

# Disability Deep Dive Episode 97: Little Imperfections, Big Conversations: Peet Montzingo On Growing Up Different

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**Jodi Beckstine** (00:00:20):

What happens when you grow up in a family where you're the one who stands out? What does it teach you about difference, belonging, and the stories we tell about what's normal? Today we're unpacking all that and more on Disability Deep Dive.

**Keith Casebonne** (00:00:36):

Hello, listeners. We're really glad you're here. I'm Keith.

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:00:39):

And I'm Jodi. Welcome back to Disability Deep Dive.

**Keith Casebonne** (00:00:42):

Today's episode is Little Imperfections, Big Conversations: Peet Montzingo On Growing Up Different. Peet is a creator, musician, and author whose book, Little Imperfections: A Tall Tale of Growing Up Different, explores family, identity, and humor in the face of difference.

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:00:59):

We talk about what it means to grow up as the only average height member of a family of little people, how that experience shaped Peet's perspective, and how he turned his story into connection through millions of followers online.

**Keith Casebonne** (00:01:11):

Yeah, you'll hear about the power of humor, the responsibility that comes with visibility, and how personal stories can shift how people see disability and difference.

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:01:19):

And after the interview, stay with us for our Deep Cut. This week we're diving into Cyrano, the 2021 film starring Peter Dinklage, to talk about beauty, love, and representation on screen.

**Keith Casebonne (00:01:31):**

It's going to be great. Let's get into it.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:01:33):**

Hello and welcome to Disability Deep Dive, Peet. For listeners meeting you for the first time, how do you introduce yourself and the work that you do?

**Peet Montzingo (00:01:41):**

What's up? My name is Peet Montzingo and I'm an artist. I make content online and I am a musician and I actually just started a podcast yesterday, ironically.

**Keith Casebonne (00:01:51):**

Oh, nice.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:01:51):**

Great!

**Peet Montzingo (00:01:53):**

Thank you. And I'm an author.

**Keith Casebonne (00:01:56):**

Excellent. Well, thank you so much for being with us. We really appreciate you spending some time with us today.

(00:02:02):

So of course you've shared through all your different posts and social medias and books, you've shared that you're the only average height member of your family. What was it like growing up in that unique dynamic and how has it shaped the way that you see the world?

**Peet Montzingo (00:02:18):**

So it's funny when people always ask what it's like when I grew up in an all-dwarf household, to me, I'm like, "It was normal." It's weird to me to imagine a life that I had to look up to my family physically. That's just so strange. To me, a family means you look down. I'm comfortable now when I look down.

(00:02:39):

It's always such an interesting thing when people come up to me and they're like, "So when I see an LP," little person, "am I supposed to get on my knee and hug them? Am I supposed to stand there and look down at them?" And it's funny because to me, I have never thought about that. Everything has just always been natural. If anything, it's the opposite where if someone is taller than me, I'm like, "Am I supposed to pull my head up? I don't know what I'm supposed to do. Do I get the stepladder? I don't know."

**Keith Casebonne** (00:03:10):

Right, jump up and down?

**Peet Montzingo** (00:03:11):

"Do you have a stepladder? I don't know." Yeah, so I think it's just made me view life in a very different perspective and a different way that has made me... I feel like it's really helped me, actually, in a lot of ways. It helped me be over-empathetic, helped me connect with people more because I think I just inherently understand what it's like to feel different by being myself and by being with my family in two different ways. And yeah, I don't know. I just feel like I wouldn't know what it would be like not to have an all-little person family.

**Keith Casebonne** (00:03:49):

Wow, yeah.

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:03:50):

It's such an honest perspective.

**Keith Casebonne** (00:03:52):

True, true.

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:03:55):

And I think people can relate. A lot of people feel different in their own families for many, many different reasons.

(00:04:00):

But looking back at your childhood, is there a moment that maybe stands out as a turning point in your understanding of being different or belonging in your identity?

**Peet Montzingo (00:04:12):**

I would say I probably noticed the biggest realization when I went to school. I remember people, my peers were looking up at their parents when they dropped them off. And that was the first time I really thought, "Why are they... What's different here?"

(00:04:31):

And that's when I started going to friends' houses to hang out and stuff. And I would go into their houses and I would look for the cups to get a glass of water or milk or something or juice. And then I'd be looking down in the lower cabinets and then they would look at me weird like, "What are you trying to look for?" The parents would be judging me and I'm like, "The cups? I don't know. I just want some water."

(00:04:57):

So I think, yeah, seven, eight is when I really... it hit me in a way where I was like, "Oh, wait, I'm in a different situation somehow."

**Keith Casebonne (00:05:09):**

Yeah, that makes sense. And it makes you wonder, what are people hiding in the lower cabinets normally? Why is that so suspicious? What are we worried about there? I don't know. Like, "He's in the lower cabinets. Wait, what's going on?" Geez, really?

**Peet Montzingo (00:05:23):**

For me, it was the upper cabinets. I learned that I could hide everything on the upper cabinets.

**Keith Casebonne (00:05:26):**

Oh, I bet. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:05:26):**

That's right.

**Keith Casebonne (00:05:30):**

Yeah. Oh, I bet.

**Peet Montzingo (00:05:31):**

So it really worked out for me.

**Keith Casebonne** (00:05:31):

Right, no, that's funny.

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:05:31):

My kids are average height and that's where they hide all their things is up high, so I can-

**Peet Montzingo** (00:05:34):

Are they really?

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:05:35):

Yes. So that's where they hide all their stuff.

**Keith Casebonne** (00:05:37):

Got it.

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:05:38):

So I'm the only little person in my family growing up and in my married family with my children. So yeah, everything is high.

**Peet Montzingo** (00:05:46):

Oh, no way!

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:05:47):

And I'm always asking.

**Peet Montzingo** (00:05:49):

Oh my God. So you have a average height partner?

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:05:53):

Yes. And two average height children.

**Peet Montzingo** (00:05:56):

Wow. Oh my gosh. That's so interesting.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:05:59):**

So I'm the opposite.

**Keith Casebonne (00:06:00):**

Yeah, right, inverse.

**Peet Montzingo (00:06:02):**

Yeah, it makes me think like, "Am I going to find an LP and marry them and then have an all LP family again?"

**Jodi Beckstine (00:06:08):**

That would be awesome.

**Keith Casebonne (00:06:09):**

For sure. Oh, wow.

(00:06:16):

Well, you built a huge community online, obviously, of course. And we're talking TikTok, YouTube, Instagram. What inspired you to start creating this wonderful content and when did you realize it was resonating with so many people?

**Peet Montzingo (00:06:32):**

Okay, so this is kind of PTSD because I started posting on YouTube when I was a kid in 2007, and I was posting at least once a week until, I would say, like 2015. I had different series I would try and put on YouTube, different angles of it. I tried everything because I really thought that I could, first of all, never hold a job, and I'm like, "I need to figure out how to make money. I keep getting fired everywhere I go."

**Keith Casebonne (00:07:00):**

Oh, jeez.

**Peet Montzingo (00:07:02):**

I'm like, "It has to be my way!" I'm a Taurus.

(00:07:08):

Yeah, so I joined a boy band actually in the mid-2010s, and I was in different boy bands for seven years. And I thought that that was going to be like, "All right. I tried YouTube, I tried acting, I tried all these things, but boy band, that makes so much sense."

**Keith Casebonne** (00:07:27):

There you go.

**Peet Montzingo** (00:07:28):

"Just get up there." And we got to do so many amazing things, but this was all right before COVID. And the last thing we were doing was a world tour supporting other artists. So we got to perform in arenas and things like that.

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:07:42):

Wow.

**Keith Casebonne** (00:07:43):

Oh, wow.

**Peet Montzingo** (00:07:43):

And I was like, "This is bucket list stuff here," you know?

**Keith Casebonne** (00:07:48):

Sure.

**Peet Montzingo** (00:07:48):

"This is so crazy." And then all of a sudden, COVID hit, and I was living in Nashville at the time because that's where my label was and then the other guys were there. COVID happened, and then they had me go back to LA. And that first week I went to LA for quarantine, if you remember that. Oh, God.

**Keith Casebonne** (00:08:06):

Oh, yeah.

**Peet Montzingo (00:08:06):**

My mom was like, "I need someone to help me wash the groceries that I order because it could have COVID on it." You know?

**Jodi Beckstine (00:08:12):**

Yeah.

**Peet Montzingo (00:08:13):**

And we did that too. So I-

**Keith Casebonne (00:08:17):**

Oh, the fun days of washing groceries, yeah, I don't miss that.

**Peet Montzingo (00:08:19):**

I know, seriously. But she's like, "You have to wait two weeks because you just came back from Nashville, so you have to quarantine." And in those two weeks I was like, "All right, let me do a video. It's been a few years since I've done anything myself." And then I have a ball pit in this, it's now my office, in my office. And I was like, "All right, this is stupid. I'm just going to go up to the ball pit and then post it on this new app, TikTok, that everyone's talking about."

**Keith Casebonne (00:08:43):**

"It's a fad. It'll never catch on."

**Peet Montzingo (00:08:44):**

I know. I'm like, "Everyone's trying to be famous right now. It's so stupid." And then the next day I wake up after I post it and it went viral. James Charles commented on it.

**Keith Casebonne (00:08:53):**

Wow. Oh, yeah.

**Peet Montzingo (00:08:56):**

And he ended up living directly above me in the same building. I'm like, "What is going on?"

**Keith Casebonne (00:09:00):**

Oh my gosh.

**Peet Montzingo (00:09:01):**

"Everything is feeling just really weird right now." And then viral video again, viral video again. And then I went to quarantine with my mom and I briefed her. I was like, "All right, Mom, you're about to have a new career because I really feel something's happening." And here we are.

**Keith Casebonne (00:09:18):**

Wow. What was the name of the band, by the way?

**Peet Montzingo (00:09:21):**

The first one was called ZeroGravity, the second one was called Euphoria, and then the last one was 5WEST.

**Keith Casebonne (00:09:27):**

5WEST. Okay, awesome.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:09:29):**

Yeah, I found you on TikTok when you were living across the street from the hotel. So that's what I knew you as with all the videos that you were doing with it.

**Peet Montzingo (00:09:39):**

There it is! << Dun, dun, dun! >>

**Jodi Beckstine (00:09:40):**

So that's how I first saw you, and then your mom came into the picture and I was like, "What is happening?"

**Peet Montzingo (00:09:49):**

Really?

**Jodi Beckstine (00:09:49):**

And I was so excited. Yes. I was so happy.

**Peet Montzingo (00:09:51):**

You were like, "This guy is so weird. What the heck?"

**Jodi Beckstine (00:09:55):**

Yeah, I just loved you for that reason, and then to find out that you had a dwarf mother and then your whole family, I was just like, "Oh, I've hit the gold mine of people to follow on TikTok."

**Peet Montzingo (00:10:05):**

You did! That's so interesting.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:10:08):**

I was so thrilled.

**Peet Montzingo (00:10:09):**

That's so interesting that it popped up on your FYP before my family stuff did because I did Cecil stuff after I started doing family stuff, so that's so interesting.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:10:19):**

Yes, yes. But the Cecil stuff came up first for me, and then the other stuff was a fantastic bonus, but-

**Peet Montzingo (00:10:24):**

That's amazing.

**Keith Casebonne (00:10:25):**

Wow, wow.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:10:25):**

... you have a gift for using humor to open up difficult conversations. I will say you dressing up as Snow White with your family-

**Peet Montzingo (00:10:34):**

Oh, God!

**Jodi Beckstine (00:10:34):**

... makes me cackle every single time.

**Keith Casebonne (00:10:36):**

That is funny. That is so freaking funny.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:10:39):**

But your videos, they combine that humor with powerful messages. How do you strike a balance and what do you hope people take away from the content that you're making?

**Peet Montzingo (00:10:51):**

Yeah, so obviously a huge part of my content is advocacy. That's what drives so much of my being, and it's interesting because I've learned that through the process of what I'm doing because I was trying to avoid it when I left... We grew up in Seattle, so when I left Seattle to come to LA, I was like, "I'm not going to lean into the dwarf thing." I got offered a couple of reality shows, as I'm sure that you probably have and people you know. It's all the same thing in the community. And so I'm like, "I'm not going to do that. I'm going to be known for my talents. I don't want to be the average height dwarf guy." You know?

**Jodi Beckstine (00:11:27):**

Yeah, yeah.

**Keith Casebonne (00:11:27):**

Yeah, yeah.

**Peet Montzingo (00:11:28):**

And then it just organically happened the last couple of years in a way where it had to happen if it was going to happen that way. And my mom moved to LA and it just was the perfect situation. And then it sparked something in me to be like, "No, actually this is always what I've believed, and this is such a big part of me, and this is probably partially why I'm in this family and I can help change people's perspectives so much if I really lean into this." And then it just became such a driving force for me.

(00:12:00):

And so right now, it's always hard because you want to stay relevant, go viral. And I do that, again, because I have a very interesting sense of humor, my mom would say. And so I'm always trying to walk the line of, "Oops, did I..." I'm neurodivergent. I'm ADHD AF. And so sometimes when I'm doing a video, I will think of it like it's helping and it's a good thing, and then I'll post it and then my mom will be like, "You have to take that down. You have crossed the line. That's so disrespectful to LPs." And I'm like, "Is it really?" And I'm not going to argue. I never argue with any of my family about that because it's like although I really understand, I will never fully understand, and I can never take that away.

(00:12:48):

That's always a challenge for me is like, okay, how do I keep the views up with advocacy specifically, have some message underneath it that is consistent, but then also have it be this perfect storm of people laughing, but then also thinking?

(00:13:14):

And a good example of that is this last weekend I was in my Snow White dress again.

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:13:18):

Yay!

**Peet Montzingo** (00:13:20):

Oh, God. And I surprised my mom when she got back from the hospital again. She hates me, I swear. No, she loves me. But she gets home after she's grocery shopping or something, and I'm in my Snow White dress that night, and she comes home, but she was gone for four hours and I had hired a bunch of actors to dress up-

**Keith Casebonne** (00:13:43):

Oh my gosh.

**Peet Montzingo** (00:13:44):

... as different characters from derogatory movies that view LPs in derogatory ways. And so we had, what is it, The Wizard of Oz people there, and then we had all these different characters, and then she would go through her house, which we made into a haunted house, so it was a haunted house for LPs.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:14:08):**

Oh my God.

**Keith Casebonne (00:14:08):**

Whoa.

**Peet Montzingo (00:14:12):**

And it's a good example of my mom's like, "Are you crossing a line here?" Because I told the actors, "Say..." There's this one section where I had a bunch of kids taking pictures when she's walking through saying, "Oh my God, Mom, a midget," and all this stuff and touching her. "It's real!" Really just-

**Keith Casebonne (00:14:30):**

Oh, wow.

**Peet Montzingo (00:14:30):**

... making people think that this is what people go through. And my mom's like, "How are you going to spin this though to make people think that instead of just like, 'This is what happens'? How do we get them to change the perspective?"

(00:14:44):

So now I'm sitting with the footage and I'm like, "Okay, what captions can I put to soften it maybe a little? Maybe I went too hard." So it's just that, that's a good example, I guess, of I am trying to always figure it out. I don't know.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:14:58):**

That's a great example of trying to balance that. It's true.

**Peet Montzingo (00:15:05):**

And I'm not an LP, so I am really just guessing or talking with my mom about, "Is this right?" And usually I'll be right, but sometimes I'm not.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:15:15):**

Yeah. And there's such a spectrum of feelings on how people deal, especially LPs, how we deal with the M-word and being seen in public. And so it's a very fine line. Some people are going to be offended, some people are going to find it absolutely hilarious. So you just got to find that middle zone.

**Keith Casebonne (00:15:35):**

Know your audience.

**Peet Montzingo (00:15:36):**

Right, right.

**Keith Casebonne (00:15:37):**

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Wow.

**Peet Montzingo (00:15:40):**

Yeah, but thank you for asking that because that's something that I always want to talk about too because it's a nuanced thing that a lot of people wouldn't understand.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:15:48):**

Absolutely.

**Keith Casebonne (00:15:49):**

Yeah. Yeah, it's really fascinating and I think it's a good segue into then to talking about your book, *Little Imperfections*, because in my mind, that desire to be an advocate, I think, really is encapsulated in the book. I think that's such a good example of a way to teach others. And of course, it's technically a children's book, so it's four kids, and I think that that's really a wonderful approach. And I love the... I think you had a perfectly unique story to tell to educate people about disability and perceptions of people with disability.

(00:16:35):

And I'll real quick say too, yeah, it's a children's book, but when I read it, I read it a few months ago, and I'll be lying if I said I wasn't getting teary-eyed at the end. I mean, it's an emotional book.

**Peet Montzingo (00:16:47):**

Oh my God!

**Keith Casebonne (00:16:47):**

I mean, I'm almost 54 years old and I was like, "My God." So I mean, seriously, it was really, really...

**Peet Montzingo (00:16:54):**

Wow.

**Keith Casebonne (00:16:55):**

And then the video that you made too, even though I had just read the book and I knew everything that was going to happen, then seeing that-

**Peet Montzingo (00:17:00):**

Double whammy!

**Keith Casebonne (00:17:01):**

... was like, "Dammit." Yeah, it was really... I think what I'm trying to say here is that it's universally, I don't know, it works for kids, but I think an adult and someone that's worked in an advocacy area for ages, it still really resonated, and I really felt something from it.

**Peet Montzingo (00:17:23):**

Thank you for saying that.

**Keith Casebonne (00:17:24):**

So one, just kudos. I mean, it's just incredible.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:17:27):**

Absolutely, yeah.

**Keith Casebonne (00:17:27):**

I think it's written simply, it's written for kids, but yet it can inspire and educate and provide an emotional reaction in adults.

(00:17:38):

So now that I've told you my story reading it-

**Peet Montzingo (00:17:42):**

No, you just made my day. I'm like... Yeah. I mean, yeah, thank you.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:17:45):**

Great.

**Keith Casebonne (00:17:45):**

Oh, good.

**Peet Montzingo (00:17:46):**

Thank you.

**Keith Casebonne (00:17:46):**

Well, I'm glad. I'm glad to hear that. Well, so tell me a little more about what inspired you to write it and maybe how the process differed from the way that you tell stories on social media.

**Peet Montzingo (00:17:57):**

Yeah, so it actually stemmed because my management at the time was like, "You have to sell merch. You have to slap your face on it. Do one with your mom too. Do a dwarf thing, do..." And I'm just like, "Okay, this is not why I'm here. I'm not doing... Yes, I care about money, but no, I don't care about money when it comes to things I'm passionate about. I will lead with my passion always, and inspiration, even if it's delusional, to a fault."

(00:18:26):

So with the book at the time, the content that was really popping off was my poetic narrative stories. With my mom, it's like the videos that was blowing up at the beginning a lot, and it was more wholesome, a little bit more sweet. And it was me walking into my mom's house. It's like, "When you visit your little mom's house," and then it's like the next shot and it's I'm dusting something up high, and it's like, "but you're tall." So it was already Dr. Seuss-y vibes, but in a video.

(00:18:59):

And so I had a business partner who is an author in New York, and I was like, "Hey, what if, instead of this merch crap, what if we actually do something cool? And then it can still be a cash grab, whatever, but we can... Hopefully it's something substantial." And he's like, "Okay, great, yeah, let's write it and then let's get it out in a month, and then we're going to be rich." And I'm like, "God, okay, well, fine. I trust you more than my management, so sure."

(00:19:29):

And so a month goes by and then another month goes by and then all of a sudden, I'm really in this and I care more about this than anything else, and then it becomes a huge passion project. I'm learning so much about myself, I'm spending way too much time.

(00:19:42):

Two years later-

**Keith Casebonne** (00:19:44):

Wow.

**Peet Montzingo** (00:19:44):

... not even kidding, two years later, and then we were saying no to publishers because I was like, "I don't want their deals," because again, I'm a Taurus. And I basically, two years later, I released it and I had to have the sexy hardcover and dust jacket, and I have to get the soft cover and then the ebook, and then I'm like, "Wait. But then we have to make a video out of it and then we can correlate it together and ah!"

(00:20:11):

And yeah, two years later, it just ended up being such a passion project of mine that I poured everything into, and I really felt like it captured the heart of my content, but created a new perspective and a new audience. But then it was also not just about dwarfism because I know there are a lot of dwarfism books, and unfortunately they just don't do that well because there aren't that many little people in the world.

(00:20:38):

And so I'm like, "Okay, well, if we do it from a perspective of just a regular dude, me, but then it's still the same story though of I don't fit. They feel like they don't fit, and then we can correlate the two." And then it was a magical and stressful process, for sure, but-

**Keith Casebonne (00:20:59):**

Yeah, I think magical's a good way of putting it though. And you mentioned Dr. Seuss-ish kind of rhymes. I hadn't even thought about it until you said that, but then I started thinking in my head, like the cadence of the book, and I'm like, "It really did have kind of a Dr. Seuss feel to it," which I mean, I think to replicate that is amazing and just takes a lot of talent. So amazing and good job.

**Peet Montzingo (00:21:24):**

Well, I'm glad you said that because a big reason we were having a hard time with settling for a deal with publishers is because they all wanted us to not do the Dr. Seuss thing.

**Keith Casebonne (00:21:34):**

Really? Interesting.

**Peet Montzingo (00:21:35):**

They said, "It won't sell anymore. People don't like rhymes. It's cringe," the whole thing.

**Keith Casebonne (00:21:40):**

Huh.

**Peet Montzingo (00:21:40):**

And I'm like, "Well, I'm sticking with it because F you."

**Keith Casebonne (00:21:44):**

I think it's great. And again, it's for kids. That's what helps make it engaging for a kid is that it has that rhythm and rhyme to it, I would think. I mean, I'm not a book publisher, I'm not a writer per se, but I mean, I don't know. To me, it's common sense. That's really interesting that that's the feedback you got.

**Peet Montzingo (00:21:59):**

Right? Yah.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:22:01):**

And I think it also comes from your musicality background as well because you're musical, so of course it's going to flow-

**Keith Casebonne** (00:22:07):

It's got a lyric-y... Yeah.

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:22:08):

... and a rhyme to it. Absolutely.

**Peet Montzingo** (00:22:10):

Right. This is so interesting. Anyways.

**Keith Casebonne** (00:22:13):

It really is, it really is.

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:22:13):

Well, coming from the opposite perspective as the only little person in my family, I loved the book. We talked about how we read it, we covered it last season. We do a segment, we call it our Deep Dive, where we talk about films and movies and that's how we covered it then, and we loved it.

**Peet Montzingo** (00:22:31):

Oh my gosh.

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:22:31):

And it resonates with so many people. So have you heard from readers or your followers who say that your work and your content has changed how they see themselves and see others and can maybe share a comment or a moment with us?

**Peet Montzingo** (00:22:49):

Yeah, I mean, it's just honestly been overwhelming. And this isn't just with the book, but I would say just advocacy in general or just with my content when it has to do with my family, I am actually genuinely surprised how many people, one, didn't even know that little people existed, which is crazy; two, how many people have never seen a little person; Three, how many people feel like they were seen for the first time who are little people who

didn't know any little people, people who... It's like The Grinch. Some people literally in my DMS are, or even on reviews on Amazon or whatever for the book, you can see, it feels like their heart grew three times. It's like they were like a troll, but it was like the curse was broken. You know?

**Jodi Beckstine (00:23:40):**

Yeah.

**Peet Montzingo (00:23:40):**

It was weird. I feel like there's something about my content and the book that helped make people see dwarfism in a different way. And I also think I realized a lot of it is that people who are advocates for dwarfism are usually little people themselves. And I think part of it helps that I am not a little person because then these people feel like they can relate with me and then be like, "Oh, little people are people." It's like, "Oh my God, you guys. Seriously? Ah!"

(00:24:17):

And then also just having ginger hair, I think all these elements, it's just I think people look at it and read the book and look at my content and can just be like, "Oh, he definitely is kind of different himself, but he's relatable. Oh my God, he has a little person family. Okay, life is life-ing." And then we don't have to be so discriminative and judgmental. You know?

**Jodi Beckstine (00:24:48):**

Mm-hmm.

**Peet Montzingo (00:24:49):**

I just think it's making people more human, I guess.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:24:53):**

Well, I will say after seeing your content at the conference, the LPA conference, I have not been, because I've been very nervous to go because I don't have any little people friends really. I've met a few.

**Peet Montzingo (00:25:06):**

Oh my God! You have to go! What are you doing? It's so fun.

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:25:11):

I didn't even go to the one that was in Orlando and I lived in Orlando at the time because I got too nervous because I felt like they know each other and they've been together for years, and I'm just going to step in and no one's going to want me there.

**Peet Montzingo** (00:25:23):

Listen-

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:25:24):

But I saw how great it was and I saw how much I'm missing, so I'm probably going to go to next year.

**Peet Montzingo** (00:25:30):

Are you really?

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:25:30):

Because of your content, yes. Because I felt safe with it.

**Peet Montzingo** (00:25:32):

Oh my God! Well, I better see you there.

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:25:35):

I will, I will. I'll look you up.

**Peet Montzingo** (00:25:37):

Please do.

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:25:39):

And then your mom and I can thirst over Peter together.

**Keith Casebonne** (00:25:43):

Oh, jeez.

**Peet Montzingo** (00:25:43):

Don't get her started because you guys will be up till 4:00 AM.

**Keith Casebonne** (00:25:46):

Oh, gosh.

**Peet Montzingo** (00:25:48):

Oh my gosh. That makes me so happy too.

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:25:51):

Good.

**Peet Montzingo** (00:25:51):

Because listen, I'm the one, I feel like, that it's like, "Why am I going?" You know?

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:25:58):

Yeah.

**Peet Montzingo** (00:25:58):

At least you can do all the things there.

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:25:59):

That's true, that's true.

**Peet Montzingo** (00:26:00):

They don't let me, so.

**Keith Casebonne** (00:26:04):

Wow, wow. All right. Well, I'll hold her to it. I'll make sure she goes.

**Peet Montzingo** (00:26:10):

You better.

**Keith Casebonne** (00:26:10):

I don't know how. I don't know. Well, all right, so as Jodi alluded to earlier, we do a segment on our show called Deep Cut where we talk about a book, a film, a show, a song, any media that we connected with, we wanted to talk about, and share our thoughts on the show. So we also like to ask our guests, is there something like that, some piece of media that's connected with you lately? What would be yours and why?

**Peet Montzingo (00:26:40):**

Okay, so something I've just resonated with?

**Jodi Beckstine (00:26:43):**

Mm-hmm.

**Keith Casebonne (00:26:43):**

Yeah, like a book, a song, a movie, something that maybe is on your mind.

**Peet Montzingo (00:26:47):**

Oh, God. Okay. Oh, God, this is so embarrassing and I apologize in advance.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:26:50):**

No!

**Keith Casebonne (00:26:51):**

No, there's-

**Peet Montzingo (00:26:52):**

No, I mean, you guys are going to be like, "Oh my God." Okay, so it is KPop Demon Hunters.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:26:58):**

Yes! Absolutely. Absolutely.

**Keith Casebonne (00:26:58):**

That's okay.

**Peet Montzingo (00:27:00):**

Do you love it?

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:27:02):

Yes!

**Peet Montzingo** (00:27:03):

I know all the songs.

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:27:03):

Absolutely.

**Peet Montzingo** (00:27:04):

It's changed my life. The message and the meaning, I don't know, I've read into it.

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:27:09):

No, that's great. That's a great one.

**Keith Casebonne** (00:27:11):

I have never-

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:27:12):

Why does it resonate with you?

**Keith Casebonne** (00:27:14):

Yes. Why?

**Peet Montzingo** (00:27:15):

You've never seen it?

**Keith Casebonne** (00:27:17):

Okay. All right. I hadn't heard of it until the Saturday Night Live sketch that I just saw, whatever it was, last week about it. And I was like, "What is this?" I didn't get it at all because I've never... So all right, yeah, now I have homework.

**Peet Montzingo (00:27:30):**

You do, because I wasn't going to go. I got invited to a sing-along in a theater and my manager was like, "Go." And I'm like, "KPop Demon Hunters?" I'm like, "This sounds so stupid." And then I get there and it's just like I'm like, "Okay, what is this animation?" And, "Okay, I've wasted my time, for sure."

(00:27:49):

And then five minutes in, I'm hooked on the edge of my seat. I'm like-

**Keith Casebonne (00:27:53):**

Oh, gosh.

**Peet Montzingo (00:27:53):**

It captured my whole attention. It's so relatable. I'm like, "Oh my God. I'm the main character," and everyone can feel like they're the main character. You know? It's just...

**Jodi Beckstine (00:28:00):**

Yes!

**Keith Casebonne (00:28:03):**

Oh, wow. All right. Okay.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:28:04):**

Keith, you're going to be singing it. You're going to come to work on Monday singing Golden. I can feel it.

**Keith Casebonne (00:28:09):**

Oh, God.

**Peet Montzingo (00:28:09):**

Come on, Keith.

**Keith Casebonne (00:28:11):**

All right. All right, all right. I'll check it out.

**Peet Montzingo (00:28:12):**

Spread the gold.

**Keith Casebonne (00:28:12):**

I'll check it out. I'll check it out.

**Peet Montzingo (00:28:14):**

The Honmoon.

**Keith Casebonne (00:28:16):**

Oh, gosh.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:28:17):**

Oh, gosh.

**Keith Casebonne (00:28:18):**

Nice.

**Peet Montzingo (00:28:18):**

Oh, God.

**Keith Casebonne (00:28:19):**

All right, all right. Well, good. I'm glad. Hey, I learned something. I'm going to learn more about it and I'm going to check it out. Pretty cool. Oh my gosh.

**Peet Montzingo (00:28:27):**

I'm so embarrassed.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:28:28):**

Don't be embarrassed. That's fantastic. I think it's great.

**Keith Casebonne (00:28:31):**

No, I should be the embarrassed one because I don't know anything about it and you guys are both just like, "Oh my God." And I'm like, "Huh?" So I should be the one that should be embarrassed.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:28:37):**

Yeah, you have two Taurus banging up on you now for not seeing it before.

**Keith Casebonne (00:28:40):**

Right, right, right.

**Peet Montzingo (00:28:40):**

Oh my God. You're a Taurus too?

**Jodi Beckstine (00:28:42):**

Yes.

**Peet Montzingo (00:28:44):**

I knew I liked you.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:28:45):**

That's why you and I, yep.

**Keith Casebonne (00:28:45):**

There we go. All right.

**Peet Montzingo (00:28:46):**

Sorry, Keith.

**Keith Casebonne (00:28:50):**

It's all good. Oh, that's hilarious. Oh, gosh. All right. This has been such a fun conversation.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:28:55):**

Yes.

**Keith Casebonne (00:28:56):**

Yeah. Thank you so much, Peet, for spending time with us. This has been a blast and learned so much about you and apparently myself in the process. So anyway, thanks so much. We really appreciate your time today.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:29:11):**

Absolutely.

**Peet Montzingo (00:29:12):**

Yeah, thank you, guys. Keep advocating out there and I better see you at LPA next year.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:29:18):**

Yes, you will. I'll look you up.

**Peet Montzingo (00:29:19):**

Perfect.

**Keith Casebonne (00:29:19):**

Absolutely.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:29:19):**

Thanks.

**Keith Casebonne (00:29:19):**

All right.

**Peet Montzingo (00:29:22):**

Thank you!

**Keith Casebonne (00:29:27):**

Stay tuned. This week's Deep Cut is coming up.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:29:32):**

Before we start this week's Deep Cut, a quick content note. In discussing the film *Cyrano* and its language, we will quote a derogatory term for people with dwarfism once in context. You will hear the word exactly one time. We do not endorse it. It is a slur.

**Keith Casebonne (00:29:48):**

Today we're talking about *Cyrano*, a 2021 musical film directed by Joe Wright, starring Peter Dinklage, Haley Bennett, and Kelvin Harrison Jr. The title character, Cyrano de Bergerac, is a brilliant soldier and poet who believes he is unlovable, but loves Roxanne. And Christian is a sincere young soldier who also loves Roxanne, but lacks the eloquence she craves. He asks Cyrano to give him the words because Roxanne expects poetry. Cyrano supplies that poetry in letters from the shadows, letting Christian speak with a borrowed voice until the truth becomes impossible to hold.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:30:24):**

Most versions lean on the famous prosthetic nose as a symbol of unworthiness. The adaptation removes the fake nose and casts Peter Dinklage without prosthetics. The script briefly acknowledges prejudice on screen, and then turns the camera inward with intimate songs and close-up performances.

**Keith Casebonne (00:30:43):**

Yeah, and the promise is that it shifts the conflict from "the body is the problem" to "the belief about the body is the problem." It is this idea that changes how this classic story is framed.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:30:57):**

There's also a hazard. Most audiences are conditioned to treat visible differences as the issue. They may substitute dwarfism for the missing nose even when the film tells them not to. Today we want to talk about whether the movie makes that shift.

**Keith Casebonne (00:31:15):**

Yeah, yeah, definitely a challenge. And let's see if they're up to it. So letters, longing, sword fights, and the risk of being truly known, that's *Cyrano*. So let's begin.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:31:26):**

Okay. So Keith, does removing the prosthetic nose genuinely move the conflict from body to belief, or does the audience, are they still conditioned to pull the viewers back to body is the problem?

**Keith Casebonne** (00:31:43):

Yeah, I mean, that's honestly the biggest question I think of the film. I mean, did it accomplish that?

(00:31:50):

You know, it's hard to say because I feel like... So when I watched the movie, I didn't have a lot of context. I knew the story of Cyrano de Bergerac, and I knew the classic interpretation of the long, silly nose, and so the guy just, he thinks he's ugly and so on. And we talked obviously a little bit before watching this, and it was like, "Well, we don't want this to be dwarfism equals this ugliness that they referenced like the play is about. That's awful. That's not good."

(00:32:25):

So we went into it, and you'd seen it before, I hadn't seen it, so I went into it not really knowing what to expect and you can't help it. I mean, there's Peter Dinklage in the main role, and obviously he's a little person, and you see that. There he is.

(00:32:43):

So the first conclusion you come to is, "Well, is that the stand-in? Is that what they're trying to convey?" And yeah, they talk about it in the beginning, but it's really not... I mean, once the movie gets going, I don't know. In my mind, I kind of forgot. I didn't really think of it that way. But it's a challenge, I guess, for some viewers to make that separation.

(00:33:14):

So did the removal of the prosthetic nose change everything? I think it made it real. The nose is silly and it's comical. Whereas this is real life, there are many, many real people who will have the same internal fears, disability or not, have those internal fears of just, "Am I good enough? Am I attractive enough? Am I smart enough?"

(00:33:52):

And so I think it's funny, this just popped in my head at this moment, one thing that doesn't come up a lot is the other guy, Christian. Christian is also not confident in himself. So he's a handsome guy, traditionally whatever, handsome, but he's not well-spoken, and that's

making him not confident enough. So I think people forget that side of it, and they only think about the physical, but there's many reasons why someone could have low self-confidence or not feel good enough, and so I think that doesn't get talked about as much. We think about the silly nose or whatever, whatever issue it is that they're trying to convey that might be a physical difference.

(00:34:44):

Yeah, I mean, there's more to it than that.

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:34:48):

Yeah, I understand where they're coming from. I see what the filmmaker is trying to say. But as a person with dwarfism, that's the first thing that happened to me. And that's the first thing I noticed. When I saw the trailer for the first time, I was like, "Oh, God, they replaced ugliness with dwarfism. Oh, this is not good."

(00:35:14):

I got into it and settled in with the idea of what they were trying to say about it being more of an internalized thing, and you bringing up Christian is definitely the point. He has his own internalized things about himself that makes him feel unworthy to speak to Roxanne. So both of those men are dealing with that for different reasons. And I think you're right, people do forget they're only focusing on Cyrano's difference and Cyrano's issues and Cyrano's self-loathing, and not Christian's.

(00:35:49):

But again, as a person with dwarfism, I just really had a hard time bridging that external to internal. But I did eventually settle down, and I watched it again a second time knowing we were doing this. With that in mind, and you had pointed out some interviews with Peter and I got to see where he was coming from in the role, that helped a little bit, having that context now with what they were trying to say and then being able to see it in what they did with the movie.

(00:36:24):

So I'm not sure, I don't think audiences are dumb. I think they're pretty smart and savvy, and I think most people probably were able to go on that ride and their mind change a little bit over the course of the movie, or at least I'd hope. I'd like to think that that happens.

**Keith Casebonne** (00:36:47):

Yeah. Yeah, I agree. And I think it was filmed in a way to focus less on his physical stature and more on the feelings that he's feeling, for lack of a better way of putting it. There's close-ups, you see the struggle in his expression on his face and things like that. And it's not so much focused on, "Oh, I'm a little person, and oh, woe is me." They take that... I don't know. They try to shift the focus away from that as they film it. So yeah, it's interesting.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:37:28):**

It's definitely not the Steve Martin version where there was lots of gags and jokes. It had its few moments, and then it just wasn't brought up anymore, and you zoomed in on Cyrano and stayed there.

**Keith Casebonne (00:37:45):**

Right, right, right. Yeah, yeah. So I mean, ultimately the question is, was it successful? I think in part, and I think it's good to leave it to the viewer to think about it and process it. And maybe you first watch it and you see it one way, and then as you think about it later, you see it another way. And that's fine too. You can take time and think it through. You know?

**Jodi Beckstine (00:38:16):**

Yeah, yeah.

**Keith Casebonne (00:38:17):**

You don't have to make a decision about everything within the span of a two-plus-hour movie. Yeah, I think overall there's some success there.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:38:29):**

Yeah, it says a lot for a movie when you can go back and watch it a second or third time and get something different from it or gain a new perspective. So that says a lot for me as how well the movie was made.

**Keith Casebonne (00:38:42):**

Yeah, for sure, for sure. Well, the film includes one instance of a slur framed as self-loathing. Does it include help or harm the interior shift?

**Jodi Beckstine (00:38:54):**

Okay, so let's get the line out of the way.

**Keith Casebonne** (00:38:58):

Yeah, settle down, everyone. Here we go. Yeah.

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:39:01):

Yeah. Cyrano says, "The world will never accept a midget and a tall, beautiful woman."

(00:39:07):

So again, I can only speak from my own experience, but I hear that word constantly. I've said this before in other episodes, we have this running joke in my family. We have a little bit of a dark humor side that it's our M-word of the day because I pretty much hear it in some context every single day. I'll hear it in a movie or TV show, morning radio shows, the shock jocks really like to use it a lot, and people will even say it to my face out and about grocery shopping, doing whatever.

(00:39:43):

So every single time, I've had it happen for years and years and years, I won't say how old I am, but it's a gut punch every time I hear it. It hits me physically when I do, and you can brace for it, but you never get used to it.

(00:40:02):

So when it came up in the movie, I felt both those things at once, the sting of hearing it, but also understanding that it's written into the show to show how deeply he's internalized society's cruelty. He's not hating on anyone in the moment. He's turning that hatred on himself. He's using it against himself.

(00:40:29):

But what makes it complicated for me was that the filmmakers are trying to hold a mirror up to prejudice through this film, and for those who live with that word constantly being thrown at us, it's not neutral. It's got impact. But I think if they avoided it and acted like that word doesn't exist in Cyrano's world and the real world, I think it would've been dishonest to dance around it. And by taking away the comical nose and placing them into this real space, I think it's important that it was there because that's a true lived thing that happens to people with dwarfism.

(00:41:21):

I think people maybe can bring from it that that word is unacceptable, but still being used flippantly in our society. I make the comment that dwarfism is one of those things where it's still acceptable to make fun of. There's other things, other communities that if someone were to make a joke, people are like, "Ooh, wouldn't say that," or, "oh, you're not supposed," but when it's a dwarf joke, it's funny, just automatically, "Ha, ha ha."

(00:41:53):

So I don't know, it was difficult to hear, but I'm glad they didn't harp on it. I'm glad they didn't use it all the time. I'm glad it wasn't, "Here's the whole thing about dwarfism in act one and now let's bring it all back up in act two. And here it is again." It kind of just, "This is it. It's in your face. We're going to talk about it and now we're going to live the story." So I appreciated that. So it's a mixed bag.

**Keith Casebonne** (00:42:23):

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, that makes sense. And the fact that he says that as a term of self-loathing, while I mean, either way it's a slur, either way it can cause harm, but I think it's at least a somewhat marginally better than if someone else said it referring to him just a little. I mean, not a lot. It matters either way. It carries the same weight, right?

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:42:53):

Mm-hmm.

**Keith Casebonne** (00:42:53):

But I'm glad that it wasn't an insult someone else said to him. He gets insulted earlier in the movie. Someone refers to him as a freak. And his response, I love the response, "The insult is antique, but I accept it." I love that. I love that.

(00:43:11):

So he gets insulted, but no one ever uses that word outside of himself so he has the ownership, in a sense, factor, I guess, that can give it a little bit of the difference. So I'm really glad that they decided if they're going to say the word, that's how they did it and not with someone else saying it.

(00:43:31):

I remember when I first heard it in the movie. I mean, I sat up. I was very surprised. And I wondered too if it had to do with the timeframe, like the setting of the movie because I

don't know what terminology was common back then. I know words change over time, and I don't know if that's... Was the word dwarfism... I mean, I mean, I don't know. I mean, I have no idea.

(00:43:59):

So that's where my brain first went, but then as I sat with it, I thought, "No, I think it's the weight." I think it's just to really make it... It's strong and it's powerful and it hurts, and I think that's the point.

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:44:12):

Yeah, and it's interesting that other people have things to say about him, but the most biting, the most cutting, the deepest wound was brought on himself. He reserved that. They reserved that moment for him to do to himself, which made it even more cutting. I can't imagine saying that about myself. You know?

**Keith Casebonne** (00:44:33):

Sure, sure, sure.

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:44:33):

I have moments where I don't feel empowered and wonderful and great, but I would never, just saying that to myself is so biting and cutting. So it's very interesting that they chose that word solely for him to say, and everyone else has versions of it and whatever. But that's his. And he took power of it and sadly used it against himself.

**Keith Casebonne** (00:44:58):

Agreed, yeah.

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:45:00):

So speaking of him, what do you think of his performance as Cyrano? Did his portrayal in the film's framing challenge your expectations about the character or about disability on screen?

**Keith Casebonne** (00:45:16):

Yeah, I think so. I think, well, first of all, Peter Dinklage is a great actor. He's just an amazing actor. He gives a very complex and charismatic performance for, I mean, almost any role

he's ever done. He's great at that. He wears his emotions well on his sleeve. His acting is powerful. And I think that, again, that same sort of complex and emotionally resonant performance, it helps move the story away from being silly and a spectacle and the guy with the prosthetic nose toward the real world, toward humanity.

(00:45:57):

So yeah, I think that was great, and I think I love that he... Oh, and some of the research we did on this, this was a stage play before it was a film. I didn't know that. It happened to be written by his wife, but not for Peter Dinklage. Peter Dinklage read it, loved it, and asked to do it. He was like, "I want this role."

(00:46:21):

So it's interesting that he... Something about it resonated with him and I think he brings that to the screen. I mean, I haven't seen the live play. I've seen clips and, well, in research, but I mean, he looked great, but obviously it's a full body of work. I've only seen the film. But you can feel it. He seems like he's really feeling his feelings there, acting. But it looked... I don't know. A lot of actors bring that realism into their role, and I feel like maybe he did.

(00:46:57):

But I had mentioned earlier they did some more close-ups, so you see more of his face and his expressions than his stature. And so maybe moving the focus away from the physical disability to just what I'm feeling in my head. So I think that all influenced the viewer's perception of what he's thinking and how he feels.

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:47:24):

Yeah, I think it's very interesting how he came about in the role. It wasn't a typical Hollywood, "We have a disabled person. We have this funny elf role. We have this whatever. Let's get someone with dwarfism," that you normally hear about.

(00:47:41):

He came to the role and honestly wanting to play it for himself. He saw something in the screenplay, in the script that he felt that he could bring to the film with his acting, and that I appreciated. I didn't know that prior to seeing the film the first time. And once again, pleasantly surprised with how that came about.

(00:48:07):

So I think that you're correct. He came into filming this movie with the idea of the internal workings of Cyrano, the internal self-loathing he has, and how to display that through his acting, through his face, through his movements, not him standing off to the distance with all these tall people and "look at the guy, look at the guy" that you typically would think, so I agree. I think he did a phenomenal job in this role.

**Keith Casebonne (00:48:49):**

Awesome, awesome. So how do you feel about seeing Peter Dinklage as Cyrano, a disabled actor in a romantic heroic lead, and how do you think that landed with the little people community?

**Jodi Beckstine (00:49:02):**

Well, for me, seeing someone with dwarfism playing a lead role that isn't comical, that isn't a dwarf, an Ewok, it was great to see a leading role. He carried the movie, which is rare. I think the only other time it was something that substantial where the person wasn't in a costume was Willow, where the dwarf community or little person community, they had their own things that it wasn't based in comedy.

(00:49:39):

So that was amazing for me, but it stirred mixed emotions, and I think for me as well as the community, that the idea of love is unreachable because of how you look because that's your first instinct when you see it. Again, it comes back to replacing the nose with a person with dwarfism. That's still there and I think it changes over watching the movie, but that's your first five minutes, or watching the trailer or hearing about the movie, I think that's instinctual, at least for me as a person with dwarfism. I'm always looking at, when I see that there's a dwarf cast for something, I'm always like, "How are they being represented?" And I'm always looking to be disappointed, unfortunately.

**Keith Casebonne (00:50:31):**

Right, Unfortunately.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:50:34):**

But I don't think he played his dwarfism as a weakness. I think his issue was all internal, self-inflicted, self-loathing that he had. Yes, it was based on external things like society, but I think his biggest problem was himself. So I liked that.

(00:51:00):

Hoping that the audience doesn't equate disability or a disabled character, their difference is the tragedy, that trope is always disability is a tragedy, or disability is inspirational. And it's hard. It's hard because that's what most storytelling is. Most storytelling, narrative storytelling is about blank happened and it's tragic, or blank happened and a good thing and it's inspirational. So it's hard not to just fall into that groove in those lines.

(00:51:39):

But I do want to say that I hope soon that women with dwarfism will start getting these leads and these roles because for me personally, I see the same two or three men being cast in these things, and they're opening doors. They are bridging the gap, but the women are being left behind. They're not being cast in things.

**Keith Casebonne** (00:52:08):

Good point.

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:52:08):

So I'm hoping that comes down the pipe soon because I would really like to see a woman with dwarfism in a role that she's empowered by and she leads and she is considered beautiful and worthy.

**Keith Casebonne** (00:52:28):

Absolutely, absolutely. That's wonderful. Yeah, I'm glad you brought that up. Yeah, no, I agree. He's the romantic heroic lead. They make it very clear that he's an excellent fighter, swordsman. He's strong, he's smart, he's obviously well-spoken. I mean, he is such an intelligent and strong, amazing person that, I mean, to me, it doesn't take long to see him as just he's the valiant, amazing lead. And I love that.

(00:53:10):

And I feel like if you just let yourself get into the film and enjoy it, then you don't have to worry too much about... Sometimes the audience does that defect hunting and they're looking for something to equate with a difference or a problem or this or that, and I think the film does the best it can to put that aside. And so him as the lead, I think it's brilliant. I think he comes across as just as amazing as, I mean, anyone could. You know?

**Jodi Beckstine** (00:53:50):

Mm-hmm.

**Keith Casebonne (00:53:51):**

He's out there fighting 10 men at once and just kicking butt and then writing the most beautiful, poetic... I don't know. To me, I'm just like, "It's just another guy. And he's amazing and it's great." Anyway, yeah, I agree with you a hundred percent.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:54:09):**

So big question, and you had mentioned this when we first started talking about it. How do you feel about Cyrano being a musical? Do you think it helped or hindered the core message of the film?

**Keith Casebonne (00:54:23):**

So that's actually a really good question because I'm not a huge musical guy myself. I don't hate all of them flatly. I mean, there's some very good musicals out there, but I had no idea it was a musical. And so when they first started singing, I was like, "Oh, it's a musical. Oh." It maybe just put my head like, "Oh, no, I have to watch a musical," but it's fine. No.

(00:54:48):

But I like how... I mean, so I actually think it helps. We were talking about his emotional vulnerability and who he is as a person and how he's feeling inside and trying to take the focus away from that he's a little person, and I actually think making it a musical, again, the script was written before he was cast, so it wasn't done intentionally for this reason, but I think what ends up happening is the songs, again, they take you away from thinking of, "What is the issue? What is the physical issue or whatever that's the problem here? Where's the prosthetic nose?" And turning it into emotion and feeling, because whether you love musicals or not, you can really express emotion in song in a different way than you can through not singing, through just speaking.

(00:55:55):

So in a way, I think the fact that it was a musical, I think helped advance the story, actually. And it's done a little bit more of a modern way. I mean, Peter Dinklage is not a singer per se. He does not have the world's greatest voice or anything like that. But that's, again, I think the point is that it makes it more real. He's not out there fighting the bad guys and then suddenly bust's into operatic, amazing << ooh >> performance. It's just, hey, it's this guy singing and it's kind of nice in a refreshing way.

(00:56:47):

So yeah, I think it worked and it helped to express how he's really feeling inside. Some of the quieter, softer songs really show the emotion. And I don't know, I liked that approach in the end. I think for what the movie is trying to do, I think it worked.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:57:11):**

I think nothing is more vulnerable than having to sing in front of people, especially when you're not a singer. You know?

**Keith Casebonne (00:57:20):**

Yep, yep.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:57:21):**

And I think that brought such a delicateness to some of his real raw emotions and some of the softer parts of the film was this vulnerability, not only as an actor, but now as a singer and putting that all together. And they weren't, like you were saying, they're not these big, Broadway, belting, dance numbers with plates spinning and all sorts of stuff. It was just sometimes the most delicate way, the most gut-wrenching way to say something is to sing it, is to have that music come across.

(00:58:06):

So I was pleasantly surprised. I didn't know either. I would never have dubbed him as a singer. The biggest thing I knew him from was Tyrion from Game of Thrones and you would never think about Tyrion singing, except that one part where he comes into the big throne room. There's a meme of him doing a little joke singing. But other than that, I would never have thought about him being a singer. So I think it really just brought some... made him fragile in moments and vulnerable, and I appreciated it a lot.

**Keith Casebonne (00:58:43):**

Yes, same. Yeah.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:58:46):**

So today we dug into representation and performance and how stories can challenge what we see as the problem with the body or belief.

**Keith Casebonne (00:58:55):**

The work isn't just what's on screen. It's how we watch, what we bring as viewers, and what we ask of storytellers next.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:59:02):**

Progress isn't clean, but these conversations move us somewhere better

**Keith Casebonne (00:59:06):**

Indeed. Thanks for being a part of it.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:59:12):**

That's it for this episode of Disability Deep Dive. A huge thank you to Peet Montzingo for joining us and sharing his story with honesty, humor, and heart.

**Keith Casebonne (00:59:20):**

Yeah. Peet reminds us that growing up different isn't about limitations. It's about finding your place, owning your story, and inviting others to see difference as something worth celebrating.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:59:31):**

If you enjoyed this conversation, make sure to subscribe, leave us a review, and share it with someone who would benefit from hearing it.

**Keith Casebonne (00:59:38):**

And you can find Peet's book, *Little Imperfections: A Tall Tale of Growing Up Different*, wherever books are sold, and follow all his latest projects on social media. We'll see you next time.

**Jodi Beckstine (00:59:49):**

Disability Deep Dive is a podcast that is brought to you by Disability Rights Florida, where real conversations about life, culture, and ideas meet the lived disability experience. Follow us on YouTube, Spotify, and wherever you get your podcasts. You can also find us at [disabilityrightsflorida.org/podcast](https://disabilityrightsflorida.org/podcast).