



Official Transcript

Season 1, Episode 1

Adele Lim: Why Being Yourself, Embracing Resiliency and First, Writing A Terrible Script, is Good.

Adele [00:00:00] So, it's on us as content creators to really push, you know, our own point of view. And, not view as the "other" or the "minority" point of view. We're Americans—we're all in this together. If we don't share our stories, who's going to?

Megan [00:00:13] From ADECIBEL Media, I'm Megan Rummler and you're listening to ADECIBELvoices, a podcast that features intimate conversations with Asian American trailblazers who all have one thing in common, unabashedly pursuing their dreams while transforming the fabric of this nation. From food to business to tech to the arts, this is Asian America up close and personal.

Megan [00:00:40] We just passed the one-year anniversary of "Crazy Rich Asians."

Megan [00:00:43] And, since that watershed moment for Asian American representation in the mass media, there have been noticeably more films either written by or featuring Asian Americans. Films like, "Always Be My Maybe," co-written by Ali Wong and Randall Park and Lulu Wang's, "The Farewell."

Megan [00:01:02] Given this backdrop, it seems like a great time to be talking about the creative process in Hollywood, especially for those aspiring writers. And, we want to really dive in and talk about, what does it mean to find success in the industry?

Megan [00:01:17] Our guest today is, Adele Lim, a writer and producer for film and television.

Megan [00:01:23] Most recently she wrote the screenplay adaptation for, "Crazy Rich Asians." Currently, Adele is the lead writer for "Raya and The Last Dragon," Disney's newly announced animated feature. An epic fantasy adventure inspired by the cultures of Southeast Asia, the movie is set to release Thanksgiving of 2020 and will star the voices of Awkwafina and Cassie Steele.

Megan [00:01:46] Adele is with us via Skype from Los Angeles and is here to talk about her writing career, the entertainment industry's reality, and to really provide a sense of transparency into the creative writing process from script to screen.

Megan [00:02:03] Adele, we're so happy that you've agreed to be here with us, especially since this is our debut episode. Welcome to ADECIBELvoices.

Adele [00:02:13] Thank you so much. It's my pleasure to be here.

Megan [00:02:15] I'd love to know more about your backstory. You were born and raised in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. I heard you say during a speech, when referencing the movie, "Crazy Rich Asians," you said, "I like to say my family isn't rich but they are crazy."

Adele [00:02:35] I remember when I read Kevin Kwan's amazing, fantastic book that the characters, the dialects they used, the family dynamics, it was absolutely what we grew up with. And again, we didn't have a ton of money but you know that the crazy and how intense those relationships are was absolutely something that was just, you know, baked into us.

Megan [00:02:56] Tell me a little bit about your family. What was it like in the Lim household up to when you left for America at age 19?

Adele [00:03:02] So, growing up in Malaysia, my family is Chinese and they've been in Malaysia for a long time. For that part of the world from Malaysia and Singapore, a huge chunk of the population is Chinese and so they've retained their culture but they've also assimilated to a larger extent.

Adele [00:03:16] And, there your family basically, close knit doesn't even begin to describe it, you know? Like, they are completely, completely, entirely invested not just in, you know, your upbringing as a child but, you know, for for everyday afterwards.

Adele [00:03:32] I remember when I started with the American transfer program in the local college over there. They had to give us these, you know, these sort of like cultural assimilation workshops telling us the key differences between our culture and America where we were going to go.

Adele [00:03:46] They said, "Oh, you know, American parents once their children reach 18 or they get to college they're done, they're expected to move out and be independent and be on their own."

Adele [00:03:54] And, this was shocking to us. We're used to having, you know, several generations living under one roof. We're used to them constantly being part of our lives, all our decisions.

Adele [00:04:05] And, it could not be more different than the image of like, the hero's exceptionalism, where you're looking out for your own drive and finding your own happiness. And, you know, telling the rest of the world to go to hell as, you know, you blaze this bright streaked across the sky, you know, finding your own specific destiny.

Adele [00:04:24] It would never occur to us. You know, there's such a lot of familial pressure built into all the decisions you make in life.

Adele [00:04:31] I think that's one of the biggest key differences, in terms of storytelling, and you do see that a lot in "Crazy Rich Asians," and also the stories that, you know, play in Asia, like Korean soap operas, and how we think about people and the value we put on those relationships.

Megan [00:04:45] I love that because that really helps kind of give some coloring to the behind-the-scenes-influence. Unless you, you know, having grown up in an Asian American household and understand these kind of nuances, there's really not... I mean is there any other way to know this?

Adele [00:05:03] Yeah, it's hard. And, I think, one of the most gratifying things about the movie was that it wasn't just playing or connecting with the Asian American audience or the Asian Asian audience.

Adele [00:05:13] We really had tremendous feedback from a lot of minority or underrepresented communities. You know, whether you are Latino or Persian, that a lot of these families had those same sort of constructs and dynamics and so they got it.

Adele [00:05:27] And, I think the biggest challenge was in American storytelling for romantic comedies, you know, having outside constraints from your family is largely seen as a bad thing—that it's something that you need to free yourself of before you can truly find happiness on your own.

Adele [00:05:44] And, a point of view that the movie had, and, you know, that a lot of us also carry with us is that our families are not separate from us. That, of course, we want, you know, the American way is to find our own path and our own destiny.

Adele [00:05:57] But ideally, you know, we want the support and love of our family and to be able to have them on that journey with us where it's something to talk about. That for a lot of people and not just Asians in Asia, having our family be there for us is tremendously important and that they should be part of, you know, these drastic changes and decisions we're making in our lives. It's not said very often particularly in movies.

Megan [00:06:23] That is such a good point.

Megan [00:06:26] You graduated from Emerson College in Boston, Massachusetts with a degree in television and film. Did you always know you wanted to be a writer for television and film?

Adele [00:06:36] No. I think I always knew I wanted to be a writer.

Adele [00:06:39] I think I wrote from the time I could write. And, growing up in Malaysia you don't think or you're told by your parents and your relatives, that writing really isn't a viable vocation. That you're not going to be able to pay the bills that way and, more importantly, you're not going to be able to take care of your parents with a job like that.

Adele [00:06:56] And, that's another cultural thing, you know, most of my friends growing up there and I think a lot of the Asian Americans here too, it's expected that, you know, you're going to be sending a chunk of your paycheck to your parents, after you after you get out. It's just like a natural thing.

Adele [00:07:09] And, it's another example of how money is, sort of, an extension of love. We may not be as expressive about it in language or in gestures but, you know, weirdly without it sounding too gauche, that you know, it really is a way we show affection for each other.

Adele [00:07:22] Back to your question in terms of, you know, growing up in and whether or not I knew I was going to be a writer.

Adele [00:07:27] I just assumed, you know, I was going to be poor. Honestly, I thought that to be creatively fulfilled I'd be living in squalor in a hut writing books, you know, surrounded by dogs.

Adele [00:07:38] And, my parents who were both in advertising said, well listen, in advertising you can be a writer. You can be a copywriter, so, perhaps that's something you want to pursue. And so I thought that was going to be my career.

Adele [00:07:49] And, what I would do is on break from school, I'd go back to Malaysia and my mother would have, you know, these pitches for these companies and I would do the creative pitch. I didn't know what I was doing. It's insane that my mother had enough faith in me.

Megan [00:08:03] That's crazy.

Adele [00:08:04] And I did have a lot of fun doing it. You know, there are a lot of similarities from copywriting into writing primetime network television. But, it was also enough to tell me early on that this was not what I wanted to do.

Adele [00:08:16] I remember we had an account for baby formula, I think. And there's some culturally specific thing with Asian mothers and Asian families where they want fat babies. Who knew!

Adele [00:08:26] So, as I'm pitching this, you know, baby formula you know, I'm standing in front of this video of like tremendously fat babies with this music with this loud beats going boom-bada-boom-bada-boom-bada-boom. And again, making this sales pitch not based on science or what's necessarily best for your child, but you know, pushing this subconscious message of "buy our formula and you're gonna get a nice fat baby."

Adele [00:08:50] And, I remember thinking at the end of that pitch, "What am I doing with my life?"

Adele [00:08:56] It wasn't until I met a boy in college. It always starts with a boy who lived upstairs and we were talking about what we were going to do after graduation. I said, "Well I'm probably gonna go back to Malaysian work in advertising."

Adele [00:09:08] And, he said, "Well I'm going to drive out to Los Angeles and try to get a job writing for television."

Adele [00:09:13] And, even though I technically knew that was something you could do, until you meet somebody who wants to do that, you don't really think it's something one does. And that sounded amazing.

Adele [00:09:23] So, what happened was long story short, after graduation we jumped into his car which was a beat up terrible Dodge. Put everything we had in it and drove out to LA. It's that stereotypical story but I think we had like \$300.

Megan [00:09:38] I love it. That's great.

Adele [00:09:39] And, for people who are thinking of starting a career in entertainment, there is this perception that oh, it's who you know, it's networking, it's all these things. And absolutely those things are important. But, I was terrible at networking. I'd only been in the country for about two years at that point. And, so we really came out here with no money, not knowing anybody and just trying to like hit the ground running as best we could.

Megan [00:10:03] I mean how did you have that courage? Like where did that courage and bravery come from to take that huge leap of faith to move basically across the country to L.A.?

Adele [00:10:16] It's very generous of you to say brave and courageous. Where I look back on it and I think just ignorant and stupid and being clueless and naive. Which by the way turned out to be a huge benefit. Because, I think if I'd known how really difficult it is to get a foothold in the industry, I would have probably been much more discouraged right up front.

Adele [00:10:34] Because I'd made the jump from Malaysia to Boston, Boston to Los Angeles really didn't seem that much further and truly it seemed like a leap I would really much rather take instead of, you know, jumping back to selling baby formula.

Adele [00:10:48] So we were in it. And, also I think a lot should be said about again, being naive and being young.

Adele [00:10:55] I remember because I was 21 when I first moved out to LA. That when you're young there's a certain romance even in being poor. You know, having that scrappy, creative lifestyle where you're trying to get a foothold in the city and you're trying to find your voice and, you know, the whole world is just nothing but possibilities and options. It's also, you know, balanced out with the reality of having to eat at Arby's with cut-out coupons.

Adele [00:11:20] I totally had of Scarlett O'Hara a moment. I remember just feeling so ill after like a third Arby sandwich of just like holding that horseradish packet and saying, "Never again!"

Megan [00:11:32] Adele, we've covered embracing really who you are, where you're from and then taking risks in embracing the unknown. And, I think that's a perfect segue way to this theme of breaking into the industry, or like you said, getting a foothold into this industry.

Megan [00:11:52] Can we shed some transparency into this process? I mean what is it going to take to be successful in this industry? There's no real overnight success, is there?

Adele [00:12:02] I think you've hit it right on the head in terms of, you know, overnight success is very, very rare and particularly for writing.

Adele [00:12:09] I remember when I first started out thinking, you know, you want to be the wunderkin—the person who has that amazing script that's going to sell for millions of dollars and then you'll, you know, you'll be made and that is never how it happens.

Adele [00:12:21] I mean it happens occasionally. Rarely there are some people who break out and, you know, have this amazing feature script or they have this amazing TV pilot that goes. But, more often than not and I'm going to say like over 90% of the cases, it really is a learned craft.

Adele [00:12:37] That what you have that you know really can't be taught is a specific point of view and passion for what you do.

Adele [00:12:43] But, you know, beyond that it's like with anything, it's like a musical instrument or being a performer. That it is all about your 10,000 hours of getting in there.

Adele [00:12:53] And, that means writing a lot of scripts. Writing a lot of scripts that are going to be terrible. But, you have to write the terrible script.

Adele [00:13:00] There are a lot of writers who get completely paralyzed by, no, I'm going to keep working on this and then I will present it to the world when it's perfect, and that I will be famous, that people will throw riches at me and give me overall deals.

Adele [00:13:12] And, you know, you're going to be in that room writing your script for a very, very long time and chances are it's not going to be that good.

Adele [00:13:18] Part of learning is writing your terrible script, you know, being out here, making your contacts, making friends or working for people who know what they're doing and can give you constructive helpful notes.

Adele [00:13:31] Because anybody can give you an opinion on a script, but you want somebody who knows what they're doing and you're not going to meet that person and that person is not going to have time of day for you unless you're out here, you know, sort of in the mix.

Megan [00:13:43] Right. I think that's a great place to pause.

Megan [00:13:46] We'll be right back after this word from our sponsors.

Stacy [00:13:50] This podcast is brought to you by our sponsors, 8 Media Group, a Washington D.C. area video production company whose mission is to create, collaborate and resonate. Find them at 8MediaGroup.com.

Megan [00:14:02] If you're just joining us, we've been talking with Adele Lim, a writer and producer for film and television. In addition to writing the screenplay adaptation of "Crazy Rich Asians," Adele was named in 2018 among Elle's "Women in Hollywood Power List" and Variety's "Women's Impact" reports. Both lists salute women in the entertainment industry who are making significant waves in the area of inclusion, representation and diversity.

Megan [00:14:33] So Adele, before the break we left at the time when you and your partner decided to make the leap and move from the East Coast to Hollywood and this began an arduous climb within the industry and your career at the time.

Adele [00:14:46] Yes.

Megan [00:14:47] As someone who's been in the industry almost two decades now, what top three things do you want aspiring writers to know about the realities of finding success in this business?

Adele [00:14:59] First, I would say it depends on the kind of writing you want to do.

Adele [00:15:01] But, if you do want to be in television or your own features and you're just starting out, working on your craft is the most important thing. And I mean, you know, writing your spec scripts, writing your short stories, writing your plays.

Adele [00:15:14] Because, it's all about finding your voice, honing that specific point of view. Because there are countless writers out there and you need to think about, you know, why you want to pursue this and what is going to make you stand out.

Adele [00:15:27] And, what will make you stand out is having a very, very specific authentic point of view. So, you have the point of view and then you want to be able to work on your craft. So, you give your point of view a platform where it can shine.

Adele [00:15:39] The thing that doesn't get said enough here, because Hollywood also has a reputation for being superficial and that it's about the contacts and it's not so much about the quality of your work.

Adele [00:15:49] But I will say that for writing, you know, it really could not be less true. It really is about the quality of what's on the page.

Adele [00:15:57] Even if it doesn't translate, people can look at a lot of television shows and movies and think wow you know that's not that difficult. That's not that hard. But you don't know the journey that piece of material has taken. That there are a lot of things that shift along the way.

Adele [00:16:10] If you are trying to distinguish yourself as a writer you want to be able to hand somebody a piece of material and not just have it be good enough, not just have it be, oh well I can see that this is an episode of NCIS.

Adele [00:16:22] It needs to blow the roof off the place. It needs to excite the person who's reading it so much that they feel like they need to get invested in your career, that they are going to hand this piece of material to their representation.

Adele [00:16:35] And, that's the loose track of, sort of like, how it works here. You know, you work on your material. Somebody reads it and somebody refers you to an agent or a manager or to a studio executive and hopefully you get your first break from there. And, this is me covering steps it a few seconds that take people years and sometimes a decade to get to.

Megan [00:16:54] Right. Right. And, as a kind of us a little side note, I just want to know if the story is true. I heard you might have gotten your start in writing church plays?

Adele [00:17:07] Yeah, you know what I did? I wrote church plays. I wrote a lot of high school plays. And again, I grew up in a very conservative country with a conservative culture, in an all girls school.

Adele [00:17:19] And, I would write these insane plays about hookers, you know, trying to find redemption. And, I would get into it with our strict headmistress with a whole head, you know, hijabi-like headscarf.

Adele [00:17:31] And, to their credit, this is Sri Aman Girls School in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia. To their credit, they let me put on those plays, you know, with certain concessions of, if I was gonna have, you know, young girls playing hookers that they couldn't have bare armpits so they had to wear shawls. So, I had the most conservatively dressed hookers but I got to put on my plays.

Adele [00:17:53] I wrote choral reading poems, you know, and I think just having the freedom to be able to do that and having the support of your classmates and, you know, the community, it gives you that first case of what you can do with your writing.

Adele [00:18:05] Because writing runs the risk of being this solitary pursuit and in entertainment it is an incredibly collaborative process. So you want to be able to, if you're a writer starting out, there's no excuse for people now. Everybody has an iPhone.

Adele [00:18:21] You can shoot any little thing you write and I highly recommend that because you don't learn, you know, you can learn abstractly by taking a screenwriting course while, oh you know, for a scene to be put on its feet you need conflict and you need this that and the other thing.

Adele [00:18:34] But, it's not until you write it and you shoot it and you try to put it together and you give it to somebody for feedback that you truly learn how to construct a scene. You learn what works.

Megan [00:18:46] I think shedding light on the process resonates today because people are really into transparency and process and you know agency, how things work.

Adele [00:18:57] Yes.

Megan [00:18:58] Okay. So, the three things you talked about is number one, work on your craft, keep writing. Number two, focus on an authentic point of view and think about the quality of what's on the page.

Adele [00:19:12] The quality what's on the page. I think the third part of it is, you know, bring other people into your process whether it's a writer's group and getting notes or you know shooting it and putting it out there because that takes courage, that takes bravery.

Adele [00:19:23] And, you need to develop a skin also. A lot of new writers have this idea that they're going to write the script and when they give it to somebody for notes, the most annoying thing is getting a script and taking time out of your day to give notes and the person just goes like uh-huh-uh-huh-uh-huh and then takes none of the notes and doesn't change anything.

Adele [00:19:40] Any good career successful writer knows that taking notes and learning how to have that elevate your script is a huge part of the process and that's the only way you learn, by taking someone's note and seeing if you can make your screenplay or your pilot, you know, that much better.

Adele [00:19:58] And, being able to hear criticism and not take it personally. And also being, you know, being judicious about it. There are lots of people who will give you bad notes and you want to be able to, yeah, you know, again your uncle could give you notes, your grandmother could give you notes.

Adele [00:20:12] And, their notes are valuable too. But they're coming from it from an audience perspective. What you want to think about, too, is the note behind the notes. Somebody will tell you, you'll give your script to someone you'll have some note that sounds completely ludicrous like, "Oh, well, I don't think your character will be wearing a pink dress."

Adele [00:20:28] You're like, oh dear god who cares. But, you know, there might be a note behind the note, where you know for some reason this reader or this audience member doesn't find that character believable or doesn't connect with them. So, what is the bigger issue here?

Megan [00:20:42] Okay, so being really thoughtful about the feedback and the collaboration.

Adele [00:20:47] Yes.

Megan [00:20:48] You know speaking of collaboration, there are so many other kind of important elements that goes into the creating writing process. And, one of them and you mentioned this earlier is skin, you know, a type of resiliency.

Megan [00:21:04] So. If you were to name a couple of driving characteristic traits needed really, really needed to survive in the industry as a writer, what would they be and why?

Adele [00:21:15] I think the resilience is the first part of it. I think 60 to 80% of it and finding success in this industry is hanging in there.

Adele [00:21:24] The first thing to understand is that this is not an industry you get into if you want a regular paycheck.

Adele [00:21:30] And, I think it sounds silly to even have to say, but a lot of people get into this industry and they get really disheartened feeling, you know. Well they can't live their lives that way, not knowing what the next year is going to bring. So if you're that person, perhaps this life isn't for you.

Adele [00:21:45] But I will say that, you know, with the new generation, particularly with the millennials and the younger ones, they already live in an industry, in a world that's like that. They feel that a lot of industries are not dependable and so it may not be great for them in terms of stability and long-term planning but you know it's great if they are thinking of entertainment because they already have that gorilla mindset of, you know, I need to pursue my passion and find ways, creative ways of making it work for me.

Adele [00:22:13] So, I would say a big part of it is just hanging in there, working on your craft, hanging in there. And, also the thing of having a thick skin. That is going to serve you well when you're trying to get a foothold. And, even after you've gotten your break sometimes there's a perception that, oh, once I get my first break, I'm set.

Adele [00:22:31] And, again that's not true.

Adele [00:22:33] You get your first job but you have to worry about getting your second job and it's how you do on your first job that is going to dictate your next step. Also the way the industry works is the writers, you know, writers run television. And, you know, for features you don't have as much agency but people are still calling other people about you.

Adele [00:22:50] It's a huge investment of money and time for them to hire a writer and so they want to make sure that you are somebody that they can work with.

Adele [00:22:57] In television writer rooms, you are often in those rooms for 8 to 10 hours staring at the same people every day. And they have to offer you a contract in the beginning of it. So, they want to make sure they are hiring the right person.

Adele [00:23:10] And a lot of how that gets sorted through is, you know, as a young writer you're taking meetings with executives with show runners and those meetings, I remember being disoriented in the beginning because I thought, oh well, I'm here to talk about the project, so we should be talking about the project.

Adele [00:23:24] And, I would be thrown if, you know, we're half an hour into an hour long meeting and we're just talking about our personal lives. And, I would say don't worry about that and don't feel like, oh no, I've got to skew the conversation back to work.

Adele [00:23:37] You know, let the grown up in the room steer the conversation that way. What they are getting a sense of is you as a person. Is this somebody I want to hang with for hours and hours a day you know all week? Is this somebody who has a natural storytelling sense? Is this somebody, you know, who is going to bring something to my room that I don't already have?

Adele [00:23:58] So, when we talk about writing it's not just about the craft of writing, it's also you as a human being and, you know, can you sell yourself? You know, are you fun to hang with? Can you tell a yarn?

Megan [00:24:10] I feel like the word maybe is attitude.

Adele [00:24:14] Yeah. I'm so glad you brought that up. I would say attitude is everything. Course there are instances in every writer's room where you have this enfant terrible. Just, hard to work with individual, but her craft her lines, it's just such genius, that you have to work with this person.

Adele [00:24:32] Of course there are those people in every writer's room. Show runners talk about it there'll be somebody with, you know, the prickly personality or is difficult to work with but because of what they put on the page that they're part of the process. But again, those people are few and far between.

Adele [00:24:47] And largely, I think it's much more pleasant to have a really great attitude about your craft, what you do and the energy you bring into the room. Whatever another cynical person might think of your show, you have to be 100 percent emotionally committed to it.

Adele [00:25:03] One of the most valuable lessons I got was being a writer's assistant on Xena Warrior Princess. And the show runner, you know was this older guy in his 50s and 60s. I walk into his office and he's typing at his desk. He's got tears going down his face. He is killing off a character that he had for a while. And again, Xena Warrior Princess, it's like women and metal bras, but he was emotionally committed to it and because he felt it our audience felt it also.

Adele [00:25:30] And, it's the same with any project you get on. You never want to have a cynical point of view of just like, oh well, you know this is gonna pay the bills, but boo these characters they're awful I don't believe in this plot.

Adele [00:25:42] If I was hiring a roomful of writers, I want writers who are passionate about the work, passionate about the writers. And again, it doesn't mean you have to like everything but having a passion for something means that you know you have ideas. You're invested in making these stories work.

Adele [00:25:56] And, you also have a great attitude or being an open person, that's what you want if you have to collaborate with a bunch of other writers and not just the writers, as a television writer specifically.

Adele [00:26:07] And, I think you'll see this more in features too. You have to be able to communicate this passion and your ideas to a crew. And, even with the crew, somebody who is like in charge of throw pillows on set, there is a scope and a spectrum of how much passion they can put into it.

Adele [00:26:22] If they can get that enthusiasm and passion from you and a clarity of vision it's more likely that they're going to put the effort into your scene and your episode. So, it's going to translate on screen. You're gonna have to work with directors. You're going to have to work with writers and all these people that you interact with, there has to be a level of dedication and belief in your work.

Adele [00:26:44] So yeah, I would say attitude is you know attitude is a huge chunk of it.

Megan [00:26:48] I'm wondering if we can spend some time talking about something you had referenced earlier and that was lending authenticity to your creative voice.

Megan [00:26:57] You know, it sounds really simple, but I would say I'm an amateur writer myself, and I find that super hard to do because it takes bravery to place value on your own life's experiences.

Adele [00:27:12] A hundred percent. That's very well said. And, I think it's even more so if you are a woman or if you're a minority because the truth of the matter is, you know, when we write for television or for film and why people want to get into the industry it's because of movies and shows that we saw growing up.

Adele [00:27:32] A lot of the time those, you know, those movies, those shows didn't reflect who we were necessarily. And, so sometimes there's this idea that you have to write to that. That somehow your own story is not as valid as the mainstream narrative.

Adele [00:27:48] And, I've brought this up at a panel before. You know, for a long time, I really did believe and because that's how the industry was structured that there was a gold bar for writing and that gold bar really was a white, male point of view. Because most of the lead characters on network primetime shows were that. Most of the lead characters in features are that.

Megan [00:28:09] Right.

Adele [00:28:10] And, if you look at the writers for the top 100 grossing films of last year, 15% were written by women, 15%. That means 85% of those stories were being told by men. And, a lot of them are like, white men.

Adele [00:28:24] And again, not to throw all white men in the same category because they're not. It's a very specific kind of man who had a certain education. And, out here it

usually was a certain kind of guy who went to a certain prestigious, you know East Coast school.

Adele [00:28:35] And, so you begin to think that it is not just the gold standard but it is the only standard.

Adele [00:28:41] And, what I think we've begun to realize you know in the last 5 to 10 years is that that could not be more far from the truth. A lot of amazing shows and movies that have just completely exploded did so without the studio executives believing in it.

Adele [00:28:54] It really was a writer, a director having an authentic point of view, being brave enough to put it out there and say you know what, I think the world is going to respond to this. And I think the audience is hungry for it. I think audiences are always a lot more sophisticated and open than executives and studios give them credit for truly.

Adele [00:29:12] It's not an exact science. A lot of times you're not going to know what is going to land with an audience because it reads a certain way on the page but then you have the magic alchemy that happens with your director and your actors.

Adele [00:29:23] But I will say that if you write from an authentic point of view, you know, that there are things you experience when you were growing up with your parents and you feel like, oh this is just too insular, it's too specific to me.

Adele [00:29:33] But if it is true and genuine, I guarantee you that there is going to be somebody out there who, you know, was raised in a completely different house or of a completely different culture or race who is going to relate to that, in terms of specificity and how much you lean into it.

Adele [00:29:48] Whether it's for something like "Crazy Rich Asians" or a show like "Private Practice" or it's you know like "PEN15" this amazing show with like a Maya Erskine on Hulu. Where the more specific experience you write about, first of all the more appealing it is to an audience, because they haven't seen something like that. We don't want to watch programming to see a reread of something that we've seen before. We want something new, something amazing.

Adele [00:30:13] And, if it's true, there is going to be something in that story that will resonate with them. And, it's having the faith that it will.

Megan [00:30:19] Yeah.

Adele [00:30:20] You know as you put it out there. And also, I think in the climate now, it's for us, the content creators, people who have a different point of view from what's been the standard mainstream point of view to really sort of fight for that.

Adele [00:30:32] I'll use myself as an example. I wrote for television all those years. But even in creating new shows and pilots before, "Crazy Rich Asians" I wouldn't even think of having a lead Asian American character because all the shows that were being picked up that were being bought did not have those characters.

Adele [00:30:47] And, you want to put yourself in a position to succeed. And, now I think we're finally getting to the point where you can't deny the numbers. You can't deny the box office results, that the audience is ready for it.

Adele [00:30:57] So, it's on us as content creators to really push our own point of view, and not view it as the "other" or the "minority" point of view. We're Americans. We're all in this together. And, if we don't share our stories, who is going to?

Megan [00:31:12] All wise and practical and super helpful advice.

Megan [00:31:15] It's been such a pleasure Adele. Will you consider coming back on the show?

Adele [00:31:20] I would love to. This was delightful. Thanks so much for having me.

Megan [00:31:24] Adele Lim is a writer and producer for film and television. Most recently she wrote the screenplay adaptation of, "Crazy Rich Asians." To date, the John M. Chu directed movie has become the highest-grossing, studio produced romantic comedy to hit the U.S. box office in over 10 years.

Megan [00:31:43] Currently, Adele is the lead writer for "Raya and The Last Dragon," Disney's newly announced animated feature. An epic fantasy adventure inspired by the cultures of Southeast Asia, the movie is set to release Thanksgiving of 2020 and will star the voices of Awkwafina and Cassie Steele.

Megan [00:32:04] Are you a mom dad uncle on or caregiver to children in any way?

Megan [00:32:09] If so, you'll want to tune in next week as we talk with Katherine Reynolds Lewis, an award-winning Washington D.C. area journalist and certified parent educator, about the challenges of parenting year round, but especially now, as we head fresh into a new school year. Katherine is the author of, "The Good News About Bad Behavior: Why Kids Are Less Disciplined Than Ever and What To Do About It." Be sure to tune in.

Stacy [00:32:36] Hey, it's Stacy here. Since we're a brand new podcast, we need your help. Send us your feedback. We want this podcast to be listener-centered and we'd love to hear from you. What do you like? Not like? Or, wish you could hear more of? Is there an Asian American trailblazer whom you want us to interview?

Stacy [00:32:53] Tell us what you think. Call or text us at 202-599- 3318.

Stacy [00:33:02] Leave your full name, contact info, age and where you're from. Messages are recorded, so, who knows maybe you'll hear yourself on our show. Thanks for listening and subscribe wherever you get your podcasts.