

The Simple Genius of Rick Rubin

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SUMMARY

The conversation revolves around Rick Rubin's creative philosophy, emphasizing the idea that "less is more," which requires more effort to achieve. Rubin discusses his journey in music, the importance of simplicity and authenticity, and how constraints can enhance creativity. He also shares insights into the different working styles of artists like Eminem and Jay-Z, and reflects on the nature of success and the importance of staying true to oneself.

- *Rubin believes that to achieve simplicity in art, one must engage in a rigorous process of reduction and curation.*
- *He emphasizes that the essence of music comes from authenticity and personal expression rather than overproduction.*
- *The conversation highlights the contrasting approaches of artists like Eminem, who is meticulous and obsessive, and Jay-Z, who is spontaneous and instinctual.*
- *Rubin discusses the significance of meditation and grounding practices in maintaining his perspective and avoiding the pitfalls of fame.*
- *He stresses the importance of creating for oneself, suggesting that true fulfillment comes from making art that resonates personally, regardless of external validation.*
- *The idea of "ruthless editing" is introduced, where removing excess can lead to a clearer vision of the work.*
- *Rubin's approach to collaboration is centered on listening and facilitating the artist's vision rather than imposing his own.*
- *He reflects on the transient nature of success and the importance of remaining present and engaged in the creative process.*

Five years ago, I read this biography of you. It's called *In the Studio*. You and I were just talking about it before we started recording. One of my favorite ideas that I took away from that book that I think about probably every week is this concept that you have that less is more, but to get less, you have to do more. Can you talk a little bit about that?

>> Yeah. Um, if you're stacking a lot of things on top of each other, each one of those things becomes less important. So if you have 10 things, each one of them is onetenth as

important as one by itself. So if you're making something and you want the least amount involved, those things have to be really critically curated because they're doing the work of everything and nothing is hidden. It's why it's not as easy as it sounds to do less.

But it it

when you see it,

you can get the personality. I'll give you an example with guitars. If you a lot of recordings are made where a guitarist plays and then they double it and triple it and they create this like wall of guitars. And when you when there's a wall of guitars, you hear guitar, but you don't hear someone playing guitar. You just hear guitar. It becomes more generic.

When one person plays it and you can hear their fingers on the strings, it's got more personality. It's more human. And I tend to look for those things where it's the the singular essence shows through.

What I'm always surprised about people that do great things, I think especially from people on the outside, uh it's like the amount of volume that goes into it before like before you're presented with like their finished work.

>> I I know like you start, you know, you're obsessed with music when you're a teenager. You start def jam in your dorm room. You're like 18 years old. What was the first example? Was it L CoolJ? Like who was the first example you're like, "Wow, there's a lot more work that goes into making a great piece of art, great product, great album than I ever knew."

>> I never thought about it because this was

it was like a mission and a love and I didn't think of it even as work. It was just what I wanted to do is make these things. So, the fact that it took a lot of work wasn't it wasn't even in um it wasn't in consideration at all. When you were 18 years old, 19 years old, it was just all music all the time.

>> Yeah. It's just um as a fan, I listen to music all the time. I fell in love with it. I wanted to be involved in whatever way that I could. Uh hip-hop was just starting in New York City. It was still a totally underground movement. So, the only place you could hear it was at one club downtown where I where I was going to school. Um, there was only one club that you could hear hip-hop and that was once a week, but other than that it was only in it was in the Bronx, it was in Brooklyn, but really just in like community centers and outdoor parties. It was underground and not well thought of kind of music. It was street music.

>> And um, and I would go to this club every week and hear the music. And at that time, there would be a few hip-hop records coming out, 12-in singles, no albums, only 12-in singles.

And um there'd be maybe one new record every 2 or 3 weeks, and that's all there was. And I would so I go to the club every week, hear the music there, and then I would buy the one single that would come out every few weeks. And the singles didn't represent what the energy in the club was.

And I wanted to feel that energy of the

club. So I started the first record I made was called It's Yours. And the purpose of that was I was just trying to capture the energy of the club on record and I didn't know anything about recording. I wasn't a professional. I was a kid. The fact that I didn't know what I was doing allowed it to be true to what hip-hop was. was all of the records that were coming out, the few and far between 12-in singles every few weeks, they were made by professionals who made other kinds of music. They weren't made by hip-hop people. So, an outsider with experience was making what they thought hip-hop was, but if you went to the club, you knew what it really was. And the club was very stripped down and it was scratching, breakbeats, drum machines, and rapping. And that's what the records were. the ones that were produced by people producing other or making other genres of music. Was it like too much polish? Too was it like fake? How would you describe the difference between what you're hearing in the club? So, this is like your opportunity essentially your way into this.

>> The records are like a documentary of this scene that was going on and all of the other documents of that period weren't representative of the scene. They were representative of something else. So, profession professional the professional like the Hollywood version of it, but that's not what it was.

>> Is this the uh the first um like signal you put out? It sold like 100,000 copies or is that the same one?

>> Yeah, something like that. It sold a lot. I mean, for for a record in that

world, it took a long time. Probably took 18 months to sell 100,000, but over 18 months sold about 100,000. And it was a hit as much of a hit could be in something that would never be on the radio and a kind of music that nobody listened to or liked. As a matter of fact, back then most people who were not hip-hop fans didn't even acknowledge it as music. That's how far it was.

>> What do they think it was?

>> Don't know. It was same thing though with Elvis and rock and roll. Like the grown-ups didn't acknowledge that as music. It was just some other thing that they didn't know what it was.

>> That's how foreign it was.

>> When you were 18, 19 years old, were you already studying older versions of music? Did you you already going back?

>> I always listen anything I liked. I wanted to hear everything that the person that I liked, everything they listened to that they liked. I always wanted to understand.

>> I do the same thing with biographies. Yeah.

>> So I I want to know more about this. But uh I'll find somebody that you know like Steve Jos for example, I find him very interesting. I'd read a biography of him and then every single one of these books they'll talk about like half a dozen maybe a dozen people and I'm like who's that? I don't know this guy. And I'll go in the bibliography and usually find books about the their inspir the people that inspired them.

>> Same.

>> Do you remember the first time you did that? Like who were you like I'm really interested in this band or this artist.

Let me find out who they were inspired by.

>> It's always been the case. Or the other version of it is um it's like it where I would hear something for the first time. I can remember the first time I heard the MC5, which is uh a band from Detroit in the 1960s, kind of a proto punk rock band. They're before punk rock, but it has punk energy. And I heard that and it was really cool. And then I remember going to a used record store because the used record store had all the cool older stuff and they knew the most about music. So I spent hours in used record stores and just talking to the people who worked there. same like um you've heard Quinton Tarantino working in a video shop and just there's so much information around the people who really love this thing. Um and I remember they said, "Well, if you like the MC5, you might want to check out Iggy and the Stooges." And then I listened to the Stooges like I love this, too. And that was another also Detroit, same time frame, same scene and it was great music. Um, so it would either be music like the music that I found that I liked or music that inspired the music that I liked. Both of those were things I would always pursue.

>> I want to tell you about the presenting sponsor of this podcast, RAMP. I have been reading a lot about SpaceX lately. SpaceX is one of the most valuable private businesses in the world, and one of the main themes in the history of SpaceX is constantly attacking and

questioning your cost. RAMP helps many of the most innovative businesses in the world do exactly that. The median company running on ramp cuts their expenses by 5%. And one thing SpaceX has demonstrated is that a religious dedication to controlling costs can help actually increase revenue because you can pursue opportunities you couldn't otherwise. And we see that in the RAMP data, too. The median company running on RAMP also grows their revenue by 16%. So, when you're running your business on RAMP and your competitors are not, you have a massive competitive advantage that compounds over time. RAMP is the only platform designed to make your finance team faster and happier. Many of the top founders and CEOs I know run their business on RAM. I run my business on RAMP and you should too. Go to ramp.com to learn how they can help your business save time, save money, and grow revenue. That is ramp.com.

I always think like the motivations I always want to know why people are doing what they're doing. I think the motivations of what they're doing, the reason that they're they go into their like chosen profession is really important. You thought music was going to be like a hobby. like you were going to have to get a day job and then just do

>> I didn't know it was possible to me a job.

>> Yeah. Can you talk about that?

>> Yeah. I thought I would have a regular job. I didn't I didn't know anyone who did music professionally or

>> I couldn't imagine it. I didn't have any and no one in my family was an artist.

Uh so it wasn't a realistic expectation. So I thought I'd love music the way I always have. I could participate and make music if I want, but I would have a job to support myself because I didn't think that that was possible for music to support my life.

>> You were in a band, right?

>> You played in uh I think guitar in a punk rock band. So, it's very rudimentary.

>> Yeah. And then DJ. I still a little confused. Can you like try to explain the path that led you to this very singular position that you that you have now?

>> Yeah. I just always followed what was interesting to me at the time. So when punk rock came along, well first before punk rock would be heavy metal, heavy metal at that time was really more like hard rock than what we think of now as heavy metal. So it would be Aerosmith, AC/DC, Ted Nent.

Those were kind of the main stays of what arena rock was like when I was 13 or 14 years old.

and I loved that music and then I got a guitar and tried to play along and it didn't it didn't go well. But then when punk rock came along I could it was easier for me to play along because it was more basic music.

>> But how do you go from that to is DJ the next route in? Uh the next thing that happened was in in my interest in hiphop in high school, there were some kids, no no one in my high school like punk rock except me, but there were some kids who liked hip-hop. And this was again in the very

very very early days of hip-hop.

>> I think that's an understatement. I mean, the the beginning of hip-hop because I remember reading uh about the early um founding of Def Jam.

>> Yeah. And then I was I always like when I'm reading books I like write out the year that I'm in and then I look up what year that person was born. It's like okay how old is Rick at this point that's happening in his life. And was what I remarkable is like when I was reading your book I had read this is after I read Jay-Z's book Decoded.

>> And Jay-Z 10 years after you're starting Def Jam is talking about the early days of hip-hop when he got into it which is a decade after you got into it. And he says something that's really great. He's just like I definitely couldn't tell you that I was going to I could get rich from rap. I just knew that hip-hop was going to get a lot bigger before it goes away. That's a decade later than where you're at.

>> And where I was, I would not have said it'll ever get big. I was in the stage where I'm going to make this and the few people who like this will all like it and that's it. There was no upside. There was no thinking anybody else is going to like this. That's how underground it was.

>> Is L Cooler the first person you produced? The first hip-hop record I produced was Tor Rock It's Yours.

>> Okay.

>> It was one single.

>> That's the one that sold 100,000 copies in 18 months.

>> And then LL's first record was the first record after that.

>> But which is the one where you put
Reduced by Rick Rubin on a sleeve and
then your your dorm room address?

>> Yeah, I think all of them probably had
the dorm room address cuz that's where I
lived. And um reduced by I probably said
it for the first time on LL's record.

This is the thing that I'm fascinated
with. It's like this less is more, but
to do uh to get less, you have to do
more. This stripping away of everything
that's just like almost like religious
devotion to simplicity and like timeless
ideas. You were 19, 18 years old when
you put that on his record.

>> Well, I thought about the idea of
produced by and I thought the word meant
to build up.

Like I I think of production as building
And really what I was doing was taking
apart and reducing. I thought maybe
reducing would be reduced by is more
accurate in this case. And that's that's
how it happened.

>> So he brings you a song and you there's
just too like can what do you what do
you take?

>> In those days it weren't he didn't
weren't songs. It would be um he would
just have notebooks of lyrics
and they weren't in song order. It was
just rhymes.

And um
we would look at all the lyrics together
and say, "Is there something here that
could be the basis of a song?" Like, "I
need a beat," for example, that could be
a repeated phrase that ends up being a
hook.

And and the reason like many of the
hip-hop records before the Def Jam
records were somebody would start

rapping and then they would rap for a few minutes and then they would finish rapping. It wasn't like a song. It was more like a monologue almost like spoken word to beat kind of, but but it was still in a rap style, but it wasn't in a song structure. It was like Jamaican toasting. But the fact that I grew up on the Beatles and loved the Beatles and my understanding of music is based on the Beatles and the Beatles were the greatest songwriters ever and the structure of their songs are really um organized and tight.

So based on what I knew about from listening to the Beatles, I applied that to rap music so that it would be structured more like a Beatles song instead of like a monologue or a Jamaican toasting record.

>> Okay. So there is four decades separating when you're working with LL CoolJ and today. How similar or different from what like if you're working with an artist today, how different is what you're doing with that artist today compared to what you did with LL four decades ago?

>> Probably not so different. It's it's probably pretty similar. Just it it depends on the artist. Like because LL was a solo rap artist and he didn't have a a band or make music. I was responsible for making the the tracks and my version of that was a very stripped down minimal thing. But now I get to work with bands sometimes that have a big sound and there are a lot of players and I'm looking for the essence of each of these artists and the essence tends to be stripped down but it's

stripped down to what they are. just finished a new album with the Strokes and they're a band of five people. So, it sounds like a band of five people. It doesn't sound less than that.

>> Mhm.

>> Sounds like what they are.

>> You have this idea of ruthless edit. I've heard you talk about a few times on on podcasts. Can you explain what that is?

>> Sometimes for the sake of the whole work, removing things about it that you really love is part of the process. And instead of if you have if you have 100% and you know at the end you want to have 70% of what you have like you have 30% too much instead of whittling down that 30 to get to the 70 I would say reduce it to 40% let's say force yourself to get to 40%. and then add back what's what's needed to get to the 70. And it it it works in a different way. You you have a better understanding of the work after the ruthless edit because you find out especially with a group because in a group everybody votes. So with the Red Hot Chili Peppers, we'll record for an album we might record 40 or 50 songs and then all of us vote on A, B, or C. And then if everyone picks it as an A song, that's going to be on the album. If it's really divided, it might not be, you know, it'll be it'll be a democratic process until we get down to like what does everyone together think is the best thing that we can make. That's a ruthless editing process.

>> And you're just looking for the essence of what you think could be great. So like in that case, you're recording, let's say, 50 songs and you say the album wants to have 10 or 12. Yeah. Well, what about there's like there might be three that we can't live without.

>> Yeah.

>> Is that the thought process?

>> It helps to get to that point of

>> what are the ones you can't live without? However few it is and build from there, build out from there.

>> What other interests do you have outside of music? Like are you into like architecture or like is there anybody the reason I ask you that is like is there anybody else in different domains that you still uh have a passion for that you see that use similar ideas that you do? In every domain there are people who do make beautiful things. I like people who make beautiful things.

>> But like do are you seeing that their their thought process you find similarities between their thought process and their push?

>> It's all the same. I I think most of what I do is not really about music. I happen to work in music but it's not about the music. Does that make sense?

>> It does. But say more about this.

>> You're at Changanger and you walk through the space and you see it doesn't feel like other places you've been.

>> Yeah. It it has the same aesthetic as the records I make or the things that I work on, the things that I like, things that I buy, you know, the objects I buy would have the same aesthetic. So, it's all fitting into a I'd say

worldview.

>> Yeah, I feel this way too because like I mean we we talked right before we started recording about, you know, podcasting. I think we're both have the same obsession with it. And I've had my first podcast for over a decade. And it started out just me reading biographies of people that built businesses. But over time, I realized like this same personality type. It's like the artist, the entrepreneur, the filmmaker, the musician. I've done podcasts on all these kind of people and I'm like I don't see any distinction between them. Yeah.

>> It's the same.

>> It's all the creative spirit.

>> I want to like I have a bunch of like selfish things I told you I want to uh talk to you about because there's just some people that have made massive impacts on my life. If I told you like I grew up listening to hip-hop. It's all I listen to to this day. I listen to more podcasts. I listen to music now. But like it really gave like a put a voice like a words to a feeling I had even maybe in my subconscious. Eminem was the first one that like I was I I heard his first album. I was like this is how I feel. I didn't grow up in a trailer park in Michigan, but I know exactly what you're talking about with certain things with your family or certain things of like just becoming you know coming of age. I heard you say one time I'm like obsessed with I want to spend time with them and hopefully get him record a podcast and I know it's be very difficult but especially for for you who've worked with you know the best the

best of the best people over almost half a century and for you to say that he might be the most obsessive artist

>> they've ever worked for it was like I literally screenshotted that and saved it on my phone I look at it all the time why did you say that can you just tell me about what it's like working with him

>> it feels like his entire life is centered around writing words. He's totally preoccupied with that. So, he always has a notebook. He's always making little notes. He writes tiny tiny letters

and he's always making notes. And at one point, I asked him because he's got notebooks and notebooks and notebooks. And I said, "Are you working on a new song?" He's like, "No, I'm just like keep keeping active, keeping active in the skill set." And I said, "Are you going to put those in a song?" He's probably said 90% of it will never be in a song. He's just writing. Just writing. And that's what he does. He writes.

>> Does he apply that to like other elements of making a song though? Just not just writing cuz he does a lot of his own production.

>> He does. And I would say the same type of obsessive. It's what makes him great. He's obsessed.

>> Have you come across anybody that you consider great that hasn't that's not obsessed?

>> I'm sure there are. I have have to think about it. But it it's that's not the only way to do it. For some people it happens in a more natural way and for some people it's more of a work ethic is always a part of it, but for some people work ethic is the reason

they are who they are. And there are other people who are just incredibly talented and have enough work ethic to get over the finish line.

>> What do you think it's for you?

>> I don't like to quit. I like to see things through. When I start something, I like to see what it can be

>> from the outside. Uh cuz you know, you have this whole like very relaxed like zen vibe.

>> Yeah.

>> But I I I swear I think underneath is like a workaholic.

>> Oh, for sure.

>> Okay. For sure.

>> I'm a lazy workaholic.

>> Lazy workaholic. You No, you got to say more about that.

>> That's what it is. It's like uh I

>> Cuz it doesn't feel like work. Explain.

>> No, no, no. I have to force myself to do it. But I do force myself. My demeanor would be to do nothing.

>> Rick, I don't believe that.

>> It's true.

>> No, you love this too much, though. What do you mean?

>> That's the point. So, I love the beautiful thing,

>> and it takes a lot of work to get to the beautiful thing.

>> You like the end result.

>> Yeah. I like I like to get there. I like to get to the point where it's like, okay, press the send button and share it with the world. That's a great feeling. Like, I I like it enough for you to get to hear it.

>> Okay.

But all of the work up until then, it's like, "Oh my god, I have to go to the

studio today."

>> That's surprising to me.

>> Yeah. It's like it's such a beautiful day. Wouldn't it be nice to just go out and have lunch with friends? But my whole life has been, you know, most of my life was in the first

>> 25 years was in a dark room for 16 hours a day, 7 days a week in New York City working on music. No, you'd be rather be out here barefoot, butt naked in the sun. I think

>> now, but I not then. Not then. But but I'd ra, you know, I like being outside. I like having fun with friends. I like hanging out with my family.

>> Do you like making podcasts more than music now?

>> I don't know if it's I like it more. I like the people I get to meet and I'm interested in learning about people. I like learning how people think, their vision to make something, how they follow through to make it, and learning the the uh the roller coaster ride, that journey of building things, how it worked, where it didn't work, what ideas they thought may have worked that didn't, when they were surprised in the process. It's all interesting to me.

>> I I want to like pull on this for a little bit if you don't mind.

>> Yeah. So, I heard um Billy Isish's brother, who I think they have a close collaboration with, and he uh so he was describing the difference between uh him and Billy, he said that he enjoyed the process of making music. She enjoyed having made the music.

>> Yeah.

>> So, are you more like Billy in that case? Like, you like that it's done?

>> I think so. I I'll say I like the moment of revelation. So, we're working on something. It's just okay. It's boring.

I'd probably rather not be there. That's how it feels. But then something happens and it's like magic. Like something appears. It doesn't It's not like we made it. It's like something comes up in the process is conjured in the process.

That's like a miracle.

And that's the thing that's addictive.

That feeling when it's like it's not good, it's not good. It's not good. It's not good. We try this. We try this. This doesn't work. This doesn't work. This doesn't work. And it could be a mistake. The machine could not work. We can hear something. The machine broke. But what you hear, but what we're listening to is really cool all of a sudden.

That's the feeling that that moment of discovery where it goes from nothing to something really good. And then the whole rest of the process after that is protecting that because it's super delicate.

>> Mhm.

>> When it happens, it's like this miracle happened and this magic thing happened and now we have to protect it through the rest of the process to not ruin it.

When it comes together, let's say a band is playing and doing take after take after take. When it's really good, we all kind of look at each other like as they're playing it's like it's scary because you don't want it to end. Like you don't want it to stop because we know if it stops we can't control it. We can't do it again. It's not like that.

It's this moment in time where something magical happens. So we spend a lot of time waiting for those. And I can't say that's fun. It's not funny. It's It's just like takes a lot of pressure.

>> You have to force yourself to do it.

>> Yeah.

>> Have you ever just like I'm gave up in that moment, just walked away for a little bit.

>> Mm-

>> So you Okay. So you do have this like this really

>> good work work ethic.

>> You have work ethic and discipline.

>> Yeah.

>> Okay. But it would still be if you could

>> It's frustrating and

boring and takes a great deal of patience. It's like waiting for paint to dry. just waiting, waiting, waiting and trying different things and nothing works until something either works or something happens and it just comes together and and I can't tell you why.

>> Explain like what people do to kill these special moments though.

>> You kept saying like we have to protect

>> aware of it.

It's harder to

protect like in the in the process of it happening

if you realize this is it. It's like

it's like um what is it in golf? The

yips, you know, like when you're playing golf, if you like if you start thinking about it instead of just being in it, you can't do it anymore.

So,

it's almost like you have to get out of yourself.

to allow it to happen. Maybe not me, but

for the artist. The artist has to get to this place where it's like they don't even know they're doing it. It just happens. It's not a performance. It's something else. It's it's a it's just like a real moment happens and it's thrilling. I think you're speaking to my soul right now because there's uh something I heard Steph Curry talk about one time where they're like, "What do you think of when you're taking a shot?" And he goes, "Absolutely nothing."

>> Exactly.

>> And so like when I I read books for a living essentially before I started this >> and you know people I've had authors reach out to me after I did their book and they're like, "How did you get to the essence of it?" Like what were you thinking? What are you thinking of when you're doing this? And I was like nothing. I just read and if something stick jumps out to me I don't think at all. I just underline it and then I'll go back through if I when I reread the highlight if it's still interesting. It was interesting the first time, now it's interesting the second time, but it's probably interesting.

>> Interesting.

>> There's 10 million me out there. I'm not unique.

>> Same.

>> And there's no way I read this line twice and if I read it on a podcast that somebody else is not going to think of it's interesting. He's like, if I overthink it or if I think of, oh, this person might hear it or this kind of this many people are here, it's in the way.

>> Nothing. I'm thinking of nothing.

>> Yes.

>> That's really interesting. So, let me let me uh ask you this, though. So, you're [__] Rick Rubin. You can do whatever you want. Why are you choosing to spend so much time podcasting then? I like meeting the people. And even before the podcast started, I would still if someone was interesting to me, I would reach out to them, want to spend time with them, hang out with them, and just learn from them really. I can remember the the one where it became obvious to do the podcast was Dana White. Someone introduced me to Dana White.

>> I'm recording with him next week.

>> Great. He's great.

>> He's incredible.

>> And I said, he actually reached out to me. He's like, "Anytime you want to meet, I'm down." I was like, "Great. Let's do it." We met. We sat at my house. We sat outside. We talked for about 3 hours. And at some point in the conversation, I said, "Do you mind if I record this because I feel like I'm not going to remember what we're saying, and I'm really liking this story." And that was sort of a breakthrough of like this is kind of what doing a podcast is like. I'm I already do this in my life. I don't record them, but I meet the people that make things that are interesting to me, and I spend time with them, and I listen to what they do, and I ask a lot of questions because I'm curious. So, it really is an outgrowth of my normal life. So, I like doing that.

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studying how history's greatest founders operate for a decade. And one thing they all have in common is they understand that recruiting and hiring the very best talent is your most important priority. A players recognize other A players, which is why top companies like Ramp, Shopify, 11 Labs, Uber, and Door Dash all use Deal. Many of the top founders I know have personally invested in Deal after using their product. And what they discovered is that deal is the best company in the world at building infrastructure for global hiring. Deal will help your business hire, pay, and manage any worker anywhere in the world. So you can retain the best talent anywhere and spend the rest of your time focusing on what you do best, delivering value to your customers. The founder of 11 Labs has a great description of the value deal can give your company. He said, "We built 11 Labs to break down language and communication barriers. With deal enabling us to hire and support exceptional talent anywhere, we can accelerate our innovation and bring more voices, stories, and ideas to every corner of the world. Deal is trusted by over 40,000 businesses. Learn how they can help your business today by going to deal.com/enra.

That is deal.com/enra.

We were talking before we started recording like I may be the person that's most obsessed with podcasting in the world. I listen to thousands of episodes. I was listening to your podcast broken record back in the day. I was like this is incredible and you were heavily into like interviewing musicians back then.

>> Was the format of that show was just talking to musicians
>> and then tetragrammaton you took in my opinion to another level and you're talking to all kinds of incredible people. I listened to I just had a conversation with Toby Luk founder of Shopify.

>> Yeah. Amazing.

>> I used one of your episodes to prep because he's

>> such a unique mind. One of the most interesting conversations I had. But I was I I analyze people like, you know, there's a handful of podcasters are really great. There's a couple million in the directory. Only a handful are really great. Yours is really great. And I'm like, why the hell? How? It's unfair. This guy is like gifted at music and now he's gifted podcasting. Why is this the case? And what I came up with, and I started analyzing and thinking about what you do in your day job, what you've done for over four decades, and I was like, he's a professional listener.

>> That's true. I don't. He's listening to the guest. He is in the moment with the guest.

>> Yes.

>> And it's like that is why one of the reasons why obviously you're you have a lot of interesting things to say, but one of the reasons in my opinion that you're so great at podcasting.

>> Well, I think in real life people like to talk and they don't like to listen.

And often in a conversation, you'll be with someone and they'll be saying something and you'll be thinking about, okay, this is what I'm going to say in

response to that. You're not really not really present back and forth. That's what it is. It's like two people waiting for their turn to say what they think.

And um

this is different. And it really I think it came from listening to music cuz I listen to music in a very deep way. I close my eyes. I really pay attention. It's not uh it's not wallpaper. It's like I go into the music. In some ways, I think my relationship with music allowed me to never drink or take drugs because listening to music for me is totally psychedelic experience. I can feel the music and I can be transported by the music. Not all music, but good music. So I close my eyes, I feel it, and then at the end of it, I open my eyes and I'm surprised where I am because I've I'm been gone when I'm listening. So I listen deeply and I want to know. I really want to understand things. So I'm comfortable asking questions and I really listen to what someone's saying. And if someone says something I don't understand, I'll ask a question to clarify so that I can understand it. I also don't have any judgment. I don't I don't think that I have a way that like my way is the right way. And I'm not comparing what's being said to me about what I think. What I think is not part of it. I'm just I just want to truly understand what's being shared with me.

And if someone says something that's very different than what I believe, I want to know more. It's like, how did he get to that? Why? Wh Why do you think that? Because maybe I'll learn something. maybe maybe I have it wrong,

you know, like I don't I don't know anything. I want to know more. So, through talking to people and really listening, you really get to meet people and and as a as a professional listener, I found some people it's disarming to talk to someone who really listens because it's so rare. Most people don't listen.

>> When I listen to your podcast, I feel you have this combination of like sincere interest.

>> Yes. True. in the other human being.

>> Yes.

>> And a desire. I think you just said this, but the way I think about it is the way I think about you when I listen to your podcast is like a desire not to form an opinion, but to understand.

>> That's it. That's it. I just want to understand.

I want to understand to broaden my scope to see the world. I want to see the world through your eyes, you know? I want to see the world through someone made something that's beautiful to me. I want to understand how they see the world.

someone makes a great discovery. I want to know what was the process that allowed that to happen. I'm curious.

>> Yeah. There doesn't seem to be an end to your curiosity either.

>> I'm interested. I've always been interested. I I think of myself as a researcher. I've always like when the internet came along, anything that I'm interested in, I'll go

forever

going deeper and deeper and deeper into a topic just to get any glimpse and to read opposing opinions and go deeper and

deeper and deeper and just trying to understand. I'm curious.

>> You think of yourself as a researcher.

>> Yeah, that's what I do most of the time is research.

>> Okay. I don't know about this. Tell me about this. Well, not a researcher in a professional way, but anything I'm interested in, I want to know everything about it. Whatever it is, and even mundane things.

>> If I drink coffee, I want to taste a million. I want to find the best coffee.

I want to read what every person who knows about the best machine says about every machine and then test every machine. And it's just a fanatical devotion to finding the best version of whatever it is.

Is it all-consuming for you when you when you find these these pockets of interest?

>> I'd say so. There's no end. I don't get to an end of that process.

>> I admire people that do things for a very long period of time and I you can tell a lot about people by what they admire. It's like I want to do these kind of podcasts till I die. Like what's your strate? What's what what's successful can I do for in 5 years and 10 years? One that I'm still doing it and two I'm just making things that I'm proud of.

>> That's it. There's no [__] download number. There's no how many ads I sell. It's just like that's it.

>> And I'm terrified that one day, you know, I'm going to wake up and be like, I don't want to do this anymore.

>> No, but the only reason that would happen is because something else would

take over that you have to do. And that would be fine, too.

>> Like I when I was when I was 9 years old, I spent a lot of time practicing magic like card magic in front of a mirror

>> and that was really fun. And then there's a whole community of musician magicians and I was just a little kid but like grown-up magicians and if you're truly interested in magic um there are all these meetings and they get together and talk about stuff and if you're an outsider everything's a secret but if you're a magician they love sharing. So, it's a really cool community to be part of. And that was my community from nine until probably 16. That those were the people I hung out with and that were the people that we shared this interest and I just wanted to learn. And then music became more and more popular in in my life. Like music became a and then at some point it's like there I can't do both. They're both these are both full-time occupations. And so when I say occupations, I don't mean jobs. I mean something to occupy my time. I can either devote myself to doing magic or devote myself to doing music and at some point music won.

But that wasn't a loss. I didn't lose anything. That's a beautiful way to think.

>> Yeah. It's like I let go of the thing that I loved for this other thing that I loved that just took on this new life. And um I've done music for a long time. And

I like making other things too. And if it became if my life became about making

other things more than making music, that'd be okay. It's more about the making that excites me.

>> This is why I kept asking like, do you think you would like making a podcast like we can have a conversation? We could be doing your show right now instead of mine and at the end of this hour or two hours like we have it's done. we have something we we can do it again tomorrow. Like the the the amount of time from, you know, creation to output is so much shorter than an album or even a great song.

>> True.

>> And if you're what you're saying, I think you called yourself a lazy workaholic. I was saying lazy alcoholic. Lazy workaholic. Like it it's almost like this isn't work. This doesn't feel like work to me.

>> I feel like you I was a little surprised with the way you described

>> working in music. That's does feel like work to you

>> for sure. It's also work because I I have to show up. If you commit to be somewhere at a certain time, that's work because the that morning I might wake up and think I don't really want to do that today, but it's agreed to with other people. I'm going to be at this place and we're going to do this thing. So, I have to show up. But most days, I don't want to do the things that I'm scheduled to do. Now, at the time that I choose to at the time that I choose to do them, I want to do them. I want I know I want to do them, but still it's really nice not to have to get out of bed or it's nice to go for a walk on the beach.

So, I I think I might be well

positioned. This is I'm just now getting advice from you because I I'm a huge fan of you uh and I respect the way you think. Anyways, I just did another podcast on the the book you wrote, Creative Act, by the way. And there's so many ideas that you put into words that are in my head that I didn't have words for in there. So, if I right now I feel like this is I don't work a day in my life. I feel like I wake up and I'm like compelled or like I don't even know the word to use it. Like then there's no doubt that I'm just on the right path. If I was sitting here and we weren't recording and I was just seeking your advice

>> like I don't feel it's at work at all.

The only time it feels like work is when I have to edit which I [_] hate but I do it anyways cuz I think it makes it better.

>> Yeah.

>> But that's the only time.

>> That's a good example. It's a good example. There are parts of it that are not always fun. And when you're committing time, like time is our most valuable resource. And we when we're committing our time to doing something in advance, which we do, we preschedule the day of, you don't always want to do that thing.

>> But I feel you have complete control over your time and your life.

>> Yes. I still

>> I choose it and I have to acknowledge I made this. No one's forcing me to do this. I said I would show up. I have to show up. But in your day-to-day that still feels like work.

>> Yeah. It's like

I'd be happy not doing anything. Well, I
I don't know. I don't know if that's
true. There's no way. It's never been
the case. I've always
>> Cuz you could have stopped working
decades ago.
>> Yes.
>> And you think you're addicted to making
great [_]
>> Yes. And I'm lazy. It's a real part of
it. I'm telling you an honest piece of
this, which is every day it's not like
let's go. Every day it's like oh no,
>> I got to go work.
>> You're disappointing me. I'm
>> It's the truth.
>> I'm sad.
>> But it doesn't feel like it feels like
out of almost anybody in the world that
gets paid for being them.
>> Yeah.
>> Is you.
>> Yes.
>> And you're saying that's not the case.
>> No. I I'm me. I'm definitely me. There
is a part of me that doesn't want to
show up for anything and I have to
overcome that every day. That's what I'm
saying.
>> Did you ever spend any time with Tony
Bourdain when he was alive?
>> Never have.
>> Were you ever a fan of any of his
>> Yeah.
>> Okay. So, I read all his books, watch
all his shows, and in his book, I was
shocked because that guy
>> Yeah.
>> First of all, like in his book, he
describes what it's like to be a heroin
addict, which is insane. And the amount
what you realize when you read Kitchen

Confidential is like the same work ethic he used to score drugs as a junk as a broke junkie once he broke that habit he just applied it to writing and building TV shows like his work ethic was the same which was directed the worst thing possible being a [_] heroin addict >> and then he directed in a positive generative direction and and he took off but he he says something very similar to you he's like somewhere deep inside me is this guy that just wants to smoke weed and lay in bed all day and he goes I had to fight his writing is beautiful I had to fight that guy every single day.

>> Yeah. Now, what's what's also true, I do have to fight that guy to show up and there are parts of the job that are just like watching paint dry, waiting for something good to happen. But that moment of magic when something good does happen is the thing I'm addicted to. That feeling of it wasn't good, it's not good. Oh my god, it's good. And it's like a miracle because nobody knows how or why that happened. It's not in our control. That's the other thing about it. It's really, it really is magic. So, I'm addicted to the magic part of it, but I'm not addicted to everything leading up to those magical moments. I'm patient. I'm patient enough to wait forever for that thing to happen, but it's it's not fun. Like, some people really look forward to fishing. It's like fishing. It's like you can go out and spend a whole day fishing and not catch any fish. It's like that. You can work in the studio for a day or for a week and nothing good can happen. That's

happens. It's out of our control. But when the good thing happens, it's like, ah, there it is. That's why we're here.

>> That fishing analogy is really important to me. I've heard you say this a few years ago.

>> It's it's it's the best example. I heard Acon one time describe uh working with Eminem and he shows up into Detroit and he gives him a call. He's like, "All right, I figure we're going to do a night session. You know, these guys are usually nocturnal." Calls him at like 7:00 p.m. and M's like, "Yeah, I'll see you tomorrow." And Acon's like, "Tomorrow." Like, "What are you talking about?" Shows up and doesn't realize that he treats it like a job. Shows up at 9:00 a.m., right? He's in the studio writing, like you're saying, recording verses. I think it's like, let's say, noon. He'd literally be in the middle of a verse and like, "Oh, I'll be right back. I'm gonna take lunch." And he's like, "What?" Goes comes back at 1, goes back to work 5 o'clock. Says, "All right, I'll see you the next day." Yeah. And people like misunderstood what Acon was saying is like he doesn't wait around for inspiration. He shows up every day knowing that if he does the work,

>> then it will come.

>> Yes.

>> It's exactly what you're saying about fishing.

>> Yeah. And inspiration is a real thing, too.

>> But it's both. Like, if you only wait for inspiration, it won't ever come. like you have to work and be there and show up. If you're not if you're not in

the practice of allowing the thing to happen, it won't happen. Doesn't mean it will. Just because you do the show up doesn't mean it will happen. But if you don't show up, it won't happen. Brian Haligan founded HubSpot 20 years ago and he has this line about AI that I keep thinking about. He said, "Most companies are using AI to make their teams more productive, but the companies that will thrive make the company itself the intelligence." And that is exactly what HubSpot does. HubSpot gives you AI that works. AI that actually knows your customers and your business. Your AI needs to know what you know, your actual customer conversations, your sales history, what worked last quarter and what didn't. HubSpot connects AI to your real customer data. So, when it writes an email, it knows this customer asked about pricing 3 weeks ago. It knows what campaign brought them in and it knows that they already contacted support twice this month. And that's when you start seeing actual results. Visit [hubspot.com](https://www.hubspot.com) to learn more. That's [hubspot.com](https://www.hubspot.com).

You got me into Johnny Cash, who is a couple generations before me. And not only was the music great, but I loved you describing like the what went into making it.

We can talk about that, but there was something like the way I would like uh distill down what you were saying is like constraints are actually your friend.

>> Yeah. If you don't like you can't do everything. So if you if you artificially constrain yourself, you can you it forces you to be more creative.

Can you talk about this? I I feel like you've used this a bunch in your career.

>> Yeah. It's like the idea of creating a pallet. And the albums that speak to me most are ones when you hear them, you know, if if an artist has 20 albums, but you hear a song, you know, oh, that has to be on that album, that seventh album, because that's the only album that sounds like that. Even though the band always sounds like the band, this group of songs sounds different than all the rest. And it and it may be that there's some it was either recorded in a different way or all the songs were about a particular thing or they're using different instrumentation than they used to use. I like it when an album like stands alone outside of an artist's career as a defining moment in time. It's not just more of the same.

>> But how is that tied to these these constraints that you put on the work? it that happens by coming up with like uh a series of rules that only apply to this project.

Those are the constraints. So that could be

>> in Johnny Cash.

>> In Johnny Cash's case, the first one was I didn't know that it was going to be an acoustic album, which it turned out to be. Um, but that was something that through the process of recording, I learned the most interesting version of this to me is when he's singing alone, which is really the demos in my living room, him singing me songs. That sounded better than when we went into the recording studio with musicians and played them with a band. It wasn't as interesting. I

didn't know that in advance. That wasn't a premeditated idea. And then in terms of the material that he would sing, I grew up with this image. What what spoke to me about Johnny Cash was this image of the man in black. And the man in black is a mythical character. Yes, Johnny Cash, but it's not just Johnny Cash. It's like the mythical Johnny Cash. The Johnny Cash who's the man in black. And the man Johnny Cash could sing a funny song. The man in black probably wouldn't sing a funny song. So the material that we picked was always through the eyes of what's something that the man in black, the legendary mythological character, what would he sing? And those are the songs that we chose.

>> And so in this case, the constraints are you, Johnny, a guitar. I think he said he didn't even use a pick.

>> It was like his fingers. every every guitar every time he strung the guitar was his fingers.

>> Yeah.

>> And you guys in a house.

>> Yeah. But but a big part of it too was the choice of material. That's a big part of it for for those albums.

>> And it's looked at through the viewpoint of not a funny song, but a man in black.

>> And not even just a not even just a funny song. It had to have a certain amount of gravitas to fit the a mythical character singing it. When I think about everything I've read about you and all as much as I've heard you speak, it's like I feel like you would agree with the statement that like great things can't be made by a committee.

>> Correct. It would be unusual for that to

be the case.

>> In many cases, it's just there.

>> It tends to water it down. It tends to water it down.

>> Is it So, this is the case in companies since obviously my my main focus on like entrepreneurship.

>> Yeah.

>> It's like even if there is a group, there's usually like a main person. Is that the same thing in bands? Is there always like one def like there might be four guys in the band or five guys in the band? Is it usually the stronger personality that uh has more influence

>> in a band? What makes a band great is how the different musicians hear music and play together. And it doesn't have to be a single point of view. The Beatles are a great example because John and Paul really were very different people and wrote different kinds of songs and approached music in different ways. Jagger and Richards same. There's opposition there. That's goes against exactly what you said. It's a different model. But then like in Competted and the Heartbreakers, Compedi is really the

the flag bearer of the band and everyone lines up behind Tom. They're all great and they all can play great things and they all add incredible things, but Tom is sort of the final word in what happens in that band. In a band like you two, it's democratic. Everybody in the band has to like it. If three of the guys like it and one of the guys doesn't, it doesn't happen. And that's another model that that works for them.

>> So if we go back to this designing in constraints, your work with Johnny Cast

is very simple. Go back all the way 40 years before that. I'm reducing. I'm not producing. I think in 2023, I listen to I don't know 600 to 700 individual probably listen to two to three podcast episodes a day. So I don't know 700 900 episodes. I think the single best podcast episode that I listened to all that year was your episode of Tetra Grammaton with Jimmy Ivine. There was a story that you told in there that was very fascinating because Jimmy's like I think 10 years older than you kind of like 10 years

>> almost exactly 10 years old. We're we're a day we're our birthdays are a day apart.

>> Yeah. And you you tell this phenomenal story on the podcast of one of the first maybe been the first time you met Jimmy I he said something that was so strange. You go to play something you're working on and he goes I wish I could still make something that simple.

>> Yeah. And your response was, "I'm sure you can."

>> Yeah. What do you mean?

>> Explain why he said that. And what's happening? What happens over time?

>> Yeah. Because he he was a producer.

And

as you learn more of what you can do, you tend to do that. You tend to they tend to get bigger. At that point in time, I hadn't done it enough. It was my first record. So it was that was the the cult electric was my first rock record.

>> This is after almost a decade in hip-hop or half a decade in hip-hop.

>> No,

>> no,

>> no.

>> When was this?
>> Same. Like same time.
>> Oh, okay. Okay.
>> Yeah, this is like 19.
>> Is this when you moved to California?
>> No, this is still in New York.
>> Oh [_] Okay, so give me this.
>> I'm still living in the dorm. I'm still living in the dorm at NYU.
>> Oh god.
>> I thought this was Okay, so this is the very beginning. So it's as simple as it gets because that's all you can do. Yeah, I was doing what I was very simple, but I stayed true to that as much as I can. There probably been a couple of examples along the way where I may have uh I may have not stayed true. Very few. If you look at my whole recorded discography, there may be two or three examples where it got out of control or where the artist that I'm working with just had a very different vision, which does happen sometimes. And usually we end up not working together again. And there have been one or two occasions where we end up not even finishing a work because it's just too we just see it in a different way. I had that experience with Joe Cocker. We went into the studio to to record and I had a specific vision of how I saw Joe Cocker and what I thought was great about Joe Cocker and he really had a vision of it being something different than that and we weren't on the same page and it didn't jive so it it never happened. I'm curious your perspective since you've known Jimmy Abbe for so long because he has a very another singular career where he like kind of in music the whole time but

>> jumped around. Yeah. Different job from you know engineer to producer to uh record company uh uh owner to then building businesses with his his artists like what do you think is special about him? Like what what's unique about him? Why was he able to do what he was able to do?

>> He's got good taste and he's got a great work ethic. Those are the two

>> to me in my mind. You two are very almost before this conversation I'm having with you almost at the opposite ends of the spectrum where I felt like you were

>> just like drawn you know like a ma flame about what you want to do where he's like it was always work I never liked it was always a job like I like certain parts of it but I just he's essentially just forced himself to do it.

>> He said something really interesting that I thought really summed it up which was Jimmy is in the banking business. These are his words. He said, "I'm in the banking business and you're in the church business and that's the difference."

>> Explain that. I love this.

>> It's that I'm doing a a passion and belief

and he's doing a bottom line what's going to work, what's going to be good for business. And it's just two

different thing, two different

mentalities. There's a great line in the Defiant Ones where he hears he's

producing Tom Petty and he hears uh a song. He goes, "This is house music."

And Tom goes, "What do you mean?" He goes, he goes, "Find me, you know, whatever. It's eight more albums." He

goes, "That song's going to buy you a house."

>> Yeah. So that it's we have a different we have we're different in that way.

>> And then Tom goes, "I've never heard somebody describe music that way. This is going to buy me a house."

>> Yeah. There's a bunch of stories that Jimmy uh tells in that um podcast with you about the crazy things that you see in the music business, you know, where I think he tells a story like the Phil Spectre coming to the studio with like a butcher's uh in a butcher's outfit and he's got like guns strapped to him everywhere and David Geffin's in the studio and John Lennin's getting drunk. Do you have any like things that stand out from you? I've never heard you hear tell any of these like stories of stuff you've seen inside the studio. I can remember doing a session with OB dirty bastard from from Wuang and I remember being nervous because I'd never met him before and his reputation preceded him. So I didn't really know what I was going into

>> and um and I thought I'm going to I'm going to bring my dog. I had a pulley which is a dog that has dreadlocks and

I'll be and that would be dis whatever's going on. And if you see a dog with dreadlocks, it's interesting. Like it it it there's it's fascinating in its own way. And I had a friend of mine also filming everything cuz I thought, well, if there's a camera and if there's a dog, it's going to be okay.

>> What was his reputation for you to do this though?

>> All kinds of crazy things like

>> violence.

>> Could be violence. Could be a lot of things that would not be good.

>> Yeah.

>> And just things I wasn't really prepared for. But I loved him, you know, I was a fan. And I remember we walked in and he looked

and he pointed at the dog and he said, "He's okay." And then he pointed at the camera, "He's got to go." It's like, "Okay." And then he went and then the session ended up going pretty well.

>> We mentioned Toby Luke earlier and in the conversation I had with him that was very fascinating. He said something where he's just like there's not like one right way to do things. There's probably a hundred which I think you would agree with and he's like you just have to find the one that fits best for you

>> and just do that and you would think this like

>> computer German computer programmer engineer would be like very rigid but when you talk to him he essentially just runs his life by all intuition.

>> Yeah,

>> you were all intuition.

>> All intuition. like explain like why you essentially your entire life is just gen is in my opinion like managed or or run by your intu intuitive feelings.

>> Yeah, I've always been true to what I feel and it's worked out. I suppose if it didn't work out then maybe I would have to try something else. But it's the fact that I've stayed true to what feels right to me and luckily by the grace of God, it has resonated with

other people, it allows me to continue doing it. But I suppose if that didn't happen, I would just make things for myself on a small level and keep doing it and have a real job.

>> Is this your guided by intuition tied to I feel you have a skepticism of human knowledge. I think you say like I think we know very little about everything. Yeah.

>> Uh Thomas Edison has this famous quote where he's like we don't know 1 1,000th% of anything.

>> Yeah. I believe that. I believe we don't know anything.

>> Yeah. So if you believe you don't know anything, then what is the only other thing you could do is be guided by your intuition.

>> Yeah. And and to try things and see what works and and just because one thing works doesn't mean that's the way that that's the way it happens. That's a way that happened to work in that case.

I found one of my all-time favorite quotes when I was reading the book Oero to1. The quote says, "The single most powerful pattern I have noticed is that successful people find value in unexpected places." And they do this by thinking about business from first principles instead of formulas. That is exactly what Apploven has done with their advertising platform Axon. Axon connects you with over a billion potential new customers inside mobile games. Axon allows you to capture undivided attention. Axon ads are full screen video ads that are watched for an average of 35 seconds. That is retention that blows other ad platforms out of the water. You can launch on Axon in

minutes. You set the goal and Axon achieves it. There's no complex setup, no expertise needed, and Axon scales quickly. They can put your ads in front of over a billion potential customers. Other businesses have seen immediate results, have scaled to hundreds of thousands of dollars of spend per day, and increased their revenue by millions. So, you want to get started quickly before all your competitors are on Axon. And you can do that by going to axon.ai/enra.

That is axon.ai/enra.

>> I I heard you um one time compare and contrast the uh approach of Jay-Z to Eminem.

>> Yeah. you work with both them. Can you talk about just how different they are?

>> Yeah, M is much more um well, he writes down the lyrics and he's really studious in the way that he works and he'll also record take after take after take after it's written and try different things. Jay is much more spontaneous. It all happens in his head and then he'll get up and say it once or twice and that's it.

>> What's the energy when you're in the room with both of them though?

>> M is totally involved in every aspect of everything and Jay is like, "Play me a bunch of stuff. If I hear something I like, I'll think about it and if not, I'll see you tomorrow." He's like, "Jay will only be there when he needs to be there. And if he hears something that sparks an idea, he'll sit and just say, "Play it over and over again. Play the music over and over again." And he sits in the back and you almost, it's it goes on long enough

where you forget he's even there because he's just silent in the corner listening, sitting on a couch listening over and over again. 30 minutes, 25 minutes later, I was like, "I got it." Jumps up. He runs into the room, hit record, and he does the whole thing just from his head. It's amazing. He's the only person I've ever seen do that.

>> I think a lot of people know that he did Magna Carter Holy Grail essentially in two weeks. Like he did the whole album in two weeks.

>> Most of his albums were made very quickly.

>> Yeah. It was always interesting. He was like, "Yeah, he recorded them in two weeks." But these ideas he's been refining. It's not like when he's not in the studio, he's not thinking about these. He's like refining these ideas over a long period of time. Sometimes yes, sometimes no. Some of them it all happens in a weekend. The whole thing.

>> That's crazy.

>> Yeah.

>> As opposed to M who will work on a song forever.

>> Yes. Very different. Just two different styles. Both amazing,

>> but they just come at it from different I think it's just different personality types.

>> What do you think M's personality type is, then?

>> I would describe him as obsessive. You know, he's really perfectionist, uh, willing to do whatever it takes for it to be great and diligent, hardworking, and Jay's much

more relaxed. Jay's, it just kind of happens for him. He's doing it, but it's just a different style.

>> Of the two, which one do you think you're that your working style is closer to?

I do different things. So, it's hard to say what I do changes according to who I'm working with. It's like whatever whatever the artist needs

is what my job is. So, in some cases it's totally hands off and in some cases it's well, we got to start from the beginning and try to figure this out together. Oh, so you know what I just I'm thinking of like it's kind of tied to what you were saying about being a professional listener that you take a sincere interest in the person whether you're recording a podcast with them or you're working with them in the studio. And so your goal, if I'm reading this correctly, is like has really nothing to do with you. You you feel your act of service to try to get them to be the best version of themselves. Is that the way you think about it?

>> Yes, I'd say that's that's accurate.

>> Do you have anybody that plays that role in your life for you?

I don't know if I do.

I don't know if anyone produces me.

>> Could they reduce you? I don't know if there's anything to reduce here.

>> Yeah, I don't know. I luckily I have friends who um friends and family who are not particularly interested in what I do. So, I have reality around me. A lot of just like that's crazy, don't you know? Like a lot of

>> that's a bad idea. Man, and it's interesting for me because

some ideas I hear that's a bad idea.
It's like, okay, maybe you're right. And
so, and many ideas is like,
I'll show you. I'll show you it's a good
idea. I'm I feel I have to do this, you
know.

Yeah, I could see that you take a lot of
input, but I think you would be
resistant to

>> I won't change my mind, but I'm open to
hearing ideas and definitely open to
help. If if someone suggests something
that makes it better and I see that,
it's like that's the best. I'm not
close-minded because someone offers
information, even experienced
wisdom,
I might not always choose to use that
information.

Do you think you have a big ego?

>> I don't think so.

>> You have a lot of self-confidence
though.

>> I have a lot of self-confidence.

>> But they even said I met somebody met
you when you were like 19 and like
that's the most conf self-confident
19-year-old I've ever met.

>> I think that's the m that's the mix. I
think you know lucky I learned to
meditate when I was young and
meditation's been a big part of my life.
So it it's never been about ego. It's
never been about me. You know it's it's
uh I'm confident in being able to share
what I'm experiencing. I hear something
like that's amazing
and I hear something else, it's like,
you know, it's not good enough and
nothing anyone can say will tell me
otherwise. It's like I I know I can feel
it.

>> So this confidence in your own judgment cuz you were just saying you could have somebody has a lot of wisdom.

>> Say when I say confidence in my own judgment in this is how I see it. I'm not saying I'm right. I never say I'm right or I know what's best. None of those things. This is how I see it. I see it clearly. This is how I would vote for it. If I get to vote, I vote for this.

But it's not my way or the highway at all.

>> What is your inner monologue like when you're making something? Is it positive, negative? Are you self-critical?

>> Depends. Like it

I would say rarely critical. What it usually is is it starts apprehensive when we start because it could be anything. So at first it's scary cuz I don't know what's going to happen

>> even today.

>> Even today and there's usually expectation because I've had success in the past that if I'm there it's going to be great. So I feel this pressure of like there's expectation and I know I can't control anything. It's going to be the way it's going to be. I know I'm patient and I know I'll wait until it's great and we start by experimenting and see what it could be. And as soon as there's a glimmer, as soon as I hear something that's good, then I relax. But until then, it's too open, you know, it could be too many things.

But once something lands, whatever it is, I relax. It's like, okay, we have at least a direction to move in. It doesn't mean we stay in that direction

forever, but having a direction is better than not having a direction. And when we start, we don't have a direction.

>> So, you would say you don't have a you're a a like a self-critical inner monologue constantly playing in your mind?

>> Never.

>> It's interesting. The reason I asked you this question is because um I was with a an entrepreneur yesterday. guy's worth \$10 billion and he wakes up every morning at 5:30 just assuming he's going out of business and like essentially paranoid. He lives like a paranoid life and that's why he thinks he's good. This is very common with like a lot of people.

>> Yeah.

>> And um I used to have a self-critical like kind of mean I was [_] pretty mean to myself. This guy named Brad Jacobs uh I've actually had him on the show and his I've talked to him a bunch and he used to have that too and now he's in the 60s like it's counterproductive. it's not helping anything. And some something I talked about this on the podcast. You can hear me mentioning it over and over again for a few years. And just something one day just [_] snapped. And I just don't do that anymore.

>> That's great.

>> And I went back and I was reading my notes on you and I was just telling uh my partner Rob about this. This way I look at the work we're doing now. It's like I like Rick's framework that like if you look at your work, it's just like an entry to a diary.

>> Yeah.

>> It's like there's nothing to be critical about because like you did the best you possibly could have done

>> in that moment.

>> In that moment.

>> Yeah. And then that was 10 years ago and that was 5 years ago and then what we're making today is

>> and I might not do the same thing I would have done 10 years ago and that's fine but I don't have any regrets about 10 years ago that's what I thought that's real. Each each of those installments are real. So it's always true. It doesn't mean that that's who you are forever. That's who you are in that moment. It's really freeing. It's helpful for an artist to think that way because usually, especially when we're younger, we think the thing that we make is this is my o this is my magnum magnumopus and this is going to define me for the rest of my life. And it's uh it's a daunting hill to climb. But when you realize it's like this is just the one today and we're going to make another one tomorrow and hopefully the one tomorrow is going to be as good or better than the one today.

What's true today? What's the one I I usually say that if you are excited to share it with your friend? Like if if I'm working in the studio and before, you know, long before a record comes out, if we're we're making something and if someone comes and I'm excited to play it for my friend who has good taste, who I know likes good music, it could come out then. Like if I want to play it for for them, that's good enough for everybody.

Do you know what I'm saying? But we but usually artists will feel like,
>> well, I'll play this for my boys, but it has to be a lot better before regular people can hear it. And that's ridiculous. It's like, as soon as I liked it enough to share it with one person, chances are it's ready for everybody. I've seen you talk to a ton of musicians and artists on camera. Uh I just finished rereading this profile of uh that was in Colossus magazine on Josh Kushner and it starts out with him coming to seek your counsel. There's a ton of people that come to seek your counsel and I feel almost like you're hold up like you're modus is like holding up a mirror to them and just telling them to do what they know they want to do but it's somehow even more valuable if they hear it from somebody else. Does that make any sense to you? Do you resonate with that at all?
>> That sounds right. I mean, there are occasions where someone will come to me and say, "I'm thinking about doing this crazy thing." And I'll say, "I wonder about that." But more often than not, when people share their hopes and dreams, that's all you need to know. It's like, "These are my hopes and dreams, but I'm afraid of this, this, and this." Most often, it's go with the hopes and dreams. Don't worry about any of that stuff cuz that stuff doesn't matter.
>> What is the stuff that they're afraid of over here?
>> What someone's going to say? Uh, will I be able to keep doing it? Um, my last

one was successful. What do I do now?
Success is a funny thing, you know, when
you're young and you get successful
quickly. No one's prepared for that. And
it's awkward and uncomfortable. And you
think that's the thing that you want,
but when you get it, it's not like what
you think it is. It's very different.
And there are all these uh pressures
that come with it that no one's ready
for and no one learns how to do. And
it's not like whoever uh you learned
good habits from over the course of your
life, they don't know how to deal with
it because they're they never got, you
know, overnight famous or successful or
like it's it's a weird thing. Um
so a lot of artists kind of implode in
success.

>> Okay. So, I want to ask you why you have
not imploded over this this this many
decades. One of the most interesting
things uh that Jimmy Aine told me, we
talked a lot about this because like I'm
obsessed with people that are just
further down the line than I am.

>> Yeah. Like this just the the the wisdom
they gain from experience. Like I'll
read I I got the book knowledge. I need
like the stuff that not in there that
they can like tell you. And he was just
like, "Most people cannot handle, you
know, you guys have been around some of
the most talented people, genius level
talents that have completely imploded,
maybe destroyed their lives, maybe died
prematurely." And so he broke it down
like four things for me. Like there's
like people can't help stress. And these
are the pitfalls, David, that you should
watch out for. One was drugs, second was
alcohol, third was women, and fourth was

megalomaniac. that you know it's really hard to get on stage and there's 80,000 people screaming your name and over time they just think they're some kind of they're not even human anymore which you seem to be like I'm not special I have no I know you say you have no talent all this other [_] but like I I'm not special you know I I think that's there's a lot of wisdom to that it's like man there's 10 million me and 10 million you's

>> all over the world or whatever is do you think Jimmy's

>> perspective on that is like the people that you've seen that were had talent and had success and and destroyed it. Is there anything else that he's missing from there?

>> I think those are all of them. It's like because the last one takes into account a lot of like

there's both the the mask of overconfidence and ego which is hiding insecurity.

Or there's the insecurity, but they're they're really the same. You know, they're just presenting in two different ways. Two different people have the same overnight success. One of them gets really boastful and I'm the greatest that ever lived and the other one is like, "Oh my god, they're going to find out that I'm not it's that I'm really a fake."

But those are both the same people. It's the same.

They're two sides of the same coin. the the megalomania is a way of hiding the insecurity. It's a it's a brave face. They might not know this. They rarely know it. You know,

it's different sides of the same imbalance.

>> So, that leads me to the question I hinted at or maybe even said like how do you sustain success over such a long period of time? I think the fact that I learned to meditate when I was young and always had a grounded and I and the fact that I know it's not me. That's it's like those two things like I'm grounded and I know I'm lucky to participate in this magic that's happening. I get to be in the room when it happens, but it's not from me.

>> What do you mean it's not from you in the conduit? Is that what you Yeah, I would say that I'm in the service of it. I'm devoted to setting the stage to allow it to happen and I'm patient and waiting for it to come.

It's not like when it's great, it's like I did a great job.

>> It's not that.

>> No. I think the people that sustain greatness over time, even if they do something great, they don't like rest on their laurels. They don't go to sleep on wins. They just make something great. They're like, "All right, you try to do it again the next day." And they don't really think too much. Uh Jimmy has I keep bringing them up, but uh he has that great line. He's just like, "I don't have a review mirror and I don't have a trophy room." He's just like, "I don't give even when he did the show." He's like, "I don't want to talk about the past. I want to talk about like what I'm working on in the future." They're all like that. I just had lunch with

Jeffrey Katzenberg. Same thing. He's just like, "Yeah, we do the show, but like I want to talk about what I'm working on now, not just what happened at Disney and everything else." It's just very very common.

>> Uh like staying in the moment being present. Let me tell me if you disagree with me. Uh cuz again like I have this interpretation of you in my mind cuz I've been a fan of yours for a very long time and going back to this like sustained success over a long period of time. I talked to James Dyson, the guy that invented, you know, the vacuum cleaner guy,

>> and he's a fascinating person to me. Number one person I wanted to meet because his first autobiography, I think, is so great because it's all about like him just enduring to struggle and refuse to quit. And something I didn't understand even though I read his first autobiography five times, second autobiography two or three times, and his he wrote an encycl this I love obsessed people. He's inventor. He wrote an encyclopedia while he's building his company on a history of great inventions. And he's there's like [_] 200 inventions in there. like look at this little weird thing and he's just like complete

>> obsessed

>> obsessed but what I didn't understand what was driving him was he told me this great story on the podcast where he he goes this is his or his simple organizing principle he's like I pick up a product right cup pick up product it exists I go how can I make this product better makes it better puts it back down

waits a little bit picks it up goes how
can I make it better makes it better
puts it down he goes I just do that over
and over again I've been doing it for 50
years

>> so if I had to Yes. What your organizing
principle was that I think also
influences the sustained success that
you've had is you just making things
that you yourself like.

>> That's good. And sometimes I'll go into
a friend's house and I'll think the
furniture in here isn't arranged in the
best way. Maybe I'll rearrange the
furniture.

>> No, you don't.

>> I've done that.

>> I've done that.

>> What does your friend say?

>> Depends. Some are, you know, some are
cool with it. Some are like, he's crazy,
you know. Okay, we could say more about
this like

>> Well, it's just like seeing the
possibility.

Um I've I've worked on a lot of um
a lot of living spaces and
the idea of designing a house from
scratch is a daunting one to me. I can't
imagine doing that because too many
options. But if there's a house that
exists,

I might be able to see, well, what's the
best version of this thing that already
exists?

And that's what same same with music.

It's like I hear what's there and now
what's the best version of this? What
can we do to make it better? What can we
do to make it better? Same thing as
James Dyson. Exactly the same.

>> Yeah. I feel like you did this from the

very from the jump when you're like,
well, I'm in the club. I'm obsessed
going to the club.

The hip-hop club is incredible, right?

>> Yeah.

>> But I like this stuff that's here. I go
to the record store. I'm buying this
stuff that I don't like.

>> It's not real.

>> Yeah. So, I was like, why don't I just
make what I actually like and it wind up
working out like fabulously.

>> Yeah. But again, I didn't know in
advance it would work out fabulously.

It's just like this is what I want to
hear. I'm making it for me.

>> Which these are my favorite kind of
people because you're again, it goes
back to like why are you doing what
you're doing? And you're doing it
because you wanted to make it to the
point where

>> you want it in the world.

>> You were willing to just make music at
night and have a normal job just because
you liked doing it.

>> Absolutely. It was never I never thought
of any of this as a job. It's never been
about that. It's only a job because I'm
committed to show up. That's what makes
it a job. The actual craft of making
things is what I like to do. What would
have to happen for you to basically
disappear and to not and to stop stop
working with musicians, stop making
podcasts?

>> I think I would just keep making things
for myself. You know, I give the example
in the book of if you were to
move into a house on the top of a
mountain that no one could ever come and
visit

and you made that the place that you most wanted to spend your time and you really create you curated it to your taste.

That's the job. It's not about I'm making this to show off to someone else. I'm making this because I want to inhabit this.

I make the music that I want to I'm excited to listen to. Now, it's ridiculous. It It doesn't work out that way because in making the music, we work on we listen to it a thousand times and then when it's done, I it's fine if I never hear it again. I never put on music I worked on, which is funny because I'm making it to be the perfect version of what I want to hear.

But in the process of doing that, there's so much listening involved that it's not fun to go back and listen to it for me. I want to hear something new.

>> This idea of that you the example that you use in the book of the house on the mountain

>> that no one can ever see. No one will ever see.

>> Say more about the thinking behind that though.

>> Well, it's it's true. I just know for me if I was I don't decorate my home for to impress someone else.

I decorate my home to be the best version of the house that I want to live in. And it's not typical. I'm willing to go to extremes to make the thing that I want to inhabit.

And it's not for anyone else. It's just for me. Now, often other people, if they do happen to come over, they're like,

"Wow, I'd love to live in a place like this. I've never been in a place like this."

I think the metaphor that you're using there though is like almost like a a map for people to find their life's work if they haven't found it yet. It's like what are you already doing?

>> Yeah. And what will you do no matter what? What won't you stop doing regardless?

>> I always say it's like people say, "Oh, you know, if you love what you do, you would do it for free." And I was like, "No, there's another level to loving what you're doing. If you love if you truly love what you do, they couldn't pay you to stop."

>> Yeah. I think it's excellent advice for helping people find their life's work. Rick, this was awesome. You've been a huge inspiration to me. Uh, I've used a ton of your ideas in my work and I hope this is the first conversation of Maddie, between me and you.

>> Great pleasure.

>> Thanks for doing this.

>> Thank you.

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