

Interview Questions for

The Migrant Creative

Prepared for: Saliha Bava, Ph.D. at Taos Institute/Tilburg University

Prepared by: Laine Goldman

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Pre-Interview Research Questions – Bill Cavanaugh “Rerun Nation”

Spoke with Bill Cavanaugh (audio recording engineer with over 30 years of experience) about critical areas of importance to address in an interview about freelancing. **Social networking and isolation was critical to him – “no place to hang your coffee mug.” Also stressed the stress and uncertainty surrounding freelancers.** Noted that a lot of producers at Viacom are quitting because they cannot wait for 4 or 5 months to be paid. In a corporation, more individuals share the burden of failure. When working as a freelancer, it’s all on you. He finds the work ethic of young people starting out in sound recording as “good enough” rather than the satisfaction of a job well done. Companies also have that attitude of “good enough” and would rather hire a \$30,000 a year engineer rather than an engineer with a solid track record for \$150,000 . Cavanaugh notes that this “good enough” attitude is obvious with television shows – reality television and “reruns” fill time because it’s cheaper – not necessarily better. **Mentioned “permanence” as the way most media companies are going such as VH1 and MTV where individuals are laid off in December and rehired in January.** We also talked about the new realities of **freelance geography.** He’s moving out of Manhattan after 20 years to Rhinebeck, NY. (proximity Boston and NYC). The problem is that once you lose your freelance contacts or the job changes, you have a longer commute when you need to reestablish more contacts. Notes that cities are for the young because they are in a “chronic state of raw potential.” They do not mind living with 4 or 5 people to get by. Bill discusses the surge of **middle class individuals moving out larger cities like New York.** He commented on a NY Times article that basically said, “we are a city of wealthy people from all over the world and the people that service them.” The tax on freelancers in NYC is truly hitting freelancers hard. Cavanaugh commented that freelance was the only way for him to go in the recording industry.

The following questions are designed for Bill Cavanaugh but could work for just about all the freelancers with variations.

- 1) Discuss your career path and how it eventually led to a freelancing recording business with major film and video companies?
- 2) When did freelance opportunities start to eclipse your traditional career path? (CAVANAUGH DISCUSSES HOW MANY RECORDING STUDIOS IN NEW YORK AND LOS ANGELES ARE CLOSING UP SHOP THEY ARE A PREDICTOR FOR WHERE BUSINESS IS GOING. HE WOULD HAVE NATURALLY HAD TO GRAVITATE TO FREELANCE WORK.)
- 3) How long have you been on the freelance path?
- 4) How does your new vagabond-style setup compare to working in a studio?
- 5) Describe a typical recording session and where does it take place?
- 6) Does geography make a difference in your line of work? Or is it more about proximity and maintaining connections? (CAVANAUGH TALKS ABOUT MAJOR CITIES NOT BEING AS IMPORANT – PROXIMITY TO WORK IS CRITICAL – HE GOES BETWEEN NEW YORK AND BOSTON)
- 7) Provide a short snapshot of your geographical trajectory in terms of work? How much does geography impact your work? Do you need an urban setting or are you free to roam?
- 8) What is the most challenging part of freelancing for you? (SOCIAL IMPACT OF ISOLATION – “no place to hang your coffee mug.”)
- 9) How do you deal with the stress of uncertainty when it comes to always soliciting work, money and dealing with jobs? (TALKS ABOUT CHANGING OVERHEAD AND MOVING OUT OF NYC. STRESS IS ALWAYS THERE.)
- 10) Are you making less or more money with freelance than you did in your past “conventional” work life?

- 11) What kind of lifestyle has freelance work afforded you? Middle Class, upper middle class lower middle class, comfortable, itinerant (in the fullest sense), or just happy to have a job, a house, and a car?
- 12) How much do you charge on the average for your services? What is your pay structure (half up front and the rest paid upon completion). Generally, what's the average amount of time you wait until you are paid?
- 13) How did the last recession affect your freelance business?
- 14) Why did you feel a need to move out of Manhattan? (TAXES, AGING, ETC).
- 15) What words of advice would you offer an up-and-coming recording engineer when it comes to successfully navigating the freelance recording industry?
- 16) The author Malcolm Gladwell in *Outliers: The Story of Success* talks about the importance of perfecting your profession through practice and noted that to attain any degree of excellence someone needs at least 10,000 hours of practice. How are age, creativity and experience valued in your industry?
- 17) Tell me a story about a client or situation as a freelancer that made you love the work.
- 18) Relay another story about a situation or client that made you want to quit freelancing.
- 19) Do you imagine ever working full-time for any of the companies where you presently freelance?
- 20) Do you want to stay working as a freelancer? Or do you have something else in mind for your future work?
- 21) What kind of personality is needed to operate successfully as a freelancer? Do you have those traits?

- 22) Have you hired freelancers for Razermix? How did that work out? Do you generally refer other freelancers if you have a work overload and vice versa? What is the level of cooperation between freelancers in your field?
- 23) Are there more people freelancing in your industry since the recession? Do employers take advantage of the downturn to pay less for projects?
- 24) In the past, the freelancer has been viewed positively for having an outsider perspective? Do you think that's true as more professionals are securing freelance work by default and not choice?
- 25) How do you generally get your work? Does it come through solicitation or waiting?
- 26) If you had a choice between freelance or a "regular" job what would you consider when making the decision? Have you ever had to make that decision?
- 27) Do you have any final thoughts about our freelance conversation? Where would you like to see the dialogue go in the future?