

00:00:00	Oliver Wang	Host	Hello, Heat Rockers. On the occasion of the 10 th anniversary of Kendrick Lamar's <i>Section.80</i> , we're bringing back one of our earliest episodes, recorded back in year one with jazz composer and pianist Kris Bowers, talking to us about this very seminal release by LA's own Kendrick. Hope you all enjoy.
00:00:22	Music	Transition	"Crown Ones" off the album <i>Stepfather</i> by People Under the Stairs. <i>[Music continues under the dialogue, then fades out.]</i>
00:00:29	Oliver Wang	Host	You're listening to <i>Heat Rocks</i> . I'm Oliver Wang.
00:00:31	Morgan Rhodes	Host	And I'm Morgan Rhodes. Each episode, we do a deep dive into a special album joined by a special guest. And this week, we'll be talking about Kendrick Lamar's <i>Section.80</i> .
00:00:43	Music	Music	"Hol' Up" from the album <i>Section.80</i> by Kendrick Lamar. <i>I wrote this record while 30,000 feet in the air Stewardess complimenting me on my nappy hair If I can fuck her in front of all of these passengers They'll probably think I'm a terrorist Eat my asparagus, then I'm asking her Thoughts of a young nigga, fast money and freedom A crash dummy for diamonds, I know you dying to meet 'em I'll probably die in a minute</i> <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i>
00:01:07	Oliver	Guest	<i>Section.80</i> was the debut studio album for Kendrick Lamar, released in the summer of 2011. Up until that point, the Compton rapper had built his reputation on a string of mixtapes going all the way back to 2003. But <i>Section.80</i> was the tipping point for his emergence on the national stage through songs like "Hol' Up," "Rigamortis," "Keisha's Song." These didn't just boost his popularity. They helped to shape our understanding of Kendrick Lamar's personality as an artist: someone who is introspective, perceptive, and more than a little eclectic. In writing about <i>Section.80</i> for <i>Pitchfork</i> , Tom Breihan said that it, quote, "Stands as a powerful document of a tremendously promising young guy figuring out his voice." <i>[Music fades in.]</i> Now, speaking personally, <i>Section.80</i> was certainly my introduction to Kendrick Lamar, especially when I first heard songs like "A.D.H.D.," which you're listening to in the background right now. And I thought, "Who the hell is this guy?"
00:02:02	Music	Music	"A.D.H.D" from the album <i>Section.80</i> by Kendrick Lamar. <i>Eight doobies to the face Fuck that, nigga, 12 bottles in the case, nigga, fuck that Two pills and a half, wait nigga, fuck that Got a high tolerance, when your age don't exist You're like whoa, whoa Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa</i>

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

00:02:19 Oliver Guest To talk about *Section.80*, we invited Los Angeles jazz pianist, composer, and arranger Kris Bowers.

00:02:26 Music Music "Forget-er" from the album *Heroes + Misfits* by Kris Bowers.

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

00:02:43 Morgan Host That song was "Forget-er," featuring Julia Easterlin, from *Heroes + Misfits*. It was that album, released in 2014, that introduced me to the music of Kris Bowers and, at a late-night show at The Bootleg Theater in Echo Park that, for me, sealed his genius. And I left there saying a few things, including what Thelonious Monk said, or Nat Coleman: "This guy is nuts."

[Oliver laughs.]

Kris Bowers was born and raised in Los Angeles, fed a diet of jazz and soul music as a young'un by his parents who encouraged him to flourish. He studied at LA County High School for the Arts and then took his talents to Julliard where he majored in Jazz Performance, going on to win the prestigious Thelonious Monk International Jazz Competition. He's toured with some greats and since then has been burning up the scene as a composer and a producer, scoring both Netflix's *Dear White People* and Amazon's animated adaptation of Ezra Jack Keats's *Snowy Day*, for which he won an Emmy this year. And while we were sleeping, he was doing other big things—like being on *Watch the Throne*, Nate Smith's *KINFOLK*, Richard Spaven's "The Self," and José James's "While You Were Sleeping." And a fire remix for Christian Rich's "The High."

00:04:05 Kris Bowers Guest He is a jazz wunderkind and an all-around cool kid and my homeboy, Kris Bowers. Thank you so much for joining us today. Oh, thank you guys. Appreciate that.

00:04:07 Oliver Host So, we're here to talk about *Section.80*. And in deciding, you know, which Kendrick album we thought you might pick, perhaps the most obvious choice would have been either *good kid* or *To Pimp a Butterfly*. But you went with *Section.80*. Why *Section.80*?

00:04:20 Kris Guest Well, um, it's funny. Morgan actually came to me with *Section.80*, I think specifically because I have this cover of "Rigamortis" that I put on YouTube—

00:04:27 Music Music "Rigamortis" cover by Kris Bowers.

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

00:04:43 Kris Guest That song and that album was my introduction to Kendrick Lamar. I remember my assistant, Sam—he actually wasn't my assistant at the time. He's just a family friend. He showed me the video for "Rigamortis" when it first came out, I think back—like you said, back in 2011.

[Oliver confirms.]

00:05:21	Music	Music	<p>And I immediately was so viscerally moved by his approach to lyricism and rhythm and the track was just really mind-blowing. And it was also funny enough that the track actually sampled a song that was written by a teacher of mine named Eric Reed. And so, it just kind of all felt very exciting. And so, I kind of became a fan instantly. “Rigamortis” from the album <i>Section.80</i> by Kendrick Lamar.</p> <p><i>(He dead, amen)</i> <i>That’s what they telling me</i> <i>Aim it at your celebrity, this is studio felony</i> <i>Ferragami so many and cool enough for the seventies</i> <i>Nigga, payback’s a bitch, and bitch,</i> <i>You’ve been living in debt with me</i> <i>Dead ‘em all and especially</i> <i>Leave a call on his mother’s voicemail</i> <i>That say that he rest in peace</i> <i>Bigger chopper, the recipe...</i></p> <p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i></p>
00:05:37	Oliver	Guest	<p>So, had you heard him on—you know—one of his gazillion mixtapes prior to that? I think <i>Overly Dedicated</i> had come out maybe the year before <i>Section.80</i> and, again, he had sort of slowly built a rep up the way a lot of artists did. It’s not like he came fully formed to the universe.</p> <p><i>[Kris confirms.]</i></p> <p>But, yeah, had you been—had you heard anything from him prior to that?</p>
00:05:53	Kris	Guest	<p>No, not at all. And actually—actually, no, that’s a lie. Right before I’d seen the video and heard that track, I did a show with Q-Tip. It was, like, a hip-hop festival in Brooklyn. The Brooklyn Hip-Hop Festival. And Kendrick Lamar was performing that day. And I remember walking through, and it was like daytime, so you know, usually you don’t pay attention to the artists that are there during the day. And so, we’re walking through, and a friend of mine was like, “Oh yeah, this guy Kendrick Lamar. He’s really dope.”</p> <p>And I was like, “Oh, okay. Cool. I’ll check him out at some point.” But yeah. That was—that was before he blew up. <i>[Laughs.]</i></p>
00:06:24	Oliver	Guest	<p>Did he strike you as an inherently LA artist? As someone, yourself, who grew up in Los Angeles?</p>
00:06:29	Kris	Guest	<p>Yeah. I think that became more prevalent maybe in <i>good kid, m.A.A.d city</i>, given that it sounded very like—just threw me back to my youth in L.A. and like Dr. Dre and Snoop Dog and that whole like kind of era of West Coast hip-hop. And then also even more so with <i>To Pimp a Butterfly</i>. Like, it just reminded me a lot of all the Funkadelic stuff and Parliament, and I think a lot of stuff that, again, I grew up listening to and kind of being around. I think that was kind—those two tracks really made it feel like an L.A. artist, or make him feel like an L.A. artist.</p>
00:07:03	Morgan	Guest	<p>That was gonna be my question. What did you—besides jazz and obviously soul—what kind of hip-hop were you listening to, growing up? Or what were you attracted to, hip-hop wise?</p>

00:07:12 Kris Guest Hip-hop wise? Growing up, my cousin's—my cousin's a rapper. His name is Murs, and so he was—he was definitely—although he was a family member, I was also a fan of him growing up. And he and his brother really introduced me to a lot of stuff.

00:07:25 Oliver Host So, we gotta pump the brakes for a quick sec.

[Kris chuckles.]

00:07:29 Morgan Host Because that's awesome, number one. Shout out to Murs! Shout out to Murs.

[Kris agrees.]

00:07:31 Oliver Host And I'm guessing you're probably, what, maybe half a generation younger than him?

[Kris confirms.]

00:07:43 Kris Guest So, at what point did you—at what point did you realize or were told, “Oh, by the way, your cousin Murs is a really well-known rapper out of Los Angeles?”

Pretty early. Like, my—his brother, Nate, he used to pick me up from school sometimes and, like, took me to concerts and he always would kind of like—you know, banging that into my head, essentially. Kind of like playing me a bunch of Murs's stuff and kind of really making—making it known that my cousin was doing really dope stuff. And it wasn't until—my parents were pretty strict about listening to explicit stuff when I was younger.

[Morgan affirms.]

Anything that I got that was, you know, “parental advisory” they would immediately take from me.

[They chuckle.]

00:08:14 Oliver Host And like—and buy me the clean version.
Even when it was family?

00:08:15 Kris Guest *[Laughing.]* Oh yeah, for sure.

[Morgan and Oliver laugh.]

00:08:24 Music Music So, I actually didn't see a Murs concert until I was probably like 16 years old, *[chuckling]* 17 years old. So, that was pretty funny. “Everything” from the album *Murs for President* by Murs.

*They call me crazy
At least I'm not getting punked out on the daily
And when I look back, I wouldn't change a thing at all
Where do you think I found the strength
That I'm speaking to y'all?*

*I take everything
Your hopes and your dreams
And your hate and your lies (and your lies)*

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

00:08:37 Oliver Host Bringing this back to Kendrick, do you think of him as being a very quintessential L.A. artist? Or someone who maybe exists outside of any one city, besides the fact that he obviously references L.A. all the time.

[Morgan affirms.]

But in terms of something about his artistry or his musicality, do you—is—do you tie that in with something being as inherently L.A. or does he exist in sort of his own kind of bubble of Kendrick Lamarland or something like that?

00:09:01 Kris Guest Yeah. I think a bit of both. You know. I think maybe the heavy L.A. aspect is just the production and the tracks and the way that they sound and the way that he sits on top of that and, you know, the way that obviously that he raps. But I think, as far as his artistry, I think that that itself is much bigger than this L.A.

[Oliver agrees.]

00:09:21 Music Music “Chapter Six” from the album *Section.80* by Kendrick Lamar.

*Riding with them boys and girls and we're high
(and we're high)*

*All we want to do is have a good time
(have a good time)*

*Young, wild, and reckless is how we live life
(how we live life)*

*Pray that we make it to twenty-one
(one, one, one, one)*

Whoa, whoa

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

00:09:42 Oliver Host So, off this album—alright? Off of *Section.80*, what—too you—is the fire track? What is the one will always get you hyped?

00:09:48 Kris Guest Uuuh, how about—it's tough. I guess “hyped,” quote/unquote? I would say—*[chuckles]* I would say “Rigamortis” just ‘cause like it just—it baffles me every time just how ridiculous it is. But as far as what hit me the strongest when I listened to the album was “Keisha’s Song,” just ‘cause, like, it was—again, something—to see an artist, especially a rapper, be so raw and so emotional and so honest? That was something else that made me feel like, “Wow, this is somebody to really pay attention to.” ‘Cause I feel like that’s missing in a lot of art, especially in rap. Because it’s all about optics. It’s all about saying how much I have and what I’ve done and all that kind of stuff.

And for him to really bare his soul and be unafraid to like—um, yeah, I think it’s on that track that he’s kind of crying. At least—and he’s definitely done that in other tracks, if it’s not that track. And to hear that is just reassuring as an artist that it’s okay to be honest and that if you don’t maybe adhere to the, again, optics of being great, that you have these other moments of insecurity or sadness or whatever, that that’s okay to actually share in your art. You know? And I think that’s something that’s lacking today.

00:10:54	Music	Music	<p><i>[Oliver confirms.]</i> “Keisha’s Song (Her Pain)” from the album <i>Section.80</i> by Kendrick Lamar.</p> <p><i>Just give it all to her daddy but she don’t know her father, that’s ironic See a block away from Lueders Park I seen the El Camino parked And in her heart, she hate it there But in her mind, she made it where Nothing really matters, so she hit the back seat Rosa Parks never a factor when she making ends meet</i></p> <p><i>Fancy girls on Long Beach Boulevard</i></p>
00:11:13	Oliver	Host	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> I think what I love about this is that not only does this song stand on its own for all the reasons, Kris, as you’re laying out. But then Kendrick comes back an album later and references the same song.</p> <p><i>[Kris affirms with a chuckle.]</i></p>
00:11:37	Music	Music	<p>It’s sort of—and sort of breaking the fourth wall in a sense, ‘cause he’s basically responding to the criticism that some people had about him seeming kind of condescending or a bit of a mansplainer, I guess, on “Keisha’s Song.” And then that works its way into “Sing About Me.”</p> <p>“Sing About Me, I’m Dying of Thirst” from the album <i>good kid, m.A.A.d city</i> by Kendrick Lamar.</p> <p><i>You wrote a song about my sister on your tape And called it Section.80, the message resembled “Brenda’s Got a Baby” What’s crazy was, I was hearing about it But doubted your ignorance, how could you ever Just put her on blast and shit Judging her past and shit Well, it’s completely my future Her nigga behind me right now asking for ass and shit</i></p>
00:11:55	Oliver	Host	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> It’s like he’s having this conversation, and I think something about just being willing to acknowledge that maybe mistakes were made, even though he gets to control the discourse in a sense. But still, I mean, how many artists back-reference their own songs in that sort of introspective and being open to some level of criticism kind of way. I mean, this really goes back to the point you were making.</p>
00:12:16	Kris	Guest	<p>Yeah! For sure. I think it shows such self-awareness that—and unafraidness to be able to do that. It’s really impressive.</p>
00:12:24	Music	Music	<p>“Sing About Me, I’m Dying of Thirst” from the album <i>good kid, m.A.A.d city</i> by Kendrick Lamar.</p>

*And I'm exhausted, but fuck that "Sorry for your loss" shit
My sister died in vain, but what point are you trying to gain
If you can't fit the pumps I walk in? I'll wait
Your rebuttal a little too late
And if you have a album date, just make sure I'm not in the song
'Cause I don't need the attention, bring enough of that on my own
And matter fact, did I mention...*

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

00:12:42 Morgan Host

I see that a lot in his career in general—that he accepts criticism but he's also very aware of his own flaws. I think in one song he says, you know, "People wonder how I talk about money, God, and clothes, and hoes all in the same track."

[Kris chuckles.]

So, he's aware that there's a little bit of a dichotomy, you know, in terms of theme, that he goes back and forth. And I like that self-awareness. I have never heard anyone go back to a song *[chuckling]* that they did before and reference it. So, this is new for me. Certainly not in a way that's—that allows for mistakes. If someone goes back, they're like, "Oh, I was dope on that song."

[Kris laughs.]

"Remember that song? I was so dope on that." This is—

[They laugh and agree.]

00:13:22 Kris Guest

"Remember that jam? That jam was hot." I've never heard anyone say, "I might have gone too far." You know what I mean?
[Inaudible].

It's also funny, going back to what you said about him referencing all these different things in one song, it's funny to see even that the album cover of *Section.80* has like—you know, has condoms and weed and then bullets and a Holy Bible. Like, you know, it has all of these things that seem juxtaposed against each other, but it's like, "No, this is one person that actually really heavily believes in or needs these different things." You know? And it's pretty awesome to show that.

00:13:52 Music Music

"Ab-Souls Outro" from the album *Section.80* by Kendrick Lamar.

*See, a lot of y'all don't understand Kendrick Lamar
Because you wonder how I could talk about
Money, hoes, clothes, God, and history all in the same sentence
You know what all them things have in common?
Only half of the truth, if you tell it
See, I spent twenty-three years on this Earth searching for answers
'Til one day I realized I had to come up with my own
I'm not on the outside...*

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

00:14:08 Oliver Host We will be returning to our rerun episode of Kris Bowers talking to us about *Section.80* by Kendrick Lamar after a brief word from some of our sibling Max Fun podcasts. Keep it locked.

00:14:19 Music Music
00:14:22 Promo Clip “Crown Ones” off the album *Stepfather* by People Under the Stairs.
Music: Sophisticated electronic/string music.

Teresa McElroy: *Shmanners*. Noun. Definition: rules of etiquette designed not to judge others, but rather to guide ourselves through everyday social situations.

[Music stops.]

Travis McElroy: Hello, internet! I’m your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa: And I’m your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis: Every week on *Shmanners*, we take a look at a topic that has to do with society or manners. We talk about the history of it. We take a look at how it applies to everyday life. And we take some of your questions. And sometimes, we do a biography about a really cool person that had an impact on how we view etiquette.

[Music fades back in.]

Travis: So, join us every Friday and listen to *Shmanners* on MaximumFun.org, or wherever podcasts are found.

Teresa: Manners shmanners. Get it?

[Music ends on a bright chord.]

00:15:04 Promo Clip **Music:** Light, chiming music.

James Arthur M.: Hey, folks! It’s me, James Arthur M., host of *Minority Korner*—your home through these bewild times for weekly doses of pop culture, history, news, nerdy stuff, and more through a BIPOC, queer, and allied lens.

[Scene change.]

Speaker 1: Yo, we have been in a panorama for a whole year.

James: I—! The Pon de Replay has been going for...

[They laugh.]

James: We’ve been in a Ponderosa for a year.

[Scene change.]

Speaker 2: Wonder Woman doesn’t even get to fly her own invisible jet. That was another thing. I was like, “This is your jet!”

[Scene change.]

James: Think about the war on drugs. We must think of it as a war on Black and brown and poor people.

Speaker 3: Yes.

James: To only uphold the caste system of America.

[Scene change.]

James: So, join me and some of your new BFFs every Friday here on Maximum Fun, to stay informed, empowered, and have some fun. *Minority Korner*. because together, we're the majority.

[Music fades out.]

00:15:51 Music Music
00:15:53 Oliver Host

"Crown Ones" off the album *Stepfather* by People Under the Stairs. And we are back here with a *Heat Rocks* rerun. This takes us all the way back to year one, where we had jazz composer and pianist Kris Bowers talking to us about Kendrick Lamar's *Section.80*, which turns ten years this week.

00:16:19 Kris Guest

I'm wondering, where do you see *Section.80* stacking up within his broader catalogue? I mean, now—you know—we have four or five albums deep to sort of compare it with. Where does this album stand relative to the other ones?

I think it's one of those things that is, like, separate from the other ones. Right? I think it's like—it's his, in my mind, freshman album and it's kind of like his first statement. And so, therefore I can't really put it up against these other albums 'cause, like, this is somebody that was—you know, when it's your first album, this is your—everything that your entire however many years you lived in one album. And then the albums that come after that are like the things that you've thought about in the last year, two years, or how you've grown since then. And so, I think it's definitely up there very high, but—again—separate from all of the other ones, just because I feel like you can't compare them.

00:16:56 Music Music

"Poe Man's Dreams (His Vice)" from the album *Section.80* by Kendrick Lamar.

*But anyway, this for my niggas
Uncles, 23 hours sending me pictures
I want you to know that I'm so determined to blow
That you hear the music I wrote
Hope it get you off Death Row
You came home to a pocket full of stones
A Metro PC phone, then you went back in
So, when I touch the pen, the pen is in my view
I'ma get it right, just so you*

*Smoke good, eat good, live good
Smoke good...*

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

00:17:19 Oliver Host

Where were you in your life when you first encountered this album? What was going on for you?

00:17:23	Kris	Guest	<p>Well, so 2011, I think it was right before—before I had won the Monk competition. So, I was—I was in Julliard. It was probably my second year of Masters, maybe finishing my first year of Masters, and kind of trying to figure a lot of stuff out. You know? ‘Cause like going into your first year of Masters, you’re about to face the real world pretty soon and had I not won that competition, there were a lot of things that I was—I was very fearful about having to really try to figure out.</p> <p>So, yeah, that’s kind of where I was. It’s just like most college seniors or whoever’s in your last year of school trying to—just freaking out about the real world coming in on you. <i>[Chuckles.]</i> Closing in fast.</p>
00:18:03	Music	Music	<p><i>[Morgan agrees.]</i> “Fuck Your Ethnicity” from the album <i>Section.80</i> by Kendrick Lamar.</p> <p><i>I’m tired of y’all, ‘cause everybody lied to y’all And you believe it? Recognize them false achievements It’s treason and I’m Tylenol, I knock out when you knock it off Knock on the doors of opportunity, I’m too involved I’m not activist, I’m no Einstein, before calculus I was kicking in math Dropping that science like an alchemist, and I be kicking that ass</i></p>
00:18:23	Morgan	Host	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> We ask this of all our guests, because obviously there are great jams on great albums, but there’s always something that goes—you know—unclaimed, unhyped.</p> <p><i>[Kris agrees with a laugh.]</i></p>
00:18:42	Kris	Guest	<p>Okay? Unclaimed jams. So, we have to ask you, what’s the unclaimed--what’s the sleeper jam on this album that people just really don’t know is dope, but it actually really is?</p> <p>I don’t know, that’s tough. I might be biased, because I feel like all of the tracks are dope and I can definitely—every single track, when it comes on, I’m like, “Oh yeah. I remember listening to this very vividly.” But maybe—I don’t know, maybe like “Kush & Corinthians.” Maybe that’s one that people don’t reference as much that I still think is a really dope track.</p>
00:18:58	Music	Music	<p>“Kush & Corinthians” from the album <i>Section.80</i> by Kendrick Lamar.</p> <p><i>As I open this book and then burn up some of this reefer My plan is to figure out the world and escape all my demons I’m dying inside, I wonder if Zion inside the heavens A condom, a Rollie, pain, a fat blunt, and a MAC-11 That’s all I see in my life and they tell me to make it right But I’m right on the edge of Everest and...</i></p>
00:19:14	Oliver	Host	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> So, what is it about this song?</p>

00:19:16	Kris	Guest	Well, firstly, hearing it again, I have to take back what I said about him not being an L.A. artist—or me not thinking of him as an L.A. artist, sonically, until later albums. ‘Cause that sounds a lot like FlyLo and like a lot of other stuff that’s very L.A. And yeah, I just think just the way that the track is made and the way that he raps on the track is, again, very reminiscent of FlyLo and Dilla, the way that he lays back and the way that the—the beat, like, really lays back on itself is really dope.
00:19:46	Morgan	Host	<i>[Oliver agrees.]</i> And then again, the battle between the spiritual and the secular. <i>[Kris agrees with a laugh.]</i>
00:19:53	Oliver	Host	Kush and Corinthians. Here we go again. I just—I just got that!
00:19:57	Music	Music	<i>[They cackle.]</i> “Kush & Corinthians” from the album <i>Section.80</i> by Kendrick Lamar. <i>... they said it would be I wonder, when I die, will he give me receipts? I wonder will the eyes of the Lord look at me? Look at me, look at me, I’m a loser, I’m a winner I’m good, I’m bad, I’m a Christian, I’m a sinner I’m humble, I’m loud, I’m righteous, I’m a killer What I’m doing is saying that I’m human Now people just ride to it, ride to it...</i>
00:20:15	Morgan	Host	<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> Let’s talk about “Rigamortis.” It’s one of my favorite tracks. My favorite track is actually “Kush & Corinthians.”
00:20:22	Kris	Guest	Ah, nice!
00:20:23	Morgan	Guest	But “Riga”—so thank you for shouting that out.
			<i>[They laugh.]</i> But “Rigamortis” is probably my second favorite and that’s in large part to the horns. <i>[Kris hums in agreement. Music fades in.]</i>
00:20:37	Music	Music	The horns, to me, are the star of the story. “Rigamortis” from the album <i>Section.80</i> by Kendrick Lamar. <i>Got me breathing with dragons I’ll crack the egg in your basket, you bastard I’m Marilyn Manson with madness Now just imagine the magic I light to asses Don’t ask for your favorite rapper</i> <i>(He dead) yes, sir (Amen), church (He dead) I killed him (Amen), bitch</i> <i>And this is rigor mortis...</i>

00:20:53	Morgan	Host	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i></p> <p>And once I realized what he was talking about, what he's really saying. "Then I'm out here just like killing MCs, you're dead. I'm deading you out here." Then the horns to me make it a battle rap. It's like—it's almost like he could be walking into a boxing match that way.</p>
00:21:08	Music	Music	<p><i>[Volume increases.]</i></p> <p><i>... get busy on many MC</i> <i>Really ballistic, anybody can see</i> <i>Any assistance, everybody deceased</i> <i>Some persistence, recognize I be</i> <i>Really too vicious, the permanent beast</i> <i>And the demolition breaking up the street</i> <i>Better partition, better dot your T</i> <i>And I gon' mention how the far you see</i> <i>Putting my dick in the rap industry</i> <i>Everybody bitching, getting mad at me</i> <i>Recognize Kendrick in the battery</i> <i>And I'm charged up, and the catastrophe</i> <i>Is charged up...</i></p>
00:21:23	Morgan	Host	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i></p> <p>What I love about your reimagination of it is that it changes the mood and makes it more—to me, more contemplative, that little bit of melancholy. It's elegance that you add to it.</p>
00:21:35	Music	Music	<p>"Rigamortis" covered by Kris Bowers.</p>
00:21:49	Morgan	Host	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i></p> <p>I wanna know more about your decision to cover it and your thoughts about how you wanted to arrange it.</p>
00:21:55	Kris	Guest	<p>Yeah, so, originally, a friend of mine—the guy who actually shot the video, Lucas Alvarado, he and I had been talking about doing some sort of cover and for me it's very—I didn't really wanna cover something that just happened to be, like, in the top ten charts that week or, you know, something that would hopefully, easily give me views or whatever. I just wanted to pick something that actually spoke to me. And, again, because that was my—'cause at the time, Kendrick was one of my favorite artists and that was my favorite track of his, or at least the track that introduced me to him. I felt—it was a perfect track. And the fact that Eric Reed, my teacher, had composed the track that he sampled.</p>
00:22:35	Music	Music	<p>"The Thorn" from the album <i>The Next Phase</i> by Willie Jones III.</p>
00:22:48	Kris	Guest	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i></p> <p>And as far as the contemplative approach—you know, I think that's—for me, that's always there in all of Kendrick's more, like, bravado-type tracks. You know? Any track that he's talking about how great he is, I think there is this underlying—<i>[chuckling]</i> and I might be projecting it, but I think there's this underlying humbleness or underlying like—almost like poking fun at people that do that. And so, I think that's something that has always interested me</p>

about him, 'cause it's like he can say that, "I'm one of the greatest rappers alive," and be undeniably correct about that. But at the same time, I feel like he is so humbled by just the art of rap in general that he would never get too bigheaded, if that makes any sense.

00:23:32 Music Music

[Morgan agrees.]

"Rigamortis" from the album *Section.80* by Kendrick Lamar.

*... yup-yup (Amen), I know
(He dead) For sure (Amen), amen
Got me breathing with dragons
I'll crack the egg in your basket, you bastard
I'm Marilyn Manson, don't ask for your favorite rapper
(He dead) Yup-yup (Amen), I know
(He dead) For sure (Amen), amen*

00:23:47 Oliver Host

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

So, Chris, if you'll entertain a brief tangent—there is definitely, I think, a subgenre out there that you could describe as jazz covers of hip-hop songs and/or the samples that were used in them.

[Kris chuckles.]

And I'm sure that certainly, you know—part of it is that, you know, jazz musicians just grow up listening to a lot of music and if you have been alive for the last 40 years, you have listened to hip-hop to some extent. I imagine though there is also pressure, especially on jazz musicians—given the market for jazz, right? Which is very niche, to put it politely—that in order to be relevant, shall we say. And I'm putting—people can't see this, but I'm putting "relevant" in scare quotes. To be "relevant" to younger audiences, you have to make a nod to hip-hop or you have to pander to somehow—by making sort of cover songs that people can recognize as, "Oh! He's doing Pharcyde's 'Passing Me By' or he's doing the Quincy Jones loop behind 'Passing Me By.'" Something along those lines.

00:25:01 Kris Guest

And I think for you, as someone who's trying to make it in this business, as someone who is trying to make it in—you know, with jazz, does that pressure exist? And how do you balance out that tension behind, on the one hand, paying homage to the music of what you grew up with, the music that you loved, but doing it in a way that doesn't seem too obvious or too easy, in a way? If that makes sense?

Yeah! Totally. I think—I think yes and no. Firstly, I think when you look at somebody like Kamasi Washington, another L.A. artist—he's kind of proven the fact that there is a market and a viability for somebody that's just playing pure jazz to actually be accepted and celebrated by young people, because his stuff is not really him covering anything, it's just—you know, just straight up intense jazz that these young people are listening to. But then at the same time, I also think that, you know—Marcus Miller told me once that he compared some of these things to the fact that back in the day, when his parents went to go see a Broadway musical, they could

then go down to The Village Vanguard and hear a band play those same songs in sort of a more abstract way.

And the thing about that is that, like, if they had just seen that Broadway musical, they could—they knew the melodies. They knew the songs. And so, therefore, they could tolerate somebody kind of stretching that to a crazy extent. And I feel like that's one of the things that a lot of aspects of jazz education is missing, because—you know, we might learn these jazz standards that are very fun to play and very important to learn and so on and so forth, but—you know, my little brother who's about to be 21 years old didn't grow up to listening to "Stella by Starlight."

[Oliver laughs.]

So, therefore, no matter how I play it—no matter—even if I put a bunch of, you know—like, put a beat to it and all that kind of stuff, that that is not a song or a melody that he can instantly recognize. But if I play, you know, "Hotline Bling" and then start to mess around with it, it's the same thing in my opinion as somebody taking, you know, "I've Got Rhythm" and messing around with it back in—back in the day, because it's taking a popular song and then taking it and just stretching it out and doing whatever you want to it as a—as a jazz artist. Yeah.

00:26:49 Morgan Host

I think that's part of the sound of L.A., is that—our tendency to put a lot of genres together on one song. We see this evidenced clearly in *To Pimp a Butterfly*. You have a lot of jazz there, but then you also have, like, George Clinton. And then you also have, like, Thundercat. But then you also have, like, Bilal. And you also have, like, Ron Isley. And I think the thing is that there hasn't been—we are genre-agnostic, right? We put a lot of things together, but jazz keeps floating up in these L.A. conversations, particularly because of Kamasi and because of yourself.

00:27:29 Kris Guest

How do you feel about jazz and hip-hop and the melding of these two things in a lot of new releases?

Yeah! I think it's kind of just the natural progression. You know? When I listen to Kendrick, it reminds me of jazz—even outside of the songs that have an obvious jazz influence. Like, the way that he—the way that he floats over the bar line sometimes, the way that he decides randomly that he wants to add this other element and, like, layer his voice with another—with his voice with an effect on it or something like that. Like, it's very—it's very similar to the way that jazz musicians kind of are playing within the form but at the same time disregard the form completely. You know? And I think it just makes sense that he would be attracted to jazz and those two things would come together.

00:28:21 Music Music

And, at the end of the day, I think jazz artists and jazz musicians and jazz music is the foundation of *[chuckling]* pretty much everything that comes out of America, you know? And so, therefore like it—yeah, it just completely makes sense. For sure.

"Blow My High (Members Only)" from the album *Section.80* by Kendrick Lamar.

Wonder what's behind them Ray Bans?

*Eyes of a coward, I understand
Niggas like to gossip like bitches
Sip Dom Perignon, when we finish, we say*

*R.I.P. Aaliyah, R.I.P., yep
R.I.P. Aaliyah...*

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

00:28:35 Oliver Host There's certain jazz artists who get described as "sounding like jazz," but usually that either means that they use a lot of jazz loops or that they're too eccentric for anyone to have a better verb—or adjective, I should say—to apply to them. So, in other words, it gets applied a little bit sloppily. I'm wondering, for you Chris, does Kendrick sound like someone who understands—has a jazz sensibility, of sorts? And if so, what does that even mean?

00:29:02 Kris Guest Yeah. Uh. I definitely think so. I would compare it to this story that Wayne Short had told me once, where he said that apparently Miles Davis's bodyguard was an ex-boxer. And they were having a conversation about boxers and this bodyguard said that he felt like younger boxers had less moves and more predictable moves, because they worked out listening to hip-hop or listening to R&B or listening to, like, a much simpler music.

When his era or his generation listened to jazz while they worked out and because of that, that just influenced a different approach to rhythm and a different approach to—you know, jazz has a such a syncopation to it and a disregard for the norm that I think that's kind of the biggest thing that I hear in Kendrick's music. It feels very much like somebody improvising over a form and that's not afraid to impose other things over that—over that harmony or go off on a small tangent and then still come back to the form. Or do these things that are—yeah, just for lack of a better term, very jazz-like. You know?

[Oliver agrees.]

00:30:16 Music Music And I think that's the thing that I hear in his lyricism.
"HiiiPower" from the album *Section.80* by Kendrick Lamar.

*And I want everybody to view my autopsy
So you can see exactly where the government has shot me
No conspiracy, my fate is inevitable
They play musical chairs once I'm on that pedestal
Frightening, so fucking frightening
Enough to drive a man insane, a woman insane*

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

00:30:33 Morgan Host So, if you had to describe—we ask this of all our guests as well. If you had to describe *Section.80* in three words—*Section.80* the album in three words—what would they be?

00:30:45 Kris Guest Hmm. I'd say honest, emotional, and honest again.

[They chuckle.]

I know that's cheating, but yeah, it's just really—Kendrick is in general such an honest artist and I feel like that's so lacking and it's one of the things that speaks to me the most about his artistry, that I feel like it can't be—you know—ignored. *[Chuckles.]*

[Music fades in.]

00:31:12	Oliver	Host	I'm just glad you didn't say "jazzy," 'cause that would have been a little—a little—a little too on the nose!
00:31:15	Kris	Guest	<i>[Laughing.]</i> That's true!
00:31:16	Music	Music	"Ab-Souls Outro" from the album <i>Section.80</i> by Kendrick Lamar.

*My innocence been dead
So, the next time I talk about
Money, hoes, clothes, God, and history all in the same sentence
Just know I meant it and you felt it
'Cause you too are searching for answers
I'm not the next pop star, I'm not the next socially aware rapper
I am human motherfucking being over dope-ass instrumentation
Kendrick Lamar
Now fuck 'em up, Terrace (Soul)*

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

00:31:40	Morgan	Host	That'll do it for this episode of <i>Heat Rocks</i> with our special guest, Kris Bowers. His most recent release is <i>Heroes + Misfits</i> .
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[Theme song fades in.]

00:31:52	Kris	Guest	Thank you so much for coming to be with us and we want you to let people know where they can find you. Thank you so much. Yeah, you can find me online. My website is just KrisBowers.com . That's Kris with a "K." And on social media it's just KrisBowersMusic on all the different social medias.
00:32:02	Music	Music	"Crown Ones" off the album <i>Stepfather</i> by People Under the Stairs.
00:32:03	Oliver	Host	You've been listening to <i>Heat Rocks</i> with me, Oliver Wang, and Morgan Rhodes.
00:32:07	Morgan	Host	Our theme music is "Crown Ones" by Thes One of People Under the Stairs. Shout out to Thes for the hookup.
00:32:13	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.
00:32:20	Morgan	Host	Our senior producer is Laura Swisher, and our executive producer is Jesse Thorn.
00:32:25	Oliver	Host	We are part of the Maximum Fun family, taping every week live in their studios in the Westlake neighborhood of Los Angeles.
00:32:35	Sound Effect	Transition	Cheerful ukulele chord.
00:32:36	Speaker 1	Guest	MaximumFun.org .
00:32:37	Speaker 2	Guest	Comedy and culture.
00:32:39	Speaker 3	Guest	Artist owned—
00:32:40	Speaker 4	Guest	—audience supported.