



Perez Hilton

Celebrity Blogger

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Welcome to Media Masters, a series of one to one interviews with people at the top of the media game. Today, I'm in the Los Angeles home of celebrity blogger Perez Hilton. Starting out as a freelance writer, Perez originally began blogging as a hobby because in his words, 'it seemed easy'. Launched in 2004, his website has built up a reputation for Hollywood gossip as well as outing celebrities. With over 300 million hits per month, Perez is now a celebrity and television personality in his own right, appearing on such shows as TRL, America's Next Top Model and even on the UK's Celebrity Big Brother.

Perez, thank you for joining me.

Hello.

So tell me, how did you come to start blogging? Tell us about how the journey began.

Well, before I even begin, since this is called Media Masters and since you are based out of the UK, I will just put out into the universe that I have the biggest crush on Owen Jones! I just invite somebody - not him specifically, but hey, if he's available and interested, I'm available and interested – but I want my own Owen Jones in my life. So for 2017 I'm putting husband vibes out there!

So are you like a lot of Americans, then? You're kind of an aficionado and a kind of lover of British culture and British media?

Yes, and I've always been that way. It started for me though with music. I have always loved that in the UK, they're more willing to give independent artists a chance, not conventional type of artists a chance, and that the radio will play whatever they want, which is never going to happen in America because here it's much more corporate and much more driven by money. There, BBC Radio 1 will often play unsigned artists. Here, they refuse to, and that's really upsetting to me. I think radio in America is in an awful place. And then after appreciating the music, I

really just try to appreciate the culture and observing that culturally, they seemed to me to be a lot more ahead in many ways than America.

It's interesting because as a Brit we always think of the Americans as being ahead, rather than us.

No, I think you guys had a legal recognition for same sex couples before America did, they're... you know, something as, to me, inconsequential as nudity isn't really a big deal. It's in the newspaper on page 3 or page 6 or whatever page it is, and here it's still such a taboo. "Oh my God, she's showing her boobs!" Who cares?

We should state to our listeners that both of us are in the nude right now.

Haha! And also I love that it's part of the culture in the UK to really socialise with your family and your neighbours and your co-workers, and to go to the pub after work, and that's just expected of you and that's what everybody does and it's also part of the culture there to go to the music festivals and to go see shows and to do all those things. America – which I love, I'm not dissing America, I'm not having a Gwyneth Paltrow moment on you – that's not really part of the culture, because I think America geographically cannot replicate in most cities what the UK can, which is it's a very walking country and a very subway or tube and bus country. Here it's all about the car and getting your car after work, and people commute long distances often to get to work and they're not going to want to go to the bar to meet up with somebody. It's just a different experience. Not better, not worse... maybe a little worse. Just kidding! Different.

Because a lot of people in the UK have a go at the BBC because it is in a sense a poll tax. Every citizen of the UK has to pay about £130 whether they listen to it or not if they want a television, and that means that we can have a – albeit state funded – very independent broadcaster that can break bands as you were saying on Radio 1, but there is a downside that a lot of people say, "Why am I paying this money?" whereas in America you guys don't do that.

I wish that we did that in America. I would be happy and I think that a lot of people would, to help support the arts because they are critical, especially given what happened in both of our countries in 2016. Art can not just be entertaining but it can also be thought-provoking and it can also be healing. I'm on the board of directors here in America on this foundation called the VH1 Save the Music Foundation which, their mission is to bring back music education to schools that have had funding taken away. And studies show consistently, repeatedly that students who study music do well in other subjects across the board; it helps them to excel in other subjects. And I think that we should be lifting up artists that maybe wouldn't be getting the opportunities if it weren't for a programme like public funding in the UK. Sure, you're still going to have Little Mix be popular, but some smaller acts may not get the same

exposure if they were just done commercial radio like Capital FM or something like that, or Kiss.

We're back to the commerce thing again, aren't we? Because there's huge pressure on educators here in America and in the UK to kind of get students ready for the world of work. One of my friends said recently that both our education systems are very good at training pupils and students up to be successful in the 1950s.

True!

Not now, unfortunately, they're not empowering them in the way that you were saying, like inspiring them in music and all of the other kind of arts.

Well, I think one of the problems with that is for me, students aren't given enough time to discover themselves. I don't know what the structure is in the UK but here, kids have almost three months off in the summer. I think that's too much time. I might get criticised for this but I think kids should only have one month off in the summer and school should be almost year round. You know, with Christmas break and spring break and a summer break, but not three months off. However, I do think that school should maybe only be four days a week with a fifth day being more like on the fifth day, devote yourself to the sports part of school or acting or music or something else, or something where you're in a leadership role and you get to travel with your classmates to volunteer or whatever it be, but I think the fifth day should be out of the classrooms, out of the schools, and you're discovering what excites you and what your passions are.

I'm determined to talk to you about what excites you and what your passions are in terms of the blog and all the other things, and I will get to that, but just in terms of your analysis of the UK media, you're quite a well-known celebrity even in the UK now. What's your analysis of the UK, given you went on Celebrity Big Brother and had Katie Hopkins, for example, as our ambassador.

I think that the British media in some sense birthed Perez Hilton because they were doing what Perez was doing before there was a Perez, and in America it wasn't like that before. In the UK, they loved and still love celebrities with their warts and all. In the US, it was all about maintaining this image of perfection. You know, the girl next door or the heartthrob who everybody wants to sleep with. And before the age of the Internet it was a lot easier to maintain that false reality. Because publicists were a lot more powerful back then. Before the internet and websites like mine it was easier to kill the story, you would barter. "Don't run that, I'll give you this instead." "Don't run that or I'll cut off access to all my clients." Things like that. But now, when news breaks it's instant and it's out there, and taking it back or keeping it quiet is nearly impossible. So I love that not only did the UK media, which I was always aware of

ever since I had a computer – because music introduced me to culture, introduced me to celebrities there, introduced me to what was happening there – they also were a lot more humorous in talking about celebrities than their American counterparts were. Like if you would pick up an issue of People magazine from 2002, what a bore! Oh my gosh! Such a snooze. Now, even People has changed how they talk to their readers. I think that's more exciting, I think it's more real. I'm a fan of reality and being real, or as real as possible, because it's still all fake.

You are right, there's a huge clamour for authenticity now in our politicians and in our celebrities as well. I mean, I know Alec Baldwin has, you know, left a few terrible messages on his daughter's voicemail; it doesn't make me respect him less as an actor or as a person. In fact arguably, it means that there's more of a sense of me knowing him as a person, which is a good thing.

I don't know...

Do you think it's led to things like Donald Trump as well, because he is the ultimate in so-called authentic, you know, unfettered, what you get on Twitter is the real him, even though half of his tweets are actually ghost written for him. People want to feel a sense of connection even if it may not be true.

I think having a black president and having progress made for groups on the fringe like gay Americans, those played more into Donald Trump being elected than a shift in tone in the media. And also, though the media itself is largely responsible, because in America, Fox News, which he would almost exclusively call into during the election, they get huge ratings there. They're far higher rated than any of the other cable news networks and they're far right. And they created this culture of distrust and of conspiracy theories and of...

Which many people believe.

Totally. He believes here it and he perpetuates it, and as a result you have people being grossly misinformed and distrusting the government, and perpetuating lies. It's sad because I don't think it comes from a good place.

Social media is really odd as well isn't it, insofar as you can be so selective in what you follow and what you don't. So if you're someone who doesn't believe the so-called 'mainstream media' your news feed will be full of websites that are Donald Trump-esque, Fox News-esque, whereas if you're someone on the left, you're going to be seeing a completely different thing. And in a sense it's served to polarise society even more than necessary – there seems to be these two groups of people that are completely disconnected from one another.

I think everything is cyclical. I hope that in America what has happened here will give birth to... it needs to be more than one, truly, or changing the other ones that we have right now. I mean, I feel no connection whatsoever to the Green Party but I think that we need desperately more than just two viable options. People are clamouring for that. Everybody was saying, "Oh, I don't really like him, I don't like her much, I don't like either of them." Well, it sucks that we really only had two viable options. Jill Stein wasn't a viable option, Gary Johnson was not a viable option Write-in was not a viable option, even a lot of people did have those other options as their choice. I think that the next election might see a character like a Mike Bloomberg possibly win. I don't know.

Do you think the media will start to take responsibility for their part in it? So for example, here in America...

No. The media has to do their job, and it's unfortunate that they can get played so easily, but they have to. Well first, this is two things, right? The media has a responsibility to cover news. We are now living in this new age where a tweet by a president-elect is news. And Donald Trump, I don't think is the smartest man, but I think he is savvy with an ability to entertain and get people talking, and he knows that sending out a tweet will create news and create distraction from other things. The media knows that too, but they can't ignore his tweets.

Well, certainly not now he's president-elect, anyway.

Even before! I mean, he got so much more coverage than any of the other people he was running against, and he won the nomination, and he was elected president even though he claims there are tons of millions of fraudulent votes.

He clearly has been wrong on many aspects of his behaviour, and the facts, so-called facts, that he said. But do you think he was right to tap into this large contingent of British society who voted Brexit and American society, the so-called non-coasties, the people in the middle, that are disaffected with their lives and the mainstream media have ignored, at least they will say from their point of view.

As we have seen in both countries, a lot of that really has to do with people just having extreme dislike, distrust, and then aversion, right now to immigrants. But they're necessary.

I don't care where anyone's from.

I've been to London tons of times. Of the hotel workers, the majority of them are from Eastern Europe. Why is that? Why are the majority of hotel workers not British? Do they not want to do the housekeeping work, or do they not want those jobs? I find

that bizarre. Here, a lot of the workers that do all the hard work, the construction work, they're working in the fields and the farms, a lot of them are Mexicans. Why are all the unemployed factory workers moving to California, working the fields? Well, those jobs don't pay as much as their other jobs used to. Those jobs that left aren't coming back though, because technology changed. The country needs to evolve with the times. We need to, I think, as Hillary Clinton was saying, really foster and help small businesses and having people create small businesses and not these false illusions of, "Oh, the factories are going to come back, and these jobs are going to come back." Those jobs aren't going to come back! We need to create new jobs. We need to innovate. We need to keep moving forward. And it seems like in both of our countries, people want to move back – but we can't go back in time. The world, life, doesn't work that way.

I wish it did, for one.

I don't! I'm happier moving forward. I'm happier now than I've ever been before.

Well I'm glad about that. But do you feel a sense of responsibility with the millions of readers and people who follow you? Because you must have been courted by both sides of the political divide given that the readers that you have, and those that support you and that you have influence over, are the kind of those hard to reach kind of younger people, where they feel that an endorsement from Perez would actually help them.

I am not one of those celebrities. If you call me that – which I wouldn't call myself a celebrity – I'm not one of those people who thinks that their opinion is going to sway anybody's vote. I just speak out because that's what I would do privately anyways to my friends. So I behave in public like I do in private, not because I'm trying to sway your voter, or expects or think that anybody really cares what I have to say, I care what I have to say and I think what I have to say is important, that's why I'm going to say it. Also, I don't think that celebrities should be shamed for speaking out. I've been seeing recently a lot of people, Donald Trump included, shaming celebrities or even Mark Wahlberg in an interview this week saying celebrities should shut up, they're so disconnected from the average American, blah, blah. Everybody should be a) interested b) invested and c) vocal about what's happening. Every single person! Period. And I also don't understand this notion that, "Oh, you shouldn't talk politics." Why not? Everybody should! If people were more engaged, more vocal, then in America we would hopefully have a higher turnout at the polls and a more functioning government, hopefully.

And do you get grief from your followers on Twitter if you talk politics? Do they say kind of, "Shut up, silly man, just give me the gossip, and I don't want your political opinions."

Always. But I have always talked about things that interest me and that I feel connected to from the very beginning, whether that be politics, gay issues, Latino issues, now that I'm a dad parenting issues, that's what's great about being your own boss. I can do whatever I want!

That was a very interesting aside, in fact I was going to cover some of it later, but let's go back to how the blog started. Tell us about how the journey began.

I'm a dinosaur of the Internet. I've been around since 2004. Gosh, that's a long time!

It is.

Especially in the Internet, because things come so quickly and go just as quickly sometimes. I work just as hard as I ever have, but I still enjoy what I do, I still feel so lucky to be able to entertain others, entertain myself and make a living off of it. I want to have a career like Joan Rivers. She is my ultimate inspiration in that she did so many different things.

She was always herself though, and she was hilarious. Sadly missed.

Yes, she did so many different things. She was unapologetic, and she worked till she died.

Literally, I think, until the day before.

I saw her less than a week before she died doing stand-up at a small club in Times Square

And she was hilarious.

She wasn't hilarious in that show.

No, not in that one. She was generally.

I've still got to be honest, even though I love her, it wasn't her best show.

But you could tell that she had a delight in her job, the same as you do. when you read your blog you can tell that you know, if you think something's funny you can tell you're laughing as you're writing it.

I love what I do and there is a lot of aspects of my job I don't love, but that's life. No job is going to be perfect. Nothing is ever ideal.

So what's the good and what's the bad, then? And then we will get back to it. Maybe this will be the whole podcast. We'll keep going back to the question, "How did you begin?" and never get there. What's the good and what's the bad? And what is a typical week as well? Do it all in one go.

Sure. Well, the good is there is no typical week. The good is that it's constantly changing and evolving. You know, I compare my job to surfing. Every day you're going to have different waves. Some days you're going to have big waves, some days you're going to have small waves. It's about getting out there, enjoying it, making the most of it and improving your technique over the years, getting better at it – hopefully! I still love it. You know, if you're a surfer you love surfing. I love surfing. I still get excited about things that I'm talking about; if I didn't, the day that I didn't, the day that it was just a job, I would stop and find other ways to entertain and be entertained myself. And the worst part of it is really... it's just being a business owner. When you're a business owner, when you're the boss, you have to work harder than everybody else.

You see yourself as a business owner or as an entrepreneur, like a blogger? Like if I ask you what do you see yourself as, what's the first thing that comes to mind?

Entertainer. Because I have websites, I have radio that I do, I have my own podcast... if you want to listen to the Perez Hilton podcast, you can listen to it on Spotify, iTunes or play.it/perez.

Brilliant.

Which is very different than this podcast. I don't have guests, because I don't want to talk to anybody. I just want to hear myself and my co-host talk.

I've got nothing meaningful to say which is why I always get interesting people like yourself.

I always think I'm right, which is hilarious because I'm not always right, but I always think I'm right!

And do you have a script then, when you do your podcast?

Yes, I have my bullet points of subjects I want to talk to and then we just talk about it. I just didn't want to be talking to this person promoting that show or that reality TV star. I did a little bit of that when I first began the podcast and I'm like, "You know what? I am doing the podcast and I want to do it for me. And if I'm enjoying it, then the listeners will enjoy it," and I really wasn't enjoying those segments. Anyways.

So when you set up the blog originally did you think that it would become this successful?

No!

Did you think it will turn into you being an entertainer and an entrepreneur? And when was the moment when you realised that there was there was something in this?

All right, because I have slight OCD – I don't really but I have obsessive thinking, which is similar but not the same thing, I do have obsessive thinking, it's one of the things I've got to... I don't know how you can overcome obsessive thinking.

I don't think you should – it makes you part of who you are. I'm like that as well and I don't want to change.

I have obsessive thinking, which sometimes can lead to anxiousness. In 2015 it triggered a few months of anxiety because I couldn't stop thinking about the future obsessively, and I'm definitely Type A control freak and you can't control the future. You can't control other people. You can only control yourself.

We'll have a damn good go though, won't we?

I try! So the thing I dislike the most about what I do now is I miss, you know, I think when you get older, you go, "Oh, I miss those good old days when this or that or the other," I miss the good old days without social media! Just because my job in and of itself takes up so much of my time, now social media is also a part of my job, and that takes up so much of my time.

But you've got the blue tick on Twitter, I imagine that filters out a lot of the idiots.

Yes, but I've also got to be on all the other platforms. I'm on Twitter, I'm on tumblr, I'm on Snapchat, I'm on Pinterest – well, I quit Pinterest, nobody's on Pinterest – I'm on YouTube, I'm on Instagram, I'm on all of these things. I've got so put content up on Instagram story, I'm like, "Oh, my God!" it's so much, so that I don't love. If I didn't have to, I wouldn't be as active on social media – but it's my job and I feel like I have to. So back to your original question, let's just get it out of the way. Why did I start blogging? Because I discovered blogs. Being a blogger now isn't even that common. You know, I am a dinosaur of the Internet. People don't really choose to be bloggers any more because everybody is a blogger. If you have a Twitter account, you're a blogger. If you have an Instagram account, you're a blogger. You're just using a different platform to blog, or share, with the world.

Was it a hobby at first though?

It was, totally. I didn't think anybody would read it. It wasn't a website back then, it was just my own little blog. And all I ever did at the beginning to get the word out – it was so long ago, 2004, I don't even know if people will remember – there was one social networking site that came before Facebook and came before MySpace, it was called Friendster.

Even I don't remember that, and I'm old school Internet as well.

I was on Friendster and I had a bunch of 'friends' there. And I posted a bulletin, it was bulletins that you posted. And I said, "Hey everybody, I started this little blog, check it out." And that was it, and then... I was very consistent though. For some reason it was something that I felt like I enjoyed. It just gave me joy, I enjoyed doing it every day, so I started doing it every day and I just kept it up – and that's one of the things about the Internet. If you really want to grow and cultivate an audience you have to be consistent.

Regularity as well.

Hmm. I discovered blogs, I said I'm going to do it and then I discovered this one blogging platform called Blogger or Blogspot that made blogging easy. If it would have been difficult or too tech involved I wouldn't have done it, because I'm a tech idiot. I'm not an early adapter, I don't have the latest gadgets.

It was a means to an end.

It was just an evolution of what I had already been doing and whom I always was. Meaning I went to school for acting. I am an entertainer, I've always been an entertainer since I was a young kid. I would put on shows for my grandparents. So blogging allowed me to just evolve, and that's really what life is all about, it's about evolution. You've got to keep evolving and changing as the years go on or else you start to resent your life, I think.

So when did the light bulb go off? Where was that moment when you thought, "I can take this to the next level, I've got an audience." How did that manifest itself? Was it, "Right, there's a business here," or was it something just like, "I've got an audience here." What was the next stage?

As I mentioned earlier, things online can happen really quickly, and it happened very quickly for me. Within six months of me blogging, I got an email from this TV show in America called The Insider, which is the sister show to Entertainment Tonight, and they said, "Hey, we're doing this segment on Hollywood's most hated websites. How do you feel if we include you in this segment, and if we name you number one, the most hated website in Hollywood?" And I said, "Oh my gosh! Wow." Well, a) I didn't even know people were reading my site, and b) I don't think people hate it, I think

people might be enjoying it, and c) like, heck yeah! Let's do it! So for years afterwards, I billed myself as perezhilton.com, Hollywood's most hated website!

I remember that.

So even though I never bought into it that I was the most hated website in Hollywood, I used it for all it was.

It's PR, isn't it, at the end of the day.

Yes.

So at that point you knew there was a business, an audience. What came next?

At that point I knew, "Well I got on TV once, maybe I'll be able to get on TV a second time." And that hope, that maybe, was all it took for me to never give up, work even harder, take it even more seriously and grow it.

Tell us about the blog today then, and all of the kind of platforms you're across. I know you said there was no typical week, but what's the business model now? Because you are across a number of platforms. How do you monetise it? Is it getting in the neck from Katie Hopkins every so often on a reality show, or is that just one part of the mix?

Well the business model is to just not give up! I mean, I think I have business instincts, but I'm not a business person – I'm an entertainer. I think about things with those lenses on. And I was listening recently to a podcast called Making Oprah, because I love Oprah Winfrey, I'm obsessed with her.

She's lovely. Can you help me get her on the podcast? She'd be amazing.

It was a great... it was a three-part podcast, so you could listen to the three hours in one sitting if you wanted to, and one of the things that Oprah said on there, which she would repeatedly tell her staff when she had her show on, was you need to almost put blinders on, like you're a horse and stay in your own lane. So I don't even try to compete with anybody else. I can't. I can only compete with myself. I can only be the best version of me possible. So the business model is...

Focus.

Yeah, keep working hard. The business model is keep working hard. Hard work pays off. Keep working hard. Hard work pays off.

It's like the old Russian proverb, isn't it? If you try to catch two rabbits you won't catch either one.

Yeah. I mean, I feel blessed – and that word is so overused these days – but I feel so immensely grateful that 12 and a half years later, I'm still around. Especially in an industry that is so immediate and about the latest thing and what's hot now. I'm not hot now. I was in it girl back in the day. But Paris Hilton isn't hot now either, but she's still making money. She's still a brand and she's still Paris Hilton. And think whatever you want about me, I created something for myself that didn't exist before, that wasn't handed to me, and I am still here.

I have massive respect for that. And in fact, this question almost seems a little bit sycophantic, but what is it about you and your blogging and the kind of persona that you've created in public, which like you say is the real you, why has that outlasted so many other competitors and other false starts? You know, you started this well over a decade ago; you're still here. What is the secret of how you do it?

There is no secret. The only thing is hard work. Truly. I know that some people can stumble upon success. Some people can accidentally achieve fame. But there's not a single successful person that has been able to sustain success that's lazy. If you are lazy you will not have a career that spans decades. It's as simple as that. It requires hard work. Unless you made tons of money and then don't have to work hard. I don't have a few money in the bank. I still need to work – but I want to work. I love working. You know, it's that Cuban work ethic that was instilled and ingrained in me from a young age. You know, my parents, both of them fled this dictator to come to a country that thankfully at that point in time welcomed them with open arms. They both had nothing and they worked so hard to make something of themselves here.

That aspect of American culture is very empowering, isn't it? Like you say, if you're welcome you can come here with nothing and no one's going to get in your way. No one's going to give you a hand up, but if you are determined enough to succeed, and you can do it yourself, then the sky's the limit.

And I've always had that determination, even since middle school. I've always known I was different, I've always known that I was resourceful, and I've always known that I liked to make up my own rules. Always! I did very well in high school, I graduated top 10 in my class, I went to NYU on a full scholarship, and I was acutely aware and shown by the world at a young age that hard work pays off.

Do you – celebrate is the wrong word – but do you think it's good for Cuba that Castro has... I was going to say 'finally died' because of course you very famously announced that he'd died in 2007. Maybe you were just ahead of that of the world in the breaking news.

I honestly think, and a lot of people do, that he might have been already dead now for a few years, if not in 2007. Do I think it's good for Cuba? Time will tell. I think it's good for the hundreds of thousands that he caused pain to, the tens of thousands that he killed, the tens of thousands that he imprisoned. His death is healing for those people. But I'm not very optimistic that things are going to change much in the wake of his death.

If you look at what Obama has done, he's re-established diplomatic relations, he's allowed people to come over here and re-established trading relations as well. Do you think that's going to be put at risk by kind of a backwards reactionary like Trump? I mean, it seems like we're on...

Well, Trump says he's going to reverse the things that Obama did in relation to Cuba.

Basically anything that he's done that's good really.

Yes.

Obama care and all the other things.

So...

Are you optimistic about the future, if that's not a silly question? Well, let me say how pessimistic are you about the political the state of the US?

For a while there, my motto is 'hope is dead'. And I still believe that. And I don't think that's a bad thing to say. And I say in relation to 2008 – that's what Obama ran on. Hope. That was his message. He achieved great things, pretty scandal free presidency for eight years! Kind of unheard of. But that's dead. Americans have loudly said they don't want that. They want something else. And I think that it's a good thing to say hope is dead, because we need to feel that, we need to tap into that, we need to channel that into something positive – and we can't just sit home and be mad and disengage, we need to speak louder and do more. And I know this because I've dealt with people like this in my life, and I used to be one. You can't win over a schoolyard bully with love and kindness. They don't hear that. You need to stand your ground and you need to be loud. You know, one of the oldest sayings in the history of the sayings is the squeaky wheel gets the grease. We gotta be squeakin'.

What else have you learned over the years in terms of how it's changed you as a person? You know, you've done well over a decade at this now. Your commitment to hard work, who you are as a person, hasn't changed – but what

have been the lessons along the way where you've you might have learned something? It might have challenged a view or a long-held perception that you've had.

What have I learned along the way? Well...

That was new to you.

That was new to me. That nothing matters. And everything matters. I sometimes can sweat the small stuff as they say, and I don't think that's a bad thing; that's just how I am. It's who I am. But all of those little things don't matter. And Oprah is too! I am a firm believer in the universe. Or some people might call it God, or some people might call it destiny, but whatever you want to call it, I'm a believer. I believe in believing, I believe in myself. I believe that most people are good, and I believe that everything will work itself out eventually, even if you don't believe that now. I mean, I've been through moments of anxiety and moments of depression where I didn't believe that, but things got better. Things get better unless you die, and then they don't. But even if you don't think they will, eventually the way you think about things changes, or your strategy as an approach to difficult situations, or just a job you hate or whatever it might be, you learn to cope. You learn to deal. You find a solution. So what I have learned that surprised me is that nothing matters, because that goes contrary to what I used to believe. I believed that everything matters really deeply.

Right now.

Yes!

It reminds me of an old Scottish phrase, what's for you won't go by you. I always believe in that. But do you... I mean Facebook, for example. It has this 'on this day' thing now where it repeatedly kind of reminds you of embarrassing posts that you posted like eight or nine years ago, and I find whenever I look at it now I end up deleting what I wrote nine years ago on this day because I think, "Oh God, did I even think that?" or, "If I thought that, why did I say it publicly?" Do you ever think about that from your blog, some of the spats that you've been involved with celebrities over the years? Do you have certain regrets about how you've either conducted yourself or that you got into a public spat with them in the first place? Because in some ways it was good for PR.

I have a ton of regrets. I live my life in shame a lot. And it's heavy baggage that I carry with me. If I could go back in time, I would change things. You know, I watch interviews a lot where people are asked that question and they're like, "Oh, I regret nothing, it's led me to where I am today." But I would have rather be less wise and not have caused people pain. Because also what I've learned is I would have made it

anyways; I don't need to do all that. I am special. And I don't mean that in a bragging way or putting anybody else down – I believe that everybody is special. I believe that every single human being is special, and when you find what it is that makes you special and you can share that with the world, that's when you truly succeed. And people, when I say this to them, a lot of them think I'm full of crap or they don't quite get it, because people... a lot of them really believe that ideas are special. Ideas are not special. Two people in completely the most far apart places on this planet could have the same idea that they might think as revolutionary. "I invented something that's going to make billions!" Two people can have the same idea. And those two people can execute that same idea in completely different ways. So it's not the idea that's special, it's the person special – it's how you do things, it's what you bring to the table, and when you really find that, success will follow.

In terms of some of the fall-outs that you've with celebrities over the years, what's been the underlying reason? Is it that you felt a sense of injustice or that you felt that it was the public's right to know something and the argument started from there? What's the actual kind of moral truth behind them all?

The underlying reason was I would always tell myself, "Oh, this is what I would be saying to my friends in private, and I view my readers as my friends. Like, I just want to be authentic. I'm just saying what everybody's thinking." But that was 26-year-old me, and eventually I was like, Well, I'm not 26 any more, and this doesn't really feel right any more." Some people can be 40 and still behave like 26-year-olds. Thankfully I'm not one of them. You know, I am still very childlike many times, and I enjoy not behaving like an adult a lot of the times, or... I wouldn't say I always behave like an adult but you know, you can be connected or tapped into youthfulness.

You don't want to lose that sense of being playful though.

Yes.

That's a thing of being old.

Yes, that's who I am, that's what my spirit is. But I'm not that person who goes out to a bar and, "Let's do SHOTS!" I'm almost 40. I don't want to do shots. No. So some people are still repeating their same mistakes, repeating the same patterns, doing the same things in their 40s that they were in their 20s – I don't want to.

But like for example, I know a few people have criticised you when you'veouted like, gay celebrities.

I don't do that any more.

And I'm interested as to why you did it then and why you did it now.

I did then because like I said, I would talk amongst my real friends about whom so-and-so is dating or, "Oh, they're not out," That was my justification: this is what I talk about with my friends and my readers are my friends. That was the line in my head that I kept telling myself. But then I realised, well no, I don't want to be responsible for something possibly bad happening. In addition to causing pain to people, which those that I have outed over the years have told me I caused them pain. But also I think that young people couldn't care less what somebody's sexuality is, and I think that's awesome. I look at somebody like Troye Sivan, who is this Australian pop star who's very popular with young kids, and he has a huge female fan base and they love him and worship him, and it doesn't make any difference to them whatsoever that he likes dating boys and not girls.

But did it back in the day? For example when George Michael was in Wham, it was part of his following to construct this fake character that he was heterosexual.

Yes.

When you look at the old Wham videos now, the Faith video, I'm like, "How could anyone NOT know that he was gay?"

Everybody new, they just... you know. It was like the military policy in the US for the longest time. Don't ask don't tell.

So society has moved on now, and no one really cares what anyone's sexuality is.

Yes. And I am optimistic for the future, because a lot of the deplorables, and a lot of the people even in the UK who are racist and small-minded, they're overwhelmingly older people. They're going to die. All of these deplorable people will ultimately die, and I hope that we have a younger generation that is more accepting of differences, and focussing on the things that make us similar and not the things that set us apart.

And yet if you look at a map of the world you tend to see that religions dominate certain areas, so that might undermine your argument a little bit, that the Middle East tends to be largely Islamic, the Western cultures tend to be largely Judeo-Christian, the eastern cultures etc etc.. Do you think that might undermine your argument slightly, that with every generation things get slightly better but there isn't this revolution that we all want.

Well, I can only speak for myself. I know that when I was a gay teenager I didn't see anybody like me on TV. The only one I saw was Pedro Zamora in The Real World San Francisco, and I saw gay people in Madonna's Truth or Dare documentary, and

then Ellen came out. And then in the last 20 years, things have changed a lot. Now being gay is boring! I go, "Okay, he's gay, so what?" So I think that in the next 40 years, you know, things will change a lot more. I mean, it's definitely going to take not just a generation or two, it's going to take a lifetime for positive change, because in America, up until the 50s, it was still legal...

Things have moved on hugely, haven't they?

Yes, it was still legal to do all these things that are no longer legal to do here, or on the flip side it was illegal to do things that are now legal. That was, you know, 70+ years ago, so it's going to take another 70 years for a huge change. And then there'll be different issues in the future. Who knows what those will be?

But do you not see that you personally might be able to have a political career in the future? I mean, it started with Ronald Reagan, you know, people were saying, "What, an actor? He couldn't be President," and he turned out to be quite a good one. Look at Donald Trump – many would argue he's the first celebrity, social media, you know, boosted, bolstered person to get the presidency. Could we see a President Perez in maybe 20 years?

What a frightening concept!

I'll be the first to say that I don't think it's that frightening a concept! It looks like I'm your first supporter.

Well, I wouldn't say that being a politician is something I'm passionate about, but I am passionate about young people so...

But you've got into spats with people. Ann Coulter for example, a prominent Trump supporter. What was behind that?

She was just disgusting and being a vile troll towards larger women. So I felt the need to troll her back. I can still be petty, okay?!

I don't think you were petty. I thought that you clearly saw something that was unjust. She was being bigoted and being horrible, and you didn't just stand up to her, but you acknowledged that you've got a few million followers yourself; that brought a lot of attention to how horrible she was, frankly.

You know, I like to think that I am a somewhat well-rounded person. I love entertainment and pop culture, but I also like other things and I have many interests, and I like to be authentic and express all of those things to others. But no, I don't ever see myself in politics. You know, recently I've been going on a lot of tours of schools because I am in that process for my son here. It's quite the process in Los

Angeles if you're not going to send your child to public school. If you're applying to... they now don't call themselves private schools. They call themselves independent schools.

We have that in the UK as well. Plus we call... bizarrely, private schools are also called public schools in the UK, which is really weird and confusing.

I could see myself doing something with children. I just love being in schools, I love kids, so who knows? I mean, I love also my job. I am totally open to the universe, like I have no idea what it will be. I just want to be happy.

Do you think there might come a point where you might consider closing the blog, and say everything that you do in terms of your entertainment career? Say 15, 20 years from now where you say, "Right, that's it – I'm retired from doing what I do and I'm now going to move on to a completely different career.? Or do you think you might go part time? I mean, in a sense I'm kind of assuming that your appeal might tail off a little bit in time, but it might well not. It seems to me that you're considering other options, ultimately.

But I don't think I'd ever give it up.

Why?

I love it. I mean, I started off as a hobby and if I never make any more money doing it I would continue it as a hobby.

So you mention that you used to out people and now you don't. Are there any other behaviours that you know don't do? So for example, if you've got a celebrity friend who told you something and they didn't say it was off the record in confidence, but you would assume it was, are there certain things that you now know that you wouldn't share with your readers?

Yes. I mean, I don't do a lot of things I used to do.

Can you tell us what those things are?

Doddle inappropriate things on people's faces, I don't do that any more.

I used to enjoy that though, that sense of mischief.

That's very juvenile, and there's nothing wrong with being juvenile if you want to, but...

It sounds like you've grown up and I haven't, actually!

I don't draw inappropriate things on photos any more. I also don't give people stupid and nasty nicknames. Hello! Before Donald Trump was doing it, Perez Hilton was!

Absolutely!

I gave birth to Donald Trump! If there was no Perez Hilton there would probably be no Donald Trump. Maybe I should run for President! Not for President...

No, run for President.

Haha! But do you know what, if I was to do something like that I would have to genuinely believe that I can make things better. And you see, that's the thing – from day one I never believed that Donald Trump was doing it for the right reasons. I know a thing or two about celebrities and pop culture and entertainment, and I feel like I've got Donald Trump very well figured out. I am 90+ per cent certain the real reason Donald Trump ran for president is ego. And to live for ever. Because in 100 years, nobody will remember Perez Hilton. In 100 years nobody will remember the latest pop star. But everybody in America will always remember every President. You study them in school. You memorise them. Presidents are for ever. Entertainers – it's not a guarantee. So Donald Trump wanted to be even more famous than he already was. Simple.

So it's just pure ego that's driven him.

Yes. He's just like Kanye.

You know, in terms of all the celebrities that you've met, what what's the ratio of people that you would consider a friend, that are friendly, and those that are, like Kanye and Donald Trump, seem to be deeply troubled? Because it's obvious, but I imagine there's some people that still appear quite sensible on the surface but have issues. Do you think that a lot of insecurities and issues drive people to that world of celebrity and they're all crackers, or do you think there's... you know, I know someone who knows Harrison Ford and they say that he's a very nice guy actually. Completely well rounded and, you know, would buy you a drink and you'd enjoy it. Not in any way insane.

I would say that like celebrities are just like the people in your office – some are really nice, some aren't.

All of the people in my office are terrible people, I'll just put that on the record! Have your readers grown up with you then, as you've changed?

Yes.

Do you feel that you have a contingent of people that stayed with you, or is there new blood?

Both. I mean, I have new readers, because you know, I talk about Shawn Mendes and Fifth Harmony, but I also have leaders who say, "Oh my gosh, I've got kids now, and it's beautiful to watch you with your kids." And also I am not the product; I am the conduit for the product. Meaning most people don't care about me, they just care what I provide for them. And I'm very well aware of that I don't have fans. I'm not a celebrity. I am an entertainer who does that and the other, who has readers or people who enjoy this that I do or people that enjoy that, but I wouldn't... I don't think I have fans. I don't really view my relationship with the world that way.

You must get recognised in the street though. People come up to you, are they largely friendly, do they want a selfie with you? What's your interaction with the actual real members of the public?

Well, they're mostly friendly. Every once in a while I don't get a friendly one, but...

What's your strategy for dealing with people like that then?

I just keep smiling. Just smile.

Does that antagonise them more? Because I would just run a million miles from people like that.

I care about people, but I don't care about what people think of me.

So a penultimate question then. Of everything you've done in your career, what's the thing you've done that's made you most proud?

The thing I've done over the 12 years, the thing that I'm proudest of is in 2011 I released a children's book called *The Boy With Pink Hair*, and to this day I get people coming up to me saying, "That is a really special book and I read it to my students," or, "My son or daughter loves it." And that means so much to me. I also... almost can't or don't take ownership of it. You know, sometimes musicians will say that a song birthed itself, that it just came pouring out of them; the same experience happened for me with the book. All I had was the title in my mind and I just sat down to write it, and in one sitting the entire book wrote itself with barely any changes needed afterwards. I mean, whatever, it's a children's book, it's not the most complicated thing to write! But it was a fairly quick and easy and, I think, inspired process.

Did you always want to write a book?

No! I had no idea or interest in writing a children's book. It was very flippant. I was at a book conference promoting my second book that I wrote, which was about Hollywood and celebrities – write what you know, they say –

Absolutely.

And I was on a panel with Mario Lopez, he was an actor who used to be on Saved by the Bell and now he's a presenter, he's on this show in America called Extra, and he was promoting a children's book, and I was on the same panel with him and I just flippantly said, "I should write a children's book too! The Boy With Pink Hair." I had never thought about writing a children's book and I don't even know where that came from. I think I just wanted a title because he had his book and his title. And then I just could not stop thinking about it. I was like, "I have to write this. I have to." And thankfully I was able to, and it's the thing I'm proudest of.

And last question then. Not that there's any vacancy, but what advice would you give to a young person that is aspiring to be the next Perez Hilton.

The advice I would give to them is the continuation on the theme I said earlier. You have to not just to work hard, you have to a) work harder than everybody else, and b) there is no balance. I think a lot of young people have been fed this false notion that you could have it all. You can't have it all. All but your work should and must suffer, meaning if you really want to be extremely successful, your job must be your life. It must be all-consuming. You must work all the time. Romantic relationships, friendships, family, your fitness, personal enjoyment, all of those things should suffer. You can't have it all in your 20s. And I don't even know if you can have it all in your 30s! I don't know if you can ever have it all. I mean, hopefully, eventually, maybe when you're in your 50s or 60s you can have truly more balance, but there is this saying that maybe there's like five or six important things in life. Professional success, romance/partner/boyfriend/girlfriend/husband/wife whatever, family, fitness and fun. Right? You can have three out of us five things at one time, but you can't have all five at the same time, especially if you really want to be mega successful.

Well, Perez, we're out of metaphorical tape, so thank you ever so much for joining us, I've learned an awful lot. Really enjoyed it.

I would just say thanks for having me, and I'll shamelessly plug myself again, because I am the Queen of All Media! If you enjoyed me on here, listen to my podcast, The Perez Hilton podcast with Chris Booker, you can listen directly on Spotify, iTunes or at play.it/perez, read my website and follow me across social media. I am on every frickin' platform and my handle is ThePerezHilton.