

## Leyel Hudson, and Jennifer Husband Sign Language Interpreting

Episode 195

**Scott McKain:** It's Reality Check... with Craig Price.

(Intro – Upbeat music with clips from past podcasts)

**Craig:** “I’m an idiot!”

“Four minutes in and I’m already wrong.”

“I’m like a monkey. “

“Hello! Look at me!”

“You’re like a Beautiful Mind and I’m more like Forest Gump.” (laughing)

**Thom Singer:** “Craig Price is the man.”

**Craig:** “I knew it!”

“Craig shut up.”

**Craig Announcing:** It's Reality Check with Craig Price. This week, Leyel Hudson and Jennifer Husband are going to talk about being sign language interpreters.

(Intro music slowly fades out)

**Craig:** Welcome to the podcast, glad you are here. This is the first of a few, not an overwhelming amount, but the first of a few Comicalooza oriented podcasts coming out in the next six weeks or so. I'm officially a podcaster in the Comicalooza partnership program and if you have heard past episodes I have had actors like David Anders on, filmmakers like Paul Bright, celebrities like Ming Chen on the podcast, thanks to Comicalooza. Now, David and Ming were panels I hosted in front of a live audience and while I cannot guarantee that will be the case this year, I certainly hope it is and I am hoping to bring those to you if possible. I really enjoy hosting panels and am always looking to do more. But, before Comicalooza starts up this year, which is June 17<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup>, I wanted to use my little corner of the podcasting universe to spotlight more than just the traditional entertainment and pop culture aspects of comic cons. Like, for example, when I had John Simons on, founder of Comicalooza. He was on to talk about how putting on a con of this size works. Thanks to hosting panels last year, I discovered and maybe we mutually found each other, these great American Sign Language interpreters. They have just started their new business called Blue Sun Interpreting hoping to bring access to these great, fun, comic cons to the Deaf community. In the spirit of access, this entire episode, for the first time has been transcribed so if you can't listen to it, you can still enjoy the conversation. They have really cool jobs, not only because of the people they get to come in contact with, like William Shatner and John Barrowman...you know...myself, but they really are helping huge conventions like Comicalooza reach even more people so they too can have the kind of fun we have at these great events. So sit down, find a comfy chair, and listen or read about Sign Language interpreters with my pals, Jennifer Husband and Leyel Hudson.

(Upbeat Intro Music)

**Craig:** It's good to see you guys. We get to see each other, what...once every three or four months?

**Level:** Something like that.

**Jennifer:** Yeah, if we're lucky, yeah.

**Craig:** It's been like that and we're getting into your busy season.

**Level:** Yes

**Jennifer:** Yes. We are very excited. We're about to be really busy.

**Craig:** Now, you've got Deaf Con coming up. Explain what that is and why you are having it.

**Level:** So we, as nerds (laughing), are extremely excited about cosplay and, just, performances, um, pretty much anything nerdy and we know that we have a large Deaf fan base that's very nerdy as well...

**Jennifer:** That's true

**Level:** ...and so we thought, why don't we have an event that caters to that? Certainly they can come to any of the major cons as well, but I think that it's fun to have something that is completely in sign language. So we are going to have this event where we have a couple of Deaf and signing presenters coming out. They're going to do some performances, we're even going to have a technology company come out who does technology with the Deaf. And, um, so they'll all have performances but in addition to that we're going to have cosplay, games, and all kinds of fun things that are going to be happening and all in sign language.

**Craig:** So, who came up with that idea?

**Jennifer:** This lady right here, Miss Level did.

**Jennifer and Level:** (laughing)

**Level:** It's fun but, you know, it's definitely been collaborative. Jennifer has had a lot of input in that and I've been super thankful.

**Craig:** And so my guest today is Level HUDSON...

**Level:** Yes

**Craig:** ...and Jennifer HUSBAND...

**Jennifer:** Correct.

**Craig:** Um... You guys are going to trip me up on that.

**Jennifer and Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** 'Cause I only know you as Jennifer and Level.

**Jennifer:** Right.

**Craig:** 'Cause we've worked together a couple times...

**Jennifer:** Mm-hmm.

**Level:** Yes.

**Craig:** ...and we met through Comicipalooza...

Jennifer and **Level:** Yes.

**Level:** Nerdy stuff.

**Craig:** ...and it was doing the panels. It's one of the few times I'd seen an interpreter...anywhere. I speak for a living and I speak in front of large groups all the time and they don't have interpreters.

**Jennifer:** Wow.

**Craig:** Unless it's specific because they know there's a need for one. So, it's almost like... is it Mary Matlin?

Jennifer and **Level:** Marlee Matlin.

**Craig:** Oh, Marlee Matlin. She's got that Interpreter guy...

**Jennifer:** Yes

**Level:** Absolutely

**Craig:** ...that lives with her for the last 25 years...

Jennifer and **Level:** (laughing)

**Jennifer:** And now Nyle DiMarco has one too.

**Level:** Yes.

**Craig:** Yeah. And so, they know that person is coming so they go, Oh well you're going to need an interpreter.

**Level:** Absolutely.

**Jennifer:** Right.

**Craig:** But it's not, definitely not something that anybody thinks about. And so...

**Level:** Right. You know, it's funny that you say that...that's something we have noticed at each of the comic cons that we have interpreted at. We have seen...we'll be interpreting at the front just for the general population whether we think there is a Deaf person there are not. And we're fortunate that in doing that we've realized, "Oh there's a Deaf person in the back that didn't know there was going to be an interpreter here." And so, it's a chicken or egg kind of situation, I think that often Deaf people don't come to these types of events because they don't think there's going to be services provided for them...

**Jennifer:** Right.

**Level:** ...and vice versa the venue doesn't think to provide the services because they don't think they have an audience for it.

**Jennifer:** Yeah, and nobody has asked for it before...

**Level:** Exactly.

**Jennifer:** ...and nobody asked for it that time so they don't even think about it.

**Craig:** So, the Deaf Con is this weekend.

**Level:** Yes. Absolutely.

**Craig:** Because this is May 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup>, I can't remember when we're having it. But your event is on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Level:** Right.

**Jennifer:** Right.

**Craig:** So, can you announce...I don't know who is coming. I've been hearing about this for a while. There's been some changes, there's been some things...

**Level:** Right.

**Craig:** ...logistically it's not easy to put on any event.

**Level:** (laughing) No.

**Jennifer:** (laughing) Correct.

**Level:** That is very true.

**Craig:** So, is there any names that you can announce?

**Level:** We have major presenters that are going to be there. We have Austin Andrews, he is hearing but he is a child of a Deaf adult, or actually he has many Deaf family members. He is going to be performing with Kent Kennedy who is a Deaf comedian. They both live in Austin. And then there is also a group coming out called ASL Nook. If you ever look them up online, just Google or search for ASL Nook...um...it's a family and they have all of these videos out where they sign. In fact recently they were on a Disney commercial. They are just very sweet. They are putting out a book, I think, even related to Sign Language.

**Jennifer:** I think so, yeah.

**Level:** So all of them are going to be coming out and performing for us.

**Craig:** Now, we've been at Comicpalooza and...how did you get involved with that? Because that one, you just kind of appeared one day.

**Level:** (laughing)

**Jennifer:** Comicpalooza, yeah...

**Craig:** And I think that's where you guys got started, wasn't it?

**Jennifer:** That was our first one, that's where we got started so, um, I certainly appreciate Comicpalooza for letting us come in.

**Level:** Definitely.

**Jennifer:** I actually got a name... My husband worked with a guy that was a watchmen for Comicpalooza and so...

**Craig:** When you say Watchmen, do you mean one of the characters?

**Jennifer:** He was, no...(laughing) He was a security guard.

**Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** He was one of the characters from Watchmen?,

**Jennifer:** I wish. (laughing) He was one of the security guards from Comicpalooza. And um, so I called him and I was like, “Hey I want to talk to somebody about providing interpreters.” So he gave me the Director of Programming, his phone number. So I called him up one day and I was like, “Hey. I’ve great this great idea. This is my skills set, I’m a sign language interpreter, certified State of Texas. I love comic cons. I love geek stuff. I want to provide services so that the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community have access to your event. Have you ever thought about doing this?” And he was like, “Oh no, I’ve never...but that’s a great idea.” And I was like, “Yes it would be great!” So then from then on we just worked it out and I got this lady (Level) involved and started tagging all my friends saying, “Hey you want to come do this thing with me?” And we scheduled all of our interpreters and showed up to the con...

**Craig:** Yeah, cause you have a crew...

**Jennifer:** Yes.

**Craig:** It’s not just you two.

**Level:** It’s an entourage. (laughing)

**Craig:** It’s a group

**Jennifer:** Yes.

**Craig:** Because when you were at Space City Con I specifically went just to take pictures of you guys. Because I...

**Jennifer:** That’s right, that’s right...

**Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** So I started and realized, hey wait a minute! There’s more of them.

**Jennifer:** (laughing) Yes.

**Craig:** ‘Cause you guys kind of rotate through even every presentation...

**Level:** Right.

**Craig:** So it’s not like you have one person who is going to do the William Shatner, You’re going to have four.

**Level:** Right.

**Craig:** Is there like a shift situation?

**Jennifer:** There is. There’s kind of like an industry like...

**Craig:** A norm...

**Jennifer:** ...an interpreter norm, standard.

**Craig:** It’s like a union?

**Level:** (laughing)

**Jennifer:** I wish.

**Craig:** It’s like a union thing?

**Jennifer** and **Level:** (laughing)

**Level:** Like a comic con union

**Jennifer:** It's like an expected thing.

**Leyel:** Yes.

**Jennifer:** About every 20 minutes your brain gets a little fried and you start making mistakes even though you don't realize it. So about every 20 minutes you need to switch out so somebody else can come in and take over the interpretation. And so you have your team and y'all switch out about every 15 to 20 minutes depending on how heavy the content might be.

**Leyel:** Side note too, um, probably if you subscribe to the podcast you know that Craig is a fantastic photographer but we were so thankful for those pictures. Because it's not often we have pictures of ourselves working, so...

**Jennifer:** (laughing) It's true. And then you get a lot of interpreter face pictures.

**Craig:** There's two main issues with taking pictures at a con with interpreters. One, and you know this being interpreters, it's almost like me. I don't have a picture of me speaking where I don't have my eyes all askew and my mouth weird...

**Jennifer and Leyel:** (laughing)

**Leyel:** It's not pretty.

**Craig:** Well, I'm not pretty normally.

**Jennifer and Leyel:** (laughing)

**Craig:** so to get me in a situation where I look like I might have stepped in something gooey...

**Leyel:** Yeah...

**Craig:** ...and so it was hard to get a good picture. That's why you take a lot of them.

**Jennifer:** Absolutely. Yeah.

**Craig:** But also the lighting is so awful...

**Jennifer and Leyel:** Yeah.

**Craig:** in those comic cons. I got a great picture, of, I think you (Leyel) with Bill Shatner.

**Jennifer:** Yeah.

**Craig:** I know him, so I can call him Bill. (sarcastic)

**Jennifer and Leyel:** (laughing)

**Craig:** And it was very difficult. I took a lot of those different pictures because the lighting was off.

**Leyel:** Yeah.

**Jennifer:** Mmm...

**Craig:** And then the other one was with you (Jennifer) and Manu? Bennett?

**Jennifer:** Yes.

**Leyel:** Yes.

**Craig:** So I'm not a professional photographer. I'm not hired by the Space City Con to take pictures. And I'm there to do some stuff too. So I'm taking pictures, taking pictures, taking pictures, taking pictures and they're all getting very repetitive. So I put my camera away. And it's getting...we're winding down. Of course that's the one time...

**Jennifer:** That's the one time! (laughing)

**Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** So I'm officially apologizing in public for this. It's the one time Manu did anything that had anything to do with you.

**Jennifer:** Yes.

**Level:** Of course.

**Craig:** He comes over and gets real friendly and I'm like...

**Jennifer:** Yes, and then he did, yes, kiss me...

**Level:** Woo-hoo!

**Jennifer:** ...on my head and nobody has pictures of it.

**Craig:** And you looked at me like I had maybe smothered your baby.

**Jennifer and Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** Because I...my camera is right there, and I'm like, you know. Now you know why I'm not a professional. I'm not here to just take pictures.

**Jennifer and Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** I felt so bad about that. But it's very difficult to take those pictures so...

**Level:** It's ok.

**Craig:** in fact I have a...

**Level:** I believe it happened Jennifer.

**Jennifer:** (laughing)

**Craig:** I have a presentation I have to do in October and their theme is superheroes so I've got to, I've got all these cons I'm going to that I have to take pictures.

**Jennifer:** Nice. Wonderful.

**Craig:** Because it's a lot easier to take pictures of a little kid that's Superman than it is to use the image of Superman.

**Level:** (laughing) That is true.

**Craig:** Because one is copyright infringement. And the other one is not.

**Jennifer:** (laughing) Very good.

**Craig:** So, the change is every 20 minutes...

**Jennifer:** Mm-hmm

**Craig:** ...when you're doing cons, how difficult is it? Because the verbiage is not normal. I mean, I remember the one, Jennifer, that you and I were...that I remember the most was...

**Jennifer:** David Anders?

**Craig:** ...was David Anders.

**Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** So you can hear that one the episode, because that was an episode that we did...

**Jennifer:** Yes. Yes...

**Craig:** ...but in the middle of it you had to sign about shotguns or something...

**Level:** (laughing)

**Jennifer:** Yeah. I had to cock my shotgun and shoot it.

**Craig:** Yeah. So when they say...when you're doing Star Wars and they talk about light sabers or blasters or Yin Nunb or Nien Nunb or they talk about Kit Fisto and all, you know, these weird names like that...

**Jennifer:** Yeah...

**Craig:** How do you adapt to the weirdness of geekery as you're signing?

**Jennifer:** If you can you just you act it out. I mean that's what I did. I just had to mime and gesture...

**Craig:** You did a great job...

**Jennifer:** ...shooting my shotgun.

**Level:** And here's the best part about our job...well it's sometimes the worst...but in this particular case the best part about our job is that in order to come to these cons and interpret, we have to do "homework" and... (laughing)

**Jennifer:** Uh-huh.

**Level:** ...and our "homework"...

**Jennifer:** Lots of homework (laughing)

**Level:** ...and I'm sure for a moderator it's true as well, No?

**Jennifer and Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** Nah. (laughing)

**Level:** ...we have to watch the TV shows and the movies, you know...

**Jennifer:** Yeah, we have to start watching, you know. I watched Alias, I love it.

**Level:** I tell my family, "I'm doing my homework." (laughing)

**Craig:** You know, um, the first Comicpalooza I went to I did 4 panels...

**Level:** Uh-huh...

**Jennifer:** Whoa.

**Craig:** ...and I only knew I was doing the David Anders panel.



**Level:** Oh my goodness...

**Jennifer:** (gasp) Wow.

**Craig:** He was the only one I knew ahead of time, so I had all...he was on a Monday so I had Friday, Saturday, Sunday...

**Jennifer:** Wow.

**Craig:** ...I knew he was going to happen, but the other three, I'm getting texts in the middle of-I'm watching, you know, sitting there watching Hayley Atwell and I get a text going...

**Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** ...You know, "Can you do, can you go do Richard Harmon?" And I'm like, "Sure?" And then I gotta Google, "Who the hell is Richard Harmon?"

**Jennifer** and **Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** And then I saw his face and I'm like oh yeah! That kid from, the one...

**Level:** Right...

**Craig:** ...from The 100 or he's from Continuum is what I knew him from...

**Level:** Yeah...

**Craig:** You know so I didn't have much time, but you guys...

**Jennifer:** We make sure that we take the time to prep and do our homework as much as possible in order to, uh, interpret correctly for those crazy things. I remember I know I had, you know we had a Battlestar Galactica panel at Space City...

**Craig:** No Comicpalooza

**Level:** That was Comicpalooza.

**Jennifer:** Was it Comicpalooza?

**Craig:** That was Fan Fest.

**Level:** Right.

**Jennifer:** That was Fan Fest! That's right. Because yeah, we've done both of those. And, um, there was an interpreter up there and she hadn't seen it and I'm sitting in my seat going, "I know exactly what they're talking about! I just watched this episode..."

**Level:** We're trying to feed the information and...yeah (laughing)

**Jennifer:** ...and I'm like, "They're shooting out the air lock they had to open up the air, they came out this way!" Like, you have to watch it, just so you can mime it and do the best that you can...

**Level:** Make it more visual, yeah.

**Jennifer:** Make it work.

**Craig:** So like, if they use a name like um, Finn is going to be the probably the one they start talking about Star Wars...

**Level:** Sure...

**Craig:** ...they're going talk about Rey and Finn...

**Jennifer:** Right...

**Craig:** Do you spell that out so that people know or you know?

**Jennifer:** Yeah, I think right now we spell out until...

**Level:** Some characters have what's called a name sign, but usually yeah...

**Jennifer:** ...until the Deaf community decides on a name sign then we'll spell it out...

**Level:** Like a nickname kind of thing...

**Jennifer:** Yeah.

**Craig:** So they've got a short hand that you learn over time...

**Jennifer:** Yeah.

**Level:** Sure (laughing)

**Craig:** Because that's the one thing I noticed you guys were posting was how to say certain things...

**Level:** Right.

**Craig:** Especially things that are geek/nerd related...

**Jennifer:** Yeah.

**Level:** Right.

**Craig:** So here is, there is no definitive so we're going to make one, here...

**Jennifer** and **Level:** Yes.

**Craig:** So you're kind of like hash-tagging almost...

**Jennifer:** (laughing) Yes.

**Level:** That's a good way to think of it.

**Craig:** Like, I want to try to get in early and hashtag this person's sign...

**Level:** (laughing)

**Jennifer:** Yeah. This way, yeah (sarcastic)

**Level:** Yeah. We're actually going through that even with the political debates and everything right now. People are trying to figure out how they want to sign the different candidates' names and...

**Jennifer:** Yeah

**Craig:** Especially when you just want to give the middle finger...

**Level:** (laughing) Well yeah, I mean, that could be a lot of it...

**Jennifer:** (laughing)

**Level:** (laughing) Yeah.

**Craig:** So how did you get involved in interpreting in general? Was there, we'll start with Jennifer, was it just, did you know someone? Did you have someone in your family? Was it something you just kind of fell into?

**Jennifer:** I kind of fell into it, um, I don't have anybody in my family that is Deaf or Hard of Hearing or an interpreter and when I was taking classes in high school I needed foreign language and I'd done two years of Spanish but it didn't stick...

**Craig:** Yeah you have restaurant Spanish like me?

**Level:** (laughing)

**Jennifer:** (laughing) Not, not even...

**Craig:** I can order beer and go to the bathroom and that's be about it...

**Jennifer:** Yeah, that'd probably be about it yeah...

**Level:** That's important.

**Craig:** I can get to the um, I can get to the (laughing)...

**Jennifer:** (laughing)

**Craig:** I can get to help you know, if I'm stuck...

**Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** I can get to the embassy...

**Jennifer** and **Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** I can get to the bathroom and I can get to beer. That's all I can do.

**Jennifer:** Yeah. Those are important things...

**Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** Yeah.

**Jennifer:** Um, yeah so then I started taking sign language. It got offered and I just fell in love with the language and ended up, you know, just kind of falling into it. And uh, taking classes at Houston Community College, and SFA and um, just fell in love with it.

**Craig:** So, we now know it's easier than Spanish.

**Jennifer:** If you are a visual learner, for some people, it might be easier than Spanish.

**Level:** Yes. My sister is an example of that, actually. She, um...because it's like any other language, it's going to be more difficult to learn than, or it's going to be difficult to learn no matter what. But, if you are a more visual learner, like my sister did struggle with Spanish and other spoken languages but she picked up on sign language pretty quickly. So...yeah

**Craig:** So yourself, is it the same situation or did you have someone in your family?

**Level:** I did not, although I will say that it used to be more common that interpreters had Deaf family members. Um, but yeah, no I saw Deaf people at my campus and I was really nosey and wanted to know what they were saying (laughing)...

**Jennifer:** (laughing)

**Level:** ...and so I, uh, I got a finger-spelled alphabet. We don't spell everything that we are interpreting...

**Craig:** No, no, you couldn't possibly to do that...

**Leyel:** ...which is a common misconception, yeah. But I did get a finger-spelled alphabet and I tried to spell out, "Hi, my name is Leyel. Will you teach me sign language?" You know, and uh, they were very patient because that took about two hours to spell for me so, (laughing) with my little piece of paper...

**Jennifer:** (laughing)

**Leyel:** ...um, but they were so sweet and welcoming. They're very community-oriented so they just said, "Come sit with us and we'll teach you." And so after that I started taking classes um, I actually became a Christian through Deaf people which is crazy because I was a staunch atheist, a lot of stuff. They brought a tremendous amount of things or a number of things into my life and I appreciate the Deaf community.

**Craig:** Yeah, because I noticed that Leyel you, especially have the comic con stuff because I've seen Jennifer dress up a little bit.

**Leyel:** Yes, she's AWESOME at cosplay!

**Jennifer:** Yeah. (laughing)

**Craig:** I've seen more of yours (Leyel), like Snow White and other things like that...

**Jennifer:** Oh yeah, uh-huh...

**Craig:** ...where you're actually, you didn't seem to be at a comic con you seem to be doing it for school and for other things.

**Leyel:** Right, right. We do, we'll have different events for the students on campus um we do a lot um, I forgot to mention I'm a professor full-time, that's what I do.

**Craig:** Yes, are we here at...

**Leyel:** Yes, we're here at my college right now. (laughing)

**Jennifer:** (laughing)

**Craig:** ...we're here in your classroom.

**Leyel:** And I'm the Lead Professor at Lone Star-Cy Fair for American Sign Language Interpreting and it's so much fun, so uh, we get the college students together and we like to have a lot of, again, community-oriented events and so we'll have storytelling and songs and, and superheroes and princesses and all kinds of things and so yeah, it's just a good excuse to cosplay really.

**Jennifer and Leyel:** (laughing)

**Craig:** And I can see, like I said, I can see you get into the Comicpalooza, then you started to grow to Space City Con, which is also in Houston...

**Leyel:** Yeah, right.

**Jennifer:** Yup, yup

**Craig:** But then all the sudden you're like, you've got this thing called Blue Sun and I saw this and all the sudden I'm like, "What? What, they've gone..."

**Leyel:** What?! (laughing)

**Craig:** "...they've gone corporate."

**Jennifer:** We've gone legit (laughing)

**Level:** Yes. (laughing)

**Jennifer:** Yes.

**Craig:** So, exactly what is the plan for Blue Sun and, because I keep seeing other events, because I know you were in Dallas recently...

**Jennifer:** Yes, we were in Dallas.

**Craig:** ...but then all the sudden I started to see little, oh, interested in, you know, New Jersey...

**Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** ...New York, and it's like what is going on? Because...

**Jennifer:** Yeah

**Craig:** ...I did the same thing when, with my uh, with my panel moderation but they could care less about panel moderation in the comic cons...

**Jennifer and Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** They'll just grab any, any monkey that can speak...

**Level:** Any Joe Blow

**Jennifer:** (laughing)

**Craig:** Yeah

**Level:** I don't suggest that. Craig does a fantastic job. (laughing)

**Jennifer:** (laughing) I agree. Agreed, agreed.

**Craig:** I appreciate that...

**Level:** Yeah

**Craig:** ...but it's one of those things where it's very difficult to break in...

**Level:** Sure.

**Craig:** So, is that something you're trying to do? Trying to get in like, basically be THE interpreters for...

**Jennifer:** That is, I mean, that is one of the goals for sure. I, I have been a Deaf Ed teacher for 8 years and I would love to change my career into interpreting at comic cons and making that my career and um-

**Level:** That sounds so boring (sarcastic)... (laughing)

**Jennifer:** (laughing) I've got a great business partner here-

**Craig:** It's a lot of travel...

**Level:** Yeah.

**Jennifer:** And um, you know we, I decided I want to have, I want this to be legit. I want this to be the real thing and so we started Blue Sun Interpreting and we've filed, you know, as a business with the State of Texas and-

**Craig:** LLC, I saw that.

**Jennifer:** LLC, you know we're legit so we, that is the goal is to you know, hopefully get some contracts with some of these big cons that are over the country in multiple cities and we can be those, the interpreters, we know how to handle ourselves professionally, we're certified, we're qualified and then we can take on that responsibility of finding other interpreters in the cities and vetting them out ensuring that you are getting other qualified, certified or professional interpreters and then we'll take over all that scheduling and all the...

**Level:** Mayhem

**Jennifer:** ...the changing of the guards and the mayhem and figuring all that out so the people that are volunteering or the people who are on staff at the con don't even have to worry about that. You know, get a contract with us and we will take care of it.

**Level:** Did you see what had happened in South Africa with Nelson Mandela's Funeral?

**Craig:** Um...I, I remember vaguely because again I'm not in the community.

**Level:** Right, right...(laughing)

**Jennifer:** Right

**Craig:** But I remember that...

**Level:** it was a huge debacle...

**Craig:** ...wasn't it like, like he was the worst interpreter?

**Jennifer:** He was like...

**Craig:** ...or the laziest?

**Level:** I don't think he was even an interpreter...

**Jennifer:** He was like having a schizophrenic fit.

**Level:** Just some cray-cray guy (laughing)

**Craig:** Like something I would do, just kind of making crap up?

**Level:** It was pretty much that...

**Jennifer:** Yeah, yeah...

**Level:** ...and so you have your South African Deaf folks who, of course they use a different sign language than we do...and even knowing that, I'm still looking at this guy thinking, "That can't be legit. That can't be real." You know-

**Jennifer:** Yeah, you can tell there wasn't a language...

**Level:** Right...

**Jennifer:** There was no form or circumstance to it. It was just...

**Craig:** Just waving around like a chicken?

**Jennifer:** ...a repetitive motion over and over again and that was not...

**Level:** I mean it was a huge International event and so yeah, that's another thing we're hoping to bring...

**Jennifer:** Yeah, with the heads of countries and states and you've got this person...who is this person?

**Level:** "Who is that? Who vetted this person?" (laughing)

**Jennifer:** Next to the President. Like, "What is happening?"

**Level:** Yes.

**Jennifer:** Yes, so we will take over that vetting process... (laughing)

**Level:** (laughing)

**Jennifer:** ...and ensure that the people on stage with celebrities,...

**Level:** Right

**Jennifer:** ...you've got to be comfortable on stage with a celebrity, not freak out in front of big crowds and...

**Level:** Right

**Craig:** And how has that been because I noticed, like, even like a John Barrowman is, I bring him up specifically because I've mentioned him a lot on the podcast because I, I appreciate how he handles comic cons...

**Jennifer:** He's fantastic.

**Level:** He's great.

**Craig:** But, I've noticed that he, he's done so many and I don't think he's been around a lot of interpreters. In fact you two may have been the first that he had seen at an event...

**Jennifer:** I'm not sure.

**Level:** Yeah.

**Craig:** ...like that. How are they reacting? Because I, I know most of it is positive but what we, what I don't want is to have them turning you into a prop. Because I know like William Shatner...

**Level:** Sure, sure

**Craig:** ...he started talking to you guys, and he's fine but it was like now he's going to do schtick with a person verses, they've got a job to do.

**Level:** Right, mm-hmm

**Jennifer:** Right. There is definitely a fine line there and I think we have felt either one of two ways. Either the celebrity talent or guest, what have you, completely ignores that we're there and doesn't acknowledge it...

**Level:** Which is fine.

**Jennifer:** ...which is fine. And, or they make comments on it like, "What's happening? Oh who are you?"...

**Level:** (laughing) Yeah

**Jennifer:** Or, "What's happening?"...

**Craig:** But they're not used to seeing anybody with them. Or they're just used to the moderators.

**Jennifer:** Yeah. And we do try to say hi before hand and let them know if we have the time. To be like, hey, we're going to be your sign language interpreters, we're going to be here on the stage...

**Level:** We're not random people waving our hands around...

**Jennifer:** Yeah, this is why we're here...

**Level:** ...don't call security

**Jennifer:** But John Barrowman, we did interpret for him in Dallas. And he was fantastic...

**Craig:** He's fantastic every time.

**Jennifer:** Yeah

**Level:** He does, He actually does work with a foundation in the UK for what's called Hearing Dogs. And um, so the Deaf community overall is very familiar, even if they haven't watched some of his body of work, they're very familiar with him just from that where...

**Craig:** He did the um, he put the putty in his ear for like...

**Level:** Exactly

**Craig:** ...a day or...

**Jennifer:** Yeah

**Craig:** ...or just to see what it was like to be Deaf.

**Jennifer:** Yeah, exactly.

**Level:** Right, and so we got to , that was one of the times we got to get to talk to him just briefly and say hi we are going to be on stage with you and by the way, the Deaf people are very excited to see you because of XY and Z and so, um, he was great. He was like, "Oh, ok well I'm going to direct questions directly to them." and we said, "Well, do you want them to get in line?" "No, no, no. I will just stop the presentation and ask them directly." And you know um, so he was-

**Jennifer:** and he also told you, like, "I'm going to warn you, you know, I'm going to pick on you." And that's totally fine.

**Level:** (laughing) and he did.

**Jennifer:** and he was very sweet. Nobody has ever been mean or cruel...

**Level:** No

**Jennifer:** No, everybody has always been sweet...

**Craig:** No, and I think the reception is going to be overwhelmingly positive, I just, it's just a matter of how do people react to having a person their not used to. Because they're not used to that...

**Level:** Right

**Jennifer:** Right, yeah.

**Craig:** ...and especially in this security-conscious world. Especially with fans...

**Jennifer:** Sure

**Craig:** ...like, we've got Norman Reedus coming to Comicpalooza...



**Jennifer:** Ahh, so amazing!

**Level:** (laughing) (singing, "Ahhhhh!")

**Craig:** I know but he has a legitimate worry about being bitten.

**Jennifer:** Oh! Oh because he has been...

**Level:** Oh, I saw something about that, yes!

**Craig:** Well, because he's been bitten before...

**Jennifer:** Yes, yes

**Craig:** I...because he's on the Walking Dead. People are dressed up like zombies and then, especially women, I don't know if a lot of guys are doing it but a lot of women get real close and they like, like, bite him.

**Jennifer:** Like, nibble, yeah.

**Level:** We were at Walker Stalker recently and we heard about that...

**Jennifer:** We did Walker Stalker in Dallas and then the head of security told us a little story, so yeah. We do know it's a legitimate concern.

**Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** So I, I think they're worried about security because in this day and age you know because anybody who is not on stage or not supposed to be on stage is, technically, especially in the state of Texas, with our gun laws, could be a credible threat.

**Jennifer** and **Level:** (laughing)

**Level:** That is concerning, yes.

**Jennifer:** I, I think that was another reason that I wanted to make this agency or company legit. So that way we could get in a contract with the con,...

**Level:** Right

**Jennifer:** ..show that, like, we're here legitimately and the talent would know, like, "No, we're real. We're not just volunteering, some crazy fan that may be able to sign some words..."

**Level:** And we've seen that...

**Jennifer:** "...We are legit, this is our job, this is what we do and we're here to provide a service and provide equal access for any Deaf or Hard of Hearing people who just want to meet you and that's all it is." And so hopefully that, you know helps us do that.

**Craig:** What do you find is difficult when you're dealing with say, William Shatner who I saw, who is a tangent machine?

**Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** Who cannot finish a sentence because he's thinking about something else and you still have to translate it to some degree-

**Level:** Right

**Jennifer:** Yeah.

**Craig:** Is it, at some point do you just want to put your hands up and go, “I don’t know...”

**Level:** “I don’t know what he’s talking about!”

**Craig:** “...I’ll just wait until he gets coherent?”

**Jennifer and Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** I mean, it’s interesting to listen to when you’re there but I can’t imagine that it’s fun to sign something like that.

**Jennifer:** Right. I remember it being difficult...

**Craig and Level:** (laughing)

**Level:** I agree, yeah.

**Jennifer:** But I remember like, you...I just kept going. All of our interpreters, we just kept going...

**Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** Well, that’s also the good thing that if it’s, if they come up to you afterwards and they sign to you, “That, that didn’t make much sense.” And you can say, “You’re right.”

**Jennifer:** Yeah

**Level:** Yeah, we do, another job that both of us do, is we interpret phone calls for Deaf people. And talk about no context for anything, you know, we get these phone calls and people say, “Did you get it?” Well, I don’t know what you’re...what is it? What are you even talking about, you know, sometimes they’re talking about drugs, sometimes they’re talking about (laughing) I don’t know...

**Jennifer:** You have no idea what they’re talking about

**Level:** ...so with no context and rabbit trails, it can be very difficult. I think without any context and/or a point to your story, it does make it more difficult. (laughing)

**Jennifer:** Oh yeah, but you just keep going and just keep doing the best you can and...

**Level:** Right

**Jennifer:** ...at that point you just have to let the Deaf person, if they want to raise their hand and say, “What are you talking about?” ...

**Level:** (laughing)

**Jennifer:** ...then let them ask that question, I’m not going to ask it.

**Craig:** Do you have a mental system in place that helps you kind of keep track of the conversation that the person is having? So you can kind of go, if you get stuck on a word or a situation that you still have to think about how to translate it...

**Jennifer:** Right

**Craig:** ...but then you still have to listen to them jabber on...

**Jennifer:** Right

**Level:** Absolutely

**Craig:** ...so when you figure it out, you can still kind of get back with the flow.

Listen to the episode at <http://realitycheck.therealistsguide.com/episode-195-blue-sun-interpreting-sign-language-interpreters/>

**Jennifer:** Get back in there, yeah. That's one of the best things, that's why you also switch every 20 minutes and you have your team there, like...

**Level:** Sometimes the team can see what's going on on-stage, like if they're saying look at this and the interpreter on stage can't see what's being pointed at and so, yeah...

**Jennifer:** Yeah and so you, your team....you've seen us, they sit kind of in front of the other interpreter while the other one interprets in stage and they're there to help feed and if you get that lost look on your face...

**Level:** (laughing)

**Jennifer:** ...you can be like, "Oh here you go," ...

**Level:** Right

**Jennifer:** ...and help you get back on track too.

**Level:** Right, right

**Craig:** So you can prompt them a little bit. It's almost like having an earpiece...

**Level:** Exactly, yeah

**Craig:** ...but you don't need them, you're from a distance.

**Jennifer:** Yeah, yeah

**Craig:** So, the reception from folks who are not the talent and not necessarily the, I think a lot of people who are not Deaf, who don't understand the difficulties or the, and not even the difficulties, the lack of access...

**Level:** Access...

**Craig:** I think that's the biggest issue because they're like, "Why do they need interpreters?" And it's like, "Because they can't hear anything. Ok?"

**Level:** Right

**Jennifer:** Right

**Craig:** "Why do they get special treatment?" it's like, they don't get special treatment, it's just, they have to have certain things. Because I remember we did the movie.

**Jennifer:** Yes

**Jennifer** and **Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** With Jackie Earle Haley-

**Jennifer:** Jackie Earle Haley, yes.

**Craig:** And Jackie follows the podcast I believe, I know, he's at least on social media so hello Jackie. I hope that you come back soon...

**Jennifer** and **Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** ...um, it was a fantastic movie...

**Level:** It was great

**Jennifer:** Yes

**Craig:** But the set up early on was really weird because they has to get a light on you

**Level:** Right, but you can't wash out the screen obviously. That makes sense. But they were great. They worked with us and we were repositioned and everything worked out really well. Like, we've been repositioned at a few of the cons we've been at so we are not in the photos. We don't take offense to that (laughing) sometimes we don't want to be in the photos...

**Jennifer:** Yeah, yeah

**Level:** Um, but...

**Craig:** She wants to know, Jennifer wants to be in the photos...

**Jennifer:** I mean...

**Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** But she wants to be in the photos by herself, because I've seen...

**Level:** But not making an interpreter face.

**Jennifer:** (laughing)

**Craig:** She pays, she goes and gets them, I know you do, I've see you go get their autographs...

**Jennifer:** Oh yeah, on my time off I will go get that photo with that celebrity.

**Jennifer** and **Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** That's why I say the nerd, I think Jennifer is the real comic con nerd...

**Jennifer:** Yeah

**Level:** That's true.

**Craig:** ...who loves all the stuff...

**Jennifer:** The nerd's there, yeah.

**Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** ...because you're constantly getting the pictures there, the official pictures.

**Level:** Yes

**Jennifer:** Yes, yes.

**Level:** I would say over all the reception has been really great though, both from the staff, Comicpalooza, I can't say enough. They've given a discount code to our, um, just our group. They, um...

**Jennifer:** Which is ASL2016

**Level:** Indeed \$10 off. Woo-hoo!

**Jennifer** and **Level:** For the weekend pass.

**Level:** Yes. And you know, JR and everybody that we worked with...“No Fly Melody.” We have, uh, Melody, I don’t know how to say her last name...

**Jennifer:** I don’t know how to say it.

**Level:** She um, she was one of the ones working with the photographers in the front and she would just, we call her “No Fly” because she would just say...

**Craig:** I know about Melody.

**Level:** “This is the no fly zone and you don’t walk in front of these interpreters.” (laughing)

**Craig:** She is a...

**Jennifer:** “I will kick you out!”

**Craig:** She is awesome.

**Jennifer:** Yes.

**Level:** I love her. She’s come to some of our events since then so yeah, their staff has been great in working with us and trying to accommodate anything that we’ve needed within reason, obviously, so yeah!

**Jennifer:** Mm-hmm, they’ve been great.

**Craig:** And so has there been any weird things that have happened to you guys now that you’ve been in this, and I don’t mean bad things, just sort of weird things that you wouldn’t expect. ‘Cause, I know when I kind of called you out, and not in a bad way, you’re shot gunning was so fantastic and it was so distracting, but in a good way. I am looking at David Anders, he’s so cute and handsome...

**Jennifer:** He’s so cute and handsome. (laughing)

**Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** I can’t, but I’m also having a conversation with him and apparently I hug everyone I do panels with because I...

**Level:** I loved those pictures! (laughing)

**Jennifer:** Me too! That was so great.

**Craig:** I got pictures with Richard Harmon, I sat in his lap for the first 5 minutes of... with him and Ming Chen...

**Jennifer:** It’s fabulous

**Craig:** I don’t try to, it’s just...

**Level:** Right

**Craig:** But you know, David got all upset and it was very emotional. I wanted to make sure he knew I had his back.

**Jennifer:** Yeah.

**Craig:** But I’m talking to him and I can see you signing which is normal and it’s not a big deal and then all of the sudden he starts talking about shot gunning and you go all out...

**Jennifer:** Yeah.

**Craig:** ...and so, when I called you out you were stunned by it..

**Jennifer:** Right. I wasn't expecting it...

**Level:** Right

**Craig:** But you went with it.

**Jennifer:** Absolutely. And I didn't mind it either...

**Level:** She's a pro.

**Jennifer:** Um, then David looked at me too so that was great!

**Level:** (laughing)

**Jennifer:** (laughing)

**Craig:** But has that helped you now that you have been doing this enough to know that at some point, because I know one of your other interpreters was with William Shatner, because I remember him, because I have pictures of them...

**Jennifer:** Yeah, with Sarah-

**Craig:** Sarah Connor? Not Sarah Connor...

**Jennifer:** Cooper

**Level:** No but it'd be cool if her name was Sarah Connor! (laughing)

**Craig:** Sarah Connor was the Terminator. Sarah Cooper, yeah. Have you gotten more comfortable or is it still kind of, because you're dealing with a lot of celebrities that you really like. It's not just celebrities because I deal with celebrities I could care less about meeting them is not a big deal. It's the ones that you like that you get all flustered.

**Jennifer** and **Level:** Right.

**Level:** For me, I think that one of the harder ones, and this is going to sound so cheesy, especially because my students, who are way too young had no idea who I was talking about, but I was so excited at the first Comicpalooza to get to see Henry Winkler...because I love The Fonz and his body of work after that as well but that was my favorite role and um, and so... (laughing)...

**Craig:** I so campaigned to be the moderator for that.

**Level:** Oh my gosh, I love Henry Winkler so much and so I went up to, um... quite a few of the Deaf people got to meet with him and even just getting to meet with him myself, I'm sure I turned like 20 shades of red and, you know, I don't know. It was kind of difficult at first but he, he did refer to me while I was interpreting one time and he was like, "And what's your name?" And then he was like, "Beautiful interpreter." And I was just like "I'm just the interpreter, It's okay."

**Craig:** Well that's the other thing I was going to say is that I don't know if there's a...

**Jennifer:** (laughing)

**Level:** And it's like, "The Fonz thinks I'm pretty!" (laughing)

**Jennifer** and **Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** That's the thing is that you guys are not unattractive women...

**Level:** Well thanks, that's very sweet. (laughing)

**Jennifer:** (laughing) Thank you

**Craig:** We brought that up in the Ming Chen, part of the interview, it's hard to...

**Jennifer and Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** It's very difficult because you've got all these pretty people, much better looking than either one of us talking that the people kind of came to see. Is it like, oh do you guys just, oh well your pretty and you sign? Because that seems to be the key demographic you've got. Except for the one guy that's just average looking like me.

**Level:** I will say that Sarah was actually in the Ming Chen scenario as well...

**Jennifer:** (laughing) Oh, yes, yes...

**Level:** ...and what' so funny is that Ming was trying to give us a compliment but none of us could hear what he was saying and so, um, she kept looking at me for a feed, like we were talking about and I was like, "I'm not sure what he is saying," and so he had to repeat it a few times and what he was saying is that, "The interpreters are stunning." So then it sounded like we were fishing for a compliment (laughing)-

**Jennifer:** (laughing) Yeah.

**Level:** Yeah.

**Craig:** So you've got, we're almost out of time and I want to make sure people know where you're going to be. As we go through this month, we've got Deaf Con on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Jennifer:** Deaf Con is on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Craig:** And that is here at the...

**Jennifer and Level:** Lone Star College-Cy Fair.

**Level:** Yes, in the Conference Center.

**Craig:** What are the times for that?

**Level:** 10 am until 4 pm

**Craig:** Great. And then comes up Space City Con, which is a big deal because my wife and I are really big Alex Kingston fans...

**Level:** Oh yeah (laughing)

**Craig:** So you know. I have no connections over there at Space City Con except you two so you know, if you need someone who can't interpret, but you need someone like a body guard...

**Jennifer:** (laughing) There you go

**Level:** (laughing)

**Craig:** Then my wife and I and you guys are going to be in Dallas...

**Jennifer and Level:** Yes.

**Jennifer:** Very excited

**Craig:** I can't wait to see Peter Capaldi-

**Level:** Oh my gosh...

**Jennifer:** There are so many people in Dallas I can't even...

Listen to the episode at <http://realitycheck.therealistguide.com/episode-195-blue-sun-interpreting-sign-language-interpreters/>

**Level:** Dr. Who people, Arrow people, all kinds of people...

**Jennifer:** Everyone

**Craig:** This is their smaller con but it seems like it's the big one-

**Jennifer:** No, this is going to be the big, the one in February, the Fan Days, was their smaller one. This will be the Fan Expo, this is gonna be the big one...

**Craig:** This is the big one, yeah.

**Level:** There are more than 30 people already, 30 guests, so far.

**Jennifer:** Yes, there are a huge amount of guests.

**Craig:** And that is going to be the first weekend in June...

**Jennifer:** Yes, the 3<sup>rd</sup> through the 5<sup>th</sup>.

**Craig:** ...and of course, Comicpalooza...

**Jennifer:** Yes

**Level:** Woo-hoo!

**Craig:** ...where I, this is one of the official podcasts of Comicpalooza and this is the first of the, we are doing highlights of Comicpalooza...

**Jennifer:** It's so exciting

**Level:** Yeah

**Craig:** You're going to be there, and I believe that's the 17<sup>th</sup>-

**Jennifer:** The 17<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup>. Yes.

**Craig:** And that...

**Jennifer:** ...and Norman Reedus will be there...

**Level:** What?!

**Craig:** ...and Norman Reedus will be there. I'm more excited about all the Aliens folks.

**Level:** Oh my gosh, that's going to be great!

**Jennifer:** That's going to be fantastic!

**Craig:** Sigourney Weaver is actually going to be here,...

**Jennifer:** Yes

**Craig:** Bill Paxton is going to be here...

**Jennifer:** Yes. Incredible...

**Level:** What?!

**Jennifer:** ...it's going to be a great con for sure.



**Craig:** So, when you, now when you know someone's going to come ahead of time, do you like talk to them and say, ok look, I wasn't to get pictures with you later on and then they, because I see all the pictures you (Jennifer) get.

**Jennifer:** Right, right, right...

**Craig:** Like, like, the official ones, you sign and pay...

**Level:** (laughing)

**Jennifer:** ...I did do that, like, with David Anders. I was able to introduce myself and be like, "Oh we're going to be your interpreters and I'll see you later." And when I took my official picture with him, it was right before his panel and he was like, "Hey, we're going to have a great time and I was like, yeah, It's going to be fantastic, I'll see you up there." I mean, so, and then we took our picture. But um, I do try to yeah, get official pictures when I can and...

**Craig:** And post them onto...because you don't have a website yet, but you have a Facebook page...

**Jennifer** and **Level:** Right

**Craig:** So the last question is where can people find out about Blue Sun, which, where did that come from? Is it like, Blue Moon but the opposite?

**Level:** (laughing)

**Jennifer:** No, it's actually (laughing)...did you watch Firefly?

**Craig:** I did, but not like, again, not religious where I memorize all the stats.

**Level:** I got ya.

**Jennifer:** Okay, well, "Blue Sun" is like the evil corporation in the Firefly world...

**Craig:** Well it's good to name yourself after an evil corporation.

**Level:** Absolutely! Why not?

**Jennifer:** Well, it's got that...

**Level:** (laughing)

**Jennifer:** ...it's a beautiful name, Blue Sun, and, "Hey! That sounds pretty." But if you're in, deep into the geek world you're going to know, Oh, Blue Sun, that's from Firefly, that one season show from Joss Whedon-

**Level:** Yeah

**Jennifer:** You have that geek cred. But um, you can find us on Facebook. We have a twitter, which is @comicconterp...

**Craig:** And she's signing it to me like I know what she's doing-

**Level:** (laughing)

**Jennifer:** (laughing) That's for myself to help spell.

**Craig:** That's good. Because I'm watching the fingerspelling and I know "C" ...

**Level:** Yeah. There you go.

**Jennifer:** We're on Instagram too. We're trying to get more on that. So it's comiccon.terp

**Craig:** On Instagram

**Jennifer:** On Instagram

**Craig:** Well I will make sure to, I think I'm already following you guys

**Jennifer:** Yeah, I know we're following you and we've following Comicpalooza and everybody, it's just...

**Craig:** Well I can't wait. I think this is a fantastic thing to do...regardless of how widespread it's going to go. The fact that you guys, at least in Houston, and in Texas are doing this for everyone is fantastic. Um, it is always wonderful to see you guys, even when I'm not presenting...

**Jennifer:** (laughing)

**Leyel:** Thanks, ditto

**Craig:** It's always great to see you guys and I can't wait to see you again in June.

**Jennifer:** Yes, looking forward to it, fantastic.

**Leyel:** Yes, see you and Heather, thank you.

(Upbeat interlude music)

**Craig Announcing:** That's the show. Thanks to Jennifer and Leyel for having me out to the college. Can't wait to see them again in a few weeks. They do great work. Don't forget to download the app available on iTunes, Google Play, and in the Kindle store. You can follow us @RealityCheckPod on Twitter, I'm CraigPrice47 on Instagram, and send any comments, questions, or guest suggestions to [Craig@speakercraigprice.com](mailto:Craig@speakercraigprice.com). See you next week!

(Upbeat outro music)

**Transcription courtesy of Shiloh Self, Jacob Garner, and Joni Herbst, students of the American Sign Language Interpreter Training Program at Lone Star College-Cy Fair.**