, for a brief while, I was on decent communication terms with a select few members of ScrewAttack, and that I would sometimes write in their blogs sections and post in their forums. He would reach out to me on Skype and tell me that he was not comfortable with my communications and would prefer if I stopped interacting with them altogether. His reasoning, he told me, was that he perceived ScrewAttack to be TGWTG's direct rivals, and that he was concerned that ScrewAttack would "steal me" away as a contributor. I assured him that this was not going to happen, that I did not consider myself to be a video game content creator, and that I was satisfied being attached to Channel Awesome. While this satisfied Michaud for a brief while, I did not understand his concerns, especially since Doug Walker (The Nostalgia Critic) had been brought significant viewership by participating in crossovers with James Rolfe (The Angry Video Game Nerd), whose intellectual property at that time was under legal ownership of ScrewAttack. Partnership and interaction seemed to be working out well for them, and I was upset that Michaud addressed me with such vitriol during the situation.
- In 2009, ScrewAttack held their first ScrewAttack Gaming Convention in Dallas, Texas. I was excited about attending because prior to that, there were next to no video game events within Texas, where I lived at the time. Michaud once again addressed me and suggested that it would be a bad idea for me to attend. I had to reassure him once more that I would not be trading my Channel Awesome loyalty just because I wanted to attend a video game convention.
- In 2010, I participated in the next ScrewAttack Gaming Convention as a general staff member, typically asked to stand next to doors and check members for their badges. This year, Noah Antwiler (Spoony) was a guest at the convention. I told him that Michaud had a previous history of being upset with me for communicating with ScrewAttack, which is when he told me that he was also hearing Michaud's upset tone with him for agreeing to be a guest at SGC.



## **My Decision to Distance Myself From Others During My Time as a Contributor**

- All of these interactions with Mike Michaud made me very nervous about doing something wrong, and it felt like there was always a target on my back, or that someone was looking for a reason to drop me as a contributor from the site. Rather than having to put up with the anxiety of being told I did something wrong when I had no idea I was doing anything wrong, I began to largely pull away not only from communicating with Mike Michaud, but with anyone on the site at all. I kept to myself for the next several years, did not want to participate in anyone else's drama, and just continued releasing my videos on my own as best as I could.
- My interactions with Michaud had also made me very gunshy about participating in Skype or being available on Skype in any capacity, and I feared logging on and seeing some new angry message from Michaud. I would sometimes not log into Skype for months at a time. This would begin to cause communication problems when site management would decide that, rather than give us promised communication through either monthly E-mails or through our internal scheduling site, they would instead put all contributors into one large Skype chat room and use that chat room to deliver important messages to us. I would often miss large, seemingly important notifications due to this, and despite them having multiple E-mail addresses of mine and my phone number, they never utilized it.

## **Making Costumes for Anniversary Films**

- Many of us were expected to make our own costumes for the anniversary films, myself included. In most instances, we were not paid for the creation of these costumes, if we were deemed capable of making/bringing them with us.
- Before the filming of *To Boldly Flee*, I was asked initially to make a costume of Leela from *Futurama*. Luckily, I did not make it far in the construction of this costume, because I received an E-mail from Doug saying that I needed to make a costume of Major Kusanagi from *Ghost In The Shell: Stand Alone Complex*, and a very specific outfit of hers. There was only a couple of weeks left before the shooting of the movie, and I had to make some expensive and fast purchases to throw it together in time.

- We were told that, if we made our costumes ourselves during To Boldly Flee, they would pay us for the construction of the costume if we met two conditions. One, we had to provide receipts for the materials used to make the costume. And two, we had to turn our costumes over to Channel Awesome. I was frustrated with this idea and decided I wanted to keep the Major Kusanagi costume for myself. It meant taking a financial loss, but I was not happy that I would have to hand over a costume that I had to both make and wear myself.

### **The Death of the Nostalgia Critic and the To Boldly Flee Wrap Party**

- As is mentioned elsewhere, the death of the Nostalgia Critic and the ending of his character and review series was written into the script of To Boldly Flee. Many people did not know that this was going to be happening until they read the script. Many others did not understand until filming got underway, and from my discussions with other content creators, no one had a clear idea of what they were supposed to do with their content creation once this was loaded onto Channel Awesome and the rest of the Internet found out Doug was making this decision.
- After we had finished filming during the week of To Boldly Flee, a wrap party was held at a pub nearby the hotel we'd been lodged at. We paid for our own meals. At this party, Doug Walker handed out individually addressed letters to each member of the cast that was there, which seemed like a nice enough gesture. But the finality of the letters indicated that Doug did not intend to continue to create anniversary videos nor did he intend to utilize us again. It was obvious that we were considered obsolete to him at this point, and that perhaps we were just expected to go on about our own lives without him, not considering the consequences for everyone for what he was about to do.

### **Forgotten During Filming**

- During the filming of To Boldly Flee, several contributors were called down during a specific scene where the entire cast was expected to be knocked out and having fallen asleep on the floor. They called down nearly the entire cast by name except for me.

- Later on, they needed us all back for the scene in which we all woke up, and this time they included me. I informed Rob Walker that this was going to look strange because I was not in the initial scene where they filmed everyone falling asleep. Rob responded to this by saying, "Oh... Oh, well! Plot hole!" And then proceeded to laugh it off. I laughed with him at the time, but truth be told, I was saddened by this.
- This scene can be seen in the final cut of To Boldly Flee. I am not there when the crew of the ship falls asleep, but I am there when the crew wakes up.

### **More Mislabeled Videos and Videos Not Hitting Social Media**

- Our internal web site is where we would schedule our video content. I would schedule my videos there, much like everyone else, and leave notes about the name of my video, the link to my title card, the link to the video itself, the description of the video, and my contact information (phone number and Skype user name). I would often leave extra notes if there was anything important I needed the person doing the scheduling to know. These notes were never read, always ignored. For example, I would have a "Request Review" because I take requests from my Patreon contributors as a reward tier for them. So the title of a review might be "Request Review - The Transformers: The Movie" or "Request Review - Batman: Mask of the Phantasm". These reviews would never be called this. Instead, they would be titled, "MarzGurl - The Transformers: The Movie" or "MarzGurl - Batman: Mask of the Phantasm". I repeatedly left notes for the schedulers to correct these titles, or to please remember to properly title my videos on the web site. They refused to do this properly. Without fail, the names of my videos were always wrong on channelawesome.com.
- Usually, when a video is posted, it is also cross posted across various social media platforms, specifically Twitter and Facebook. Frequently, I would wait for channelawesome.com to update so that I could then retweet their tweet about my video or share their Facebook post about my video to my personal and public Facebook pages. Frequently (not always, but frequently) my videos would not show up in their social media feeds along with the other posts for the day. This happened slightly less frequently on Twitter, but more frequently on Facebook. It felt like management was commonly attempting to make me feel invisible to make me want to quit on my own accord rather than be fired and make a big deal out of it that would get them into hot water publicly.

- As an aside to all of this, there was a weekly producer spotlight that was meant to feature a new producer on the front page every week. I was never featured, nor was I on the schedule at all in the first place.

## **Leaving Channel Awesome**

- I had been considering my exit from Channel Awesome for many years, but only stayed as long as I did because I had a manager outside of Channel Awesome for some time who schedule my convention appearances for me. This manager suggested that he understood how bad Channel Awesome was, but if I wanted to keep getting con appearances, he needed me to stay because still being associated with Channel Awesome as a brand and Doug Walker as the Nostalgia Critic was good for me to continue to get work. He told me to consider waiting until I reached 10,000 YouTube subscribers, and only then to consider getting out on my own.
- I initially agreed with my manager, but then decided that I would also add in the idea of waiting until my 10 year anniversary, and leaving then, depending on which one of those two things happened first.
- Eventually, I decided I just couldn't wait any longer, and I left on my 9-year anniversary with Channel Awesome in September of 2017. I could no longer idly stand by and watch others and myself be affected by their poor management and direct abuses to many of my friends. I left a farewell song in the Channel Awesome group Skype chat, and then removed myself from the conversation.
- Within a single hour of my removing myself from the group chat, all of my content had been removed from the site. Unlike previous contributors who had received pleasant farewell messages from the administrators, no such farewell message was delivered to me, a contributor who had been there longer than 90% of their team and had been in every single anniversary movie. This was also how others were treated who were there either as long as me or a little longer than me, such as Linkara and Suede.

## Holly Brown (Admin)

- I was HR for the company. They barely listened to me, 5% of the time maybe? That's probably generous. In general, only when production was falling behind on an anniversary and they needed advice from someone who actually got a degree in directing and stage management.
- Mike Michaud is not the sole owner of CA, but DOES own the NC IP. He is, last I knew, the majority shareholder. Doug and Rob did not know him until he, Mike Ellis, and Bargo approached them to make the site, and they liked having someone else in charge.
- Mike Ellis was the one who originally built the site, I believe he did site updates. He did most of the day to day operations. None of us had any clue what Michaud did.
- I can verify that even people who THINK they're cool in the eyes of management have had shit talked about them.
- They never understood social media. They were happy with their little corner of the Internet. That's why [@Punkyval](#) ran the official Twitter for so long, they didn't think we needed social. Even looking now, you can see they don't get it.
- I was not informed of everything that went on despite being part of management. For instance, I was never in on CA premium and had no idea what it was.
- Rules were not enforced equally for everyone. There is one person still on the site who didn't post for months but they didn't want to drop, despite the minimum video per month requirement.
- The site lost a bunch of stuff in 2010 or 2011 because it only existed on a single drive.

- I was also part of TGWTG's failed spin-off site, BarFiesta. I actually set up an interview and tour with a brewery, we got some amazing coverage...and then they only made videos of my ex being a dork. The story of The Inebriati is a little convoluted. We were literally just a group of friends who watched anime together and decided to brew beer. When Michaud came up with the Barfiest idea, they approached us about creating content because Rob was in our group. The idea was we were going to review beers, go to beer festivals, etc. But of course, we ended up with some kind of story line that was never followed up on, because TGWTG started getting more traction and Rob was the one making our videos. That's my super brief history as a producer with CA.
- Mike Ellis was upset that I would not pursue a relationship with him (he was married) and that I brought certain severe mismanagement (legal boundary here) to light. In a previous meeting, there was nearly a fist fight between him and Michaud. I'm sad that I probably threw away the handwritten notes that were taken when Ellis was threatening to fire me. There were some real gems in there.
- Mike Ellis got fired and CA put me in a safe house for a few days because they were concerned he would come after me. Nothing was more strange than being escorted to my house with a group of guys with baseball bats and a sword so I could pack. Pretty sure I even grabbed a golf club to be able to go up to my bedroom. We all got pepper spray after that. To inject a bit of humor in the horror, I wish I could remember who carried the sword. I WANT to say Doug, but I'm pretty sure it belonged to Rob. On the other hand, I'm pretty sure it was Doug who tested the pepper spray by spraying it into the kitchen sink. It didn't go well.
- Let me tell you about the fury I felt when they CALLED ME on the way to Doug and Rob's house to tell me we were scrapping Suburban Knights. Them: "No one is going to want to finish it" Me: "WHY DON'T WE ASK THEM? I know for CERTAIN they want to finish this." Thankfully, I got them to at LEAST agree to ask, and then called the producers to let them know what was up. (I think this is probably all covered in the DVD extras)
- I came to work on To Boldly Flee after surgery. The days I wasn't on set, I still gave them notes based on all the issues I heard about. After that, the only time I missed filming was when I had to go get the drain taken out of my abdomen. I don't think I ever received a final script to work from.
- I wasn't even informed about the last anniversary I was there for (The Uncanny Valley). That's why I only worked on Mat's project, I was not invited to the CA official one. I still don't have a copy of it.

- I was the only person asked to work every day of the year. I worked through weekends, holidays, vacations, days I had surgery, everything. Unless I could beg Michaud to do the daily site update for me, I worked. I requested multiple times to be able to pre-schedule the update and was always told no. Hell, I once took a meeting on Christmas. I missed events with my friends for years because they insisted on an evening upload time. Michaud was the only person other than me who knew how to update the site. There is literally no reason someone needs to sit and code for a daily update at a the time of the update. Finally they moved the update time, but they still wouldn't let me preschedule it. Do you know how hard it is to do a daily update at an exact time if you happen to have a doctor's appointment or a dentist visit in the Chicago area? It became such a long running joke in my family that I was always working that my dad and his wife were stunned the first time I visited them and didn't even PACK my computer. The day before I was let go, I had surgery, came home, and did the update. The next day, I was asked to drive to the studio against doctor's orders to be told I was no longer employed.
- I was not provided with a reason I was let go. They didn't need to because Illinois is an at-will state. I think they had been preparing for it for a while, because we had just signed contracts for the first time only a month or so prior. I assume letting me have the surgery was a gift. But I would have liked a day to recover first. They had me sign another contract after I was fired because if I didn't sign I wouldn't receive severance pay. This contract would bar me from working in the industry for 3 years. I could not be paid to consult, run a site, anything. My involvement with NerdVice and CirclePlus couldn't make me money.
- I was scared of pursuing anything legal against them because I was chronically ill, unemployed, and they had recently accumulated \$90k after their Indiegogo campaign.
- Doug was the deciding vote on my being employed.
- My life was ruined. I lost all of my friends, I had to leave Chicago, I didn't have a job--nor could I GET one if you Googled me. It was rough for several years. I've really worked hard to make things better for myself though. And I've been published on The Mary Sue and was a guest on BBC Newshour.

# Lewis Lovhaug (Linkara)

## Joining the Site and Inked Reality

- I joined up with the site when I had very few reviews – maybe 5 or 6. My meeting with Mike Michaud was at night – or rather very early in the morning, I'd say around 3 or 4 AM Central time. While I admit in hindsight it was unprofessional for that to be the case, it wasn't really a problem for me then due to an erratic sleep schedule.
- After informing me that I was on the site and they enjoyed my early work, I was told of some of the plans for the future of That Guy With the Glasses. If I recall correctly, even then the plan was to eventually rebrand it as Channel Awesome so that the focus wasn't strictly on Doug Walker's work.
- Specifically, the plan was to break the site into various satellite websites – the central one for movie and TV reviews, one focused on video games, and one focused on comics and animation (including anime and manga).
- While I don't think the name Blistered Thumbs existed yet for the video game site, there was definitely no name yet for the comics and animation site.
- If my memory can be trusted, even back then Michaud was suggesting I could head up that satellite for comics and animation (referred to as Inked Reality from here on out for the sake of simplicity). The way he described these plans, it seemed like they would be happening in the near future.
- Since I was young, eager, and enthusiastic about the idea of managing a collection of sites, I started looking for talent. I put together a "Contest" for people to submit their work and made it a private video on Blip so he could review the idea and let me know when we'd be ready to launch.
- That time never came (although some change at Blip at one point a few years later released every private video to the public, confusing one or two people who found the video later).



- While we later came up with the Inked Reality name while spitballing a few ideas, there wasn't really any attempts to advance it at any point. The Inked Reality eyecatch featured at the end of several videos came from Team Four Star member MasakoX, who was also doing videos for the site by that point. He liked the idea of a satellite website as well and did the eyecatch on his own initiative. While Michaud approved of said eyecatch, there still was never any momentum to move the idea of a satellite site for Inked Reality forward nor any discussion of me potentially running it or anything of the sort.
- After Blistered Thumbs launched, I did assume that Inked Reality would actually follow at some point. I was unaware of the difficulties Blistered Thumbs was facing until after the fact.
- By this point I really had no desire to run Inked Reality because of the amount of time and energy I was putting into my own show, but it didn't seem to matter because as far as I know there wasn't any other momentum for launching Inked Reality, anyway.
- Eventually, Blistered Thumbs closed and I came to realize that not only was Inked Reality likely never going to happen, but that the eyecatch was promoting a thing that did not exist, would not exist, and even if it did was promoting a website that was slowly losing interest in its producers. I commissioned MasakoX to design a new eyecatch for my videos that I still use today.

### **Moderator Mismanagement**

- For a long while, the Channel Awesome forums only had one moderator – Mathew Buck, AKA Film Brain. While others like Mike Michaud had administrative access, they did not handle any day to day moderation in the forums.
- This grew to be an increasing problem as the site's popularity expanded. More people coming on at all hours of the day and some people acting inappropriately or a growing number of bots needed more active moderation to be combatted. However, despite several pleas these requests went unanswered... for a time.
- At one point, I commented on the forum about the lack of moderators and how disappointed I was in that. Unceremoniously and without asking if it was a job I wanted, I was made one of the moderators.
- Despite my misgivings about being given such a role, I tried to do the best I could to answer incident reports and help Mathew, but both of us were active producers on the site and trying to do our own shows.

- The fact that Mike thought that I would be the one to solve these woes shows a disregard for the problems facing the forums and for the lives of the people who were told to fix them.
- Eventually, we convinced them to bring on DodgerOfZion to also act as a moderator, but that was it. I became less actively involved in the forums (which changed anyway during the site transition so I no longer received reports).
- The fact that they were unwilling to bring on anyone with seasoned moderator experience from the get-go, relying instead on a producer who was doing his own show (and was equally not allowed to moderate his own forum section because of an understandable conflict of interest there) who didn't even want the job is incredibly unprofessional given their desires for expansion.

### **The Mass Exodus**

- Several people left Channel Awesome at roughly the same time. Some did so voluntarily, but two in particular did not – Allison Pregler and Phelan Porteous. While the others – Lindsay Ellis, Kyle Kallgren, and Andrew Dickman – did so of their own volition citing various reasons, the other two were different.
- There was a Skype chat that we used to contact the higher-ups and discuss business matters that were relevant to all the producers. It became the fastest method for distributing information for most producers simply because any previous attempts at distributing information had proved unsuccessful or were ignored – e-mail, direct messaging Mike Michaud, etc. The Business chat was it.
- When Allison and Phelan left because of the incidents over Patreon, Michaud and Rob Walker organized calls to each of the producers. I believe they were trying to assuage people's concerns about the site or directly answer questions to people
- In the wake of what had happened, I knew there was a general feeling that the site was no longer in its glory days and that the more optimistic sense of togetherness the site had engendered was going away.

- Despite my outrage at what had happened, I decided it would be best to try to fix things – particularly for the new producers who had only more recently signed on. After all, many of them wanted to be on the site because it involved working with other producers they had admired and I didn't want to give the impression the ship was sinking.
- I outlined a few complaints I had for the management... as well as several ideas I had for improving the site. These ideas included:

-Improved Communication with Producers

-A dedicated Social Media person

-Have the social media link on the sidebar of the site promoting not just Doug's work, but various producers.

-Reduce wasteful spending (opening the CA studio to be rented by other video producers, less charity drives where people are flown out, etc.)

-Bring back the anniversary movies, in particular paying for them through the use of crowdfunding campaigns (the site itself had had a successful campaign and other producers had also launched successful campaigns for independent projects)

-A larger, more deliberate presence at conventions to promote the site.

-Release information on what the higher-ups at the company DO, since there was a perception that Mike Michaud didn't actually DO anything at the company other than issue orders.

-An overhaul of the comment system

-Reduce the amount of advertisements on the site, or at least reorganize the sidebars to promote producers or new videos so it's the first thing people see instead of the ads.

- All of these ideas were rejected save for doing more anniversary movies, although they never truly came to pass aside for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The thing repeated over and over in response to each of these ideas was "It's our site. We'll do what we want."
- The final point I made to him was that, in light of what had happened with Allison's "firing," I told Mike point blank that the incident had made me lose respect for him. His answer was a terse "okay."

### **The Atop the Fourth Wall Movie**

- Deciding to make my own movie and fashioning it off of the style of the Channel Awesome Anniversary movies with other video producers in it, I launched a successful crowdfunding campaign and produced my own film for my web series.

- During production, as my Assistant Director and I worked to reduce costs for our budget, I realized that the studio space we needed could be made available by using the Channel Awesome Studio.
- The studio I went with charged \$1000 per day for the use of their space. After ten days, that naturally came out to \$10,000 of a \$60,000 budget JUST for that space. In addition, because of the close proximity of the studio to three of the actors, costs could be further reduced by not having to fly them out to Minnesota.
- I brought this information and my request to Mike Michaud and Rob Walker. Rob was amenable to the idea, but Michaud flat-out refused. His reasoning was thus:
  - It would interrupt the production of the Nostalgia Critic
  - Someone would need to be with us to supervise us
  - I would have to get insurance to protect against damage to the studio
- These points are all ridiculous for a number of reasons. While production of the Nostalgia Critic COULD have been impacted, we WOULD have been happy to spend some money to rent the space and make up for any lost revenue (the idea was to reduce our own costs, not spend nothing at all).
- In addition, not every Nostalgia Critic episode requires the use of the studio space. Simpler, less grandiose episodes could be made. Plus Doug had done Nostalgia Critic for 5 years before without the use of the studio and could simply film somewhere else in a manner that did not interrupt his video production.
- The idea that we would need to be supervised is insulting. We are all grown adults and do not require someone watching us at all times. It conveyed an idea that we were untrustworthy and could not act responsibly.
- The studio we did end up renting did not see any need to supervise us, the people who owned and worked in the studio normally simply staying in the office area to provide any assistance that we requested.
- The insurance request was not unreasonable. In fact, I ended up having to get insurance for the studio we did rent. However, Michaud listed this fact as a reason why we COULDN'T use the studio. That's especially confusing since if he truly felt we were not that responsible enough to use the space, then surely getting the insurance would cover any potential risk.
- To be fair, it is entirely likely that using the studio would not have been a viable solution anyway since the movie involved complicated sets that would need to be transported down from Minnesota at a great cost of time and labor with no way to transport them back again for later use.

- However, the fact that Michaud was not even willing to humor the idea or discuss it any further demonstrated an unwillingness to work with us, compromise, or negotiate to make things easier.

## William DuFresne (Suede)

All my statements are only in regards to events I was directly involved in.

- Though I wasn't affected as directly as many of the others, there are many instances where I felt the producers were negligent and unprofessional, without any attempt at reconciliation or apology unless forced to.
- The earliest instance I can remember of something being 'off' is during filming of Suburban Knights where producers were mocked for wanting craft services and even water on set. Most of us were not being paid and the organisers not just refusing but scoffing at the idea of fulfilling basic cast and crew needs was concerning.
- I wasn't there for To Boldly Flee, so I can't comment on that experience. However I was greatly concerned when it was revealed to me that Doug had decided to retire the Nostalgia Critic character in it, as well as strongly imply that the other producers would do the same with their personas. This was a massive change up that could have affected the income for all the producers using the site, including those such as myself who relied on Blip revenue to support a family. Most visitors to the site did so solely from loyalty to the NC, and with a radically different format thrust forward with Demo Reel many viewers were left unimpressed. This should have been put forward to those dependent on the NC's traffic so that we could offer alternatives or even just brace ourselves, but nothing.
- The majority of the producers were upset and got together over several drafts to put forward a list of grievances and suggestions. Both this list and the reactions are available elsewhere but suffice it to say, apart from spotlighting producers on the site, almost all of it was ignored.

- I was one of the early adopters of Patreon and made a video, not advertising it but discussing its pros and cons. As far as I am aware, the CA response to this was to tell other producers not to advertise their patrons in their videos as it gives off the impression of “e-begging”. This was after they told us not to use more than one midroll ad on blip per video to avoid encouraging site visitors to use Adblock. This left many wondering how they were going to support themselves. CA eventually relented after near-unanimous outcry.
- When I first left the site for a two year hiatus, the entire site got together for a farewell video. When Noah left (disregarding all other aspects), there was a heartfelt text post. When Linkara and I left, our archive was deleted and people had to ask where we went. It's almost understandable that they would focus more on what they can directly control, but the lack of acknowledgement, apology, or any kind of transparency regarding their past mistakes suggests to me that they simply don't care about those not directly under their umbrella. If that is the case (and they have not made any statements indicating otherwise as of writing), there's no longer any reason for me to be loyal to them.

## Jacob Chapman (JesuOtaku)

- Michaud was going to have me fired for criticizing the site. I told him that no, I would quit on my own terms, in my own time, or else I would go public with the chat logs I had of their abuse.
- They were 100% going to fire me for basically saying the site had issues in public at all, but they crumpled like wet cardboard when I told them it wasn't going to happen without me publicly destroying their reputations as much as I could though.

## Benjamin Daniel (Benzaie)

- At no point ever was I told my vid archive would not transfer from TGWTG to Channel Awesome or that I was let go or smth, which happened the years I published a feature length movie & a TV series (albeit in French but subtitled).

- Guess I burned my bridge when notified Mike Michaud he shouldn't be selling my GF's artwork as limited prints without giving her a share since the shirts she got in exchange back when she did the Suburban Knights art was simply for the DVD & not ad-vitam rights to sell her art.
- I found my fortune elsewhere but management was indeed a farce at [@ChannelAwesome](#) This at least taught me to never slave away for free no matter what exposure I would get. Looking back, this was disrespectful regardless of how much I owe TGWTG.

## Jon Burkhardt (ChaosD1)

- Witnessed several contributors get unceremoniously removed from the site after the BT/CA merger, without directly informing any of them. Had to personally inform one of them myself.
- Had a sudden "one video per month" policy implemented on us, which was later changed to a TWO video per month policy (roughly late 2016/early 2017). Enforcement of this rule seemed random and arbitrary.
- Removed from schedule access after being one day late with a video due to wife's medical emergencies, despite having provided 4 videos to the site in the previous month, and never having missed a regularly scheduled post for over 5 years.
- When discussing reinstatement with Greg, was told to wait a few days before reinstating me and claiming it was my "one strike", only to receive a message several days later via Skype telling me "Unfortunately we are going to part ways with you" without discussing anything with me beforehand. When lamenting the sudden change, was shown a photo of my Twitter account where I asked if anyone still watched me on CA, as I was recently unlisted, and Greg thought I posted the message out of spite after talking with him and being told to wait, despite it having been posted hours before our conversation.

☆ Greg

If you have a questions feel free to leave a message and I'll get back to you asap. | Chicago, United States

Video call, Phone call, Add contact

Wednesday

I take it I was unlisted? I can't access the scheduler anymore, and the last video I scheduled wasn't listed.

7:31 PM

Thursday

Hey, you only had 1 video for April and never contacted me letting me know you couldn't get the 2nd video out in time. I can add you back to CAfiles, but this is your 1 strike. If you can't make the deadline for 2 videos by the end of a month just message me to let me know. Sound good?

12:41 AM

That should be fine. There were just a lot of NDA games in the market so nothing to do short form previews on, so I focused on streaming. (And I'm pretty sure you don't want stream recordings for posted content.) Also taking care of my wife is taking a toll with everything going on lately. My bad on at least not letting you know I had nada for April. I take it I would need to reschedule the Eternal Crusade video I originally posted on May 1st?

10:57 AM

I'm out of town until Sunday. I'll message you when I get back to go through everything

9:48 PM

Yesterday

Hey man, sorry it took me longer than normal to get back to you, I've been out of town since Thursday. Unfortunately we are going to part ways with you. We wish you all the best going forward and thank you for your contributions to the site. Best of luck.

10:07 PM

Well, glad to have it discussed with me beforehand.

10:08 PM

☆ Greg

If you have a questions feel free to leave a message and I'll get back to you asap. | Chicago, United States

Video call, Phone call, Add contact

Well, glad to have it discussed with me beforehand Yesterday

10:08 PM

Well, instead of waiting for a response from me when you asked, you immediately went to twitter and began this.

10:12 PM

Retweeted  
@kousabber - 15h  
@ChaosD1  
one to that site in months. Say what you will re YouTube content I want much easier.

10:12 PM

@ChaosD1 - 15h  
I can't list videos on CA anymore...  
no even know I still listed videos on CA?

10:12 PM

Replying to @ChaosD1  
The hell is a CA?  
@ChaosD1 - 15h  
Just a silly title. They don't exist.

Replying to @ChaosD1  
I haven't gone to that site in months. Say what you will on YouTube, at least I can find the content I want much easier.

Replying to @ChaosD1  
CA. How there's a name I haven't heard in ages.

I wanted to see if it was worth trying to stay on. Clearly it was not. And I said that on Twitter far before I came to you. If I can't even air questions and grievances on Twitter to my extremely below average follower count, I have little business with the site anyway. Enjoy whittling down the site to where you all clearly want it to be.

10:15 PM

Best of luck to you.

10:15 PM



- Original Tumblr Post: <http://chaosd1.tumblr.com/post/172060463782/chaosd1-you-know-when-i-reblogged-that-it-was#post-notes>
- Offending Twitter Post: <https://twitter.com/ChaosD1/status/859913024236290048>
- My first and ONLY interaction with Doug was after the massive cameo scene in TBF (where we all gave the NC our "Spirit Bomb" by have all us plebeian producers listing off plot holes in films.) I sent in a short scene where I honestly couldn't think of anything, but just appeared on camera saying "Birdemic.... Just... Birdemic!" I sent in the clip the appropriate way pretty early on, and was told they received it.
- When I saw the final episode/part of TBF and that scene came on, I wasn't in it at all. I brought this up to someone and somehow was told to talk to Doug about it. I'm pretty sure he just gave some lip service about adding it back in and just forgetting. Yeah, yeah, shit happens. When I asked him about retiring the NC, I got a bit of an answer but I didn't hesitate to throw him some subtle shade by saying "Love, Luck, and Lollipops" before signing off. I figured it was a reference he wouldn't appreciate.
- Oh and when the scene was added back in, it was a blink and you'll miss it half-second appearance of me just yelling "Birdemic!"

## Dr. Gonzo (Nerd to the Third Power)

- **Preamble**  
My part of the CA drama is probably a bit longer running than most. It wasn't limited to one single incident, nor even a group of smaller ones. It was one, long, continuous torture session perpetrated by a man who I am convinced has no soul, no conscience, and I'd be very surprised indeed to find out he had a heart. It's also not one you heard a lot about while it was happening. This was the result of a social isolation imposed on me (if rumor is to be believed) by design, first by a fellow contributor, and then by the aforementioned soulless wretch.

- Like any good story, mine starts at the beginning. The literal beginning. If Channel Awesome had a “Book of Genesis” I was there to see it written. I was one of the first contributor's brought on to the site, based on my Gaming Hall of Fame blogs. I was offered the position of article writer by Mike Michaud and I accepted. Also present for this “job offer” was one Daniel “ThatAussieGuy” Rizzo, or “Aussie” as we referred to him casually. Also brought onto the team as article writer was my friend Christine “Cat” Thompson, who started writing blogs there at my urging. For the first few months, things were great. Every evening, a massive skype call would be conducted by Chris “RolloT” Larios and Sean “HopeWithinChaos” Fausz, and we all would join in. I became friends with Chris and Sean, as well as with Linkara, Krissy “Goggles” Diggs, Kaylyn “MarzGurl” Saucedo, Benjamin “Benzaie” Daniel, Patrick “ColdGuy” Burnden and most of the crew from the first year. There were those I clashed with: Spoony and I never saw eye to eye, and Angry Joe and I never got on, but that was because of personality differences with the former and the latter was due to events which will be relayed here. Beyond those two, I got along with most everyone on the team, and we all came to be, I THOUGHT really good friends. This didn't last.

- **Seven Years of Hell**

Shortly after the establishment of Blistered Thumbs is when things went to hell for me. I began to notice that members of the community who I had been friends with before were less and less likely to answer my messages, whether if they were to offer them guest spots on the podcast or just to have a friendly chat. Eventually, nobody would return my messages. Eventually the only reliable contact I had within CA was with Mike “Birdman” Dodd, who had a line to CA management as well as regular contact with members of the producer community. He relayed to me a rumor that Michaud had told other producers on the site that I was “trouble” and that they were to keep contact with me to a minimum. I cannot verify the truth of this rumor, and even Dodd himself admitted that he couldn't say for sure if the rumor was true. If it was true, however, then it was a deliberate abuse tactic on Michaud's part to isolate me from the rest of the CA community, and it is this isolation that I think led in large part to what would follow in my time with Channel Awesome.

- We continued to produce Nerd to the Third Power (hereafter referred to as N3), and brought in additional team members. We would produce a “video” version of the podcast to go on the site, as well as an MP3 download on the company FTP server for people to download and listen to. At the start, we had access to our viewership numbers via counters on the website, but these were eventually removed. When I asked Michaud for our subsequent numbers after the disappearance to gauge performance, I was consistently ignored until one time when I got a reply to the effect of “stop asking for your numbers. They suck anyway, because nobody comes here to listen to you.”

This would become the lion's share of how any contact between me and CA management. Michaud would randomly message me and tell me something to the effect of "Your numbers are low. Get them up, or you'll be booted from the site." Yet he would not tell me what our numbers were or what total we needed to get. In addition, my show and all the other podcasts were buried at the bottom of the then exceptionally overcrowded front page where nobody could find us unless they scrolled all the way to the bottom. We would always be last on the "New content" slider on the front page, and would only remain on said slider for one day, as it would be removed the next day, meanwhile, everything else that came out the same day we did was still there. The side panel slider was for many months one slot short of the number of shows meant to premier on any given day, so unless the schedule for that day wasn't completely full, (which it seldom WASN'T completely full) we wouldn't appear on that side panel at all.

- We would schedule our shows MONTHS in advance. On NUMEROUS occasions we would schedule an episode, and then the day it was supposed to go out, we would find that our show had been replaced with something else. Typically this was a Linkara, Joe or Spooky vid, or a special vid put out by the site management. At no point would we receive any warning the show was being replaced, and we would have to reschedule the episode ourselves. And because at this point the schedule was full up months in advance, that meant it would have to be scheduled 3 or 4 months down the line. The worst this got was in one year, it happened 3 times, so every episode that came out that year would actually be three or four weeks old, because we'd been preempted so much. This happened mainly when Michaud was doing the site updates, but it also happened on two occasions when Holly Brown was doing the site updates, although when she preempted us, she would put our show up on the next day's rotation with proper placing on the new content slider and side panel.  
There were also a number of occasions when I would find that our entire rotation of episodes on the backend site were deleted off of the calendar.
- On numerous occasions the show would be published, but would not be placed on the front page or the new content slider, it would simply have its own episode page put up and that was it. And when I went to Michaud about this, he would tell me "why do you care, nobody listens to you anyway, your numbers suck, it doesn't matter if you go on the front page." This is if he even responded AT ALL. And when he did respond, it would be hours or even DAYS after the fact. Many have spoken about Michaud's legendary evasiveness, well, I got it too.

- He would also randomly message me to offer “feedback” on the show. Invariably it was negative and mostly abusive. “Your background music sucks. You need to lose the british girl (Skyblaze, our Convention/Tabletop correspondent is from the UK), she's boring. Why do you do so many movie reviews, we got Doug for that.”

After several YEARS of not having any problem with how we handled our MP3 downloads, we were told randomly that all MP3 files had to be less than 20 megabytes in size. This was for a show that at the time had recorded audio from six people, plus background music, and ran for 2 hours. I had to purchase web hosting and host the files myself and send Michaud a download link, which half the time he wouldn't post, and I'd have to chase him down and make noise that he put it up to get me to quiet down.
- This continuous treatment from the management sent me into a deep and at times very nearly suicidal depression. Given the events surrounding what I am about to relate, I will spare you the details of my emotional traumas.
- **The Justin Carmical Tribute and The Straw That Broke the Camel's Back**

In January of 2014, Justin “JewWario” Carmical died by self-inflicted gunshot. Carmical was a much loved and respected member of the community. I personally didn't know him very well, again, because nobody was willing to talk to me, but I thought that it would be a nice thing to do a kind of online wake, where we would bring everyone together who wanted to be there to say a few words about Justin. I didn't see anyone else talking about the idea, so I approached Michaud with the idea. In a rather (in hindsight) out of character moment, he got back to me immediately. And I presented him with the idea, and he said “Well, you're not gonna have to worry about that, Gonzo.”
- So my first thought is he's already got something planned. But then he follows that up with “Nobody know who you are. They won't care about anything you're gonna put together. We're gonna have Doug or Lewis or someone put something together. Someone people actually come here to see.”

- And I sat there, stupefied. I couldn't believe that he had said that. Not just that he'd flat out said that to ME, but that he'd said that about a plan to let people mourn a loss. And I realized that Mike Michaud never cared about anyone beyond what use he could get out of them. Oh, he would put together a Justin Carmical tribute, but it wouldn't be about the loss, it wouldn't be about letting people grieve, to him it was just another piece of content, something he could make money off if, even if only indirectly. I could even see his thought process: What's the only thing that sells better than sex? Death. He was thinking someone who never heard of CA finding this tribute and going "Oh, someone on this site killed themselves? What's that about? And what's this website he worked on?" It was never about the loss, it was about PROMOTING THE BRAND.
- That was the moment I realized Michaud was not, and never was, a man to be trusted. And that was the moment I knew my days with CA were numbered.
- **The Transition from TGWTG to CA, and My Final Exit**

Around the time the company moved from the TGWTG website to the current Channel Awesome domain, I suffered a laptop crash and lost my login credentials to the site backend. I want to say it was just after the transition, as I have vague memories of at least one episode of N<sup>3</sup> going up on the new site. I sent numerous messages to Michaud asking for him to send me my credentials so I could log in and schedule shows, but I never received any reply. Finally, after a few months of this, I got a message from one of my team members on the show over facebook: "Did you pull the show from CA?" And I didn't know what he meant, and he said "Our show page on the CA website is gone. All of our episodes we have there are gone." And I looked on the website, and sure enough, our show listing was gone, as were any links on the front page for us. And when I logged into my CA email address, (I was provided the email billysmith@channelawesome.com, fat load of good that did me), I found that it had been shut down. So all my emails, all my messages, POOF! Not there anymore. And that's how I found out we'd been cut from Channel Awesome. No notice, no warning, no nice "we wish Dr. Gonzo the best of luck!" on the website, just cut away like a stray lock of hair.

- **One Final Note**

I'm sure you will hear from many former CA contributor's about the awesome producer community, how it was a tight-knit group of friends, who stood up for and helped each other, and got along oh so well. Let me tell you, after Aussiegate, I don't remember ANY of that. The reason I believe that my abuse at Michaud's hands went unnoticed and unknown until now is because I was so isolated from the wider producer community. People that I had called friends just stopped talking to me, or having anything to do with me. And people who say they're my friends NOW, who were back then in positions to know what was going on and could have helped me stood idly by and did nothing. If I wanted to get anyone to come on the show, it just didn't happen, cause nobody would return my messages, so after a while, why bother trying? I never got any friendly "hey, you seem like you're having a rough time" or "hey, haven't heard from you in a while, how you doing?". Nobody said anything in my defense throughout the entire time I was Michaud's whipping boy.

- I don't know if Mike Dodd's rumor about Michaud "blackballing" me to other producers is true or not, but it would not surprise me at all. Isolating a victim from their support network is a textbook abuse tactic and I was basically locked alone in a dark room with Michaud for all the support I was able to get from the community. So the only conclusions I can draw is that either Michaud told them to stay away, or none of them really cared enough to ask after me and find out what was happening.
- I don't remember the community because, frankly, I wasn't a part of it. But let me be clear: the, soul-less, money grubbing piece of dogshit had us all fooled. If you can take one lesson from my story, let it be this: Channel Awesome is a meat grinder, and it's owners and managers are fat swine, feeding off the blood, sweat and tears of good people. Them and their like care nothing for you, your well-being or your ambitions. And they WILL tear you open and suckle on your innards if you give them the chance.
- Maybe that's not the happy ending people want to read. But if all this other drama should teach us anything, it's that nothing involving Mike Michaud HAS a happy ending.

## Leon Thomas (Renegade Cut)

- I joined Channel Awesome in February 2011 and stayed until April 2016. I was brought into the fold when CA launched Blistered Thumbs, a related website dedicated exclusively to video games. Eventually, I made a new web series and requested to be switched over to the main website.
- Compensation to Blistered Thumbs writers came only in the form of the occasional review copy of a game. No actual paid compensation. Those who were video producers, like myself, received nothing. Like all CA contributors, we were paid in "exposure." BT eventually died due to neglect from CA management. Because of this, it is difficult for those who worked there to use their experience with BT as a business reference to gain paid work. In other words, the "exposure" did not work the way the contributors hoped.
- Early in the days of my new web series on Channel Awesome called Renegade Cut, Doug Walker made a "rebuttal" video editorial to my short video on The Big Lebowski. He used video footage from my channel without asking me. I believe in some level of fair use, but this is a remarkably unusual thing for management to do to a subordinate. I believe Doug Walker thought he was doing me a favor simply by referencing my web series. I found it insulting that I was not consulted. CA does not, in any way, own rights to the videos made by its unpaid producers.
- The history of broken promises and extreme lack of communication between management and video producers eventually created a tense relationship. After years of persisting, Mike Michaud finally agreed to meet with us over Skype in small groups of about four at a time. In my meeting, Michaud claimed that we would do what he could to meet our needs and presented himself as agreeable and understanding, but over time, he bowed out of communicating with us completely. By the time I left the company, Michaud had long since left the official Channel Awesome Skype chat that we used for collaborations and for producer-management communication. He refused to speak with us any longer.

## Sean Fausz (Epic Fail)

- When I was at CA in the first year of it or so, I found myself regularly in a group call with Michaud, Bhargo, sometimes Ellis, Aussie, Rollo and myself. Usually some sort of mix and match of all of those. During But sometimes, calls would end up being just Rollo T myself and Ellis. We all had a pretty different sense of humor, and our personalities worked out and we'd sometimes just spend convos just laughing our asses off at whatever the hell we would talk about that night.
- However, one night in particular after a call, Ellis kept messaging me afterwards on skype. This wasn't unusual, we'd usually just BS about stuff, however he was supposedly intoxicated. I say supposedly because that's the excuse I heard later, but he was typing very coherently, not one misspelled word during our conversation.
- What started as a simple enough conversation quickly became a very... uncomfortable. He kept asking more personal and personal details, eventually going full in to "I heard from a little birdie that you were gay" "Oh I heard you were at least Bi" "Oh so you're just curious about guys then". Really, really pushing as if he was fishing for something, maybe he was desperate?
- This conversation quickly turned very one sided and even more uncomfortable as he would went on telling me all the things he wanted to do to me, the things he wanted me to do to him, Just give him a shot, he said.
- This went on for 2 hours. For these 2 hours, I typed not one word to him, but he had this entire conversation with himself, and multiple times tried the whole "Sorry i didn't mean to scare you off" tactic on me, as if it was going to make things better.
- I showed this conversation log to two people. I believe I showed part of it to Rollo T, because I was freaked the fuck out and he was the guy I trusted the most, and I remember him being completely blown away. The other person I showed, was Michaud.



- I messaged Michaud, telling him "Look what this guy is doing, I'm super freaked out" and keep in mind I believe this was just before the anniversary brawl. The only thing I ever heard from Michaud was "Damn it, I told him he couldn't be doing this shit. I'll take care of it." And then it was never spoken of again. I never heard from Ellis again and I have 0 idea if that was part of the reason he was fired from the company or not.
- Weirdly enough, the "Seinfeld" hatred that I sometimes joke about actually has to do with this story. two of the things Ellis said to me during that have stuck in my head, because of how pathetic and how fucking weird it was.
- 1) He kept calling me his sexual cupcake. What the fuck is that?  
2) After those hours of him talking to himself, he finally gave up talking to me. But he did make one last ditch effort to hit on me. And it by far, was the worst pick up line I've ever been given.  
"Hey."  
"Hey."  
"Hey."  
"Hey."  
"Hey Sean."  
"Hey Cupcake."  
"Do you like Seinfeld?"

No. No I do not.

## Beth Elderkin

- Before I share anything, let me state that—for me—business and friendship are two different things. The Walkers and other CA crew have been, and continue to be, good friends of mine. Others may not share that view, and that's their right.
- After I'd lost my last FT job, I started working with CA on a series called Awesome Comics. I was promised by Mike an hourly rate for what turned out to be several-hour shoots (including waiting time). Travel time was my own cost, though in hindsight it shouldn't have been.

- It wasn't until after I'd recorded the first episode, along with taping a several-hour intro sequence, did I find out I'd only been paid for one hour: the hour I had been on camera.
- I raised my concerns about this, because I was not told ahead of time that my pay would be 1/5 of what I was expecting. Hourly wages for actors and TV personalities, doesn't start and end when the cameras roll.
- Management was understanding, but also told me Mike had said, in no short words, that CA was "already losing money," and that they couldn't pay me the full hourly wage I'd been promised.
- They offered me a few bucks more for travel and I accepted. Looking back, I should not have done so. I was using up my entire work day to basically break even, given travel and food costs. And my time was worth more than that.
- Soon after, I got an offer to be io9's weekend editor and I accepted. It meant having to quit CA a couple of months after I'd started, which I felt guilty about. But again, in hindsight, it was the right decision.
- Eventually, my working relationship with CA ended. It was because of a number of things, namely my career. But I will say that if management had paid me what I was worth for CA, I would have been more inclined to stay.
- I'm still grateful that my husband and I were brought into the CA family, and I wouldn't trade that experience for the world. I made some wonderful friends, and my career grew thanks to my time there. But good experiences don't negate unacceptable ones.
- I share this story not to shame, but to educate. In a gig economy, we're tempted, coerced, and sometimes even forced to lower our value in order to get by. You're worth more than that. As was I.

## Cferra (Wiki)

- **Wiki**

In the beginning Channel Awesome was sort of indifferent about the Wiki. They treated us as nothing more than fans. Sure we'd get special things like autographed dvds. We even had a link on the sidebar on the old website. Sometimes they said they liked us and then it was found out that the higher ups did not like the wiki at all. It was strange because they'd say on streams that they liked them when in actuality they did not.
- We found that several people were being talked about behind their backs while maintaining a facade. That was strange when you consider several websites work harmoniously with their corresponding wiki like the Homestar Runner wiki. The Chapman bros use it constantly and they've been around a LOT longer than Channel Awesome.
- **Blogs**

It used to be relatively easy to contact the administration when it came to the blogs. Now errors pop up when users go to post. They just don't seem to care about fixing various errors which can be fixed. The site's management has often neglected to update various parts and leave the blogger spotlight untouched for months or even years at a time.

## Topher Ames (Fool Fantastic)

- I was invited to join the Channel Awesome team as a writer in late 2009; a very short time later, they warned us that the article section would soon be disappearing from the site - why they would hire me so close to making that decision I found a bit questionable. Not wanting to immediately lose my chance at having a platform, I decided to essentially tackle my article topics in video form. They were a bit rough (and I was perhaps a bit young at 17 to tackle essential cinema), but they got the point across, and they decided to pick up the series as Marvelous Movies.

- A little before I began creating my videos, Holly was hired as HR for Channel Awesome; she was essentially presented to me as someone who should be a main contact. A little bit later, Mike Ellis was let go; up until that point, he was the one site runner I could get to consistently respond to me (though our discussions were a bit questionable, such as the time he randomly mentioned the fact that he was high).
- After the third episode, a few issues began to pop up in my personal life. On the simplest level, it was my senior year of high school; stress was kicking in as I was focused on school. But what really took my focus away from the site was that I was finally accepting that I was gay - which, living in a town of only 5,000 people in rural Illinois, is a scary experience.
- Now, I don't want to make accusations of homophobia and the like toward Channel Awesome - but at the same time, the idea of going to someone like Michaud and saying 'hey, I'm having some issues with my sexual identity and need some time away from the site to figure things out' certainly didn't sound inviting. However, as I've said, Holly was presented to me like a key member of the team, and she had been open about her own association with the LGBTQ community. So, naturally, I discussed coming out with her, and made it clear my time would be occupied for a couple months.
- Of course, things didn't go as smoothly as I had planned. Pretty soon I was faced with the threat of not being allowed to go off to college due to coming out. So, what was already a stressful period turned into a threat against my future. As you can probably imagine, creating content for TGWTG wasn't a main focus at that point.
- Yet, throughout that time period, I remained determined to better my content. I consistently worked on improving my style, but avoided publishing any videos until it was up to the standards of other producers - I became focused on how to make a positively focused series entertaining. I even put quite a bit of money down on a camera.
- Finally ready to return to TGWTG, I contacted Bhargav with my improved series ready. However, while getting ready to message him, I happened to look at the website and noticed my videos were no longer in the drop down menu. Instead of going straight to my new video, I instead brought this up. He claimed that, because I hadn't produced anything in several months and hadn't contacted anyone about why, they decided to remove me.

- I addressed a few issues:
  1. I had contacted someone from the site - Holly
  2. We were all connected on Skype; if they were wondering where I went, they had my contact information immediately available
  3. Additionally, I explained my reason for needing to take time away
  
- They entirely ignored the first point - apparently, talking to Holly didn't qualify as talking to the company. I got in a conversation with both Bhargav and Rob, where both consistently belittled the experience I had been going through. Having a rather traumatic experience meant nothing to them. They didn't even offer sympathy - even if they had still decided to not let me return, they could have at least acknowledged that my situation was rough. So, while I don't want to accuse anyone behind Channel Awesome as being outright homophobic, they certainly don't care about the well-being of queer people. I guess the word here is indifference opposed to hatred. I would go in more detail on what exactly was happening in my personal life, but I have since reconciled with the person behind it and would prefer not to drag the details into a public spotlight. But it had gotten to the point where some people were inviting me to move in with them due to what was happening, so it was clearly severe.
  
- After spending an hour repeatedly telling me none of that was a good enough excuse, Rob and Bhargav told me they would discuss with Michaud whether I would be allowed to return to the site - but it was clear from their language it wasn't actually being considered. I brought up what had happened on twitter, as I was obviously furious at having had such an abusive conversation with people I had until then looked up to. They then told me that those tweets meant I wouldn't be allowed back on - as if anyone would believe for a second they actually considered it.
  
- Afterward, I had to directly remind them that I was also an article producer and my writing was still up. They even asked if I actually wanted them to be removed - why was that a question? They had just released me from the company on incredibly bad terms - why would I let them keep my articles up?

- Unfortunately, I was the first person let go from the site without being told - being the first, it left the impression that my content was just that terrible. I quickly removed any contact I had with other producers, as I was convinced everyone was on their side. Even my debut video was published in the final time slot of its night - they clearly didn't want me there from the beginning. It wasn't until I saw #ChangeTheChannel mentioned on a forum that I realized they were acting this same way to everyone else.
- Hell - looking back, I would have loved if they simply told me, 'hey, your videos aren't that great/getting enough viewers,' because I could at least agree that, yeah, my first few videos weren't especially great. And I'm pretty sure that's the real reason they removed me. But, instead, they fumbled that conversation so badly that they had convinced me I was being let go for coming out at an inopportune time.
- It's saying something that, even through all the actual trauma I went through while coming out, my worst memory from that era was my conversation with Rob and Bhargav.

## Animerica

### **Broken Promises and Other Lies**

- My introduction as a member of Channel Awesome was a group Skype call with Mike Michaud. During this call, we were told that the following things were going to happen for us:
  - A. Each of us would be promoted routinely at the top of the page to draw eyes to our content, Doug would do a video promoting us and our video for that week, and it would also be crossposted with his NC video for that week.

**Did this happen?**

Partially. While all of the above did happen, it only happened one time. In addition, when Doug "promoted" us, he sounded condescending and indifferent; it was barely a plug at all. I was quite put off by his attitude throughout, almost as if talking about anime was beneath him; like he was being forced to do something he had absolutely no interest in. On top of this, for no discernible reason, once the first run for us new producers was over, they incorporated all of the already established well-known producers, who clearly had no need for it. Doug never again did any promotion for anyone and being "featured" did very little for us in the long term.

- B. We would receive sponsored giveaways to go along with being featured from companies like Amazon, Humble Bundle, Gamefly, and others.

**Did this happen?**

No. Instead, when it came time for our "Producer Spotlight," we were told that the giveaway was optional and that if we wanted to do it, we had to arrange it ourselves. There was no sponsorship, simply a free gift card.

- C. Everyone would visit the CA Studio to meet with Doug and Rob to discuss how to grow in the CA community and develop an audience there.

**Did this happen?**

No. No offers were ever extended, no further word on this was ever heard, and when I brought it up with them, I was ignored.

- D. New custom headers for the new Channel Awesome website would be created to reflect the producers posting videos that day, creating a dynamic eye catch that indirectly promotes everyone.

**Did this happen?**

No. Only after asking about it a few weeks later was I informed that it was being scaled back to only feature big producers like Linkara, Brad, etc., and then it was silently dropped.

- E. Mike said that he would be hands on with us initially to help with our integration to the site and make sure we became members of the community.

### **Did this happen?**

No. Instead, Mike would always respond to my questions and concerns as if I was annoying and/or not worth his time. He always--ALWAYS--had his Skype set to unavailable and if he responded at all, it was not until I prodded him multiple times to do so. Eventually, he ducked out entirely and assigned Greg to communicate with us, who, also, after only a couple months, stopped replying with any degree of immediacy. We were never seen as assets by them; only burdens.

### **Punishing From the Top Down (minus the bottom)**

- I would have thought that, as with anything in life, us newest in the fold would have faced the strictest enforcement for violating the rules set out for us. After all, we were the rookies; we were the ones who needed to be made to adapt to their way of doing things since we never had before.
- Instead, on multiple occasions, Greg (possibly via Mike) doled out the harshest punishments on the veteran producers who, in every case, had never once stepped out of line. As has been well documented, Chaos D1 faced the harshest penalty--being removed from the site--for being one day late with his second upload for the month, even though he had been with the site for years and had never before been late. Tom White also experienced the same treatment when matters in his private life also caused him to be one day late. Exactly like D1, he was told that it was his "one strike" and that if he did it again, he would be permanently removed from the site. I personally witnessed all of this play out in real time.
- I cannot fathom how such treatment is justifiable, or, to any extent, even intelligent. Where is the value in demoralizing the producers most loyal to your brand with the most impeccable track records of reliability? What sort of people would do blatantly disrespect and demean those who they should ostensibly value?



- One might then, at the very least, expect such obtusely stringent enforcement to happen across the board. Because if such productive members of the site would face such withering penalties, everyone else would too, right? One would be wrong. In fact, I heard from several smaller producers that they went several months in a row without publishing a video, didn't hear a word from Greg, and remained on the site with no acknowledgement whatsoever.

## Doug and Only Doug

- While it has become a very apparent reality that CA only cares about Doug Walker and his series somewhat recently, this has been the case since we were brought on the site, if not earlier. Near the beginning of our tenure, I was taking a look at the new website, where I noticed a sidebar widget titled "Popular Videos." Not surprisingly, ALL of the top videos were Nostalgia Critic episodes with maybe a Linkara video poking in once or twice. In addition, this widget was placed ABOVE the daily videos sidebar, meaning people were more likely to click away from the page featuring our videos and just watch an old video of Doug's.
- I contacted Greg about this and questioned the purpose of advertising Doug when the overwhelming majority of people coming to the site already did so primarily for him. I suggested that the widget could be modified so that it only included a maximum of one video from each producer. This way, other producers could find spots on the list and possibly some of the new producers as well. Before suggesting this, I even contacted our web developer, who confirmed that such a thing was most definitely doable.
- Greg responded by telling me that doing such a thing would be completely impossible. Obviously, this was objectively false, but not wanting to appear hostile, I then suggested the possible addition of another sidebar that featured the most popular videos from the new producers. Call it "Popular and Fresh" or something like that. For the record, I suggested this because **I could do it myself in Wordpress**. Greg said they might consider it, but it never came to pass. Instead, the "Popular Videos" sidebar was quietly deleted and nothing was ever done for us as the only takeaway for them was how immensely popular Doug was. After all, that's the only thing they care about

## Conclusion

- The entire reason why I started making videos online was because of TGWTG. In fact, in the first two seasons of our flagship series, Animerica, we included "Inspired By That Guy With The Glasses" in our opening credits sequence. I was so excited to join the site that I posted it as a milestone in our Facebook group the day I got the news. Three years later, I was unhappy, not valued, neglected, and getting absolutely nothing out of it. The other producers' overall misery permeated our side chat as only a few were getting anything positive out of it anymore. What really drew the line for us was how Chaos D1 and Tom White were treated. We weren't around long enough to hear about everything else that had gone on; I had no desire to be a part of an organization that treated longstanding contributors with such disregard and disrespect. While we never personally suffered any direct abuse from the leadership there, we also never received any real aid. Our views dropped off the map, as did many others', and no one batted an eye. I do not miss Channel Awesome, I would never want to be a part of it again, and that, for me at least, is the worst part.

## Tom White

### Mike Dodd

- Mike "Birdman" Dodd had worked really hard on Blistered Thumbs. He created daily content for a long while. He also had extensive background in PR and promotional work and had a number of contacts in the industry that he tried to use to help promote the site. He offered his expertise to Michaud lots of times, even including drafting up formal proposals to help turn the site into a successful gaming website. He was completely ignored, and later Blistered Thumbs tanked. When they migrated all the BT producers over to TGWTG they ignored Mike Dodd and essentially dropped him from the site without telling him.
- I was on a Skype call with Michaud when he was explaining how to use the TGWTG system when he casually mentioned that Dodd was going to be let go. Mike had to hear the news from me.

- Here's a recording from the Skype call:  
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/hzhtl3n8d2chqgr/Skype%20Michaud%20excerpt.mp3?dl=0>
- Before this had happened I was really passionate about Channel Awesome. After the way Mike Dodd was treated, I lost my enthusiasm for the site. I just kind of kept on but no longer felt any particular loyalty.

### **Video Game Music Contest**

- I'd been talking to Michaud about running a trivia contest on my channel and he liked the idea. I was going to offer my own prize, but Michaud insisted on using a Sega Genesis he had lying around the office as a prize. I was reluctant because at this point his reputation was that he could be untrustworthy about this sort of thing, but I said sure.
- The contest ended. I contacted the winner and got their address. The winner was in Russia and immediately I was nervous that that would make the game system expensive to ship and I had a feeling Michaud would try to tell me that wasn't the deal or something.
- So, I forwarded the address to Michaud. He didn't bat an eye at the fact that it was Russia and told me it would be sent out immediately.

I followed up later and he told me it was sent out.

Months went by and the winner never received the prize. I asked Michaud about it and he ignored my messages.

The winner told me that if it was mailed out, the post office would have given him some kind of customs number even if there was no tracking information and asked if that could be provided.

I asked Michaud and got no reply.

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November-01-15

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Hey, Mike. My contest winner still hasn't received the Sega. Were you given a USPS Customs Form number?

2:54 PM

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November-05-15

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He said that when you send a package via USPS they give you some kind of number of something. Did you happen to keep one?

1:24 PM

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May-19-16

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Did that Sega you sent out get returned in the mail or anything? The contest winner still hasn't received it or heard any word about it

9:31 AM

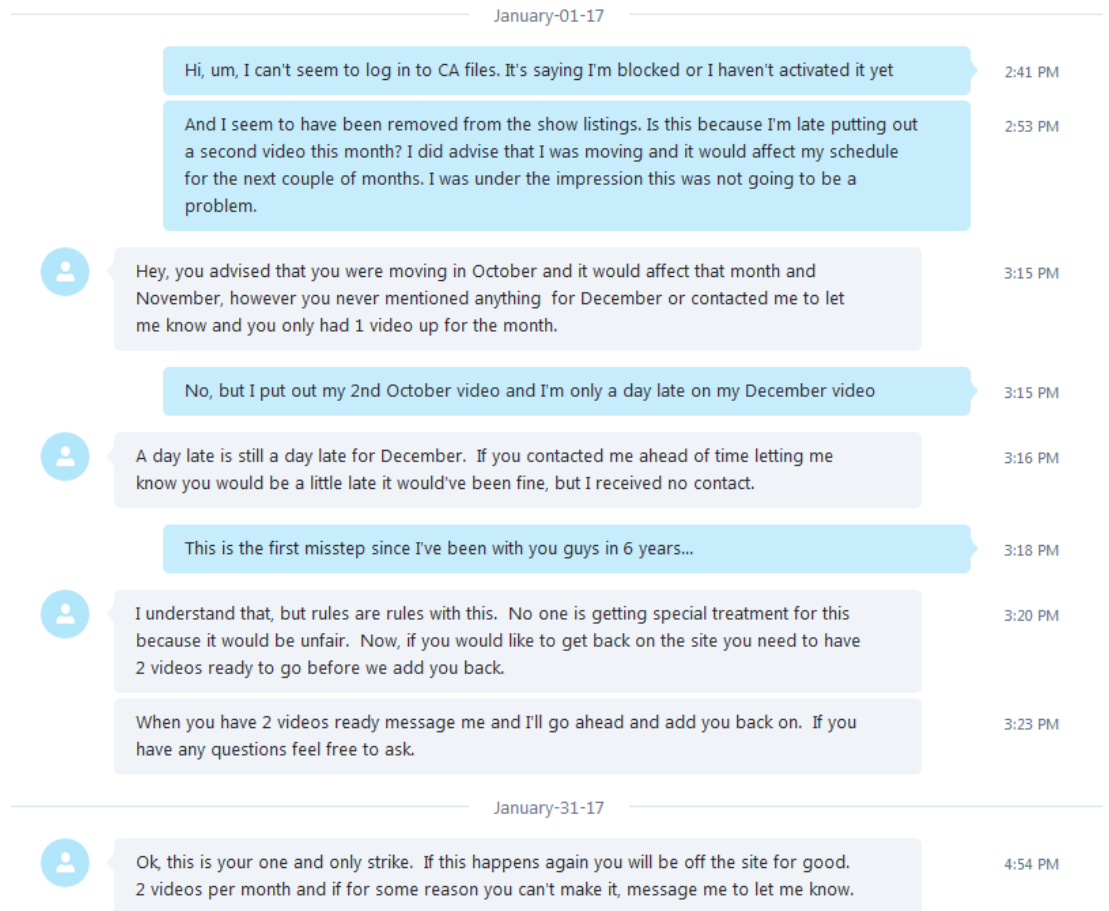
I was in a really difficult position because I didn't want to badly represent Channel Awesome and my boss by telling the winner it's not my fault, but I was given nothing to work with. Eventually after like six months with no prize I had to apologize to the winner and send him an Amazon gift card instead. Years later I sent the winner an E-mail again and still no prize.

If Michaud actually did deliver the prize as promised, my best guess is that the package got returned and he never said a word to me about it, even after repeated follow ups.

### **My booting**

- By the end of 2016, a lot of people had been kicked off the site for minor reasons. Allison getting booted was particularly ridiculous. I knew that Allison had been more outspoken than other producers and although I thought it was stupid to remove her from the site I figured Michaud was just petty and lashed out at anyone who would disagree with his methods, so I kept my head down and just did my best to be professional and compliant. Their two videos a month policy was extremely difficult. They had removed Ross Scott and Guru Larry from the site for not producing content fast enough, which was bizarre to me since both had between 100,000 and 200,000 subscribers and were some of the bigger draws. (Guru Larry was reinstated later)
- I was feeling constant stress trying to work within their time constraints but I managed to keep up with their policy. Then I ended up having to move. I contacted Greg and let him know the situation and I said I THINK I'd be able to do 2 videos a month during October and November but because of the move I might not be able to. He said that was fine.

- I actually still managed to put out 2 in October as usual, and only 1 in November. So I still did all right. In December, I finished the first video early on in the month but at the end of the year I ended up not finishing my video until the 30th but had some issues with the final product that had to be fixed. Seeing that I needed a little extra time to finish and upload it to YouTube, I scheduled the video for January 1st instead of the 31st.
- I figured it wouldn't be a big deal because I'd known other producers who had been lax, and I figured since I gave Greg a heads up about my situation it would be easily understandable that the move was still affecting me. I honestly didn't think he'd even notice.
- I was already removed from the site and my login was revoked the next day. I'd been with Channel Awesome for six years. I'd been completely professional and reliable, never argumentative for even a moment. I did volunteer work for them and their charity live streams. And they removed me instantly the moment I was late on one video after I already warned them of my situation. I actually think the only reason I got removed at all was because after I warned them of my move they were waiting to see if I messed up so they could remove me instantly. Other producers had not produced content in months and never got removed.
- After I talked to Greg, he told me I would get one last chance and that was it. Any more issues and I would be kicked off the site for good.



(One or two messages are missing from this screenshot because of how Skype saves message history across different devices. I probably sent Greg the link to the new videos on my phone or something.)

## ChaosD1

- ChaosD1 got kicked off the site in much the same manner as me. He didn't put up a second video one month. But while they'd established the rule was that you'd always get one second chance, he was refused his second chance because he had happened to run a poll asking people on Twitter whether they still watch him on CA or just on YouTube.
- This was the last straw for me. I didn't want to sit around and wait for the next time I accidentally make some minor mistake that would have me kicked off permanently, and I couldn't support them after seeing how they treated so many of their producers, employees, and fans. I made plans to leave after that and never looked back.

## Lindsay Ellis (Nostalgia Chick)

- I left years ago and the mismanagement of Channel Awesome doesn't really haunt my every waking moment (nor did it ever). Still, I see people putting words in my mouth, so I want to get some things on the record. To me this is not about defamation or destroying them, but about clearing the air and correcting misconceptions.
- First of all, I do feel like the way management approached the anniversaries from the getgo was inappropriate in a way that was never rectified. I was in my third semester at USC when the second anniversary happened, and the first real moment of concern came at the hotel in Reno on the set ("set") of Kickassia, when Doug was explaining the schedule, and I asked a logistical question, namely, what his plan was for craft services. Doug actually laughed at me, like I was some princess expecting special treatment. Noah Antwiler, who was also there, explained that craft services is generally a given at any shoot, even student films. Only then was the suggestion taken seriously.
- This was a set with more than 30 people, and they did not have food or water until they were told to do so (to my memory, they didn't get around to it until day 2). To be clear, inexperience was not the issue - arrogance was. Everyone who gets into film has a learning curve, but Doug & co. barged in like they had nothing to learn, and this resulted in a variety of issues, from not bothering to secure permits or even learn shooting location hours (Suburban Knights), or to multiple injuries on the set ("set") of To Boldly Flee. They never secured production insurance. Ed Glaser and I had to step in to help during the Suburban Knights shoot, which had next to no planning. They never hired stunt people. The whole experience was unprofessional and irresponsible. As for legality, I'm not positive, but this wasn't illegal so much as grossly unprofessional given how much money was involved. This would have broken the rules of every guild on Earth, but this wasn't a union set, so whaddya gonna do?
- The worst aspect of this for my part was the fact that when I tried to give advice or make suggestions, it was met with disdain. This was not limited to Michaud and the Walkers - there was definitely an atmosphere that viewed any sort of experience or knowledge of how film sets work as a sort of elitism, in a perverse way, an anti-intellectual streak.

- The project I most regret was To Boldly Flee- I made my discomfort with Doug's expectations known before I set foot in Chicago, so this should come as a surprise to no one. As has been discussed elsewhere, my "character"'s name, a parody of 7 of 9, was originally 60 of 9. Doug didn't see why this might raise hackles. My biggest objection was the outfit I was expected to wear. I had no say on the fact that Doug wrote my character based on 7 of 9, and I had to dress like that character.
- The worst of course was the "transformation" scene, which was just an extended rape joke. Lewis and I talked about it between each other weeks before the shoot (Lewis actually reached out to me with his concerns, as I had not read the script yet), and explained our objections to Doug together. Doug's solution was, rather than rewrite it, have a "toned down" version in the final cut, in which I make comical sexual assault noises instead of the original script as written. In effect, it was not changed, and it's still an extended rape joke, just perhaps less overt.
- And while we're here, Michaud expecting producers, who were independent contractors, to hand over their privately written and filmed crossover videos during the anniversaries to help recoup the costs of production while themselves getting NO compensation was repugnant and exploitative. I regret not having pushed back more against this.
- During this time there was also a streak of harassment against female contributors. The worst case that involved me resulted in an extended case with the NYPD. This was not the only incidence of harassment that went unremarked upon by CA. There was a rash of harassment against CA producers between 2013 and 2014, mostly women, which was never acknowledged or condemned by CA.
- The breaking point for me came much later. In late 2014, channel awesome brought on some new content producers, several of which I vouched for. One of these was Dan Olson. In December of 2014, Dan did some investigative journalism work which resulted in him becoming the target of organized harassment and conspiracy theorists. Dan posted an article on medium about 8-chan's willful complicity in child pornography. This resulted in a organized campaign to defame Dan Olson, declaring him a child pornographer for doing journalistic work about child pornography. The conspiracy theorists continue to this day.



- This happened right before Christmas, on December 23, 2014. I was driving home to visit my family in Tennessee. I was about two hours from the Virginia/Tennessee border when I get a call from Mike Michaud, who was absolutely livid about something Dan Olson has done. Predictably, these organized harassment brigades started a campaign emailing Mike Michaud. Rather than seeing it for what it was, Michaud blamed the victim. And instead of calling Dan to find out what happened, Michaud called ME while I was in the car driving home to visit my family for Christmas, because in Michaud's mind, I was apparently Dan's keeper for having vouched for him when Channel Awesome was picking up new talent.
- This was not the first time that one or several producers was being targeted by harassment campaigns, and Channel Awesome never stood up for anyone (unless it was directly related to them being demonetized #WTFU). They stood silent during the gamergate, they stayed silent while many of their female contributors over the years were targeted by gamergate. Their business model implies that it is more important for them to be uncontroversial than it is for them to stand behind their contributors who are being targeted. To be clear, Dan did nothing wrong, but was blamed by Michaud (and by extension, so was I) for attracting "controversy" from people who are somehow threatened by outing websites that enable child pornographers.
- I left a few days later, as did Kyle Kallgren and Dan Olson.

## Anonymous I

The following story is from an anonymous contributor we are calling "Jane Doe", recounting the story of a former producer who had sexually abused her, and claims that management was aware of said producer's deviancy for a year and did nothing. Pieces of information, including names, are removed for the sake of privacy. Jane Doe has given us permission to share this story but not her name. At least two other victims have come forward regarding this person, but whether management knew about them is unknown. The chat is copied verbatim with the victim's permission.

- Jane Doe: Hi. I'm one of his victims. (...) I have nothing but hate for him. it makes me...mad at all of you. even though I know you don't deserve it. it's why I left. yeah. he groomed me.
- Anon 1: I think at first we need to come to terms with the fact that a lot of people in this chat legit did not know

- Jane Doe: that's something I need to come to terms with. I burned so many birdges with you becuase I was SO angry (...) so I'll tell my facts, but I wanna leave out anyone else who doesn't need this shit
- Anon 2: To me the most damning part is that folks knew and had a chance to cut off [his] access to fans early, and did not.
- Jane Doe: I dunno. I'm sure I'm part of it. I could have been louder. I'm no angel. anyway, you all knew me back then. physically I was 18 but had the mind of a 16 year old AT BEST. he groomed me. convionced me to take my clothes off for him. told me he wanted to teach me how to kiss, fuck etc. made it seem like it was like teachiong someone how to read (...) anyway, I genuinluy thought he was being an impassionate teacher. I Came foreward as best I can. (...) yeah it wasn't until I read a pamphlet on choild grooming techniques I went "holy shit that was ME". yeah. that's the damning part. since he didn't "hurt" me, I wonder how much of it was him genuinly thinking he was helping me come into my sexuality? (...) but I am really done with all of thus. I'm a different person in a different world, and I really can't druge it all back and remain mentally healthy. this is about as "brave" as I get. i was so mad at all of you. This...I'm glad some of my anger was misplaced. (...) I'm sorry I burned so many birdges. I was just...so angry. (...) yeah, part of the reason I couldn't say much was because grooming isn't illegal. and I can't say he raped me, soooo there wasn't anything to tell. (...) yeah seriously. like I said, when I read a pamphlet on child predator techniques I was like WHAT OMG THAT WAS HIM AND ME
- Anon 2: Jane, if you want to say anything else, do you recall how long it was after you came forward to CA management that [he] was finally let go?
- Jane Doe: it's kinda hazy, but I'd say maybe a year?
- Anon 2: Something like a year between them first finding out he was sexually grooming female members of the channel's fan community to them doing anything about it.
- Jane Doe: yeah. that didn't really help me feel any more heard lol. (...) I have to say, this was very therapeutic. and I'm sorry for all the times I lashed out at you all. you didn't deserve it, and I took my anger out on you

# Anonymous II

- I started off making fanart of Channel Awesome. All of the video creators of the site were inspirational to me and I wanted to provide some artistic input for them. For awhile, I felt like I was a part of the "community" and a lot of the creators became closer to me as a result and I've gained a lot of friends because of it. I started to become hired to create title cards for many of the content, I almost became overworked because of the sheer amount of commissions (this was on me, not on any of the content creators.) It was fun and I even decided to try my hand at some of my own content.
- I was working full time as an animator, from time to time I was on hiatus and I would have more free time to create content. I decided to create a show based on video games with my own writing flair, and I never honestly expected to become a part of CA until Holly brought me aboard, whom I later found out, I was the last one to be brought aboard before she was cut from the site altogether, so I owe her a lot of credit for me even being a part of it as a content creator.
- At the time, they were looking for content for their Blistered Thumbs website, which sort of became an afterthought. I didn't think there was a lot of attention given to the videos posted there, and I honestly think the site was overrun by almost TOO MUCH content, to the point where quantity mattered more than quality (not that my work was quality, but I put as much effort into my show as I was able.)
- It almost felt like it wasn't worth the effort... Maker(aka Blip) was dying, Blistered Thumbs got no attention, and by the time they made the redesign, months and months they promised "spotlights" to other creators outside of the "main big ones" (I believe Atop the 4th Wall was featured for all those months) I decided to leave on my own account, and that's when the drama began to come about.

- I mainly tried to avoid a lot of it, but it really depressed me to see how much Doug and Mike had truly seemed like they didn't care about anyone else on the site. I didn't honestly expect them to give a lot of focus to others outside themselves, they had their own shows to worry about, but to make so many promises and then just cut everyone off in an instant seemed like they were just dooming themselves. But they seem to have survived and focus on a lot of nonsense that, in the long run, looks pretty bad from an outsiders point of view. I think the biggest issue I had was how easily they used their fanbase... I was making fanart for free out of my own free will, but when they made contests, their prizes were pretty underwhelming and I thought it was monumentally unfair to the artists involved, but that was my opinion.
- Again, I was but a speck among others involved and I don't expect to make much of an impact. I was a fan at first, I have my profession, and I wanted to join in on the fun, and I guess I joined in at the wrong time. I am deeply saddened by the amount of hate and harm that a lot of the site has given its creators who were offering their time and money and effort into helping someone else who, in my view, pretended to care about more than himself. As a business person I can understand the position, on another, business practice is a thing to handle with care, and by kicking out the people who DID do a good job with that, seemed counterproductive. Ignoring warnings and making bad decisions just seemed to be going on nonstop.
- At any rate, that's just my two cents. I've liked to think I moved on from all this, especially since my expertise is in a field I am happy to have been in for the past decade.
- I still miss a lot of the wonderful people I got to meet face to face and talk to on a more personal and friendly manner. I wish them nothing but the best. Sometimes the only way to stop toxic behavior is to cut it from our lives entirely and not offer any help, and soon enough they were realize what they've done.

# Fan Document

In the interest of transparency, we have removed the link to the fan document. We would like all information we support to be verified. Due to the extra attention received, more stories are coming out and we don't have any way of verifying fan submissions. Because of this, we cannot in good conscience continue to link to a living document.

## Conclusion

The above stories were written to the best of our personal knowledge and recollection. Our belief is that Channel Awesome CEO Mike Michaud has not had the best interests of anyone but himself in mind in the management of the company, and that Doug and Rob Walker have also done little to show that they are concerned with the rest of the contributors that have been partnered with Channel Awesome. While in many instances one or all three of these parties may have simply been complicit in many dealings, in other instances they have been directly involved with our mismanagement and in some cases egregious mistreatment. Our stories are many and varied from content creator to content creator, and yet many stories also mirror one another's experiences. We believe that by making these statements in regards to Channel Awesome that we are largely doing something that we believe to be morally correct, and we hope that what you have read above has been beneficial in your decisions to support any number of content creators. And above all else, we hope that you learn from our stories, and that you as a reader do not find yourself in situations similar to those that we have already experienced. It is not necessary for you to remain in a situation that makes you uncomfortable simply so you can produce entertainment or other kinds of media.

We thank you for the time it has taken for you to read our stories, and we wish all of you well in your future endeavors.