

Molly: Hey, everyone. We are nearing the end of Season 3 of Pod and Prejudice, finally. I can't believe we've been covering *Emma* for two years. And next up, we're going to be covering *Persuasion*. So, if you want to read that with us, grab your copies now. We're going to be putting out a start date soon. And don't worry, we're going to leave you plenty of time to read the first couple chapters along with us.

As you know, this is also Becca's first time reading this book. And so, she's reading it now, and she's been recording her initial reactions to each chapter as she goes, which we're going to be releasing in short companion episodes on our Patreon as we release Season 4 of the podcast. So, if you want access to Becca's first thoughts on *Persuasion*, check out our Patreon at patreon.com/slashpodandprejudice.

And now, enjoy this week's episode talking about *Emma Approved* with the creator of *Emma Approved* and *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Bernie Su.

[Pod and Prejudice theme]

Becca: This is Becca.

Molly: This is Molly.

Becca: We are here to talk about Jane [00:01:00] Austen.

Molly: We are here specifically to talk about--

Molly and Becca: *Emma Approved*.

Molly: Wow. We didn't plan that.

Becca: Not at all. It's just we've been doing this so long, we make the same stupid jokes together all the time. But listeners, if you're new here, I, Becca, have read many Jane Austen novels and watched many adaptations of her work, both for film, television and of course, YouTube.

Molly: And I, Molly, am doing all of that for the first time through this podcast.

Becca: If you want to hear Molly read through *Pride and Prejudice* or *Sense and Sensibility* for the first time, you can listen to Seasons 1 and 2 of this podcast, respectively. But that is not what we're doing here today.

Molly: No. Today, we are talking about *Emma Approved*. And we are joined today by a very special guest. We are joined by Bernie Su, the creator of *Emma Approved* and *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. Hello, Bernie.

Bernie: Hello, ladies. Thank you for having me.

Becca: This is such an honor for us. Such a pleasure. We are both now [00:02:00] huge fans of your work. Me for a decade, Molly, for--

Molly: Like, two years?

Becca: Well, it's been a minute since we watched *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. But two weeks since you've watched *Emma Approved*.

Molly: Yeah, I would say I watched all of *Emma Approved* over the course of the last week.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: So, that's been a journey. But *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is my favorite adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*. So, big fan.

Bernie: I'm honored, people say that, by the way. [laughs]

Becca: [chuckles]

Bernie: Because there are a lot of good adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*. So, people, wow, it's amazing. So, thank you.

Becca: Well, not to nerd out about it. But you guys just get so wonderfully creative with how to make the actual YouTube series book accurate, as opposed to just a fun YouTube series. It is both at the same time. But before we get ahead of ourselves, do you want to introduce yourself very quickly to our audience? Most of which I'm sure is very familiar with your work.

Bernie: Sure. Hi, my name is Bernie Su. By trade, I suppose. I am a writer, director, producer, creator. I say I make digital [00:03:00] or web series, online shows. Obviously, most people listening to this will know me for doing the Austen works of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* and *Emma Approved*. I've also done several other shows, couple for-- I did one for Twitch. I've done some for Style Hall [unintelligible [00:03:17], and I've sold projects into traditional development, so people can think of me as that. I also directed my first national commercial this year, which hasn't come out yet. So, maybe by the time you listen to this, it'll be out. But we'll see.

Also, I guess I'm most known for the three shows, *The Lizzie*, *Emma* and the show, *Artificial*, all three of those were Primetime Emmy winners. And *The Lizzie* and *Emma* were the first two Primetime Emmys ever won by YouTube.

Molly: That's awesome.

Bernie: Thanks. Thanks. And *Artificial* was the first Primetime Emmy ever won by Twitch. It also won a Peabody. So, very much known of taking stories and pushing the envelope with formats and technologies and things.

Becca: Yes. [00:04:00] And we have a lot to say about the ways in which you transformed some of the most classic stories into wonderful online interactive experiences. But before we get to that, we're going to dial it back to the 19th century and ask you a little bit about Jane Austen.

Bernie: Sure.

Becca: Starting with a very quintessential question, we ask all of our guests, what is your relationship to Jane Austen?

Bernie: So, mine is my mother. My mother is a huge *Pride and Prejudice* fan. So much that when I was growing up, she was watching the Colin Firth miniseries using VHS tapes. Like, it's the very nascent memory of this. She's always loved the story. But I've said this publicly, like, I don't think I can take credit to being to say I'm a Jane Austen super fan. I think that's a little disrespectful to Jane Austen superfans that to say [Molly giggles] that I am a Jane Austen superfan. I believe that most of them would know the text for all six [00:05:00] books better than I do.

But when I approach a work like a *Pride and Prejudice* or an *Emma*, I try to treat it with the utmost respect. Because, again, my mother was connected to *Pride and Prejudice*. You think about a world before *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* existed, and you can think going into something like that, "Hey, we're going to do *Pride and Prejudice* on YouTube." That sounds terrible, or that sounds absolutely stupid and silly. Those are the things that people you can go to and honestly say, and no one would judge you for making that statement. But I went into this going, "Wow, my mother-- This is my mother's favorite story. I have to do a good job. I have to give it my all."

I remember it was the Thanksgiving before *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* came out, and I pretty much spent the entire Thanksgiving watching all the adaptations with her and just seeing

how she reacts to different things and stuff. And so, that was a fun little bonding moment in that. So, my barometer of how I did was always like, [00:06:00] “Does my mother like it? Did I honor her favorite story?” So, that's my connection.

Molly: That's really beautiful.

Becca: That warmed my heart all the way up. Two things. One, our podcast is very pro. You're a Jane Austen fan, no matter what your level of fandom is, because we come at it from a very loose angle and we just love her works. So, in our podcast universe, you get to be Jane Austen superfan [chuckles] too.

Bernie: [laughs]

Becca: I love hearing you talk about your mother and her relationship to Jane Austen, because I also come to Jane Austen by way of my mother's obsession. So, I think it's something that-- Because the stories are timeless, it is so beautiful how it gets passed on through generations. So, it's very lovely.

Bernie: Thanks. [chuckles] Well, I'll add one thing though. Because I remember when my first exposure to the JASNA community, which-- JASNA> J-A-S-N-A, right?

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Bernie: And so, I went to a conference, and there was a lot of people dressed in Regency garb, and they're [00:07:00] a little older and everything and a little more conservative. I could tell a lot of them didn't like what I did with *Pride and Prejudice*. And honestly, I think some of them were offended. I think coming out of that, it opened my eyes to something there, and I went, “All right. I think I need to be open minded and respectful to people who are more precious to this than I am.”

And so, what I always say to them now, when I go into a JASNA event or anything like that, and I say this to your audience, who may be these people, “You're great. I'm not saying you're wrong or I'm right. I'm saying that you are free to judge my work however you feel. You can like it. I obviously hope you like it. But if you don't like it, that's okay too. That is your right to do. But please be respectful to my work, that my work has inspired thousands of people to read the text for the first time. Thousands of people to read the text for the first time. And I think that's a net good. So, you don't have to like my work, but just be aware that that has happened. Thanks.” [00:08:00] [chuckles]

Becca: I agree 100%.

Molly: A 1,000%.

[chuckles]

Becca: I will also say that I think the Venn diagram of people who appreciate *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* and its alternative telling of Austen, and people who appreciate our alternative contemporary takes on Austen is almost a circle. So, I think there's quite a bit of sympathy for that point of view in our fan base, particularly. I don't want to speak for our fans, but we are also looser and more flippant, I think, with the text than some in the community might want us to be. But I guess our goal is to make Austen fun and accessible and still organically joyful to our own experiences of it. Not necessarily everyone's. And luckily, as I'm sure you've experienced tenfold to us, a lot of people also really resonate with that as well. So, that's the beautiful overlap between contemporary Austen fans and both [00:09:00] YouTube and podcasting form.

Bernie: Absolutely.

Molly: I'll also add that you go into these festivals where all of these people love Austen and appreciate her work so much and they're being precious about it. But I think that you approaching it from a point of view of being like, "I want to do my mom proud and make sure that I treat her favorite work well." It just really shows that you care as much about the work that you're creating as these people are caring about Austen. And for me, that really shines through, and you treated the text. So, you really honored it.

I felt like, it was like Becca said earlier. We're talking mostly about *Emma Approved* today, but just to gush about *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, like, watching *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, that was the first time I saw an adaptation that was doing something new, and putting it into a new place and also being really accurate to the text where all of the plot points were there. And if [00:10:00] you changed things, it was to improve upon them or make them more accessible to a modern audience.

Bernie: Thank you. My opinion is I agree with you. I believe our version is the most accurate of all the adaptations. We just cover more [Becca chuckles] of the story. So, thank you for that.

Becca: Yes, absolutely. So, speaking of adaptations, our next question is, what is your favorite Austen content? It can obviously be your own. Others have said your content on this question before.

Bernie: Wow.

Becca: But basically-- Oh, yeah. Plenty of people say, "Yeah, my favorite Jane Austen content is *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. *Emma Approved*. It is pretty common, but it can be a book, it can be an adaptation, it can be a song lyric. Whatever is Austen inspired or Jane Austen created herself, whatever's your favorite, you can let us now.

Bernie: I have to give *Clueless* its props.

Molly: Ooh.

Molly and Becca: Yes.

Bernie: Yeah. I just like though, every time they do a best Austen adaptations list and they put *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* and they don't put *Emma Approved* and they put [00:11:00] *Clueless* in, I'm not upset. I go, "That thing is so good." It's so good. And it was just such a shadow when we were doing *Emma Approved* of having *Clueless* out there and being like-- Everyone who worked on the show loved *Clueless*. But we didn't want to do *Clueless*. So, it's like, how do you do it and everything? So, it was almost like this landmine that we had to move around as we went. But it's so good. So, that one is probably my favorite of them all.

Becca: It's an excellent choice. And definitely, Alicia Silverstone delivering a level of iconic that keeps that movie in the canon of *Emma* adaptations.

Bernie: Still?

Becca: Yeah.

Bernie: Yeah. Still to this day, right?

Becca: Yeah.

Bernie: It's incredible, the legacy of that piece. And so, yeah, you have to give it props. My second choice would be the Keira Knightley *Pride and Prejudice*. When I was watching it with my mother, because she loves the Colin Firth one so much, she's part of that generation [00:12:00] who's like, "Colin Firth is my Darcy," et cetera. When we were watching that one, she would instead go-- When they had these beautiful landscape shots of Keira on a cliffside

with the wind in her hair, and she would instead go, "Why do they use time on this? Why don't they tell more of the story?" and laughs.

[laughter]

Becca: That is the perfect encapsulation of the debate between the 1995-ers and the 2005-ers.

Bernie: Yeah, exactly. I'm like, "Ma, cinema. Cinema"

[laughter]

Bernie: Because I can make the same criticism of the Colin Firth one where they have these grand dances. There's eight people at the dance. I'm like, "What?" [laughs]

Becca: That's true. [laughs]

Bernie: It must be like this massive ball of rich people and everything, or people coming town. You can see that depicted really well in Joe Wright, Keira Knightley one. So, anyway, there you go. Those are my answers.

Molly: Those are great picks.

Bernie: Thanks.

Becca: Okay. Which Austen character do you relate to the most?

Bernie: [00:13:00] Well, I'm curious. Who do you think am I?

Molly and Becca: Ooh.

Bernie: Have answer for this.

Molly: Well, I've known you for half an hour.

Bernie: A guess. Make a guess.

Becca: I'm going to go Bingley.

Molly: Bingley?

Becca: Yeah, because I've seeing--

Bernie: Bingley? Interesting.

Becca: Well, thus far, all I have of you is first impressions.

Bernie: [laughs]

Becca: And your first impression is not very Darcy like, but rather quite friendly and game, such as one Mr. Charles Bingley. So, I'm giving you Bingley as a man willing to jump in and chat with just about anyone, including me and Molly. [laughs]

Bernie: Fair.

Molly: I am going to say Mr. Knightley.

Bernie: Interesting. Okay.

Molly: Just because I'm fresh off of watching all of *Emma Approved* in the last week, so I have these characters fresh in my head. I don't think you're Emma, I don't think you're Harriet. So, I'm thinking of just these specific characters. I don't think you're Frank, but I could see you [00:14:00] being Knightley, because I feel like you're helpful and also fun.

Bernie: Sure. Cool.

Molly: Yeah.

Bernie: All right. So, if you had met me 10 years ago, it was absolutely Emma-Frank Churchill. So much that the team, when we're doing Emma proof, was like, Frank Churchill is basically Bernie. Just write Bernie [Molly giggles] and take away some of the things that like logic. [chuckles] Take away some things away from me, and I talk exactly like that.

Molly: That's so funny.

Bernie: I speak in grand statements. I'm trying to rally the team. [chuckles] And so, there's that. But I do think now, as I'm matured, it's 10 years later, it's definitely more of like a very logical base. So that Knightley one actually makes sense. I just wouldn't have called that years ago. But if you had said, "Yeah, of your two works, who are you in your works?" It's like, it's Emma Frank Churchill. It's like, girl or boy, how you want to do it?

But that was the most-- It was very easy for me to [00:15:00] write those two characters to the point where it was actually harder for the writers, especially for Frank, to get in how I feel that guy talks. Because I had it so clear in my head, because it's like, "Okay, you take me. You take away these inhibitions. You take away this inhibition, how would I do it?" And so, it was just really easy for me to write that character. So, that's my answer.

Becca: What a plot twist. [laughs]

Molly: I could totally see that in a nice way.

Becca: Yeah.

Bernie: Yeah.

Becca: In an Enna Approved way. [chuckles]

Molly: Yes.

Bernie: Yeah. Absolutely. I don't take any offense to it. I know they're completely flawed characters. I'm not saying I'm perfect either. And so, it's just that from a writer's perspective, when you're writing so many different characters and different perspectives, I feel it's very, very important that to the point of you have empathy toward who you are and who you aren't, okay? What I am, what I'm not. And can you, as a storyteller, put yourself accurately into the mind and the mindset of those people, who they are, who they aren't?

And [00:16:00] because the energy of the *Emma Approved* team, it was a very-- I think the entire writing team was all women except for myself. And so, when you have this very male energy coming to the show like a Frank, it's like, all the women are really strong in writing the other character. Emma-Harriet, Jane. They had them no problem Like, they were really strong about those things. And then you have someone like Frank who has to come in like a rocket and completely change dynamic of the show. It's like, "All right, I need to just present this energy here in a different framework, because this is a guy who's got to come in like a rocket and change things." So, a lot of that is in that development of that character.

It actually started my relationship with Stephen Chang as a working relationship. He is literally the person who's been in most of my shows, more of my shows, more of my work than anybody.

Becca: Oh, I love that.

Bernie: [chuckles] Yeah.

Becca: Oh. Well, he's fantastic.

Bernie: Oh, he's so good. He's so good. [chuckles]

Becca: Very base level charm that immediately hits [00:17:00] with the sneaky under.

Bernie: Yeah. There were some behind-the-scenes crushes going on with Stephen. Not me, of course but [crosstalk] say.

[laughter]

Becca: So, our last question is, what is your hottest Austen take?

Bernie: Ooh.

Becca: We have so many fun answers for this. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* as actually one of the great examples of one of our hot Austen takes, which is that Lydia Bennet is a tragic character. That's the hot takes we market in. We're really changing the conversation. [laughs]

Bernie: Interesting. Okay. What is my hot Austen take? Gosh, this is a tough one, because even trying to take away the patience. Yeah, I guess I would say that Caroline is a tragic character too then.

Molly: That is spicy.

Bernie: Yeah. I'm not saying our Caroline's a tragic character. [laughs] I'm saying Caroline's a tragic character, if you look at her from her [00:18:00] perspective. Not as tragic as Lydia. I won't say that. But one of the things I've also said about and try to be respectful about our works, like *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, for example, I would say the big four or the main two couples. Lizzie-Darcy, Bingley-Jane. I go, "You look at all the adaptations, you can have a fair debate about who's the best one of all [unintelligible [00:18:22]." Colin Firth or Keira or whatever.

I just don't think there's any real strong debate, you could say, for any of the characters that we have the best version of that. We have the best Lydia, we have the best Caroline, we have the best Charlotte. I guess you can have that debate. I just think we just gave them much more to do, and they do it so well in ours that I just don't think that's a debate. But maybe that's my hot take [laughs] and that's a selfish one.

Becca: Honestly though, I don't disagree with it.

[laughter]

Becca: So, I'm perfectly okay with that being the position on this podcast, which brings us to the meat [00:19:00] of what we're discussing today, which is, *Emma Approved* and by proxy also, of course, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* as well, two seminal Austen adaptations, both created by you and starring just a plethora of brilliant young actors across YouTube and other platforms.

This is the fun thing I remember about when this first came out. This was a very new form of media, and you guys were capturing a new form of influencer that is so funny, because now it's like a time capsule to 2014, the vlogging that Lizzie does. And also, in *Emma Approved* that BuzzFeed creator lifestyle blogger that was so big in that time period, and also transferring that to social media platforms, so that the fans could interact directly with these characters as if they were those influencers, as if they were those vloggers.

So, [00:20:00] anyway, that's my starting piece on this. But what gave you the idea to adapt these stories? Particularly, we can talk about *Emma*, but also *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* as well. What gave you the idea to adapt the stories in that platform? Because it was so new when it happened.

Bernie: Yeah, for sure. So, I think you need to have-- You can't just answer one without the other.

Becca: Yeah. [laughs]

Bernie: Or, you can't answer *Emma* without *Lizzie*, right? So, *Lizzie* started with me Hank Green. He met me at an event one night, and he found out I was a storyteller on new media and he's like, "Hey, could you tell a book as a YouTube series?" I immediately went to, "You mean like a real YouTuber series, like vlogging and all this stuff?" That kind of the stuff we eventually did. He's like, "Yeah, not like a movie chopped up into two-minute episodes and told over 50 videos." And I'm like, "Yeah, theoretically, absolutely. Why couldn't you do that? No one's done it yet. You're thinking about a book?" And he goes, "Yeah, *Pride and Prejudice*." I'm like, [00:21:00] "Oh, okay." And then that started that whole discussion.

Because it's Hank. Hank Green was the genesis of this. No one's denying that. When I came on and really dissected how to do this procedurally, like one by one, issue by issue, how do you tell the story within budget, how do you tell the points of views, how do you modernize it, how do you do all these things? You go through piece by piece and do the whole thing. And it was really important for us to make sure that *Lizzie* felt, like, of that time, a YouTuber, so she would have to have all these social media accounts. You were referring to her Twitter and her Tumblr, which at time was a big thing, which isn't anymore.

Becca: Well, listen. Like I said, I was in college in this time period, so I certainly was a Tumblr girl in this time period and felt it-- You can feel it [Bernie laughs] very viscerally coming off of *Lizzie*.

Bernie: But you get what I mean here. That's what it was. [00:22:00] And so, we were very authentic to that. So, once *Lizzie* ended and we had this massive hit, people loved it. It was obvious that going into a second one. And so, the deal that we had done with our financier after we came out, it was a blind deal. It was basically like, "Hey, we will fund the rest of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, whatever you need. Everybody gets paid more. Great. Everybody did. And we'll also fund a second series of yours, and you get to pick whatever you want to do. It's got to be the same basic style." I forget the exact parameters. But basically, a book adaptation on YouTube. That's basically what it was, right?

And so, me going, "Well, it makes logical sense to do another Austen book and not veer off and go do like *Dracula* or something like that." [Becca chuckles] It's like, "Okay, let's stay in Austen. Let's be good partners here, and let's pick a book that interesting to me." Because at this point now, Hank steps away. He's like, "Okay, I did the thing." He dreamt up *Pride and Prejudice* on YouTube, and we did. He's got other things [00:23:00] to do, and he has other things he's doing. And so, this one was very much on me, and I just went, "I think we should do *Emma*. Because, one, I like *Emma* as a story. I identify more with that character." Once we did that, because it was my choice. And I would be respectful too, if Hank had said, "Hey, I don't think you should do *Emma*." I would have absolutely said, "Hey, okay. Cool."

[chuckles]

Bernie: Let's have that discussion, and he could easily convince me if he had a very strong opinion about it. And so, then it was, "Let's do this differently." Like, "How do we do this differently than what we just did and learn from what we did and-- We made mistakes, but let's optimize a little better here about it." Because *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is as great as it is, and as crazy as the transmedia, mixed media, multiplatform stuff was. It was definitely not [00:24:00] optimized. That's not a bad thing, which is wasn't.

What that does hurt is the sanity of a lot of the writers and the storytellers, because it just takes a lot of energy to do that. So, what was the most optimal, and how do you make it authentic to the modern day and who *Emma* is and the version of *Emma* we want to do

today? So, it was, as I was describing to people at the time, before we launched an episode, I'm saying, Emma Woodhouse fashion blogger.

Becca: Yes.

Bernie: That's what we're building. We're going to build Emma Woodhouse fashion blogger and we're just going to run it that way. And so, what's a fashion blogger? A fashion blogger has a fashion blog. She takes photos of herself in cute clothes, and she tags the people, the clothes that she wears, because fashionistas love telling you what they're wearing.

Becca: Yes. [chuckles]

Bernie: Whether they're being paid for to it or compensated to it or not, especially today in the modern day, where it's very, very part of the meta, back then, disclosing advertising was not part of the meta or how these things were done. But they still tell you. [00:25:00] It's like, "I'm wearing brand and it's so fancy sounding," or not. So, that's what we did. And so, that's how the design of it was. And the rest of the story and the way we're presenting the story had to recalibrate and adjust to that frame, that canvas. So, even though if you watch it too, it feels like you could tell that they're the same story creator, story world. They do feel like very different shows. Tonally, stylistically, they're different and a little adjusting. And even the multiplatform transmitted stuff is very different too. Whether you like it or not, that's cool. But it was a choice to do that.

Becca: First of all, I think it's so fun that Emma was a fashion blogger, especially because I'm looking-- As I was watching it in 2024, I was like, "Damn, I vaguely miss this style, this era of fashion, these mod clothes that [Bernie laughs] she's tagging on Instagram." But I think our next question goes to this. I think it's so fun to adapt *Emma*. You start with Lizzie Bennet. [00:26:00] And Lizzie Bennet is one of the most iconic characters of all time, and you adapt her to a YouTube show. Then you take Emma Woodhouse, who is also iconic in her own right, but is also kind of a lightning rod. She's a bit more controversial than Lizzie, because she is so openly flawed, and that's the point of Emma as a character.

I think if you look at the 19th century, Emma's, this upper class gentleman's daughter, with a heart of gold, but absolutely no self-awareness and a level of snobbery that could floor anybody. [Bernie laughs] And then you have *Clueless*, obviously, where Cher Horowitz plays that valley girl. And I guess you answered this in talking about Emma as a fashion blogger. But how did you think of her bringing that sort of duality to Emma, that self-centeredness mixed with that genuine care and generosity that she has for others?

Bernie: I would say it's just-- Man, I'm trying to think of like, [00:27:00] my [unintelligible] [00:27:00] today is based on maturity and experience rather than in the moment of time, 2014 or 2015.

Becca: [laughs]

Bernie: Because to me, I go, "Look, everyone's flawed. Self-centered people, it's not black and white, and it's not like they're completely self-centered and hate everything. They probably have someone or something they really care about. That's not them. And that's human. That's complexity." And so, when you have a character that Emma, who on the surface is very flawed, pretty unlikable for a lot of the things that she does, you can build in things that do make her likable. And whether you think we did that or not effectively, I think that's something that is a case-by-case basis, because Emma does do things that are admirable for the people around her.

Like, you can tell she does actually care probably a little more than the book version of her in our show about the people around her than you-- [00:28:00] It's also by-- because we didn't

really use the father. Because in the book, they use the father as like, "Well, she really cares about her father, so she can be a complete--" Using an expletive there.

Becca: [laughs]

Bernie: And then we'll still follow this character, because you know what, her love with her father is still so pure and everything.

Becca: I think you guys did succeed in pulling out and exaggerating what was already in the book, which is, Emma's commitment to her female friends. That's obviously a huge theme in *Emma*, the novel.

Bernie: Yup.

Becca: I think there's something very heartwarming about in 2014, watching this real era where it was starting to become really popular, but also in the best positive way to portray female friendship on screen. And you guys just ran with the female friendship that's present in *Emma* and exaggerated it to give the saving the kitten from the tree metaphor, [00:29:00] instead of Mr. Woodhouse being the kitten. You guys did your best and made Harriet the kitten, and Annie Taylor, the kitten and et cetera, et cetera. [chuckles]

Bernie: Yeah, absolutely. I remember this now. We were very clear that her statement of like, she makes your life better, even if you don't want her to, right? [laughs]

Molly: Right.

Bernie: It was very clear. I would say that our Emma very much believes in that. It's like, "I do believe that I'm making your life better, even though you may not be asking for the specific thing, whether that's a violation to their space or not, that's each individual person to make that call." But we felt that we were designing this character from a very consistent point of view from that that she does actually want the better thing for the person. Sometimes she has to be convinced what that is, and that's a part of her flaw, and that's great part of her growth.

Becca: [chuckles]

Bernie: I'll also add that I felt that she actually respected her partnership with Knightley as like [00:30:00] a duo in the business they had together. So, when Knightley comes in and goes like, "We need money."

[laughter]

Bernie: "We need to make money." Because that was the main thing of during the Caroline-Elton arc, it's like, "Why are we even taking these people on as clients?" [laughs]

Molly: Right.

Becca: It's like, "Because they're paying us."

[laughter]

Becca: That's actually a pretty good Alex Knightley.

[laughter]

Bernie: Right. Yeah, that's basically the dialogue verbatim from the episode. It just brings the story together, and she's like, "All right, I'm just going to go with it, and I'm going to do my thing and have the adventure." It also solves the story. It's like, "Why doesn't she just throw this people out of her office?" "Because they're paying her."

[laughter]

Bernie: So, in that regard, whether you think it's selling out or not, it's like, "What's her business? This is her thing. It's not her job. It's like her thing that she's doing. It's like her [00:31:00] purpose, practically." So, it's a different bent, again, modernizing that, because in 1813, there wasn't consultant businesses of love lifestyle.

[laughter]

Molly: Right.

Becca: But she would have had one if there were. [chuckles]

Bernie: I'm confident she would have had one if there were.

Molly: Jane Austen famously said that she set out to write a character who was not going to be likable to anyone but her. But it's funny, because I think that she, in doing that, wrote someone who many, many people could see themselves in and could find things to like. And so, that's why the story prevails, because everybody is flawed, like you said. And so, I think it translates really well into the character in the show.

Bernie: I agree. [laughs]

Molly: So, in adapting this story to YouTube, what was the most fun [00:32:00] part of bringing it into this medium, and also what was the most challenging part of it?

Bernie: I think what was harder about the *Emma Approved* story was that *Emma* is a book. As the novel, it is not as plotty as *Pride and Prejudice* is. So, it made it harder for us to keep the action going. And then we also had these restrictions of like-- Because of budget, we had to make it like guest star of the month situation where you had the main three, Harriet, Knightley and Emma, and then you had one or two people coming in each month and being the guest. So, you actually can track this very cleanly for the first five or six months of the show where it's like, "Oh, this is the month where this person comes and then leaves. And then this person comes and then leaves."

So, it was like, we were trying to reframe the story into this kind of format. It was hard. So, that was difficult, because the book's not written that way. So, I was trying to jigger [00:33:00] this in. And then what was really fun was just like-- because the characters are so larger than life, at least Emma is, and you have a lot of characters who are big and iconic, it was really fun just amping that up. So, if you look at this more traditionally, I go, the beginning of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is basically a sitcom." It's basically a sitcom. It's basically friends with three sisters and their friend having shenanigans for like 20 episodes, okay? That's how it starts.

It evolves and becomes some pretty dramatic episodes toward the end, for sure, and becomes a drama toward the end. But it basically is a sitcom and starts. *Emma Approved* is basically a romcom. It is a romcom all the way through end to end. And the bread and butter of the whole thing is Knightley and Emma just bickering. That's what the show is. And they talk way more than any other adaptation, because Knightley is actually in it. Like, Knightley is there for like 80% of the episodes. He's not in [00:34:00] that. In the book, he's disappears for a while and so forth. So, because he's so present, it changes the dynamic of the show. But that made the show so fun, because those characters are great. The actors, Brent and Joanna, so good. Such great chemistry together. Hilarious.

Like, just watching them go-- Just hang out with them-- when were just hanging out, because they're basically their characters, by the way. [Becca laughs] It was just so much fun. That's hilarious. [laughs] They were dating. This is public. They were dating for a while. They actually did shoot a commercial together. I think it was for a jewelry commercial. It's out there and it's hilarious on YouTube. It has the highest engagement of any of that like, Zelle or Zia jewelry.

Molly: Oh, my God.

Bernie: Because it's them. It's those two, right?

Molly: Yeah.

Bernie: They're basically being themselves. It looks like Emma and Knightley took a road trip.

Molly: Oh, my God.

Bernie: [laughs] If that video is still on YouTube, I'm sure you can find it. You see the comments, and they're like-- Everything's about Emma-Knightley and like, "Oh, my God, they're so cute," and all that.

Becca: [laughs] [00:35:00]

Molly: They really are [Bernie laughs] very, very cute. The proposal scene in this, I literally had my computer on the table in front of me, and I was sitting back on the couch, and then the proposal started happening and dropped everything, and was glued to the screen, because it was [Bernie laughs] such a good one. I think you can measure an *Emma* adaptation by the proposal scene, because some of them do it really well, and some of them do it really not well or do it really weird.

Becca: I don't know what you're talking about at all.

Bernie: [laughs]

Molly: This one was like on point.

Bernie: Nice.

Molly: Their chemistry was so palpable.

Becca: I think for me, when I think about *Emma Approved* versus *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* in general, I think you're right, because when I think of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, I really do think about Charlotte and Lydia and Jane and Lizzie hanging out together and making fun of these characters in their lives and telling the story on YouTube, which is very [00:36:00] fun. But I think with *Emma Approved*, I think of the love story between Emma and Knightley, as a through line because obviously in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, you don't meet Darcy until way later into the series. But here, Knightley's there from day one. The two of them are just consistently flirting back and forth with each other, the entire series. And that's the pleasure of watching it over and over again is that relationship, that tension just from start to finish.

Bernie: I completely agree. I'm glad you all enjoy it. Again, this is by design. I designed it to be this way as a romcom, and I'm just going to go hard romcom here all the way through. A lot of things worked out. Like, Joanna and Brent are absolutely lovely people. They're professionals. They're great actors. They have obviously amazing chemistry, and they really just embrace their characters. So, it was really, really easy for us to design the series going [00:37:00] back to their bread and butter, like the keystone of this relationship and having that be the series and not just be Emma running shenanigans all around. It's really Emma and Knightley as a duo running shenanigans, and they're checking each other right in their back and forth. So, yeah.

Becca: Maybe a difficult question to answer, but an easy one for us to ask. What is your favorite episode of *Emma Approved*? Or, I guess you can go for arc, if you'd like.

Bernie: So, let's see. I'm trying to remember the specific episodes, like what happened in them.

Becca: [laughs]

Bernie: My two favorite arcs are the Frank and Caroline arcs. Those are my two favorite arcs, obviously, because you heard me take off on Frank earlier, and I just really enjoyed that character and what he brought coming into the show. And I specifically remember the Frank haircut, which was lip gloss thing where Brent had to put on lip gloss [laughs] and he actually had to do this authentically where he does [00:38:00] it. And so, that was super fun.

And then the Caroline arc to me was just like, like I know a lot of people who didn't like it. A lot of people didn't like that we did that. I've said this in panels and I've got people nod. I understand a lot of people didn't like that we brought Caroline into *Emma Approved*. I can only assume different versions of why. I never really asked them. But I respect that they have that opinion. That's fine. But I do think that it was nice to be able to connect the world very clearly on screen. It added so many elements to the story. We brought in someone that we already loved working with, so it was easier for us. Number one.

Number two. Ironically, it actually gives Elton the hard type, that he goes for. He's like, "Oh, wait, this guy, definitely--" He said in the line. He said it himself. We called out in the show, because it's like, "Well, he clearly has a type if he's going for mixed race Asian women." So, that actually adds to it [00:39:00] too. It's just like, it was fun to connect the world. One of my favorite lines, because it adds to this, is when Caroline and Emma are talking and Caroline's giving her advice of not losing Knightley-

Becca: Oh.

Bernie: -and she's basically telling the story of Lizzie of how her perspective. She's like, again, verbatim, "If you don't lock him down, some random woman out of nowhere is going to come in and swoop in and take your man."

Molly: Yeah.

Bernie: It was just like her exaggerated perspective of what happened to her. So, I thought that was kind of cool. I remember writing that line on a flight back from south by southwest, this time of year back then. I was sitting across from Jay Bushman and I showed him the line. He'd actually made some notes on it and we kept it. So, that arc was just so- It was just a really fun arc to do, because it was soapy and backstabby. And credit to Jessica and Paul, the two actors. [00:40:00] They're both incredibly kind and nice people.

Becca: [chuckles]

Bernie: They had a lot of fun just grinding into it and being so evil about it. [laughs]

Molly: It's so funny that you say that about him having a type, because one of our recent guests, when we asked what their Austen hot take was, was that Emma is Jane Austen writing Caroline Bingley more fleshed out. Like, giving her more of a personality and more of a story, because she wrote this kind of like-- They've just got similar personalities, Caroline Bingley and Emma.

Bernie: Yeah.

Molly: And so, for her to come in as Mrs. Elton and for them to be like, "Oh, you have a type." And Emma to see herself so clearly in Caroline and be like, "Oh." And be really cowed by that and be like, "Oh, I have to better, because [Bernie laughs] I don't want to be like her," is really smart.

Becca: Yeah. And I love the transport of Caroline Lee over from *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* [00:41:00] to *Emma Approved*. I am on the pro side of that, in part because I think you're right. The actress is just-- she plays so fake nice, all of LBD until the very end. And so, you

don't actually get to see her play that much evil. I love that she gets to come in and just be one of the most despised characters-

[laughter]

Becca: -of all time in Jane Austen's work, and just kill it. She's so irritating in the most fun way. And even if you're someone who thinks Emma's a flawed character and has trouble with the decisions she makes, the moment you put her against Caroline Lee and the moment that she is defending Harriet, she is like saving the kitten immediately, because Caroline's so awful. It's perfect. I love it so much.

Bernie: [laughs] Thank you. I'm biased. I'm full biased. I really like that part of the series. To me, I just like, "God, I love this. This is great." [chuckles] And [00:42:00] one of our team members too, who doesn't know the *Emma* book that well, she was one of the more like the support staff, not like one of the writers, but she was like, "This arc is so good. It's so fun." Yeah, so much drama and tension between women and men, because it's two guys, two girls. So, it's like, it's good stuff.

Becca: And it's also very difficult to capture, just like the propriety that would have had to take place, that would have kept putting Emma and Mrs. Elton in the same place at the same time. But having her hired by Mrs. Elton means that she has to be nice to her when Regency Era society makes her be nice in the books. So, it works out very nicely. But you do get that catharsis of Emma telling her off, which is missing from the book, and we all wish it were.

Bernie: Yes, I agree with that.

Molly: So, which character felt the most adaptable from Regency Era Austen's [00:43:00] novels to screen and the modern era? And also, on the flip side of that, who was the hardest to adapt in terms of characters?

Bernie: Gosh, it's a good question. Okay, I think the hardest to do was Miss Bates.

Molly: Mm. Yes.

Bernie: That was hard. I think Nikea is great. I'm not saying she did a bad job. She killed what we gave her. She was absolutely awesome what we gave her. I'm a little not quite sure if I gave her the right stuff. [chuckles] So, all my criticism in this is from my side. Nikea is lovely and amazing, amazing actress and did exactly what she was given, if not more, way more and brought that character to life. But it's just a hard character, because it's rooted in traditional, traditional values. Like, traditional, traditional, traditional values. You just amplify your aunt's traditional values and Thanksgiving and you 3x [00:44:00] that, and then [Becca chuckles] you get that character or something like that. So, it was really hard to do.

We had a black woman as part of one of my sports staff members, and we were kind of like-- We had discussion, are we going too stereotypical here with this, the way she talks and everything like that. We just went forward with it. For this show, I would flag that one. I think going into it, I was a little worried about doing Jane Fairfax, but I didn't give the credit to the team. This is the team. The team, they did a really good job with her bringing her to life. I'll admit that. I think going into revealing Jane Fairfax and having her come on, that one made me nervous a bit, because I'm just not in this headspace for that character very well, but the others on the team. This is why you have a good support team. They can come in and cover that for you.

[00:45:00] But then in the ease, it's like the larger-than-life characters who are very opinionated. It's because as the world has become more open, it's just easy for them to do that. So, Emma is actually pretty easy to adapt conversationally, like, the way she talks and everything. That's actually pretty easy to do.

Molly: Totally.

Bernie: And then, if you've ever seen the behind-the-scenes footage of this, where Stephen Chang talks about playing Frank Churchill, because in the auditions, we didn't come out of the auditions of Stephen as Frank, as in Stephen was the de facto winner of this, hands down, no question, like we did with Joanna coming into Emma Woodhouse. And so, I went with Stephen because I felt I could get him to the point where I felt we would be really, really entertaining. My first meeting with Stephen, I said, "I'd like you to adjust how you're doing this role." And he's like, "What do you mean?" It's like, "I would like you to look at [00:46:00] how Justin Timberlake plays Sean Parker in *The Social Network*."

Molly: [giggles]

Bernie: And he goes, "I got it." [laughs]

Molly: Oh, my God. Yes.

Bernie: He just runs it, okay? And he does his version of that. [laughs] So, so much that-- I don't know if it was the first month he appears, the second month appears. But I remember Brent Bailey actually going, "Is this character on cocaine?"

Molly: [laughs]

Bernie: He's so out there. He was like, "I think Frank's on cocaine or something." And I was like, "Okay, maybe we don't go too far further than this, but the character is supposed to be big." And in a world where people have people going, "We're going to go to Mars and we're going to--" It's actually pretty easy to imagine the modernization of that type of person, the hot takes on social media and everything. It's not crazy. So, those were easier, [00:47:00] at least for me and super fun, of course.

Molly: Yeah. Going back to talking about what was challenging with Jane Fairfax and Miss Bates, I was super impressed with the way you adapted those two, just because I think you gave them justice that they might not get in the book or other adaptations, particularly with Jane and the fact that she and Frank did not end up together, and she was like, "I'm going to go do my own thing." I was like, "Yeah, because if I were her--" In the book, every time I read the book or watch any of the adaptations, I'm like, "Why does she stay with him? He's so awful to her."

Bernie: [laughs]

Molly: So, I was really happy about that. And then the Miss Bates and Emma apology scene, I feel like Emma, first of all, really understood like, "Oh, crap, I really do need to apologize." And she did. And when Maddy Bates put the iPad away, and she was like, "We are family or friends. You don't need [00:48:00] to do that. I understand." But she also was like, "But don't do it again." Like, "You're going to change and you're going to better." I feel like they just both got real justice that I haven't seen them get before.

Becca: Yeah, the Bateses and Miss Fairfax don't exactly get accountability in most adaptations. Their justice is a rise in status and the humbling of Emma, but actually being able to say, "No, you need to do better later" is something that is a great 2014 adage.

Bernie: Thanks. Yeah, absolutely. That's kind of the ethos of the way we just do things is that we treat every character as a full arc, if you try. I'm not saying we're perfect in this. But you look at *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* and look at all the complete arc narratives that we gave all the characters, not, let's say, most of the characters and their adventures. And so, it felt right going into the end of *Emma Approved*, it's like, "All right. Well, instead of having their stories just end, [00:49:00] let's actually just give them an ending." [chuckles]

Molly: Right.

Bernie: Like, "Where do we want to leave these things?" And again, I want to give credit to my team and support team, because that was the kind of the POV that we maintained in the culture of how we'd adapt these, that all characters have full arcs, and you should defend them all. They're not just there to serve a plot point.

Becca: In that vein, obviously, whenever you adapt Jane Austen to 200 years later, certain plot points evolve to more conform with contemporary themes, but also still maintaining the spirit of the original story. Do you have a favorite plot point that we haven't talked about that you guys changed?

Bernie: Are you saying something like the sex tape in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*?

Becca: Oh, yeah. Something- Because that-- [crosstalk]

Bernie: But that's the exchanged. But it's like our version adaptation.

Molly: Yeah, your version, your adaptation of whatever plot point.

Bernie: Okay. So, in *Lizzie*, I'm going to go in order here, [00:50:00] because I just can call this one faster. In *Lizzie*, my favorite plot point that we acknowledge was the breakup of Lizzie and Charlotte. That's what it is to me. I like a lot of things. In that one, that just was my favorite one. Just because I, as a watcher of [unintelligible [00:50:18] adaptations was like, "What? She does this thing, stabs her friend in the back? And then two scenes later, they are hanging out this thing. What kind of friendship is this? This is not a real friendship. We're going to correct this one when we do this." So, I'm very strong in that one.

That was actually one where I felt the ownership of that one so strongly that there are very few times when we're breaking episodes that I will demand to take an episode, a specific plot point as an episode. And sometimes it's because I feel like I have to, because for example, Darcy's first appearance, I felt I had to take that one. [00:51:00] So, Hank and I took. You could say good things or bad things about it, right? And that's fine. But the Lizzie-Charlotte one, the breakup, I was like, "I have to take this." Because we're four months in.

I've been waiting four months to do this episode. I know exactly how this is going to go. Well, now adapted because now we've seen the show and people are playing them, right? But I've been imagining this moment in the plot for like four months, and like, "This one's mine. Everybody can take everybody else. This episode is going to be mine." So, that to me, I just felt so precious about that one.

The irony of this is that my favorite episode, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, is Episode 78, which is the Lizzie-Gigi Darcy episode, where she pushes them in. I took that one because I think no one else took that one, and I went, "What am I going to do here?"

[laughter]

Molly: Like, "Why do they come together?" And they just went like, "You know what? I'm just going to go back to my old [00:52:00] sitcom roots and just do a sitcom version of the scene." It's exactly what that episode is. It is exactly a sitcom moment where it's like the onetime Lizzie doesn't want to film is the one time Gigi really wants her to keep filming, and it becomes this chess match of keeping the thing together. You know something's jumping in the back and everything. So, anyway, that was a tangent. [laughs]

Becca: Never a problem.

Bernie: Yeah, let's continue. In *Emma Approved*, let's see. I really like the song and I really liked how we ran with it and made Harriet a singer and a musician. And that was one where it came, because sometimes just things fall into place, sometimes it happens. And we were discussing the adaptation of that moment, the song, or in this case, the painting, the painting in the original text. And it's like, "Okay, what's the modern version of a painting?" "Well, a

picture, obviously.” But like, “Wait a second, [00:53:00] that's what *Clueless* does. *Clueless* does the picture.”

So, we can't do a picture because we can't do *Clueless*. That's the stance. We literally came into this adaptation. We're not going to do *Clueless*. We can't do *Clueless*. And *Clueless* does a picture, so we cannot do a picture. And then became, “Well, what the hell are we going to do then? [Becca laughs] What can we do? What can we do?” I don't know how it came about, but we discovered that Harriet could play the ukulele and she could sing. And everyone's like, “What if it's a song?” And then everything clicked. [chuckles] Like, “Yes, Emma writes a song, Harriet plays the song,” and then everything works together.

So, that was one where all the forces [Becca laughs] just fell into the right place. It's like, you open the puzzle box and all the corners just magically hit the sides and it's like, “Ah,” the picture becomes clear to us. So, that one is definitely very special to me as a moment in the show.

Becca: They say necessity [00:54:00] is the mother of invention. Is that the phrase?

Molly: Something like that.

Bernie: Something like that.

Becca: Yeah, something like that. [chuckles]

Molly: So, you mentioned that you had like, “I'm going to take this episode where this thing happens or this episode where this thing happens.” What was the process of bringing this novel to YouTube? Did you say, these are the plot points we're definitely going to hit and then lay them out, or did you have to go and see what fit in where? Just like a little on that, because I know that's a very long explanation probably, but I'm really curious.

Bernie: Yeah, sure. It's different for both shows. So, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* was designed where we had it in location based with chapters. So, the first three months of the show, it's always in Lizzie's room, is basically the first 12 chapters of the book, minus the Netherfield arc, okay?

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Bernie: And then we go to Netherfield, and we do one month of that as a full month. So, that one, you had to extend it because they're there for two weeks in the book and it's like, “Why are they there for a month?” So, we had to [00:55:00] make all remodeling BS stuff.

Molly: [laughs]

Bernie: And you call it out. Like, Lizzie calls it out like, “What remodeling? It looks exactly the same.”

[laughter]

Bernie: Like, she calls it out. So, it's like, they go to a place, rather she goes to a place. She goes to Netherfield, she comes back, she has her adventures with Collins, and then she has her adventures with Wickham. And that helped necessitate the story too, because after the adventure with the Collins, Charlotte's gone. So, when she's doing the Wickham stuff, Charlotte's not there. So, she's weaker as a whole, because she doesn't have her best friend with her, so then she's more susceptible to that part. And then when Wickham thing is over, she goes to Hunsford, I think is the name of the place, Hunsford, does a two month arc there, sees Darcy, blah,blah, blah. Comes back, we have the pre-Brighton arc back at the home. Then she goes to Pemberley, clean blocks, right?

Molly: Yeah.

Bernie: And then last two months at home in the new spot and then closed it. So, *Emma Approved*, slightly different, because we're all [00:56:00] in the same place the whole time. So, it's about people this time. So, *Emma Approved* is about people. And so, each month, each block of [unintelligible [00:56:06] is like, again, a person of the month. So, it's Taylor in the beginning, then Harriet, which is, Martin, Harriet Martin, then it's Elton, then it's her sister, then I think it's Caroline. I may have these next up in five. And then it goes to Frank. Frank and Jane, Frank, Jane, something like that. Frank, then Jane. And then the last two were the wrap ups.

So, it's designed that way because of production reasons, story reasons. And so, when you're breaking an arc like the Caroline-Elton Arc, where they're back in *Emma Approved*, you're like, "Okay, this month for these eight episodes, we're going to have Caroline-Elton around. So, let's talk about the entire batch of narrative story that falls around this and what episodes we're going to make what." And so, that's the same similar way of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, except it's location based. "Hey, at Netherfield, [00:57:00] we got to get eight videos at Netherfield. We have to get eight. So, let's do the turn about the room episode, let's do this and this and this." And so, you cover each one, and you have to add some things sometimes.

I don't think we ever really contracted, because we had so much to expand on, which is good or bad, depending on how I think you guys would say it's good on how we could do the story. So, as an example for this, on this expansion, I remember this very vividly because Hank and I had this discussion. So, Episode 16, I believe, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, it's Lizzie and Charlotte, and they're literally talking about one paragraph of like Chapter 8, I think. You could take the paragraph from the text and say, "This is exactly what this episode is." You can put it in there, and that's the entire episode. I might get the chapter wrong, but I'm pretty confident it's Episode 16 of LBD.

And so, no other adaptation covers this chapter. Nothing covers this chapter. And so, you have these things where [00:58:00] you're expanding on the text because of this. Another one of my favorite runs of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* in the beginning, again, I have a lot of fondness for the first 24, because I think it's just so fun. 11, 12 and 13 is basically the dinner where the Lee's come over. And it's like, these dinner shenanigans and the post dinner shenanigans of three episodes.

And none of the other adaptations covered this either. They don't cover this part where they come over and have this meal with them. So, we cover it and we give you three episodes of it. So, it's like, why are we doing that? Because we're extending. We're purposely expanding the story to fill out the arc of the stories, because our restriction at that time was that we have to be here at Lizzie's house for 24 videos. We got to get 24 videos out of this. Can we do it? I will admit that Episode 24 feels like complete filler, because [Becca chuckles] we ran out.

[laughter]

Bernie: Because [00:59:00] Episode 23 does it just fine and you could have not have it Episode 24, I think. I'm going to call this out, because I think they're my episodes, by the way. I'm credited as a writer.

[chuckles]

Bernie: So, I'm blaming myself. I am taking the L here. But I just like, "That one, well, let's just go on." Like, "We got it. We got 24. Let's continue." But the rest of them feel like we're covering something very specific from the text in some way and giving it some life and expansion. So, again, another fondness, 11, 12 13 of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is a fun little three episode run to me, because it basically all covers one evening, but it runs for like a week and a half. So, it's fun stuff. Fun stuff.

Molly: So fun.

Becca: Yeah. I actually think I did notice. It's weird, because I think I noticed this only watching for the podcast again. Not when I initially watched it, but because we had just read the books, I could tell that *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* follows slightly more closely to the [01:00:00] actual chapter structure of *Pride and Prejudice* than *Emma Approved*. The *Emma Approved* hits all the plot points. But like you said, there's less plot moments in *Emma*. It's really a lot about Emma flitting around and saying silly stuff and trying to control people's lives.

Bernie: Yup.

Becca: So, necessarily, you need to break the structure Jane Austen put in there, because it's got to propel forward. But I did notice, like when we were watching *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, I was like, "Oh, wow, this really does map on to the book pretty directly."

Bernie: Yeah, it's pretty close. It's not exact. It's not one to one, but it was very much a kind of when we were designing *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. Before we started making the show, it was like, "Okay, we're going to do a chapter a week." It was the basic, rough guideline of the thing because I think that the text is like 52 chapters. It's close to the actual one year.

[01:01:00] So, you have it close to that. So, yeah, that is by design. And of course, then by design approved, we purposely went away from that because of the structure that we had instilled into the show.

Becca: So, speaking of that structure, we've had you going back a lot in time, two centuries, to discuss how you brought these books into the 21st century. We are now going to ask about the future a little bit, because obviously, these two adaptations are both in the style of 2014, 2010s in general vlogging. And you have since then worked on other platforms, including Twitch. There's obviously a lot more short form content out there. Vlogging looks very different nowadays. How would you adapt these books to the 2024 format of vlogging?

Bernie: Interesting question. I would say, well, the current meta of video [01:02:00] definitely has changed. So, we're in a very TikTok meta. Whether you're on TikTok or not, you've seen a TikTok video, because the other platforms are basically copying TikTok. So, YouTube shorts, Instagram reels, very much like that. I've definitely remember seeing a TikTok by someone who was like, "Hey, if you did *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* a day, it would be like this on TikTok." She actually did it pretty well. I didn't assume that she put a lot of time into the structure and all the crazy things I put in, but she basically did what the first video could have been, and it could have worked. So, you could do it. It's definitely something that you could do a TikTok style thing where they're filming themselves and everything like that. So, there's that.

I'm wondering, one of the things that was very tricky for us, for *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, was that the whole real-world aspect of, [01:03:00] it's like, "Well, how can you know, whatever. Just watch my videos." It's like, "What videos?" That was like a huge reveal moment in the show. It's like, "Wait a second. That's not Jane Austen." But it's not like, "Hey, just read my diary." That doesn't work quite the same way. So, it's like, are the videos in world or out of world bent on it? You have real time aspects too that *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* was doing too, sort of. So, that made it very challenging as well. And the question is, how and if you do that.

And so, there are people out there who are very big proponents of like, "You should make it so authentic that, it's like, in real time," blah, blah, blah. . So, the show's com, did this for a while. That show, it's a Norwegian, started in Norway as multiplatform teen drama, where it's like everything's real time. It's like, "Oh, they're in class, and you see a video at 3 o'clock on a Friday," et cetera. So, that's an interesting way to tell stories. I'm not saying it's the right way or wrong way. [01:04:00] It's hard. The more restriction you put on yourself, sometimes

it just makes things much more difficult. But it also frees you up, because you're restricted. You're like, "Oh, well, I can't leave this room. So, I'm not going to be able to show Darcy for half a year because why would she show her? Why would Darcy come on camera?" That's the classic thing of LBD, for example.

But for an *Emma* thing, it was like, "Oh, it's my documentary, blah, blah. Blah. That's a little simpler." How you decide to frame your canvas is how you would do it. But to answer your question again, TikTok or vertical video format, that style, very real. I think a challenge though, if you were to do it, is you are also fighting the algorithm, because algorithms was not the thing back when we were doing it. And so, shooting vertical videos that are three minutes long, okay, fine. That's fine. You can perfectly do [01:05:00] that and people do that, just fine. Having a very sequential serialized story and presenting that, make sure the audience sees it, sequential and serialized, tricky stuff.

Molly: Yeah.

Bernie: Tricky stuff.

Becca: Very tricky. Just stressed me out to think about oh.

[laughter]

Bernie: Yeah.

Becca: All right. Listeners, that concludes this episode of Pod and Prejudice, and our discussion with Bernie. Thank you so much for joining us here. Do you want to tell the people where they can find you?

Bernie: Sure. I am Bernie Su, B-E-R-N-I-E-S-U on pretty much every platform. I'm the most active on, ironically, Instagram or LinkedIn. Right now on Twitter X, I'm pretty silent. But if you tweet at me or you at me, I pretty much respond to everything. If it's direct to me, I pretty much respond to everything. So, happy to answer questions. Be respectful, but just know that I'm doing my best.

Becca: I will say our fans are so respectful. They're so lovely. Every time we get criticism on the pod, it's always like a paragraph beforehand [01:06:00] being like, "Obsessed with your podcast. By the way, you got these three things wrong about Regency English."

[laughter]

Becca: Okay. Yeah. So, for next time, get ready, because we are finally comfortably wrapping up *Emma* in a little surprise episode that you will not hear about quite yet. Molly, did I cover that correctly?

Molly: I think so.

Becca: Well, then, until next time, stay proper-

Molly: -and go watch all of *Emma Approved* in a week, because you're going to go on a wild ride and it's going to be so fun. And now, I don't know what to do with myself.

Becca: And then cap it off with a jewelry commercial with the same actors.

Molly: Yes.

Bernie: [laughs]

Becca: [laughs]

Bernie: It's a great commercial.

[music]

Molly: Pod and Prejudice is edited by Molly Burdick and audio produced by Graham Cook. Our show art is designed by Torrance Browne. Our show is transcribed by SpeechDocs Podcast Transcription. For transcripts and to learn more about our team, check out our website at podandprejudice.com. To keep up with the show, you can follow us on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, **[01:07:00]** [@podandprejudice](https://twitter.com/podandprejudice). If you love what you hear, check out our Patreon at patreon.com/podandprejudice to see how you can support us or just drop us a rating and a review wherever you listen to podcasts. Thanks for listening.

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