



SODAJERKER

Meet the Liverpool duo whose podcasts have formed the basis of some of our biggest-name interviews

For well over two years now, *Songwriting* has been bringing you interviews with some of the biggest stars in the business based on podcasts put together by our brothers-in-arms up in Liverpool, Sodajerker. So we figured it was about time we told you a little more about the Sodajerker boys themselves, and what goes on behind the scenes to make those podcasts happen.

Simon Barber and Brian O'Connor met as friends in secondary school 25 years ago, and formed their first band, Santa Carla, at the age of 14. They've been a songwriting partnership ever since, but the idea of doing a podcast on the subject only came to them in 2011. Brian takes up the story...

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“We'd been writing songs as Sodajerker for a few years and were trying to think of ways to engage more readily with people who liked our music. We were big fans of interview-based podcasts like WTF and The Nerdist, and decided to use that format as a template, but focusing on songwriters. We drew up a wishlist of writers we'd like to talk to and fired off a few requests. One of the first people to respond was Todd Rundgren, and by October 2011 we were up and running.”

Sodajerker currently publish a new podcast every two weeks, with everyone from Suzanne Vega to Lamont Dozier to Neil Sedaka having featured to date. Given the wide range of artists, we wondered

what the selection criteria are for choosing artists – is it simply writers the guys are fans of themselves?

“We don't need to be fans *per se*,” says Brian, “but given the amount of work that goes into an episode, we at the very least need to have a healthy appreciation of their work. If we can't get excited about a guest, then it's going to be pretty hard to excite our listeners. They don't have to be household names, or mega-successful in a commercial sense, but writers with a solid and interesting body of work that we can really delve into are generally desirable.”

Brian cites Andy Partridge, KT Tunstall, Joan Armatrading and Disney legend Richard Sherman as some of his personal favourite interviews from among the 80 or so shows they've done to date, but adds, “To be honest, there've been so many great guests, I feel bad for leaving any out! We've been extremely fortunate.”

STUDIO SECRETS

As for actually recording and producing the podcast, “We keep it pretty simple,” says Simon. “The first 80 episodes were recorded on two SM58 mics going into an Apogee Duet 2, which is connected to a MacBook Pro. We tested a range of condenser mics, but they were so sensitive, they were picking up birds nesting in the roof! Our trusty Shure vocal mics are ideal in this regard because they ignore everything that's not right in proximity.

Intros and outros are recorded in Logic Pro X, while editing and assembly is done in Amadeus Pro... and when we visit a guest in person, we usually take a Zoom H4N. After that, we'll spend about 10 hours on the post-production of each episode.”

Away from the microphone, Brian and Simon continue to write songs together themselves, though as Brian says, “Ironically, the podcast eats into a lot of the time we used to devote to writing! But we're always generating ideas and we have a lot of material that's been floating around for the last few years... and of course you can't help being inspired by talking to all those great writers! One great piece of advice was from Tom Robinson, who talked about not being afraid to write, as he put it, ‘a load of shit’ in pursuit of one great idea. He figures you probably write nine bad songs for every winner, but you should embrace those duffers rather than cast them aside them. Finish everything – that's how you learn discipline as a writer.”

MOVING ON UP

Going forward, says Brian, “We'd just like to see the podcast continue to grow organically, as it has done over the last few years, and steadily reach more and more people, eventually reaching the point that Ira Glass has us on speed-dial. We're lucky in that we have a committed audience who are incredibly engaged with the creative process. They send us guest suggestions

and feedback on a daily basis and we wouldn't still be doing this without their support. Because of them, we've enjoyed chart success in iTunes and achieved millions of downloads and streams. We also have plans to put together a book based on the interviews we've conducted.”

But before that, there are still a few big names the lads would like to pin down for an interview. “Paul McCartney would have to be top of the list,” says Brian, “because, well, he's the gov'nor. Jeff Lynne. Randy Newman would have to be in there. Prince. Bowie. Although we probably stand more chance of interviewing John Lennon than getting hold of the latter two!” **SW**



MORE INFO

For more information about Sodajerker, hit up www.sodajerker.com. You can also find them on Facebook and, of course, you'll find their podcast interviews regularly republished on *Songwriting*

Brian and Simon: short-haired song lovers from Liverpool