

# Murray Hill

[00:00:00] **Wanda:** Welcome to Sundays at Café Tabac, the podcast. This podcast series is an extension of our film's mission to firm and extol the courage, strength and joy in our LGBTQ plus community through the perservation and sharing of our personal stories and the collective histories we live through and change. I'm your host, Wanda Acosta.

In this episode, we welcome the hardest working man in showbiz, Mr. Murray Hill. Murray is a New York City queer legend, a comedian, a TV host, an mc, and an international entertainer. Wow, this is gonna be fun. So buckle up your seatbelts folks. I am so damn excited to welcome to the studio the hardest working man in showbiz, Mr.

Murray Hill.

[00:01:01] **Murray:** Murray! Please hold your applause till now, everybody.

[00:01:04] **Wanda:** Murray Hill is a New York City comedian and drag king legend. He's currently playing Fred Rococo, would you say? Is that the right? Yep. Fred Rococo. On the HBO series Somebody Somewhere with Bridget Everett. And is the host of the competition show Drag Me to Dinner on Hulu.

First time we got some drag king hosting a 2000 years later series. And soon you'll be seeing Murray in Paul Feig's film Grand Death Lotto. I'm so happy to see you here, Marie. It's been years.

[00:01:37] **Murray:** Wanda, that's the most on the book I've ever heard you as long as I've known you. It, you know, for your listeners out there, I only ever knew of you from 11pm on till 4am.

So it's great that we're both seeing each other during the day. I know,

[00:01:54] **Wanda:** I dragged you. One of you the best. I dragged you out, I can't believe it. And I remember

[00:01:58] **Murray:** you from the Wonder Bar. Mhmm. And then Velvet. And Starlight. And Starlight, and then Café de Beck, which I didn't know you when I went there. You didn't know me then.

No, I was a little tiny little baby butch looking at all the fans going, Oh my god, it's Christmas morning every Sunday.

[00:02:18] **Wanda:** Oh, you must have been a hoot back then. I don't know that I remember you either from... Well, no, I do remember you. I do remember you. I was young. I

[00:02:24] **Murray:** had cheekbones. You were young. You were young and you

[00:02:28] **Wanda:** were running for mayor.

Yeah, that was a long time ago. Right? When did you run for mayor?

[00:02:33] **Murray:** What year was that? I recently looked back. I think it was 94 or something

[00:02:39] **Wanda:** like that. So it was like right after tobacco. 95. Because tobacco 92, 93, 94. So it was right along the... So I

[00:02:46] **Murray:** got in there at the end. Yeah, I remember going in there. Oh my goodness.

And being like, ooooh, I've never seen these kind of homosexual ladies in my upbringing and this is, I could do

[00:02:57] **Wanda:** this. So we've known each other quite a while. And

[00:03:00] **Murray:** we were just saying. Can you do the math on that? What,

[00:03:02] **Wanda:** twenty something? I know. At least almost thirty years. Or twenty eight years. Twenty eight years.

Well. We're doing great. We're doing great. And congratulations, you're doing amazing. What? What a year

[00:03:14] **Murray:** you've had. Wanda, it's 30 years in overnight success. I know,

[00:03:20] **Wanda:** it's crazy. But you've been, I mean, you've put in the time. You have been working, and God bless, because, you know, it's, it's really easy

to just say, you know what, this ain't happening, I'm gonna move on to something else.

But you have stuck to it, and you're great at it, and finally, Here we

[00:03:35] **Murray:** are. Thank God! Yeah, you know, you know, when I first started back in the day, when I knew you, you know, I saw such an imbalance of representation. And, you know, we didn't say things like representation and things like that. We didn't say trans, we didn't say even drag king, really, back then.

You know, I just knew that it was so, it was so imbalanced. Like, drag queens, gay men, lesbians, drag kings, I mean... Hello. Fast forward 30 years, it's not that different. It's still hugely different. Mm hmm. And then it's kind of like, well, how do you reconcile that? Because we have friends in the community, the drag community, the gay community, the trans community.

Like, we're friends, you and I especially, we cross over, we're friends with everybody. Right, right, right. So it's like, kind of figuring out, like, well... You know, I had a mission to like raise the visibility and you know, I'm still doing it.

[00:04:26] **Wanda:** I wanted to ask you because when you first started and when I first remember seeing your character as Murray Hill, it was at drag king parties or balls if you want to call them.

You would host and you would have your shtick. Did you start the drag king kind of parties or were you working in conjunction with other people and? What did you

[00:04:49] **Murray:** expect out of? Well, I started, I don't know if you remember this, I started in Flamingo East. I do remember Flamingo East. At the Nines. And it was on Sunday night.

[00:04:59] **Wanda:** The Nines was with, uh.

[00:05:01] **Murray:** Penelope Tuesday. And Fancy. Keith. It was an Adam Gold's. Yes! Yes, that's

[00:05:08] **Wanda:** right. Ed Stone as well. Right?

Adam

[00:05:10] **Murray:** passed, who passed away passed. Yes. He was in, he was in that scene. Yes, absolutely. So that's where I started. That's where Murray was literally born. Wow. And you know, after I started doing that for a little while, then there was a drag king night called Club Casanova, right over in the East Village at Cake.

Mm-hmm. . So I would, you know, This is back in the day when I used to drink Stiff Gimlets. Woo! Oh boy. Rough. So I, I would be lit, be doing, I already had done shows at like 12 o'clock, 1 o'clock in the morning. And then I would walk down to Cake and walk to, you know, we'd just walk there. And, and then do shows at two and, and three.

Wow. So, that was a, that was a set Drag King night. Right. That was like the first like weekly Drag King night I think ever. And is that when Moby Dick? Moby Dick was hosting. Yeah, that was Moby Dick. And Penny and I, the first thing we did there was like a, a John Travolta and, and um, Olivia? Olivia Newton John.

And then I played Coach Bella Carolli and she was Carrie Strug. So I was like, and then I did Fat Elvis. So I was like, so in the beginning, I was doing like characters as Murray, and then I ran for mayor, and then I just, after that I just stayed as Murray,

[00:06:26] **Wanda:** just stayed as this guy. And the influence for Murray is like that Borscht Belt sort of like comic, yeah?

Don Rickles. Yeah,

[00:06:35] **Murray:** I don't know how. I think it's the universe intervening in some ways, but you know when I was a kid I watched Johnny Carson, of course. We all did. Yeah, you know down in the basement when everybody else was in bed And you know back then in the 70s, it was all those big personalities.

Right. Like Rickles and like Shecky Green And Buddy Hackett. Buddy Hackett. He was great. Yeah, they were just these like Most of them were chubby. Uh huh. You know, Jackie Gleason, these chubby, funny, you know, kind of host of the party, kind of, you know, your drunk uncle at Thanksgiving. Uh huh. of guys. And they still had an edge, but they were like warm hearted.

Right. So I think I just like, you know, I just kind of And that's your personality. Yeah, it kind of stuck in there. Not to mention, you know, I'm half Italian. Uh

huh. I don't think I ever knew that. Yeah, well, this half, but you can't, the viewers can't, you know, they can't hear that my stomach's coming out.

But, you know, all my uncles and my grandparents and my, you know, all the relatives that you'd only see at funerals and they'd always be happy at funerals because there was all the food. Right. You know, they all look like Minnie Murries. Yeah. You know, you know, the, the, the women were hardcore, you know, rough, and the guys were these jovial, you know, these short Italian guys.

Yeah. So I kind of became that, and then I dated rough, showgirl, crazy women for most of my life. So, you know, it just, I think I absorbed it. I absorbed all of it. Right.

[00:08:07] **Wanda:** And it was useful for your material, I'm

[00:08:09] **Murray:** sure. Yeah, endless. Endless material. I'm still, still drawn from that well. But, you know, also When I was a kid, I thought I was a boy.

Like, I thought I was a tomboy. Remember that term? Oh, she's a tomboy.

[00:08:25] **Wanda:** Yeah,

[00:08:25] **Murray:** of course, that's what they said about me. They were like, oh, she's a tomboy. And I was like, okay, yeah, I like sports. And, you know, I sit with the, you know, back in elementary school, I don't know if this was your experience, but they separated everything by gender.

You know, so the girls had to sit with the girls at lunch in kindergarten, and you had to go to home ec class, and the guys got to go to shop, shop class, which is like, they build things with tools, and you wanted

[00:08:54] **Wanda:** to hang out

[00:08:54] **Murray:** with the shop class? I did! I did! In the beginning. I just did. Nobody thought about it.

I went to shop class. I, I did the tools. You know, I, I made, I made a bench, you know, and all that kind of stuff. And, you know, but I remember kind of specifically like when they were like, okay, you can't do that anymore. Right, right, right. And I was like, what? Yeah. And it happened so young. I think it was like kindergarten.

I actually, or, or even in like, You know, elementary school, I remember being like, well, how come I can't go to shop class anymore? Right. I don't want to, like, stitch a pillow. And I don't want to sit with girls, they're annoying. I know, I

[00:09:31] **Wanda:** don't want to play with dolls

[00:09:32] **Murray:** and stitch a pillow. No! You know, I like sports and, you know, all that.

That's ridiculous, right. Yeah, I was a, I was a butch, tomboy. . Yeah. So, you know, so it, it, that I think kind of caught up with me later too because, you know, I mentioned this when I walked in, but, you know, there wasn't so much ID politics or even options mm-hmm. when we were in the clubs. Clubs for the

[00:09:54] **Wanda:** language.

Right. No, it was butcher femme. That was it. Exactly. And girl or guy. Or you would call each other girl if you were a girl or a boy or

[00:10:02] **Murray:** it didn't matter. Yeah. And nobody cared 'cause it was loving. 'cause we're all on the same team. Hey girl. Yeah, hey girl. I'm like, hey, you offend me? No, never happened. Yeah, so, you know, I didn't have those options or anything like that, so I kind of became a character that was male.

Right.

[00:10:19] **Wanda:** So did you become the male character because in your everyday life it was sort of not so easy for you to be the male character?

[00:10:28] **Murray:** Well, I was always, you know, I was always in between, you know, I always felt, you know, yeah, I was like, I don't want to sit with the girls. Right. And I like the boys, but they also stink.

Literally, they smell, they still smell. Yeah, I think Murray was like an, just like a little exaggerated

[00:10:46] **Wanda:** extension of, of. How was your family with your sort of persona and your desire to expand on...

[00:10:56] **Murray:** Well, you're not going to be surprised by this. Because also, our generation, you know, we, a lot of us gay folks, we moved the fuck out of...

Our hometowns, to get out and go to the city and find our people, our chosen people, and become who we're supposed to be. So my family, I was completely estranged from them. When I left, 18, gone. Homophobic, you know, right wing, Irish Catholic, Italian alcoholic, you know, you name it. It's all there. All there.

And, um, repressed. You know, everything, conservative, just like, RARGHHHHHH All of it, yeah. So I was like, get out of here. And that's the cr this is the crazy thing, which I don't talk too much, you know I got a memoir coming out?

[00:11:43] **Wanda:** I just found out you have a memoir coming out next in 2025. Yeah, 2025.

[00:11:47] **Murray:** So I gotta get started.

I can't wait. Well, here you go. This is a good... You can start

[00:11:52] **Wanda:** practicing. Yeah. Have it come up to your, uh, psyche.

[00:11:56] **Murray:** Showbiz. But, you ready for this? So, when I was an undergrad in Boston, Right. I was starting to come to, so to speak. You know, I came out as gay, right? Right. And

[00:12:07] **Wanda:** eh, eh, eh, eh. Imposted. Uh huh. Yeah.

[00:12:09] **Murray:** Where'd you grow up, though? Connecticut. Ugh. Oh, okay. Ugh.

I was a photography student, and I snuck into the clubs in Boston. I was a child. I knew nothing about anything. But I was obsessed with Diane Arbus and Nan Goldin. Nice. You know, so I came from a very sheltered place, so I started studying them. And I was like, what? What's this community? Who are these people?

And they were celebrated. Like, Nan Goldin and Diane Arbus, they, Photographed like people on the margins, but they were their friends and they were they were like respected, right? So anyway, I was fascinated by the drag

community in the trans community I used to lie and say I was a reporter for the Boston Phoenix To get into the clubs.

Oh, are you ready for this? I'm gonna drop on you. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, the gay clubs are on Commonwealth Avenue Uh huh. I can't remember. It's called V. It's called Venus the mile or something like that. Uh huh Anyway, guess who I have photographs of from back then. Lady Bunny. No way! Girlina. Oh, wow. Candice Cain.

From way back then, because they were performing there? Yes, they were doing gigs. Wow. Can you believe that? And then, I always say this when I'm talking about that, they were old then. And they're still alive. They're still working. And now they're all like, you know, dinosaurs. Yeah. And they were dinosaurs when I met them back then.

And now, I knew all of them. Bunny, hearing that? Yeah. She can't hear you because she's got the hearing aid turned off. They shadow banned her on Instagram for all of her Crazy posts. They did .

[00:13:48] **Wanda:** She's not hearing this. She's not hearing or seeing anything.

[00:13:51] **Murray:** No. So, you know, it's wild that it was like full circle is so, so that influenced me so much.

'cause I was like, oh my god. It like that's when I got like sucked into camp. So did you make friends with

[00:14:02] **Wanda:** them in Boston or are you just photographing them and then later on in New York you met up? They

[00:14:07] **Murray:** wouldn't have it. Yeah. One of my favorite pictures I've ever taken is of lip synica. And she was mean and nasty backstage.

And I don't blame her, because, you know, I probably had a bob haircut. You know, I deserved, yeah, I deserved any wrath that came my way. You had a bob. You had the wig. I might have. I, who knows. It just wasn't, probably overalls, you know, cheekbones. I'd be, hey, can I take your pony? You know, she, she was just like, Over it.

But she was so annoyed at me, you only have a quick second. Oh, that you got her face? No, I got this picture of her just looking absolutely regal, and it's like



my favorite shot that I've ever taken. Oh, wow. Like, ever. She was in costume. Yeah. So awesome. She she, you know, she just looked...

[00:14:51] **Wanda:** She must look wonderful.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah.

[00:14:54] **Murray:** I love that. You know, in Candace and Gerlina, I couldn't believe how wild they were. Yeah. You know, they, they used to like jump all over the place and do splits. They would do splits.

[00:15:02] **Wanda:** The legs were all huge. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Do you they were? Long, long legs and doing splits and

[00:15:08] **Murray:** kicks. Yeah.

No, I'm, I have a picture of her. I'll send you these. I have a picture of Gerlina and Candace doing high kicks. Yeah. You know, and I'm like, I know you can't tell that on the podcast, but you know, that's, I'm like way underneath the legs looking up, photographing so that you just see the leg.

[00:15:27] **Wanda:** So your first career was a photographer and doing any, doing the clubs in Boston.

[00:15:31] **Murray:** I love it. And that's how I got to New York. And I was like, I'm going to do this in New York. I'm going to take photos of drag queens. Queens.

[00:15:38] **Wanda:** So you wanted to take club photos in New York. And that's what

[00:15:42] **Murray:** got you here? That's what got me for grad school. School of Visual Arts. Oh, I went to School of Visual Arts.

Oh, shit! Thank God Biden just cleaned my bill. Because I had to be 80 paying off those loads. Oh, did you get it cleaned? Yeah. You know why? Yeah, yeah. I graduated. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. In 1927. They're like, I think it's time. We're going to forgive your loan and forgive you for going to school of visual arts. I got to write that down and put it in the act.

That's a pretty good joke. Rib shot. Yeah. So I, so I got to New York. And did the same thing, I pretended I was working at the Village Voice, and snuck in.

You ready for this shit? Cause I'm sure you've been there. Oh wow. I snuck into Hershey Bar. Oh yeah. And you took pictures at Hershey? And there was a drag king pageant or something it was called.

And you know who was on there? Um, you're gonna have to help me remember.

[00:16:36] **Wanda:** No. Rebecca. Rebecca... Weinberg.

[00:16:40] **Murray:** Was dressed as some like, wild, and you know, funny guy with big chops.

[00:16:45] **Wanda:** I have a picture of him. Oh, I remember that character. Yeah. I can't remember the name. I'm trying to

[00:16:48] **Murray:** remember the name of the character.

Yeah. And then everybody else in the show was all like, masc, and tough, and serious, like it was a whole, there was no like, camp or comedy, except for Rebecca, like she added a little ex of the like, because she hung around with drag queens too. So I have pictures from that night, I'll never... You know, forget that.

Cause you remember, it was the Meatpacking District. Yeah. In the 90s. Yeah, for sure. And it was

[00:17:13] **Wanda:** rough as fuck. The clubs over there. Mother and the Click Club and all of those, like, Meatpacking. All those clubs I went to. And Hershey, I think, was maybe on 23rd Street at that point.

[00:17:25] **Murray:** Somewhere dark. It was dark.

All I know, there was no street lights. Right.

[00:17:29] **Wanda:** Oh my gosh. Yeah, So you, so you were, yeah, you were totally involved in the scene except that you hadn't quite developed your

[00:17:36] **Murray:** persona yet. No, I was, I was more. observing it, you know, and documenting. I kind of had like a, you know, like a little protection lens.

But that's really

[00:17:44] **Wanda:** interesting because you were also like learning and absorbing and visualizing while you were taking all those

[00:17:51] **Murray:** photographs. And it was all, you know, the whole, everything was like. Getting formed unconsciously kind of. Right. Exactly. Because I was so, and I still am, I'm so into camp as a strategy.

Mm hmm. Like I love it. Mm hmm, you know, but I'm just into it as a way to politically communicate. Right. And it's positive. It doesn't, you know, offend people off and stuff like, you know, so you get your message across. Yeah, and you can all have a good time doing it. Yeah, exactly, but I've never been like even the back in the old drag king clubs, like, you know, you've, I don't know if you remember, like dread or even some of the old school kids.

And even today they do it, you know, they take the clothes off and whip out a big

[00:18:30] **Wanda:** dildo and do this. Yeah,

[00:18:33] **Murray:** yeah, the apple. That's right. I forgot about the apple. Oh my God. Dread with

[00:18:37] **Wanda:** the apple. Yeah, the apple.

[00:18:38] **Murray:** Rest in peace. Yes. Rest in peace. Oh my God. Yeah. So, you know, I kind of was influenced by Bunny. You remember this?

Bunny is great. Yeah. You remember this thing called drag etiquette? Yeah. Do you remember that? And you probably don't even remember this thing. But, you know, I know I'm going to sound like a senior on, on the show, but hey,

[00:18:56] **Wanda:** sure. But you are a senior. I am now. In 1927

[00:18:58] **Murray:** you graduated. Yeah. I got my AARP card this year.

And, you know, back, and this kind of goes, goes to coming to New York to reinvent yourself or to find yourself, but, you know, like back then nobody knew my name. You know, we didn't even have a dead name. Right, right, right. Our names were so dead, they were fucking buried six feet under. Like, nobody asked you where you grew up, what your name was, like, where you live, if you have a job, if you have parents, if you have siblings.

Like, you were what you presented. Right. and then you were treated and respected as that, right? So I knew Bunny for, I still don't know Bunny's name. I did see her out of drag once and I thought it was Bruce, Bruce Valanche and I've never, and I love Bruce Valanche. I just saw him not too recently, but I've never recovered from seeing Bunny out of drag.

Now when I got my mustache on, I basically looked the same, but I must, Bunny on the, but anyway. Yeah, it was like you didn't, you didn't think, so even today, there's like,

[00:20:01] **Wanda:** And you never would even contemplate seeing them out of drag, it's true. And you wouldn't even ask them! Right, right,

[00:20:05] **Murray:** right. You know, and, and, there was some negatives about that, cause then you could just be a complete, you know, party every fucking night, and live this whole other life, and then, you know.

Right, because you wouldn't be recognized. Yeah, and, and nobody, You know, in the downtown scene back then, we'd be like, Uh, yeah, I think you're partying a little too much. Because we all were! Yeah, exactly. You know, so you could exist in this whole other... But what was the

[00:20:29] **Wanda:** drag etiquette? That's what you were mentioning before, like you

[00:20:31] **Murray:** don't ask anything.

The drag etiquette was you Like you were that... Person so I so I'd suck to that. I was like, I'm never gonna and I don't even that's why I don't even say like I'm a drag king or anything. I just I'm a Murray. Right? You're a Murray.

[00:20:44] **Wanda:** Murray. And you're a great, we love Murray. Murray Hill. Yeah. Don't

[00:20:47] **Murray:** worry about

[00:20:47] **Wanda:** it.

Don't worry about it. don't need to know

[00:20:50] **Murray:** anything else. If you see my show, you know, I say the same joke. I'll say it for him because every time there's somebody new It's like

I'm doing new material. So this guy's looking at me and I can read his mind. He's thinking, is it a man or a woman? Is it a man or a woman?

Sir, the answer is no. I always say that. Right, right. You know, as like a kind of

[00:21:12] **Wanda:** a woman or am I a man? Yeah, no. The

[00:21:14] **Murray:** answer's no. Yeah, the answer's no. And I'm like, what? And if they don't laugh, then I always say, well, it's going to be the longest two and a half hours of your life tonight.

[00:21:24] **Wanda:** Your show. Is that you having any shows at Joe's, uh, coming up?

I am.

[00:21:27] **Murray:** I gotta get started. When is that? I got some in mid October. Oh, that's soon. Yeah, I know! I know! And then the Christmas show is back on. Oh, we love the Christmas show. Yep, the Christmas show. I've been doing that for a hundred years. I love that.

[00:21:40] **Wanda:** I love that. And you have so many fun friends that come on and join you on stage.

[00:21:44] **Murray:** How is Bridget? Yeah, and now all my friends, speaking of Bridget, we're all 50 plus. Yeah. So now it's a, it's a bunch of middle aged downtown people. Who should be retiring and be in assisted living homes, but we're still out there. We're like doing the, you know, the, Hey, you know, we're going to put on a show.

Get my walker.

[00:22:07] **Wanda:** I just saw Joey Arias at Joe's last month and you know. Joey, like all of us is up there. Oh Yeah's still more up there than us. More up there. And he is still doing it. And God bless him and you know, he was great. I see

[00:22:18] **Murray:** Joey, Joey at Suzanne's shows when I do Suzanne shows, he still kicking it. I love

[00:22:23] **Wanda:** Joey.

He was one of my favorite's. A great show. You know, it was, it was great. Cracks me up though. Yep. So, Murray, I have to ask you, 'cause I've watched the show and it's wonderful. How, how is it? Working with Bridget and your wonderful cast

[00:22:37] **Murray:** on your show. Well, you know, Bridget and I have obviously been friends forever.

She got to New York, I think, 20 years ago. Mm hmm. And she used to do this night, this show at the Ritz. Do you remember that? Of course. What was that, in 40s? I never went up there because that was gay Hell's Kitchen vibe.

[00:22:55] **Wanda:** It was in Hell's Kitchen, yes, in the

[00:22:56] **Murray:** 40s. Yeah, so she did. You know, she would stop by there and do a couple songs and like, and all the gay guys were like, Who is this?

Oh my god! Instantly loved her and she was wild. Yeah. I mean, she's still wild. Yeah, but she was like really wild back then And so and I was doing shows down in Lower East Side At Moe Pickens, Fez, and that whole scene. Oh wow, yeah, Fez. So, the old days, when I met her, it was like instant. My friend was like, Hey, uh, yeah, Bridget just moved, you know, to New York.

And I was like, What are you doing Saturday night? Wanna be in my show at Moe Pickens? The Murray Hill Show. You're on at 9. And she's like, Okay. And she used to wear this, uh, this corset, and black panties. That was her, yeah, that was her outfit. And pumps. And then a big, dirty deli bag as her purse. Yeah, she now has like a Louis Vuitton type of thing.

But anyway, I mention this because we both slugged in the clubs. Like, we didn't do comedy clubs at all. You did the nightclubs. We did nightclubs. And that's like, you know, I, Probably takes a little bit longer. 20 years longer maybe. But the nightclubs you can be original and you can be celebrated for that, right?

And no one could put either of us in a box. You know, it's just like, it's too impossible.

[00:24:12] **Wanda:** And not censor you either. Because the audience, you know the audience and they know you and it's

[00:24:16] **Murray:** fine. Yeah, they're not like judging you like, Oh, you know, you're gay or you're chubby or you're this or you're 40. It's like, fuck that.

Downtown and the gay community is kind of like a gutter. They take anything in. That's actually not a joke. It's a fact. Exactly. Yeah, we do. Yeah. Another person's trash is another's treasure. There you go. So, Ava, I say all this because, you know, Bridget and I have been trying to get on TV forever. Right.

Literally. And it's no, no, no, too niche, too original. Like all the things that should be good, but, you know, we don't know what to do with you. You're too risky. You know, blah, blah, blah, blah. No, no, no, no, no. Who's the audience? Right. Yeah, all that crap. Like, the gatekeepers, no, no, no.

[00:25:01] **Wanda:** Did Logo, Logo never, remember back in the day, Logo?

Because they were the only ones really showing any kind of

[00:25:05] **Murray:** gay content. No, and now they only show, uh, I think they only show... Are they even around? Ten thousand, what's that? The Pyramid Game Show and Golden Girls. Yeah. Yeah, which is gay content, but that's another story. But, uh, yeah, so, you know, it was just full on rejection, so we just kept doing live shows.

So, she got a pilot on Amazon, and she got to make one, and then that didn't make it. Mm hmm. And then it was like back to, oh, Joe's Pub you gotta keep grinding, it's never gonna happen. Now it's never gonna happen for anybody, though. And then, you know, she got this, several years later, got another opportunity with, uh...

Was

[00:25:46] **Wanda:** that when she did

[00:25:46] **Murray:** the film? She had done Amy Schumer's show a bunch. Okay. She did the Comedy Central special. Right. And, uh, she did Patty Cakes. Great Patty Cakes. That was

[00:25:56] **Wanda:** wonderful. She was great in

[00:25:57] **Murray:** Patty Cakes. Yeah, so she started getting more, you know, and that's the thing, it's changed a little bit, but before it's like you, like other people, like with me, like they need to, the gatekeepers need to see you in a traditional sense, and they're like, oh, actually they're not so frightening.

Right. You know, it's all about homophobic, transphobic, and all those wonderful words that we hate. So, anyway, she hooked up with Carolyn Strauss, who used to run HBO, now she's independent. And she said, she's queer, big success, and she saw, you know, she saw something special in Bridget, and they got together, and they started writing, and they brought in some writers, and they created this whole story based on Bridget's life.

Right. And luckily, the writers put in a character that was based on me. I love it. And, you know, the, the old, the old lore, or the, what's the, what's the, what's that word called? The wives tale? Uh huh. Is, I'm the only one in the show that didn't have to audition to play... Your part. My part. And, thank God, because this is what I say, because if I had to audition for the part that was played to play me, I wouldn't have gotten it.

Yeah. I've done self tapes for auditions for parts that have been written for me. And I didn't get it. Really?

[00:27:21] **Wanda:** Showbiz. So, yeah, so that part was perfect then. So you got it, you're on it, you're fantastic, and I'm sure... It's wild. That, that is also like created more exposure, not only for yourself, but for Bridget and the stories and, and recognizing that, yeah, queer people can, can

[00:27:42] **Murray:** play these roles.

It's validating in, in kind of a sick way, because you can always say, Oh, I don't want to be validated. But it's like, just the fact that me and Bridget got on there. On HBO, you know, on Sunday nights, you know, as ourselves,

[00:27:55] **Wanda:** really. And picked up for

[00:27:56] **Murray:** another season. Yeah, season three. And like, you know, we're a little tampered down on the show.

It's like the Misfits got to play in the big leagues, and people loved it, and I think they related, and this is what people always say, You guys have so much heart. You know, we can relate to you so much. You're so real. And, you know, when people say real, that means, okay, we're overweight. That's part of it, right?

But the other part is, I think it's from doing nightlife. Because, when you're doing stand up comedy or you're doing acting, like LA actors, right, you're



doing other people's material. Uh huh. You're trying to get that material perfect. Right, that character. And deliver it. Uh huh. And all that kind of stuff.

So, you're presenting it. Mm hmm. But when you are the person, when you're the persona, it's a different relationship with the audience.

[00:28:45] **Wanda:** And it has more heart, right. It's more heart, because it's

[00:28:47] **Murray:** who we are. Yeah, because it's real. And then, you know, we're not trying to nail jokes, we're trying to put on a good show.

Right. You know, we want the applause, we want the fun, we want to have some laughs, you know, we're up there singing, we're dancing, you know, all that stuff. So I think the, the New York nightlife is like direct, like responsible for people's reaction to us. So it's kind of like, that's how we put our, you know, we didn't go to acting school.

Right, right. I love it. Or trained or

[00:29:12] **Wanda:** anything. I know, and it seems, I mean, and the characters do seem very natural, you know?

[00:29:18] **Murray:** So that's, yeah. And you know, for me, I have to like, you know, I'm, I'm loud today in here, but you know, I basically, you, you gotta tamp it down. Yeah. I gotta be like,

[00:29:27] **Wanda:** you are my, you are like that.

[00:29:29] **Murray:** Hey, Sam. What can I do for you? That's my acting. Just whisper. A whisper for me is still playing to the back of the room. I don't even know how to talk quietly. Look, I'm trying to do it right now. That's my acting. Just quiet.

[00:29:44] **Wanda:** Just quiet. That's, that's, yeah, exactly. That's, that's your method

[00:29:48] **Murray:** acting. Quiet.

Remember La Tigre? Yeah. I love them. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I was on one of their records, and Kathleen Hanna, who was, you know, they were in the recording booth and I was in the studio, much like this, and she kept, you know, the,

through the intercom. Yeah. Can you do, um, can you do another take with like, Less personality.

And then I try it and then she go, less. And then she goes, okay, just no personality, just read the line. And whisper it. And I was like, that's it! That's the one!

[00:30:21] **Wanda:** Well, thank God you have that personality, Murray. And it's certainly coming in handy in your Drag me to dinner. Holy shit. Cause that you can be really, you know,

[00:30:33] **Murray:** big.

So

[00:30:33] **Wanda:** that's exciting. That's the the drag queens.

[00:30:37] **Murray:** Can you believe I held my own? I know. And I look like the same person in that show. Which is, which either, which might say how crazy the drag queens are. But that show is wild. Totally unscripted. And then I had pretty much had the only. It wasn't really a script, but just like the basic beats I had to hit.

Mm-hmm. , you know, like, now we're going to cooking over here, now we're gonna cook over there. We're, we're, but you know, it was a dream come true for me because somebody, somewhere, I gotta memorize all the lines and we can improv, but you always have to what's written first. Right. So, you know, that's a different muscle when you work the clubs.

Yeah. That's not so easy, you know, doing that stuff. So it dragged me to dinner. I had the, like, it was the size of a football field teleprompter, and it was, like, size 20. I was like, no, no, no, up the fonts. I could see it. If I was sleeping in bed, passed out, I could read that. Oh my god. And it was a dream come true, because I had the teleprompter in the back, and then I had one on the actual camera.

To me, it was freeing, because I could read it, and then go off and be crazy, and then come back to it. Right. So I felt like that was my sweet spot. That's wonderful. So I'm trying, you know, trying to do some more of that. That's on Hulu.

[00:31:54] **Wanda:** And how many episodes have you done of uh, drag me to dinner? I think we did

[00:32:00] **Murray:** eight.

Oh, okay. Or 10 maybe.

[00:32:02] **Wanda:** Do you have any participation in who

[00:32:04] **Murray:** competes? Nobody knew anything until we showed, showed up. So it's a surprise for you? Oh yeah. The funny thing about that show is, you know, we had to start filming at 7:00 AM Oh wow. So the beginning of that show, when the drag queens come through the curtains and New York.

Yeah, no one's been up that early ever. So they're already up in makeup. So, you know, half of the queens were already by 8 a. m. loaded. Oh my god. Yeah, like Vanya showed up with, you know, a bottle of tequila on her walk on. And then by lunch, gone. You know, and then every time a balloon, like, pops, she goes, Oh my god, there's a shooting!

And we're like, no, no, no, no, we're okay. We're inside. It's just a balloon. You know, but it was like a reunion. I got to see everybody. I knew most, except for the younger ones, I knew most of them. Right, right, right. Oh my

[00:32:52] **Wanda:** god, that must be a hoot. It

[00:32:54] **Murray:** was nuts. Crazy. It's nuts.

[00:32:56] **Wanda:** Circus. So let me get a little serious, on a serious note.

Okay, I'm ready for this. You're ready for this. We know all this legislation that's been going around. For the trans, and, you know, the gays, and the drag queens, and the drag kings. I was wondering, like, you know, what, what are your feelings on this, and, uh, have you experienced any, like,

[00:33:19] **Murray:** pushback? Well, I mean, yeah, it's, it sucks.

It's a dumpster fire. I think I'm in an age where I've never felt safe. Mm hmm. So I never lived my life feeling like, oh, everything's fine. The world's changed. Right. Maybe a little minute when Obama was there, I was like, okay. We got happy. Yeah, we're alright. But, so I, so I didn't grow up with that. So I've always been on the defense.

And that sucks to kind of go through life like that. So I think. As things have gotten bad, again, that kind of defense mechanism and survival is like kicked back up. You know, I go to therapy, of course, you know, 25 years in therapy. Doing great. But, you know, I do struggle with, Like what to do with the anger a part of it.

So I have to actually work at it to like Channel the anger into something productive. I'm not an angry person Maybe I should be that's what my shrink says sometimes, you know And anger is it is important to deal with some of this stuff, of course But so I try to filter all that out Those feelings and the anger and the, and the hypocrisy and the insanity.

I try to put it through the Murray filter, you know, which is kindness, having a warm heart and creating like safe spots where people. can come, even if it's, like, it's my show, or it's doing a podcast, or it's walking down the street, or whatever it is, that, you know, it's like a sixth sense, and unfortunately it's developed out of necessity to survive, but of, like, disarming people.

And it's like, you know, you can't, I'd definitely be like, you can't hate someone if you're laughing. Right. You know, so if, you know, I come across shit all the time, all the time. Stares, heckles, whatever it is. But, you know, I try to like, you know, build the bridge. I just try to be who I am. You know, I was down in Florida.

And I'm like, no, I'm actually, I'm not going to not go to Florida. I'm going to go to Florida and be me, be Murray. I'm going to go to the drag club. I'm going to see my buddy who's performing at the other place. I'm just going to, I'm going to be, you know, what they say in rehab, keep your side of the street clean.

Right, right, right. You know what I mean? So, I'm gonna, I'm not gonna change who I am, because I'm not the one that has the problem. Right, and I

[00:35:40] **Wanda:** think... It's important for you to keep visible and, and, and influential and have, and keep your warm heart and keep people laughing and, and turn things around so that folks aren't so petrified and afraid of like this unknown in their heads of what, you know, queer, trans, drag

[00:36:00] **Murray:** people are.

And that's why I like about... The shows, all the shows that I'm in, you know, I am like myself. I'm not like Fred, like who's, you know, a depressed trans man

who's getting beat up in an alley or, you know, like, it's not negative. It's just, I get to be like everybody else. And that's been, that's kind of been my thing from.

I got a heart, you got a heart. We're really more the same, but different. If you meet people in an emotional level, rather than a fear based, you know, that's where I think it's... Yeah, or anger, or like, you know... Yeah, because like, none of the things I do on TV is, they're not angry... They're subversive in a way, but they're not like these threatening characters and like waving flags.

It's just like, Hey, it's Fred. Hey, it's Murray. Hey,

[00:36:46] **Wanda:** you know. Exactly. Come on, who

[00:36:48] **Murray:** doesn't want to go out to have, you know, Chicken McNuggets with this guy?

[00:36:52] **Wanda:** Have you found, uh, since you've had more popularity that your show audiences have changed? Uh, do you find that people that have never seen you perform are coming to your shows?

[00:37:04] **Murray:** Well, I, I, I definitely have seen this with Bridget, because it's been a weird, a little, like, where the strike, and then there was this, and then there's the COVID, and all that stuff. But like, I, I say this to Bridget when I go to her show, um, it's called the TV bump.

There's something about TV. That it takes away the hard work you got to do in that opening monologue. Because they feel like they already know you and they already like you. Right. So live performance is already, you know, trying to get them to be on your team and laugh and, you know, feel comfortable and stuff.

So, um, I was in Vegas just last week. And I was doing a show with Brian Newman and Angie Pontani. You probably remember Pontani from the Pontani sisters. And, uh, now I was there before the pandemic, and, you know, we don't go on until like 1230 in the morning, and the last time I was there was a little rough, you know, because that's a rough slot to go on as a comedian, because, you know, people are raging, they're drunk, they've been drunk for days, so, but this time, This time, I'm just waving to some fans, but this time I had the TV buff.

Uh huh. It's like, they were like, oh I love you on that show, I love you on that show. They already were like, okay, we don't, They could already relate to you

somehow and were familiar with you somehow. Yeah, so I didn't have to prove myself, I just had to entertain them. So it's like a very different, energy.

So I'm hoping that in the October shows that I will get the TV bump and then I'm going to maybe make them a little bit shorter. But that's, I think that's

[00:38:36] **Wanda:** great because listen, for any show you want to have, you know, your audiences grow. But if like audience members that maybe would never consider going to a Murray Hill show, you know, a straight.

couple or whatever, like kids from out of town can now recognize you because they've watched the show and now are curious and come and see your show and then see maybe guests that you bring on your show, you know, it just expands their whole perception of what, you know, yeah, but It's positive.

[00:39:06] **Murray:** And I do a type of comedy that, you know, people really don't do anymore, probably for a good reason.

But so they're getting that too. Yeah, exactly. You know, the young kids don't know it. the Borscht Belt type of humor and, you know, I was, I was saying like, you know, a young trans kid got upset with me. Like, I think they're in their 20s or something. And I said, Oh, you look like my son or my daughter or my son.

I'm not sure. And they were so mad. Oh, they got offended. You know, and all this stuff. But I'm like, no, I'm saying you're my kid. Yeah. You know, or like two gay guys, like two gay guys together. I'm like, great guys. Great to see you. Where's your wives tonight? And they're like, I'm gay. I'm like, duh, duh. So it's like we don't get the humor.

Well, it's that it's that thing, I think. That's different is but it's also I can learn from the younger generation is I know my history I know I've been part of the queer community. I've been living it I've been out in the streets pounded it for decades before they were born, right? So when I make a comment like that to a younger gay person, I'm doing it from on the same team.

Mm hmm right like You know, like, because we mentioned that earlier, like, we'd call each other girl, you know, because we're all on the same team, right? It was like endearing, like we can do that with each other. Yeah, we can wink, wink, wink, ha ha, you know, and now I think there's more infighting and then there's like, okay, well, I'm this way.

You need to address me this way, that way, that way you're the enemy. I'm like, well, actually, I'm not the enemy. I, I'm old, but I'm not the enemy, you know, I'm actually on, I'm I'm on your side, exactly.

[00:40:38] **Wanda:** Yeah, they're the enemy. Been there, done that.

[00:40:40] **Murray:** So, you know, but there's, there's stuff to learn from both sides, but yes, but that kind of camp humor, like that Don Rick, you know, like Shecky Greene, like Buddy Hackett, it's like, you know, they got on the talk shows and they would say to the host, why are you looking at the teleprompter to say my name?

You don't know my name? My name's Don Rickles. What, do you gotta read the cue card Yes, it is. It is. So that's a long story. I used humor. To deal with it. Mm hmm. And that's how I started using humor. It's a way to make things better. And I can, you know, I can do it on a small level. And I, with TV, you can do it on a little larger level.

[00:41:17] **Wanda:** Well, I love it. And we love you. And if there's anything else you'd like to mention while we're here...

[00:41:22] **Murray:** I want to mention how beautiful you are! And you are the best. You've been a staple in the queer community. Really. Our goals are not too different. No. No, no. Because nobody was doing parties for, you know...

The gay, women, female, dress nice demographic. You know? It didn't exist. Right, right. It just didn't exist. And also older women went to your

[00:41:48] **Wanda:** events and stuff. Yeah, just having safe space for queer community for lesbian

[00:41:53] **Murray:** women. Which still! And that's why you're a pioneer. So I want to make sure she's getting her love.

Because that's the thing with me too. Is, we come from that. I always say, if you don't see yourself represented, go out and represent yourself. Mm-hmm. . Mm-hmm. . So you went out and created that space. You went out and worked at that place. And it's not easy doing a thing every week for years and

[00:42:14] **Wanda:** years. No, it isn't.

You know, the money and getting people to come out, the

[00:42:16] **Murray:** drama, the making flyers, the drink, sales, this thing, you know, but you, you did it and you. Provided a space. And so, you know, hey, we're still here. We're still here. And I was

[00:42:27] **Wanda:** uptown and I'm so happy to see you, Murray. It's been it's been a bit. It's been a minute through ups and downs.

And I'm you look great. And congratulations on all your successes and more, more, more, more, more. You too. And, congratulations on, we won't mention it, we could cut this off line too, but on your

[00:42:47] **Murray:** engagement. No, there's no strike on that. Yep, you heard it here second, ladies and gentlemen, I asked my, uh, lady friend to marry me.

And I never thought I would want to get married. I've been engaged three times. You've never heard anyone say fourth time is the charm. Showbiz! And, uh, yeah, I did it. And, uh, you know what? Anything's possible.

[00:43:09] **Wanda:** I love it. Well, congratulations. And much love. And I can't wait. When? You got a date? Or you're just, like, you

[00:43:16] **Murray:** know, planning?

Well, Wanda, I didn't know there was a second part to this. So, don't get me in trouble. I'm like, wait, I gotta do something else now?

[00:43:23] **Wanda:** One thing at a time, exactly. Oh, that's wonderful. Showbiz. Yes.

[00:43:27] **Murray:** All right, that's it, Wanda.

[00:43:29] **Wanda:** I love

[00:43:29] **Murray:** you. All right. Well, thank you. I love you too. See, I got emotional. Showbiz.

[00:43:34] **Wanda:** It's showbiz, kids.

And Murray is out. And

[00:43:38] **Murray:** scene.



[00:43:41] **Wanda:** Woohoo. Well, that was a blast. Congratulations, Murray, on your engagement and definitely wishing you the best. If you want to see and hear more of Murray, tune in to Somebody Somewhere on HBO, or catch Drag Me to Dinner on Hulu. If you are in New York City or happen to be in New York City next week, Murray will be performing at Joe's Pub October 13th and 14th, and for a jolly good time, he'll miss his annual holiday show, A Little Murray Christmas, December 12th through the 16th, also at Joe's Pub, and I highly recommend.

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Special thanks to Joseph Hazen and Karen Song for their support. See you next time.