



## Jimmy Kimmel transcript 5/25/06

MICHAEL EISNER:

So, Jimmy, I appreciate you coming here to Spago in Beverly Hills to talk to me. And I'm excited because you are one of a par-- part of the group-- how do I say this? I'm out of Disney but--

JIMMY KIMMEL:

What?

MICHAEL EISNER:

I know, it's depressing.

JIMMY KIMMEL:

I didn't know-- I wouldn't have come if I'd known this.

MICHAEL EISNER:

I know. One of the last things that I was kind of responsible for was approving the *Jimmy Kimmel Live* show going on the air. And--

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Yes.

MICHAEL EISNER:

It's now become very successful. It's the only late night show that went up 13-- 17 percent. Almost two million viewers every night. It's had this great evolution. You've become a household word and-- around America. And it's evolved. And it's great.

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Well, thank you. I appreciate that. I think you may be-- you may be nicer than the reality. But-- yeah, we're doing alright. I think it gets a little better each month and--

MICHAEL EISNER:

The opening monologues--

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Uh-huh (AFFIRM)?

MICHAEL EISNER:

Which is the place that most people, like, connect are fantastic. You're now doing all this stuff inside and outside the studio. You're commenting-- on society through looking at what's going on in television. It's pretty clever.

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Well, thank you. I appreciate that. You know, it's hard-- it's hard to do it differently, as you know and-- because it's been done for so long and so we look for a lot of ways to do things differently. And some of those things were, I guess, mistakes. But-- I think we've come to a point-- well, hopefully I'll look back at this time and I'll say, oh, that was terrible but--

MICHAEL EISNER:

You think getting the audience loaded on the first night was not--

JIMMY KIMMEL:

That was probably--

MICHAEL EISNER:

--a mistake?

JIMMY KIMMEL:

That was a mistake. I'm not sure how you guys allowed us to have alcohol (LAUGHTER). In retrospect, the whole thing is preposterous.

MICHAEL EISNER:

I'm sitting in my office and somebody says to me, "Oh, the first show went great but somebody threw up in the audience and--"

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Yeah.

MICHAEL EISNER:

And I said, "Well, how did that happen?" "Well, we allowed there to be an open bar before the show went on the air." I said, "Well, who did that?" And they blamed 11 people all of whom hadn't been in the company so 20 years--

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Right. (LAUGHTER)

MICHAEL EISNER:

So-- so you stop that. You realize that a sober audience would probably be a better audience.

JIMMY KIMMEL:

No, you stopped that. I didn't stop it. I had nothing to do-- (LAUGHTER) I-- my-- the way I looked at it was, yeah, someone vomited in the audience but people vomit on Pirates of the Caribbean and you don't close that ride down, right? Or maybe not that ride. But on the Matterhorn, sometimes people throw up. What are you going to do?

MICHAEL EISNER:

We give them air sick bags. Did you have air sick bags?

JIMMY KIMMEL:

We should've. In retrospect, that would've been the way to go.

MICHAEL EISNER:

Well, from that first night, which was very funny, by the way, even though somebody threw up, (LAUGHTER) through the evolution of the show, the show has now become, I think, one of the funniest shows. It's being booked extremely well. But I'm not surprised. And I'll tell you why I'm not surprised. When you were on Ben Stein's Money--

And when I called Ben Stein up, I'd say, "Who is this guy?" He said, "I'm telling you, he's going to have a late night show. He's really funny. He's really clever." Was that show fun to do?

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Oh, it was a lot of fun to do. And Ben took big, long naps during the day which made it a little bit hard to do. But Ben is a-- he and I are still very close and--

MICHAEL EISNER:

He took naps during the day?

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Yeah, he would take naps-- sometimes between--

MICHAEL EISNER:

Alone?

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Oh, usually-- with his dog.

MICHAEL EISNER:

I see.

JIMMY KIMMEL:

His dog would come and he had to have-- 600 thread sheets on set so he could take naps frequently throughout the day. He's a-- he's a character-- as you, I'm sure, know.

MICHAEL EISNER:

And that show, obviously, wasn't fixed. He knew all those answers?

JIMMY KIMMEL:

That show was not fixed. They were--

MICHAEL EISNER:

How did he know all that stuff?

JIMMY KIMMEL:

He just knows-- you know, I-- I had dinner with him one night and I showed up and-- and he was reading-- I said, "Are you reading an encyclopedia?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "Well, what are you doing?" He said, "I'm studying for the show." By our last season, the last season I did with him, he was winning more than 90 percent of the games. I mean, so, we'd have one person beat him every two weeks. I said, "Ben, at a certain point, people are not going to enjoy seeing you just beat every--" but he took every challenge very seriously. And that's what made it fun.

MICHAEL EISNER:

And was it fun being on the s-- you-- you won an Emmy for that show. Was it being the sidekick?

JIMMY KIMMEL:

It was. It was because there's not a tremendous amount of pressure on you. And it was a great way to, kind of, it was my first television job to be introduced and just get a little sampling of what it's like to be on TV.

MICHAEL EISNER:

You've done a lot of radio.

JIMMY KIMMEL:

I had, yeah. I did 12 years of radio.

MICHAEL EISNER:

You-- an HL-- NFL Sunday.

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Right. I did Fox sports--

MICHAEL EISNER:  
Getting people--

JIMMY KIMMEL:  
Yeah.

MICHAEL EISNER:  
--annoyed.

JIMMY KIMMEL:  
Getting people annoyed, right. Terry Bradshaw.

MICHAEL EISNER:  
Terry Bradshaw.

JIMMY KIMMEL:  
Howie Long. They're glad I'm gone but it was fun.

MICHAEL EISNER:  
What were you doing? You were just ragging on 'em?

JIMMY KIMMEL:  
I did picks. I did-- well, not really. That wasn't intention. The intention was I would do football picks. But-- the first week I-- I had made some joke about Terry Bradshaw being bald. And these are not guys, Terry Bradshaw and Howie Long that (LAUGHTER) are used to being--

MICHAEL EISNER:  
Bald jokes?

JIMMY KIMMEL:  
Are used to being--

MICHAEL EISNER:  
I'm very sensitive.

JIMMY KIMMEL:  
Having any jokes made about them. I mean, they're, you know, like-- if they're the guy who would, you know-- Lift you up by your nipples in the locker room, you know? And so they were taken aback and outraged. And it turned into almost like a-- a wrestling event.  
But the funny thing was, if I made fun of-- of Terry, everyone else thought it was funny. Howie thought it was funny. JB, Chris Collingsworth. If I made fun of Howie, Terry thought it was funny. But no one liked being the one that got made fun of.

MICHAEL EISNER:  
Are your kids today embarrassed by your very existence? Cuz they're, like, teenagers, right?

JIMMY KIMMEL:  
Not quite. Yeah, my daughter's 14 and-- but she's not quite embarrassed by me because all the boys at her school love me. So-- I'm still kind of cool to them.

MICHAEL EISNER:  
And how 'bout your son? When you speak about him on television?

JIMMY KIMMEL:

He-- I don't talk about him too much, you know? But-- he's-- you know, I'm-- I'm careful. I don't-- I don't reveal anything that's too-- embarrassing to them.

MICHAEL EISNER:

See, my kids when they were that age and I'd say, let's go to Disneyland or let's go to Walt Disney World, they'd say, oh dad.

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Yeah.

MICHAEL EISNER:

You know?

JIMMY KIMMEL:

My kids are pretty jaded. I mean, it's rare that they even watch the show. You know, they'll be up in my office and the show's on and they're playing videogames. They're on their computer. And no celebrities really mean anything to them, you know?

MICHAEL EISNER:

What do your kids-- what did your kids or your parents think about *The Man Show*?

JIMMY KIMMEL:

About *The Man Show*? My parents loved the show. My kids have never seen it but--

MICHAEL EISNER:

Your mother loved the show?

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Yeah, my mother-- my mother loves everything I do. She's alright with (LAUGHTER)-- you know, I don't think people know--

MICHAEL EISNER:

She had no comments about *The Man Show*?

JIMMY KIMMEL:

She had no negative comments about the show. No, my parents are very, very supportive. Almost to the point where it's ridiculous. But--

MICHAEL EISNER:

So they were okay with the person throwing up the first day?

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Yeah, they don't mind it.

MICHAEL EISNER:

Fine. (LAUGHTER)

JIMMY KIMMEL:

I don't think people realize that ABC originally picked up *The Man*-- made the pilot for *The Man Show*. It went to Comedy Central. But I was always curious what your reaction was seeing the pilot. Now, this is a different time in 1999 where-- it wasn't like it is now where *Fear Factor* is on the air. Things were pristine at the time.

MICHAEL EISNER:

I don't think I've told you this, but the reason it didn't get on the schedule is because of me. (LAUGHTER) I-- I looked at it. We went over to ABC. Lloyd Braun who ran the-- the area at the time--

JIMMY KIMMEL:

I think I-- Stu-- Stu ran the network at the time. It was--

MICHAEL EISNER:

Oh, right. Yeah, Lloyd was at the other side. Right. Okay. So Stu ran it. And they put it up. And they were very enthusiastic.

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Uh-huh (AFFIRM).

MICHAEL EISNER:

And Bob Iger and I looked at it. And I looked at it and I said, "Are you guys insane?" (LAUGHTER) That is the most distasteful, disgusting-- you can't put that on ABC. (LAUGHTER) And they said you're a Neanderthal!

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Uh-huh (AFFIRM).

MICHAEL EISNER:

And you understand the new world. This is men, macho-- what's wrong with you? I said, "I don't think it's a-- a hit." I think it's--

JIMMY KIMMEL:

I think you're probably right. I-- it was a show for cable. It was a cable show.

MICHAEL EISNER:

I think they were right and I was right. I think it was a big hit on Comedy Central. It had a certain beer drinking, frat orientation. What I loved when I was a beer drinking frat person. But I couldn't see it being a national show. And women kind of drive a lot of what is watched on television. So I passed on it. And then was reminded endlessly (LAUGHTER) how stupid I was by Stu and everybody else. But what was great on the show was you. I just didn't like some of the attitude. And what was fantastic was *Win Ben Stein's Money*, those little pieces.

So when it got down to late night and our debacle and David Letterman and trying to get David Letterman over to Disney. That was pretty embarrassing. You must have been watching that with interest.

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Yeah. I was very interested in the whole thing.

MICHAEL EISNER:

I mean, he's your-- he's your favorite comedian, yes?

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Yeah, he is. He's-- yeah, he's my-- my me-- as a kid, I-- I-- I mean, I still do, but I worshipped him. I mean, I--

MICHAEL EISNER:

Why?

JIMMY KIMMEL:

I just--

MICHAEL EISNER:

Why him more than Johnny Carson?

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Well, I-- I think first of all is he, you know, just-- just the age. I love Johnny Carson, too. And I watch-- I'd stay up on my little black and white TV. I'd watch Johnny and I'd watch Letterman and then I'd watch *NBC News Overnight* with-- with-- Linda Ellerbee and then Charlie Rose. I loved talk shows. But-- I remember--

MICHAEL EISNER:

You must have done very well in school the next morning.

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Yeah, I-- it's true. And I didn't have a VCR. So I was very tired every day. But I-- I just felt like-- I felt like I was the only one watching the show. I real-- I didn't know anyone else who watched the show. And I felt like almost like it was-- a secret made for me. And I really-- it just-- the humor was so unusual. And I'd never seen anyone-- anyone like him or any bits like he did. And, I mean, just walking around on the street doing a taped bit. I mean, that's something that I'd never seen before. And I was drawn to it and I loved it.

MICHAEL EISNER:

Did you think that he was going to come to ABC?

JIMMY KIMMEL:

I didn't know. I mean, I-- I really, I never imagined-- people say, like, oh, is this something you always dreamed of doing? It really isn't. I-- I just-- I mean, when-- when you're a kid, it's like there was only one talk show. It's Johnny Carson. And then occasionally someone comes along like Pat Sajak or Joan Rivers and they go away quickly. But-- Johnny Carson and David Letterman, I never imagined that every network would have their own talk show. It just didn't even register with me that people would put other shows on to compete with these shows. And-- I-- you know, I had no idea. I didn't know anything about it.

MICHAEL EISNER:

In my history at ABC, which ran 40 years, until you, we never had a successful late night show. I mean, we had *Nightline* which was a successful-- in-- in the non comedy area. And we had Dick Cavett for awhile. And we had Joey Bishop where-- Regis Philbin was on. But we never had somebody who had a growing audience appeal the way I think you are. So--

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Oh, I'm-- I'm honored to have the time slot. I really am.

MICHAEL EISNER:

And the-- you're more comfortable with the Letterman style than the Johnny Carson style? The more sardonic--

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Yeah. I mean, it's-- I mean, Johnny was-- it was so effortless but it was a different thing. I mean, people-- I know people consider Johnny Carson the greatest talk show host of all time. But for me, I think-- I think Letterman on his best nights is-- is better than Johnny on his best nights. And on his worst nights, is better than Johnny on his worst nights.

I mean-- people have-- kind of a white wash memory of, you know, it wasn't always the-- the acts hitting him in the groin. And there were nights were things were a little bit boring and the sketches were a little bit stale. And-- and I think that when David Letterman eventually retires,

everybody will remember the highlights, the highlights, the highlights. And I just-- to me, Letterman is the guy.

MICHAEL EISNER:

Who has your favorite guest been since you've been doing the-- this show?

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Oddly, I think Mike Tyson has been my favorite.

MICHAEL EISNER:

That was a great week. That was early.

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Yeah. And he's-- well, he's come back a couple of times. But it-- there's a real-- there's a genuine terror because you look at him and you go, this is a guy-- this is a man who has bitten a-- I mean, he's bitten another human being. And, you know, it's fun to, like, you know, you poke fun at people and they get mad. But most of the time, it's very safe. And people are, like, oh, wow, you're really ballsy. You say that to that guy.

But, you know, with most people, like, what are they going to do, really? It's a talk show. You know, I mean, the worst case scenario is they're mad afterwards and you have to write them a note. But with Mike Tyson--

MICHAEL EISNER:

Was he annoyed?

JIMMY KIMMEL:

He-- it wasn't that he was annoyed. It was the potential for him being annoyed. I mean, there was a-- a moment where he was very attracted to one of our guests, Ali Landry. Where he was starting to become physical. I had thought, oh my god, this could-- and I was looking around for, like, the heaviest object in case I had to hit him with something.

I decided it would be the phone. We have a big, old time phone on the desk. I was thinking if I hit him with the phone, he's going to kill me. But at least, maybe, it'll distract him for a moment and she can run. And-- and the security can swoop in and we'll all be killed but who-- but at least we won't have a live, on air assault.

MICHAEL EISNER:

I think the one thing that you've done that's been fantastic in the evolution of the late night show is you do not go over the line. You have found the line in which to stay right behind. Very funny. In good taste. And I don't think you're over the line.

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Well, it's hard not to because when pressed, especially at the beginning, in the first year of the show, where there were real lulls and I-- really, I mean-- it would just-- I'd just start sweating.

And the show was live.

MICHAEL EISNER:

Hard to book at the beginning.

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Yeah. And you'd be talking to somebody that you had no interest in at all. And the easiest thing to do is to say something dirty. And, you know, sometimes, most of the time it works. Most of the time you get a big laugh and you get out and whatever. But when it doesn't, it's-- it's ugly. And it's-- it's tough. And-- it's confidence, really, I think that-- that-- that steers you away from that. And you build it, really, like every month you get-- I get a little more confident, a

little more confident. And I don't-- I know it's cliché to say you don't have to go there, but it is true. It's a lot easier to go to that.

MICHAEL EISNER:

The interesting thing is I have three sons. And the th-- and they're no grown. And the thing that we all have most in common is your show.

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Really?

MICHAEL EISNER:

I swear to god. (LAUGHTER) They call me up and they say did you see it again last night? (LAUGHTER) And they're-- so my sons who go from 35 to 27 are totally connected to your show. And I'm connected to your show for all sorts of reasons. And I think it's great. And I appreciate you coming here and--

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Well, you've always--

MICHAEL EISNER:

--doing my-- my little thing here.

JIMMY KIMMEL:

People-- ask me about you a lot. Cuz I've-- I've met you and talked to a few times. And I always say he-- the-- people get this idea of what Michael Eisner must be like. And I just-- this is a very practical man whose a nice guy. Whose interesting and enthusiastic about-- I-- I just-- I was just knocked out that you watched the show every night. I mean, to me, that's like whether you have something positive or negative to say about it, I just think it's a-- it's amazing with all you had to do that--

MICHAEL EISNER:

Let me ask you a question.

JIMMY KIMMEL:

--you would do that.

MICHAEL EISNER:

If you were me, would it be more interesting looking at a balance sheet-- writing a speech, thinking about governance, talking about Enron, talking about Congress or watching *The Jimmy Kimmel Show*? I mean, please.

JIMMY KIMMEL:

It depends on what-- who we had on. (LAUGHTER)

MICHAEL EISNER:

That's true. And it's (UNINTEL). Anyway. Thank you very much.

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Thank you.

MICHAEL EISNER:

Jimmy, I appreciate it.

JIMMY KIMMEL:

Thanks, Michael.