

00:00:00	Music	Transition	“Crown Ones” off the album <i>Stepfather</i> by People Under The Stairs
00:00:05	Oliver Wang	Host	Hello, I’m Oliver Wang.
00:00:08	Morgan Rhodes	Host	And I’m Morgan Rhodes. You’re listening to <i>Heat Rocks</i> .
00:00:10	Oliver	Host	Every episode we invite a guest to join us to talk about a heat rock. You know, an album that burns like an eternal flame. And today we will be jumping into our first ever discussion of India.Arie by revisiting her 2006 album, <i>Testimony: Vol. 1, Life & Relationship</i> .
00:00:27	Music	Music	<p>“Private Party” off the album <i>Testimony: Vol. 1, Life & Relationship</i> by India.Arie. Mid-tempo, grooving R&B.</p> <p><i>I don't remember when it started But this is where it's gonna end My body is beautiful and sacred And I'm gonna celebrate it</i></p> <p><i>I'm having a private party Ain't nobody here but me, my angels, and my guitar, singing "Baby, look how far we've come, yeah"</i></p> <p><i>[Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]</i></p>
00:00:47	Oliver	Host	<p>By the time we arrived at <i>Testimony</i>, neo-soul pioneer Arie had already introduced us to her acoustic soul and taken us on a voyage to India. It’s hard to describe <i>Testimony</i> as her most personal album, given that Arie’s soul-bearing earnestness had always been part of her artistic identity, but as with all good break-up albums, <i>Testimony</i> wouldn’t live up to its name if it didn’t feel a bit too intimate at times, like a diary you’re not supposed to read, but you can’t help yourself. <i>Testimony: Vol. 1</i> was a commercial smash, debuting at number one, but fell short of reaching a critical consensus. In fact, one writer compared the LP to, quote, “A cup of decaffeinated jasmine tea.” Unquote. Ouch. And that was one of the <u>positive</u> reviews. Where will the <i>Heat Rocks</i> crew land on this? You’ll just have to listen, as we get into the <i>[Clears throat]</i> heart of the matter.</p> <p><i>[Morgan laughs.]</i></p>
00:01:39	Music	Music	<p>“Heart of the Matter” off the album <i>Testimony: Vol. 1, Life & Relationship</i> by India.Arie. Slow, passionate R&B.</p> <p><i>Oh, there are people in your life who've come and gone They let you down, you know they hurt your pride You got to put it all behind you 'cause life goes on You keep carrying that anger...</i></p> <p><i>[Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]</i></p>
00:01:58	Morgan	Host	<i>Testimony: Vol. 1, Life & Relationship</i> was the album pick of our guest today, Jarrett Hill. Race, politics, pop culture, Black culture.

It's a good day when Jarrett Hill is speaking about any or all of those things. How do I know? Because I'm tapped in. I stay tapped in. His talents have taken him to NBC, Channel Q, the Hollywood Reporter, the New York Times, and Variety.

I asked my grandmother once why she wore gloves to church all the time and she said, "Because they give me good coverage." Jarrett Hill gives good coverage. Sharply on point, timely, insightful, making the best use of his rather large platform for such a time as this.

We both attended Clark Atlanta University and we majored in the same field, and somehow, we've ended up on the same network, Maximum Fun. He hosts a weekly podcast called *FANTI*, with a former guest of ours, Tre'vell Anderson. Good stuff you might remember from our episode on *Dreamgirls*. We are so happy to have Jarrett Hill on the show. Welcome to *Heat Rocks*.

00:03:00 Jarrett Hill Guest

Um, am I supposed to be able to talk after that?

[Morgan giggles.]

Wow. I—I hate hearing my own bio, but that was even bett—like, I want to come here every week! Let's do it!

[Everyone laughs.]

00:03:13 Morgan Host

Welcome to the show. So, as we ask all the time, what was your introduction to one, India.Arie, and two, this album?

00:03:22 Jarrett Guest

First things first, I have to say I did more preparation for being on *Heat Rocks* than I do for being on CNN.

[Oliver and Morgan laugh.]

Just gonna be honest. 'Cause I was nervous, like, about doing this. I was introduced to India.Arie with her first video. She did that song called "Video", and I remember just thinking like, "Woah, she did not care to like, try and be any of the stuff that we've seen before." The lyrics of that song were, "I'm not the average girl from your video," right? And that was me meeting India.Arie and being so impressed by how counter she was to everything else I'd ever seen in an artist. And I just—I—after that, I was in. I was completely in.

00:04:07 Music Music

"Video" off the album *Acoustic Soul* by India.Arie. Mid-tempo, relaxed R&B.

*I'm not the average girl from your video
And I ain't built like a supermodel
But, I learned to love myself unconditionally
Because I am a queen
I'm not the average girl from your video
My worth is not determined by the price of my clothes*

[Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]

00:04:22 Morgan Host What about this album—and sometimes we ask people, you know, how they got this album. I, for one, bought this album at Circuit City. Um, Circuit City selling CDs then, and I picked up the album there.

00:04:36 Jarrett Guest Circuit City, may she rest. Um, I—I was at Clark Atlanta University when this came out, actually.

[Morgan affirms.]

Um, and I lived in what we would effectively call a boarding house. It was like, four bedroom house, uh, with you know, four different roommates, none of whom knew each other before. And I remember this album coming out and feeling like I was so deep because I loved this album.

[Morgan laughs.]

Um, and going through it and just really loving almost all of the songs at the time. And thinking to myself like, this is so, like, transcendent, but it was also so introspective and vulnerable and beautiful.” And just talking with my friends about it and you know, at 20 years old or 21 or whatever I was, it was—it was real heavy to us.

And I mean, it still is now, but what I loved about India.Arie, um, and when we were talking about what album to do for this, I also sent you guys *Voyage to India* because India’s albums have this thing for me that, when I hear them, they speak to me in a way that is really resonant and really gets beneath the surface. But then also when I go back and listen to them years later, they speak to me in a different way than they did the prior time, and I get so much more out of it. And that has happened to me again with this album, as preparing for this episode.

00:06:01 Morgan Host You know, I went back and forth, because I made the final decision between this album and *Voyage to India*, and it was—it was hard—it was hard for me, because I like both albums. Um, I’ve always said that *Voyage to India*, wanna talk about this album, ‘cause it’s one of my favorites. It just feels a little bit more produced than this album, it’s a little bit slicker, and it’s almost like someone said, “We’re gonna let you do your acoustic thing, but we’re gonna give you like a slick undertone to it, so it’ll be a little bit more palatable for the masses.”

00:06:33 Jarrett Guest And even to that point, like, the graphic—like I always look at graphics in marketing and like, what they—how they brand something, and like, even the cover of *Voyage* feels a little bit more commercial, a little bit more like, store-friendly. As opposed to the cover of this where she’s like, standing in front of a tree with some—with a, you know, orange-yellow situation. I completely get what you mean by that.

00:06:53 Morgan Host That’s it. And I think someone made that decision. Um, and it’s surprising, because this album was nominated for three Grammys, right? She’s got four wins, 23 nominations overall. Yet the critics weren’t kind to her on this album. Um, they said a lot of what—what

Oliver said in the intro, and they said that she was a victim of her own earnestness, and earnestness and India. Arie are two things that go together. That's just her—her thing. What do you think the critics might have missed about this?

00:07:26 Jarrett Guest I think the critics feeling that way about this album is more about the problem with critics than it is about this album.

[Morgan affirms and Oliver laughs approvingly.]

Um, I—one of the many things I do is working with NABJLA—the National Association of Black Journalists here in Los Angeles—and we are always having a discussion about the lack of diversity in newsrooms, and that also stretches to criticism, right? When we're looking at film and television and music, those rooms are often filled with a lot of white men, and like, it's not hard for me to understand how a white man might have a difficult time connecting with what she's doing in this album.

00:08:06 Morgan Host Right.

00:08:07 Oliver Host I am definitely not an Arie-ologist, in fact, it occurred to me in prepping for today, I've never listened to any of her albums from front to back. And in fact, I think really the only time I paid her really any kind of attention was probably when *Acoustic Soul* first came out. And by that time—and she was a little bit on the slightly later wave of kind of neo soul artists, you know, a little bit after Erykah, a little bit after Jill Scott—and an album like this being her third album would have completely missed my personal radar. And so, sitting with it was pretty interesting, especially having read some of the reviews and trying to understand what it is that they were hearing or not hearing.

I thought overall it was a very—and I'm not trying to damn with faint praise here—it was a very pleasant album. I did find myself agreeing with at least some of the criticism around the songwriting, and maybe it was really just the most, to me, obvious example, which is on "Wings of Forgiveness", where she compares forgiving her ex to Nelson Mandela forgiving his apartheid oppressors. And I just felt like the scale of that didn't quite seem right.

But that said, it—it seems to me that what—when people are commenting on her earnestness, they're also suggesting that the way in which she writes songs, it's not—this goes back to, I think, Morgan's point a moment ago—there's not like, an overproduction to it. In other words, she speaks her mind. And I know that sounds like its own kind of cliché in terms of she just—she's very sincere.

But there is kind of this raw sincerity on here, not in a way that feels too intimate in terms of too awkward, but just that you feel like these—some of these songs were not necessarily workshopped to a great extent, which could both be seen as, I think, a pro or a con, depending on your point of view.

00:09:56 Jarrett Guest I would say that the—the analogy of "Wings of Forgiveness" and the Nelson Mandela apartheid moment, I would say that that was

probably more indicative of what that relationship was like for her. Right? I mean, mind you, scale is—apartheid’s a little bit bigger than a bad relationship, um, but, I would—it would make me—hearing that would immediately illuminate for me like, this was no ordinary just, run of the mill relationship that didn’t go well, right? It seems like it was an oppressive relationship, seemingly, or one that really did damage to her, if not both of them.

00:10:32 Music Music “Wings of Forgiveness” off the album *Testimony: Vol. 1, Life & Relationship* by India.Arie. Soulful R&B with a steady, light beat and gently passionate vocals.

*If Nelson Mandela can forgive his oppressors
Surely, I can forgive you for your passion*

*You're only human
Let's shake free this gravity of resentment*

[Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]

00:10:47 Jarrett Guest If I could just like, insert really quickly here, I wrote down—I told you guys, I took a lot of notes preparing for this—uh, I wrote down that she was so far ahead of her time for 30 years old, right?

[Morgan and Oliver affirm.]

Like, I’m just thinking like, “Oh, if I had this level of insight at 30, like, where would I be at 35?” I turn 35, uh, you know, in the next few days, and like, I just don’t know where I would be now if I was thinking this way at 28, 29, 30.

00:11:15 Morgan Host That’s it. And I’ve said, you know, I said it before, maybe you’ll appreciate this ‘cause you went to Clark, but I do think your 20’s are like *Freaknik* in the 90s.

[Jarrett laughs.]

You know that you were there, but parts of it were a blur, and you hope to God nobody was recording. And there’s things that you would do differently if you had the chance, but you don’t. And for her to be this woke and insightful in her 20s, going into her 30s, she was early on that, too.

00:11:41 Oliver Host Actually, I wanted to come back to the fact that uh, you know, Jarrett you had originally suggested two different albums by her, the other one being *Voyage to India*. And I’m wondering, Jarrett, for you, what are some of the similarities and really, perhaps more to the point, the differences between the India.Arie that exists on *Voyage to India* as opposed to the one that we got four years later with this album?

00:12:02 Jarrett Guest Well, I mean, most practically applied, *Voyage to India* was me in high school, and *Testimony* was me in college. And I remember um, I remember *Voyage to India* because one of my really good friends at school was one of the teachers, this English teacher named Ms. Bess—who is now Ms. Calamares—but a Black woman, and like,

we—we just bonded immediately when I met her in ninth grade, and we would always just like, play that album and like, talk about it all the time.

And I loved that album, but I also know the difference between one to the next was I had come out when *Testimony* came out. And like, I had actually started dating, and like having relationships, and was able to relate to actually, you know, being with someone. Because before I came out, I never dated. Um, and so my first relationships were starting when I was 19, as opposed to my friends who you know, were boyfriend and girlfriend in first grade, whatever that meant.

[Oliver and Morgan laugh.]

Um, and so I was—I was just kind of getting to understand what it felt like to have my heart broken, what it meant to love someone and care about someone and them not reciprocate that, or for me to not feel what someone else was f—you know what I mean? Like, so I was able to connect, I think, with thi album in a way that was wholly different, and I think I probably go back to this album more than even *Voyage* because of the way I was able to connect with it.

00:13:32 Oliver Host Right, 'cause I would imagine that if you were to listen to a break up album before you even started dating, the themes are not gonna be resonant in the same way, because you just don't have that kind of emotional experience to be able to relate to what it is that the singer's giving you.

00:13:47 Jarrett Guest Yeah, I—there was only one song that was like, a break up song that I could really relate to, and it was me trying to date this girl who ended up being one of my best friends, go figure.

[Everyone laughs.]

But like—but I was like—I was doing mathematically. I was like, "I'm a boy, you're a girl. We're best friends. We're supposed to be together, right?" And she was like, "Nah bro, it don't work like that." So, I was so hurt, and I remember um, there was—so embarrassing—there was this uh, track from *NSYNC called "Selfish", and—

00:14:23 Morgan Host Yeah, I know that jam.

00:14:24 Jarrett Guest *[Singing]* I just don't understand why you're running from a good man, baby. Why you want to turn your back on love. Why you've already given up.

[Normal voice] And like, I was that guy, right? And I had my eight second anti-skip CD player, and I played that song all morning, all day at song, all—like, I was in the bathtub with it, sitting on the floor so it didn't get wet with my headphones on. Like, that was the only real connection I had to like, love and break up, because I'd never had a relationship before that.

00:14:53 Music Music "Selfish" off the album *Celebrity* by *NSYNC. Slow, emotional pop. Music fades in and plays low under dialogue.

00:14:54	Jarrett	Guest	Wow, did I just sing “Selfish”?
00:14:56	Morgan	Host	You did.
00:14:57	Music	Music	<i>[Music swells in volume.]</i> <i>You can call me selfish But all I want is your love And you can call me hopeless, baby Cause I'm hopelessly in love You can call me imperfect...</i> <i>[Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]</i>
00:15:12	Morgan	Host	And you know what? I remember that jam, too, which is me having to come out as a quiet *NSYNC fan. You know, low key. Low key. <i>[Oliver laughs.]</i> Not all albums, not all jams. But confession is good for the soul. There were some jams, and <i>[Clears throat]</i> I'm gonna cosign that.
00:15:28	Jarrett	Guest	I appreciate that. Thank you for standing with me.
00:15:30	Oliver	Host	Morgan, I want to come back to something you were touching on a little bit earlier, which is how does India.Arie fit into this kind of constellation of other artists that she's frequently compared to? And in asking this, I think neo soul, as much as it was a term that was being championed by some of the artists at the time, as we know with any genre, it's also just a marketing thing, right? It's a way to group people together so it makes it easier for people to find whatever it is you're looking for at a record store. You can program it for radio and what have you. So, do you feel like India.Arie actually really is meant to fit in alongside, let's say, a Jill Scott or an Erykah Badu, or anyone—or D'Angelo, for that matter. Um, or do you think it had more to do with the fact that—of her age, at the point at which her first album comes out, happens to be around the same time as some of these other artists. Does she belong in this? Does neo soul even make sense as something to apply to India.Arie?
00:16:22	Morgan	Host	I think so, and although she's a little bit later, I think she definitely should be a part of the neo soul conversation, um, if for nothing else thematically and—and the presentation. We think about you know artists like Musiq Soulchild and his first video, where it was, you know, he had the headwrap and you know it was, “Peace, peace.” That—that side of Philly and what he, what he was, was giving on that album. <i>Aijuswanaseing</i> I think was the name of the first album. And so I do think she belongs, you know, included in that category. A different side of neo soul for sure, but definitely should be a part of the neo soul conversation, albeit a few—a few years later.
00:16:59	Jarrett	Guest	I think of India.Arie in the time of neo soul—like the other artists that come to mind immediately <u>are</u> Erykah Badu and Jill Scott, but also like an Angie Stone, Musiq Soulchild, that you spoke of, um D'Angelo, Maxwell—kind—kind of Maxwell in there as well, and—

but she doesn't feel like any of them. You know what I mean?

Like there's something very different about her, and, I mean, it's not just playing the guitar but I think that's probably a part of it. But I think there is a vulnerability—and I mean *Testimony* is a perfect example of that—a vulnerability in this album that I don't know that I've seen in another album. And I won't say that it doesn't exist in another album, but I'll say that I don't know of it in another album quite in this way.

00:17:46 Music

Music

"I Choose" off the album *Testimony: Vol. 1, Life & Relationship* by India.Arie. Mid-tempo, rhythmic R&B with a steady, clapped beat and passionate vocals.

Filled up with shame from the top of my head to the soles of my shoes

I've put myself in so many chaotic circumstances

By the grace of God I've been given so many second chances

But today I decided to let it all go

[Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]

00:18:07 Jarrett

Guest

You know, I think part of what feels different from India—and I'm thinking about Erykah, I'm thinking about Jill, and maybe a bit with Angie Stone, too—I don't feel like India is trying to like, uh, do like, a flat-footed, wide-stance, "I'm here to make a statement". I always feel India.Arie's music as, "This is who I am."

[Morgan affirms.]

You know what I mean? Um, and I don't feel like she has like, a political message always, but even in uh, in one of my favorite songs on the album, "Better People", she even like, says like, "If democrat—if democratic people would talk to republican people, we would be diplomatic people all around." And like, even that doesn't feel political. It feels like her saying, "I think we should be, you know, talking to everybody."

And I don't know if that is true for all of the other artists that we were talking about in neo soul, but I definitely feel that about India. She's not like, trying to like, stake her flag here and say, "This is who I am, this is what I believe." It's like, "This is—this is who I am."

00:19:09 Music

Music

"Better People" off the album *Testimony: Vol. 1, Life & Relationship* by India.Arie. Slow R&B with a passionate main vocal line accompanied by a backing chorus.

They call it a generational curse

But these problems don't just drop out the sky

But listen to Mahatma Gandhi's words

And be the change you want to see in the world

Start with yourself, and healing will multiply

[Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]

00:19:29 Oliver Host We will be back with more of our conversation with Jarrett Hill about India.Arie's *Testimony: Vol. 1* after a brief word from some of our sibling MaxFun podcasts. Don't go anywhere.

00:19:40 Music Transition "Crown Ones" off the album *Stepfather* by People Under The Stairs

00:19:42 Promo Promo **Music:** Strumming acoustic guitar.

Announcer: Hey! Thanks for coming.

Three voices overlapping: Thank you. Thank you. Thanks.

Announcer: These are real podcast listeners, not actors! We took the identifying marks off this podcast. Just... tell me your impressions.

Speaker 1: It's really sexy.

Speaker 2: My first thought is, like, Radiolab?

Speaker 3: Definitely something popular.

Speaker 1: Yeah. Really popular. A hit show.

Speaker 2: But funny, too. Like, does Tina Fey have a podcast?

Speaker 3: *[Stifling laughter]* Or the Marx Brothers?

Speaker 2: Yeah, is this podcast Radiolab, but hosted by the Marx Brothers?

Speaker 1: And sexy? Like *Chaude*? It reminds me of *Chaude*.

Speaker 3: Exactly. *[Stifling laughter.]* And they're all riding in a BMW?

Announcer: Close! But not quite. Take a look behind these panels!

[Sound of metal doors lifting.]

All three listeners: *[Gasp!]*

Announcer: And then watch this rocket blast off into space!

[Sound effect of rocket taking off.]

Speaker 1: Whoa!

Speaker 2: Oooh!

[Timer dings.]

Announcer: And—there's the pies we made you!

[Listeners make excited noises.]

Announcer: Now. Let's show you the podcast!

[Whooshing noise.]

All three listeners: Ooooooh.

Speaker 2: Wow! It was *Jordan, Jesse, Go!*

Speaker 1: *Jordan, Jesse, Go!?*

Announcer: Hold on!

[Sounds of metal things falling and clanging. Listeners make concerned noises.]

Speaker 3: Oh my goodness.

Announcer: That...was 514 JD Power & Associates Podcasting Awards!

Speaker 2: That was really scary.

Speaker 1: But...compelling!

Speaker 3: I guess I should definitely subscribe to *Jordan, Jesse, Go!*.

Announcer: Um...yeah. I'd say so.

New announcer: *Jordan, Jesse, Go!*: a real podcast!

[Guitar music fades out.]

00:21:07 Promo Promo

Music: Tense sci-fi music.

[Announcer narrates in voiceover intercut with dialogue from the show. Dialogue is slightly fuzzy, as if being heard through a speaker.]

Announcer: Strange planets, curious technology, and a fantastic vision of the distant future. Featuring Martin Starr.

Martin Starr: So we're going on day 14. Shuttle still hasn't come.

Announcer: Aparna Nancherla.

Aparna Nancherla: *[Cheerful and electronic]* The security system provides you with emotional security! You do the rest!

Announcer: Echo Kellum.

Echo Kellum: Can you disconnect me, or not?

Announcer: Hari Kondabolu.

Hari Kondabolu: I'm staying.

Announcer: From *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, Geoffrey McGivern.

Geoffrey McGivern: Could you play Cyndi Lauper's "Girls Just Want to Have Fun"?

Announcer: It's *The Outer Reach: Stories from Beyond*.

Announcer 2: Now available for free at MaximumFun.org, or anywhere you listen.

[*Music fades out.*]

00:21:52	Music	Transition	"Crown Ones" off the album <i>Stepfather</i> by People Under The Stairs
00:21:54	Morgan	Host	Yo, and we're back on <i>Heat Rocks</i> talking with Jarrett Hill about <i>Testimony: Vol. 1, Life & Relationship</i> by India.Arie.
00:22:03	Oliver	Host	Jarrett, let's take a quick break to ask you a little bit more about your new podcast with Tre'vell, and I realize that this is a little bit maybe self-serving in-network, but—

[*Jarrett laughs.*]

—seriously, I have not had a chance to listen to *FANTI* yet, but if I understand the concept, it seems to be devoted to discussing people's problematic faves, if I have that right.

00:22:24	Jarrett	Guest	That is absolutely right. So, <i>FANTI</i> is a portmanteau, uh—
00:22:29	Oliver	Host	That's a great word. We don't use that term enough in everyday speak.
00:22:33	Jarrett	Guest	We don't. We don't. Yeah, it is a portmanteau of the words "fan" and "anti", so it's uh, certainly quintessentially about problematic faves. The people and things and ideas and concepts that we really love and hold dear, but we are also really challenged by.

Um, and so right now we're in a series called *Proud To Be An American?*—question mark—which is our first series within the show. But we're talking about, you know, loving America and being American, but that coming with some things that don't sit well. And that was really born out of a song um, that "God Bless the USI—", "God Bless the USA", sorry. Um, and I remember seeing that on *American Idol* and them singing that when—in those instances where they would make all of the people on *American Idol* pretend that they were a choir, as if that were a thing.

[*Morgan laughs.*]

It would feel weird to me to hear them singing, “And I’m proud to be an American.” And I’d be like, “Huh. Okay.” And so in the series that we’re doing, we’re talking with Asian Americans, Latino and Hispanic Americans, Black Americans, but we’re also looking at other marginalized groups, and the ways that we engage this idea of being American.

And some of our other episodes have been on Tyler Perry, and the ways that we love and are challenged by Tyler Perry, and Wendy Williams, and like, “How you doing?” but like, how are you doing, you know? Uh, so that’s really the focus of the show.

00:23:59 Oliver Host So, if and when you get to talk about a musical artist, who’s likely to make it there besides—I’m just gonna volunteer Kanye, because I can’t imagine he wouldn’t belong somewhere in this mix at some point, but who else?

00:24:10 Jarrett Guest So, it’s funny that you say that, because Kanye is the episode that we feel like we are building to, and we have to like, graduate into.

[Oliver and Morgan laugh.]

‘Cause there’s—there’s just a lot there, right? Like, there’s a lot of meat on that bone, and we’re probably gonna need more than the 45 minutes we normally do. Um, but also, uh, we—I Tweeted about this last month, and my mentions are still lit up about it—we’re doing an episode that I’m calling right now, working title, uh, “Robert, Bill, and Michael” which is about R. Kelly, Bill Cosby, and Michael Jackson.

[Oliver hums affirmatively.]

And why we feel differently—why I feel differently about each of them, and engage them all differently. Um, and so that one is one that will come at some point soon, I’m sure, but it’s uh—we’ve got a lot of different ones that we’re excited to be doing, and we’ve already got, you know, more than a dozen episodes in the can now that people can go check out.

00:25:07 Oliver Host Well, bringing this back to India, who I think we can agree, not problematic, at least not on this album. We—

00:25:13 Jarrett Guest Not that I’m aware of.

00:25:14 Oliver Host Exactly. And Morgan, you already revealed what your fire track is in terms of your favorite song on here. How about for you, Jarrett, what is the song that every time you listen to this album, just like, boom?

00:25:24 Jarrett Guest *[Oliver hums delightedly multiple times while Jarrett speaks.]*

So, it’s—it’s—it’s a toss up. Depends on the day. And like, on the version that’s on Apple music, there’s a different version of my favorite song that frustrates me, but it’s a song called “Better People”. The original version was more upbeat. The one on the album that I was listening to most recently was a little bit more acoustic, but I love “Better People”.

Um, on the version that I was most familiar with, it starts off very upbeat. She's like, "Yeah! Yeah!" And she's like, in it, and it's like—it's a song that you have to like, clap your hands to when you're listening to it.

00:26:02 Music Music

"Better People" plays again.

*I wish there was a video game
To teach you your ancestor names
I wish there was a phone number
Like 1-800-Save-Your-Brother
I'm thankful for the radio station*

[Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]

00:26:19 Jarrett Guest

When I talk about how Indie.Arie songs, you know, hit different if you will—

[Morgan laughs.]

—the next time you hear them, this song definitely hits different in 2020 than it did in 2006 or in 2010 or in 2014, you know? Um, she's talking about, in this song that has kind of a gospel-y vibe to it, how if we would just talk to each other, we would be more effective, and we could be, quote, "better people". She's—in the chorus, she says, "If—" um, she says, "*[Singing]* If young people would talk to old people, we'd be better people all around." And like, I just—and then in the bridge-y kind of space, she talks about republicans talking to democrats. She talks about, you know, different kinds of people talking to each other in a way that really, really speaks to the polarization that we see right now. Which, again, to Morgan's point earlier, like, she was early.

[Morgan affirms.]

We are so in that space right now, where that song really, really resonates in a different way.

The other song... realistically there are three, but I'm not gonna do that to y'all.

00:27:29 Morgan Host

Go ahead. Do all three.

00:27:30 Oliver Host

Yeah.

00:27:31 Morgan Host

All three.

00:27:32 Jarrett Guest

Okay. Well, in that case, I love "India'Song".

[Morgan and Oliver respond delightedly.]

I was just talking about the series that we're doing on *FANTI* and how uh, how we're doing this proud to be an American thing and how sometimes we can feel uncomfortable here in America, and like, in the idea of pride and patriotism in America, because of the ways that America has done us so dirty. "Us" being every

marginalized group, every minority, right? And so that song, she says in the chorus—

00:28:01 Music Music “India’ Song” off the album *Testimony: Vol. 1, Life & Relationship* by India.Arie. Slow, melodic R&B with gentle vocals.

I wanna go where the wind calls my name

[Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]

00:28:13 Jarrett Guest —“I want to go to a place where I feel comfortable.” Almost in that *Cheers* way, “Sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name.” Like, it speaks to me in that kind of way, and I Just—I just think it is a beautifully constructed song, it’s beautifully sang, it’s beautifully written. Like, everything about that song is great. Um, it has so much like, history and ancestry in it, and just—it’s so packed.

“I Choose”, I—so, I didn’t realize this, uh, until I was researching for this episode, but I’d forgotten that back in college I used to do a blog, and I took “I Choose” and I did like, a weekly write about “I Choose”. I think that song is one of the most lyrically rich songs I know. Um, I used to take one line of lyric from that song and every week I would write what that lyric meant to me, um, and how it resonated with me or spoke to me.

And I thought it was such a—it was rich in that there was so much growth in it, and so much to grow out of in that song. She talks about so much. It’s like, if you were gonna start an app for meet—for, like, quotes to put out as memes, you could literally take every lyric in that song and put it into—into a quote. It’s fantastic.

00:29:32 Music Music “I Choose” plays again.

*I choose
To be the best that I can be
I choose
To be authentic in everything
I do
My past don't dictate who
I am*

[Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]

00:29:51 Jarrett Guest Can I also say though, it’s hard for me to choose favorites, because “I Am Not My Hair” is—we haven’t really talked about it, but it was like, the big single that launched this album, right?

[Oliver and Morgan affirm.]

And in hearing her talk about this song, like, I didn’t recognize what she was doing with that song, but like, apparently she wrote that song after watching Melissa Ethedridge perform at the Grammys, after she had shaved her head from having cancer. Um, and in the lyrics, she says...

00:30:20 Music Music “I Am Not My Hair” off the album *Testimony: Vol. 1, Life &*

Relationship by India.Arie. Up tempo R&B with a steady, clapped beat under ardent vocals.

*Breast cancer and chemotherapy
Took away her crowning glory
She promised God if she was to survive
She would enjoy every day of her life, oh
On national television
Her diamond eyes are sparkling
Bald-headed like a full moon shining
Singing out to the whole wide world like, hey*

*Hey (hey)
I am not my hair*

[Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]

00:30:43 Jarrett Guest We just did an episode of *FANTI* where we were talking about people being in quarantine after a few weeks started to realize like, “Oh my god, what am I gonna do about my hair?”

[Morgan and Oliver affirm and laugh.]

And so we talked about barbershops and how, you know, the barbershop is one of those places that has very mixed feelings for us. But the idea of our hair being something that is so important, and I am—I cut my own hair while I’m in quarantine here by myself, ‘cause like, it’s important to me that I feel a certain way. And so to hear her talk about, “I am not my hair” and the ways that like, we have really oppressed ourselves and been oppressed by the way that we address our hair, it really gets me too.

00:31:21 Morgan Host Yes. And there aren’t that many songs by Black women about—about hair. I mean, you got uh, Afro Puffs, “Lady of Rage”, you got Solange, “Don’t Touch My Hair”, you got um, I think Erykah has an afro song, but that’s about somebody else, and then you got Willow, “Whip My Hair Back and Forth”.

[Jarrett affirms emphatically.]

You know what I’m saying? So there haven’t been—

[Sound of something knocking into a microphone.]

—there’s not an overwhelming canon of hair-positive songs. And in 2006—again, early—she—she was too early for this widespread acceptance of natural hair. She missed it by a couple of years, early again. So while she was celebrating—and I’m not taking anything away from our natural sisters, god bless them as well—she was a little bit early for that, too.

00:32:09 Music Music *[“I Am Not My Hair” plays again.]*

*Hey (hey)
I am not my hair
I am not this skin*

*I am not your expectations, no (hey)
I am not my hair
I am not this skin
I am the soul that lives within*

[Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]

00:32:28 Morgan Host I wanted to ask you, Jarrett, because sometimes we ask on this show, is this, you know, this artist's best album, or is it just your favorite? So, to you, is this India's best album, or is this just your favorite? No shade either way, but we just wanna know honestly.

[Jarrett sighs.]

You know, what do you feel?

00:32:49 Jarrett Guest So hard. I—well like, I haven't listened to the new one, full disclosure, stop judging me.

[Morgan laughs.]

Um, I would have to say I think so. And I think that it goes back to what you were talking about earlier, about how *Voyage* felt like she wanted to do this, but they were like, "That's really cute, now let's give you some producers so you can sing."

[Morgan agrees, Oliver makes an amused noise.]

You know what I mean? I think this might have been... it's hard for me to say, because I haven't heard the newest stuff, but of all the things that I'm aware of, I would say this is probably the best one. Because I feel like it was the most honest, it was the most heartfelt, and the most open, vulnerable. So, I don't know if that's answering you.

00:33:35 Morgan Host No, it does. It does, and I asked you this because, in prep for the chat, I went back and listened to a few of the albums, and I found myself going back to *Worthy*, which is her latest album. And I was like, "This is fire." And when it came out—I don't know if I was caught up, but I skipped over it. And I felt like, you know, am I like everybody else, that I haven't spent enough time? And *Worthy* to me was fire. If you had asked me before, it would have been a toss-up between actually this album, and *Voyage to India*, and I love them both. I love the slickness of *Voyage to India* and I love the message of them both here.

But *Worthy* was something else, and so I wanted to ask you, because sometimes your favorite album is not the best one, it's just the sentimental favorite.

00:34:25 Oliver Host Jarrett, I'm wondering, is there a song off of here that you would want to hear someone now cover?

[Morgan hums.]

And, if so, what would the song be. And more important, equally

important, who would you want to hear tackle it?

00:34:36 Jarrett Guest Um—

00:34:37 Morgan Host Because Oliver and I are gonna say Frank Ocean, because we say Frank Ocean for every album.

00:34:44 Oliver Host But Frank would—I think Frank would do very well with a song off of here, you know?

00:34:48 Jarrett Guest Um, that is so difficult. I feel like it would probably “Better People” or “I Choose”.

[Oliver and Morgan affirm in tandem.]

I think “Better People”, because it could not be more relevant right now.

00:35:00 Oliver Host Yeah, totally.

00:35:02 Jarrett Guest Um, and, who would do it... I don't know why I'm thinking—the first person that's coming to mind is H.E.R.

[Oliver and Morgan affirm in tandem again.]

Um, I just love her voice, and I just—there's something about like, listening to her sing. And I wanna be, like wholly clear, I don't know all of her music by any stretch.

[Morgan assents.]

But I, um, love her voice. And also—I love H.E.R.'s voice. But I also—I'm really, really in love with Snoh Aalegra's voice. I don't know—

00:35:37 Oliver Host Interesting choice, yeah.

00:35:39 Jarrett Guest Snoh Aalegra has one of those voices that I—I'm such a foodie. I always describe voices like her's as soft butter over hot pastry. It's kind of melting, and you cannot get enough of it. And like, I just imagine like, her voice doing a song like that, because it just feels like, warm and welcoming. Um, and I think that—I don't know if it would work, but those are the things that are coming to me.

00:36:11 Oliver Host No, I like both of those choices.

00:36:13 Morgan Host I was gonna say, you know, even if it sounds wild, when I think of “Good Morning”, I'd like to hear CeCe Winans do this, I love her voice.

00:36:21 Jarrett Guest Oh my god.

00:36:22 Morgan Host And I think she'd be great doing “Good Morning”. And it wouldn't have to be—she wouldn't have to substitute anything for the Lord or whatever, but I would just love to hear her do “Good Morning”.

00:36:31 Jarrett Guest Can you imagine CeCe Winans doing “Better People”?

[Oliver and Morgan make awed noises.]

CeCe Winans, oh, that's such a good call. Can I amend?

- 00:36:39 Morgan Host Go ahead. *[Laughs]* Yeah! Go ahead.
- 00:36:42 Oliver Host *[Through laughter]* "Can I amend to CeCe Winans?"
- 00:36:46 Jarrett Guest I think that is so good! Like, aw, CeCe Winans on that *Let Them Fall In Love* album, which is just a wild departure from gospel, right? And just, ugh, we could talk about that all day, sorry.
- 00:36:58 Morgan Host Come on. Come on. And I saw her at Disney Musical, and she wore us out. It was just her, and her three singers, and she wore us out.
- 00:37:10 Music Music "Let Them Fall In Love" off the album *Let Them Fall In Love* by CeCe Winans. Slow, soulful gospel music with tenderly passionate vocals.
- Please forgive them too
For they know not what they do
Let them fall in love with you*
- [Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]*
- 00:37:33 Morgan Host But the one question I wanted to ask you, back to the tracks though, if there was a track on here, if you had to introduce someone to India.Arie who had not heard of India.Arie, those unicorns do exist, and if they had not, what track from this album would you use as an introduction?
- 00:37:51 Jarrett Guest I think "India'Song".
- [Morgan affirms.]*
- I think that song has so much of who and what India.Arie is. Because there's talk of the ancestors, there's talk of freedom, there is talk of just, there's so much in "India'Song", it would probably be that? If I wanted them to like, really love her. If I just wanted them to like, hear a song and like a song, it'd probably be, like, "Better People", or "I Choose". But like if I wanted you to really appreciate India, um, it would probably be that, because if you love that song, I think you would be along for the ride with India.Arie.
- 00:38:34 Music Music "India'Song" plays again.
- ...where the wind calls my name
The wind is calling "India, India, India"*
- [Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]*
- 00:38:52 Oliver Host If you had to describe this album in three words, what three words would you choose?
- 00:38:58 Jarrett Guest *[Resigned]* Okay, Oliver. So, I told myself to be ready for this question.
- [Morgan starts laughing.]*

Um, and I wrote down “replenishing”, “honest”, and “open”. And, I think about replenishing because of the unique thing that India.Arie gives me. Like I’ve talked about at the beginning, of how I can hear a song, and come back to it four years later, and it sounds like something completely different to me.

[Morgan assents.]

And it speaks to me in a different way. It fills my cup up in a different way, and that’s when I think of with replenishing. I think “honest”, um, to start off with “These Eyes”, I mean, that is a song of like, heartbreak and devastation, and watching the possibilities—the dream for a love die, right?

Um, I think that is probably the most vulnerable track on this whole thing, and it’s just so honest, and like open because I feel like her heart is wide open in this album, I feel like she’s like fully exposing all of her stuff.

00:40:05 Oliver Host I like that you did your homework, good choices, very good choices.

[Morgan and Oliver chuckle.]

Well, before we bounce, we wanna leave our listeners with some recommendations in terms of what they should add to their next album to check out, and I’ll kick things off.

I was thinking about other kinds of break up albums, and for whatever reason, I landed on Nas’s 2012 *Life is Good*. Partly, I was influenced by the kind of critical controversy about this album, so I was thinking about imperfect break up albums, and I think *Life is Good* qualifies as that. Because it’s no *Here, My Dear*, let’s put it that way. But Nas recorded it after him and Kalis split up, and “Bye Baby” which ends the album is kind of his big, like, “Here’s the breakup tune” on there.

00:40:46 Music Music “Bye Baby” off the album *Life is Good* by Nas. Fast rap with a steady beat in the background.

*You screaming at the racist cops in Miami was probably
The highlight of my life, like "Hiyo look at my wife"
Gangsta, me and twenty cops about to fight, crazy night
Bailed you out, next morning we got clean
Like it never happened and later we at that Heat game
Just another day in the life of two people in love
But it wasn't enough, so baby guess what
I guess you knew and blew a good thing*

[Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]

00:41:07 Oliver Host How about you, Morgan?

00:41:08 Morgan Host Um, I always have two. So, my first recommendation would be to go back to 2002 and go to Tweet’s *Southern Hummingbird*. Uh, you got acoustic in places, it’s self aware, it’s introspective, and I would start

with “Complain”.

- 00:41:24 Music Music “Complain” off the album *Southern Hummingbird* by Tweet. Slow, tender singing and guitar.
- Nothing in this world but you complete me
And even if the bad times call*
- If I had you back, I wouldn't complain at all*
- [Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]*
- 00:41:44 Morgan Host And then, if you want to hear India.Arie singing something other than these kinds of songs, go to 2015, and her album with Joe Sample, which is called *Christmas With Friends*. It’s one of the prettiest Christmas albums I’ve ever heard, and I would start with “God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen”.
- 00:42:01 Music Music “God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen” off the album *Christmas With Friends* by India.Arie and Joe Sample. Slow, heartfelt Christmas music with a gentle piano backing.
- Let there be peace on Earth
Comfort and joy
Comfort and joy*
- [Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]*
- 00:42:16 Oliver Host And Jarret, how about you, what do you think our audience should be checking out after they’ve finished listening to *Testimony: Vol. 1?*
- 00:42:22 Jarrett Guest I don’t know if this makes any sense. But I’m gonna go with it. I... I, working at a radio station, ran into this artist, and had a complete breakdown, and went and saw her perform at the Staples’ Center two nights later. It’s gonna be Anita Baker.
- [Oliver responds emphatically.]*
- 00:42:44 Morgan Host Oh my god, which album?
- 00:42:45 Jarrett Guest Well, what’s odd about this is I’m choosing *The Best of Anita Baker*.
- [Morgan assents.]*
- Which, might be controversial, you know, take me. But, you know, I think *The Best of Anita Baker* is like, I can play that, and like, it just gives me hints of everything that I’ve had from Anita Baker through the years.
- Um, and what I appreciate about Anita Baker, um, is one of the things I don’t say about a lot of artists. Celine Dion, I think, has a perfect like, that voice is so consistent. Like, you’re not gonna see her give you a perform—like, I’ve seen Celine Dion sing one time where her voice cracked, and it was the first performance after her husband died.
- [Morgan affirms.]*

I'm gonna let her cry. Anita Baker performing at the Staples' Center, that voice sounded exactly like that voice sounded on these albums, and I was just blown away by. Mind you, it was not a fanfare kind of show. Like, there was no background dancers, and there was like an Apple screensaver on the screen. But like, that voice was amazing, and I think *The Best of Anita Baker* is probably the one for me.

00:43:53	Music	Music	<p>"Been So Long" off the album <i>The Best of Anita Baker</i> by Anita Baker. Mid-tempo soul jazz with heartfelt vocals.</p> <p><i>I think you take for granted I'll always be here Just because I'm near you It doesn't mean I won't disappear Been so long of missing you, baby Been so long of missing you, baby</i></p> <p><i>[Music fades out as dialogue resumes.]</i></p>
00:44:13	Morgan	Host	Well, that's gonna do it for this episode of <i>Heat Rocks</i> with our special guest, Jarrett Hill. Let us know what you're working on now.
00:44:20	Music	Transition	"Crown Ones" off the album <i>Stepfather</i> by People Under The Stairs
00:44:21	Jarrett	Guest	<p>You can check out my podcast on Maximum Fun called <i>FANTI</i>, um, we come out with new episodes every Thursday, and it is a labor of love.</p> <p>I'm also writing an immense amount of different things. Um, and so, you can follow me on Twitter, and Instagram, and I'll kind of keep you guys posted on the things I'm writing. Everywhere @JarrettHill, Jarrett is with two R's and two T's. Um, and my website JarrettHill.com.</p>
00:44:47	Oliver	Host	You've been listening to <i>Heat Rocks</i> with me, Oliver Wang, and Morgan Rhodes.
00:44:51	Morgan	Host	Our theme music is "Crown Ones" by <i>Thes One</i> of <i>People Under The Stairs</i> . Shoutout to Thes for the hookup.
00:44:56	Oliver	Host	<i>Heat Rocks</i> is produced by myself and Morgan, alongside Christian Dueñas, who also edits, engineers, and does the booking for our shows.
00:45:04	Morgan	Host	Our senior producer is Laura Swisher, and our executive producer is Jesse Thorn.
00:45:09	Oliver	Host	<p>We are part of the Maximum Fun family, taping every week live in their studios in the West Lake neighborhood of Los Angeles.</p> <p>One last thing, here is a traser of next week's episode, which features the one and only Havoc of Mobb Deep, talking about The Purple Tape, Raekwon the Chef's debut album from 1995, <i>Only Built 4 Cuban Linx...</i></p>

[Music ends.]

00:45:32	Oliver	Host	I'm just wondering if you could talk a little bit about just the kind of competitive spirit of all of these different artists at the top of their game trying to outdo one another, assuming that was the case.
00:45:42	Havoc	Guest	<p>Yeah, well like, we all was friends. You know what I mean? So, it wasn't a rivalry that was plagued in hate or something like that. It was like, we all was friends, and we would see each other, and we would always pick each other up for our projects. It's like, you know, like, "Yo son, that shit was crazy!" Like, you know what I mean?</p> <p>And that was—that was the beautiful thing about it, because you know, they would be picking me up about my project. Raekwon would drop his joint, we'd be like, "Yo, son. That—yo." So they already knew that after each one of our projects, when anybody goes back to the studio, we going <u>in</u> in, to try to top <u>that</u>, you know what I'm saying? Like, I mean—but <i>Only Built 4 Cuban Linx</i>, that was a hard one to top.</p>
00:46:37	Speaker 1	Promo	MaximumFun.org .
00:46:39	Speaker 2	Promo	Comedy and culture.
00:46:40	Speaker 3	Promo	Artist owned—
00:46:41	Speaker 4	Promo	—Audience supported.