

**Interviewee:** Dan Davies

**Interviewer:** Brandon Koran

**Date:** December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021

**Format:** Video recording, Zoom

**Location of interview:** Eau Claire

**Transcriber:** Brandon Koran

**Additional Transcription Equipment used:** Otter.ai

**Project in association with:** University of Wisconsin- Eau Claire

**Abstract:**

Dan Davies was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and raised in Waupaca, Wisconsin and currently works in Appleton as a writer, actor, producer, and director. In this interview, Dan Davies discusses the impact Covid-19 has had on his work, his life, and his mental health. He explains how Covid-19 shut down the movie industry and effectively ended most types of jobs within films. He continues by explaining the struggles of making films during the pandemic, keeping the safety of his crew members and actors his top priority, and the loss of film projects. He discusses how the pandemic motivated him to write and publish a book with another on its way. He touches on the politicization of Covid-19 and the conflicting messages the media spreads.

**Brandon Koran 00:02**

I'm Brandon Koran. The time is 2:05 December 31st 2021. The current number of cases when the US is 53,795,407. And deaths in the US are 820,355. In Wisconsin, there are 4230 cases, with 10,044 deaths. The percentage of the population within the US vaccinated is 62%. This is provided by NPR. And I'm here today. Oh, actually, if I could have you state your name and share some demographic information such as race, age, gender.

**Dan Davies 00:49**

My name is Dan Davies. I'm an actor, and a screenwriter. I live in Appleton, Wisconsin. And I'm in my mid-50s. And yeah, and I domicile here pretty much 24/7 unless I'm traveling for films.

**Brandon Koran 01:09**

And then what would you what are the primary things you do on a day to day basis?

**DD 01:14**

Oh, you know, for me, it's, you know, if I have an audition, I do a video audition, I prep for those things. I do a lot of writing. I finished my first book, actually, the rantings of a madman on Facebook. And that came out in 2021, during COVID. So I've got a book out, I'm writing a second book, that'll be out in 2022. My screenplays, so I'm always writing, I'm always kind of creating from that angle. And then working my craft and- and filming, I was able to do some filming in Colorado for a TV show called Weird People in Weird Places. And a TV show based on a book called A Forest Dark and that book comes out April One of 2022. And I was able to film that here in Appleton, which is cool. We did as much COVID protocols as we could and it went real well.

**BK 02:11**

Gotcha. If you're willing, would you be able to describe the experience? Like filming compare-compared to before COVID to now during COVID?

**DD 02:20**

Yeah, it's- it's- it's, you know, it's obviously different. We had a COVID kind of compliance officer, so to speak on set, but we kept it. I just asked very simple questions to everybody that was there. Can you, have you, had it? Do you have immune you know, antibodies, you have an immunity built up? Have you had the vaccination? How comfortable are you to be in a room with people, you know, that will be masked, and then when we're filming, they'll be unmasked, so I made sure that it was incumbent upon them to feel comfortable to do their due diligence, and their legwork to- to come prepared for the filming. So, we had about, oh, 25 extras, in a very, very large room, we set the- the seats up, so they were quote unquote, socially space, they weren't exactly six feet apart. But yeah, it went really, really, really well. And people felt comfortable. And it's just- it's all about taking those- those precautions, you know, just taking the time to implement them is half the battle. So, if you can get to that point of, you know- and what I didn't want to do was pry into their medical history, it's none of my damn business. And people kind of, you know, there are HIPAA laws and people think that they just are like federal government or whatever. No, they don't they they're wide reaching. If I was an employer, I can't ask someone's, you know, you're not even supposed to ask their age, let alone I can't say if you have cancer, or, you know, there's a lot of questions that you can't ask from a legal perspective, which makes sense, because people would find a way to be maybe bigoted towards that person. Why can't hire this person, they've had cancer already two or three times? Why should I hire them, train them for six months, and then they get cancer again, you know, just you know, that's a probably a bad example. But it's- I didn't want to pry too much. To make a long story short, I didn't want to pry too much. And I just wanted to kind of leave it upon them to feel comfortable and yeah, so we had the masks, readily available hand sanitizers, all those things, and it went really well.

**BK 04:48**

Did you find difficulty in hiring extras or crew members at all during this time?

**DD 04:54**

You know, there was some people that were still a little reticent about being on- on set until I explained to them how we were going to go about doing it. And then that gave them a comfort level. And- and I just asked everybody that was there to be respectful of everyone to be socially distant to, you know, keep your hands clean at all times. We had buffet style food, we did it so that people kind of went up in kind of segmentalized when up to the where the food was at and made everything disposable. Had the hand sanitizers. I said, if you go up for seconds, you can, I don't mind, but you can have to clean your hands, you know, so, um, so there were just simple things, you know, that kept everybody safe and kept everybody happy. And it went really, really well actually.

**BK 05:51**

Gotcha. And then you said you had a little bit of filming in Colorado? Was there a big difference in covid restrictions compared to call like filming Colorado versus Wisconsin?

**DD 06:02**

Well, let me backtrack when we filmed in. in Appleton, we have- I reached out to Downtown Appleton Incorporated. And they've been very helpful with my filming and- and are very supportive of me. So, they said, "Well, do you know who Amanda Furman is, the realtor?". And I said, "Yeah, I think I do". She- she just bought this humongous building on East College Avenue in Appleton, which is actually just a couple blocks from my house. So, I reached out to her and then I find out that she wants to get into acting as well. And she did a real fine job. So, she actually got a role in the in the TV pilot, but the her but the building was so damn large, it gave us that opportunity to be distant, you know, quote, unquote, to kind of do our best with those things. So that was that was really kind of cool. Now in Colorado, we shot outside a lot. My two co-hosts are a married couple, Eric and Tara Gulbrandsen. And we had Mitch Minster who was our camera guy and sound guy and jack of all trades, and that was fun. But that was exterior shots. It was shot in the Rockies, you know, we were up 9000 feet above sea level. We did some interiors, but a lot of exteriors on and that TV show kind of basically, is about UFOs and Bigfoot and, and kind of the supernatural and paranormal aspect of it. So, we interviewed you know, leading proponents of UFOlogy and cryptozoology and, and in cryptids, and Bigfoot and UFOs and the supernatural, that was really, really, really cool. So, but- but you know, again, with COVID, it was again, trying your best. You know, you don't do the hugs, you don't see try to keep your distance. You know, keep your hands clean and keep your distance, which my parents would tell me all the time. You know, [starts impression] "Hey, Danny, keep your hands clean. Quit picking your nose, Danny Davies, you freak". [impression ends] [both laugh]

**BK 08:15**

So, you were pretty prepared when the pandemic happens then?

**DD 08:18**

Yeah, yeah. So, I've always been kind of a clean freak. Anyway. Which is good. You know, I've always had hand sanitizer. I absolutely love hand sanitizer. I just think it's just well, it's handy. You know, it's just, you know, it's- it's and it's ubiquitously, now, it's everywhere, so you can keep your hands clean. I think that's half the battle, is if you keep your hands clean, because we don't you don't realize how much how many times you touch your face, until you're not supposed to touch your face and your ward. But no, it's- it's been really cool. And people have been cool about it, they understand that there has to be a modicum of the- these protocols in place. And I didn't go overboard with it. I didn't feel you know, the old Nazi Germany joke was [starts impression] "show me your passport and your papers, please". [impression ends] You know, I didn't want to have to go that route to see their vaccination cards. And, you know, I just I took them at their word, which you should if you ask an honest question, hopefully you'll get an honest answer, which people did so I think I don't know if that answered your- your question at all.

**BK 09:27**

No, it did. That was a great answer. Then following up with this on when did you first learn about COVID-19 And what were your thoughts about it?

**DD 09:37**

For me, when I was thinking, you know, was going to be two weeks to flatten the curve and whatever and stay at home, I'm reclusive anyway. I have an office in my home and a gym in my home and a massive screen TVs and I'm very fortunate very blessed. That I've got all these creature comforts, I don't have to leave the house, you know. So, for me, it wasn't that big of a deal. But then when it kind of dragged on, I was like, oh, man, and then when all of my events and films either got canceled or postponed, I'm like, holy crap, this is, this is serious stuff. And for me, travel is paramount, you know, because I live in the, you know, [starts impression] "the Great North Woods of Wisconsin, you know, the frozen tundra, you know, surrounded by cheese, head and beers". [impression ends] And I have to travel, but with the travel restrictions that just put a damper on for almost a full year and a half. And prior to that I was averaging about 20,000 miles a year in travel. Yeah, I've done you know, stuff in Europe, Serbia, Hungary, West Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Bahamas, Jamaica, and all over the US. And that basically took a kibosh on it. I mean, because those international flights were, were canceled or minimized. And in some countries didn't want Americans to come, you know, it's, you know, they thought we were spreading the disease or whatever. So, and I understand that, you know, you have to have those types of, again, protocols in place, so you don't spread the disease, but it completely put a kibosh on every single thing that I did for a full year, year and a half, and its barely kind of making a comeback. It's but it's- it's- it's slow. Still.

**BK 11:38**

Then I noticed you did a lot of podcasting this time, right?

**DD 11:43**

I did. I'm my social media, I try to keep people abreast of what I'm up to my- my next book, or if- if I'm filming some place, or if I have a film coming out, I had a film called I Dream of a Psychopomp. We have a small supporting role. It's a- it opened at the Music Box Theater in Chicago, in September, and that was super, super fun. And they did it safely with you know, the masks and social distancing. And it went really, really well. So with these little videos that I do, do, it's basically this is what I'm up to guys. And you know, and I'll do like bad impersonations. You know, [starts impression] "look at my look my triceps my biceps. I do a bad Arnold or My name is Morgan Freeman. A lot of times I've seen Dan Davis, new from the waist down", [impression ends] you know, just crap. [laughs] Like Morgan Freeman hasn't seen me nude from the waist down. But, I just want to get that out there. You know, he hasn't. Um, so I do like a little funny little impersonations. And, and just to kind of keep it lively. I always try to keep my social media, less than two minutes. The videos because people have a shorter attention span now. So that's why I do all the crazy shenanigans around it. But yeah, so that I hope that answered your question.

**BK 13:04**

Yeah. Did you also find you posting these videos a lot more due to the pandemic?

**DD 13:09**

Yeah. Because I wasn't going out and meeting people. I still wanted to show them I'm still, you know, viable. I'm still alive. I'm still doing these things. And because of the success of a couple of films on Well, first of all, Ed Gein the Musical and then West of Thunder, and then a Trip to Jamaica that I filmed in Africa, and Atlanta, in Jamaica, became a massive, massive hit. It was a number one film, and Nollywood, which is the second biggest film market in the world. And it opened and in Nigeria, Ghana, in London, and every city that it opened, it was number one, which is really just blew my mind. But Nigeria and Ghana, between the two of them, they have 250 million population. So, it's an absolutely massive market. It's the biggest film market in the continent of Africa. And by some estimates that a Trip to Jamaica has been seen by 100 million people.

**BK 14:12**

Oh, congratulations.

**DD 14:13**

Well, yeah, just absolutely blows my mind because it's a shitty film. [Brandon laughs] It is, I just, it absolutely blows my mind. [laughs] I didn't mean to swear. Well, I did mean to swear but it for two years, it was a Netflix, you know, by their, you know, algorithms or whatever. It was Top 10 Top 20 International Comedy and then BBC did stories on it and CNN Africa and it became a juggernaut on Netflix and it just actually got off Netflix, this November of 2021 just last month. Now it's going on to other platforms and I'm thinking might go HBO or Cinemax? And one of those is the next step for it. But, yeah, it just it blew my mind that it did so well. So having said that, I've got 1000s and 1000s and 1000s of people that want to be my friend, which is cool. [starts impression] "As long as you don't ask me for money, cuz I ain't got none, Brandon". [impression ends] [both laugh] I'm just kidding, but not really, um, but I mean, but that's the thing too, you're always- I'm a little bit afraid to, you know, get these requests via Instagram, or Facebook, and there's 1000s of them, someone sees the film, especially if they're, you know, African or European. They, I think they assume every American actor is living in mansions in Bel Air, you know, and it's, but it's, it's a lot of them are very, very sweet. And they're there, it's awesome to have a fan base, it's really humbling, I don't deserve, you know, any of the accolades or any of these things, to be really honest with you. So, it's very, it's very humbling, actually, it's, it's pretty cool. To be honest with you.

**BK 16:08**

Did you receive a lot more messages during the pandemic, from your fan base, like, words of encouragement, or just generally asking how you're doing? Cause I know, everyone-

**DD 16:17**

Yeah, they did. And I had COVID, actually, in May. And so, I was out of commission for about 18 days. And it was bad news, and I was vaccinated, but I picked it up eight days after getting inoculated, actually. So, it wasn't in that intubation or incubation period, or whatever they call it, but it was bad news. So not only vaccinated, I've had it in it. It was the worst I felt, I think in my whole entire life, and I probably should have, at one point probably should have gone to the hospital, just to get some accessory oxygen, not the intubation, you know, but just the, the oxygen just to help out for a day or two because I was- I was in a bad way. But I kind of gutted it out there'd have to be a certain way that I slept.

And I was always very purposeful in my breathing you know, to get as much oxygen as is in there but yeah, it was difficult but- but people were real excuse me supportive. Sending me nice, [coughs] excuse me. messages. And it was actually it was very sweet of the people to do it. So

### **BK 17:30**

Then- actually that goes up. Takes another one my questions I was gonna ask you at COVID-19 Like you said seems like you had a pretty bad way I also had COVID back in math this last October the- the two years ago almost a year and a half ago sorry. I have COVID I was lucky enough not to have any breathing issues. Can you describe what- what was that like having COVID Like on- on your job and your family for your friends?

### **DD 17:58**

You know, it's- it- it was it was difficult but you know you take the precautions you quarantine as well as you can and since I'm reclusive anyway it was wasn't that big of a deal but the- the issues and then the long term problems that I still have today it accelerated some heart issues that I didn't think would rear their ugly head for another 10 years or so I thought maybe in my mid 60s I'd have these heart issues well it- it exacerbated them and now I have them so now there is another thing I have to look at in my stamina in my cardio never came back completely it's- it's halfway decent I'm very I'm very thankful that I can get on my air you know Schwinn Aerodyne and in a day go two hours on that and I can do power walks but I can't do my jogs or sprints like I used to be able to and I know it's age, but just even a two years ago, I was able to run you know 50-60 minutes and sprint on top of that. So it's it really took a it threw me for a loop and I'm still kind of recovering from that so.

### **BK 19:23**

And another question I had with connected to COVID. What are your thoughts on how it- COVID it has affected the movie industry in general it from a writer's, director's, and actor's perspective.

### **DD 19:37**

It's- it decimated. I think a lot of freelance actors and screenwriters and because there's not just the product it wasn't out there for a good year. We didn't have a hell of a lot of you know this from your experience. You know, theatrical releases were minimized. And, you know, so they weren't filming. And I think Los Angeles already has a, they've lost their grip on being, you know, Hollywood of Hollywood. You know, it's- it's, it seems to be that even Chicago, actually, I think has more or equal filming, especially with other TV shows that happened in Chicago and Atlanta, and New Orleans and in some of these places have kind of usurped Los Angeles, it was already hurting to begin with. Now you see, I've got friends that are moving out of LA, they just said "The hell with it". COVID was the final steak to the heart. And they said, "I just can't do it anymore. I need to find, you know, a real job. That's 40 hours a week with a steady income, I can't go to five or six months without a paycheck or a year". You know, not many people can do that. And so, it's decimated, I think, sectors of the film industry. And I don't know if it'll ever make a comeback. You know, I just I don't, I don't know, because you even look at what the theatrical releases, you know, unless you're a tent pole. \$250 million aliens versus Iron Man versus Thor versus Spider Man versus Godzilla. Unless you're one of those types of movies, it's really difficult to gain traction in theaters. People go to Steven Spielberg and George Lucas talked about this just recently, they said they people go to the theaters to see a spectacle. It's, it's a circus, it's become that

it big in their minds. Because now with our widescreen TVs, you know, a 60 inch TV, high definition with surround sound, I can actually watch a lot of films, but for the big time films, where I want to see Hulk, you know, smash, you know, for whatever, I want to see that on a big screen. You know, so but but if it's a- a romance or a small drama of sorts, it doesn't get to theaters anymore. It's it's people just see that they binge watch TV shows, they watch those on the small screen, because there really isn't a need to do that. You want to see the- the theatrical, which is really sad, because back in the day, they used to do it, where let's say they had half a billion dollars Universal Studios. So, they'd have one huge film \$100 million film and then they'd have 10, you know, \$25 million films, some comedies a horror, Drama, Romance, a suspense thriller, they don't do that anymore. They put all their eggs into the basket DC and Marvel, you know, those are still you know, and then they're still, you know, Mission Impossible. And John Wick and Keanu Reeves matrix are still those franchises. But if you're not part of that, you're it's- it's tough going. So COVID just kind of I think exacerbated that difference, you know, the huge, you know, we're used to be you could go and see all kinds of films that theater is now it's, you'd have three or four choices. And that's it.

### **BK 23:13**

And I've also noticed a trend. Looking at it in the cinema side, a lot of studios are pushing their movies, right to streaming services. Yeah. And studios have had mixed reactions to this some- some do decent while HBO max like HBO, Max is at a really tough time this this year. I think they lost. I was just reading about this. I think it was at least \$100 million this year. Oh, I was wondering, have you like had any thoughts about like moving, putting your stuff on streaming services first, like during this time, like in hopes that it'll reach a wider audience right away?

### **DD 23:49**

That's a great question. And I've got I did a film that really kind of put me on the map that was called Ed Gein the Musical and it was a musical, comedic musical about a cannibalistic necrophiliac serial killer named again, was from Wisconsin. And a lot of films have been loosely based on him from Psycho to Texas Chainsaw Massacre all the way through and I thought, well, let's do a funny musical on it and what I wanted it to be I didn't want to demean his victims, nor did I want to glorify him at all. We made him into this kind of reclusive, horrible evil person which he was and now we've got four distributors that want to distribute it now. And it's- it hasn't been we- we traveled with it. We had 500 theatrical screenings in 11 states from 2010 to about 2012. And but then we just put it to bed and we were going to do a 10th anniversary edition but then COVID came and stole that from us, but now we have a 12th anniversary edition. That'll be coming out we got you know, distributors that are very interested in in getting out there, which is really cool. So- so again, to answer your question some of these other like weird people in weird places, we shop that around as a TV pilot, but then but it gives us an opportunity and leeway to even streaming ourselves on Amazon Prime YouTube TV, IMDb TV, you kind of become your own boss that way, it's better to have a distributor have a major platform, promoting it in showing and with A Forest Dark, which the rough edit should be this month sometime or January, actually of 2022. I'm very excited about that project on it's based on a novel book that comes out April one. And it's based on a gentleman who's in his mid-70s, who wrote a book of all of his paranormal supernatural things that he experienced as a, he worked for the FBI, and he actually worked for NASA, but he was a freelance, they hired him to come in to take a look at security cam video footage or photographic footage on crime scenes where they had quote unquote, anomalies. They didn't understand how can this be so he witnessed supernatural paranormal things on the security camera videos and the FBI was

flummoxed. They hired him originally to try to decipher it. Is this something that Hollywood could do is it's just an FX? Is this them doing something? Is this a glitch? Can you figure this out? So his level of clearance for the FBI, not so much NASA but for the FBI was massive, because he was witnessing, you know, capital crimes and seeing these things to their, you know, a security camera that a UFO, but you know, in the background, like what the hell is that or a laser have been coming out like what, or a ghostly figure or he but after a while though, it got to a point that it stressed him to the max. And he retired in his mid-50s, a little over probably 20 years ago, after witnessing on a security camera video footage, a nonhuman invisible entity, murdering two drug dealers. And it absolutely shook him to the bone. And what actually happened was in his own personal life was affected too, with the supernatural paranormal. So, he's got this book coming out called A Forest Dark and of course, dark the title is basically it's Dante's Inferno, before Dante goes into the nine, you know, circles of hell, he goes to a forest to contemplate, and one of the demons kind of shows them into hell. But he goes to a forest dark before he goes into Purgatory and Hell. So, it's absolutely freaky. It's, it's very disturbing on a lot of levels, and we're shooting it like a documentary. So, we've shot it. So, it's basically me just talking about my conversations with Sam Johnson. And, you know, having people come up, we've even got, this is what the book cover actually is for it. We had Sidney Pirtle, who is an artist from Seattle, Washington, created this for us. So, we're really excited about that. So, we're gonna coincide the book with the TV pilot, and kind of promote it from that perspective. But his stories are absolutely mind numbing. It's- it's very freaky, to a point where I was very hesitant about filming, um, because we even experienced some some weird things as well, while we're filming, but I won't go into that too much. But did that answer your question?

#### **BK 29:01**

Yeah, that was- sounds like a fantastic book, too. And show!

#### **DD 29:06**

Yeah, I'm really super, super excited about it. And everybody had to sign you know, the NDA is. So the non-disclosure agreements so that they couldn't talk about some of the things that we witnessed and it's, it's very, very, very freaky. And there's a there's a surprise twist to it, as well. A very shocking, surprise twist to it as well, but I can't, you know, divulge that yet, but it's, it's it's freaky. We should have it at one of your parents' theaters. We should have the premiere. That'd be cool. It's a 30 Minute. Um, we can actually coincide it with the book. You know, we could have a book signing. He's in hiding. Um, he's anonymous. That's not his real name, but he writes under Samuel Thomas Johnson, and so he won't be there. But he'll have signed books and whatever. So maybe we can, you know, maybe April, we can have a little, you know, get together at one of the Rogers cinemas.

#### **BK 30:09**

That'd be awesome to discuss with my parents that's and then let's see. So, I'm curious too, because in Appleton, how is COVID-19 affected the community there and like the theater community.

#### **DD 30:27**

Yeah. And again, it just everything was put on hold, I've got friends that are that have their own theatrical company inside of Oshkosh. And I've got friends that do improv comedy out of Green Bay and, and theatrical things here in Appleton for a whole year, they didn't do anything. They it just it shut



it down completely. And that's understandable. I mean, you people need to sit. And in the theater, if you socially distance and do it correctly, a theater that would hold 100, you could maybe get 20 in there, if you do it six feet, six feet, because it's literally would be a bubble, six feet in front of you six feet behind six feet to the left and right. It would be it would make any sense. You know, you want to get as many people to pay for tickets to cover your costs. But if you're only can fit 20, or 25 people for theater, that's not gonna cut it. So, it's been tough, you know, and my friends is kind of, you know, during the pandemic, though they a lot of them picked up, got a degree or went back to college did some online stuff writing on and that was cool about it, you were forced to be kind of creative. You know and do these outlets that you normally wouldn't have the time to do.

### **BK 31:51**

Yeah, I mean, even for me, like when the lockdown happened, and I got really into cooking or baking. That was my outlet.

### **DD 31:58**

Yeah, yeah. I think a lot of people did that. You know, add friends add a now they want to get I have one friend actually now she wants to get into on mobile culinary it where she actually goes into people's houses and teaches them how to make you know, Chinese food or Italian food to how to make fresh noodles and, and pasta. And so, she basically is always love food. Now she's following her dream of doing this, which is I think it's really cool. So, you see, you saw a lot of people like yourself who got new vocations and applications and fun little hobbies. And that's cool. I mean, I, for me, I guess because I have a gym in my home, that my life didn't change that much. You know, and I hate saying that. But it's just when you're all enclosed anyway, and your house has all the creature comforts and things that you need. I didn't affect me that other than not getting the jobs because there weren't any jobs out there. Having these jobs and events postpone, for me, didn't really change much. But the hardest thing I've ever done really was write this book. I've written screenplays before. But the book was daunting. For some reason. The screenplays to me are, I can crank those out in a few weeks, I can get 80-90 pages in a month or two. But for the book, it's- it's a whole different animal. I mean, it's- it's, it's a different fruit. I mean, it's it is it truly is apples and oranges. Because when I write a screenplay, I've already visualized Act One, Act Two, Act Three, I've visualized it from top to tails. It's already fully formed in my head before I even start typing. And that helps a lot and you know, with COVID it's just you and your computer. So, you don't need to have that. meetings I write all my stuff essentially by myself. I don't have a staff of writers I have to talk to on but yeah, it's just you and your computer and you just you busted out and the book that was the hardest thing I've ever done in my life. And- and I was afraid to the people wouldn't get my humor, you know, in which it's a little bit off the wall. Just I'll read the back of the book just to give you an idea. So it's- it's the Rantings of a Madman on Facebook, the inspiration, perspiration and inebriation of a lovable loser. And then it says Dan Davies is an internationally acclaimed and award-winning actor and writer. He also passed out seminude while drunkenly hugging a llama at Jr's petting zoo Waupaca Wisconsin July 5 1995. [Brandon laughs] This is true. So, I wasn't sure if people were going to get that off the wall. And I think COVID Kind of just shine more of an intense light on on my quirkyness, I guess my idiosyncrasies and peccadilloes, you know.

### **BK 35:17**

So you would say that pandemic just kind of influenced the writing of this book a little bit?

**DD 35:22**

Yeah, it was the only I knew, you know, I had films that were canceled the ones and, you know, had in Africa and all over and I'm like, well, shoot, I got a, I've always talked about, I'm a writer, I'm a screenwriter, why not get a book out? And I just said, yeah, why not. And I just kind of went in, I didn't really take a primer on it, or, you know, any videos, I just basically got a program. That is for books. And I hired a graphic artists designer, to do the, you know, the spine and the front cover back cover, and I just, I knocked it out. But it was very, it was daunting. And, but it really kind of I had laser focus, though, because all these other things because it COVID were canceled or postponed. So

**BK 36:15**

And with these canceled projects, are they completely done for, or, at a later date, they'll be looked at, again?

**DD 36:23**

What happened was, some of them were postponed indefinitely. But- but with a lot of independent projects, their funding is kind of tenuous to begin with, anyway, they don't have, you know, Paramount Studios, throwing, you know, \$50 million into your project. A lot of the independent, you know, TV programs that I'm on and films don't have massive, massive budgets. So once those get postponed and cancelled, there's also a lot of times in the- the- the- the investment prospectus in the contracts that basically say there's a timeline, if you give \$200,000 to invest in a film, there's basically a rough timeline that states by give you this money, now you have six months to get filming done, and another eight months for post-production, so that we could hit the market in 2022, or whatever. But all of those were thrown out. And people were like, I can't give you \$200,000 And have you sit on it for a year while we wait on this. So, a lot of those monies got pulled, and then they got basically cancelled, and I don't, you know, I, I wouldn't want somebody walking around with \$200,000 of my money. You know, for a year and a half. I mean, [starts impression] "hey about that \$200,000 I gave you just was wondering when I could [impression ends], you know, I mean, shit, you know. So it was, but now I'm very thankful, I'm very fortunate to be my own executive producer, I'm able to finance things myself or co-finance with other financiers. And that has given me a lot of freedom, a lot of wonderful freedom, which is really cool. Because to be honest with you, I've been on sets and on movies with a lot of assholes. And again, pardon my swear word, but it's apropos, they are nothing but just horrible people to be to be brutally honest. And I got to a point where I was like, I don't want to be have this emotional abuse anymore. I don't want to have this bullshit with these people with narrow minded people and people that have their egos drive them, and then it's all about me, and not about wheat. And any projects that I do, it's a team effort. I try to get everybody you know, again, with COVID everyone feel safe, you know, and it's a good environment, I try to get a curate a culture on set where people feel comfortable, they feel like they're part of a well-oiled machine, that they're a cog in it not just an extra or a PA, everybody's important on the sets that we do, and that for me has shown huge dividends with the type of quality people we get. And it's- it's not that difficult to do. You know, but I've been on so many sets where people are just, yeah, dicks, you know, and pardon my language, but it's true. And I won't put up with that on any of my sets. If somebody again if somebody is not, you know, following the protocols that we have in place and- and, you know, first but second of all, if they're mean to people, if they're if they spicata line if they're misogynistic, if they're bigoted, if they're even in the least I'll- I'll confront them and tell them to get the hell out and fire him on the spot. I just, I don't care anymore. I'm at an age where

I just I don't give a shit. I just I won't put up with it at all. So, but having said that, um, people have been really cool. You know, overall, I think that was your question. I, I probably went off the beat here.

**BK 40:27**

No, no, that's great. It connected this to your- your view is change, but a half the people around you have you seen their opinions change their day to day activities?

**DD 40:40**

Oh, yeah. Yeah, you see people, you know, just being more cautious. You know, obviously, see the masks. I'm not a I don't like people getting close to me anyway. So, I've always kind of been, but I like it, you know, people kind of and if somebody gets a little too close, I always kind of give them the side. I'm like, hey no, I don't know, you, you know, keep your distance. And but I see more people are respectful of that. And that's cool. It's how it should be. You don't need to be that close, you know, to someone when you're shopping or whatever. But um, yeah, it's people overall, I think are pretty good about it. And have been.

**BK 41:27**

And you said earlier, um, you got a covid, right after you were vaccinated. Was this your first shot or a second shot?

**DD 41:34**

I did the one and done.

**BK 41:36**

The one and done?

**DD 41:37**

Yea

**BK 41:37**

Gotcha

**DD 41:38**

And because I was hearing a lot of different, you know, the, the people that would get it. It had some of the less side effects as I was going in. And it was one of the later ones, you know, the- the Pfizer Moderna came out right away. And then J&J [Johnson & Johnson] was out two months later. So, they had already kind of pigeon or like all that. Well, they've kind of not that they stole the information, but they had already done the research a little bit longer than the other two vaccine makers. So, for me, I thought it has to be more efficacious if you're putting a lot more money into it. And plus having one more time to develop it piggyback. That's and I think they did I think they shared some of their proprietary information on the vaccines, because it was for the greater good. And so, but they piggybacked off of the research already. So, I felt comfortable with the J&J.

**BK 42:41**

Gotcha. Would you mind going, like describing how you got it? Well, did you schedule an appointment? I know there were some places where you just walk in and get the vaccination.

**DD 42:51**

Yeah, I went to Walmart, and I'm here in Appleton. And it was it was funny, because I was all masked up and whatever. But then when I gave over my information, one of the- the ladies who were kind of putting all the information in the computer was like, "Well, I know you" she said, I felt comfortable. I was like, "Oh, great. You're not going to hurt me with a needle, are you?" It goes well, and she goes, "I'm pretty good at making it seem painless as possible". I said, "Well, good. I'm glad you know who I am. This is nice". You know, so I went in and, you know, filled out all the paperwork. And 15 minutes later, I was in and out. And she really did she kind of like, hit my arm, like boom, and then put it in so like it numbed it for maybe a half a second or whatever. And she popped it in, I hardly ever I didn't feel anything. I was like, "Is it done?". She goes, "yep", I'm like, Oh, that's pretty cool. But my arm was sore. Over a day or so. But, no, it was it was relatively painless.

**BK 44:02**

Then, just I-I know I've- I'm an Eau Claire right now. And there's been not as much recently but over in September, and then like August, there are protests actually for vaccination and masking all around Eau Claire. Did Appleton receive like, similar kind of protests?

**DD 44:21**

Um, no, not really. Um, I just I, you know, we have to be I'll give you a little case in point Spanish Influenza. They always called the Spanish flu 1918 Essentially, from the trenches in World War One, from probably about 1916 to 1921. It raged. And with the soldiers that were in these non-sanitary environments during war, you know, they had, you know, fecal matter and urine and they the water was there too. Since there, they had all kinds of things. It was a breeding ground. For contagions. It was a breeding ground for that type of influenza. So, when it did come out and the soldiers came home, went back home to Europe or the US, it, they spread it like wildfire. I mean, there was 50 million people who died worldwide of Spanish Influenza, and it had to run its course. Now sadly, you're going to hear a siren. Sadly, we, as humans, you know, build an immunity to almost everything, there are only a few things that are considered probably medically chronic. As they say, once you have like a cancer or something that everyone has a cancer in their body to begin with. It's just when will it? What does it metastasized, or whatever that word is? metastasize? I think metastasize. Yeah, and- and so but they're- they're very few things that are essentially chronic were built as humans, to you know, they always say, if you've had a cold, you won't get the same one. There's all kinds of flu variance, and covariance is probably hundreds of them on that you had, but once you have it, you get an immunity. So, I didn't understand why they weren't kind of saying, because it just seems disingenuous, and from my limited and, and it's very limited, medical, you know, background, um, you know, one in a sanitary class, or whatever, in high school, um, that I flunked, because I was coming in like hungover and high. Just kidding, I wasn't. But um, yeah, but- but you have to build an immunity to it, or you would never really

get rid of it. Now, now, it would be chronic, you'd always have the symptoms. For if you don't build a natural antibodies, or natural immunity to it, you would be infecting yourself all the time, you would always have it, because you're not the way we get rid of things is we build up antibodies build up an immunity to it. So, I think there's going to come to a point where people have to say, there's a balance, you know, let's do our best keep our hands clean. If you want to mask up, stay six feet away from me, because I don't like people anyway, Brandon. So. So, you know, if you do those things correctly, then it'll it'll hopefully subside, but it's not going to go away. You know, the Spanish Flu took like five years to probably fully run its course. So, and it's a highly contagious, it's a contagion. It's virulent. It's, it's nasty, and we just, we have to be, again, vigilant about it. But I'd say the next like, year or two, we're still going to get different variants. But I think with a variance it's going to be even with Omicron is lessening the symptoms are seem to be lessening, and there is some scientific data about people that are vaccinated to have less symptoms. And that makes sense. And why not? I mean, you might still get it. But if you can lessen the symptoms of COVID Why not? You know, what the hell we've- we've been inoculated since we were, you know, three, four years old since a little babies, you know, I mean, this, this shouldn't come as a shock that I think the one thing that people are going to get a little bit perturbed by is, you know, the second booster, the third booster, the fourth booster, I mean, it's fine if people go and get a flu, you know, shot every- every year around flu season, especially elderly people. But I think people are getting to a point where it's like, we need to start living our lives again, we need to start you know, in and mental health is taken a massive I work for I volunteer and work for some organizations that help with that trends and suicide and kind of offshoots of all those things and drug counseling and and they've seen an uptick, massive uptick, because people are getting isolated. We were already starting to become isolated. Because, you know, for our entertainment systems, our phone our computer, we started to isolate ourselves, even you know, 10 years ago, we started slowly, but this exacerbated it to a point where people now have emotional problems. You see suicides and drug use and alcohol use going through the roof, because we're built to be social creatures. We're built have that connection with other humans. Were designed, you know, to be that way. And once you take that away, that's why even when people are they try not to get people in solitary confinement in prisons for more than 30 days because they have no Mental disassociated behaviors. They have mental problems and emotional problems. Because of that. We need people we need to see people and hear them and talk to them face to face and not just on a computer screen. So, there is a fine line between those two things. And I just, you know, the one thing that freaks me out is, you know, I was I'm a huge sports fan. I'm a massive you know, Packer fan and Brewer fan and box and badgers Marquette and all the UW system. You know, Claire, you know, lacrosse, my alma mater football. I absolutely love Wisconsin Sports. So, I watch sports all the time. But I was just watching a bowl game yesterday, and they had 70,000 screaming fans and not a one of them wearing a mask. And then that's socially distant. They can't they're gonna frickin stadium. And I've been in some of the older stadiums. I've been to Wrigley, I've been to Fenway, I've been to some of the older stadiums. And I'm 240 pounds. And I'm, I'm literally touching the- the person to my left and person to my right, not on purpose. It's just because I'm a little bit bigger. And I'm like, What the hell? That's kind of it that kind of freaks me out like, well, shit, what's, what's their dealio they have people not only to the left, right, you have somebody in front of you and behind you. And you're screaming, and you're Yellin And you're talking, and I'm like, and I don't I rarely see people mask. So, I don't I don't I don't understand that at all.

**BK 51:32**

Yeah, I mean, connected to that there was the anime convention in New York City, which is a super spreader event for Omicron, for the United States. It'd be my fear, like for sports stadiums, tours, any like, kind of big social gatherings like that. They can be super spreader events as well.

**DD 51:47**

Yeah. And that's, it's just, you just have to, you just have to show caution. And it's so simple to do. It's not like we're asking them to learn, you know, Chinese arithmetic, you know, it's- it's- it's- it's not brain surgery, or, you know, quantum physics. You know, Dr. Fred Alan Wolf, who's the number one quantum physicist in the world, is also a proponent of and was of, we need people, we have a connection, we have an energy that we share with people. It's pretty cool stuff on a quantum level. But anyway, I'm digressing. Plus, [starts impression] I'm hungover Brandon. I saw the Badgers last night and had a little get together to that I went to just to say hello, and then went to a bar to watch the Badgers. And what a great game but I was drinking. And I was with two dear friends, and it was very, very fun. So, I'll be real honest with you, Brandon. I'm so hung over my toupee hurts. [impression ends] [Both laugh] So it was it was done again. I'm sorry. I'm getting way off topic.

**BK 52:54**

Oh, no, you asked you answered it perfectly. I have two more questions for you. Well, what do you think are the most important issues that the media is, is covering, or should be covering?

**DD 53:07**

I'm sick and tired of having this politicized. We should never have had had this. And both Democrats and Republicans are to blame. You politicize something that you should know. It should have been basically the CDC and basically, professionals that would have said medical professionals just saying, this is this is what the variant is, this is what COVID-19 is, this is what you need to do. But once you put blame on people like Well, the reason why the reason why we got this COVID branded was because President Trump, he was spreading it. I saw him you know, just like no, come on, guys are you know, President Biden, Biden is one who's been you know, looking out of the Omicron I got, you know, it's all on him. No, it's not. Stop blaming them. Just do what you're supposed to do to get yourself healthy. It's not like they're asking to do backflips or brain surgery. Again, just mask up when you when you can. Socially distance is so important. Keep your hands clean, just simple crap like that. Don't politicize it. So the media has been part of this push, which is really disgusting. If you think about it, because the media, we lost the media, the media isn't giving us truthful things I missed, like the Old Walter Cronkite, and I miss the old school guys that did the hardcore journalism and found the truth but didn't politicize it. Just get us the truth. And if it's tough news to swallow will swallow it. We're Americans were tough. You know, I mean, so yeah.

**BK 54:46**

I've noticed in like the past year that, any family gatherings that I've found are like my classmates, or almost everyone in general is like walking on eggshells when it comes to covid or politics in general right now.

## DD 54:59

Yeah. It's a, you know, it's- it's you should never be afraid to voice your opinion. And you should never be afraid. Because what I'm finding myself doing is I'm, I'm censoring what I'm saying before I say it. Now, now you should, if I'm in a church group, I'm not going to say the F word, and I'm not going to drop, you know, F bombs and that type of shit in a church, you know, you have to do you have to know your audience, and you have to act accordingly. But what I'm doing is, I'm almost like, it's almost like 1984. It's like, you know, I'm censoring what I'm saying before, I'm saying because is it politically correct? Am I right to say this stuff? What pisses me off is I'm, I'm, I'm proud of being three quarters Irish, Welsh, but I'm also Native American, and very proud of those things. But when you have blue eyes, and little copper colored skin on, it's like, why am I censoring who I am? Why am I afraid to tell somebody my ethnic background? Because I don't look? Well, you know, uncles and my grandpa and great uncles looked, but I don't, specifically I look like I fell off the boat from Ireland or got thrown out of the boat from Ireland. [starts impression] "Danny, you're too drunk, swim to America, you know?" [impression ends] [laughs] So I'm censoring all this shit, because it's the canceled culture and all this crap and all that shit is gonna go to the wayside. Now, obviously, you should never say anything bigoted, misogynistic, racist. Those are the real swear words. Now, it's not shit and the F bombs. Those are swear words. Just be careful. Don't say those things. But- but don't chastise and don't. You know? Don't crucify people that are speaking the truth. And, and have good intentions. If you have shitty intentions and you're an evil person. Yeah, those people should be thrown under the bus. Not literally, but figuratively. You know, it's just, you know, Bill Clinton. You know, I've been very honored to have met presidents in my life I've met, um, Prime Minister of the Bahamas, I met the President of Nigeria. I met a Ronald Reagan when I was a little kid, you know? And that was pretty cool. [starts impression] "He's like, Well, what's your name?" And I went, Danny. He goes, "Ah, you're Irish". And I went, Yes, and then Bill Clinton, "I believe Dan Davies is one of the greatest people I've ever met in my life. He's smart, sophisticated. He's great looking" [impression ends]. I was like "Hey, Bill, saying, Get your paws off me". [laughs] He didn't say that. But oh, my dad, I got a funny story about my dad actually met John F. Kennedy. And got to know him actually fairly well, my dad was a union steward for AMC motors in Kenosha, Wisconsin. And John Kennedy was running for president. It's like late 1959. My dad was, you know, 21-22 years of age and just out of the army. And he's a union steward. And he- he leaves on a Friday, early, because there was a bar about eight blocks down the road that had free hotdogs, and half price beers. So, my dad said, "Well, I'm gonna get to this bar before, because they always run out of these hot dogs, because, you know, hundreds of guys eating hot dogs". And so my dad's running out of the place, and he looks and he sees John F. Kennedy. And he's standing next to fighting Bob LaFollette, Bob LaFollette, Jr, his son, and Robert Kennedy. And my dad had just finished Profiles and Courage, which was John F. Kennedy's book. And my dad, so my dad knew who he was. And so, he shakes his hand and he's my dad was Irish Catholic, like John Kennedy. So he's like, "Oh, my God, I'm Irish Catholic. My whole family loves you. We think you're amazing. And thank you for being a war hero. And I'm reading your book". And he and he looks up my dad. And he says, [starts impression] "Well, what's your name?" And he goes, "my name is Jim". And he goes, "You look Irish, I could tell because of your giant, handsome Irish face, or head". And my dad was like, yeah. [impression ends] And then he met Bob LaFollette, Jr. and then Robert Kennedy. He actually talked to him a little bit more. And he said, Man, those- those Kennedys, he said, they're bright as hell and they're good people. So that was kind of my dad. Sorry, I know, that had nothing to do with COVID, but I wanted to share it and converse it sadly, my dad died at COVID. He had it August of last year. And that was tough. You know, he was just into his, you know, 80s wasn't, you know, ancient by any stretch. But yeah, yeah, it was it was tough. He had it and within three or four days he was gone. So.

**BK 1:00:09**

I'm sorry to hear about that.

**DD 1:00:11**

Yeah, so it's hit home with me 2020 and 2021 had been really, really tough. I've lost some very, very, very, very, very close family members. One to COVID and one not. But, it's been very, very difficult.

**BK 1:00:35**

Have you- what have you done to- like, I don't know, there's a lot of people have done like- like, outlets for stress, or just to try to help improve their mental health like during this difficult time, like for you, I couldn't imagine that sounds extremely difficult. Is there anything that you found, that's helped

**DD 1:00:51**

Yea I always tell people, it's the perfect socially distant exercise, power walks, as long as you know, it's not icy, or, you know, to frigid, try to walk every single day, try to do a power walk, get fresh air, and just be out, it helps with your health. Number one, it helps with weight management. Number two, it helps with your emotional stress as well it kind of de stresses you the exercise as a matter of fact, after I'm done with you, I'm going to get all bundled up and get my- my walk in for today and then get on to my air. My Airdyne Schwinn on and so exercises is vitally important. So, you know, for a lot of those reasons.

**BK 1:01:44**

Yeah, I'd agree with that. But during COVID I got a- I bought weight set at home, I used that and once the gym was open, I was, and I felt comfortable there I'd go with a mask or that was a great stress reliever for me.

**DD 1:01:57**

Yeah, yeah, it's and I know, when people are doing cardio, especially, they feel kind of confined with the masks. So some of the gyms try their best to, to make people wear it, but I'm very thankful I was able to invest in a really killer home gym. So I've got, you know, like 800 pounds of cast iron, I've got weight machines, I've got bench presses, and squat racks and all kinds of stuff. So my gym is for home gym, it's professional grade, but it's the best damn investment, you could make. You know, and, and I love my gym, too. It's crunch fitness, I absolutely love it. Um, but you know, I'll go there to do like, certain workouts, you know, because they've got, you know, 25,000 square feet of equipment. So but it's important to keep yourself healthy, and to have that outlet, just to get out of your house. And it's also to I see people on East College Avenue here in Appleton, it's their kind of their coffee clutch. So the walkers will come up to each other, hey, how you doing, and they'll stay, you know, six, eight feet apart. And that's their little interaction for the day. And that's important too, because you're not going to the coffee houses or bars or restaurants as much as we used to. So, you know, it's, it's, it's been, it's been important to me, for sure.



**BK 1:03:34**

Then the one final question. Knowing what you know, now, what do you think that individuals communities and governments should keep in mind for the future?

**DD 1:03:48**

They have to tell people, you know, the truth number one that we are of the human species, we're a mammalian, you know, we're mammals, we're species, we're humans, that these will be inevitable that from here on in, we just, this is going to be pretty much par for the course, we were kind of lucky to not have, you know, some of these other diseases that were virulent, like MERS and some of these other things spread like COVID. But we have to first of all, we have to be diligent, again, with the social distancing with keeping your hands clean, just doing all those things from here on in, it'll just be par for the course, which is number one. Number two, um, I think the- we have to put pressure on any government. That is, quote, unquote, and I'm not saying that COVID was created from a lab. I'm not saying that, but we'd have to be pretty preventional to think that, you know, germ warfare and chemical warfare has been around actually, since the soldiers that had smallpox giving it to the Lakota Indian people in the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s. It was a way to eradicate them. We've had germ warfare; we've had chemical warfare in earnest. Literally, since World War One, we've had it. So we'd have to be pretty naive as to think these governments aren't creating in a horrible way, they shouldn't even be touching with this shit, because there's no way to control it. If you create a disease somehow, if it's lab, you know, the function of gain or whatever, or gain of function or whatever they call it on, don't mess with that shit, because it'll get out of it. But it'll not only hurt your enemy, enemy, it's going to hurt you too, because the disease doesn't know your enemy. The disease isn't just going to pick your enemy, it's gonna pick everybody in your- your lab and in your groups, we have to be more vigilant and diligent about any of these labs that are doing that type of work. germ warfare, chemical warfare, we really need the- our federal government and every human of the human race needs to put pressure on whoever is doing this shit to stop it, which is to say, we cannot number one, you can't control it. Number two, and I'm not saying it's lab. You know, it's there are a lot of people out there that truly believe because it has all the earmarks of something that would have been created in our lab, and I'm not saying it was, but we have to be put our foot down and say, We're not going to let this happen. Again, we can't create those types of weapons of mass destruction via germ warfare. And again, I'm not saying COVID was but we just have to be vigilant. We just have to know from here on in. You know, just take those precautions. You know, if you're not feeling well, don't go to a party. Don't go anywhere. If you're symptomatic, stay at home, you know, quarantine. Um, you know, wash your hands, you know, wear a mask when is when it's needed, you know, and just the again, be vigilant with it.

**BK 1:07:17**

Gotcha. Oh, well, thank you for all your wonderful answers. Hey, it was a pleasure interviewing you.

**DD 1:07:22**

Thanks, Brandon.