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John Moe: Hey, it's John, and before we begin, I wanna remind you that we are in the 2025 MaxFunDrive. It's a special time of year. It's when we celebrate you, our listeners. We offer special bonus content for all the MaxFun shows, including *Depresh Mode*. We offer unique, special thank you gifts, including some really cool new ones this year. Those thank yous are for contributing to the show. The only way this show exists is from listener membership—people giving 5 bucks a month, 10 bucks a month, 20, whatever makes sense for you.

We need you to become a member or upgrade or boost your membership. You can even pay in one lump sum for the year if you want to, instead of monthly. Or you could pay monthly; totally up to you. Just go to MaximumFun.org/join. They'll walk you through how to do all this, and you could do that all while you listen to this week's episode. It's super easy. Now on with the show.

A note to our listeners: this episode contains mention of suicide.

Our show is about open, honest, hopeful, and healing conversations about mental health. We at the show believe that learning more about the human mind and the many ways it can get complicated, that's a good thing to do—a good, enlightening path to follow. We believe in presenting new information, new insight, new techniques and breakthroughs. But we also believe in just flat-out talking about mental health journeys.

It's easy to feel alone in this world, especially when something kind of difficult is happening, and especially if your brain gets a little complicated sometimes. Our show tells you that you are not alone. Any scary thing that you're going through is something that someone else has gone through already. The more we talk, the more we realize we're all on the same team, the better. We'll meet another teammate today.

The name of our show? It's *Depresh Mode*. I'm John Moe. I'm glad you're here.

Music: “Squid Ink” from the album *is* by the band My Morning Jacket.

Say what you say, mean what you mean

Day after day, living the dream

Hour after hour, love every bit

(Music fades out.)

John Moe: That's the band My Morning Jacket with “Squid Ink” off their new album *is*. Jim James on vocals, there. He's the lead singer, lyricist, founder of My Morning Jacket. *is*—spelled in all lowercase—is the band's 10th studio release. They have sold a lot of records; pretty well known for live performances too. They've sold out Madison Square Garden. They've been on *Saturday Night Live*, played a four-hour set at Bonnaroo in a torrential rainstorm. That's one that people still talk about.

I feel a little mixed, actually, talking about all of Jim's achievements and his band's achievements, because—as we learn in this interview this week—he's had a bit of a tough relationship with the concept of achievement in the past. He's also dealt with depression for many years, and he is a recovering alcoholic. But Jim James has put in a lot of work on his mental health. He's tried a lot of things, and he's been fortunate to have had some strong results. He's gonna talk about all of that in this interview. And for now he's feeling pretty good.

Transition: Spirited acoustic guitar.

John Moe: Jim James, welcome to *Depresh Mode*.

Jim James: Thank you so much for having me.

John Moe: I want to talk about you and your mind, but first I wanna talk about the new album. Why is it called “is” in the lowercase?

Jim James: You know, I just started seeing this word kind of pop out at me. You know, it's obviously a word we all use and see many, many times every day, but you don't usually see it by itself. And I just kept having this interesting phenomenon where it just kept popping out at me all the time as I would read or think about things. And this album, the process was a really long and winding process, and I kept having this kind of hit from the universe or whatever anytime I was trying to understand it or like seek an explanation for it. I just kind of kept getting this hit that it is what it is. You know? Like, just let it be what it is. Like, just stay present and just listen to the music, play the music. And it's gonna be—

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It is what it is, you know? And I feel like we had a really beautiful experience this time of really, really trying to step back from our opinions on the music or our agendas and just let it speak and then let it shape itself. And eventually, it will; it always does. That's what music does. It kind of shapes itself. We're just here to kind of help it. Yeah. Something about that is—you know, it's so simple. It almost became like a symbol or a number or something. And I love seeing it by itself.

And the reason it's lowercase is just a visual. There's something about that visual. I love the line with the dot on top of it; it almost looks like a simple human figure or something, you know? And I've always loved the letter s. Because sometimes when you have an I uppercase, it kind of can look like an L or something like that, you know? So, I really like the way that it looks when it's in the lowercase. And I kind of always write in lowercase. I don't really use

capitalization or things like that when I'm writing—unless if the computer just auto corrects it; sometimes I really don't care. But I like lowercase stuff.

John Moe: Is that typical of your creative process to kinda—not to sound too mystical—but wait for information from the universe as to where you're being guided with the creative work?

Jim James: Definitely. Yeah. But it's also been a battle, because—talk about mental health. Like, I've always placed far too much emphasis on trying to find love for myself through the music and through these external validation sources. And I've tried, really—and I'm proud of everything I've done. And I'm—you know, I don't have any regrets, and life has been the way it's been and all that stuff.

But I've just found the more I've worked on myself, the more I've tried to love myself and stay present, the more—as I look back—I see what a desperate ego battle I was waging my entire life of, *(in a mocking, dopey tone)* “Oh, maybe I can finally get people to love me, if only the music is this or that. Or if only I do everything with the music. I've gotta produce it; I've gotta play it; I've gotta write it; I've gotta sing it. I've gotta—” You know? And I just kind of saw a lot of the time I was really getting in my own way when— Yeah, just kind of almost like I was trying to play all the positions on the team and coach the team all at once, you know what I mean?

And it's like you can't really be the best thing you can be if you're trying to do too much. But you know, whatever. I mean, again, it is what it is, and I have no regrets.

John Moe: *(Chuckling.)* It is!

Jim James: I have no regrets, but—you know, it's just—it's interesting, as you go through life, what you learn.

John Moe: And depression's been with you for a long time, correct?

Jim James: Oh yeah, absolutely. Yeah.

John Moe: It seems like a real recipe for depression, what you're describing. Because, you know, if you're going after this perfectionist ideal, and you're trying to be all things to all people and good at everything, you're never gonna measure up to that. Like, it's impossible. So, you're always going to feel disappointed in yourself.

(Jim agrees.)

Yeah. What did mental health mean to you growing up?

Jim James: Well, it's so interesting. I mean, it's like I've always had this sense of like—some kind of like— Yeah, I mean, as a kid, obviously I didn't know the word depression. I didn't really know what that was, but I've always—I've had this sense that I just didn't fit in, and I

just didn't belong on this planet. And I feel like, as I learn more about my family history, like— You know, there's histories of depression in my family, and my great grandfather was a musician, and his name was James too. And he committed suicide a long time ago. And so, I kind of found these traces of, you know, depression in my family and in my genetics or whatever.

And I feel like, as I slowly came into the consciousness of an adolescent or a teenager, I just felt so eaten alive by it almost. And at that time, grunge was hitting really big, and Nirvana came out, and I fell in love with Kurt Cobain and his whole thing, you know. And it's like the alchemy of what he was doing with his depression really spoke—you know—obviously to myself and so many others.

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And I think, you know, getting into music around that time, it definitely saved me. And I've had a lot of friends who've taken their own lives. And I think, you know, there's this fine edge of circumstance or destiny or whatever you wanna call it that, obviously, some people find the path that eventually can lead them out of the depression, but other people don't. You know? And then they don't make it out of there.

It's such a complex topic. But one thing I think that is so important and why I wanted to talk to you is I think there's all— It's kind of all of our duty to normalize mental health struggles, to normalize depression, to let people know they're not alone. You know? So, many people deal with depression. So many—you know, like let's talk about it and get it out there and find the best way we can help people. So, I'm glad that people like you are helping to normalize this discussion.

John Moe: Yeah. Well, yeah. I mean, I lost my brother, who was afraid to talk about what was going on with himself. He felt like it was his fault that he was depressed, and he died from that.

Jim James: Yup. Yup. I'm sorry.

John Moe: And it seems like you've known some people as well. When did you identify this feeling that you had? When did you say, “Oh, this is something. This is a condition called depression. This is something that other people deal with. This is something I can seek treatment for”? How old were you at that point?

Jim James: Definitely in that kind of like 12/13/14-year-old age. 'Cause I had several friends at that time who were being put on medication for their depression and dealing with various treatments—that seemed kind of wildly unsuccessful when we were kids, for them. But I kind of knew about that and saw firsthand, through their experiences, what they were going through. And I—yeah, that was when I kind of became aware of it. And also, as you—honestly, as we read about Kurt Cobain's struggles and saw his struggles and kind of began to learn about, okay, there's this thing called depression. It's—you know. So, I don't know what year I—how old I was when I first went to a counselor, but somewhere in there in high school. Probably junior/senior year or something like that.

I was always afraid of medication, because I saw what it was doing to my friends. But I was trying to go to counselors or therapists, you know. And really, the way that I felt like the most successful way we were all working it out was in music. 'Cause I feel like we would get together, play. You know, we were really living for that feeling of transmuting this depression into these sounds, you know, that seemed—at least in my reflecting back on it—the biggest form of healing that we had at our disposal.

John Moe: How old were you when Kurt Cobain died?

Jim James: I was— I'm terrible with time and math. (*Chuckles.*) I think I was like probably a...

John Moe: April of '94, I believe.

Jim James: Yeah. So, I would've been a sophomore in high school.

John Moe: Okay. I mean, was that hard? That you had fallen in love with this guy's work and this music, and then to have that happen?

Jim James: Oh god, it was devastating. Yeah. 'Cause it was like—you know, we always thought that he would make it through, you know? 'Cause it's almost like you're programmed in so many ways with this kind of Disney brain. You know, where you think, “Oh, there's gonna be a happy ending to the story. Yeah. We're in the hard part now, but there's gonna be a happy ending.”

And in some ways I feel like— This is another thing that I really wanna talk about, especially with suicide and stuff. 'Cause I'm raised Catholic, and there's always this big thing. You don't talk about suicide. If somebody commits suicide, they're going to hell, and this is like a terrible sin and all this stuff. And I really could not disagree with that more. 'Cause I feel like we have to have compassion for people who get to that point where they feel like they've gotta leave this realm. I feel like we obviously want to help people find the method to help themselves, so they don't have to do that. But if that happens, it's like that's something that we need to look at with compassion and healing and forgiveness and—

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—you know, really try to find a way to do healing work, energetic work, whatever it is, to try to find the spirits of those people and really tell them that we love them, tell them that they are forgiven, that they're not—you know—trapped in some false version of hell or whatever that people put out there.

But yeah. I mean, when Kurt was gone, I think sadly that—and obviously, don't blame him for this or whatever—but I feel like that opened a door to a lot of people where they're like, “Whoa, there's this option that we can get out of this place. 'Cause this place doesn't feel good, you know? And whoa.” You know, it kind of almost didn't hit people before. And you know, you looked—at least, I looked at somebody like Kurt Cobain, and I was like, “Oh my god. Like, he seemingly has it all.” You know, he is got this career that anybody would want.

You know, he's this brilliant songwriter; he's married; he's got a child. You know, like all of these things on the surface level. And I would think like, “Wow, like how could he not be happy?”

But I think that was one of the first times that it kind of hit me, this external validation thing. Like, it's the oldest cliché in the world, but you have to find a way to love yourself. It doesn't matter how much external validation you get from the world; if you can't find that path to loving yourself, you really can't find peace. You know? And whatever that path looks like—you know, whether that's treatment and medication or your spirituality, whatever it is for a person that helps them get to that place.

John Moe: More with Jim James of My Morning Jacket in just a moment.

But first, welcome to week two of the MaxFunDrive. This is our final week of the drive and our final episode during this year's drive. So, we need to hear from you now to join *Depresh Mode*, join MaxFun, or boost or upgrade your membership.

Producer Ragu Manavalan has, once again, stepped over to the other side of his microphone and joins me on the air. Hey, Ragu.

Ragu Manavalan: Hey, John. How's it going?

John Moe: I'm good.

Ragu Manavalan: *Depresh Mode*, like all the shows here on Maximum Fun, relies on membership in order to exist. That's where the vast majority of our operating budget comes from: people like you giving 5 bucks a month, 10 bucks, 20. Whatever you can make work, whatever makes sense for you. It's the only way we're able to keep this thing going and bring you interviews like this one that we're having with Jim James.

You know, there are so many times when I listen to this show, and I think to myself, “I had no idea they were going through something like this.” But of course they were going through something. All of us are on a mental health journey. That's why this show is so important. And if it's important to you too, please help support us.

John Moe: We're asking you to help us so we can keep going. And all you need to do is go to MaximumFun.org/join. Find a level that works for you. And while you're there, shop our really fun selection of thank you gifts, including bonus content. This is the fun part. This is where we put the “fun” into MaxFunDrive. (*Chuckles.*) If you join even at the \$5 level, you get access to hundreds of hours of MaxFun bonus content, including our new offering “*Depresh Mode: The Game Show*”, which is lots of silly fun with some favorite MaxFun hosts. We'll tell you more about that in a little bit.

Ragu Manavalan: There are so many ways you can help out. You can join to start a new membership at whatever level is comfy. You can upgrade your membership to earn some new thank you gifts. You can boost your membership by a few bucks to make our show that

much stronger. And you could even prepay, like you mentioned. People had written in the past to say they wanna support the show for the year in one transaction.

We here at Maximum Fun listen. So, now you can even give your contribution for the year all at once.

John Moe: Before we get back to my conversation with Jim James, let's check in with one of our listeners. And as we listen, that website one more time—and I will make you memorize it—MaximumFun.org/join.

Sarah: Hi, my name's Sarah. I'm in Chicago, Illinois.

John Moe: And Sarah, why do you donate to *Depresh Mode*?

Sarah: I think the main reason is because it's really helped me to listen to it, and I want other people to also have the chance to listen to it. And as you say, the show only happens when we donate, so I am donating. (*Chuckles.*)

John Moe: Do you have favorite episodes that have stuck with you?

Sarah: I really liked the Maria Bamford episode. There was one with a gymnast or a skater. Gracie? Gracie Gold!

John Moe: Gracie Gold, yeah, Gracie Gold.

Sarah: Gracie Gold. Really loved that one.

John Moe: What was it about that one that stayed with you?

Sarah: I think the fact that she was a young woman and sort of already coming to terms with herself. Because I'm someone who didn't really start figuring my stuff out until my 40s, so I have a lot of admiration for a young person who's already working on their mental health. (*Laughs.*) I have to put the Joel Kim Booster episode on the list too. I'm sure a lot of people say that.

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That was very powerful. And I didn't even know who he was the first time I heard him on your podcast. And then, you know, much later I was watching one of his shows, the one with Maya Rudolph. I was like, "Wait a minute." (*Laughs.*)

John Moe: Yeah, Joel Kim Booster—who's a comedian, an actor, and a writer, and very funny, very like—does a lot of comedy. And we talked to him when he was really at the bottom of a well. He was in really rough shape. Did you ever hear the follow up interview that we did I with him when he was feeling better?

Sarah: It did! Yes. Yes. It was really great to have that sort of check back in.

John Moe: Why would you recommend to other people that they become members of *Depresh Mode*?

Sarah: I think because I would tell them that there really is something for everyone. And you don't have to come to *Depresh Mode* looking for anything specific. That you will likely find relatability, even where you don't expect it, and that it really is for a very broad audience and not just for people who are sort of actively talking about or thinking about their mental health.

John Moe: Well, Sarah, I'll tell you what: we're gonna keep making the show. And thanks for your help in getting other people to become members of the show so it can be strong.

Sarah: Sure. Can I say one more thing before you stop recording?

John Moe: Yes, please.

Sarah: Okay. I think another thing that I enjoy about the podcast is that you have a knack for getting people to share without being too—I don't know; pushy is what comes into my head, but that's not the right word. But you have a knack for drawing out their experiences in a way that makes them seem really real and in a way that seems like they're comfortable sharing. And you know, I listen to some other podcasts too, and the ones that I enjoy the most are the ones where you sort of feel like you're—you know, you feel like you know the people. Obviously, I don't know you or the people you interview, but you sort of feel like you're part of that community because of the vulnerability and the way that people are sharing.

So, I think it's a rare talent that not everybody can do, to sort of bring that out in people and make them feel safe enough. So, anyway, thank you. (*Laughs.*)

Transition: Spirited acoustic guitar which fades into a slower, gentler rhythm.

John Moe: Back with Jim James of My Morning Jacket. He's been talking about his depression and his need for achievement, for validation in his life and in his career.

Well, I'm curious about the balance of the music and the validation for you. Because you talk about, you know, being with your friends, playing this music. And you know, music—especially when you're very talented—I imagine it provides all sorts of relief and release, and it can be really wonderful. At the same time, music is a business, and you're keeping an eye on achievements and record deals and how big of a venue you're playing and record sales. And that must be feeding that need for validation, that external validation, that achievement hunger that a lot of artists fall into—especially artists who deal with depression. Because it's a way of sort of trying to fill a hole that is otherwise unfillable.

So, how did that work out for you as you grew older, and music became sort of the center of your world, to balance that validation hunger with just the joy of music?

Jim James: Oh god, I could never fill that hole. Nothing was ever good enough. You know, it's like the—and these are things I'm just realizing in the last three or four years of my life. But it's like when I look back on my life, I was running and trying to escape. I'm an alcoholic; I was drinking, you know, so much. Just trying to—my whole spirit was kind of like, “Get me off this planet. Like, I don't want to be here.”

But I also wasn't to the point of—other than a couple times I almost got there—but most of the time I wasn't thinking about suicide as an option. But I was like, “I also wanna numb out.” So, drinking was my main thing. And yeah, in that quest for external validation, it's not like I wouldn't have fun, or I wouldn't be excited when we would have some cool thing happen to the band, but also it was never enough.

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‘Cause I’m like, *(in a dopey voice)* “Well, yeah, this is okay. But we're not, you know, as big as Nirvana was, or we're not selling as many and as many records as Nirvana did, or—” You know, it's like all these comparisons that you're comparing yourself to when you should be happy for the things that are just happening to you, you know?

'Cause every life is different. Every life is special. And I've been so fortunate in so many ways. You know? And I've had such a blessed life in so many ways. But when you're trapped in the jaws of depression and comparison, it really is—nothing can fill that hole, you know? And it's like I realized too, just in the last few years with my particular kind of genetic predisposition towards alcoholism and stuff, that I'm a very functional alcoholic, where I would never drink before work. I'd never drink before a show or before the studio, but it was always kind of hanging over my head of I couldn't wait to get drunk the next time. And I'm capable of ingesting vast quantities of alcohol, genetically. You know, I kinda have the superman alcoholic type where it seems like, you know, the more you drink, the more and more super you're getting.

You know, obviously that's not what you look like on the outside. *(Chuckles.)* But the thing I didn't realize though is like, when I wasn't drinking, all of the low-level stress hormones pumping through my body, all the stuff that is kind of also pushing me further into the depression. You know, it's like I didn't— You know, they say alcohol's a depressant, and somewhere in my mind—I'm sure I didn't not believe that, but it always kind of lifted me up in this false way that, when I wasn't drinking, the chemicals from not drinking were furthering the depression.

And it's like, yeah, no matter what we did, no matter what success we found, in my mind I was never doing good enough. I was always a failure. You know, like it's like, *(mockingly)* “Yeah, this is nice, but you know, it sure isn't as good as Nirvana did.” Or whatever. You know, not even—it wasn't always about Nirvana, but that was always kinda my benchmark.

John Moe: It's a high benchmark.

(Jim agrees and they laugh.)

And if you had gotten to that point, you would've been like, “Well, why don't we sell as many records as—” whoever sells more than Nirvana.

Jim James: Totally, oh yeah. There's no end. Yeah. (*Mockingly*) “Well, it's not as good as the Beatles!” You know, whatever. Yeah. There's never any end when you're in that frame of mind.

John Moe: So, then how did the depression evolve? It sounds like the substance abuse disorder was raging. Did the depression deepen, or was it sporadic? How did it present itself in those—through your 20s and 30s?

Jim James: You know, it just kind of comes in waves. Because I've also been fortunate to have so many wonderful friends and so many wonderful band mates and people that I've met along this musical journey. So, by no means when I paint the picture am I trying to paint a portrait of like my life was just a total hellscape or whatever. You know? There's also tons of beautiful moments in there and good moments. And again, like when we were kids, the music itself is this release, is this relief. You know? So, I really, truly feel like the music kept me alive through all of that time.

'Cause I love recording and writing, and so I'm kind of always working at home. And music and I have a really beautiful relationship, one-on-one—just myself and the music. So, that's always feeding me. And then I've been so blessed to have My Morning Jacket now for over 25 years, you know, as that's rolled and shaped. You know, the concerts obviously are such a huge transmutation of energy. You know, going onto that stage and taking that energy and using it to flow through, and like the force that happens of all the people in the room—of the crowd and the band and me—and it's like we're all one, and we're all transcending, you know? And like, all of time and space is forgotten in those moments. You know, like those things. I mean, that...

You know, so there's that. And also, like all these other wonderful musical projects I've been a part of and even just jamming and playing with people, you know. This flow of music through my life truly has fed and sustained me. So, it's like—it really carried me through all the waves of ultra-crazy, unsustainable, high highs of getting so drunk or so fucked up. You know? And those high highs followed by the super low lows and those up and down waves. I feel like, through it all, music was kind of the light beam that rode through the middle of it all and kept me going.

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John Moe: Mm. Live music or studio music as well?

Jim James: Oh, everything, yeah. Recording—I love recording so much, you know. And I love playing live and just listening to music too, you know—just sitting, listening to music, taking a walk with music, putting on a record at home, bathing in the music. Yeah, anything related to music. It kind of all wraps in there in the same way for me.

John Moe: Has therapy been part of your world?

Jim James: Oh yeah, therapy has been huge for me. I mean, I've had a number—I don't know, probably 20 or 30 different therapists over my lifetime from the time I was a teenager 'til recent years. But then I got so fortunate in the pandemic. I had switched from another therapist, and I was looking again for a new therapist. And this is something that I try to tell people when they're asking me about finding a therapist. I wanna encourage people—anybody who's listening—to remember that finding a therapist takes some work. And you have to be willing to set aside some time for yourself to get on *Psychology Today* or get on BetterHelp.com or— There's a lot of really cool new websites too that you put in your zip code and find therapists in your area. Most therapists will do a 15-minute consultation for free. You know, so you can kind of see if it'll work.

John Moe: Speed dating version, kind of.

Jim James: Yeah, kind of. Yeah. But you kind of have to do that, you know. 'Cause I— You know, a lot of therapists will do sliding scale. You know, there's so many complex things with money and insurance and even finding a therapist that you vibe with.

But so, in the pandemic, I just hunted and looked and searched and did—I don't know—10 or 15 15-minute consultations, you know? And I was really interested in EMDR therapy, so you can go on the EMDR main site and search in your area. And I found this therapist named Tim that I really connected with on our call, and we started working together. And Tim—you know, I guess whenever I started with him—in the pandemic, so it's been four years or so now that we've been working together. And I feel like, you know, it took me that long to find him. You know, it took me 42 years of my life or whatever to finally find.

So, I guess I'm saying that to people to like—don't give up hope if you're having a hard time finding a therapist that you vibe with. Sometimes it just takes a while. Yeah. And Tim has led me through a really beautiful kind of combination of EMDR combined with parts work, and that has just been—I can't even tell you how helpful it's been for me.

John Moe: Well, let's talk a little bit about the EMDR, which is—we've talked about it on the show before, but if you don't know what it is: Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing. It's a psychotherapy technique, and a lot of it is aimed at getting at traumatic memories, like identifying a traumatic memory and kind of working through how you see that and how you frame that and how you deal with that in the present day.

Would you like to share, Jim, what memories you were trying to get at with your EMDR work?

Jim James: Oh god, I mean—so many. Basically—yeah, the way I describe it to people is, you know, you're working with your therapist, and you are trying to take— 'Cause I think we all know the feeling if you're triggered, and you have some trauma come up for you; it can kind of take you over and kind of overlay on your reality this huge feeling that you're kind of back in the trauma. And the way Tim explained it to me that was really helpful—and the way I perceived it as we worked through it—is you're using this left-to-right either eye movement or tapping you can do. You can tap on your chest. And you're basically trying to tell your brain to send the trauma back into its proper memory folder in your brain so that you still

remember the trauma, but you remember it almost as a black and white photo versus this full HD color movie with sound that plays when you don't want it to.

So, you have to go into the trauma and replay it in your mind. You know, you have to be kinda willing to go there. But as you're doing that, you're doing the tapping or you're doing the eye movement. And in my experience, it's really wild, 'cause it's like—you know, you start thinking about the trauma, and it's all very powerful and very colorful and loud.

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But as you kind of process it, slowly the color starts to leave it, and slowly the sound starts to drain out, and slowly it gets less and less powerful until it is more just like a photo in your memory box, you know? And it's like— Because when we have normal memories, they just kind of become like, you know, just another black and white photo in the memory drawer. And you pull it out and look at it, and you're like, “Oh yeah, I remember that time we went to the beach. That sure was fun!”

But for most of us, unfortunately, the trauma is stored in the wrong part of our mind as this kind of survival mechanism. And we need to reprogram our mind to kind of get that trauma back and just put it in the memory drawer.

John Moe: More with Jim James from My Morning Jacket in a moment.

First, let's hear from Eric, one of our listeners.

Eric: I am a member, because I like being able to support shows directly that I enjoy—including yours, of course, and other shows on the Maximum Fun Network. So, I have been a member off and on for a while. I'm lucky enough to be on at this point. So, I enjoy supporting directly and not through any sort of podcasting conglomerate or anything like that. I know from my history with Maximum Fun that my donation goes directly to the shows and keeps them going.

John Moe: Is there an episode that has really stood out for you, that kind of sticks in your mind a little bit?

Eric: I think actually—I will say that the Jamie Lee Curtis episode was one that stands out to me in my memory. That was a really informative, really kind of deep, lengthy interview that I enjoyed—hearing her story and seeing where she's been.

John Moe: Yeah, that one kind of stood out for me too. And I was a little surprised when I found out that we had landed her. I mean, not that we're not a very important podcast, (*chuckles*) but that's such a big star. But I find that a lot of times people really are drawn to the idea of sharing their stories. And you know, even if they're super famous and are in the public eye, they're eager to tell their stories. And I think that's kind of what the show's all about.

Eric: Yeah, I would agree. Even if the stories don't directly correlate with something I've gone through, you know, we are storytellers by nature. And I really like to hear what's going on in other brains than mine. I'm stuck with the one I have. And so, I'm lucky to be able to hear some about some of the other ones in the world.

John Moe: You know, during the MaxFunDrive every year, I try to just search my brain for a unique way to pitch. (*Chuckles.*) A unique way to kind of make the argument that people should give. You know, I've said it's less than a cup of coffee a month, or it's this, or it's that. Or I try to offer prizes, or I try to get kind of emotional on it. Can you think of an angle? How would you pitch to people that they should become members of the show?

Eric: I can tell my story, and I can say that I get a tremendous benefit over knowing that I have a direct contribution to being able to hear the things I want to hear on the shows that I like. I would say that I would encourage anyone to join if they've ever listened to any episode and thought, "I need to tell someone about this."

It's great to tell someone about an episode that you love, a show that you love. But for a very little sacrifice on your part, you can push that needle towards continuing to make that show, and you can continue to get the content that you like, get the shows that you like, and not only share it with your friends but know that you're a part of making them happen.

John Moe: You put it very, very well, my friend. Eric, thanks so much for talking with us.

Eric: Thank you again, John.

John Moe: Thank you, Eric. Again, it's the MaxFunDrive, and we are asking for your support. We're just gonna pause this interview with Jim James for a moment and ask for your support to keep the show going. Keep it strong.

We rely on our members, and we want to hear from you right now at MaximumFun.org/join. Start a new membership, or you could upgrade or boost your current membership. We really need it.

I'm here with producer Ragu Manavalan.

Ragu Manavalan: Hey, John.

John Moe: Hey!

Ragu Manavalan: At any level—5 bucks a month and up—you get access to all the bonus content from across the Maximum Fun Network, including our new special, "*Depresh Mode: The Game Show*". John's the host, the quiz master, the quiz ruler. We got Justin McElroy from *My Brother, My Brother and Me*, Hal Lublin from *Tights and Fights* and *We Got This*, and senior producer Laura Swisher.

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John Moe: Yeah, we had a lot of fun with this. It's definitely, you know, a lighter tone than usual.

Ragu Manavalan: A different side of *Depresh Mode*, I would say. But still a fun one, you know.

John Moe: It's a fun one, and it's pertinent to mental health and to having a brain. We play a round of “Antidepressant, Pokémon, or Minnesota State Fair Food”. That one's trickier than you'd think. I give a name; you have to decide which one is which.

We have one where the contestants need to tell renowned mental health scholars from members of Parliament Funkadelic—also trickier than you think. A bunch of games. Look, mental health can be a heavy topic, but it's okay. It's wonderful, in fact, to have a little fun now and then. We do that on our show, and we do it on “*Depresh Mode: The Game Show*”, which is our bonus content.

Ragu Manavalan: It was a lot of fun to be a part of and listen to. I make a small but important cameo—I would say—in that episode.

(John agrees.)

At 10 bucks a month, you get the bonus content across the Maximum Fun Network, and you also get our limited addition *Depresh Mode* enamel pin. It has a sad face, an okay face, and a smiley face. So, you know, if you're having a bit of a rough day and someone asks you how you're doing, you can just point to the pin! You don't even have to say something. There are certainly days I wish I had a pin I could point at when I needed to say how I was feeling that day. So, now you can do that.

John Moe: I hear from people all the time saying *Depresh Mode* has helped them understand mental health better, helped them feel less alone, more connected to the world. We love making that happen, but we can only do it with your help. And you know, if this show has helped you, if you know that it's helped someone else, we need your help to keep going. MaximumFun.org/join.

Ragu Manavalan: Like Eric mentioned—our listener—I always walk away learning something about someone else, which helps me learn about me, things that I didn't even know that I was dealing with that I got to learn about by listening to these episodes, by listening to your interviews with our guests. One of our listeners had told us that if you want the work to continue, you have to support it. You know, if this was a band you like, you would buy tickets; you would buy merch. If it's this podcast, please become a member.

John Moe: If you're not sure whether to become a member, you know, try it out. Give 5 bucks a month, see how it goes. I know you'll enjoy the show more knowing that you made it happen. You're gonna get that pride of ownership.

Ragu Manavalan: If you're already a member, first of all, thank you. We'd love to have you boost your membership a few dollars or upgrade. It's all at MaximumFun.org. You can see

some really great gifts that are new this year. The Beach for the Stars towel, or the bucket hat, a cooler tote bag—perfect for the beach.

John Moe: We'll get back to our interview with Jim James. But as we do, hop on MaximumFun.org/join and help us out. And Ragu, thank you.

Ragu Manavalan: Thank you, John.

Transition: Gentle acoustic guitar.

John Moe: We are back and talking with Jim James from My Morning Jacket. He's been talking about the EMDR therapy sessions that have helped him work through a lot of trauma and mental health issues. He's also done some work with Internal Family Systems therapy. He'll explain what that's all about.

Jim James: And one part of that too, that I found really helpful, was kind of going into parts work where you take time to deal with the part of yourself that experienced that trauma. So, you know, let's say it was the 12-year-old version of you or the 5-year-old version of you, and you find that— You know, again, you're with your therapist, working, and you go into a quiet place in your mind. And you create a safe space in there, and you invite that part of you to come forward. And you kind of—you know, there's so many different ways to do it. But for me, I kind of hold them and just give them the ear and the kind of hug that they need—that they never got—and tell them, “Hey, you're safe to tell your story here.”

And a lot of times Tim and I will kind of joke about it, and we'll say like, “Well, we need to find this part a new job.” You know, like, this part did such a great job when they were five. You know, they kept us alive. And you say that to the part too. You're like, “Thank you so much. You kept us alive, but now we're not five anymore. We're so grateful to you. Let's find you a new job.” You know, like let's like—whatever it was that you responded to the trauma, and you kind of went overboard with it, now that we're kind of working through that and moving that out of our system, let's find a new job.

Like, my quality control guy is one of my parts I've worked with a lot. And he's been like this kind of merciless, you know, “it's never good enough” kind of figures. So, we've worked with him a lot to kind of say like—

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“Hey, like your quality control is great. You know, let's use your talents to help us make things as good as they can be. But let's let go of all of the negativity. Let's go of all of the self-criticism and all these things that we really don't need to use anymore. Let's really use your skills to everybody's benefit.” And it's really just done wonders for me. And I really—working with the drunk part of myself was a really huge revelation for me. 'Cause I sat and listened to his story, and he was like—he's like, “Well, you always wanted to escape, and all I know how to do was give you this alcohol. You know? And so, I was just like trying to help you escape with this alcohol.”

And we've really had this beautiful moment of like listening to him and being grateful to him and being grateful to the alcohol in a way. 'Cause, again, without that, I don't know if I would've made it. I really don't think I would've. So, we've had this part of like really helping him heal that, and now he's more of like the magician or the healer of the group. And he's learning new ways to heal us and learning healthier ways to help us be magical or escape if we need to for a while. You know, like find a healthier way to do that.

So, all of that said, it's like—for me, it's been a slow series of doorways, of like going through that kind of therapy for a year or two. And that opened the door to me being able to quit drinking, you know. And that doorway opened. And then combining that with various psychedelic healing experiences, you know, have also kind of added into just me being able to take a step back and really learn how to be compassionate to myself and love myself. And obviously it's a lifelong journey, you know, that I'm still on. But I don't feel like I was even on the path before. You know? I didn't even have the capability of even loving myself.

And I feel so fortunate to at least be on the path and have more compassion for myself where—especially when things go wrong—now, instead of just tearing myself to pieces and eviscerating myself and going and getting drunk like I used to, I can kind of hold space for myself, be compassionate to myself, kind of work with it more and try to find a more positive avenue for it all.

John Moe: Does that hold up when you're on tour and when you're, you know, away from a therapist's office? And you know, I imagine there's plenty of substances and plenty of booze being offered when you're out on tour. Does it—how hard is it to kind of hold up that work that you're doing?

Jim James: Oh god. I mean it definitely gets challenging sometimes. You know, you have rough days, or you haven't slept, or you haven't—yeah. Touring. I always kind of joke with touring, it's like I wish they could get the teleporter up and running. 'Cause like the shows part of touring I love so much, but the travel part and the logistical part is so rough sometimes on your system. But I'm really lucky on tour though, 'cause all the guys have been doing a lot of work on themselves, and everybody's sober now, and everybody is really supportive and really encouraging.

So, we're really lucky there that we have a really great built-in system, you know, where we can talk to each other, and we can kind of share these thoughts or these stresses and try and work through these things—especially when somebody's having a tough day or something's gone wrong.

John Moe: I've read that you meditate and that you had previously been involved with transcendental meditation. Do you still practice that?

Jim James: I've tried lots of different forms of meditation. I really enjoy the mantra-based meditation, and I learned that through learning TM. And then I've kind of tried breath-based meditation, and I've tried all sorts of meditation. Right now I'm working with a mantra that Ram Dass talks a lot about: om, mani, padme, hum. You know, where you just kind of sit there and close your eyes and just kind of keep repeating this mantra—you know, repeating it fast or slow or in different ways. There's lots of different mantras available, if people wanna

read up about that stuff. I think it's a really great way to calm your mind. And there's a really great—

I listen to this guy, Michael Singer, a lot. He wrote this book called *The Untethered Soul*, and he's got a really great podcast. He's kind of like a Ram Dass sort of figure for me. He's kind of like the old, hippie brother I never had. You know? He just kind of makes sense to me, and I really enjoy hearing what he says.

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And he has this beautiful thing where he talks about meditation, and he talks about— You know, if you think of the mind as a lake, the natural state of the mind is a smooth, calm lake. But all of our thoughts are like leaves and rocks falling into the lake, and they're disturbing the water. And we think we can help it by jumping into the lake and like trying to get all these leaves and rocks out. But we're really just disturbing the water more. And when you meditate, the goal is trying to kind of get back to that smooth, calm water place. And the mantra gives you this vehicle to kind of calm your mind and give it a break from all the thoughts that are racing.

And TM has a really cool way of putting it where they're like, “The time when you've stopped thinking the mantra and before your mind has started up again with its bullshit is the time when you've kind of transcended, and you're at the same level of consciousness as a deer or a drop of water or a blade of grass.” You're kind of at this base level of a fundamental consciousness that we all have, we all share, but our mind goes haywire all the time, and it's going through all this stuff. And so, I really feel like meditation is like a good reminder of that kind of pure consciousness that's kind of behind everything that is kind of the... kind of the canvas on which everything is painted, kind of the frequency that we all share.

John Moe: Do you still deal with depression? Is it still part of your world?

Jim James: It definitely comes back in, but I've really noticed this new sense of gratitude in its place. 'Cause I really feel— It's interesting. The holidays—I think everybody would agree with this. The holidays are a really interesting mirror for us all, right? 'Cause we—it doesn't matter what religion you are, what you celebrate or don't celebrate. The holidays kind of bring up this reflective time for everybody. And I've found in previous holidays... I have a wonderful family here in Kentucky, and we have beautiful holiday activities that we do that are so fun and so beautiful. But then I kind of notice that I come back home by myself, 'cause I'm usually single. I'm usually kind of living alone. And most of my life I kind of would spiral into this “woe is me” kind of pity. (*Mockingly.*) “I'm so lonely, nothing's ever gonna change.” And kind of spiral into this depression, which would usually lead to drinking.

But I found this year especially, kind of same thing: I had some beautiful family time, some really great stuff, and I came back home alone. But instead of kind of spiraling into this “woe is me” thing, I really just felt this profound gratitude for what I do have. It's like somehow the lens was focused— Because I feel like when you're depressed, your lens is focused on what is missing. You know, what is not—what is wrong with life. And you really can't help it if you're in the grips of this depression. You know, you're like, “Oh, I'm missing this. I don't

have this, I don't have this, I don't have this.” But somehow, if you can start to shift the lens—

And I experienced this really profoundly maybe for the first time this year, where I was like, “Wow, I'm warm. The electricity is working. You know, like I've got food in the refrigerator. I've got a family that loves me.” You know? Like, kind of seeing all these things that I do have instead of focusing on the things that I don't have. And that's not easy. That's not easy to do. And so, I felt this kind of profound gratitude. And I've kind of been looking at Jim as a separate being almost. There's like my true soul, and then there's this character, Jim, that I'm playing this lifetime. And I've always hated Jim. I've been so mean to Jim and so hard on Jim. And now I'm trying to try the opposite approach where I'm very kind to Jim, and I'm trying to take good care of Jim, and I'm trying to love Jim. I'm trying to be good to him.

And so, we've had some of these beautiful moments where we're like, “Wow, look at this process that we've—” I mean, “—this progress that we've made. Like, look at this, Jim. Like, you're sitting here; you're still alone. You're still like not in a relationship or anything, but you're also feeling this contentment and this kind of gratitude for what you do have, where in the past you couldn't see it. You were blind to it, you know?”

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So, I felt this overwhelming just outpouring of gratitude from my heart and this thing. And that's not to say that I also don't still sink into depression or whatever. You know, it's a lifelong battle. But I do feel like the more we can tune into ourself... And I don't know if that's helpful to anybody else listening too, 'cause I had this really beautiful moment on an ayahuasca experience where I was holding myself in my arms, and I was able to see myself as this other person. So, it was like I was me then, holding myself in my own arms as I was then, kind of patting my hair back and looking into my own eyes and telling myself, “Jim, you're so hard on yourself, buddy. Like, you're so mean to yourself. You gotta be nicer to yourself. You gotta take care of yourself. You gotta forgive yourself.” You know?

And it really helped me. 'Cause, you know, we wouldn't treat our friends the way we treat ourselves. You know, we wouldn't speak to the people we love with the harsh words we use for ourselves. And I feel like we really gotta start looking at ourselves as our own best friend. You know, like we really gotta be compassionate to ourselves and take good care of ourselves. 'Cause then we can serve the people we love and the world better. You know, we have more energy to be more helpful to the world if we're not tearing ourselves down all the time. You know? And that's—again, it's not an easy thing to do, but I do feel like there are paths that can help you get there.

And I feel so fortunate to have found some of those paths. And again, I kind of compare it to that. I feel like my entire life I was lost in the jungle, desperately machete-ing at all the trees and all the vines, just trying to rip my way out, and not getting anywhere. And then somehow, through quieting down and kind of getting into some kind of therapy that worked for me, I stopped machete-ing, and I looked over at the ground, and there was a path right next to me that had been there all along. You know? And I'm like, “Oh fuck, there's the path. Let's step onto it.” You know?

So, it's like you step onto the path versus just desperately trying to hack a path out of an immense jungle that you really will never make any headway in.

John Moe: And is the achievement thing still there, or is that just so many floating leaves in the pond that you need to let drift away? Are those leaves still there, I guess?

Jim James: I feel I've really been able to let it go a lot, 'cause I used to be so bitter and so jealous of like other bands that did better than us, or this or that, you know? And then I—like, I find myself now—it's like I see, and I look at the music in the world, and I—you know, whatever, not all music's for all people. It's not like I even vibe with all of the music that's successful, but there's so much music that I see now that's so successful. And I really feel this joy for those people and this joy for the music and the joy that it's bringing to people in the world. So, I feel like a lot of that has drifted downstream for me too.

Like, I really just feel so grateful that I can even have the capacity to create music. And then, you know, just seeing who else is creating music as well and kind of knowing that what I'm doing is this very particular thing that this person named Jim is meant to do this lifetime. And my eternal soul is part of this thing, but my eternal soul is connected to everybody's eternal soul. So, it really is we're all in this together. We really are all connected behind it all.

John Moe: Well, I want to thank you, Jim. (*Chuckling.*) And I wanna thank the eternal soul also for being with us today. Congratulations on the new album, and I really appreciate your wisdom, and congratulations on all the work that you've done.

Jim James: Thanks so much, John. Thanks for doing this podcast. I'm sure it's helping a lot of people.

John Moe: And let's go out on a little more from that new My Morning Jacket album. From the album *is*, this is “I Can Hear Your Love”.

Music: “I Can Hear Your Love” from the album *is* by My Morning Jacket.

Baby

I can feel you lying next to me

I can see you smiling in your sleep

(Music continues under the dialogue then fades out.)

John Moe: Look, we are a weekly show, and the MaxFunDrive is a two-week event, and this is week two. So, this is the last full episode where I can make this push to you. And rather

than be a bummer about it, I want to emphasize the fun. This whole project, this whole organization, is called Maximum Fun for a reason.

[01:00:00]

And it's fun to be a member. You get bonus content; you get some other very fun thank you gifts; and most of all, you get the fun of knowing that you're part of a club. You're on the team. You're one of us. You're part of a community of artists and makers and people who want the world to be a little bit better. That's really what it's all about. It's people trying to make cool stuff to make the world better and asking your support.

Music: “Building Wings” by Rhett Miller, an up-tempo acoustic guitar song. The music continues quietly under the dialogue.

John Moe: But again, the drive will be over soon. So, we need to hear from you now before you forget, before you procrastinate. Don't put it off, 'cause—especially those thank you gifts, those are only available during the drive.

Go to MaximumFun.org/join. Start a new membership for as little as 5 bucks, or boost or upgrade your existing membership. We really need to hear from you. Shop our gift selection. Join up now. MaximumFun.org/join. Be sure to hit subscribe. Also, give us five stars, write rave reviews. That helps get the show out into the world. We just—we like the show. We want the show to exist in the world. We want your help with that.

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline can be reached in the US and Canada by calling or texting 988. It's free. It's available 24/7.

We're on BlueSky, [@DepreshMode](https://twitter.com/DepreshMode). On Instagram, we're at [@DepreshPod](https://www.instagram.com/DepreshPod). Our *Depresh Mode* newsletter is on Substack. Search that up. I'm on BlueSky and Instagram, [@JohnMoe](https://twitter.com/JohnMoe). Join our Preshies group. A lot of great conversation happening over there on Facebook. Just search up Preshies; you'll find it. People talking about mental health, people supporting each other, people having a few laughs, people talking about the show. Preshies on Facebook. Our electric mail address is DepreshMode@maximumfun.org.

Hi, credits listeners, in case you've forgotten, MaximumFun.org/join. Our production team includes Ragu Manavalan, Kevin Ferguson, and me. We get booking help from Mara Davis. Rhett Miller wrote and performed our theme song, “Building Wings”. *Depresh Mode* is a production of Maximum Fun and Poputchik. I'm John Moe. Bye now.

Music: “Building Wings” by Rhett Miller.

I'm always falling off of cliffs, now

Building wings on the way down

I am figuring things out

Building wings, building wings, building wings

No one knows the reason

Maybe there's no reason

I just keep believing

No one knows the answer

Maybe there's no answer

I just keep on dancing

(Music fades out.)

Sally Baker: This is Sally Baker in Santa Fe, New Mexico. And my dog, Danny, and I are here to tell you that you deserve to be loved. Right now. Exactly as you are.

Transition: Cheerful ukulele chord.

Speaker 1: Maximum Fun.

Speaker 2: A worker-owned network.

Speaker 3: Of artist owned shows.

Speaker 4: Supported—

Speaker 5: —directly—

Speaker 6: —by you!