

Sawbones 261: Rock Medicine

Published February 1, 2019

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Intro (Clint McElroy): Sawbones is a show about medical history, and nothing the hosts say should be taken as medical advice or opinion. It's for fun. Can't you just have fun for an hour and not try to diagnose your mystery boil? We think you've earned it. Just sit back, relax, and enjoy a moment of distraction from that weird growth. You're worth it.

[theme music plays]

[audience cheers]

Justin: Hello, everybody, and welcome to Sawbones: a marital tour of misguided medicine! I'm your co-host, Justin McElroy!

[audience cheers]

Sydnee: And I'm Sydnee McElroy!

[audience cheers noticeably louder]

Justin: [sighs] Not in a museum! A place of learning and growth? So, anyway...

Sydnee: [laughs] Wow.

Justin: This isn't a podcast recording. This is a heist. We're all gonna steal that antelope thing. This is, of course, y'all remember the plan that we went over? With Clooney and Hathaway? We're all on it. Ocean's... two hundred and... I don't know. Fifteen?

Sydnee: A lot more than we thought!

Justin: A lot more than we thought!

[audience cheers]

Justin: Oceans more than—oceans more than we planned! Hey, listen. The ex-filtration strategy we had, for the antelope, will not work. It's so much bigger

than my truck, guys! I said we could get it in my truck, and we can't fit it in my truck, I'm sorry!

Sydnee: [through laughter] We—

Justin: Does anybody have a car to take the antelope home in?

Sydnee: [through laughter] We took an Uber here, so th—[wheezes] there's no way that antelope's fitting in it.

Justin: We took an Uber! There's Uber, there's Uber XL, there's Uber Antelope. It's perfect if you stole an antelope from a nice museum that let you record a podcast in here.

Sydnee: What an amazing room to have our show in!

Justin: Yeah!

[audience cheers]

Justin: I feel very privileged.

Sydnee: This is so cool! I really—I'm so excited to be here. This is amazing.

Justin: You know what? Before we get to it—

Sydnee: This is exciting.

Justin: —can everybody hear okay? I like to make sure everybody's good.

[scattered whoops]

Justin: Good. Sorry some of you are standing. I would stand in solidarity, but... you understand.

[audience laughs]

Justin: So, Sydnee, we're in here in beautiful San Francisco, California.

Sydnee: That's right.

[audience cheers]

Sydnee: I'm part of the night life.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: I wore my sticker, 'cause it said "Night Life." [holding back laughter] And that's probably, like—Night Life sounds, like, intriguing, and so I put it on 'cause I was like, "Nobody's ever thought about me that way. Like, Night Life. Sydnee. Night Life."

Justin: Here comes the party!

Sydnee: [laughs] Look at her! Night Life. [laughs] Usually when we go somewhere, when we go on tour, we like to do a show... I feel like I do this every time. I need to mix it up. You say it.

Justin: Okay. Um—

Sydnee: Say it different than I say it, though.

Justin: Say it different than you say it? [sighs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: [biker voice???] You know...

[audience laughs]

Justin: [biker voice] On the road...

Sydnee: Glad I don't say it that way. [laughs]

Justin: I know—[yells] I'm doin' it different! You said to do it different, I'm doin' it different!

[biker voice] You know, on the road... we, uh... like to keep it thematic...al... ish?

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: We like to keep it geographically appropriate, and so... this is only—see, this is confusing, 'cause this is where you'd seg into what the thing is, and I don't know what the thing is.

Sydnee: So I'll take it over.

Justin: Yeah, perfect. I s—I—I warmed it up for you. Here! Here's the rock!

Sydnee: So, I was looking into the medical history of the area, something relevant to San Francisco. And usually on our show, if you've listened to the show, you might know that I talk about things that we've done in medical history that were... bad, or... dumb...

Justin: Not good, yeah.

Sydnee: [laughs] Just... not great.

Justin: I mean... racist...

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: And I found something that isn't... isn't that.

Justin: Hey!

Sydnee: It's still a great medical history story, and I didn't know it, and I'm hoping some of you don't know it and we can talk about it, 'cause it's a really fun, great story, and kind of the theme of it is that healthcare is a right, and not a privilege.

[audience cheers loudly and applauds]

Sydnee: Which is—which is something that obviously a lot of you, and we here at Sawbones, feel very strongly about, and so I wanted to tell this story, because that kind of battle cry, turns out, probably started here, and I didn't know that.

[audience cheers]

Sydnee: So I wanna talk about what it probably either the first, or at least one of the first free clinics in the country. Do you know—

[audience cheers]

Justin: What?

Sydnee: That's exciting! It's a really cool idea. A lot of—

Justin: Did you want me to play Jock Jams with my mouth? Like, what do you want me to do? [singing Jock Jams]

Sydnee: I don't—no.

Justin: I got—I saw the trailer for John Wick 3 today. I'm at maximum pumpitude.

Audience Member: [cheers loudly]

Sydnee: What—I need something a little more 60s. That's where we're going. We're going back to the 1960s.

Justin: [singing] All the leaves are brown, brown, leaves are brown, and the sky is gray—

Sydnee: Okay, there we go. That's better. So—

Justin: —[singing] the sky is gray, California [voice cracks] dreaming, on a winter's day--

Sydnee: Uh-huh? That was good.

Justin: [continues singing wordlessly] [sings the opening notes of Africa by Toto]

Sydnee: Are you good?

[audience cheers]

Justin: [sings the opening notes of Africa by Toto] I did a room appropriate remix for you. I blended it to Africa accidentally.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: Now, as you're probably aware, in the 1960s—

Justin: [singing] All the leaves are brown, the leaves are—

[audience laughs]

Justin: Is it not, like, a cue? It's not, like, an every time—

Sydnee: No.

Justin: Okay, got it.

Sydnee: I—I'm moving forward with the show.

Justin: Got it. Moving forward.

Sydnee: We're going on.

Justin: Got it.

Sydnee: A lot of people were coming to San Francisco—

Justin: [singing] If you're going...

Sydnee: Mm-hmm?

Justin: [singing] To San Fran--

Sydnee: That's the—

Justin: Do you want one for every time you stop talking, or—

Sydnee: No, no!

Justin: This is gonna get exhausting!

Sydnee: Just the one, just, like, the one!

Justin: Just the one!

Sydnee: Just the one!

Justin: [clicks tongue] Shoulda talked about this before, huh?

[audience laughs]

Justin: If you wanted all these great music cues, I wish you'd given me a heads up!

Sydnee: They were—they were coming to take part in the kind of counter-culture that had developed in the country, but was centered largely in the area, of course, and they were sharing everything. They were sharing their food, and they were sharing their space, and they were sharing... their beds, and they were sharing their drugs! And everybody was sharing, and it was loving and it was wonderful, and everybody was getting along... pretty okay, in the beginning.

It was this revolutionary experiment, and a lot of people wanted to be in on it. And our story starts before the summer of love. Not too far before. In January of 1967. In January, there was a concert in Golden Gate Park. The Human Be-In. Get it?

Justin: The Human Be In?

Sydnee: Be-In.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Be...

Justin: Ahh! Alright.

Sydnee: Be-In.

Justin: Alright. Nice job.

Sydnee: Just bein' there. It was a huge deal, right? This giant concert. And there was, like—Alan Ginsburg was there, leading people in chants. Timothy Leary

was there. There were all kinds of bands. The Grateful Dead, Big Brother and The Holding Company, and Jefferson Airplane. This giant concert, and everybody was singing and dancing and chanting and, you know, beads and face paint, the whole thing. Everything we—you know. We've seen—

Justin: You all know!

Sydnee: You know, documentaries. We've all watched 'em.

Justin: You probably call it Tuesday. [laughs] I know you all.

Sydnee: And a lot of the people there were doing drugs, and because of that there was one participant who—he wasn't doing drugs, but he came because he knew a lot of humans would be, and that was—

Justin: Is he a ro—oh my God, is he a robot?

Sydnee: N—[laughs quietly]

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: No. Just a doctor.

Justin: An alien.

Sydnee: Just a doctor.

Justin: Oh, okay.

Sydnee: Dr. David Smith, who was a 28 year old physician, who came because—

Justin: Can I stop you for a second? That does sound like a robot fake name, though.

Sydnee: No, that's his real name!

Justin: [stilted robotic tone] I am... David? Smith. I hear humans are doing drugs!

Sydnee: He came largely because, at the time, he was studying the effects of different substances on the behavior of rats. So he was working in the pharmacology department at the University of California, and he was injecting things like LSD and meth into mice, and watching them to see, like, what happens.

And he thought, "You know what would be better? Let's see what happens in humans! And I bet there will be a bunch of humans that I can observe at this concert."

So he came to the concert—and you have to imagine, like, everybody's all—I assume, all, like, you know—

Justin: God. I've heard—

Sydnee: —beaded and long hair and, like, groovy and everything. And then he's, like, wandering around—I picture in that blazer that you wear sometimes.

Justin: That I wear?

Sydnee: The brown corduroy one?

Justin: Ah, yes. The Professor Lactose Intolerant jacket.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: That's the one.

Justin: I've heard of buzzkills before, but I don't—it's tough to beat, like, "[stuffy professor voice] So, on a scale of one to ten..."

Sydnee: Not—but he wasn't—

Justin: "... how purple is your shirt? Go on. Mm, good."

Sydnee: So he's—

Justin: "Good science!"

Sydnee: —he's wandering around and he's watching people and he's observing them have their experiences, and on the whole, this event is notable for the fact that it went pretty well! People were okay! They cleaned up their messes, there weren't any major fights, there was no big disturbance. There weren't, like, people being carted away in ambulances or anything like that.

It went, overall, pretty well. And this went a big way in kind of communicating this idea to the rest of the country. Like, "Okay. These—these people are serious. This isn't just, like, a bunch of kids who wanna have fun. Like, this is a whole movement. This is a new way of life."

And so what resulted from this, everybody in the city kind of knew after this, like, "You know, I bet once school lets out this summer, a lot of people are coming to San Francisco."

And of course they were right. So, there were a lot of business owners and concerned citizens in the town who came forward to the city council, and they created this thing called the Council for the Summer of Love.

And they said, "Listen. We have to prepare, because they're coming."

[audience laughs]

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: "And they're—they're not necessarily bringing money, and they don't necessarily have a place to sleep, or food, or anything."

Justin: It's the exact same meeting the Pizza Hut lunch buffet has every time I'm gonna come.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: "He won't necessarily have money... [wheezily] or a place to sleep, but he is coming, so make the special apple dessert pie, please, or else he'll burn this place to the ground!"

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: So, they created this council to try to prepare. They even proposed to law enforcement, like, "We should go ahead and prepare Golden Gate State Park to, like, let them sleep at."

Justin: Hey, we're in Golden Gate State Park! Right? Sort of?

[audience cheers]

Justin: Next to it?

Audience member: In it.

Justin: In it!

Audience member: In it!

Sydnee: In it!

Justin: Nice.

Sydnee: So they were like—

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: "Let them sleep here!"

Justin: Nice.

Sydnee: Not, like, in the Africa room, but, like, out there. And the Sheriff was like, "No. [laughs] No, we're not gonna do that. We're not gonna—if we just pretend they're not coming, surely they won't. Or they'll get bored or whatever. They'll get hungry. They'll go back home. Don't worry, it'll be fine."

[distant growling]

And Dr. Smith in particular was concerned—

[audience laughs]

[growling continues]

[pauses]

Justin: [laughs loudly]

[audience laughs and applauds]

Justin: If you're listening to this podcast later, that was... probably the most confusing thing you've ever heard.

[audience laughs]

Justin: I've almost certainly edited this out, but I think a... a jaguar growled at us?

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: Is that what that is?

Justin: A cheetah? I can't read the plaque!

[audience laughs]

Audience member: Cheetah!

Justin: Cheetah!

Sydnee: It's a cheetah, okay.

Justin: For sure.

Sydnee: [through laughter] A cheetah, the big cat in the tree just growled at us. Sorry.

Justin: Cheetah.

Sydnee: We apologize

Justin: Jaguar. I had it right the first time, didn't I? It's a jaguar, 'cause the spots have discolorations in the middle!

[audience cheers and applauds]

Justin: Oh my gosh—if you're listening to this later, all the scientists in the museum just applauded me!

[audience laughs]

Justin: They all said—Oh, they're putting some sort of science crown on to me! I've become the king of science!

[pauses]

Sydnee: It is his room, and I'm sorry.

Justin: [imperiously] You may speak.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: [imperiously] Continue with your... how you say... podcast.

Sydnee: So, Dr. Smith was particularly concerned about the medical needs of all these people who were coming. And he said, "Listen. I've spent a lot of time around some of these people doing drugs, and, like, stuff can go wrong. They can have bad trips, they can get sick, they're gonna be sleeping outside, maybe. We need to be ready. We need a clinic. We need something in place to take care of all these people who are coming."

And pretty much, the city council was like, "No. [laughs quietly] No. If we build a clinic and make it seem like we wanna take of 'em, then they're gonna wanna come more, and we don't want that! So... no."

And he continued to insist. "You know, I've been seeing this new population of patients who are using drugs. I've been seeing more and more of these bad reactions. I'm really concerned!"

And nobody was listening to him. And so that was when he first kind of stood up and said, "Listen. I'm serious. We have to do something."

And still nobody would listen. And then, David Smith did something that changed his entire life and helped him eventually change the minds of everyone around him. He took some LSD.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: [through laughter] I'm not joking! He had been working with it for a long time, right? He had access to it in his lab, and he had never done it before. He really was kind of a straight-laced guy. Like, he saw this as—and these are his own words—he saw this as like a laboratory experiment. He would go out and see people using drugs, and observe them, and he wanted to spend his time kind of enshrined in academia, away from all of that.

He had no interest in going out and trying this stuff and, like, being among the people. He just wanted to see what happened and go back to his lab and kind of experiment. And then he took some LSD, and he had this spiritual revelation—

Justin: I've seen enough after school specials. I know what happens next. He jumped through a plate glass window, right?

[audience laughs]

Justin: It always gets ya! You shouldn't take drugs on the second story of a building, folks! Not if you're in an after school special, 'cause you're gonna jump right through that window the second the drugs hit your system.

Sydnee: That's not what happened, thank goodness. Instead, what happened is after he, I guess, got back from his trip, he—

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] I don't know. Was that the parlance?

Justin: Syd and I have done... a lot of LSD.

[audience laughs]

Justin: We've had so many of those... p—in—tab—pap—paper tab—paper tablets.

[audience laughs]

Justin: Oh, it was in Bandersnatch! Yeah, like the little tablets of paper with it... on it. They put it on there.

Sydnee: Uh-huh.

Justin: On the little tabs of paper.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: That—that isn't... is it paper?

[audience laughs]

Justin: Okay. Got a lot of thumbs up. Oh, now all the drug people are giving me a crown, too!

[audience laughs]

Justin: A second drug crown!

Sydnee: So, after his trip, he realized that this was about more than practicality. It was about more than logistics. It was about more than the ability to kind of scientifically study the effect of drugs in the wild. This was about the fact that people need care, and his job, as a doctor, as a human, was to help provide that, and that was the first time when, in the midst of a meeting, a public meeting with city health officials, he stood up and he said, "Listen. Healthcare is a right, not a privilege. We have to do this."

[audience cheers and applauds]

Justin: Now, come on.

Sydnee: And this—

Justin: We—listen. We know how you feel, okay? You can't give her that easy line every time! She can't just say something to get your cheering, that stinks!

Sydnee: Well, it—[laughs]

Justin: What's mine? The crown thing? Alright, I'll come back to it. Alright, keep going.

Sydnee: Keep workin' on it.

[scattered cheers and applause]

Sydnee: And this sounds like—now we say this, and like, a lot of us say this over and over again. Like I said, it's kind of a battle cry, and it sounds like a cliché. This was a big idea to be voicing in public and demanding, and demanding that city officials and doctors listen to and respect, at the time. There weren't a lot of free clinics.

Other places in the world, they'd already figured out that if you take care of people and give them healthcare it's a good idea, your society is better off. Obviously we still have not figured that out today, here.

But this was a revolutionary idea, and he was saying it out loud and demanding it, and this idea, of course, would eventually, you know, light the country on fire. Hopefully we're still—we're still working on it.

Anyway, he decided at this point, "This is a moral imperative. This isn't just a good idea." So, he rented a former dentist's office. It was, like, 14 rooms on the second floor of a building just off the Haight. And he called it the Haight Ashbury Free Medical Clinic.

I mean, it was a really tiny area to be starting this whole medical clinic, and he had, like, 150 bucks is what he rented it for. It was, like, him and some other medical students. They just pooled their money, they went in together, and they said, "Let's get this office, let's go, let's start taking care of people."

So they opened the clinic on June 7th, 1967, right at the beginning of the Summer of Love. And it was mainly run by volunteers, they had some donations by some

big money donors, and then just people who wanted to help. And they also made use of—they looked to the local population of hippies and said, "Listen. Nobody's gonna come here unless it looks like a safe place, so we kinda need you guys to make it look okay."

So they had tons of volunteers who were really there just to, like, welcome you in the door, and... give you flowers, [laughs] and take you to a seat and talk to you. And they had to whole place, like, painted in psychedelic colors. Like, the rooms were all different neon shades. They had, like, black light posters everywhere. They had lava lamps in the rooms. I mean, it was a very cool, groovy clinic.

And they thought, "Okay. Maybe a few people will come in. Maybe we'll help a few people who are, you know, having some bad trips."

That was their first idea. Like, "This is mainly gonna be utilized by people who have come out to San Francisco. They've probably not really experimented with drugs a lot. They're gonna try drugs, they're gonna be really freaked out, and they're gonna come here, and we're just gonna calm 'em down. We have some quiet rooms, [stifling laughter] we'll show 'em some lava lamps..."

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: We'll talk to them very soothingly, they'll come down, and then we'll return them to their family and friends and everything will be cool. We have some sedatives. If things go really bad, we have those on hand, but that'll be the main function."

They were wrong. The clinic saw 250 people in that first day. Which, as a primary care doctor, 250 people... that's a lot of people! And they were seeing everything.

It wasn't just patients who, you know, were using acid for the first time and having a bad trip. They were seeing bronchitis. They were seeing food poisoning. They were—they had a couple bikers who came in who had some bad burns, like they got in a bad wreck and they had some burns on their legs they had to tend to.

They saw malnutrition, people who had been living outside and hadn't had food for a while. They saw everything! They were not prepared for how wide-ranging their services were gonna be, and it became clear, this clinic was really gonna change the health of the whole population, and this was just the beginning.

So, on that day—like I said, they saw 250 people. They did see up to—this is an amazing statistic—up to 12 people an hour that they were just helping come down from, like, LSD, which is amazing! Like, the thought that they—and these were mainly volunteers, just in rooms just talking to people. Non-judgmental, just working through it with them. Just, like, "It's cool, you're fine, you're safe, we're not judging you, we're not gonna call the cops."

Their only rules in the clinic were—it was pretty straightforward. Like, don't bring drugs. [laughs quietly] Don't do drugs in the clinic. We know you did them out there. Don't do them in here, 'cause the cops come in.

And the cops did. The cops raided the place constantly, 'cause they figured, like, "We're gonna find a lot of drugs here." But that was the only rule: don't bring your drugs in here. Don't do your drugs in here. And so nobody did. Nobody was selling drugs. Nobody was doing drugs in the clinic, and so they stayed kind of out of the way of the law, but they were constantly getting raided by the police, and the people who were coming in were really stressed about that and freaked out, but it was never a problem.

So they worked with all these people, and over the course of the Summer of Love, the clinic would treat 12,000 patients! Which is a wild number of people in a summer! And these were people that, like—

Justin: To give you some comparison, if you're listening to this later, that's probably about how many people are in this room.

Sydney: [laughs]

[audience laughs]

Justin: You can hear. I mean, [clears throat] that's 12,000 people just goin' nuts for their favorite show.

Sydney: Eh... you're not very good at estimating...

Justin: Around 12,000 people, Sydney.

Sydney: ... numbers.

Justin: It's an audio medium, Sydnee!

Sydnee: [laughs] So what was great is that this really, like, created all this trust in the local community between the doctors and the nurses and the psychologists and the counselors and the social workers and everybody who was volunteering at this clinic, and the community, which was a really important thing, because then it kind of gave them a heads up as new substances crept in to the area, which was really important as meth became a bigger issue within the community.

And so, they kind of already had a heads up as they started to see people coming in with some meth-related illnesses. And the other thing with that is that people were injecting meth, and so you started to see, like, more and more cases of infectious hepatitis, because people were sharing needles and all that kind of stuff.

And so, it really gave, you know, David Smith and his crew, by being non-judgmental, by being open, by saying, "We're not here to turn you in. We're not here to tell you what's wrong. We're just here to help you," really gave them the ability to reach a whole new population of patients who were being exposed to all kinds of stuff and were afraid to seek care in traditional environments where, I mean, let's face it, in the ER you might have a cop standing there the whole time that you're getting checked out. And so if you come in and you're on drugs, you know, you might not wanna go in there! That might be kind of a freaky environment. And so it was a really big movement in this area of the country at this moment in time.

[theme music plays]

Justin: Hey, folks! Hope you're enjoying the show. Wanna break in here with a couple of sponsor messages, hot and fresh, just for you. Sydnee is watching the children that we have, uh, spawned, and so I'm here to tell you about Stitch Fix, and I'm willing to say the things that she won't.

Like this: Stitch Fix is an online personal styling service that delivers clothes, shoes, and accessories to fit your body, budget, and lifestyle. Syd just got her box this week, adored it. Adored the whole darn thing. They've really gotten a hang of her style, because after every box you tell your personal stylist—that's right, personal stylist—what you like and don't like, and they kind of help shape the next box so it fits your, uh, your exact taste!

If you go to [Stitch Fix.com/sawbones](https://www.stitchfix.com/sawbones), you can tell 'em your sizes, styles, and budget. The styling fee's just 20 bucks, and that personal stylist is worth their weight in... I was gonna say clothes, but I don't actually know if that makes any sense.

But you try the clothes on, you pay for only the things that you love, and you put the rest in a bag and ship it right back to 'em, and that's always free, so it's a great deal and there's very little risk to you.

So get started now at [Stitch Fix.com/sawbones](https://www.stitchfix.com/sawbones), and you'll get an extra 25% off when you keep all the items in your box. That's [Stitch Fix.com/sawbones](https://www.stitchfix.com/sawbones) to get started today. [Stitch Fix.com/sawbones](https://www.stitchfix.com/sawbones).

Your clothes look great, but look at your grill. Aw, repellent! You never learned how to brush. Well, it's time to learn, with a new product called a "toothbrush" from Quip. That's right, they've invented a brush... for your teeth? And this one's gonna get 'em very, very clean. It's hard to brush your teeth every day, especially before the invention of the toothbrush, uh, immediately preceding this podcast.

Um, and I think you are really gonna love the way that Quip makes your teeth feel, and this toothbrush is not only the first toothbrush ever, it's the first ever electric toothbrush! And I'm not saying it shocks your teeth, but it kind of moves around really fast, like with an engine, like in your car, and it gets your teeth so super clean.

It was one of the first electric toothbrushes accepted by the American Dental Association, which you can remember was very important to Kevin McAllister in the film *Home Alone*, and they're backed by over 25,000 dental professionals.

It's got sensitive sonic vibrations, a built in timer, a multi-use cover, and it's dedicated to helping you brush better. And you get new brush heads on a regular schedule for just five bucks. No one's gonna remember to get a new toothbrush and all that business, but now Quip is gonna do it for you. They got a million happy, healthy mouths that just love Quip.

It starts at \$24, and if you get—go to [Q—Getquip.com/sawbones](https://www.getquip.com/sawbones) right now, you get your first refill pack for free. That's your first refill pack for free, at [Getquip.com/sawbones](https://www.getquip.com/sawbones). Come on! ... And try tooth brushing.

Anyway, that's all from me. Thanks so much, and, uh... here's the rest of the show!

Sydnee: Um, so they got really close in particular... uh, Dr. Smith formed a friendship with another doctor, so to speak? Not really a doctor, but he was known by the name Dr. Zoom?

Justin: [loudly] Yes!

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: And this was really important, because Dr. Zoom was—

Justin: Yeah, I know why it's really important. It's 'cause the name's Dr. Zoom—you can drink a little if you need to, Syd. I'm gonna talk about Dr. Zoom for a second.

Sydnee: [stifling laughter] What do you know about Dr. Zoom?

Justin: I don't know anything about Dr. Zoom, except it's the best person you've ever brought up on the show before, and I'm so excited to learn so much more about Dr. Zoom. Now I'm angry about the water, 'cause you're keeping me from Zoom.

Sydnee: [laughs] So, as I said, people had started out using a lot of psychedelics and marijuana, and then they were starting to use more meth. Dr. Zoom was—

Justin: [giggles]

Sydnee: —as I—[laughs quietly] I found him described in one article, "A world-class meth addict."

[audience laughs loudly]

Sydnee: This is—these are not my words! [laughs]

Justin: [muffled laughter] That's not funny, I'm sorry.

Sydnee: He always had a syringe, like, pinned to his jacket. That was, like, his thing. Like, to tell everybody, "I'm a world-class meth addict."

Justin: "Don't even *act* like I don't do meth!"

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: And he was really famous in the community already, and he initially wasn't going and seeking any medical care, but this clinic got such a good reputation that he finally went there when he was sick and in need of help—

Justin: Just as a fellow physician, to try to...

Sydnee: [laughs] Well, he kind of became a consultant of sorts, because he knew all the ins and outs of meth, and who was using it, and who was using what, and where it was coming from, and he had the in in all of the... you're gonna go all over this name. What was called the Crystal Palaces?

[pauses]

Sydnee: Like, not the place at Disney World?

Justin: Ohh, okay.

Sydnee: But... [laughs] but, like, places where people did meth. It's a Crystal Palace.

Justin: Oh! Okay, got it.

Sydnee: You get it?

Justin: Is that why they called it that? 'Cause of the Disney World?

[audience laughs]

Justin: I mean, is that why Disney World called it that, because that's where—

[audience laughs]

Justin: —all the characters go to do meth?

Sydnee: I cannot imagine that they—surely—

Justin: That's why they have the Friendship Brace—uh, Breakfast, right? You all are Disneyland people, I don't know if you have the Crystal Palace here, but...

Sydnee: They—like, Winnie the Pooh is there.

Justin: Winnie the Pooh does meth—

[audience laughs loudly]

Justin: —is what you're saying.

Sydnee: Nooo!

Justin: Wow.

Sydnee: No!

Justin: Learnin' a lot on this Sawbones! Hatchi matchi!

Sydnee: No, but I was—when I read this—and I read this in multiple places, and I was like, "So, were these just, like, regularly known as Crystal Palaces? Why did Disneyworld call that restaurant with Winnie the Pooh Crystal Palace? That seems like a weird, name, now!"

But this gave Dr. Smith access. He would actually, like, go to these places Dr. Zoom would call him, [snorts] and be like, "Listen, we've got somebody sick, we need help—"

Justin: [pompous voice] "Greetings and salutations. 'Tis I, Dr. Zoom! Some more scallywags, doing all my meth!"

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: But this was—

Justin: [pompous voice] "They have to solve 13 puzzles to unlock the last chamber of meth that I've prepared for them, but you can come and treat them, if you like. One physician to the next. Anyway, gotta go! I'm gonna fight Batman!"

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

[scattered applause]

Justin: World class!

Sydnee: World class. But these were like house calls! They were Crystal Palace calls. He would go to these Crystal palaces and like—doctors weren't allowed in there. You weren't allowed in there unless you had a password, and here we have this, like... like, I like to imagine this tweedy, nerdy doctor, like, "Hello, I'm here to... check somebody out." And like, they would let him in and help people out, which was great! He had these contacts, and he was that trusted.

Now, it got to a point... he was kind of taking care of a lot of people who were—and he was very clear on his opinions on drugs. These are—at the time, I think they've changed now—but his opinions on drugs at the time were pretty clear. Meth is bad. Marijuana's fine. Mm, psychedelics, as long as you're using them in the right place can be fine. But meth, he was pretty clear on, nobody should be using. And this started to—

Justin: And you think this has changed over time?

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: No, I mean, I don't know his personal opinions now.

Justin: "Ah, you know what? Meth, I judged you too quickly. It's going fine."

Sydnee: I'm not gonna—I'm not gonna say what his opinions now are on anything—

Justin: Probably still—

Sydnee: —but at the time—

Justin: —down on meth.

Sydnee: —there was a division between all the different substances, and this started to gain the attention of the community of meth dealers, in particular one, like, the big wig of the meth dealers, Papa Al. And Papa Al was very upset about this whole situation, and so he decided, "I'm gonna—I'm gonna kill this guy, or I'm gonna have him killed, and I'm gonna take over his—"

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: "—I'm gonna take over his clinic, and I'm gonna use it to deal meth, 'cause that'll show him."

So he offered \$100 worth of meth to anybody who would off this doctor, to just get him out of the picture! And he—

Justin: Wait, wait, wait. How much meth, and does the offer still stand?

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: And Dr. Smith was terrified! He heard about this—

Justin: [loudly] Yeah! Yeah!

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah! 'Cause this guy was a huge deal, and he thought, "Well, I'm as good as dead!" So he went to the authorities and he was like, "This guy's gonna—he put out a contract on my life, I'm gonna die!"

And they were like, "Listen. We told you not to open the place to begin with, so... guess it's your problem! Bye."

So, no help. No help from the police, nobody was willing to help him out, so he goes back to the clinic and he's like, "I'm gonna die! What am I gonna do?"

A member of the Hell's Angels shows up.

[audience cheers]

Sydnee: And says, "Call our boss, Barger. Just give him a call, okay?" And then leaves. Gives him a phone number.

So, he calls this phone number and he says, "Hey, I'm Dr. David Smith, I was told to call you."

And he's like, "Yeah. Six words: we will take care of this." Hangs up. That's it.

Justin: [laughs in surprise]

[audience cheers and applauds]

Sydnee: So the next day, Papa Al gets a visit from two of Hell's Angels, and they're basically like, "Here's the deal. Dr. Smith is your insurance policy. If something happens to him, you're dead. So, you better hope he's fine."

And nobody ever touched him. [laughs]

[audience cheers and applauds]

Sydnee: Which I think was just—

Justin: For people—stop. One sec. Just a mom' [short for moment]? Syd, you can drink a bit more water if you like.

For people listening to a medical history podcast in a museum, y'all are pretty stoked about the Hell's Angels giving death threats to people.

[audience cheers]

Justin: Like, you're like—

[cheering continues]

Justin: —[through laughter] you're like, out of character jized about, like, "[gruff voice] Yeah, kill him!"

[audience laughs]

Justin: "[gruff voice] Kill that meth dealer, Hell's Angels! Yeah!"

Sydnee: I have no evidence—I don't—

Justin: "Hey, honey? Did our deposit to NPR go through for this month? Good. Okay, yeah! [gruff voice] Anyway, kill those guys, yeah! Tear 'em apart!"

Sydnee: [gasping laughter] So, as far as I know, they didn't kill him, but... you know. Nobody ever knew what happened to him. They asked David Smith, like, "What do you think happened to that guy?" And he was like, "Iunno."

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: "He never bothered me!"

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: "He's gone." So, the clinic continued on. It struggled to make ends meet at times, because it was a free clinic, and it took care of everybody, and it was mainly run with donations.

And so there was a point where it was gonna have to shut down, 'cause it didn't have enough money to keep going, and the way that it stayed open is that it had really great ties with the local musical community, the local rock community. In particular, Janis Joplin—

[audience cheers]

Sydnee: —was a client of the clinic, and a huge contributor to the clinic, and would help 'em out when they needed money, or when things were... when they thought they couldn't keep the doors open. In addition, the concert promoter Bill Graham—

[a few cheers]

Sydnee: —was a close friend of the clinic. And so when they really got into a position where they thought they couldn't keep the doors open anymore, he staged two huge concerts. And at these concerts—I mean, again, Big Brother and the Holding Company, Jefferson Airplane, huge bands played.

They raised, like, \$10,000. This was in 1968, you know. \$10,000 to keep this clinic open, so these connections to all these big deal musicians and all the help they provided, all of these rock bands really helped keep the clinic open.

And in return, by 1972 Graham had this close relationship with him and he said, "You know what? You know what would be a good idea?" 'Cause he was this huge promoter, right? He put on all these giant concerts.

He said, "What would be a really good idea is if we had, like, a medical tent at these concerts. We should have that, because people come and they—they don't drink enough water, they get dehydrated, they get sunburns, they fall and they break bones and they get hurt, and then, you know, people are doing drugs and all that kind of stuff. We need somebody here to help them out."

So, in 1972, he asked the clinic—he said, "Will you provide some coverage, some medical coverage? We're doing some concerts for the Grateful Dead, for Led Zeppelin. Will you have, like, a tent where we can send sick people?"

And they said, "Sure, no problem."

After that, this grew, with the help of a Dr. George Gay. He went by "Skip." And he said, "Let's create a whole organization that does this. This is a need! Events need doctors."

So from that was born Rock Medicine, which is still a thing today.

[audience cheers and applauds]

Sydnee: You may have heard of it. It was born right here in San Francisco, and the idea was that at big concerts, at big outdoor events, you need somebody to help sick people, and you need somebody who's not gonna be there to, like, cart you off to the ER right away; who's not gonna be there to, like, let you sober up and then take you to jail.

You just need people to help take care of you; once you're okay, once you're stable, get you back to your friends and family, get you home safe. It's the whole idea of Rock Medicine, which still operates today. And they send volunteers to all kinds of huge events around here, like all the 49ers games and all the big concerts and everything—

Justin: [speaking close to the mic] It's football.

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: Good job, Justin.

Justin: There's at least one person in here who's like, "Thank you."

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: Which is super cool, and it was all born out of this free clinic, this connection with this free clinic, and then Bill Graham, and this was the birth of Rock Medicine, which is still very alive and well today, which I personally think is very cool, because when I was, like, 14, I saw a documentary about Rock Medicine on television, and I saw this doctor taking care of somebody who was, like, crowdsurfing and fell, like, broke their wrist or something.

And I saw this doctor, and he had a caduceus tattooed on his ankle, and I remember thinking, "[quietly] I wanna be that doctor."

[audience laughs]

Sydnee: "That doctor is sooo cool!" And I have that same tattoo now!

[audience cheers and applauds]

Sydnee: Because—this is not a joke! It's because of that doctor who was volunteering for Rock Medicine that I saw on a documentary when I was 14!

Justin: That's adorable.

Sydnee: I just learned about this!

Justin: Yeah, that's wonderful.

Sydnee: I didn't know that's where it came from.

Justin: [quietly] I love you.

Sydnee: Anyway—oh, I love you too.

Justin: You're just sweet. Okay, go ahead.

Sydnee: Anyway—

Justin: Back to the podcast! Where's Dr. Zoom?

[audience laughs]

Justin: [chanting] Bring him back! Bring him back!

Sydnee: You complain a lot on our show that I have a bad habit of wanting to follow every person I talk about?

Justin: Until they die, yes.

Sydnee: Yes?

Justin: It is known.

Sydnee: I decided not to do that with Dr. Zoom?

Justin: Ohh, okay, I gotcha! So you think maybe he's mayor somewhere, or something. He could be an astronaut! We don't know. He could've kicked... the habit. I think once you're a world-class meth addict... you maybe don't—there's probably not a great—

Sydnee: Let's not.

Justin: —let's not. He's fine! He's here today!

Sydnee: He's fine. [laughs]

Justin: He's not. He's not here today.

Sydnee: Let's not dwell on Dr. Zoom.

Justin: Let's not dwell on Dr. Zoom. I'm sure he's fine.

Sydnee: That's not the point. Let's talk about what happened to this clinic, this tiny little, you know, second floor clinic that was funded by donations, that was run by volunteers, that had lava lamps in the exam rooms, that the city council didn't want to happen, that the police didn't want to happen.

Instead, it continued, and it grew, because more people volunteered and more people donated, and actually it got a lot of support from the University. Eventually—I think a lot of that was actually due to Nancy Pelosi?

[scattered cheers]

Sydnee: Who was on the board at the University and, like, wanted to funnel a lot—like, "Yeah, we'll support this. This is a really good idea."

And so it got a lot of help at that point, and then after the Vietnam war it started catering to a lot of veterans who were coming back and needed help, and it started to get some federal funding as a result of how much help it was giving to veterans.

And so the clinic just continued to grow, and eventually—it is now—it has been absorbed by what is called HealthRIGHT 360. It's part of that today, so it's still alive and well today in HealthRIGHT 360. It mainly joined because as part of the Affordable Care Act it had to do, like, electronic medical records and all that kind of stuff, and it's a lot easier.. I can tell you this from experience, it's a lot easier to do that in a big organization than it is as, like, a private office. Really expensive to do that stuff.

So, it is still alive and well today, and the spirit of the free clinic and the idea that healthcare should be available to everybody for free, and that you don't need my personal opinions or judgment when you come for help, when you come for medical care. You just need help. That idea really... I mean, it set the country on fire, and you can find clinics like this all over the US. today. I mean, we have a free clinic in our tiny little town in West Virginia, and I think this idea, the free clinic movement, was really born of this. You can really trace its roots back to David Smith and this first free clinic, so, thank you.

Justin: Congratulations, San Francisco! You should be very proud!

[audience cheers and applauds]

Justin: And it's also the home of, uh, Sketchfest, which we're so happy to be a part of this year. It was so thrilling for us. Thank you for having us, Sketchfest, [wistfully] wherever you are.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: Uh, and thanks to the Maximum Fun Network as having us a part of their extended podcasting family.

Sydnee: Should you thank the—did we decide it's a Jaguar?

Justin: Thanks to the jaguar... cheetah... whatever.

Sydnee: Cheetah, for allowing us to... invade your space.

Justin: To continue unabated without murdering us.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: Thanks to The Taxpayers for the use of our song Medicines as the intro and outro of our program, and thanks to you for being here and listening to us!

Sydnee: Thank you.

[audience cheers and applauds loudly]

Justin: Appreciate it. Anyway, uh, that is gonna do it for us for this week's episode of Sawbones. Until next time, my name is Justin McElroy.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin: And, as always, don't drill a hole in your head!

[audience cheers and applauds loudly]

[theme music plays]

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