

PCNY Luncheon:
Hollywood on the Hudson: A Look at the National Entertainment Shows:
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Laura Saltman, Entertainment Producer, Today Show (NBC)

(In her intro, Moderator Lisa Kovitz referred to Laura's quote, "I don't want to be a star, I just want to interview them.") I've been saying that since I was 14, by the way. 14 years old, and luckily got to do that, so follow your dreams.

Basically, I work right now, I was brought in about 5 months ago by the Today Show to make Jill's segment fresher, hipper, fun, to get her bigger stars and better stories. Our new EP, I'm sure you all read, his name is Tom Touchet, he is, he likes to focus a little bit more on news. So that, in turn, has helped me because now Jill is getting the big stars. Tomorrow we have Jennifer Aniston and Ben Stiller on the set of their new movie, we're the only show who got them, and that is in part to him and Jill and mine, calling them and calling them and bugging them and begging and pleading and, y'know, giving them my firstborn child, which may be, I don't know, 20 years from now. My mom'll be upset. But Jill's segment is different because she is on once a week, however she, if we had bigger stories, better stories, we're also willing to put her on in a series. She had a home series in May where she did Christie Brinkley, Billy Joel, Mark Anthony, and so we do segments like that, we do series. And the great thing about Jill is that she has 7 minutes to fill, whereas the other shows, their pieces, they tend to be 2 minutes, 3 minutes at the most. Jill needs to fill 7 minutes. And my edict when I came there is, I don't want to fill that 7 minutes with 5 different stories. I want to give somebody 7 minutes to tell who they are, to talk about their life, to talk about their movie, to do whatever they want. So it's a great place to come if you really want to get your story out there.

The other thing that Tom Touchet wanted us to do it make her segment a little bit, just different. Instead of just sitting across from somebody at a junket or one-on-one, we want to get into their houses, into their closets, meet their families, go to their hometowns, learn about whatever they're passionate about, their hobbies, if they have a charity that their sister is involved with because she's ill, anything that's different and that you're not gonna see on every show. And because we can devote the time to it, it's a good place to come. Obviously, the Today Show has been on for 50 years, so it's well respected-- it's the #1 morning show. And you're gonna get good time in a good time slot. Jill airs on Thursdays at 8:30, which is one of our best half hours. And I know a lot of people get very upset when they are in the 9:00 hour, which I don't understand, but 8:30 is the best time slot. 9 is not bad, but 8:30 obviously is good. And she usually airs right at the top of 8:30. So it's just a really good time slot for her.

For me, the best way is to email me pitches, definitely. My voicemail is constantly full and I have trouble returning phone calls, which is a bad reputation I have in this business. But, so please email me any pictures that you have. Also, the great thing about the Today Show is, it's a big team, there's 20 producers and they all have our own little separate segments. I just do entertainment, someone else just does health, and someone else just does cooking. But you guys don't know everybody, so if you want to you can always email me. We pitch and pitch and pitch constantly to the EP's, so anything that you have and you're not really sure who it might go to, you can always email me and I will certainly get it to the right person and make sure that they call you.

What else can I say... yeah, don't lie! I was gonna say that, coming from Access Hollywood. The thing about the Today Show, too, is we honor our commitments. If you pitch us something and we go out and shoot it, we will air it. A lot of times in the past, working at Access Hollywood

and at Day and Date and some other stuff, if things didn't work out the way that we wanted, sometimes that segment would get bumped. But the Today Show honors their commitments, that's the one thing they have always stood behind in 50 years. If it's shot, it will air and we promise you that. So, we're a good resource for that.

I think that's it. That's all I gotta say!