

# Transcript of Jay Marvin interview with Tony Ortega

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Interview by Jay Marvin (JM) of AM 760 and Tony Ortega (TO), writer for Village Voice

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**[[TRANSCRIPT BEGINS]]**

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**[[Jay Marvin Show Introduction]]**

**JM:** Scientology is a very very controversial religion. My experience with it is that I once worked in Tampa/St. Petersburg and Clearwater, Florida is right near there. I would battle with Scientologists on the phones all the time.

*[1:00]*

I don't see how this could ever be a legitimate religion that is churned up by a guy who used to write fiction novels. Tony Ortega is with the Village Voice and he's got an exclusive interview with a Hollywood star who has decided that he's had enough of Scientology. Let's go to Tony. Good morning and thanks for coming on the show.

**TO:** My pleasure.

**JM:** Alright, first of all, describe who this guy is.

**TO:** First of all, I want to say, you were down there in the belly of the beast!

**JM:** Oh, I used to fight with them all the time, wearing these cadet uniforms and all this kind of stuff. It's like, "Come on!"

**TO:** Yeah, Sea Org. Well, I've been writing about Scientology for 13 years. I was with one of our papers in Los Angeles which is the other headquarters, now I'm the editor of the Village Voice, but I've never come across something like this. You have to understand, in the world of those of us journalists that cover Scientology, this is huge news.

*[2:00]*

**TO:** Now, Jason Beghe is not the biggest star and he's the first one to admit that. He's on of these guys, as he says, he always gets work. He's been in G.I Jane, Monkey Shine; he's been in a lot of TV series, CSI New York. The last thing he did was this short-lived series with Jimmy Smits called Cane. The guy always finds work. The guys is a constant character actor on television and for the last twelve years he's been one of these celebrities that Scientology covets. They have this Celebrity Center in Los Angeles. They have celebrity centers in every city in North America and they do everything they can to attract TV and movie stars into their religion. I mean, you know the roll...

**JM:** Oh yeah.

**TO:** Travolta and Cruise and all these people. Well, this is one of their stars that we don't hear about so much, but inside Scientology he was considered one of their greatest success stories. Jason really explained some very interesting things to me. He was telling me that we hear a lot about these stars, say somebody like Tom Cruise, but actually they're not all very active in the Church.

*[3:00]*

**TO:** This is the first time I've heard it, I don't think anybody had heard this, that he says that Tom Cruise was actually virtually out of Scientology for ten years. Only recently did David Miscavige,

the leader of the organization, convince Tom to come back in and be more active. Well, Jason explained that he was one of the most active actors right from the beginning, and he rocketed up what's called "The Bridge". For your listeners that don't know, what makes Scientology so unique, what I've always written about, what sets them apart and really is a big question about whether they are a legitimate religion or not, is that any other religion on Earth will tell you right up front what they're about, right? You walk into a Catholic church, they'll just tell you what they believe. You go to a Jewish synagogue, "Here's what we believe". Scientology requires you to get about \$100,000 into their training before they begin to tell you the basic beliefs.

**JM:** Yeah, that's exactly right.

**TO:** Now, what other religion would charge you \$100,000 to look at a Bible?

[4:00]

**TO:** And that's why for the first 29 years of Scientology's existence the U.S. government did not consider it a religion, it did not give it tax-exempt status. One of the Holy Grails of Scientology reporting, what all of us are still chasing after, is how in 1993 this profit-minded organization somehow convinced the Clinton administration to make it tax-exempt. It's still a head-scratcher. So today it doesn't pay taxes. So, Beghe rockets up this organization and after twelve years he's had enough. He wants to get out. And unlike other TV actors and movie stars who leave and then stay quiet about it, he decided he wanted to speak out. That's what makes him so unique. He is the first of the celebrities that this religion covets to come out and say it doesn't work, it's a rip-off.

[5:00]

**TO:** He's denouncing it in the strongest terms, which you can see in the video he put up on YouTube and the interview he did with us at Village Voice. It's really a unique situation.

**JM:** Does he talk about this monitoring they are supposed to go through and the thetas [sic] and the Xenons [sic] and all this other stuff?

**TO:** There are actually very few people that get to as high a level as he was in. One time when I was at the Celebrity Center in Los Angeles talking to one of their spokespeople, she admitted to me that only 10% of all people in Scientology have even attained that level where they have become what is called 'clear'. Where they get the full story about the fact that this whole religion is based on the idea that this galactic overlord named Xenu sent a bunch of disembodied aliens to the planet Earth 75 million years ago and destroyed them in volcanoes, but their spirits are still around infesting all of us.

[6:00]

**TO:** This is the core story of Scientology, that the reason that you can't speak in front of a group is because there is some alien creature in your brain tripping you up. The reason you got arthritis is that there are alien creatures in your joints. Literally this is what the religion is about, is that you then go through what's called auditing to get rid of what are called these 'engrams' and 'thetans'. These are the little aliens that are infesting you. Of course, they don't tell you they are alien creatures until you are \$100,000 in. Jason Beghe estimates that over 12 years he gave them \$1,000,000. And this is a non-profit organization?

**JM:** What is this whole thing about them wearing uniforms and parading around like admirals?

**TO:** That's the Sea Org. L. Ron Hubbard was the guy that dreamed this all up in his 1950 book 'Dianetics' and then once he realized that the taxes were high he made it a religion in 1954 overnight. He loved sailing. In fact, they called him The Commodore. One of the things he did in the 60's was he bought a boat and spent a lot of time sailing.

[7:00]

**TO:** Well, it was very romantic, but really what he was doing was avoiding tax collectors. He'd go to one port for a while, until the heat got him too much in that country, then he'd go to another country. It was convenient to be on a boat. Over that time, spending so much time on that boat, he dreamed up this special, really hardcore group called the Sea Org. The Sea Org are the people, I actually had a copy of this, they sign billion year contracts to be a part of the Sea Org.

**JM:** Right.

**TO:** Which means lifetime after lifetime they will continue to serve Scientology. The Sea Org are

the most hardcore. The person with the highest rank in the Sea Org is named David Miscavige. He's this very short little man who runs the entire sha-bang. They always try to tell the IRS "Well, this organization takes care of copyrights, this organization takes care of this and that", "We separate the for-profit book selling part from..." It's all under David Miscavige's control, and it's all under the Sea Org's control.

**JM:** I mean, how anybody can buy the idea that a guy that writes science fiction novels can come up with, with a... [Laughter].

[8:00]

**JM:** I'll tell you what this reminds me of, what it reminds me of is about A. A. Allen who was on all these border radio stations and also some station in the United States and had this big headquarters in Miracle Valley, Arizona, which is still there by the way. That the train station there got clogged because so many coffins started arriving because he claimed that he could revive the dead. It was talking these peoples' money, and this is what Scientology reminds me of. It's like a business scam.

**TO:** That's exactly what TIME magazine called it in a very famous story in 1990. They called it a "ruthless, global scam". Scientology sued them for \$100,000,000 and that's what has made a lot of newspapers kind of shy about exposing Scientology.

[9:00]

**TO:** What's really interesting to me is how much the tide has turned in the last couple of years. I started doing this 13 years ago, but believe me there were journalists doing this for decades. You really had to make sure you were working for a newspaper with some guts and some good attorneys to do this kind of work. In the last couple of years I think Tom Cruise's behavior in particular has really got the tide turning. People are like "What is this thing?" Now newspapers are getting bolder about it. But then what's really interesting, in the last couple of months, have you heard about this Anonymous movement?

**JM:** No – Oh yeah! Wait a minute! Somebody sent me an email about that.

**TO:** This is really fascinating because for years there have been these people, these activists, that have done what they could on the internet and with protests, to try and bring attention, but nobody paid attention. Well in January that nine minute of Tom Cruise showed up on the internet, and it proliferated all over the place, and the Church went after it like crazy trying to shut down websites that were showing that video.

[10:00]

**TO:** That's their nature, they hate internet freedom and they try and shut it down whenever they can. Well, Gawker which first broke the video, we all owe them a favor, a debt of gratitude. They have kept it up, kept brave and kept that Tom Cruise video up. A whole movement of young people, college aged kids, around the country. The kids that are twenty today have grown up on the Internet and the idea of somebody trying to censor the internet is so offensive to them that they saw that Scientology was the enemy and they just went after Scientology. At first they did it in the worst way. They called in bomb threats, they tried to shut down Scientology websites, they just went about it all wrong. Well, some of the wiser, older Scientology activists, particularly a man in Los Angeles by the name Mark Bunker, made a simple video, put it on YouTube, talking into the camera saying "Listen, you're going about this all wrong. Join us! Do this peacefully! Do this the Ghandi way!"

[11:00]

**TO:** And then overnight, Anonymous became this massive, world-wide protest movement of young people all through the Internet. In February they held world-wide protests, in March they held world-wide protests, they show up in those Guy Fawkes masks and they are all over the internet, and it's really fascinating. It really feels like we're in a moment now where Scientology is really reaching the point where it is facing more opposition than it ever has, but when Jason Beghe comes out, Jason's not the biggest star but he's really well spoken. He's really real, he's very interesting, he's their worst nightmare.

**JM:** Usually they strike back pretty hard. Are they after him?

**TO:** Well, I think there has been some initial video attack back, but it was pretty weak. I have talked to Jason about that, I said, "Are you concerned about your career?" He said, and he isn't, he just feels he went into Scientology with an open mind, he wanted to experience it, get a little adventure...

[12:00]

**TO:** ...and it didn't work for him and he's angry and he's come out and he now he's like, "I'm just going to do the next phase of my life". He's really one of the most admirable people I've met. I think that he's just not afraid. I don't know that it will affect his career. Definitely there are actors and other people in Scientology that help each other get roles in Hollywood, but I don't think they can prevent someone like Jason from continuing his career. And overnight he is more famous than he's ever been, so that can't be bad.

**JM:** Right. What about this idea that they do this monitoring and that they have files on all these people on their personal lives?

**TO:** We've always know that they have these files, they're called PC files. When you go into this organization, they tell you that if you follow this 'talking cure' of Hubbard's it will release your mind and you'll advance your life. So what they want you to do is sit down and talk about all the worst things in your life, all the bad things that you've done. Of course they are scribbling away, right!

[13:00]

**TO:** They're making notes of all the things you're admitting to and they put it in what's called your PC file. It's supposed to help you get past these things, it's supposed to be confidential. Well, we've always heard stories that stars then feel that they can't leave because then the contents of their files will be made public. That's this thing that we've always heard. But Jason is the first one that said, "Look, I've seen them setting up secret cameras. I know they're taping every one of those things, and they've got all this dirt", and they've got this thing of Jason saying that employees all over Scientology gossip about these stars behind their backs. That's new, and that's really some of the stuff that was getting the most attention this week, was Jason making the claim that every auditing in the Celebrity Center is secretly being taped. That's a bold statement, because that's illegal, and I don't know what's going to come from that.

**JM:** Who gets the majority of the money out of this?

[14:00]

**TO:** Well, it's a wealthy organization now, they own a lot of land. They've been buying a lot of land in Africa because they've been under a lot of heat in Europe and United States and I think they are trying to find areas where people don't know as much about them. They buy a lot of land, they don't pay taxes, so these are very wealthy organizations. But they exaggerate how many people are in the organization. They like to throw around this number that there are six million Scientologists around the world, but in a video deposition for a lawsuit the President of Scientology admitted that number only represents the total number of people who've ever taken a Scientology course since 1954. So the real estimate of total Scientologists around the world is more like hundreds of thousands.

**JM:** Who's getting all the money? Do the people at the top of Scientology make these whopper salaries?

**TO:** You know, I haven't really heard that much about salaries. Salaries don't mean anything when you're a top level Scientologist, you're living in a Scientology house.

[15:00]

**TO:** I don't know that somebody like David Miscavige has a life outside Scientology. They have Celebrity Centers in every city, they have boats and planes, they can go wherever they want, so the organization itself is very rich, I don't think the individuals necessarily are taking this money away. And that is something, it's tough to get that kind of information. Maybe I don't know.

**JM:** How is it you just get me an e-meter?

**TO:** A e-meter is going to cost you about \$4000, man!

**JM:** Why don't they just give me one for free? You know, I need an e-meter, Baby!

**TO:** You know \$4000 as, Jason was saying, between OT, you know they have these famous levels, OT3, OT4, well OT3 is when you first learn about Xenu and the aliens in your body, OT4 and OT5, between OT4 and OT5, you have to do something called the L-Rundowns, they cost \$160,000 all by themselves! Can you imagine that, what if the Catholic Church or Baptist Church wanted that for little spiritual enlightenment?

*[16:00]*

**JM:** It would be [chuckles]

**TO:** It's amazing!

**JM:** Tony, thank you. This is, I know you are going to do more on this right?

**TO:** Right, oh yeah.

**JM:** So, keep in touch with us, 'cause I'd like to see how all of this develops.

**TO:** Yeah, it's really going to be interesting, cause like I said, Jason Beghe is not the biggest star, but he may be Scientology's biggest headache.

**JM:** So we just contact you at the Village Voice?

**TO:** Sure, give me a call.

**JM:** Yeah, we're going to check in with you. And if you get a, if you run into a spare one of those e-meters can you just mail it to me [chuckles]

**TO:** You got it.

**JM:** Thank you Tony! Alright, there's Tony Ortega, Scientology busted! I knew it was a racket!

*[16:50]*

**[[TRANSCRIPT ENDS]]**