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q&a [by marie speed]

Still Crazy After All These Years

THE "PAUL AND YOUNG RON" MORNING RADIO SHOW REACHES A 20-YEAR MILESTONE.

It's a commercial break at BIG 105.9-FM. The cramped studio is part freshman dorm, part blinking electronics. There is a life-sized cutout of Jack Bauer, a giant Patron tequila sign, a Miami Dolphins cheerleader calendar and assorted rock star posters. The stars of the "Paul and Young Ron Show" have been here since before dawn, but Ron Brewer is catching up on the paper and Paul Castronovo is joking around with his producer, Toast. On standby is one of the morning guests, Andrew Meyer, the former University of Florida student whose 15 minutes of fame was his "Don't tase me bro," moment at a John Kerry forum. It's a typical scene at South Florida's longest-running radio program, which has all but eclipsed its competition and now reaches the Keys (Sun 103.1 and Sun 99.5) and West Palm Beach (Gator 98.7).

Castronovo, 50, grew up in West Palm Beach and is a devout UF alumni and fan. Brewer, 54, his (somewhat) straight man, worked his way in radio from Annapolis to South Florida decades ago. Their gig already has lasted longer than most marriages with the kind of seamless trash talk usually associated with a couple of 27-year-old guys at a sports bar. Only smarter. Funnier. And more outrageous.

DESCRIBE THE GENERAL FORMAT OF YOUR SHOW.

Ron: It's just like you are sitting at a bar with a bunch of friends having a few drinks and talking about what's going in the world. And joking on each other.

Paul: Except there aren't girls around, unfortunately—just a bunch of guys wishing there were girls around. My theory is if you put a bunch of regular funny guys in a room, every few minutes something stupid is going to be said. And that's what we have based our careers on.

WHO IS YOUR AUDIENCE?

Ron: It's a guy on either side of 40 years old. It's a guy that likes sports, a guy that likes fishing, a guy that likes drinking and having sex with women. A heterosexual man.

Paul: A professional highly educated University of Florida graduate.

AND YOUR RATINGS?

Ron: We have been pretty fortunate with ratings the 20 years we have been on the radio. Our ratings have always been right up there.

Paul: Two years ago, we started on [98.7] and we were nowhere. For the latest rating period [as of this writing], we're number one between persons 25 and 54. That's a huge demo. And as a Palm Beach County kid, I am very proud of that.

WHAT DO YOU THINK HAS GIVEN YOU LONGEVITY OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS?

Ron: I always say the fact that we haven't been fired. But it's true. If you know anything about radio, you get fired all the time in this business. That's why it's so unique to have a couple of guys on the radio for so long who haven't gotten fired.

Paul: It will be fun to go back and read that after we're fired next year. I always say the reason we have been successful for so long is that Ron saddled up with me.

DESCRIBE YOUR RESPECTIVE ROLES

Ron: I'm the Barney Rubble to his Fred Flintstone. I'm Art Carney to his Jackie Gleason.

Paul: I guess it's the big bully picking on the little guy. That goes back to Abbott and Costello, Laurel and Hardy. We have completely different personalities, yet we get along famously. He describes me as someone who would like to take the world and hump it on the leg. And he's a guy who's afraid of his own shadow.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BRING TO YOUR AUDIENCE?

Ron: A couple of laughs on the way in. That's the way it's always been. We don't try to overanalyze politics or talk about things that are boring to people. We just try to



From left: Paul Castronovo
and Ron Brewer

+ sound bites

Dream guest

PAUL: Al Pacino
RON: David Letterman

Person you would most like to humiliate on air

PAUL: "We owe one to Linda Blair. She had the gall to come on our show and demand that we do not talk about 'The Exorcist.'"

RON: "The Kardashians. They're nothing. Paris Hilton, Lindsey Lohan and all those tramps."

Favorite day-off diversion

PAUL: "I'm on the boat with the wife and kids and we are in the Bahamas."

RON: "Drinking purple stuff and rollin' up stanky. ... No, it's anything to do with my boys; I just love spending time with my kids."

He [and his wife] had a newborn baby and we replaced their newborn baby [in the crib] with a midget smoking a cigar and drinking a Heineken. And the mother came in and said "Good morning, sweetheart," and he said, "Sweetheart? I want some eggs!" We almost put a big boa constrictor in there that had just eaten a rabbit but that would have been too mean.

EVER BEEN SORRY FOR ANYTHING YOU HAVE DONE?

Paul: We've never gone out of our way to be nasty or to hurt people's feelings.

Ron: Not at all.

Paul: We like to make lighthearted fun of everybody. We call ourselves equal opportunity offenders.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OVER THE LAST 20 YEARS?

Paul: One of the highlights for me was when they decided to put our show in West Palm Beach and the Florida Keys. Also, getting to meet really cool interesting people and interviewing them and joking around with

have a good time, and I think it comes across on the air.

Paul: If something is going on in South Florida—like some idiot in Delray Beach who takes a whale carcass and chops it in half and decides to make soup out of it—then you turn the radio on and we're talking about it.

Ron: People are very habitual—in the morning especially. If you get up and the first thing you do is brush your teeth, then you do that every morning that way. It's part of your routine. And part of that routine is getting into the car and turning on the radio and knowing that these two guys you have been listening to for so long are going to be there.

Paul: They follow our lives. When my wife had cancer they were there, when my baby was born they were there. When Ron has his divorce they'll be there. It's great. I'm joking ... somewhat.

Ron: It's very funny.

WHAT TIME DO YOU GET UP? AND HOW DO YOU PREPARE FOR FOUR HOURS OF CONTENT EACH DAY?

Ron: I get up at 3:30. As far as preparation is concerned it's really all about living life. Although I do watch a lot of news programs and current events stuff and keep up with the newspapers.

Paul: I get up at 4 in the morning, and I think most of my material comes from stuff my wife says to me. Or things that happen in and around my life. I can relate the things that happen in my life to the stupid things that are happening in the world.

WHAT IS THE CRAZIEST ON-AIR STUNT YOU HAVE EVER PULLED?

Ron: I think it had to do with our sidekick, Oh My God (OMG) Mike, when we dressed him up as a cheerleader and had him try and hitchhike to a certain location and back. What he didn't know is that we [planted someone] to pick him up—and that person took him out to the Everglades and threatened to kill him unless he had sex with him.

Paul: Or there was the time when a listener wanted to win a prize and we would send him on a cruise if he went through with it.

them—like Robert Duvall. Robert Duvall sitting next to me and we are trading lines from "The Godfather." Talking to Hillary Clinton about making baloney sandwiches for Chelsea. I asked her if she inhaled like Bill didn't. And she laughed.

Ron: Every payday is a highlight. I was going to say Robert Duvall too—that's the coolest thing. Ray Liotta—there have been so many people. Jerry Mathers, the Beaver. When I met him I didn't want him to leave. I think it's actually a little cooler for us than it is for the listeners.

ANY WEIRD FAN STORIES?

Paul: One time we had a construction guy doing some work on the house. And I guess he was a big fan. I had done a 56-hour marathon broadcast and so I came home thinking, "I gotta sleep." I take a shower, get in bed and my wife doesn't tell him I'm asleep upstairs so he goes into the bathroom to do some work and I'm laying there naked as a jaybird. I look up and there's this construction worker with a tool belt—I thought The Village People were in my bedroom. He

says, "I'm a big fan! I'm a big fan!" And he runs out.

Ron: Then he vomited ... Ron Brewer is not my real name so I don't get recognized as much as Paul. I have always had great experiences with listeners. They always come up and quote things from so many years ago that I've even forgotten. That's one of the coolest parts of the job.

WHY IS SOUTH FLORIDA THE PERFECT MARKET FOR YOUR PARTICULAR SENSE OF HUMOR?

Paul: I love it here. I grew up going to Dolphins games in the Orange Bowl. I went to high school here, I surfed here, my teachers were here, my friends were all here. When I went to Nashville for a couple of years, I knew nothing about the people or what they felt like. I tried to fit in, but you just never do. And I think that's why a lot of shows have failed. You come in here from some big city and you think you're going to do well in Miami and six months later you are down the road—because you don't have a clue

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about us. And I think that's why we work here.

Ron: In the obvious way it's perfect. We couldn't be in a better place for idiot news. The whole state of Florida is nuts if you ask me, and there's a wealth of material on a daily basis that I don't think you'd find anywhere else. Except maybe Washington, D.C., in the political season.

WHAT DO YOU DO FOR CHARITY?

Paul: Oh, screw those people. They're always begging with their hands out. No, I'm teasing. ... We have a hard time saying no. Our biggest charity is our annual food drive with the Daily Food Bank, now known as Feeding South Florida, and Taste of the Nation. We raise a million-plus pounds every year and they have come to rely on that. Last year we did a meatball and martinis event at Anthony's Runway 84, and it sold out in 10 minutes. We also do a big comedy night at the Improv.

WHAT IS NEXT?

Paul: Retirement for Ron. And my best years are yet to come.

Ron: I just want to go home and get a good night's sleep. 