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# Carl Swanson

## Editor-at-Large, New York magazine

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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 here in New York and joined by Carl Swanson, editor-at-large of New York Magazine. During his 14 years there he's been senior editor, news editor, and culture editor. He's been involved with vulture.com, their art and culture sister website, and the news website The Daily Intelligencer. He's also played a key role in shaping their shift toward being an award-winning digital media company.**

**Carl, thank you for joining me.**

Thank you for having me.

**Your role encompasses New York Magazine, Vulture, The Cut websites. How do you break it down on a daily basis? If there was a pie chart of how you spent your time, what would be the pieces of the pie?**

It kind of depends on what's needed. The magazine has a different pace obviously, because especially now that we are every other week instead of being a weekly magazine, which it was for most of the time I was there. You know, those projects are longer, they're more intensive, they're more sort of fussed over. Usually what I will do when I'm working on the websites are I kind of come in because there's something that I can help on, or because I have an idea that I'm sort of perfect to make sure it happens. So that's kind of how it works.

**So what's a typical week then? How do you actually break it down in terms of, are you reacting to stuff? Are you consulting and working on strategy, or is it writing, editing, all of that?**

It all depends on what's happening. Sometimes… again, like The Daily Intelligencer is basically a series of columnists, as well as a sort of news summary aggregation with attitude. I'm not really involved in that, not at this point. I was at one point, but I'm not really now. So that kind of operates on its own. So I will come in if there's a project outside of their very sort of intensive metabolism. I will sometimes come in and help them a little with that. Same thing with Vulture. I was involved in an effort to increase the amount of art coverage that we did, and for a while we were thinking about, "Oh, could we actually run like a separate art website?" and in the end,

actually it didn't have the scale that we needed, but that was something else that I was involved in. It's interesting, because New York Magazine, unlike a lot of places, it has a legacy publication, and then they try to come up with as much digital content as they can. Much more oftentimes that whatever fit within the print publication. What we did, and we made a very intentional decision to do this, is to create separate organisations, separate brands.

**The Cut, Vulture, etc.**

Yes. But at the same time, the magazine is 'the best of', in some ways.

**I've been a reader for years, I absolutely love it.**

So every time you write something or you do a bigger project and it ends up in print, it also has a life online that I think in many people, like you'll write something and many times it will end up on The Cut, and people have no idea that it also appeared, other than a tagline if they bothered to read it, in the print publication. It's a very… you end up working for all of these different organisations within the organisation. And some of it ends up in the print magazine, but it doesn't necessarily have to, of course.

**But the group as a whole took an interesting approach to the challenge that digital presented, because you had New York Magazine, you could have just had newyorkmagazine.com and just had an online version, got the clicks and so on. But creating these different brands within it, in their own right, that was quite a daring thing to do.**

It was. When you look back at the history of our website, and I've been there long enough to remember before these other websites existed, it was a place to look for restaurants, it was a very local website, and also, curiously, a lot of our traffic was fashion shows, like slideshows of New York Fashion Week, because at some point we just didn't put that stuff behind a paywall that other people had. So if someone's looking for a fashion show from a few years ago, they would look it up. And out of that, they decided they would build these different separate digital brands, with the assumption that if you're a fan of pop music, you wouldn't necessarily look to New York Magazine as a brand, as a place to look for that. The old magazine, the magazine that is sort of the legacy, it had a very particular history. It came out of a particular era of New York City, and it was sort of defining what a new city meant. But in this digital era, you need to be able to scale. Something like that, something that really focuses on what the latest restaurant is in New York City, or even the sort of micro-celebrities of New York City, wouldn't really make sense. That said, one of our micro-celebrities is now running the free world. It's a peculiar thing, because he definitely was a character in the old New York Magazine. He was on the cover a dozen times. It was just really a… and, you know, I've spoken to him on the phone. He was very easy to get on the phone. We would call up this woman named Norma Foerderer, who was his assistant, and we said, "We want to get Donald Trump on the phone." and he would say whatever you needed him to say. And I think that's one of the reasons why a lot of New York City publications that ought to have known him really well, didn't take his rise that seriously at first. Because you were just of

like, “Oh yes, it’s Donald Trump. What does that even mean?” But anyway, that’s like, that’s…

**That’s come to bite us in the ass now.**

Oh yes, absolutely.

**Well, I’m going to ask you about Donald Trump in a second because I’m going to try and have some structure to this podcast.**

Yes.

**But I want you to talk about what you’re doing now, and also your journey into the magazine and what you’ve done over the last 10 years. But in terms of what you’re doing now then, you were talking about being assigned to various initiatives and so on.**

Yes.

**I had imagery of Winston Wolf from Pulp Fiction, that you’re the troubleshooter. Is that the kind of thing you do? Are you more of an editorial strategist now?**

Sometimes, yes. And sometimes also, I’m somebody who can… you know, if we have a special issue we need to have done, I can come in and help put it together. I can have a certain amount of institutional memory, I have a certain amount of understanding of the tone and what people expect. So I was involved…

**The voice of the brand?**

To some extent, yes, and that’s also in ways that I help with a certain amount of our, you know, I’m on the team of people to come up with our cover lines, and sort of trying to discuss what a good cover is for the magazine now. So these are the kinds of things that I’m involved in.

**And if it’s not too fawning a question, it sounds to me like you’ve got the ideal job within the whole company really, because you’ve got your fingers in all the right pies. You’re doing all the things that you’re good at and that are exciting.**

I love for people to have that impression! No, really, I’m very fortunate to have been there, and to have had the support of the editor, and to have an ability to be involved in a lot of different things. It’s kind of what you want to be in journalism for. What you want to do is to find out about things and then help other people understand things.

**So it’s been 14 years that you’ve been at the magazine. Tell us how you came to join them and give us some of the highlights and lowlights of the last 14 years.**

Well, I came in because at the time I was writing freelance. I started my career at the New York Observer, and I used to write the media column for the New York Observer. And I used to hassle Adam Moss, who is currently the editor-in-chief of New York Media. So we got to know each other, sparring over various things that he didn't want me to write about the New York Times, and that kind of thing. And at the time, he was running the Times Magazine and then he had a broader portfolio there. And so I was writing freelance for them, and when the magazine was bought and was taken over by the Wassersteins, and they brought him in, I basically asked him for a job and he hired me as a contract writer. And then I kind of weaselled my way in as an editor and ultimately the role I have today.

**So you weaselled your way in.**

Yes.

**But you've managed to weasel your way… remain there… that analogy doesn't work at all! But we'll carry on. So what have you been going through? What have you been doing over the last 14 years?**

When it was a weekly magazine, I was involved in the front of the book, and that was the quicker-paced material, the stuff that would close on Friday to come out on Monday. There was a time, and this seems so very long ago, that you would actually look on a Monday morning for a magazine for information, new information, fresh information.

**Those were the days.**

It's so strange.

**You wouldn't even look at a newspaper now for that. You go to Twitter.**

Exactly. Or when you do look at newspaper, you look through and you go, "Oh, you know, I read all this."

**You're looking for different take on it, actually. You don't want to be told what's happening, you know that already. It's what's their view on what's happening. It's the lens, I say.**

Yes, that's a big part of it. But even then, you probably read about it on your phone. So that was what I was involved in. And increasingly, it became apparent that that really wasn't going to be viable. I was also, for a while, working on the culture section. That was interesting, because one of the things that we were trying to do was, at that point, Vulture was going. But it wasn't quite as robust as it is now. We didn't do all the things that we do, and we certainly didn't do the things to the ambitious degree that we do them now.

**Because it's a behemoth now, it's massive. It's one of the biggest online brands there is.**

Absolutely, and hugely successful in terms of its adaptation to how things are paid for right now.

**And in terms of strategic partnerships and that kind of thing?**

Yes. I mean, the Vulture Festival as well as… you know, there are a couple of different ways you can get advertising, and one of the ways is a more direct sponsorship. The sponsor definitely wants to be in partnership with your brand as opposed to going through Google or one of these other commoditised advertising organisations, which is not as… it doesn't pay as well. So they've done a really brilliant job of that. And so one of the things that I began a process of, which has now continued after my leaving, was trying to figure out, well, what is it, what does the partnership between our online business and our print business, what does it mean journalistically? What are you looking for to appear in print? And some of that really was just like, you deal a lot with Hollywood publicists and things like that, and they do want to be in print because it's seen as more prestigious, it still does to this day. So some of that we still work with. We say, "Well, you can appear in print in the magazine," and that's also part of that game, ultimately.

**What have been the lowlights then over the last 14 years, other than the election of Trump? We can go into that later.**

I think there have been really… there have been challenges. It was hard to go bi-weekly.

**It's a huge change, isn't it? It's easy to just think, "Well, it's going from one week to fortnightly," as we would say.**

Yes.

**Actually, it changes the nature of everything, doesn't it?**

In some ways yes, in some ways no. The way it isn't different is we still close the magazine on Friday for the following Monday. So we still do have a very quick turnaround, which is just like, it's not like we close it and then it sits around for two weeks, or three weeks, or a month.

**Yes, because a lot of monthly magazines have incredibly long lead times. They're planning their December and Christmas coverage in July.**

You can't believe it, and you're thinking that has no relationship to reality. And so it requires more planning. Implicitly, it requires that the material that's in there to be better. And I think we've achieved that. I think that we've achieved a sense that the magazine/print content has become more refined than it had been previously. The other thing is, we always think now in print, what will this do online? How can we make a national impact? And I will tell you, when I write something or when I edit something that appears in print, it doesn't matter that it's in print, and it doesn't get talked about until it appears online.

**The reality is, is that in a sense, whilst print is more prestigious and that's what the advertisers and the commercial partners want, it actually doesn't have anywhere near the impact, as you've said, until it's online. Because where can you buy New York Magazine physically? Largely here in Manhattan and at certain newsagents around the US. I can even get it in London.**

Yes.

**But you can't get it on every newsstand. Whereas online, you've got a huge, huge readership.**

Absolutely. And some of that, now in terms of people commenting on things and that sort of feeling that's in the news, some of that's just because the people who comment, comment online. So in some ways it is a little bit of a closed circle like, are people reading it in print? Absolutely. But there's no mechanism for them to comment reading in print.

**Mail the letters to the editor just like the old way of doing it.**

Exactly. We gave up letters to the editor years ago, and did this comments page, which is a sort of melange of Twitter commentary and other things. But it is really interesting. The magazine itself, the physical magazine, the cover is very important still, because it does, although it isn't something that necessarily is there to sell on the newsstand like it used to be, and we used to really worry about that, now we worry about that less, but we want to do is we want to make sure that it has a poster-like quality. It has this idea that, "This is what we're saying. This is important."

**A physical banner ad.**

We did this piece not so long ago by Jonathan Chait, sort of patterning out the relationship between Trump and Putin. So we had this rather famous artist named Barbara Kruger do the cover. It's kind of been everywhere online. It did do a nice job of summing up the idea of the piece, and that piece, of course, landed the week of the summit and caused a certain amount of trouble.

**You guys know Trump of old, as you said earlier in this conversation, and you must be particularly flabbergasted to see him in the White House.**

Yes. Yes, I think so. I think it was surprising to see that he managed to, and he's a master marketer, that he managed to create an idea of himself. And I think really, in partnership with a lot of other media companies, including Fox News, that made sense to people and really made sense to… listen, a lot of my family is from the American south, right? And we have a lot of relatives that, and I've written about this, who voted for Trump. He talks about, in a way, that for whatever reason, they think is authentic and makes sense to them, and it's hard. It's hard for someone like… one of the things that definitely has happened to the magazine in the last few years is that we've become more partisan. We become more a part of that particular bubble.

**But it's not necessarily party political in the sense of it's not Democrat nor Republican because, really, you're just standing up for a Commander-in-Chief who doesn't lie, doesn't demean his colleagues, doesn't sexually assault women…**

We'd like to think so, yes, absolutely. But I think that, in effect, within the way that our media and political culture works right now, we have sort of taken a side.

**He seems to have created and cultivated an image of being an outsider, because if you think, you know, Manhattan billionaire socialite guy that he was, you would think that in a sense, he's the ultimate part of the establishment. But if you talk to, maybe, your relatives, I'm not trying to put words in their mouth, but they would say actually because he's got independent wealth, that means he's not in hock to the deep state, the big banks, the big corporations.**

That was certainly one of the arguments. Absolutely.

**You haven't brought your crystal ball with you, but what's next? I know lots of Democrats that didn't like Hillary, for example, and thought, "Well, they're both as bad as each other," and that used to flabbergast me even at the time, because I thought there's a risk this guy might win. Obviously, he did. Do you think that the Democrats are going to get their act together? Do you think the people that maybe liked Hillary but didn't like her enough to go out and vote for her because they thought her winning was a foregone conclusion, as indeed Hillary said herself in her book? Do you think that, ultimately, all of the various parts of society that were arguably complacent, have had the jolt that they need to get rid of that, big time?**

I don't know. I really don't know. It's so hard to know. Things are moving so quickly now that I think it will be impossible at this point for us to know what it's all going to look like in November, much less in two years.

**Or what it's going to look like next week!**

Yes, I don't think we really know.

**It's like, no one knows anything any more.**

Yes. There's a lot of distraction, and I think that one of the things that's been really interesting about the media is that you kind of always have to be on deck now. Take, for example, The Cut. Okay, The Cut was started out originally as a… it came out of our fashion coverage, and then there was an idea that it should also cover other women's issues.

**You've got eight million unique visitors. That's insane.**

It's hugely successful.

**And you've done huge amounts on the gender equality debate, as I'm sure you're about to say.**

Yes, absolutely, and that's been their sort of entry point, I think, into becoming a very particular voice in the broader American culture. And yes, some of that does appear in the magazine. Rebecca Traister, who's one of the leading voices in that, she's helped define the terms of this discussion. They were the ones that… you know, even smaller sort of scuffles, like there was an organisation called… this phenomenon called the Shitty Media Men List. Then the person who wrote that, who came up with that, and it was like, calling out a bunch of men in the media, came forward on The Cut. That's been really powerful. And it's interesting, because The Cut has a political point of view. That's something that, quite frankly, surprised me, watching that develop. I didn't think that they would do that. I think that it's hard, I think for women especially, to see things like Donald Trump's comments during the election and then to see him get elected anyway, so it really galvanised people. And so you can have your, 'this is a really interesting new shoe', and 'this is about the latest Kim Kardashian kerfuffle', but also have serious and thoughtful political coverage.

**There's a risk, though, to that strategy, arguably commercially. I mean, first of all, I agree with you. I applaud it. I think it's fantastic what you're doing, but there's the Taylor Swift strategy, which is to not get involved in politics. Yes, she's not challenged the President. Her view might be privately that there's other people doing that, and all she's going to do is alienate half of her audience, or the families of her audience, if she says anything, which brings me to the point, which is the opposite of that, which is when the Dixie Chicks waded in about the Iraq war, if you remember, and George W Bush. They lost huge amounts of fans because of that, because they said, "Look, just shut up about politics and get on the stage and sing your songs." Now I feel sorry for the Dixie Chicks, because I'm actually quite a fan of them actually, I listened to their album earlier today. But you can see why it might be better to stay out of politics, like in a sense, another CEO might say, "Just stick to the shoes and the fashion," because aren't you going to create a lot of highly motivated, alienated people, that are then going to try and challenge you and get bogged down in all that?**

I don't think that you can compare the Dixie Chicks to a journalistic operation. I think that one of the things that…

**I had a damned good go, I thought!**

Yes, I know. I think that's really what they're trying to do. I think that they realised what their readership is interested in, and I think they realised what bothers them.

**So it's attracting and reinforcing the existing leadership, rather than alienating a huge group of people that wouldn't have been there anyway.**

My guess is yes, but all I know is, it's been successful, and they haven't done it in a cheap way. I think if you look over at… you know, one of the only successes online, at Condé Nast, was Teen Vogue. Teen Vogue was about social justice. I think that

when you look at, especially for a younger, millennial audience, social justice is one of the main motivating ideas in their lives. Being involved, making a difference. And fortunately – I guess really, unfortunately – there's a lot of fodder for that right now, and to ignore that is to ignore both your mission, and I think also in some ways you're ignoring the commercial potential of your organisation. My original instinct was to be a little ironic, a little distant; I think this is because that was how I was brought up journalistically, but it isn't the way that people are now. If anything, what you have to do is, you have to make sure that any stands you take, or new stands writers take, and especially online, you have a lot of stuff that's happening, it isn't just jumping on a bandwagon, but you have to make sure that it has rigour. That, to my mind, is the biggest challenge right now.

**Yes, because how do you actually do that? It's about having unique voices though, isn't it? And empowering them on your platform, because otherwise, unless you have that uniqueness, then you're just joining in the chorus of disapproval or whatever.**

But you have a Cut voice. I mean, there are individual voices within that, there are certainly writers here who I'm especially a fan of, because of the way they could turn of phrase or think of the… even people who are tasked with writing as many as multiple times a day. But ultimately, in terms of the reader, what the reader wants, I think, is to trust what the brand says, and the writers all have to live up to that trust. And people really do. They talk about The Cut. I mean, they talk about Rebecca Traister because she's a star, and unbelievably articulate in what she's saying, but a lot of times what's going on here is that they do trust The Cut's take on things. Whether that's just to reassure them in some ways, that in the face of all these challenges, that there are people who are thinking it through for them? I don't know.

**I do think you're right. I think The Cut has a tone. It has a voice. How do you create that? How do you engender it? If you're one of the custodians of that, how do you do it? I'm thinking of like, TV shows, when a TV show is created, the creator will create a show bible, that says here's all the characters and these are the scenarios. This is what they do, this is what they would never do, and so on. Is there a hidden five or six-page style guide, or tone guide, about what The Cut is about and what it would do and what it wouldn't do?**

Well, most of it's edited, and some it's edited more thoroughly than other parts of it. A lot of attention is paid to the framing, the headlines. One of the interesting things that you have to do, when you're editing, and this is something that didn't used to be the case in the least, is you had to think, "Okay, what is it that will cause someone to pass this piece along? What is it this piece is saying?"

**The shareability.**

Yes, and what is it saying about you, that you share it? And that I think is really interesting. So you have to, in some ways, have an idea of, I guess like a pitch line for the story. What is it that people are going to think about it? And if it's too muddled, then it won't work on social.

**One of the ways that we grow our listenership on this podcast is that the guests themselves tweet that they have been on it. It's a great source of new traffic. I'm hoping you will tweet that you were on this, but you may well not, it depends! But is that, in a sense, that your readers are your marketers now, that a large volume of new traffic is your readers sharing with their co-workers, colleagues, friends?**

Absolutely. I think to some extent also, and this is what I tell young journalists now, is that part of your job is marketing. You're a marketer for your material, and you have to think about that. You can't count on the reputation of, for example, New York Magazine being the thing you must read to allow what you do to succeed. And that is a completely different perspective, I think, on journalism, than certainly when I started. I remember friends who work at the New York Times, who work in politics there, who would say, and this was early on in the campaign, "Oh, no, no, we're definitely encouraged to write about Trump as often as possible, because it always does well." Now you could ask whether that contributed to his being elected, and I would say probably, fortunately or unfortunately, but it's just the way it is, the way that one of the considerations is, for a piece, is how well will it do? And sometimes things will surprise you. Our number one piece last year, called The Doomed Earth Catalogue, basically took seven looks at ways in which the world, our world, would no longer be hospitable to human habitation.

**I read it. It wasn't an upbeat article, as I recall. There weren't many laughs in it.**

No, there were not many laughs in it. What's really interesting about that piece was, at first I'd feared that it was a piece that would come across as being self-indulgent.

**Yes, I agree. But it didn't.**

But it didn't. And not only because the writer is an elegant writer, but also because there was something about its relentlessness.

**It was interesting. I know that almost sounds insipid to say as a criticism, but I want to read stuff I want to read. I don't want to read stuff that I ought to be reading or I feel some sense of duty to read.**

Oh, absolutely.

**I want to be pulled toward it.**

Now, let's also say we are a bit of a fan of an apocalyptic narrative. There's a piece in the New Yorker about what tsunamis were going to destroy Seattle a few years back by Catherine Shutlz, which also did very well.

**It's why, if I ever moved to Seattle, I'd only ever live at the top of the Space Needle.**

It'll fall into the water.

**I'm never going there ever again then. That's the plan B.**

But it really is… so there's something so evocative about that, and that's very powerful. It wasn't a piece of journalism where he went anywhere, really. He didn't really do anything other than have a bunch of phone calls with very smart people, and then it was interesting, and this comes back to our point about the role of social media, is that some of the people he talked to thought he had exaggerated what they had said, and it caused a bunch of articles being written about it in other publications, measuring that, weighing that out.

**Great. Great PR for that article.**

That was not in any sort of sense the idea, the cynical idea, but it did help the discussion going.

**Of course. If it all leads to the source material.**

And if you really read the piece, it's point was that scientists, for whatever reason, which he goes into psychoanalysing a little bit, didn't want to say things were as bad as they were. So in some ways the whole piece was a critique of scientists…

**Self-censoring.**

Yes. And that played out in this discussion, but he was worried enough about it that afterwards he actually did an annotated version of the piece that actually tried to go through and talk about it, and now he's writing a book about it. So that was a piece that I think many publications might not have done.

**Do you think social media is now so important to the work of a journalist that there's almost been a generation that have got caught out by it? I mean, don't get me wrong, the digital strategy that you guys have got is incredible – you've adapted, you've engaged, you've turned it into a positive – but there are some journalists that just haven't quite got it. I know some incredible journalists that are earth-shatteringly great and have 300 followers on Twitter because they've never been a Twitter person, engaging and causing a furore.**

Let's face it, being a Twitter person does not make you a good journalist.

**No.**

In some sense it can be the opposite, but it is also true that, especially as a young journalist, it's difficult to get hired unless you have a certain amount of a fluency with that. I'm not as good at it as other people are, partly because I think that one of the things you have to do is have a consistent perspective, often about a consistent… and I kind of write about all kinds of things. If you have somebody who like me, who will write about an artist, and then write about the future of shopping in the digital age, and then write about a movie star, or write about… I'm kind of all over the place. They sort of drop me in where they want. It's harder to know, "Oh, this is the person to listen to about this."

**Is the death of the generalist journalist at hand then?**

It could be.

**Should every journalist have a specialism?**

It could be. It really is very helpful to do that. One of the people I think is really interesting, well there are two people I'm really fascinated with in terms of how they've adapted as older people to Twitter. If you're not adapted to it and you're under 30, I don't know what's wrong with you, because you never existed. But there's a woman named Emily Nussbaum, who's now the TV critic for the New Yorker, and she worked with us for a long time. She was the culture editor at one point, and then eventually she became our TV critic, and then she became the New Yorker's. She will engage anybody. She'll just volley back and forth, just sit there and talk to people, and this kind of comes back to one of the other things that has happened, and this is something that she's a part of, and I think Vulture's a part of, which is that people want to talk to other people about what they're reading and watching and listening to, and people want that sense of community that didn't obviously exist previously. Maybe you talked to a few of your friends about TV shows you wanted to watch.

**The sense of community seemed to exist in the past even as recently as 10, 20, 30 years ago, was in your local geographic community, in the street, and your neighbours. Now, people avoid eye contact with the people in the same building, and they're building up communities on The Cut, and around interests, rather than geography.**

Absolutely. I think some of that is just because people move around more than they used to, but I think that it is… it's also totally true. I think that sometimes you wonder how people actually are able, especially younger people. You think, "You don't know how to talk to somebody, or can you only talk through the phone?"

**A lot of young people don't even like picking up the phone to speak on it.**

Oh, I think that's…

**But we're old giffers now.**

No, but it is really true. That is a weakness about journalism today, and that is, there's a lot of journalism that takes place via email. It takes place oftentimes as layers of commentary on things, as opposed to actually going somewhere and talking to somebody. And you can't get around that. You can't get around that as a way of actually finding out something.

**Good old-fashioned shoe leather. Knocking on doors.**

Yes.

**What's going on? Tell me a story.**

Absolutely. No, you wouldn't… and the stories that really have made a difference, the Times story about… you know, I love their Me Too stuff. A friend of mine was involved in one of those stories, and she was talking about how she would… they did just multiple phone calls. Leaving notes with people. Trying to find friends of friends. Forcing that story to light – and that's something you'll never do emailing people.

**Agreed, but the speed of which the Me Too movement came out of nowhere. I can remember when Ashley Judd wrote that article, and I remember reading it and thinking, "Wow, that was incredibly brave. I hope that doesn't get forgotten about quickly. That needs to lead to something."**

Yes.

**And then within three weeks Weinstein was charged with rape, he'd resigned. There was all these things that…**

Absolutely.

**I mean, it was just the speed with which some of the tenets of society is collapsing, like that sexism. I hope it gets fixed, but in the meantime, it seems that it's blown wide open now, and so quickly.**

Absolutely, and it really is a… it's changed all kinds of expectations that I think people have, and I think in some ways it's changed sympathies. It's… a lot of why you wouldn't write about those things previously, if they were known, and if you've been around, you would "know" about Donald Trump. You "know" about Harvey Weinstein – but no one wrote about it because there was a powerful publicity apparatus around them that would keep you from doing the other things that were deemed necessary as part of your job, if you didn't play along, or if you tried to do a gossipier story, and that somehow got blown apart, and that's really interesting. It's a fundamentally different set of protections for people than previously, and this is one of the points that Rebecca always makes, Rebecca Traister. That is, why do we automatically have the sympathies that we have? Why do we think that this person deserves to be successful? And her answer is the patriarchy, basically. It's plain, old-fashioned sexism.

**We had this in the United Kingdom at the Leveson inquiry. The UK press was just far too close to the Metropolitan Police, and to the police generally.**

Oh, yes.

**They were just having cosy chats, exchanging incredibly confidential information.**

Absolutely.

**To the point where the press were breaking the law, hacking phones and all kinds of things, and the police were tacitly turning a blind eye to it, because that cosy relationship suited both sides.**

Absolutely. And that was totally fascinating. I mean, the tabloid culture in London is something that's present in New York, but almost nowhere else in this country of mostly single newspaper towns. But in the end it's true, there are certain kinds of exchanges that do take place inevitably in journalism.

**Last couple of questions then. Where is print going?**

You know, I do think that print is very important, because I do think that there is a sense of finality of it. I think that's important both to our brand as a New York magazine, as well as to a number of other brands. But as always, the biggest challenge is something that we don't really think about, I think, as civilians anyway, don't really think about as just advertising. There just isn't the same… advertising is so divided up among all these different places now, so it isn't as supported as it used to be. But I think that will continue, and I do think that that will be an important part of people's diets, at least for serious journalism.

**Last question then. Where are you going? You've been 14 years where you are now, if it's not too personal a question, do you have any plans to move on? What will you do next?**

That's a really good question. It's something that I can't say that I don't think about.

**That's the most honest answer anyone's ever given so far. Everyone says, "I'm very happy where I am." And given it no thought whatsoever.**

Well, I mean, I really like New York Magazine. I've been given tremendous opportunities there.

**Huge fan of the magazine. Huge fan of your writing.**

And I've enjoyed the opportunities I've had to find different parts of the world, find different things, but the journalism world has certainly changed since I started out, and in order to remain vital within it, you have to be able to adapt to it. I have friends… I spent the weekend actually with a friend who used to write for New York Magazine who now makes documentary films, and I have another friend who used to be a staff writer for the magazine, and then took off and started making podcasts that apparently was the number one…

**Madness lies therein. I can assure you, anyone that makes podcasts, none of them are ever happy, I can assure you.**

And I think obviously there are a lot of opportunities to tell stories in different ways these days, but my first love is writing. I love being able to write something that deepens someone's understanding of something, and changes the way that they live

in the world in some small way, and when I'm editing, that's the same thing I'm after. And New York Magazine is one of the places where you can do that. That's one of the things that is a great gift of the place.

**Carl, I'm a huge fan of the magazine, and a huge fan of your writing in particular. It's been great that you've taken the time to come in and talk with us. Thank you ever so much.**

Thank you so much for having me.