



Dream of Travel Writing

Article Nuts and Bolts – Putting Together a Interview Piece

We are gonna be talking about Putting Together an Interview Piece. Last week how many of you were with us? Let me know in the chatbox if you were with us or you caught the replay last week when we spoke about Putting Together a Profile Piece because this is gonna be in many ways building on what we talked about last week, but also different because well kind of superficially or if you're not used to writing them, profiles and interviews seem kind of interchangeable.

You can often see, in fact I spent a lot of time in the database pulling some different sections from different magazines for us to look at. You can often see that in magazines they also seem a bit interchangeable, like this feature could be a Q&A or it could be a profile, but profiles as we looked at last week, are quite difficult to write. They structurally are very nuanced. They borrow not exactly from narrative, they borrow more in many ways from scene in a way like you would see in a narrative that is more of a screenplay type narrative or television show. There's a lot of different scenes so they're quite difficult things to write, but people can get very enthusiastic about them because you meet lots of people as you travel who are doing fantastic things or who are themselves fantastic or have really great backstories and there's tons and tons and tons and tons. I saw so many letters in the database, so many profile sections out there, but they're a bit hard to write. Interview pieces on the other hand are an absolute breeze to write.

So that being said, let's go ahead and dive in. What we're gonna look at specifically this week is I mentioned I had spent a bunch of time pulling different sections from all sorts of different magazines that are interview pieces for you. So we're gonna look at a lot of different interview pieces from different magazines, but they fall into certain buckets. And beyond that, the reason that I've pulled these for you is that there is something about interview piece... the thing about interviews is that they are very different than other articles because you're not really writing them exactly. You are crafting them out of some text that was exchanged, but they have a lot less of the structure, repeatable structure, journalistic structure that we've looked at in the series on Article Nuts and Bolts so far.

We started, those of you that remember, we started with news briefs and we talked about the news inverted pyramid structure and we talked about how to very quickly and easily put together a short piece which you can sell tons and tons of tons of two big magazines for a dollar a word. And the thing about these Q&As; is that none of those structural things really apply. You could say that in many ways Q&As; are devoid of structure in a way that essays also can be but differently, which you could think makes it harder to keep a reader interest in a Q&A. But that's where the questions come into effect.

So we've done some content in the past on interviews and you'll see that some of the interview article sections that recur in different magazines that we're gonna look at. You as



Dream of Travel Writing

Article Nuts and Bolts – Putting Together a Interview Piece

the writer really have a lot of options in terms of what questions you're gonna ask. And some of them you just don't. So we're gonna look at that divide and where it exists so that you can be aware of it. But I want you to know if you feel great about talking to people and you feel like theoretically, you should be able to do these interview things because you don't have to write much and it seems easy, but you're just a bit nervous about the interview part, I want to let you know that we also have a collection on how to do interviews where we look not just at what makes a great interview or how to get in touch with sources and get them to agree to your interview, but also I do interviews live with people from two convention visitor bureaus on one of the calls. And then I also show you how I cut that up into making an article.

So like I said, we're gonna talk about what makes profiles different that you can't ignore in your pitch and how that comes a lot down to this structure or lack of structure question. Then we're gonna talk about the different kinds. I've put in air quotes there of interviews because these are very loose buckets, but they're really helpful for thinking about how you generate article pitch ideas, okay? So then we're gonna pull over. I've pulled up a few different ones for you, one that we can look at in a little more depth and then I've also pulled up three different interviews for you from the same magazine so you can see how they can vary in a magazine setting where the questions are able to be quite different. So I've pulled up one interview for you that's a little bit more, you could call it like pedestrian in terms of how the questions are set up and one where the questions are a bit more interesting. So you can see how those vary even within one magazine and then we're gonna talk about how to pitch these.

So I wanna know first and foremost when I say that an article is really rubriced, what that makes you guys think of, what that means to you because it was interesting. I was looking up this word earlier to see kind of if there was a clinical definition that would be worth sharing with you guys and I was really intrigued that it appears in the Oxford English dictionary but it doesn't appear so much in some other ones. So it might be a bit of a British word that I have picked up that I use.

But the idea with something being really rubriced and in particular the idea that I think that not everyone is necessarily thinking about so much when they put together their pitch. You tend to think about it once you have an article assignment that you're working on. But I definitely see people think about it less when they're at that pitching stage is a definition that I found that I really like, which is around, this is from the Oxford English dictionary and it's around the concept of rules. So it says that a rubric is a set of instructions or rules. Now something that I've seen come up, I've been having a lot of new coaching calls with people who have just joined the program recently, so I've been seeing a lot of folks recently who have just been pitching on their own in the wild. In the wild as in, you know, out in a non-institutional setting and how they go about conceiving articles' ideas.



Dream of Travel Writing

Article Nuts and Bolts – Putting Together a Interview Piece

And one of the really big things that's a paradigm shift when you get really into this rabbit hole of how to become a rock star person that gets a 95% response rate is to follow the rules. And when you are writing articles, you can pitch so many different ideas. You can get assigned all these great things to learn about. There's so much you can do. It's entirely under your own steam. But on the other side of the desk, as they say on the other side where the editor sits, there are rules that the editor has to follow. There's rules she has to follow about what is the style of her publication. There's rules she has to follow about length. There's rules she has to follow about who specifically they are allowed or not allowed to feature, about what destinations they are or are not allowed to feature.

And if you have not spent a lot of time in contact with an editor like you don't have or haven't had a publication that you write for regularly, it's easy to not have brushed up against these. But once you start working really closely with an editor, then you get to hear all these little things like, "Oh no, we don't cover that hotel because our publisher da da da da..." Or "Oh yeah, we really aren't looking for any more articles about the U.S. because we are a Canadian publication and we wanna cover the world and Canada. But we can't just write about America all the time. So we really are not interested in those ideas anymore."

So unless you talk to an editor, it's easy to not run into these roles. And when I'm out talking to people and going to conferences and things like this, I listen for these because these are the things that I always see are really aha moments for writers. So this concept of an article being rubricked is like an extreme way of saying there is no latitude and it has to follow very specific rules to the letter and you cannot do anything past that. So some folks have said in the chatbox that it checks off all the items on a list of guidelines, that it follows a protocol or that it follows set parameters. And actually I challenge you to think that all of those definitions that you guys gave, they actually apply to all articles for a magazine, but you just don't necessarily know all the rules yet.

Now when a section is highly rubricked, what that means is more that you have very little choice about what's going to go into the article in a way. You have choice in terms of, you know, if it's a what to see, what to eat, where to sleep, obviously you get to choose what hotels, right. But if they typically wanna see one expensive, one budget and one boutique, then you have less choice than you thought. Or if they also want preferably for the price ranges to be, you know, this one's about 200% more than that one and then the mama bear one's about 150% in the middle, these are things that you might not know, but that are kind of known internally and probably not put on the page for the freelance writer because they expect that you will look at the past articles and figure that out. Now is this a reasonable expectation? In theory, yeah, but they're not telling you to make sure to look for those things and you might not understand that that is important to them.



Dream of Travel Writing

Article Nuts and Bolts – Putting Together a Interview Piece

So when articles are really heavily rubricked, what it means is it's kind of like a follow or else. So you'll see with the interview pieces that we're gonna look at that there are some that are like this and there are some that are not. So what I mean by that is I mentioned that there's two different types of articles, full articles that we're gonna look at later and one is a bit more pedestrian and the other ones have more kind of latitude in the questions. So you'll see a little bit of that when we get to the examples. But you're also gonna see when I start showing you the different sections in different magazines.

But I wanted to tell you first why am I gonna show you about 18, 17 different magazine sections that are all interviews and this is why. Because you can meet somebody and think they're great and think you should pitch them and kind of feel like, "Oh, I really wanna profile this person in their place and their backstory and all these things." And there might be so many great things going on about them that they really need to be in lots of different articles for lots of different audiences to do all of the great things that you want to write about justice because if you just put them in one article and especially in one pitch for one editor, what's gonna happen is it's not gonna be clear what the takeaway for the reader is. I remember somebody saying once that she had a music background specifically in songwriting and that that was incredibly helpful to her because when it comes to articles and especially pitches she said, "With a song, we only have one idea. You don't have that many words really. You might have like 100 or 150 words that kind of repeat over and over again, so you have to be really stuck on this one idea that you want to get across." And that's the same with article ideas.

Now we think about that. I talk about it and everything, but we don't necessarily think about it in something like an interview or a profile. Last week when we talked about profiles, we talked about how to encapsulate something big in a small space by being selective with what we choose to display, but right now what I'm challenging you to think is that you can take somebody big who has lots of different facets and polish them all kind of individually for different magazines.

So what you'll see as we go into looking at the specific opportunities in different magazines, the specific sections is that there are a lot of ones that are perhaps, I'll show you the three different categories, there are a lot of ones that are perhaps overlapping. So you might see, for instance, something when we talk about celebrity interviews, where that person would also work for a section you're going to see when we look at "average Joe" sections or something that you saw in an indie magazine. So let me explain what these three main types are. So the "average Joe" and I can't do it without doing air quotes. So that's why I said heavy on the air quotes here. The "average Joe" interview piece means someone who's not Sandra Bullock or George Clooney or Amal Clooney, you know, or Angelina Jolie or



Dream of Travel Writing

Article Nuts and Bolts – Putting Together a Interview Piece

whoever. The "average Joe" piece means this is not somebody who's like an international household name, but they can be your next door neighbor, but they aren't always.

So in some cases this "average Joe" is gonna be a person who in their neighborhood or at their coffee shop might be a totally normal person, but in their field they're actually very famous or maybe they're not exactly famous and we can argue over what famous means and how famous is subjective. Maybe they're not exactly super famous, but they've just done something recently that's worth writing home about as they say. Perhaps they've written a book about something very unique. Perhaps they have accomplished something unusual or perhaps they've just started a new initiative. I was talking about the "average Joe" here, so this could be your neighbor who's done something that in their field is really important. Perhaps they're scientists.

And I have a friend who's just a totally normal friend of ours, a friend of my husband's from growing up and he's a professor in MIT, but there's lots of professors in MIT, so that in itself isn't necessarily anything, and a few years ago he discovered, I'm not exactly sure how you can discover this, but he did a really landmark paper on how you can use tree bark to filter out 99.9% of the things in water that make it unsafe to drink when you're out in the wild. So this is basically the same success rate that you're gonna do with most of the things on the market that people pay a ton for when they go camping and backpacking and different things like that. And he ran some experiments around this. I'm not exactly sure what he did, but it's one of those things that's so basic and so cool, you could write about this anywhere. And this is just a guy that I know that my husband went to school with. So there's a lot of these kind of "average Joe" folks that you no doubt know from your life that have something interesting that you can be profiling them about or interviewing them about.

So I mentioned earlier, profiles and interviews are kind of two sides of the same coin. The real difference only is which ones are available in which magazines and what kind of piece do you wanna write. So if you are writing a profile, like I said, it can be a lovely piece of art. These can be really great clips. I know a lot of people who love writing profile, but for some folks you're not ready for that. You're just getting into interviews. I was chatting with somebody the other day who's really nervous about doing interviews and this can be a really great way to do it where you are just doing one step at a time where you're gonna do the interview, you're gonna cut it up for a nice Q&A piece, but you don't have to worry about also doing this beautiful story structure on top of it to do it justice.

So the next piece, obviously is celebrity interviews. When I talk about interviews, I think a lot of people think about the interview pieces in magazines as being specifically celebrity interviews. And the ones that I've pulled out to show you, I've pulled a really interesting selection in terms of not just showing you different ways that celebrities can be treated as in



Dream of Travel Writing

Article Nuts and Bolts – Putting Together a Interview Piece

their person, but the question specifically in their interviews and magazines that you might not be thinking about that you could take these things to. There's one in particular that I hope will get a little chuckle or a little something out of you guys. And the last one that I have and I have it out here separated as a third category because it's different and I've also pulled some full articles of this type to show you so that you can see how.

So the indie magazine interview feature is something where it's still gonna be a Q&A, but it's going to be deeper. Let's just say. So you'll see what I mean when we look at the different sections as they appear in different magazines. But also when we look at the full ones, so I'll leave that deeper, kind of a bit vague so that you can see for yourself and we can chat more about it later. So let's get into these. So first for you, I've got some "average Joe" and again, ish, "average Joe" in air quotes interview sections. So let's look here. And again, like I said, I've got about 17 of these so I'm gonna take maybe like 30, 40 seconds per one. So if you have questions about these individually, they're all in the travel magazine database so I'm not gonna be able to stop and take questions about each one because then we'll get too behind in the slides. And don't forget that there's also a delay. So I'll probably already have moved on to the next slide by the time that you have a question about one.

Okay. So the first one I've gotten here is a publication called Mindful. Now again, remember this is in the "average Joe"ish' section. This is a publication that focuses on mindfulness and meditation, working that into your everyday life and they have a section that occurs every issue. It's called "Walk the Talk." Now it's a Q&A that's got a short third person introduction covering who the person is, what they did, what they do and about six questions which cover their career, how they got into mindfulness and meditation, how it helps them or other people and any future plans.

Now you'll notice that there's about six questions here and we've already seen four topics, so that's, you know, most of the questions there. And something that I wanna point out here because I'm not necessarily gonna reread it for you each time we see an article is that there's a very recurring structural element that you'll see in these pieces, which is that there's often an introduction which is usually maximum 300 words. It's written in third person about the person and what they do and then it goes into the Q&A. So that's something that you're gonna see recur. So let's look at some examples.

So they've profiled someone who is a meditation instructor and nightclub doorman, cool twist, someone who's a mindfulness instructor and a law professor, someone who's a psychotherapist and social worker and how she uses mindfulness to help people open up. So what you can see here is that they've essentially for this walk the walk, not just chosen to profile people who are in the meditation industry, but also to show instances that have a cool



Dream of Travel Writing

Article Nuts and Bolts – Putting Together a Interview Piece

counterpoint between mindfulness and something else. So that's what they're looking for here.

And this is the kind of thing, and you'll see this as we go through these different examples where you can just kind of keep your ear pricked for this sort of thing. You can also kind of put it out there in your friends and family circle because that's the best way to find these people honestly, is those loose connections between people that you already know very well who are really happy to introduce you over to some of these people to profile. So this one you'd be looking for people who care about mindfulness and do something with it. Like there's some sort of mindfulness instructor, a meditation instructor or something like that, but then they also have another profession that's quite different.

So here's another one, Men's Journal. Big magazine, good pay, newsstand, lots of opportunities in there. Also write about travel. They've got a really neat "average Joe" Profile section which is in the notebook, which is their large kind of mete front of book section, so they do about 500 to a thousand word long articles which have third person and then the Q&A as usual and you'll see here that they profile people that you wouldn't necessarily think about as the men's journal profilee and that's because men's journal is always gonna have a picture of a celebrity on the cover and they're gonna have a full profile on that person that's written in third person.

That's gonna be one of their features. But this is something else that they have in front of book and again, it's going to pay probably a dollar a word if not more. So in this case, they're looking for people like they have a location scout for films talking about defining moments in his career. Someone who's a writer talking about his new story collection and life in Montana. These are very easy people to come across through networks that you're already in, that your significant other is in, that your best friend is in, things like this.

So next we've got...whoops, I'm missing this. So this is Blue Mountain Life and the focus. This is actually on the Blue Mountains in Australia. Okay. So they have a section called people that is 1000 to 1200 words and they frequently can be written either as a profile or as a third person Q&A. So when they're written as a third person Q&A, again, they're gonna look at their childhood career, future plans and thoughts about the Blue Mountain area. This is that rubric. You have to include questions that touch on these things. It's very easy to have a really cool interview and hear the person talk about all sorts of stuff that they're doing, that sounds great, that you wanna include and then turn that piece in to the editor and then have it be a big gong like, you know, when a gong hits..with the editor because you didn't follow the rubric of the content that they need to have that their readers expect to have in here every time.



Dream of Travel Writing

Article Nuts and Bolts – Putting Together a Interview Piece

So we saw this with the Mindfulness one as well. So what are some examples? So they have somebody who's a country music singer that talks about her childhood, how she got started, what she thinks of her hometown. There's someone who's...there's a retired couple who has created art representing the area they live and covering their previous careers. There's somebody who has experience teaching and volunteering in Nepal on a school trip from the same Bathurst area talking about the country where she was and her volunteering work there with her school.

So the next one here, this is from an airline magazine and there's a lot of these airline magazines and I've picked a couple of different ones to make sure that we didn't have too many different magazines that are too similar. So I'm trying to give you a wide breadth here. So this is from Sawasdee, which is the custom magazine for Thai Airways. So their spotlight has again third person introduction. It's about 700 words long. You're sensing a theme here and they cover their career, connection with Thailand and any personal anecdotes from their work or personal life. So that's actually a bit broader than some of these other ones, right? So they've got somebody who is a designer talking about her latest collection and identity as Thai. There's somebody who's a model talking about making it to the final six in the Miss Universe competition. Somebody who is a photo journalist and holding an exhibit in Bangkok but isn't necessarily Thai. So this one is gonna be one of those examples like we're gonna look at later when we look at the full articles where you can go different directions based on the person and what they do, but that's not always gonna be the case.

So this one, Hobo, this is actually, I have two from Hobo in here, and Hobo's technically an independent magazine, but I put one here in this "average Joe" section and one in the celebrity section because they have very different types of Q&As; and so I wanted to show that to you. So here they have a focus on the person's career, but also some questions including their personal life, inspirations, opinions on humorous topics. We're actually gonna look at some of these together and you're gonna see how the questions change very, very much from person to person. But I wanted to show you, this is the counterpoint to cover which is their more celebrity focused one. So the people that they've interviewed here are someone who is a biologist and a photographer, a writer and a poet and a screenwriter, okay? So these are more of the type of people that you could just come across.

This one also is an independent magazine, but they have a very mainstream magazine type interview section called Three Questions, so it's only about 400 words and they have the short third person intro and then they talked about what the person does and a bit about their backstory and it just has three questions. So the questions can cover their career, a big change in their life or their thoughts on a particular topic. So they've got somebody who left a career in publishing for gardening, talking about how to find calm in the city and the courage to change careers.



Dream of Travel Writing

Article Nuts and Bolts – Putting Together a Interview Piece

They've got an artist talking about what inspires her and her recent exhibition in New York. So you might also notice that a lot of these people may have done something that you can hear about through the grapevine, but they may have done something that would be, let's call it moderately newsworthy. So these are also good places to stick those people that you might get press releases about. Or you can also just cruise PR Web. And I'll put this in the chatbox. PR Web for press releases and also travel media. You can cruise those for press releases and find people who can work for these profile sections as well. If you feel like you don't know people or you don't have a network.

Now I talked a little bit about this before, so I don't wanna labor about it too long, but what does celebrity really mean? I've tried to break it out to people who are specifically famous in their field. I've kept those apart. This is meant to be more for people who are quite quite, whether their film stars or perhaps like really top athletes or something like that might. But you'll see that celebrity can be a little different for every arena. So this is Hemispheres. It's the publication for United Airlines and they have a section every issue called The Hemi Q&A, and this is usually like one page. It's got a photo of the person and then the question is around the side and again it's got an introduction of about 200 words which covers what the celebrity is known best for in the third person. Then they have a structured Q&A that focuses on the career, but especially on new projects. But look at how long this is 2000 to 2,500 words. That's an awesome paycheck to get from Hemispheres, which pays a dollar a word. Okay, so I've got one of these pulled up and we're going to look at later what they mean by structured Q&A here.

Family Traveller, there's two Family Traveler magazines. There's a new one from the same people that came out of the U.S. recently and about I think last fall that has one L, so if you see two L's, in this case it means it's the UK version. So they've got one where it's not someone who is famous in Family Travel. It's someone who is famous and they talked to them about family travel, so it's called celebrity Q&A. It's about 1000 words long, but they asked them about the celebrities' past travel with their family or their own childhood trips, their future holiday plans and any trips for traveling with kids. So here we are looking at the celebrity from a very specific lens, which is the lens of what the magazine focuses on and you'll see they've got folks here like makeup artist, Bobbi Brown, actress Emilia Fox. So I'm so sorry I left the focus off this one as well.

High Times if you don't know what it's focused on, and this is a marijuana-oriented magazine and the one that always catches my eye when I go through the database is they've got an issue with Obama holding a big bong on the cover, and I'm really not sure if that's photoshopped or not. So High Times is a marijuana focus magazine, which is less marijuana business. There's quite a few that are marijuana business focus these days, but this one is more marijuana for consumers and they have a section called The High Times Interview that



Dream of Travel Writing

Article Nuts and Bolts – Putting Together a Interview Piece

is a profile of a famous person that incorporates the person's career, personal life and thoughts on cannabis, the cannabis industry and their personal experiences with the drug. So like we saw with Family Traveller, this is something where they're gonna take somebody famous, they'll touch on why they're famous, but then they're also gonna look at that person through the lens of the magazine. So here they've got a rapper, they've got comedian, they've got author Lee Child who my husband really likes. I'm going to have to tell him to read this article.

So another one here, we've got TrueJet. This is another airline magazine, but I wanted to show you this one because this one has a slightly different take on what famous means. So TrueJet is a regional more low cost carrier that flies I think just within India or maybe just regionally and they have a section called "Face2Face" which is again on the longer side, 800 to 1500 word interview with a prominent Indian from actors to artists to politicians. And this is one of those things that it can be a profile third person version or it could be a Q&A and they cover people like Shashi Tharoor, if you don't know him, he's as a very, very big author. So here they're covering people who are really, really well-known but have that importance to the audience, which is that they are really an India specific carrier.

Now I want to show you this one because this is another example of an airline magazine and how they might take somebody who's very famous, but then there are gonna narrow it even for the airline magazine. This isn't gonna be your run of the mill kind of celebrity. What they're doing these days, new projects profile. It's about trips. So this is called "Tripping With" and it's a celebrity Q&A in 800 words where it covers topics like their favorite locations, childhood holidays, and their favorite style of travel. Now this is different than the celebrity recommendations piece that we're gonna look at next week because this is more an interview of the person's thoughts as it comes to travel and they do folks from all over. You can see that they have done a piece on Jamie Oliver.

Now this is that other one that I promised we were gonna get to, which is the second one from Hobo, which is called "Cover." And this is that more general one where they've got a profile of a celebrity, an actor, artist, photographer, musician, and it's about 2000 words. It talks about what they're known for in the third person and then goes into a Q&A. Now here's one where it's really long. It's in a relatively independent magazine, but it's pretty rubricked and it's a very famous celebrity type person talking about their life in an independent magazine. So this is really different than what we're gonna see in some of the independent magazines, but it does come up. There's a lot of really beautiful independent magazines like Cherry Bombe and Gentlewoman and this one Hobo where they do..Travel Almanac is another one where they're able to get those really big celebrities like Willem Dafoe I saw on the cover of Travel Almanac on there and to do these interviews for that magazine. And that can also be another tip off for you as you're looking for independent magazines that like



Dream of Travel Writing

Article Nuts and Bolts – Putting Together a Interview Piece

wow, if they can get this person to be there with the magazine then this means that they have a legit operation going on. So in this case they have 12 questions that they ask, they focus on the person's career and briefly touch on their personal life.

So like I said, this is the more traditional celebrity-oriented one but in an unusual setting. So this was the last one that I wanted to show you. This is about the kind of people who are famous in their arena. So this is Cross Country which is a magazine on free flying sports around the world. If you ask me a free flying sports, I can't quite tell you, but it's kind of things I think like hang gliding and kind of different stuff like that. So they've got a Q&A. Again, 700 words. We keep seeing that magical number where they ask about eight questions focused on the person in relation to that sport and this is gonna focus on people who are famous within that sport but who've done really big things. So like they do have one here where it's somebody who just entered their first competition, but they've also got people talking about placing in the paragliding competition for what is it paragliding...the Red Bull paragliding. And they've also got the Paragliding World Championships.

So this is the kind of thing where you can also be looking up, you know, say you find a magazine, say that's a topic you're interested in, like rock climbing for instance, someone I coach is a big climber, which I used to be as well. And you can say, "Hey, I wanna write for this magazine. Oh, this is a great excuse for me to interview people who are big in this field and some other cool article ideas as I'm writing up this interview, which I'm uniquely qualified for because I have a background in this field."

So let's look quickly at how these indie magazine interview features are different. Like I told you, so independent magazines that we often call indie magazines tend to have a really unrubricated magazine in general. They don't really have a table of contents. They don't often have sections that repeat every single month. Some of them are primarily repeatable sections and some just have none. So you're gonna see a lot of independent magazines where we say there's 45 features per issue and they can be this or they can be that or they can be this other thing. And this is one of those examples.

So this one's called Upstate Diary and it focuses on artists and creatives who work close to nature. And there's about 10 features that take the form of profiles of artists or creative people that can also appear as a Q&A. And again they're pretty long and the ones in the independent magazines tend to be. So this is a 1000 to 2000 words. So we've got that same short third person introduction and then structured questions. So this is gonna cover the person's career, childhood and personal life with a focus on their art and inspirations and usually as well talking about how nature works into it, asking them about their location, if they live in a rural location or how they draw inspiration from nature.



Dream of Travel Writing

Article Nuts and Bolts – Putting Together a Interview Piece

So here you'll see they do have some quite famous people like fashion designer Zac Posen and his new cookbook. They've got retired diplomat, they've got a clay artist as well, a ceramicist. So this is the kind of thing where they're a little bit people who you might find through your network. They're a little bit people that you might see giving a talk in the community or something like that and ask if you can interview them afterwards. But the people for the independent magazines tend to be, I would call them slightly famous or famous in their space to a degree that they have some fans.

So here's another one. So this magazine is called Bedboat. They have a section called "Humans" that's got five articles and they usually appear as Q&As;. So this one's a bit shorter. They can be shorter. They can be longer 500 to 1500 words and again, they talk about the person's career and personal life and include entertaining and thought-provoking anecdotes. So this is that kind of vanilla, you could almost say interview because it's really open in terms of what it can cover, which gives you the person doing the piece, freedom from that rubric where you can really just talk about what is interesting about the person, okay? So here they've got people who are buskers, which means they perform outside on the street. They've got people who...oh yeah, this one is a neat one. Someone who started the Victory Gardens, which is an initiative in Vancouver that encourages community gardening and I really like this one, a hairdresser who gives free haircuts to the homeless in the UK.

So another one here we've got Honore, this one's a little bit more on the fashion side of creative. They've got five features and sometimes their Q&A, so they are also long because they're in the feature section, so they're gonna be thousand to 1,000 to 2,500 words and they've got people like a photographer who took a portrait of herself everyday for a year for five years. They've got a Paris opera director, they've got an artist who's got an exhibition. So like I said, a lot of these ones are people that you can either find out about through, you know, press releases that are going around or just things that you hear. And when you go to events it's really easy to see something is going on and to say, "Hey, would you mind if I pitched a story, an interview story about you to some magazines?" and get their permission for that. 'We'll talk more about how to pitch these later.

So here's another one Got a Girl Crush and this focuses on profiles of inspirational women. They've got about 10 of these feature articles per issue. Some of them are gonna be Q&As;. And again, these are 500 to 1500 words. So it's that range where it depends how much juice you kind of get out of there. So they've got the mayor of Barcelona, they've got so much text in here, I can't quite find. Okay. Chelsea VonChaz is the founder of # Happy Period, which distributes hygiene kits to homeless women. So these are women who kind of can be big figures like the mayor of Barcelona, but they also can run movements. So this might be something that you're on social media and you see something's happening and you reach out to the person who's starting it and ask if you can profile them as well.



Dream of Travel Writing

Article Nuts and Bolts – Putting Together a Interview Piece

So I think this is the last one in here. This one's called Huck and this is a magazine that's also super independent, but more on the youth kind of activism side. So there are Q&As; range from 5 to 1000 words on the shorter side and the introduction, again, quite short from 50 to 200 words. And they talk to people like antiestablishment politicians. They've got a lot of those in Italy right now and Syrian rappers. They featured somebody who's an American author who talks about how the internet is driving people insane. And they asked him 13 different questions about his take on the digital age, delving into everything from the troubles of social media and smartphone addicts to podcasts, the democratization of the arts.

So what do all of these different things that we've looked at share. They tend, as you've noticed, to be dramatically on the longer side, a lot of stuff at 1,000 words, 2000 words, 2500 words, and a lot of people say these days you just can't get word counts like that from editors. But they're a lot happier to give them for these Q&A pieces than they are for a lot of features. At the same time, you are seeing a lot of things in there like I said, that 700 number that we see recurring again and again and again, but that's not shabby especially when it's a magazine that's paying you a dollar a word and these Q&A pieces are very easy and fast to write up. And you'll also see, like I said, that they're almost always, always preceded by that concise intro which can sometimes be 300 words, so sometimes it's almost a small article in itself where you're really tactfully almost like a small profile presenting that person in all of their multifaceted greatness before you lead into that Q&A with them.

So what do you see that's different in these different articles? The indies are much less likely to be rubriced and they cover people from a lot of different disciplines in one magazine, which is not necessarily gonna always be the case. So for instance, like with the Hemi IQ, you'll see they have a lot of actors and people related to film there. A lot of the other ones that are really kind of "famous celebrities" are going to be a little bit more limited in what fields they pull from. Whereas when you get into the indies, you see that they have in one magazine, they've got a profile of a photographer next to an activist next to like a street musician, right. So, while the front of the profiles tend to be shorter, they also tend to be laser focused. Either they're very heavily rubriced like that Tripping With that we saw in Qantas where they're really straight around the person's travel or they might be really focused on what that person is doing now. For instance, what's new in their career.

Okay. So let's pop over and I'm gonna show you a couple different examples of these. As I mentioned, I've got three other ones that are all from the same outlet. These are all from Hobo because I wanna show you how in those less rubric settings, how the question's really change a lot from interviewee to interviewee.

So here we've got John Lithgow in Hemispheres for the Hemi IQ. So here's the intro. I just wanna read you the intro so we can see how this mini profile that I discussed played out and



Dream of Travel Writing

Article Nuts and Bolts – Putting Together a Interview Piece

in case you want to get ahead on opening tabs, these are the tabs for the other one from Hobo that we will look at as well. And I've pulled these ones because not every magazine has full text of articles online where you can read it online without having to go into one of those digital versions. So one of the reasons also I chose these was so I could give you guys the direct links as well.

So let's look at the intro here with John Lithgow. John Lithgow doesn't hesitate to call himself a character actor. Given his diverse and unpredictable resume, it's not hard to see why. In the past year, the 17 year old stage and screen veteran has played a lovable murder suspect in the NBC sitcom *Trial and Error*, a ruthless real estate mogul in the Sundance hit *Beatriz at Dinner* and *Winston Churchill*, which was fantastic, if any of you guys have seen that, in Netflix's *The Crown*, a role for which he won an Emmy. He's also popped up in two franchise sequels "Pitch Perfect 3" and "Daddy's Home 2." "I don't know what happened" he says via home from his New York apartment where he confesses to still being in his bathrobe. "It turns out growing old is a huge asset for a character actor. It must be that I have a lot less competition." So this is one quote that they've included in this kind of third person profile bit here.

But like we saw last week when we were looking at these profile pieces, those quotes add so much in a profile piece in terms of showing you the personality of the person. So here they've added a little description there where he confesses to still being in his bathrobe, but they also have this line, "It must be that I have a lot less competition," which is quite sanguine and shows you kind of his sense of humor, the profile or the intro goes on.

But this winter, the multihyphenate star, he's also an amateur painter, Grammy nominated children's musician and picture book author is devoting his attention to most intimate project yet with the Broadway debut of *John Lithgow: Stories by Heart*, an updated incarnation of the one man show he toured with in 2008. This production allows Lithgow to pay homage to his late father, a pioneer in regional theater by conjuring characters from some of the classic stories his dad read to him as a child, including P.G Wodehouse's "Uncle Fred Flits By" and Ring Lardner's "Haircut." It promises to be a touching hilarious evening with, he says possibly a memorable mishap or two.

So what does this set up for us? Very similarly to the profile that we looked at last week, this sets up for us not the entire background of this actor. It doesn't even mention the TV show that he, I think became quite a bit famous for starring in that might've been his break, if you were to call it that. It positions you around how the person writing this piece, how the person doing this interview wants you to see him, it positions him around what he's doing now and what he's doing next and what the interviewee is going to ask him about. So this is how you focus that intro. It's not, you know, this person was born in Kalamazoo, they later came to



Dream of Travel Writing

Article Nuts and Bolts – Putting Together a Interview Piece

New York for school, dropped out to become an actor or da, da, da. We're not looking at that because it's not relevant to what is at hand.

So what is at hand in this interview here? So the interviewee begins and you'll see that these aren't, what are you working on right now? What is your best memory? These questions here are not quite so specific in that vein. Some, especially the shorter, like those 700 word ones, some of those will have questions that are quite short and quite repetitive. In this case, they're going to be kind of going with the flow a little bit more, but you'll see that the topics move through some very specific areas. So he gives a little context the interviewer here.

We're speaking just a week after New York repealed it's 91 year old cabaret law, restricting dancing. What would your fire and brimstone preacher from 1984's Footloose say? He says, "I don't even know that news. Well, it would never have happened if I had been there." So this first question, we're bringing in a little background. We're showing that he's got Broadway history, right? And this 1984 reference kind of sets the tone of how long he's been on Broadway and we get a little bit of flavor as they call it from John Lithgow here as well. Then the interviewer goes on to say, "You previously toured Stories by Heart" dropping some more kind of bread crumbs of his history here. "What prompted you to revisit the show and what's different about the Broadway production?" So now we start to get into the nitty gritty of why he does the work that he does specifically on Broadway. So I'm not gonna read all of this to you verbatim, but I wanna kind of go through the questions especially.

So you'll see that the questions don't always link together. In interview pieces, they're very frequently separate sections that are strung together in the way that makes the most sense for the reader by the interviewer after the interview. This is not gonna be necessarily the order in which these things happen. So you'll see he talks about being on tour, Greensboro, blah, blah, performing on Broadway. If you go to Kansas City, see the Arabia Steamboat Museum. Then we have a complete change of tack. "Your father devoted his life to theater, but it was never a steady gig for him and as a result your family moved around a lot. What sort of emotions did it bring up for the two of you when you met with such success where he had struggled?" So now it's like this father question, which seems to be out of nowhere. In the conversation they had, it may have made a lot more sense. It may not have, but it probably did.

So what's happening here is that we've got questions that are establishing background. We've got questions that are establishing his professional background, questions that are establishing his personal background. Then what? "Have any of your three children wanted to follow in your footsteps and if so, what did you tell them?" So we talked about how this worked for him with his father and then we move into how it's working with his kids. Then, "Pretty early in your career you played trans woman Roberta Muldoon in 1982's The World



Dream of Travel Writing

Article Nuts and Bolts – Putting Together a Interview Piece

according to Garp. It's a lovely empathetic portrayal. And what's more Roberta's identity is presented as fairly uncomplicated even though it long predates the progress we're seeing now.' Did that part give you pause?" So is this related to his kids or his father or touring? No, totally separate, but this is something that they're using to construct how he feels about the parts that he takes as we get into talking about what he has coming up.

So we've got, "Did you hear from any fans about any one role in particular?" So again, we're talking about what is a John Lithgow role. He talks about, do you know the five stages of an actor's life? Let me tell you, the first stage is who is John Lithgow? The second stage is get me John Lithgow, the third stage is just get me a John Lithgow type. Then comes give me a young John Lithgow and the last again is who is John Lithgow? So we're moving here through his background. What kind of roles he takes, why he takes them. Are you ever curious about what makes you appealing for certain roles? Then into what he's doing now? You've won multiple Tony and Emmy's. Why do movies like this? What was your preparation for playing Churchill? They talk about more about Churchill. They talk about a scene and something that he said and they're moving now into his personal philosophy. How does that philosophy apply to your 2001 memoir, *Drama: An Actor's Education*. And then he says, "You have an amazing personal history. You're distantly related to Oliver Wendell Holmes. You once met your childhood idol, Norman Rockwell. Coretta Scott King babysat you and your siblings." Not exactly a question here, but you see here that we're moving into the wrap up. This is kind of a signaling. Okay? And then we've got the last question here, which is, "What's the biggest change you've witnessed over the course of your career?"

So there was an arc here, right? We had some sort of background grounding in him and then we moved into why he does the work that he does and how he does it and then where he's going. His thoughts. This is a big thing in these interviews is to kind of get someone's philosophy on a thing. All right, so I'm gonna come over now and look at these three that are from Hobo and I wanted to show you these, like I said, less so to dig in like we did with that John Lithgow one and more so to show you how the questions can really change when you have a lot of latitude because these are also written by different people. So we've got this as by Val Litwin, this one here is by Christopher Dogimont or Christian rather Dogimont . And then we've got Julia Kidder, so three different interviewees and three different interviewers, okay?

So this guy starts, for those of you who haven't encountered the work of Gary Snyder, "I'm Jealous" you have a universe of deep and urgent thoughts still to discover. Okay? So then we get into the questions and this one you'll see is very, very, very verbatim. Okay? So he starts with, "Hi, this is Val. Calling from Whistler. How are you this morning?" So this is not something you're gonna see in most of these interviews in life, okay? So when I say that this



Dream of Travel Writing

Article Nuts and Bolts – Putting Together a Interview Piece

one is a good counterpoint to the last one we saw it's because you're really seeing how this interview took place. So again, in the links that I sent you, this is the one with Gary Snyder.

So let's go and move through. So we've got things like "what are the rest of us missing when we don't understand or know much about the space we live in?" Really digging into the person's thoughts here, right? And he says, "We're missing an understanding of ethics and etiquette." She asked questions of "how do you connect the idea of our knowing our natural surroundings to this notion as being free as human beings, what does that mean?" These are big picture questions here. Okay? And that's one of the things. That's one of the reasons I really split out these in the Q&A pieces because they are gonna be very different and very much like these more heady or hearty. They can be both ways. Not hardy with a D, but hearty with a T type of pieces that you're gonna get to see in these independent magazines.

So this one doesn't start out with that, "How are you this morning?" We get right to the meat of it. What's the last great work of fiction you read? What's your favorite singer, songwriter, artist? Is there a book that everyone loves but you? Why did you choose Portland instead of British Columbia? What do you like most about this part of the world? Do you have any favorite westerns? This is one of these Q&As; where it seems really like those, those questions picked from a random list at a speed dating party or something, right? And these are all in the same magazine. These are all different writer's takes on getting to know these people.

This one here, the interviewee here is a wildlife photographer, and again, we've got something that's quite verbatim here, but then she gets right to it. "What was it like being a kid in Baffin Island?" She asked about the impact that his work as a photographer had on conservation in the Arctic and Antarctic regions, which he goes on about at length. She asks about being raised with an appreciation for storytelling and how is it difficult to see how we as a people have been separated. So these are really big-picture questions, okay? And this is the thing, right? This one, they can be big-picture questions. It really depends how the person takes to answer it, right? Somebody could say, "Is there a book that everybody loves but you?" And the person could go on and on and on and on at length. So you can see here also that these questions really the ping pong of it also has a lot to do with the verbosity of the person who's responding here. So these are different styles of Q&A even within one publication, but you can also see how these Q&As; in an independent magazine context go into things like capitalism, you know about this. They're very philosophical at times because that's what they're trying to do. They're trying to get to the meat of what these people think, okay?

So let's come back to the slides. If you have questions about the examples that we looked at. I'm back over on the chat screen now, so now's a good time to drop those in there. So the last



Dream of Travel Writing

Article Nuts and Bolts – Putting Together a Interview Piece

thing that I wanted to look at, we've talked about how these things play out. It depends entirely on the magazine in a very different way than the other types of articles we've looked at. It depends entirely on the magazine because it really relates to how they have rubriced out that piece. What if they don't have a rubric? What if they're an independent magazine? Then you get a lot of latitude for how you wanna treat the piece within the auspices of what the magazine publishes, okay?

So how do you pitch these then? We talked with profiles last week about how it can be really hard to say I'm pitching you a profile on da, da, da, da because you don't know what's gonna come out of that piece when you start working on it. Whereas with these interviews, you can to a certain degree, have a lot more knowledge about that because you are just gonna be putting the words that come out of the person's mouth so you know what questions you're gonna ask them. So you can in your pitch say, and I will ask them about this, this, that, and the other thing the same way that we outline it in the travel magazine database.

Also like with the profiles, you need to get permission from the person that they will commit to the interview before you pitch your piece. So what that means is that you don't necessarily have to say, "I'd like to do a story about you from Men's Journal, would you be okay with that?" You can say, "I'm interested in placing a story about you" or "I'm going to contact some editors to see if I can interview you for their magazines. Would you be available for the story if it gets assigned?" Now, here's the interesting thing about celebrity interviews. We did a workshop one time and I was...we were going through articles, ideas, and the person said to me, "So Julia Louis-Dreyfus and so and so are good girlfriends of mine. Would that help me? Like, can I do anything with that?" And I was like, "Woah, when we say girlfriend, what do we mean here?" And you know, is it like, "You've dated her brother kind of situation."

So the thing with celebrity interview pieces is that if you go to an editor that's new to you and say, "Hey, I'd love to pitch you an interview with Julia Louis-Dreyfus, you know, like she's done this, this and this, you know, here's what she's doing right now. Like, would you be interested in this piece?" That's gonna be a bong because the editor knows that she's famous. What she doesn't know is that you have access. So if you are pitching a celebrity interview, the pitch is all about that you absolutely have confirmed access to that person. And you can say that you guys are childhood friends, but that's not the same as saying, "We are childhood friends and I have spoken to Julia and she's delighted to participate in the piece if it gets assigned." Okay. You have to outright say that. You can't just kind of imply that you know the person. You have to say that they have agreed and they're willing to go with the piece if it goes ahead. That's really crucial for the celebrity pieces with new to you editors, but it can help get you into a big magazine.



Dream of Travel Writing

Article Nuts and Bolts – Putting Together a Interview Piece

So something I just wanted to put out there that I noticed when I was going through is that if you're in the Travel Magazine database and you're looking for these pieces for those sections that I showed you, you will see two different tags. You'll see interview and Q&A. So Q&A is going to be the term that we use in the database for ones that are that specific back and forth question and answer format. So that's the tag that you wanna look for.

And with that, I will leave you guys to get ready for your weekends and I will see you soon or talk to you soon next week.