

A Podcast is Nothing More Than The Man Who Makes It

By Kurt Kroeber

On August 28th, 2022 a list of 57 names is published in every major publication up and down the coast. The document, known in certain circles as the Dark Star Registrar, is a working list of the men and women found dead in a suburban San Diego home as part of the largest mass suicide on American soil.



Brian has wanted to start a podcast for a while now, so in the middle of his useless daily office meeting he decides once and for all to take the matter into his own hands. He dims his laptop's brightness, pulls up a web guide to "The Perfect Podcast Studio," clicks on the Amazon link for each piece and adds the appropriate quantity to his cart.

- (1) [Behringer® XR 18 Digital Mixer](#)
- (2) [Shure® SM7B Broadcast Microphone](#)
- (2) [RODE® PSA1 Swivel Mount Studio Microphone Boom Arm](#)
- (2) [CL-1 Cloud Microphones® Cloudlift Mic Activators](#)
- (1) [Seismic® Audio 8-Channel XLR Snake Cable \(30 feet\)](#)
- (2) [Aeron Chairs from Herman Miller®](#)
- (2) [Beats by Dre® Studio 2.0 Wired OverEar Headphones](#)
- (1) [LyxPro® STP10 Four-Channel Desktop Amplifier](#)

The total price on the order was quite astronomical, but he's got enough socked away in savings to not worry about that small stuff like that. He'd have to convert his two-car garage into a studio space just like *Angry Comedian Who Interviews Other Comedians* but there's plenty of street parking in the neighborhood. He wasn't sure why he'd even splurged on a house with a garage in the first place. It seemed so important at the time. He'll have to go shopping this weekend for a desk. While deep in consideration whether

OfficeMax or Staples would have more options, Brian’s boss interrupts his daydreaming.

“What are your thoughts, Brian?” Chet asks, thinking he’d caught Brian off guard and throwing him under the bus to his boss and his boss’s boss. They were always doing things like this to each other. It was playful but it was also business. That fucker.

“You know, Chet, these VC’s have screwed us over before. Remember 2008 when they tried to buy us out completely? Don’t want another round of layoffs like that, do we? They always seem to let management go first.” Brian thanks his lucky stars for what seemed like preternatural ability to hear things in the background. Good genes. Murmurs signify that he said the right thing and the big fish were satiated.

IKEA. That would be the best bet for sure.



On lunch break Brian sits alone in the courtyard and stares up at monolithic office buildings on all four sides and thinks about paths not chosen. He considers alternate timelines where he is a famous writer or basketball player or anything more interesting than this. He closes his eyes and images a world where people actually know his name. If he really thinks hard about it, probably only a hundred people even know he exists. But that’ll all change after he gets this podcast out and to the ears of the world.

At the top of a blank page of a fresh Moleskine notebook—the guy at the store told him it was the Shure SM7B of notebooks— Brian writes one simple phrase: PODCAST IDEAS. He underlines it five times for emphasis.

The pen rests on the paper, nearly refusing to make a mark. Nothing comes to mind and Brian taps the pen on the notebook like some sort of rhythmic concentration method. What did his favorite podcasts talk about? Well there’s *The Storytelling One*, *The Docu-*

Journalism One, The One Where They Talk to Interesting People. Those are all good. He doesn't like *The One About Economics* so much, or *The Sex Advice One.* He hates *Fictional One with Actors and Scripts*—save the radio plays for the 1950s. But nothing new came to mind. Not a damn thing. How disconcerting. Brian leans over and into the eye line of Jared, his friend sitting at the next bench eating a bag of Flaming Hot Cheetos.

“Jared, do you listen to any podcasts?” He asks, what must have seemed completely out of nowhere. Jared and Brian would occasionally play a round of Ping-Pong but they'd never talk about things as personal as art. How funny that they now were.

“Not really” Jared says returning to his silence. Except for the goddamn chewing.



Come evening Brian finds himself tooling around IKEA. He always found the best time to go to was in the last hour before closing, the rest of the time this place absolutely insufferable. He listens to a podcast where Famous Sportswriter talks with three-time Ping-Pong world champion about his favorite taco place in the city. The Ping Pong player mentions Leo's Tacos, and even though Brian feels that he's had better, he agrees they make a top-notch taco. Brian pauses the podcast on his phone.

“Hi, and welcome back to *What's Your Favorite Taco? with Brian Ffft.* I'm here with some old guy wandering around an IKEA. Sir, what is your favorite taco?” The old man, now with a pink plastic carafe in his hands, turns to answer but Brian is long out of earshot, walking off deeper into his own delusion. “Ah yes, Famoso Marisco is fantastic. But if we're talking fish I'd have to go with Marisco Loco.” Brian laughs a fake laugh like you only see newscasters do and the old man places the carafe back on the shelf.

No, tacos weren't gonna cut it. Brian runs out of material before he can even make it to the dishwashers. He scans through his podcast app, swiping through pages of square thumbnails of cover art, hoping that something leaps out for inspiration. He stops for a moment on a quarter inch close-up of the classic yellow smiley face filling the frame completely. The word "Perfect" is stamped across its forehead.

Earbuds back in. Play button mashed. Brian resumes his ramble through the monstrous merchandising maze to find himself, what seems like only moments later, stopped by a beautiful tantalizing visage. There it is. A sleek midnight black oversized workspace with cable drops in the center. Exactly what he was looking for. He runs his hand along the smooth surface, dreaming of all the amazing audio content about to be made atop this sucker. Perfect. Brian jots down the name, brings it to the register and before he can say 'Dunkkeldorf' ten times fast he's loading it in the back of his Rav4.



Perfect, hosted by Andrew Ray Davidian on the Cosmic Vision Network, offers "solutions for the best version of you." It has been produced weekly for the past two and a half years in the basement of Davidian's Rancho Sante Fe home— a mere fifteen miles from Brian's own Mira Mesa residence.

The clock reads midnight as Brian shuts the light off in the garage. The newly finished desk sits in the cold emptiness, an abandoned drum kit and a very nice set of power tools piled in the corner like yesterday's cookies. Tomorrow would be Friday and most of his order was scheduled to arrive. Thank the Lord for Expedited Delivery. At this rate he could be operational by the weekend. He imagines his studio like the one in the picture. Spinning around in his chair, Brian twists knobs and adjusts levels.

“Check 1,2...”

Though Andrew Ray Davidian produces the podcast all on his own, he does not, in fact, live alone. Thirty-odd members of the Cosmic Vision Corps call the Rancho Santa Fe compound home. They dutifully follow the decrees laid forth in his *Perfect Manifesto*, an amalgamation of all topics discussed on the 118 (and counting) episodes of the podcast. Davidian has the basement unit sequestered off to himself, and his followers are not allowed down except for three reasons: prayer, procreation and podcasting.



On the drive to work Brian listens to another episode. He smiles and nods along with all of the eye-opening tips to a practicing a perfect existence. Why hadn't he been doing more of these this whole time? By midday he's completely hooked and doesn't stop listening except for a spell in the afternoon where he forces himself to drudge through enough work to ensure that Chet doesn't get on his ass come Monday. At 5:00 on the dot, Brian rushes home to find a mountain of packages waiting for him on his doorstep.

Brian carries each box carefully into the garage. Some are heavier than others but all have fragile equipment contained within. When he has to he lifts with his legs and not with his back. Brian spreads the boxes out across the garage and the night turns long as he builds and listens and assembles and obsesses.

By midnight, Brian looks on his studio with the pleasure of a proud papa. Two Herman Miller Aeron Chars sit across from each other at the IKEA Dunkkeldorf desk, with the Shure SM7B Broadcast Microphones on RODE PSA1 Swivel Mount Studio Microphone Boom Arms plugged into the Behringer XR 18 Digital Mixer with Seismic Audio's 8 Channel XLR snake cable through the CL-1 Cloud Microphones Cloudlifter

Mic Activators. The LyxPro STP10 desktop amplifier sits positioned next to his chair, connected to the mixer with both sets of headphones placed next to each of the chairs.

Tomorrow he'd start podcasting. But now, bedtime.

Brian tosses and turns, unable to find the release of sleep. Thoughts of podcasts jump through his brain sending synapses like shockwaves of sheep. He takes an Ambien and passes out cold. He dreams of a ceremony.



The Ceremony is the same as it is every day. One day it would be for real but today was not that day. Andrew Ray Davidian doles out cups of a clearish red liquid to his devoted followers (all dressed in matching Adidas gym shorts and plain sky-blue t-shirts). The Grateful Dead's "Dark Star" plays through the chapel's makeshift speaker system. The version in question is the 31 minute 13 second one from August 27th 1972 at the Old Renaissance Fairegrounds, known in certain circles as Sunshine Daydream.

Andrew Ray Davidian had eaten half-a-dozen hits of LSD-25 at this specific show and had quite literally, permanently and destructively altered his entire worldview. He had, on this psychedelic journey, come into direct contact with the Lord and Savior David Christ. It was revealed unto him that on 50 years to the day the "Dark Star" would pass across Earth once again and would be humanity's only opportunity to leave this planet before it was wiped out in nuclear holocaust.

How did he know he'd live that long? He didn't. But who wouldn't do all it they could to guarantee their ticket to Heaven? Practice what you preach in the throes of podcast and a truly perfect life can be achieved.

As the other members of The Cosmic Vision Corps mime convulsions on the floor, Andrew Ray Davidian looks on approvingly.

“Now,” he says, with the hook coming in at exactly 11 minutes and 33 seconds. His followers leap to their feet like they have so many times before, dancing in ecstatic unison the way they know their spirits will do on that fateful day.



Now, what was he supposed to talk about?

The whole weekend with a working podcast studio and Brian doesn't touch it once. With no idea what to say he instead mopes around the house, turning from his usual bright-eyed, assured self to a mere husk of insecurity. He binge listens to episodes of *Perfect* in his bathrobe and pajama pants, spoon-feeding ice cream into his mouth like a black hole consuming everything in its reach. He doesn't brush his teeth, work out or leave his house once. Instead he plays video games and masturbates constantly, the void in his soul dragging him further and further into the couch.

On Monday, Brian barely musters enough energy to make it to work. He sits in his office, staring out the window at nothing in particular. When Chet peers his head around the door, Brian wants to puke.

“Sup, dog?” He says cheerily. Too cheerily. “Get your metrics together for the database merger acquisition infographic?” Brian looks up from his computer, bleary-eyed and ghostly. “You don't look so hot. When's the last time you slept?” Brian figures he must look as dead on the outside as he feels on the inside.

“Dunno.”

“Dunno? Whatever it is, you better G-Y-S-T.” Chet’s playful way of saying ‘get your shit together.’ Brian never found it particularly amusing and detests it especially now. Seething with misplaced aggression, he imagines Chet’s head exploding over and over again. Bits of brain matter spattering over his office, the specks of blood giving this drab interior a much-needed makeover. Maybe that’s a podcast? *How to Kill your Boss with Brian Ffffft*. Nah. Too niche.

“You know what, how about you go home and sleep this one off? I’ll cover for you.” A pregnant pause sits between two men, who’ve never been particularly great at communicating their feelings. Chet takes a seat on the edge of Brian’s desk, his face crumpled in an attempt at conveying genuine concern. “Are you okay?”

This reminds Brian of how they used to be. How they shared a cubicle wall and Chet was there for him that time Elizabeth broke his heart by leaving him for that graffiti artist, Claude. They’d spend whole days talking about everything and anything and nothing at all really. What did they use to talk about? For goddsakes, what do people talk about?

Brian didn’t show up for work the next day or the day after that. On the third day his boss reported him missing to the police.



Brian stands in front of a door unfamiliar to him at an address he had scrounged up somewhere online. A girl half his age stands in the doorway dressed in a sky-blue t-shirt and Adidas gym shorts, some song playing in the background. She smiles warmly at the stranger on her doorstep before inviting him inside. Brian never did use any of the podcast equipment he had bought for himself. Guess it doesn’t matter anyway.