

Wonderful! 147: Chronohop to the Future

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[theme music plays]

Rachel: Hello, this is Rachel McElroy.

Griffin: Hello, this is Griffin McElroy.

Rachel: And this is Wonderful!

Griffin: Welcome to Wonderful. You're—

Rachel: Welcome!

Griffin: You're inside now. And we're gonna shut the doors. [makes a door shutting sound] And lock `em. [makes a door locking sound]

Rachel: Wait, why are we locking them?

Griffin: And then, here's the key. And I'm gonna swallow it. Aah! Agh! Ahh! This key is too big to swallow. So I'm just gonna put it in my pocket. But don't try and go for it. You're in here now.

Rachel: I don't know that I like trapping people in our podcast.

Griffin: Well, here's the thing. It helps the numbers. So, user retention, and minutes listened... these numbers are very, very important to the—

Rachel: Mm-hmm. How many minutes do we have to keep them here for it to count?

Griffin: Uh, depends on the advertiser. Um... like, y'know how we have that biiig Coors Lite advertiser coming up? They want them here for like, 15 minutes at least.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: So please don't leave for the first 15 minutes, so Coors Lite likes us, and—no, that's not—we don't have... we don't have that Coors Lite money.

Rachel: No, we do not.

Griffin: Yet!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Do you have any small wonders?

Rachel: Uh, I am going to say, uh... just plant nurseries.

Griffin: Okay!

Rachel: I decided I was going to invest in some herbs. You gonna...

Griffin: Mm-hmm. No, I'm not.

Rachel: Alright! [laughs] Uh, and I had an instinct to go to like, a big box hardware store, and then I thought, "Y'know what? I bet there is a local plant nursery." Turns out, there was. It's like, three minutes away. And I went there, and it was just pleasant. It was just pleasant to be there and look at the plants.

Griffin: I bet! I bet it's a nice place to be right now. Most like, uh... I've had to go to Lowes a couple times, to like, get things for our house when it started to fall apart. And just being in like, the outdoor section, I mean, it's 155 degrees, which is not great. But just like, it feels—it's a nice place to be in... in the quar, y'know what I mean?

Rachel: Yeah. Not every city has a botanical garden, but y'know, most places have a plant nursery.

Griffin: Sure. Uh, I'm gonna say Afrin. Uh, I recently had a procedure to get my turbinates shrunk down, 'cause I couldn't—my right nostril... basically stopped working. Uh, and since then, the recovery's been surprisingly arduous, and I've been very, very stuffy and hurtin', and that Afrin is like the fucking limitless pill. You take it, and just instantly, it opens things up. And this is—I know this is like, the second or third time I've talked about some sort of sinus-based medication.

Rachel: I was gonna say. I know for sure Sudafed was one of your wonders at one point.

Griffin: Sudafed is the longer haul. Afrin, which, from what I understand, Afrin can also have a sort of addictive property to it, so I gotta be careful with that. But it is, uh... it's literally... Dr. Jekyll, Mr. Hyde potion. Like, I'm so stuffy, and then I'll do a couple snoots, and I'm ready to go. It's incredible!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: It's incredible medicine that works, and that's my shit.

Rachel: Griffin takes it, and then comes into the living room, and ceremoniously lies down on the couch and just waits for it to kick in.

Griffin: It's crazy. Well, I do that so that it, y'know, settles in my...

Rachel: Gets in there.

Griffin: In my schnozz, and really gets in there. Uh, but Afrin, man. I'm upset I've only just discovered it, thanks to this procedure. And the number of like, sinus issues I've had in the past, it makes me very upset to know that—

Rachel: 30 plus years without nasal spray.

Griffin: I know. Wild. Okay. Uh, I go first this week. My first thing that I want to talk about is open mic night!

Rachel: Whoa!

Griffin: I know, right? Uh, open mic night is something that I went to, literally every week, in Huntington.

Rachel: I can't... I can't imagine this! Right? Like, it feels like the most vulnerable thing to me. And the fact that you did it repeatedly kind of blows my mind!

Griffin: So I only did it a few times. I'm talking more of like, as a patron, uh, of open mic night. I would perform a few times, but we would go to open mic night on Wednesday nights, uh, at the V Club, like, every week. Week in, week out, no matter what, even if we were performing or not. With our group of friends, usually someone was performing, but very rarely was I actually gettin' up there and takin' my turn.

Rachel: This is—I know that you get—you—it's not unusual for you to get uncomfortable watching somebody perform... when they are nervous.

Griffin: Well, here's the thing. Here's the double standard that I have for that.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: For me, that applies to comedy, and it doesn't really apply to music. And I realize that that is like, a snooty thing to say. But for whatever reason, like, watching somebody bomb at comedy sort of makes my—makes my skin crawl. And I hope I can say that in like, a non-judgmental way. It's just, the secondhand anxiety I get from that is very, very intensified.

I don't really get that with music as much, because... well, I think music is a lot more subjective, and I think it's, y'know, easier to find something good in the music that people are performing than sort of bad comedy. But also because like, I don't do that kind of like, music sort of professionally. I don't

play live performance music professionally, so like, I don't have as much to draw on when I use my imagination to pretend it's like, me up there bombing.

So, I really, really, uh, enjoyed open mic nights. I have—I haven't really gone to them since I moved away from Huntington quite as much. There was a place in Chicago I would go to occasionally. Um, but uh... it's such a great idea, and the unpredictability of it, I think, for me, is what makes it so exciting. You really never know what you are going to see at any sort of given open mic performance.

And yes, there are certainly lots of performances that are, um, not great. But sometimes, you'll see a performance that is great, and you get that, like, really nice moment of sort of talking with your friends, and then, just sort of the conversation stopping and being like, "Oh, shit. Like, whoever is on stage right now is actually really, really good."

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: It did—the few times that I did perform, it is terrifying, because you uh... whenever I would, y'know, bring my guitar up there and play, like... you know what that audience is like, because you've been in it. So like, you know that it's not the most rapt attention. And so, you're kind of fighting for their attention a little bit. Which makes it satisfying when you get it, but y'know, all the more disheartening when you don't.

Uh, and... I find that, like... I find that very, very exciting.

Rachel: I guess, y'know, I guess... I guess what it is is I have only known you in a performance context where you are collaborating with your family.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: So the idea of you getting up on stage by yourself to do something, like, blows my mind a little bit.

Griffin: Yeah. No, yeah, I've only—I have not had to do that more than a handful... I think my FSU speech is probably like, the biggest thing I've done by myself. Uh, but yeah, I definitely feel more comfortable with my family up there with me.

Um, there's—when it's good, you get this feeling like you are catching the first glimpse of something. And I'm not saying like, everybody turns out to be, y'know, a big Nashville star or whatever, following their good open mic performance. But you get the feeling of like, "Oh, I am seeing—I am hearing good music that like, nobody else has really been exposed to before," and that is sort of like, tantalizing.

But when it's bad, when it's music and it's bad, for me, at least, personally speaking... I get a sense of like, knowing that the person who is playing music on stage right now is nervous, and is fighting those nerves, and is like, still sort of like, doing their thing up there, even though they're nervous. I find that very, like, um... y'know, I get secondhand gratification off that. Like, watching somebody face their fears like that.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: Maybe I should—it's a double standard. I should feel that way about comedy, too, but it's, uh... I don't know why. It just makes me uncomfortable.

Rachel: Yeah, I didn't mean to—I didn't mean to call you out. I think, like, I am somebody who gets incredibly nervous doing anything by myself on stage. Uh, and for example, when I was in Chicago, y'know, I was somebody who was really involved in poetry at the time, and went to a lot of, y'know, what could be called kind of a poetry open mic.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: But could never imagine doing it myself. Like, as confident as I might've felt in my ability, like... oh, god. [laughs]

Griffin: Um, I just—I also think like, a good, uh, open mic venue has this like, symbiotic relationship with the performers and the patrons. Where like, if the open mic—the V Club was a very welcoming spot for musicians to come and play. So first of all, like, it would attract real weirdoes who would get up there and do like, some pretty, uh, let's call it, experimental shit. Which is super enter—like, super fun. Like, this is bad, but I've never heard it before, so holy shit!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Um, but it also attracted people who were very good and very talented. And because it was a positive experience because of the venue, and the way they sort of like, enforced things and invited that talent, more talent would come. And so, when you went to the V Club, you could count on it usually being a good time. Like, a good slate of performances, because that's what they attracted.

Rachel: That's a really good point, yeah. The environment makes a huge difference.

Griffin: Um, also because like, y'know, you're going out with your friends, and it's just, I feel like, a neat activity. 'Cause all those things you're feeling of the secondhand, like, anxiety and the like, secondhand pride of watching people—like, sharing that with friends that you're like, out on the town with is very exciting. It's usually free to go to an open mic.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: Yeah, I miss it. I feel like I would enjoy... I mean, obviously, it's much harder for us to... I mean... [laughs] Now, in the quarantine, I would not want to go out to an open mic, because I don't know that those are even happening. But y'know, with a kiddo, it's all that more difficult for us to go out for a night on the town. So I understand why we're not doing it as much anymore.

But that's like—that was my favorite way to like, go out. I would very rarely go out with my friends just to get drunk or whatever. Usually, it was to go to the V Club and watch open mic.

Rachel: Well, and it's a community too, right? Like, I was telling Griffin, one thing I really wanted to talk about this week, but I could quite wrap my head around it, was that like, creative community. Right? Like, being in a room or a space with other people who have a similar interest, and are trying to create things. Y'know? And I didn't really know how to talk about that, but I feel like that's kind of what you were describing.

Griffin: Kind of what this is, yeah. Because you get—you get—it's satisfying to be there, and like, that's its own sort of reward. But you do—like, I did see some performers who went on to like, start bands. Like, I watched Tyler Childers play there a few times, and now he's like, a big, big country star. And I just... everything about it, I think is cool. It is just a—it is just a sort of cool premise for a thing that, uh, a venue can do.

I've also been to bad open mic venues, where the venue is just like, uh, the back room of some restaurant where people are talking as loud as humanly possible, and you can't really hear yourself play guitar, and everyone just ignores you. Uh, but like, eventually, those would die out, because nobody would want to fuckin' play there.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: Um, yeah. Hey, what's your first thing?

Rachel: Uh, my first thing is a electronic pop duo called Sylvan Esso.

Griffin: Okay! Is this the music video that you sent to me—

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Okay. Yeah, this was fuckin' good.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: This is good stuff.

Rachel: You know me, I'm not always a huge fan of electronic music.

Griffin: True.

Rachel: There are very kind of specific bands that I will like that fall in that category, and this is one of them.

Griffin: I feel like you like an electronic pop. I feel like you like a Robin. You like a...

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Mm-hmm. This group actually reminded me a little bit of Dirty Projectors.

Griffin: Oh, sure!

Rachel: Yeah. Uh, do you recognize the name, Sylvan Esso?

Griffin: I do not at all, even a little bit.

Rachel: Apparently, they derive their name from an iOS video game called Super Brothers: Sword and Sorcery.

Griffin: Ohh! Okay! Yeah, that game ripped—that game fuckin' slaps. That game is super, super—I've played that game, I just didn't recognize... did not recognize the name Sylvan Esso.

Rachel: [laughs] Sometimes when I like, throw a video game reference at you, I feel like I'm like, talking to somebody's nephew, and I'm like, "You like video games, right?"

Griffin: [laughs] Well, Super Brothers: Sword and Sorcery was like, an early iOS. Like, it was—back when the app store was like, 50 apps that you could download, like, this was one of them. And it was... just rad. Like, it's a super hip, like, music-based adventure game.

Rachel: Oh, okay.

Griffin: Uh, and so, it was like... I don't know. It was one of the first like, cool iOS games, I feel like.

Rachel: Yeah, so this group released their first album in 2014. So that—that may be why it timed out that way, that that's their name. Um, they met, uh... the two members, Amelia Meath, was in a three woman folk group called Mountain Man. And they shared a bill at a club in Milwaukee with Nick Sanborn, who is the other member of the group.

Uh, Amelia and Nick are actually now married. They formed their band, and then, in 2016, got married.

Griffin: I love that. That's the—they're on that Pomplamoose tip.

Rachel: Uh, they are now located in Durham, North Carolina. So they have had two albums. Uh, the first one, Sylvan Esso was the name of the first album in 2014. The second was What Now, in 2017. And then, their album, Free Love, is set to come out September 25th.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Uh, and I discovered them... y'know what was interesting? So, I actually—one of their songs I did know on their first album was called Coffee. And they did an episode of Song Exploder.

Griffin: Oh, cool! God, that show is so fucking good. God, Song Exploder's good.

Rachel: [laughs] I don't think I've actually listened to that episode, but I have heard that song. Uh, they did chart their debut single, Hey Mommy, uh, came out... y'know, in 2014, and reached number 39 on the billboard chart.

Griffin: That's higher than we've gotten.

Rachel: [laughs] It's true. Where did we get? Where did we end up?

Griffin: We got to 40.

Rachel: 40. Oh, 40. With uh... and what was—gosh...

Griffin: Hey, Daddy.

Rachel: Hey—[laughs]

Griffin: Remember? And it would be like, [sings] "Hey, daddy! That tie is too big for you!" Y'know?

Rachel: [laughing] Uh-huh.

Griffin: Rachel and I watched a clip of some old Whose Line is it Anyway, and fell—folks wearing their fuckin' ties in the mid to late '90s... why were those shits *so large*?!

Rachel: Very large. I mean, everything was large, right?

Griffin: Wow!

Rachel: Like, the suits were big, the ties were big, the pants were big...

Griffin: So big, these ties! Wow! All of them! All of them. Drew, Ryan, fuckin' Greg... all these ties were—

Rachel: Very big ties.

Griffin: I could wear them as a tank top now, these ties.

Rachel: I like that we're not gonna really discuss how we ended up watching *Whose Line is it Anyway*, as if this is a thing that all the—

Griffin: [laughs] No. We don't do this often.

Rachel: All the cool kids do. [laughing]

Griffin: We don't do this often. I think YouTube recommended it or something like that? Or maybe...

Rachel: Well, no. I think what it is is, we get to a point in the night where it's late, and we're not gonna watch an entire show, and we usually wanna watch something kind of... light to close out our evening. And I think you just kind of suggested it, and there we were.

Griffin: I had a hankerin' for Colin Mochrie, is what it was. And yeah, we had like, 20 minutes to kill.

Rachel: A+ talent, that Colin Mochrie.

Griffin: Yeah. And a lot of, uh—I'll say, a lot of jokes that didn't age well!

Rachel: Nooo.

Griffin: You would think, uh, were not from the 1990s, but rather, the fucking 1940s.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Uh, so regressive were their punch lines. But uh... yeah. Anyway.

Rachel: Anyway... [laughs]

Griffin: Jesus. Sorry.

Rachel: Uh, so, I mentioned earlier that I am not always a fan of electronic music. And a lot of that is because, y'know, I want a melody. I want a hook. Y'know, I want something I can like, hang onto. Maybe that's just my interest in poetry. Like, I'm lookin' for some lyrics.

Griffin: Yeah, but I don't know that electronic music precludes those elements from happening. Like, I think a specific type of electronic music maybe doesn't focus on it, but I think, especially poppier stuff almost universally does have it.

Rachel: Well, I feel—so, I feel like Nick Sanborn, the member of the duo that is really responsible for the electronic component, said it really well, um, in an interview I read. He said, "My favorite electronic music is music that really sounds like humans make it. You want those choices to be emotionally intentional. Hopefully, every sound you pick, the way every word you would pick is there for a reason."

Griffin: Sure!

Rachel: Which, y'know, may sound, um... I don't know. For real fans of that genre of music, they could probably make the argument that most electronic music does that. But for me, as an outsider, I found that really resonant. Of just like, music that is intentionally aligned with the lyrics in a way that it is producing kind of the emotional reaction that the lyrics are.

Sylvan Esso, they just released a like, live concert film documentary that came out in April. And the lead singer, Amelia, is just kind of an incredible dancer and performer. It made me really sad to think like, I've discovered this new band, and I don't know when I'm gonna get to see them live again. Especially the concert film made it pretty incredible. They were traveling with like, a ten-piece band. Which as like, an electronic duo, was pretty unique. So it was cool to watch.

But the song I wanted to play... um, just came out in this quarantine time of August, 2020, and it is Rooftop Dancing.

Griffin: [whispers] So good.

[‘Rooftop Dancing’ by Sylvan Esso plays]

Rachel: I would encourage everybody to check out the video for this song. The group lives in North Carolina, but they have roots in New York, and the video is just kind of New York in this time right now, where there is still activity. There is still a lot of vibrancy, but it is, y'know, a lot in isolation. And the video, I think, really captures that. It feels like a very hopeful video, y'know? It's kind of communicating, there is still this spirit there, even if the city looks very different.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: And it's just a... it's a really great song.

Griffin: Yeah! Um, thank you for bringing it to my attention. I've been bumping it, as the teens say.

Rachel: Oh, good. [laughs]

Griffin: Can I steal you away?

Rachel: Yes!

[ad break stinger plays, distant and muffled]

[ad break]

Griffin: We got a couple of jumbogoms, here. Can I read the first one?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: This one is for Future Alex, from Past Alex, who says, "Hello, Future Alex! This is Past Alex. Hoo boy, these last six months, am I right?" I feel like this message could've worked... at any point...

Rachel: At any time!

Griffin: Anyway. Uh, "Despite everything going on, I am proud of everything that you're doing. I will always love our long walks together, laughing out loud to manga, and petting every dog that we can. I'm your biggest supporter, and I can't wait to see what we do! Your best friend, Alex."

This is very powerful, Alex.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: It's strong and beautiful and clean and true.

Rachel: There was a time during that message where I forgot it was a person writing the message to themselves.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: And then I was like, "What a great friend! Oh wait, no." [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, yeah. It's very much... it's very much on that Lizzo... that Lizzo tip. What's that song where she talks about marrying herself? Your Own Soulmate?

Rachel: Your Own Soulmate?

Griffin: God, that song rips. Uh, you wanna read this other one?

Rachel: I do! This message is for Will, it is from Dezzie. "Will, I love waking up with you every morning and falling asleep with you every night. You are the best person I could've possibly met, my dear, my doll. Love you lots and lots and polka dots. Your Dezzie."

Griffin: So good. What a good—

Rachel: Lots and lots and polka dots?!

Griffin: A succinct little package there! But every moment of it was a delight to the senses!

Rachel: [laughs] Five stars.

Griffin: Five stars, A+, gold sticker that has—what a—who—Bart Simpson on it. He's giving a big thumbs up on his skateboard.

Rachel: Oh! Sun with a smiley face in it!

Griffin: Yeah, and it says, uh, "Cool job!"

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: No wait, it's a ice cube. Or a snow man, and it says—

Rachel: Oh, perfect.

Griffin: "You did cool! You did cool!"

Rachel: Now we're here.

[Maximum Fun advertisement]

Rachel: Can I hear your second thing?

Griffin: You know I teased it! You knew it was comin'!

Rachel: I did.

Griffin: Everybody knew it was comin'. The press, the podcast press has been buzzin' about it, 'cause I dropped some hints last episode.

Rachel: Some people are about to win some money, when they bet on the next episode topics.

Griffin: The hurdy-gurdy.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: Did you listen to the thing I sent you?

Rachel: I did! It was cool to see, because I legit don't think I've heard of the hurdy-gurdy. I did not know what it looks like.

Griffin: Yeah. It's a weird box type... okay. Let's—let's start at the very beginning. Uh, the hurdy-gurdy is a stringed instrument, uh, that could be best described as a sort of crank-based violin accordion. You crank with one hand, a hand-crank, and with the other hand, you manipulate buttons to change the tone of different strings that are played by a, uh, rosined wheel.

So imagine, instead of the bow, uh, which you would play with a typical stringed instrument like a violin or a cello, that produces sound as you rub it across the strings, the wheel is sort of the same idea, but it just doesn't stop. You can produce long, uninterrupted notes, because you're cranking this wheel, and it's rotating against the strings, and uh, creating sound.

And these buttons can change to the sound, right? But there are also buttons that you can set so that they are pressed up against the string that you are not changing. So those produce a constant sort of drone. They're called drone strings. And they produce one tone that you can then play a melody over with the buttons, and that's a hurdy-gurdy.

Because of those drone notes, it is sort of, uh... it has the sort of sound impression of like, uh, a bagpipe, which also does drone notes. But uh, to give you an idea of what the hurdy-gurdy is, I want to play a song, or a clip from a song. Sorry – every time I wrote hurdy-gurdy, my... [laughs]

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: The app I used to take notes translated it to 'curdy-curdy.' Like, who is talk—first of all, whoever—ooh, this milk is quite curdy. Like, nobody says that. And nobody would say it twice in a row.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Anyway, uh, there's a song on YouTube that has like, four million views, because it's one of those YouTube recommends sort of quicksand pits that people just kind of fall into. Uh, it is by a uh, performer named Andrey Vinogradov, and the song is called Aequilibrium: Medieval Tune. And it has an organ. It's cheating, but there's an organ layered on top of it. But it'll give you an idea of what the sound of a hurdy-gurdy is like.

[‘Aequilibrium: Medieval Tune’ by Andrey Vinogradov plays]

Rachel: How do you know this instrument?

Griffin: Uh, so, my uh... the first time I think I ever heard the words 'hurdy-gurdy' and saw what it was was when I was playing Sea of Thieves, which is that pirate game which I infamously ate a banana while covering for Polygon.

Rachel: Ahh, yes yes yes.

Griffin: Uh, because when you're playing that game, you can sort of play sea shanties with the other members of your crew, and there's like, an accordion, and something else. But one of the instruments is a hurdy-gurdy. And I was like, "What the fuck is that thing?" And so, I looked it up, and it is a sort of semi-traditional sort of folk instrument, used in a lot of folk music.

It has sort of an interesting origin. It is used interchangeably with the bagpipe in a lot of different places, because it has the drone notes that give it a sort of similar sound, so you can sort of compose around it the same way. Um, so there's lots of different types of folks music that use the hurdy-

gurdy, like the Catalan folk music, Cajun, French, Hungarian, and Slavic folk arrangements all typically can include the hurdy-gurdy.

Uh, it has its origins from the fiddle, which makes sense. But when it was first developed, it was called the organistrum. And it had two drone notes and one melody string. But it was so fucking big that two people had to play it. One person would crank the crank, and the other person would play the notes to change the melody string.

Rachel: I just think—I look at this instrument, and I just can't imagine how it happened. It seems like somebody was trying to make something else.

Griffin: Yep. They were trying to like, make a coffee press or something like that.

Rachel: Or like a big music box. And they were like, "Oh, what if you could play this like an instrument?"

Griffin: It's really interesting, because like, nobody knows anything about the hurdy-gurdy. Like, I feel like... I mean, obviously, there are—there's a type of person that knows a lot about the hurdy-gurdy, and that person has been to more than one renaissance faire. And that's not a judgment – I fucking love a ren faire, but that's what I'm saying.

Rachel: It is a fact.

Griffin: It is a fact. Um, but like, I would say commonly, it is not one of the instrument types that you ever even hear about, let alone learn about in school. Which is interesting, because like, it was pretty, like, feverishly iterated on when it first came out. You had the organistrum, which was very, very large, and you would see two beefy monks, like, playing it in a church, right?

Um, and then, people would keep making smaller and smaller hurdy-gurdys with more sounds. By the renaissance, it was like, popular. Like, as popular as other instruments, and people played it very, very commonly. The reason why the hurdy-gurdy sort of fell out of fashion was because, by the end of

the renaissance, the way that composers were making music... people, uh, were drawn to a more sort of polyphonic sound. Or a more sort of, uh, frenetic arrangement.

That because of the set drone strings that you cannot change the sound of in the middle of a performance on the hurdy-gurdy, it just became sort of impossible to play those songs. Like, the hurdy-gurdy, I think, sounds really radical... but it's gonna have like, those tones playing constantly that you are chang—so like, a certain sort of—y'know, you can't do like, a Coltrane, like, jazz chord progression on a hurdy-gurdy because of those drone strings.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: So like, because of that, people stopped playing the hurdy-gurdy. And that was it. I found that really interesting. Like, the type of music we like made the hurdy-gurdy fall out of fashion, just because like, you couldn't play that music on it.

Rachel: I mean, yeah. But like, that's the whole thing with rock and roll, right? Like, all of a sudden, I don't know. Like, big, classical arrangements... you don't see that as much.

Griffin: Yeah, sure. I mean, musical taste changes, and then, the instruments sort of follow suit. But like, I cannot think of another instrument that so completely fell off the face of the earth like the hurdy-gurdy.

The next time we heard about the song was from Donovan, who in 1968, did write Hurdy Gurdy Man. Hurdy Gurdy Man does not feature a hurdy-gurdy in it. Thanks, Donovan. You had a real opportunity there, I think, to do a signal boost. But it did sort of force people to like, "What the fuck is Donovan talking about?" And then the hurdy-gurdy sort of had a slight... a slight uptick.

I mean, it is prohibitively expensive. I looked into hurdy-gurdys...

Rachel: I thought you might've.

Griffin: You know I looked into—you know I love a specialty instrument that I will play for like, one Adventure Zone song, and then put in the closet and never play again.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: Uh, the hurdy-gurdy is like... y'know, it's a complex instrument. It has the wheel, and it has these strings, and it has uh...

Rachel: How would you even like—the maintenance. Like, who—this is like—

Griffin: You have to take them to like, a hurdy-gurdy specialist. I think Fiddler's Green here in town has one that you can like, play there, and they can like, I think fix it for you. I was looking on their website, but they—I don't think they have any for sale.

But y'know, there's a handful of hurdy-gurdy players on YouTube who have like, hurdy-gurdy channels, and you go and watch them. But it's so niche, because of the price of entry, and because like... just nobody really knows about the hurdy-gurdy. But I think it is uh... I think it's—I just think it's amazing.

Rachel: Well, I'm glad you did this after your bell tower week. We're like, on a month of... [laughs]

Griffin: I could do a whole month of obscure instruments.

Rachel: Obscure instruments. Yeah.

Griffin: The uh... the name, 'hurdy-gurdy,' is thought to be onomatopoeic, just because of, back in the day, the sound that it would make as you had to crank it. Although, hurdy-gurdy or hurly-burly are also old English terms for like, commotion. So that could also be—

Rachel: Yeah, I was gonna say, I always thought it was a dance.

Griffin: Yeah, I wouldn't—I don't know what I thought it was before I knew it was an instrument. But uh, I think it's great, and also, uh, the comments I found on the YouTube video that I played the song from earlier are just some all-time greats, because again, it is everybody coming there from YouTube recommends. And it's like, a sad medieval tune, and so, I wanna read some of the comments, because they made me laugh so fucking hard.

Uh, "When thy Serf chooseth not to fertilize thy field, but to forsake thou and fertilize thy wife."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: "When thine liege lord takes 50% of thine crop yield instead of just 40%."

"It's like if a violin and a bagpipe had a daughter, but she was saddened by something."

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: And then, "So, the YouTube recommended has brought us all together again. Good to see you all."

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: Sweet. I love it, man. There's a genre of like, old, obscure, stringed instruments played by sort of weathered looking people that have the funniest fucking YouTube comments I have ever... I've ever seen. I saw one of uh, like a three-stringed like, very dark sounding, gothic sounding lute. One of the comments was like, "Other musicians: I have to check my tunes. This guy: I have to check my runes."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Anyway... so.

Rachel: Are you gonna make some memes, maybe? Seems like maybe you're gonna make some memes.

Griffin: Uh, I have no interest in creating anymore memes. The banana one was enough for me.

Rachel: You've retired.

Griffin: I've retired. I'm getting out on top. Fuckin'... I'm very uncomfortable with the energy I've created in the studio today... is...

Rachel: Is it big?

Griffin: Big. Like, uh, I was not aware of this until yesterday, when I saw that it was like, on Twitter. And people are saying it on Twitter, referencing the TikTok meme, referencing the inscrutable clip from the My Brother, My Brother, and Me television show.

Rachel: You're gonna be on uh, Reply All Yes Yes No, I bet.

Griffin: Oh.

Rachel: I bet that's the next step.

Griffin: I don't know if it's that big. It's weird to me, though! Why that? Why that?

Rachel: I mean, it's a good thing.

Griffin: It's good! I'm not—I'm not complaining. It's just—

Rachel: You're a funny guy. Everybody looooves Griffin...

Griffin: [snorts] What's your second thing?

Rachel: [laughing] Uh, my second thing is time travel.

Griffin: Oh yeah, baby! Are you kidding me!? [clapping] I'm gonna make Travis McElroy listen to just this segment of Wonderful. Travis gets irrationally fucking angry about time travel things in movies.

Rachel: Really?

Griffin: Oh my god.

Rachel: Oh, it delights me.

Griffin: Ask Tra—hey, everyone. Ask Travis his thoughts about Looper.

Rachel: [laughing] Forgot about Looper!

Griffin: And then strap in for the ride of your life!

Rachel: I mean, I have never been one of those people, let's just say, to really deeply examine a piece of culture in the way that Travis does.

Griffin: That's why I love you so so so much.

Rachel: [laughs] Which is probably why I like time travel so much! I don't care about the science.

Griffin: No!

Rachel: Don't waste your time.

Griffin: Don't! Don't waste my time!

Rachel: I mean, I enjoy it, alright? When you're watching Quantum Leap, for example, and he takes that string and creates a loop, and then balls up the string to explain how one person's life could touch multiple points—

Griffin: You love that.

Rachel: I love it. I do. I love that. But am I gonna sit there and try and figure out whether or not that makes sense? No, I'm not.

Griffin: No. No thanks.

Rachel: [laughs] Um, I don't—y'know, I'm here to say, I haven't figured it out. Alright?

Griffin: [bursts into laughter] She's been trying, folks. She's been trying. We have uh, a closet that's just full of like, there's a colander wrapped in tin foil with some batteries taped to it, and you said that that was your time—your time cap.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: And when you put that on, you could um... you said chronojump was the term that you used? But really, you just started like, sort of bunny hopping...

Rachel: I've tried different speeds in my car with different songs playing...

Griffin: Yep. You did 88. You did 33. You did, um... you did negative five. You thought if you went back—but then you—you... you've destroyed a lot of homes and houses.

Rachel: [laughs] Uh... I—I was sitting down to think like, really like, okay, obviously, I've talked about Quantum Leap. I love Quantum Leap. What other kind of time travel pieces of fiction and film are big for me?

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: There is a book I read, written in 1970, and my parents had it, and I don't want to say middle school, but middle school feels right, called Time and Again. And it was about time travel, but it was in that very, like, for the purposes of connection and romance kind of book.

Griffin: Oh! A real lake—The Lake House situation, okay.

Rachel: Yes. That's another one! I really liked The Lake House!

Griffin: [laughs] I'm not gonna—I saw it in theaters.

Rachel: [laughs] Another book I read came out in 2004. Time Traveler's Wife.

Griffin: Oh yeah.

Rachel: Made into a movie. Uh, that is actually written by, um, a faculty member at Columbia College in Chicago.

Griffin: Oh, interesting!

Rachel: Yeah. Uh, y'know, I briefly considered getting an MFA, and actually got into the MFA program there, and then didn't go, and I kind of regret it, only because she taught there and it would've been cool to have her as a teacher.

Um, Back to the Future.

Griffin: Got to.

Rachel: Got to.

Griffin: What's your favorite of the three?

Rachel: [sighs] I think the first one.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Yeah. I mean, the third one, I think, is underrated. Uh, definitely would not say the second one.

Griffin: Really?

Rachel: Yeah. Second one is just recycling a lot of the first one? I don't know.

Griffin: I like—the second one's my favorite.

Rachel: Really?

Griffin: Yeah. I just like all the future shit.

Rachel: Future stuff?

Griffin: The hover board future scenes. Both the race, uh, through town, and the like, car chase later on. Like, those were my absolute shit when I was a kid. My absolute shit.

Rachel: [laughs] Um, Bill and Ted.

Griffin: Okay. What do you think of the new one? Can I get your thoughts on the new one coming out?

Rachel: I mean, I don't know anything about it.

Griffin: You watch the trailer?

Rachel: No.

Griffin: Oh, okay. There's a trailer! You should watch it!

Rachel: Um, I've also—I'm not—I don't know much about Tenant, but I heard that Tenant has a time travel element.

Griffin: It's... yeah. I mean, it's got like a Christopher Nolan time travel element, which is like, nobody really understands what's going on. Like, time can go backwards for some people? I don't know. It looks wild.

Rachel: Um, some of the orig' kind of time travel phenomena... I mean, everything that I read said HUL's The Time Machine.

Griffin: Yeah. Got to.

Rachel: But they also—1843, even before that, Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol!

Griffin: Um... yeah.

Rachel: He's traveling to different times, y'know...

Griffin: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, for sure.

Rachel: That is time travel.

Griffin: Yeah. The Time Machine is pretty explicitly about time travel, though. That one's more about a spiritual journey into one's memories. Was it time travel, or did he experience—if you experience it in a dream, is it really time travel?

Rachel: Ooh.

Griffin: I don't think he could do—he couldn't interact with his past, right? So it's like... he couldn't change...

Rachel: Yeah. That's fair.

Griffin: ... time.

Rachel: That's fair.

Griffin: That's interesting.

Rachel: Mm. There is a lot written about time travel. [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah, I know.

Rachel: A lot of different like, theories and ways of describing it. A lot of like, speculation on whether or not it will ever be possible.

Griffin: Did your research into this fictional subject, uh, bring up Primer?

Rachel: No.

Griffin: Oh, okay. Primer is a movie, uh, that... it's like an indie movie that was like, critically acclaimed, because of its like, hyper realistic approach to time travel.

Rachel: Oh!

Griffin: Where it's like, a box that you get inside, and then you have to sit in it for like, eight hours. And then, when you get out, it's before you got in the box, and so, you can sort of like, manipulate the things that happen. And then, when you climb in the box, that version of yourself just like... now no longer exists, because—

Rachel: Ohh!

Griffin: It is a hyper convoluted, but like, almost iron clad... it's like somebody made a movie listening to people's complaints about like, causality and like, why time travel movies can't happen. Like, alright, motherfuckers, I'll make an extremely dry indie sci-fi movie.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: So it's like, almost un—it's unpalatable, but it's also super fucking fascinating.

Rachel: Yeah. So when I read about time travel, um, what I read was also pretty dry. And it was like, Scientific American talking about time dilation that you get from like, approaching the speed of light.

Griffin: Oh yeah. I guess Interstellar had that explicitly.

Rachel: Mm-hmm. So for example, um, the thing in Scientific American that I read talks about, y'know, if you left earth in a space ship, continuously moving at one G, you would begin to approach the speed of light. And as the ship continued to accelerate, it would come closer to the speed of light. And under that circumstance, a round trip to the center of our galaxy and back, a distance of some 60,000 light years, could be completed only in a little more than 40 years.

Upon arriving back on earth, the astronaut would only be 40 years older, while 60,000 years would've passed on earth. Um...

Griffin: Hurts your—hurts the old noodle to think about, eh?

Rachel: Yeah. Kind of hard to really get the brain around. Um, a lot of them just talk about this idea of, y'know, you were always moving at the speed of one second per second, but when you are flying or traveling, you can kind of... futz with that a little bit, with the time on the clock.

Griffin: It's unobservable. Yeah.

Rachel: But it's not like, going back to make sure that your parents fall in love.

Griffin: [laughs] Yeah.

Rachel: Which is what I'm interested in. [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah, sure, absolutely.

Rachel: Uh, read a little bit about wormholes. Again, don't understand it. Don't know what I'm looking at.

Griffin: Yeah, that's what—yeah. Once you get into string theory and shit, I'm like, nope! Bye!

Rachel: Uh, chaos theory, I do enjoy.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Y'know, that idea that like, a small change could impact things. I definitely... [laughing] In ninth grade, our math class asked us to pick some kind of theory and do a report on it, so I picked chaos theory, and then showed that clip from Jurassic Park.

Griffin: [claps] I was gonna say!

Rachel: [laughing] Did not do well. Did not do well on that report.

Griffin: No? That's a shame. Even with all the erotic tension between Jeff Goldblum and uh...

Rachel: You'd think that would've gotten me a few extra points.

Griffin: Yeah. Laura Dern. Oh my god, I can't believe I forgot Laura Dern's name for like ten seconds. Shame on me!

Rachel: Mm.

Griffin: Shame. Great shame to my house.

Rachel: Just put that poster back up on your wall of Laura Dern so you remember her forever.

Griffin: Well you made me take it down.

Rachel: Yeah...

Griffin: You said her shorts were too short.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I said, "Those are her Jurassic Park shorts. What's wrong with you?"

Rachel: Those are *the* shorts.

Griffin: Those are *the* shorts.

Rachel: Uh... yeah. So I—y'know, I don't have a lot to contribute to the science of this. I have not made advances in my own research in this direction. I don't know that I believe it will be possible in the way that I want it to be possible.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: I also don't know that I would really change anything, necessarily.

Griffin: No.

Rachel: Like, I still want to end up where I am now. Maybe I would like to like, have not eaten that meat that made me so sick at that barbeque. Y'know, but I don't know that I would—

Griffin: I don't know, man. The butterfly effect opens up some like, trolley problem writ large. Where it's like, every bad thing that happens after that, is it your fault, because you didn't eat that meat at the barbeque? I don't know that i would ever be able to rest.

Rachel: I also don't know if there is a particular time period, like... I don't have it in my head, for example, like, "Oh man, I'd love to go back, see some dinosaurs." Like, I don't know...

Griffin: No way! Are you kidding me? Scary and big lizards? I think I'm okay over here!

Rachel: I don't think there's a particular time period I'd really want to be at.

Griffin: No.

Rachel: Um... but man, I love—I love it in a movie. Love it in a TV show. Never saw Early Edition. Kind of like...

Griffin: Not really time travel.

Rachel: Not really time travel, but I like the idea of trying to put right what once went wrong.

Griffin: I remember the one that really blew me away was Prisoner of Azkaban, the third Harry Potter book slash movie.

Rachel: That came up when I was looking for like, examples in film and—

Griffin: It just—it has a twist time travel ending that is like, so satisfying, and like, really puts the rest of the book in perspective, and the rest of the movie in perspective. I remember being wowed and delighted by that as a child.

Um, yeah. Do you want to know what our friends at home are talking about?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Well, we got one here from Lauren who says, "When you're taking a walk around the neighborhood, pass an open garage, and the floral cottony smell of detergent wafts from the running washing machine and out through the garage."

Rachel: Oh my god.

Griffin: "Laundry smells so much better when you're not doing it."

Rachel: That is 100% true.

Griffin: That's very true. That's very good. I used to—man, god, I loved that smell as a kid. Seeing like, the steam come out of somebody's, uh, like, basement exhaust pipe in the dead of winter, and getting really close to it and smelling it... and then probably giving myself some sort of chronic condition, because of just how much I was huffing washing machine exhaust fumes.

Uh, Tia says, "Something I find wonderful is painter's tape. Peeling it off the wall to reveal a crisp, clean line of paint is so satisfying and just might be the best part of painting." Not just that, but when you can get—when we painted Henry's nursery in our old house...

Rachel: Ohh.

Griffin: I managed to like, peel off an entire wall, up over a door, like, in one single pull, even though it was multiple pieces of tape. Holy shit, that's satisfying. Wow, that's good.

Rachel: [laughs] I've been watching a lot of those videos on Facebook where people make art by putting tape down and painting around it. That's a nice video.

Griffin: Those are really popping off. Like, you make the moon by putting a circle of tape on a thing, and then painting around it. Yeah. Why are we... why are we seeing—is that viral? The idea of painting around tape?

Rachel: [laughs] I don't know.

Griffin: I didn't know that something that abstract could... anyway. Uh, thank you so much for listening to our little program. And thank you to Bo En and Augustus for the use of our theme song, Money Won't Pay. You can find a link to that in the episode description.

Rachel: Thank you, Maximum Fun, for hosting our show, and all the great shows that you can find on MaximumFun.org.

Griffin: Uh, yes. There's a lot for you to dig into.

I know this show is an upbeat show, but um, there's some horrible stuff happening right now that everyone should be paying attention to, and trying to find ways to help if they can. It is, y'know, not good to shut that stuff out completely. Specifically, the police shooting of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, which is infuriating, and just the latest in a string of police violence.

There are ways that you can support, uh, protestors on the ground, like the Milwaukee Freedom Fund, or supporting Black Lives Matter, and to not, y'know, completely turn away from that. Because it is as important as ever to find out what you can do to help.

Also, the California wild fires. There's no shortage of ways that you can help out with that. We'll have a link in the episode description of different sort of mutual funds, and other ways to give to communities in that area to support them.

But um, yeah. We would encourage you to help, because uh, it's... it is the right thing to do.

I think that's about it.

Rachel: Yep.

Griffin: And um... I sound really... gruff. Don't I? Sound like a real billy goat over here, don't I?

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: What do you want me to say in like, my cool voice? My cool—my cool, uh, shrunken nose meat voice?

Rachel: We are having a sale right now on Rice Krispies.

Griffin: [gruff] The Rice Krispies... have been... the prices have been splu—
slashed. On these crispy little guys.

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: \$4.99. How much does a Rice Krispie cost?

Rachel: [bursts into laughter]

Griffin: Probably not five dollars a pop. [laughing]

[theme music plays]

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