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Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. This week, "Baby Grand Jury". Lauren brings the case against her husband, John. Lauren loved playing the piano as a child and regrets quitting. She wants to get a piano and start playing again, but John says pianos are too big and too loud. He thinks they should get a keyboard instead. Then Lauren can play in total silence with headphones on. That makes Lauren sad. Who's right, who's wrong? Only one can decide. Please rise. As Judge John Hodgman enters the courtroom and presents an obscure cultural reference.

(Chairs squeak, followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.)

John Hodgman: *(Singing.)* "Come along with me as I drive to and fro. Ba-doo-ba-doo-bad-doo bum-bum. All my friends are crazy, but I love them so. We got a boxer abroad, an actor, and an old hippy, bum-bum bum-bum, Latka Gravas and Louie de Palma. He's very mean. Doo-doo-doo-doo-dum. It's quite a scene. My name's Alex. I drive a cab. My name's Alex. I drive a cab."

Bailiff Jesse Thorn, please swear the litigants in.

Jesse Thorn: Lauren, John, please rise and raise your right hands.

(Chairs squeak.)

Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God-or-Whatever?

(They swear.)

Do you swear to abide by Judge John Hodgman's ruling, despite the fact that he plays neither piano nor keyboard, but instead *Third Man* junior zither?

(They swear.)

Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.

John Hodgman: I still got that *Third Man* junior zither that Jesse Thorn sent me. It's a small little zither for juniors, sold during the time when the *Third Man* theme byyy... Anton Karas—I remembered at the last second—was tearing up the charts. The American pop music charts were dominated by a zither tune for the movie *The Third Man*, and it went a little something like this.

(Scats the melody.)

I'm gonna sing this whole episode. (*Continuing singing.*)

Lauren and John, I don't see you grooving to this. But that wasn't the song that I wanted you to name when I entered this courtroom. For an immediate summary judgment in one of your favors, which of you can name the song that I sang as I entered the courtroom? And more important, who is the performer, and who wrote the lyrics? Oh, I see John was raising his hand or stretching in boredom.

John: That was a hand raise. I didn't know how many parts to the question there were. I do know that's the theme to *Taxi*.

John Hodgman: Yeah. What's the name of it?

John: Um, boy. And I would think maybe the author—the writer of soundtracks, I'm gonna guess Post, who wrote so many great—the theme to *Hill Street Blues*. I'm hoping maybe he was in on *Taxi* too.

John Hodgman: Oh, Steve Post!

John: I think that's right.

(*John hums the melody.*)

He wrote the dun-dun.

John Hodgman: (*Still vocalizing.*)

That was also a very smooth theme song from an era of smooth theme songs of the late '70s, early '80s.

John: Yes! But I'm not confident about my guess.

John Hodgman: Look, I think it's a terrific guess. And I'm gonna put it in the guest book. I'm getting word from Jennifer Marmor, our producer: Mike Post wrote the theme to *Hill Street Blues*.

(*John repeats the name.*)

And Jennifer, while you're at it, would you mind checking and seeing if he wrote the theme to *St. Elsewhere*?

Meanwhile, we'll go to Lauren. Do you agree that it's Mike Post, or do you think it's someone else?

Lauren: I do not have an answer on this one as to who the writer of it was. I was also aware that it was *Taxi*, but I'm not as familiar with theme song writers. I'm more familiar with songs that have lyrics, like those that are written by Alan Thicke and his excellent sitcom—

John Hodgman: You mean every sitcom theme from the '80s ever?

Lauren: Exactly, exactly.

John Hodgman: You take the good, you take the bad, you take them both, and there you have the facts of life.

Lauren: The facts of life! Yes.

John Hodgman: That's exactly right. That is Alan Thicke. I think that's a great guess.

Jesse Thorn: We've discussed on this show that many instrumental television theme songs have lyrics. The reason being that (*laughs*) someone who worked on the show, usually the creator of the show, wanted to get half the publishing on the theme song. So, they would write lyrics when the song was filed with the ASCAP BMI or whatever. And then those lyrics would not be performed on the television show, but they would retain a portion of the publishing rights.

John Hodgman: Jesse, you're absolutely right, and that is why there are actual lyrics to the theme songs to *The Odd Couple*.

Jesse: (*Singing.*) Everywhere they go, they are known as the cooouple!

(*They laugh.*)

Yeah.

[00:05:00]

John Hodgman: Yup. As well as the original series of *Star Trek*.

Jesse: (*Singing.*) Beyooond the rim of the starlight, our looove is dancing in star-flight.
(*Laughs.*)

John Hodgman: Holy moly! This is an incredible double act. And also, the lyrics to *I Love Lucy*, also. I'm getting word from Jennifer Marmor, *I Love Lucy* also has lyrics. Do you know that one, Jesse?

Jesse Thorn: I don't know that one.

John Hodgman: (*Smugly.*) Weeell, finally, someone stumped the thorn.

Jesse Thorn: I know who wrote the *Taxi* theme, but I don't know who wrote the lyrics. So, the theme is written by Bob James, right?

John Hodgman: The theme—that's right. All guesses are wrong. You are wrong to guess Mike Post. You were wrong to guess—what did you guess again, Lauren?

Lauren: Alan Thicke.

John Hodgman: Oh, Alan Thicke. Which is great. These are great guesses. You might have guessed Dave Grusin, who wrote the theme song to *St. Elsewhere*, which I didn't know until Jennifer just texted me.

But this theme song in particular, which is probably—I would say of all of these—the smoothest and the jazziest, was written by Bob James. You're absolutely correct, Jesse Thorn. You win the case. We can go home now.

(Lauren laughs.)

Jesse Thorn: I'm gonna guess James L Brooks wrote the lyrics?

John Hodgman: No, this was the trick part, because there are no official lyrics to *Taxi*. This, the song “Angela”, was composed for *Taxi*, the TV show by Bob James—the famous jazz pianist and keyboardist, probably most famous for his stylings on the Yamaha Grand Electric piano, which I believe is what he's using in this particular song. It was composed to accompany a minor character in a later season of *Taxi*, but they liked it so much they made it the theme. So, the song is called “Angela”. It is the title track—well, not the title track, but the first track on Bob James' sixth album, called *Touchdown*, which has a football on the cover. His previous album was called *Heads*, and it had a picture of a nickel on the front. Because that was the fifth album. *Touchdown* was the sixth album, 'cause that's the number of points you get with a touchdown, I'm told?

Jesse Thorn: That's correct. If you accept the extra point or two-point conversion.

John Hodgman: That's right. And then the seventh album was called *Lucky Seven*. And I don't know if there was an eighth album. The lyrics to the song were invented post hoc, created by someone we know named Jonathan Coulton, who would make up lyrics to songs that had no lyrics for fun. I think Jonathan was inspired by his friend, the very fine musician Jim Boggia, who invented the lyrics to *I Dream of Jeannie* that went like this.

(Singing.) “Jeannie, she calls her boyfriend master. She can do magic when she *(beat)* crosses her arms and nods.”

(They laugh.)

“She's a crazy genie! And he's an astronaut. And they can get in trouble sometimes. And sometimes his boss can get mal—” No. “His—” Ugh, I can't remember the rest. You have to ask Jim Boggia. Go contact Jim Boggia by his website and find out.

Then Jonathan wrote the one to *Taxi*. And I never forgot it, 'cause it made me laugh so hard the first time I heard it probably 25 years ago. And I just texted him this morning to double check that I remembered them correctly, and I did!

Lauren, you come and seek justice before this court, correct? In regards a piano, or a keyboard?

Lauren: I do, your honor.

John Hodgman: Tell me about your case.

Lauren: Your honor, this sort of came about very organically in December—end of December. I received a form letter in the mail from a local college who was selling off an inventory of pianos. I had stopped playing piano when I was nine years old. Always regretted it. Out of nowhere, this letter arrives and says, “Cheap pianos in great condition. Email if you want the inventory list.” I emailed. They had all kinds of pianos. They had lots of upright pianos, baby grands. I wanted this piano.

John Hodgman: And this college is in where you live, more or less. Baltimore? The area of Baltimore?

Lauren: Yes. Yes. In the Baltimore area.

John Hodgman: You ever see the season of *The Wire* that deals with a bogus college piano sales scam?

(They snort.)

Jesse Thorn: *(Chuckling.)* Season six, yeah.

John Hodgman: But this wasn't a bogus college piano sale. They were actually selling real pianos. They weren't just trying to trick you.

Jesse Thorn: John, it's the system that's broken.

John Hodgman: Hey, this is America. Everyone gets to play... the piano!

(Jesse agrees.)

Lauren: At least.

John Hodgman: Lauren— Boy, there have been a lot of cultural references in this show so far, and I'm really enjoying it! So, you used to play the piano a long time ago, correct?

Lauren: Mm-hm. Yes.

John Hodgman: As a child. You were trained in the piano arts by a teacher?

Lauren: Yes. I took piano lessons with Mrs. Maminga for years.

John Hodgman: Shoutout to Mrs. Maminga. Where was this in the world? Where'd you grow up?

Lauren: So, I grew up around Dallas, Texas.

John Hodgman: Excellent. And you quit when you were how old?

Lauren: I think I was nine.

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John Hodgman: You're an adult now, so that's quite a while ago.

Lauren: Ehh, we're coming up on 40 years. *(Laughs.)* Let's call it 30 something years ago.

John Hodgman: Look, that's a forced revelation of age. I didn't ask. Anyone else can do the math. I don't want to!

Lauren: Appreciate it.

John Hodgman: But you enjoyed playing piano as a child?

Lauren: I did. But like all children—well, not all children, most children—I didn't enjoy practicing. I liked the playing. I liked the performance. I liked knowing a song, but practicing is hard.

John Hodgman: What was your favorite song to know? *(Sings a bar.)* That one?

Lauren: Just—? What, “The Fifth—”? No, no. You know, all the silly songs that kids play. I will say that I did share a piece of evidence that shows some sheet music up on the piano that I played as a child. And if you will do a closeup on that music, you will see it as a song that all eight and nine-year-old children love to play. A song about—

John Hodgman: Don't! Don't reveal the song yet. This is a great way to keep people listening to the podcast. 'Cause I am gonna look at that image.

Lauren: Oh, excellent.

John Hodgman: But not yet, because I'm gonna ask John some questions first. John, you are married to Lauren?

(John confirms.)

You cohabitate together in the Baltimore area.

John: Lovingly and happily, yes.

John Hodgman: Right. Aaand you hate music.

(Lauren laughs.)

You hate music, because Lauren wants to get a piano from a college, and you're like, “No, I hate music.” Correct?

Jesse Thorn: John, don't be presumptuous. John the litigant, do you hate music or your wife's happiness?

John: *(Chuckles.)* I think we can have both.

Lauren: Hatred of both?

John: No. *(Stammering.)* We can love music while my wife just is happy and grins.

John Hodgman: No, you love music, and I know it. Because I did receive some photographic evidence. All of these images, of course, will be available on the show page at MaximumFun.org, as well as on our social media—Instagram, perhaps most notably—and even more notably, you might even be watching it right now on YouTube. Able to see these images—Exhibit A, which is a link to a discogs website, featuring a band called The Putouts and their album, *The Putouts Sing the Hits*, released 1999. What's your relationship with this album?

John: I wrote those songs and performed them with two other gentlemen from Baltimore.

John Hodgman: This was your band?

John: Yes. I loved music then, and I still do.

John Hodgman: This is an indie rock band, would you say?

John: Yes. That album's claim to fame is it was produced by Tommy Stinson of The Replacements.

(Judge Hodgman “wow”s.)

And it might sound kind of in that genre.

John Hodgman: It includes the hits “A ____ Like All the Rest”, “Off-Key”, and “Gladly”.

John: Huge hits.

John Hodgman: Huge hits. And what are—? The three, handsome, young indie rockers—one of them is you, I presume?

(John confirms.)

You remember what this album looks like, right?

John: Yes. It is a takeoff on The Who's debut album, *The Who Sings My Generation*.

John Hodgman: And what is the tower behind you? Is that a Baltimore thing?

John: It is the Bromo-Seltzer Tower instead of the tower that The Who stood in front of, which is in London.

John Hodgman: Yeah, which deserves not to be named, 'cause it's not the Bromo-Seltzer Tower. Come on.

John: Yes. It's not American.

John Hodgman: Which one of these hunks are you?

John: I believe I'm wearing a red shirt.

John Hodgman: Yeah, I see there in the middle. You're the only one wearing a red shirt. And guess what, John? Hunk.

(John laughs quietly.)

Here's another hunky photo of John rocking out in the '90s or the 2000s. You're playing a guitar!

(John confirms.)

This was your role in the band? You were playing lead guitar. You were the lead singer. You were the red-shirted hunk who led the band?

John: Uh, yes. Light on hunk, heavy on lead.

Lauren: Eh, pretty heavy on hunk.

John Hodgman: Pretty heavy on hunk!

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

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Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

John Hodgman: Lauren, you sent in—we talked about it before—Exhibit C, the piano that you learned to play on.

(Lauren confirms.)

And there is some sheet music on it. But before I zoom in, if that's even possible, I want to describe— This is a beautiful little standup piano!

(Lauren agrees.)

A little baby with a little—a bit of like— Do you remember the brand of this piano?

Lauren: I think it's a—a Kay-why—? Uh, I'm not even sure how you pronounce it, but K-A-W-A-I.

John Hodgman: Oh, not KY, like the lubricating jelly.

Lauren: No, not KY the lube. Very different.

John Hodgman: Kuh-wai, like Hawaii.

(Lauren confirms.)

Now, what is the sheet music? I can't zoom in on it right now, so you're gonna have to tell me. Or! Turn it into a quiz.

Lauren: Okay. Oooh! This is a song—again, every 8-year-old child would love to play this song. A song about love taken for granted, sung by two powerhouse—a duet by two powerhouse performers.

John Hodgman: Oh, I have a guess.

Lauren: Please!

John Hodgman: Is it Warren G and Nate Dogg and their hit single “Regulate”?

Lauren: (*Wheezes a laugh.*) That came later. This is few years before. A few years before.

John Hodgman: Because that sampled Bob James's 1981 song, “Sign of the Times”. That's why I—okay. Never mind. Okay.

Lauren: Yep. No, not that.

John Hodgman: So, what is this song? I guessed wrong.

Lauren: It is a song performed by Neil Diamond and Barbara Streisand.

John Hodgman: “You Don’t Bring Me Flowers”?

Lauren: “You Don’t Bring Me Flowers”. Correct.

John Hodgman: I got it right this time! Thank you. The second guess doesn’t count.

Lauren: Great job.

John Hodgman: There's no second place in obscure cultural references.

So, this is the piano you learned to play on. Is this the kind of piano, more or less, that you would like to get?

(*Lauren confirms.*)

Because it's quite diminutive.

Lauren: It is!

John Hodgman: I mean, John, your primary complaint is that a piano would be A) too big, and B) too loud.

John: It's a pretty big sized piano, though. Like, it would be the wall of a house, more or less. Like, in—and we do have a sort of a small...

John Hodgman: Do you live in a tiny home?

John: *(Laughs.)* Um, not in quotes, but we don't have a lot of extra space.

Lauren: There is space.

John Hodgman: Yeah. This is a small—! What do you mean, “the wall of a house”? What, do you live in an apartment or a home?

John: It's a home.

John Hodgman: Freestanding home?

John: Yes. No attachment.

John Hodgman: So, even if this were half the size, you would still think it would be too loud though, is your concern? I mean, I don't know. Why? Why are you saying no to this thing?

John: Well, it—like, I know so many people that have pianos that are just a dusty piece of furniture with stuff on them.

John Hodgman: How many of them are you married to?

John: Well, that's a good question. But for a living, I'm a personal trainer, and I have a diverse group of clients. And I have a lady who is—her thing is kids' theatre. And she was like, “Oh my god, you have no idea how many pianos we are offered.” People trying to get rid of them, and they have them appraised to see if they can sell them. And they can't sell them, because—you know, they're beat up, and you have to get them tuned up all the time.

It just seems like a fool's folly when we can get a great keyboard that you could carry! You could take it places with you! With weighted keys! I'm definitely not some Archie Bunker character trying to make my wife not get to do anything, like, “Get back in the kitchen, and don't play that piano!”

John Hodgman: Flaw in your argument there, friend. Archie Bunker totally had a piano.

(Lauren laughs.)

John: Oh, I know! I know! I know. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: It's from the beginning of every episode.

John: I want Lauren to be able to play music. I just don't want it to be a big piece of wooden stuff that we're gonna have to— It would be an albatross, I think, eventually.

John Hodgman: Lauren, what inspired you to start playing the piano again, just even as a concept?

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Lauren: You know, it wouldn't have crossed my mind, except that that letter came in the mail saying, "Here are pianos." And as soon as that hit, it sort of—(*stammering*) it touched something in my brain that said, "Ooh, maybe this is a thing. This came here." It felt like the letter arrived just for me. It felt like maybe that college only sent out one letter, and it was just to me.

John Hodgman: I hate to disabuse you of your magical thinking, but I do believe that letter was sent out elsewhere.

(*Lauren chuckles.*)

And I do believe that the letter might be an argument in John's favor that people are constantly trying to get rid of pianos, because they are unused, loud, large, and hard to care for. Wouldn't you say, John?

John: I would say for sure. Plus, it did come from a school. And getting back into cultural references, I believe you guys are probably familiar with the movie *Fame*. God knows what occurred on those pianos when we didn't have it in our possession.

(*Lauren laughs.*)

It could be terrible! There could be germs on it. These art school kids—I don't know!

John Hodgman: Wait a minute. *Fame*, the movie *Fame*?

John: There was a lot of—that was rated R movie!

John Hodgman: I know, but I don't remember them hugging and kissing on pianos. I remember dancing—

Lauren: I think...

John Hodgman: Dancing on taxi cabs and cafeteria tables.

(*John agrees with a chuckle.*)

Was there a scene in *Fame*—? What was the famous song from *Fame*?

John: "What a Feeling". "I am music now. I am magic now." Irene Cara.

Jesse Thorn: (*Beat.*) Not "Fame"?

Lauren: (*To John.*) That's not *Fame*!

Jesse Thorn: I think “Fame”. No. I think the famous song from *Fame* is “Fame”.

(They laugh.)

John: “Fame! I’m gonna live forever!” I misspoke, I’m sorry. *(Chuckling.)* I was rattled by—

(Lauren sings a musical stinger.)

I’m still thinking of Bob James.

(Jesse sings the chorus.)

John Hodgman: I was thinking maybe that—

Lauren: I think he went to *Flash Dance*.

John: I did go to *Flash Dance*. *(Laughs.)*

Lauren: You went to *Flash Dance*!

Jesse Thorn: Take it from me. I went to arts high school. I made out on a ton of pianos.

(They laugh.)

John Hodgman: You made out on a ton of pianos in arts high school?

Jesse Thorn: Oh yeah. Big time.

John Hodgman: Okay. You’re just joking though, John, about the pianos having germs on them. Right?

John: I’m less prudish about that, yes

John Hodgman: I mean, genuinely. Okay. All joking aside here, tell me why you don’t wanna make your wife happy and just get a nice little piano.

John: I would like to get her keyboard that she could move. It would be great. We’d get her a little cool combo amp. She’d be pro. I’d get her a road case for it if she wanted it.

John Hodgman: Yeah. You’re making a positive argument for a keyboard, and I’m gonna ask Lauren why a keyboard is terrible in a moment. But why is a piano terrible? You said that it mainly becomes like a side table that’s never used. Are you concerned that Lauren won’t play the piano if she gets one?

John: I do think there's pressure with it just sitting there, and maybe not—I would dream to walk into the house and hear the theme to *Hill Street Blues* being played after a hard day's work.

John Hodgman: That's a good piano song, honestly.

John: Oh my god! That's what all the smart kids learned when I was a kid.

John Hodgman: How are you gonna hear it though, if she's got her headphones in?!

John: But then when she's so proficient at it—and she will be! She's good at stuff. She does get good at stuff.

John Hodgman: Ohh, you're saying you don't wanna listen to the wife, whom you love, play piano badly.

John: (*Stammering.*) I think— Like, I play guitar, and I'm self-conscious about it. I don't play loud.

John Hodgman: Do you play a whole guitar or just a little teeny, tiny guitar? Like a junior zither guitar?

John: I've got a good real guitar, but I don't plug in the electric one a lot of times. I just kind of plink around quietly.

John Hodgman: Wait a minute, you have more than one?

John: I've got three guitars.

John Hodgman: You have three guitars. Okay. And where do they live in your home?

John: In a basement downstairs.

John Hodgman: In a basement downstairs. And who runs this basement? Who's job? Who gets to live in this basement?

John: I'm there more than Lauren. I guess it'd be mancave-ish.

John Hodgman: Let me let the record show that there is Exhibit D, Jesse Thorn, that I can draw your attention to. Exhibit D. Which I believe, John, is you in your basement. And it really is a dude's basement, 'cause it's got a bunch of dumbbells on the floor. It's got—I take it back. I apologize. You're not a dad, but you're the coolest dad in the world.

(*Lauren laughs.*)

Because look at all of this physical media you have stacked up underneath this tv. You've got DVDs upon DVDs over there! And you're holding a guitar, and there's another guitar at your feet, and you're straddling a big bag of effects pedals. You're looking cool as heck. And you have an amp and a road case behind you. Why do you need a road case? You going on the road?

John: Ummm, no. From my days back a while ago. And that amp is fairly recently bought. I always wanted a nice road case, but I never had the money to buy it, so it was definitely an indulgence. And I was like, “You know what? I'll probably never—”

John Hodgman: Yeah, now that your wife is paying half, you can definitely afford it.

[00:25:00]

(John laughs.)

Jesse Thorn: The road case isn't for touring, John. This is just for like vacations and stuff.

John: Pretty much.

Lauren: Your honor, I would like to make a very important point here. It was two weeks after the piano conversation happened, and John crushed my dream. I folded it up. I threw it away.

Two weeks later, John brings out one of his guitars and says, “I need to find a (inaudible). I wanna get this guitar repaired.” And then, the following month, he bought that amp—maybe two months later—and the road case. So, these are not items that were existing in our home. These were items that were purchased after the piano letter arrived and I had this discussion around pianos. John was not playing his guitars consistently for years until this whole conversation happened. So, I believe the piano conversation—you see it on his face—sparked John's desire to play music. And so, all this kind of—it intensified. And that, your honor, is when I reached out.

John: And this is where I must object, if I may object.

John Hodgman: Uhhhh, overruled. How long—?

Lauren: Thank you, your honor.

John Hodgman: How long had it been? I'll get to your point. I'll let you make your point. But I wanna know this point of fact. How long had it been since you had played guitar consistently?

John: This can tie up nicely. It had been a while. It had been a while, and we got to do something wonderful in December that was an inspiration to us both.

John Hodgman: What was that?

John: I've got—it's the Yo La Tengo defense. We went to the Hanukkah shows. And Ira is a master of the fender guitar. I had always played Gibson's, but I had a beat-up fender. And I watched him for several nights play his fender so wonderfully. I was like, "You know what? I've got a Jaguar that is in disrepair, and I will—" And I was completely—it was—they were the best shows ever. And it was so exciting.

John Hodgman: Yo La Tengo, for all the children out there, if you don't know is an incredibly talented, influential, and amazing rock trio—indie rock trio. The pride of Hoboken, New Jersey. We're talking about Ira Kaplan, Georgia Hubley, and James McNew. Incredible band. And every year during Hanukkah, they play a concert—eight concerts right in a row, eight nights. Eight nights of Hanukkah concerts with lots of guest musicians, occasionally guest comedians who might have performed with them before.

Jesse Thorn: You're talking about Todd Barry?

John Hodgman: Talking about Todd. Yeah!

Lauren: We saw Todd Barry!

John Hodgman: Yeaaaaah. Todd Barry, famous comedian. Where was it? At the Bowery Ballroom or what?

(They confirm.)

Yeah. What a fun time.

Jesse Thorn: John, I think *Judge John Hodgman* listeners might best know Ira Kaplan as my costar in the documentary, *Swamp Dog Paints His Pool*, which was just released and is really wonderful. I saw Ira at Swamp Dog's 80th birthday party, which they filmed for the film.

John Hodgman: I had no idea, and I'm so excited to check it out! 'Cause I'm a fan.

Jesse Thorn: Also features our friend and past MaxFunCon guest, Vernon Reid, of *Living Color*.

John Hodgman: I love Vernon Reid. I'm a fan of all the people involved in this movie.

This sounds like a great night. And it reignited your spark to play guitar on a regular basis. Is that right, John?

John: It did. And if you've gotta sue me for that—*(sighs)* I don't know.

John Hodgman: And the first thing you were like, "In order to play guitar again, I gotta go get this road case for this amp."

(John laughs and stammers.)

Lauren: Well, get an amp. And then get a road case for the amp.

John: That is suspect, yes.

John Hodgman: Well, look, it's the arts. None of this is rational.

(John agrees.)

Jesse Thorn: I have an important question. I'm looking at this basement room, and I'm thinking about your childless lifestyle.

John Hodgman: Child free.

Jesse Thorn: Thank you. The thing that I am wondering most is: is there a place for a piano?

Lauren: Yes!

(Judge Hodgman "wow"s softly.)

That's an excellent question. It's not a huge home, but we live pretty simply. We don't have tons of stuff. I have two potential spots for this piano. One in our entry room, and another—we have like a little—it's a small bedroom that we turned into an office, and it would fit beautifully in there. An upright piano, not a baby grand. Just an upright piano.

John Hodgman: An upright piano! Yeah! Do you dispute that the piano could fit in those spaces there, John?

John: It could be done. I just don't know why you wouldn't get one exactly like Ira has, with a stand. It sits there; it sounds beautiful; it has weighted keys.

John Hodgman: You are so excited about these weighted keys!

John: It's important.

John Hodgman: Do you want this keyboard 'cause you wanna play with it? Is this like me giving my dad a 40th birthday present, which was the text adventure game *Infidel* by Infocom, because I thought he would enjoy it?

[00:30:00]

Jesse Thorn: Or me giving my wife a bowling ball that says Homer?

Lauren: That's exactly where I was going too, Jesse! Yeah.

John: I really—I think that is not the case. If we had a nice keyboard in the house, maybe I'd plink around on it, try and learn something. But I don't—that's not what—that's not front of mind for me, no.

Jesse Thorn: Lauren, have you thought through the fact that this piano is going to cost \$500 or \$700 to move into your home, in addition to the cost of the piano? And that once it is there, you will not be able to move it?

Lauren: I have thought about this. This is all part of—you know, when you make an investment like this, the more kind of pain on the front end of this investment, I feel like the more motivated I will be to learn and to play it.

Jesse Thorn: You say this is an investment; do you mean that you're going to become a professional pianist? *(Laughs.)*

Lauren: *(Chuckling.)* I am not going to be become a professional pianist, no. Yeah, but—

Jesse Thorn: So, what's on the other side of this investment? What's the payoff here?

Lauren: So, you know, if someone gives you a keyboard, you put it in your house or you buy something cheap—eeeh, you know. It's there. When you've had to put more of a financial investment into something, then you— Personally, I would be more likely to say, “Well, I put money into this. I wanna make sure that I'm getting good use out of it.” So, I realize that there may be some upfront expense, but I feel like maybe that might even motivate me more to make sure that I benefit and use this piano.

John Hodgman: But you don't like the idea of playing— I mean, obviously Lauren, you like the idea of playing a real piano for what Walter Benjamin would call “the aura of the authentic.”

(Lauren confirms.)

But how does the idea of playing with headphones on make you feel?

Lauren: Sad? A piano, when it makes a sound, it's a sound that feels organic and authentic and rich and real. Putting on a pair of headphones and hearing kind of a fake version of that is very unappealing to me.

John Hodgman: Do you have neighbors?

Lauren: We do.

John Hodgman: Are they close enough that they would hear you and complain?

Lauren: It's possible they might hear.

John: They would hear.

Lauren: Yeah, it's possible. I would not play late at night or crazy early in the morning. I would be reasonable with it.

John Hodgman: John says you will not play at all.

Lauren: *(Laughs.)* Well, that would solve the neighbor issue.

John Hodgman: Let me ask you this. What song do you wanna play? “You Don’t Send Me Flowers”?

Lauren: I mean, wow! Could you imagine relearning that?

John Hodgman: It's a heartbreaking song about a child-free couple that are falling out of love with each other.

(They laugh.)

John: Terrible at horticulture.

Lauren: *(Chuckling.)* Yeah. I think picking up some like proper classic songs, learning some of the Elliott Smith back catalog. The idea of being able to just sit down and play a song is so appealing to me.

John Hodgman: John, your wife seems to have good musical taste. Do you agree or disagree?

John: I agree. She likes the things that the bands I like influenced.

John Hodgman: She likes the things that the bands I like...

(Jesse “oh no”s with a laugh.)

Wow.

John: I would listen to The Zombies, and she listens to Belle and Sebastian.

Jesse Thorn: You're just saying you're old.

John: Yes. Yes.

(Lauren laughs.)

John Hodgman: But that's—you're not gonna be like wandering around the house listening to her play Belle and Sebastian being like, “Ugh, I wish you were playing The Zombies!”

John: No, no. I doubt she'll play Limp Bizkit on piano or anything. I think we're safe on subjects.

John Hodgman: Lauren, when was the last time you touched a piano keyboard or a keyboard-keyboard?

Lauren: Does a melodica count? That you blow into? The little keyboard that you blow into?

John Hodgman: I'll allow it, because it's delightful.

(Jesse laughs.)

Lauren: It is delightful. And in the first—what?—couple months of COVID, John and I briefly formed a band and learned one song where he played on guitar, and I played on the melodica.

John Hodgman: What song was it?

John: “Guilty AM Pleasure”. Definitely not “In a Foreign Land”.

John Hodgman: Are you turning into a John Wurster character from *The Best Show*?

(Lauren laughs.)

John: He grew up in North Carolina too. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: He may have been one this whole time, John.

John Hodgman: Let me ask you: you didn't bring your guitar in melodica with you to the studio with you, did you?

Lauren: Aww, what an oversight!

Jesse Thorn: Studio, have you got a melodica on hand?! Is there a house melodica?!

John Hodgman: Can we fly in a melodica, please?

John: She did great on it. She really did.

John Hodgman: Lauren, cover your ears for a second.

John, is she a bad musician? Is that the concern of yours? Is this something you don't wanna say in front of her?

John: It really isn't. Lauren is good at stuff. When she puts her mind to things, she's good. Honest. Yes.

John Hodgman: Is there anyone else in your house who would enjoy listening to the piano aside from you, Lauren?

[00:35:00]

I mean, it's just the two of you, right?

Lauren: We have two dogs who would love to hear piano being played. I have no doubt.

John Hodgman: Dogs? Did you say dogs? I don't see any pictures of dogs in this evidence!

Lauren: That's a very good point, and it's an oversight.

John Hodgman: Alright, I'm just gonna give a very quick preliminary ruling: no matter which way I rule, as soon as you get home today, you need to take some pictures of the dogs and send them in. And then within 48 to—let's say—72 hours, you need to record a melodic guitar song, so that we can put it on YouTube. And we'll all make a fortune.

The dogs would love to hear you play piano though, huh?

(Lauren confirms.)

Are you sure about this?

John: Dogs like reggae.

Lauren: That's what I've read, that dogs like music.

John: But reggae!

Lauren: Specifically, reggae does make dogs happy.

John Hodgman: Jesse Thorn, have a question. You have two dogs, right?

Jesse Thorn: I do. I have two dogs, Junior and Mabel.

John Hodgman: How much money would a veterinarian need to pay you to play reggae for your dogs, saying that it's good for them?

(They laugh.)

Jesse Thorn: Honestly, my wife loves reggae, so—and I like reggae. So, I think it is like the place where our tastes most intersect. If my wife is alone, and I wander into the kitchen, and she's listening to music, it's almost always Ani DiFranco. Unless it's sometimes The Cranberries. Both of these are wonderful musical artists for whom I have the most immense respect and to whose music I might not choose to listen to otherwise. But if I put on Toots and the Maytals, then we can both get down.

John Hodgman: John, you heard that Lauren doesn't wanna wear headphones, 'cause it's not the same as hearing the actual music of the actual thing. You made the same argument. So, why aren't you more sympathetic to Lauren's desire here?

John: I think we haven't investigated enough with keyboards. I would like to be able to A-B it. Like, I would like her to try out keyboards and be like, “See, same thing.”

John Hodgman: Let me ask you this—

John: Before big, sweaty guys pull—or are carting things into the house.

Lauren: There may also be sweaty women who bring the piano in.

John: That'd be great. That'd be good.

John Hodgman: Your argument is that—in part—that you'll have no faith that Lauren will key up with the piano, and it'll just be a horrible eye sore and a testament to her failure. That said, if she defies your expectations and sticks with it—like, let's say I order her to get a keyboard, and she sticks with it—would you be open to a piano then?

John: Yes. Yes. I think—

John Hodgman: Lauren, what's wrong with that compromise? Aside from it being incredibly patronizing and condescending.

Lauren: Aside from it being incredibly patronizing and condescending? It's the patronizing and condescending nature for me, probably. Yeah.

John Hodgman: I said aside from that!

Lauren: Oh, aside from that! No objection, in that case. None.

Jesse Thorn: Lauren, on this program over the years, we have heard from many husbands with aspirations to hobbies. They often are not people who follow through on those aspirations fully. Are you the kind of person who picks up hobbies and then discards them and then realizes that it costs \$1,000 to get a piano taken out of your house? *(Suppressing a chuckle.)*

Lauren: I am not someone who cycles through hobbies. I get pretty fixated on stuff, and I stick with it.

Jesse Thorn: Is there a world in which you pursue this hobby outside of your home? Like in, you know, a library or college's music practice rooms, where there is a piano—until you get to know whether you are actually gonna make this a lifestyle rather than a casual interest?

Lauren: If I absolutely had to do that, I think I would rather have a keyboard at home. Because I won't be able to practice enough. And also the dogs will miss out on hearing the music, which really seems unfair to the dogs.

John Hodgman: Do your dogs love other songs besides reggae? Why do you think that they're gonna love hearing you play the piano so much?

Lauren: The dogs just like—they just like to be where I am. Or where John is. And when John is playing his guitar—especially if he is plugged in, and he's got that basement door closed, the dogs are like—they are trying to get in there. They are at the door.

John Hodgman: Ohhhh, now I see what's going on.

Lauren: They're into it. Yeah.

John Hodgman: You're fighting for the attention of these dogs.

(John laughs.)

Lauren: They're good dogs, you're honor!

John Hodgman: They're the only babies you have, and they love your rock and roll husband, and you wanna woo them over with some lounge jazz.

Lauren: You know, we have two dogs. One dog is named Osida, the other dog is named Little Brian Eno.

(Jesse and John snort.)

(Laughing.) And I think Little Brian Eno especially would be drawn to the piano.

[00:40:00]

Jesse Thorn: John, do the dogs like The Zombies, or are they just like Belle and Sebastian?

(They laugh.)

John: They said Belle and Sebastian are hacks, and they like source material.

Jesse Thorn: The dog's only listen to Sister Rosetta Tharpe.

(They laugh.)

John: Pretty much! Yes. It has to be old-school, or my dogs will not engage.

Lauren: I did notice when Osida heard me playing Belle and Sebastian, she was barking. And the bark sounded very much like she was trying to say, “Derivative! Derivative!”

(Jesse and Judge Hodgman laugh.)

John Hodgman: John, do you have a different standard of tidiness in your home?

John: I am the cleaner. I think that's fair to say.

Lauren: He's the cleaner.

John: I'm in charge of laundry.

John Hodgman: That means you do more of the cleaning, or you are just naturally a cleaner person?

Jesse Thorn: Or when you two murder someone, it's your job to get rid of the brains?

John: Pretty much. Yeah. I am the cleaner one, but she isn't a total slob. I am the clean one. Yes.

John Hodgman: So, is this a tidiness issue that happens so much in people who live together? That one sense of tidiness is different than the other? Are you sensing an intrusion of one big piece of clutter that you don't want? Is that what's going on?

John: I don't think consciously. I don't think that's it.

John Hodgman: Then you gotta tell me what's going on unconsciously here! Because here's what I'm taking away from this, John: You are a musician. You love music. You love your wife. You also love your dogs. Your dogs love music. You live in a freestanding home in Baltimore. You're not sharing a wall with anyone. You're not sharing a floor or ceiling with anyone. There are two identifiable spaces where a piano—a small upright piano—could go. You yourself play music in the home. Not amplified, but not on headphones. Your wife is very clear that she wants specifically a real, live piano that bonks strings, and she doesn't wanna wear headphones. The understandable and reasonable compromise that you're proposing—to avoid ongoing tuning costs and the possibility that she might let it go, and then it'll be an expense to get rid of it—she has rejected your compromise. It's not for her.

You're both DINKs. You both bonk. You have dual incomes. It is not impossible that you could absorb the cost of the piano, the cost of moving it in, the cost of tuning it, and then—

within a year or two, if it didn't work out—the cost of getting rid of it. Even if you just write it off as a loss, just have someone come and take it away. So, why? Why are you so opposed to giving it a try?

Jesse Thorn: John, why can't your wife go on this bonk adventure?

(Lauren laughs.)

John: *(Stammering.)* The way you put it—I mean, it all makes sense. I think I'm— You know, I stated my case. I want versatility. I want us to be able to travel light with it. But you know, I defer to whatever you think.

John Hodgman: Do you believe that, in the case of being forced from your home, a keyboard is like diamonds? Portable wealth?

(Lauren laughs.)

Do you think you're gonna have to get out of town quick, and maybe you have to use the keyboard to bribe a warlord of a city state after society has collapsed to let you into the walled compound?

Jesse Thorn: Are you imagining sewing this keyboard into the lining of a dress?

(John and Lauren cackle.)

John Hodgman: I mean, honestly, I wouldn't be too surprised if you were thinking of making a run for it.

John: I just—I don't know if... *(sighs)* I don't know. I'm at a loss for words on this. I didn't know I was such a keyboard enthusiast.

John Hodgman: Do you want a keyboard? I guess I already asked you that. You just wanna play it yourself? But don't you wanna play music with your wife again?

Lauren: Now, if I could just interject. I don't want the piano so that I can play with John. I am not trying to infringe on his music time. We can—this is—he has his musical hobby, and I have mine. They do not have to merge.

John Hodgman: But John, your response to me was, “I just don't know. I just don't want it.” You know, what am I missing?

John: W-well, from playing music in the past, you try and zero in on the perfect thing. You want the perfect rig. You want your amp and your guitar to just be great. And I think we're making a terrible—

John Hodgman: *(Interrupting.)* Hey, Jesse. Hey, Jesse. Check out Lil Brian Eno over here.

(They laugh.)

John: Yeah! Oh, he's great. You would like Little Brian Eno a lot. He looks just like him in *Before and After Science*.

John Hodgman: I mean, I just don't know. Brian Eno is a very famous musician and producer and maybe a perfectionist.

[00:45:00]

I don't know if that's where you're coming from. But alright, go on again about how art is the search for perfection in all things.

John: Well, as far as like the perfect rig, the thing that's gonna serve me the best—and I have three really good guitars and a cool amp. And I don't want her stuck with a big piece of wood in the corner. But we could get her just a great keyboard! So, that's my whole story.

John Hodgman: Alright, well, I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision. I'm going to go into my grand conservatory, and I'm going to press the autoplay on my Casiotone keyboard to make it make the little bossa nova rhythm that I like. And as I'm jamming out to that, I will consider my verdict and be back in a moment with my decision.

Jesse Thorn: Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

(Chairs squeak, followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.)

Lauren, how are you feeling about your chances right now?

Lauren: I'm feeling very good. I'm feeling like I made my case clear. I feel that John was not able to plead a clear case at all.

Jesse Thorn: John, how are you feeling about your chances?

John: Well, I feel like I started out okay, and I might have cracked under the pressure a little bit. But what I'm counting on is that Judge Hodgman can see the truth and figure out a way that this can work in our household.

Jesse Thorn: It's amazing that you're the one that cracked under the weight when she's the one carrying a 500-pound piano.

John: And that shows you what a strong, strong woman she is.

Jesse Thorn: Well, we'll see what Judge Hodgman has to say about all of this when we come back in just a moment.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Promo:

Music: Thumpy, atmospheric synth.

Host: Good evening. Thanks for tuning into 1010.1, MaxFun. It's midnight here on *Host to Coast*, and we've got Sarah from Michigan on line one.

Sarah: Hiii. I'm calling in for some help. I used to love reading, but between grad school, having kids, and the general state of the world, I can't seem to pick up a book and stick with it anymore.

Host: Sarah, this is an easy one. Just listen to *Reading Glasses*, a podcast designed to help you read better. Brea and Mallory will get all the pressure, shame, and guilt out of your reading life, and you'll be finishing books you love in no time.

Sarah: Great! That sounds amazing! Also, I do think my husband is cheating on me with Mothman. Can you help me with that one?

Host: Ooh, I don't think they cover that. *Reading Glasses* every Thursday on Maximum Fun.

(Music fades out.)

Promo:

Music: Upbeat, exciting music.

Hal Lublin: WrestleMania is the biggest—

Danielle Radford: And busiest!

Hal: —time of the year for wrestling.

Danielle: And the *Tights and Fights* podcast is more important than ever.

Lindsey Kelk: We have so many questions to explore! How can you understand John Cena's motivation as a bad guy? Why is a car crash actually a great expression of friendship?

Danielle: You mean fwendship, right?

Lindsey: Of course.

Danielle: Whether you're a longtime wrestling fan or coming back after a break, *Tights and Fights* has you covered.

Hal: This WrestleMania and every weekend after, on Maximum Fun.

Music: *Tights and Fights* podcast! *Tights and Fiiiiights!*

(Music fades out.)

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Judge Hodgman, we're taking a quick break from the case. You know what? I have noticed, not every *Judge John Hodgman* listener, already subscribes to your Substack!

John Hodgman: Thank you for mentioning that. Yes, we have a lot of fun together over there at [Hodgman.substack.com](https://hodgman.substack.com). That's where you can subscribe to my newsletter, which is called "Secret Society". There is a completely complimentary portion of the newsletter in which I share with you some stuff that's going on in my life, talk about maybe if I'm doing a livestream of something, maybe if I'm doing more *Joy of Zoning*, that's where you would find out about it first. Obviously, talking about where we might be going in the future. And then there is a secret room that you can get into if you want to—and you don't have to!—but up in that secret room, I am currently going chapter by chapter through *Moby Dick* and reading it aloud into a microphone in a terrible Maine accent, and sharing some private opinions that I might have about TV shows and movies that I've been watching. And it's a lot of fun whether you just come for free, or you want to upgrade a little bit to the secret room. We have a lot of fun over there, and I would just invite you to go check it out if you want to. It's called "Secret Society". It's at [Hodgman.substack.com](https://hodgman.substack.com).

One of the things that I've been promoting over there—and here, I will remind you—is Jean Grae's book, *In My Remaining Years*. It's an incredibly wise, funny, and fascinating memoir by one of the most incredibly wise, funny, and fascinating people I know: Jean Grae. You know Gene, too, as being an occasional guest bailiff on the show.

And the last thing I'd like to mention is that the last week or so, I did a couple of episodes of *The Puzzlers*, which is a very fun new podcast by my old pal, A. J. Jacobs. *The Puzzlers* is sort of like the puzzle segment, that you hear on the radio, on public radio on Sundays, but... funnier. That's all I'm gonna say about that.

What's going on with you, Jesse Thorn?

[00:50:00]

Jesse Thorn: Well, John, you may know that I'm a native of the great city of San Francisco, the city by the Bay. I'm also a fan of the San Francisco Giants. And like any decent San Franciscan or San Francisco Giants fan, I am also a huge fan of the Giants television announcers Mike Krukow and Duane Kuiper. They are often voted the best broadcasters in the baseball business. They have been the Giants' play-by-play and color man on television for now something like three—let's see; almost 35ish years at this point?! 30 (*muttering incoherently*)—yeah, something like that! And they are total geniuses. They are total heroes of mine, exemplars of non-toxic jock masculinity and male friendship. And they're funny, and they're just the best. And I am so excited that the folks at San Francisco Sketch Fest invited me to moderate an event, an evening with Kruk and Kuip in San Francisco.

(John “whoa!”s.)

It is like a dream come true for me to get to do this, surpassed only by the time that Kruk and Kuip talked about my dad hat and Humbaby t-shirt when I was at Dodger Stadium at a Giants/Dodgers game once, on the Giants' broadcast.

John Hodgman: Whoa, that's amazing!

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. I'm so excited. Like, I'm truly—I'm over the moon about this. It's May 15th at our old friend, the Sydney Goldstein Theater in San Francisco.

John Hodgman: Wonderful theater, wonderful town.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. You can get tickets at SFSketchfest.com, and I hope that you will. If you have a Giants fan in your life or somebody in the Bay Area who wants to just come to something really cool, we're gonna have video. The Giants are putting together video clips and stuff. It's gonna be a ton of fun. I'm just so— This is not something that, Kruk and Kuip do... ever. Make these kinds of public appearances in this way. And I'm so excited to get to do it. We're gonna kind of focus on them being hilarious, which they really are, and their long history together.

You know, they were best buddies on the Giants in the mid-1980s. That's how they became broadcasters together. That's, you know, 40 years ago now that they became close pals. And yeah. I'm so excited about this thing. It's May 15th. SFSketchfest.com is the place to go.

John Hodgman: SFSketchfest.com. It's a Sketchfest joint, but it's happening May 15th. I wish I could be there, Jesse! I can't this time, but in the future, maybe. Because I have an adult child who's moving to San Francisco. Did you know that?

Jesse Thorn: No, I had no idea!

John Hodgman: I'll tell you more about it privately later. But San Francisco, open your Golden Gate. Welcome all of the *Judge John Hodgman* fans to this incredible event with Jesse Thorn. May 15th, SFSketchfest.com. And that's all.

Jesse Thorn: Let's get back to the case.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Please rise as Judge John Hodgman reenters the courtroom and presents his verdict.

(Chairs squeak, followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.)

John Hodgman: John, when it came down to it, your argument seems to be that you don't want the expense. But mostly, you don't want the disruption of this big, heavy new hobby coming into your house. And I don't know why you don't want that disruption. Right? I you haven't been able to articulate it. Something deep inside of you recoils from it, and it's not a tidiness issue—although you did point out that lots of times pianos simply become side tables to accumulate keys and inhalers and other junk. But it does not feel like it's primarily a tidiness issue. It does not feel like primarily it's... but I just don't know. I just don't know what it is other than disruption.

And I think that one of the things that you benefit from— Well, let me put it this way. You benefit from a lot of things by being DINKs.

(Lauren laughs.)

Being DINKs win. I mean, being DINKs is a wonderful thing. It's like being an only child. You don't have to share anything. Your time is your own. In this case, it's not your own; it's actually shared with the person that you've chosen to make a life with. But there are very, very few disruptions that you have not invited in yourself. Whereas children—just like siblings, children are human beings that you don't control and become very quickly in charge of your household in a way that surprises parents, ultimately. They are instruments of chaos. And perhaps you've gotten too used to being able to curate your life exactly the way you want to—

[00:55:00]

—that you don't remember what it's like to have chaos or an instrument of chaos like a piano in your house. I mean, look at the two of you going up there to New York City for three nights of an eight-night Yo La Tengo concert. That would never happen if you had kids! You get someone to look after your dogs; you just go away, and you just do it.

But maybe the disruption you worry and feel is that this is like... it's never—having a piano in your home is never gonna be as disruptive as a kid. But I'm wondering if maybe that's what the resistance to disruption is. Maybe. I don't know! I don't know, and I don't care. 'Cause Lauren's gonna get a piano, obviously.

Here's why. *(Beat.)* You're grownups. A moment came to Lauren of inspiration—a magical letter from a college that inspired her to reconnect with a childhood hobby that she let go of and wants to take up again. Specifically, she has a memory of a very specific standup, mid-

century modern piano from the Kawai company. It's very small. I mean, as these things go, it's got a fairly small footprint. And there's a place in your house where it can go.

I agree with you; a keyboard would be more versatile. A keyboard would allow you to not only make bonking piano sounds, but also womp-womp-waaah! And other kinds of cool sounds. Space sounds, lasers. Pew-pew! I would've wanted a synthesizer when I was... your age, I guess, which is about two years younger than me. (*Chuckles.*)

(*Lauren laughs.*)

Headphones are more practical! But we don't play music to be practical. We don't get a road case for our amp when we're not going on tour. And whatever dreams you have of Lauren packing up her keyboard and going on tour with you? That's not her dream.

(*Lauren laughs.*)

That was my feeling going into this. And as I listened to the arguments, I couldn't see—nor, frankly, could you mount, sir—a compelling argument as to why I should tell a grownup who can afford it not to get a piano. Because they want one. Is it possible that it will just become a side table for junk? Of course, especially if you've put it in that hall foyer or whatever. Don't put it there; then it's just gonna be a mail stand. But if you've got an office that is primarily hers, put it in there!

I challenge you, Lauren, to learn to play piano again and do a good job! Do not let this court down. But not just let this court down, but also let down a friend of this court who filed a friend-of-the-court brief at my request. And I did not—I simply told this person what the terms of your argument were, and I said, “What do you think?”

This person wrote, “I will try to keep this brief. Despite being the sheepish co-owner of a piano currently buried under so much bric-a-brac that it is unplayable—and consequently, I am the player of a keyboard—I am categorically still pro-piano. Is it too big? Is it too loud? Not for me to say, not knowing where John and Lauren live. But you didn't write to me for equivocation. So, the answer is piano. I hope this helps,” signed Ira Kaplan of the Yo La Tengo organization.

Lauren: (*Laughs.*) Fantastic!

John Hodgman: I'm not gonna rule against Yo La Tengo today. And I'm not gonna rule against Lauren. Instead, I'm ruling in favor of a small—I think you should try to get this exact same piano you had when you were a kid; close the loop. Find it online. Or find and try out other small pianos that are in good enough condition for you to take into your home and learn to play.

I find in favor of Lauren. I find in favor of the irrationality of art and music. This is the sound of a gavel.

Sound Effect: A discordant piano keysmash.

John Hodgman: Judge John Hodgman rules. *(Sing-song.)* That is aaaall!

Jesse Thorn: Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

(Chairs squeak, followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.)

John, how do you feel?

John: I—*(sighs)* I lost, but I feel like we all won.

Jesse Thorn: Because we get to enjoy the gift of your music, your family's music!

John: It's gonna be something We can't let you guys down.

Jesse Thorn: Lauren, how do you feel?

Lauren: First of all, I am so thankful to have the backing, not just of Judge John Hodgman, but also of Ira Kaplan.

[01:00:00]

What—I mean, what more could I ask for in terms of vindication?

Jesse Thorn: He's a nice guy. Huge Mets fan, by the way.

Lauren: Eh, everyone's got something wrong.

John: Yeah. We're Orioles fans here.

Jesse Thorn: I mean, I think it's fair to say that being a Mets fan is, in some way, a sign of a sort of broken emotional life. *(Laughs.)* It's hard to attribute causality—which direction the causality goes, but I've never known a Mets fan who wasn't at least a little broken on the inside. *(Chuckles.)*

Well, Lauren, John, thank you so much for joining us on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

John: Thank you for having us.

Lauren: Thank you.

John Hodgman: Before you guys go, let me also thank you personally. It's me, Judge John Hodgman. And in case you or any of the listeners wanna know, Yo La Tengo is on tour right now. You can go to their website, YoLaTengo.com/schedule. And if you're a couple of DINKs from Baltimore, then you can just fly away at any time you want and go see them in Baton Rouge on the 25th of April, in Houston on the 26th. You can even go see them in May

at Meow Wolf in Santa Fe, New Mexico. We gotta get over to Meow Wolf, Jesse Thorn, you and me. If you've never been to that art space, it's incredible. Go check them out at [YoLaTengo.com](https://www.yola.com/la/yola_tengo/). And I also order you guys, retroactively now, to go see one of these shows and send me a report.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Another *Judge John Hodgman* case is in the books. In just a second, we will have Swift Justice. First, our thanks to u/lexfri on Reddit for naming this week's episode. You can join us on the Maximum Fun subreddit. That's at r/MaximumFun, where we chat about each week's episode and also ask for suggestions for titles. Evidence and photos from the show are, of course, on the show page at MaximumFun.org. Also on Instagram at [@JudgeJohnHodgman](https://www.instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgman). We're on TikTok and YouTube at [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJmKdHdHdHdHdHdHdHdHdHd). Why not head over there and smash those like and subscribe buttons and share a little video? It all makes a big difference to growing our podcast.

John Hodgman: Yeah, if you wanna tickle the ivories, why don't you go tickle the like and subscribe buttons over there at YouTube? That helps. And while you're tickling keys, why don't you go over to Apple Podcasts and leave a review for us? That's what Lizzie Schultz did over there on Apple Podcast, leaving not only some kind words, but also a number of stars. That number being five! Lizzie says, "I have listened to *Judge John Hodgman* longer than any other podcast. If you're looking for something light and funny and often heartwarming, give it a listen. My husband and I love to discuss each episode and debate whether we agree with the ruling or not."

Uh, guess what, husband? I'm right.

"Thank you to everyone involved in *Judge John Hodgman* for creating such a delightful show week after week, year after year."

Thank you so much, Lizzie, for writing those words! And if you're listening to us as an Apple Podcast, why don't you go and leave a review and a rating? You can also rate us in the same way over at Pocket Casts. And as mentioned, you can add a comment on YouTube if you're watching an episode there, or comment on our socials, or send our socials around. All of these ratings and comments and shares really do help new listeners find the show.

Jesse Thorn: *Judge John Hodgman* was created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. This episode, engineered by Andrew Eppig and Molly Mountain at Clean Cuts in Baltimore, Maryland. Our social media manager is Dan Telfer. The podcast is edited by AJ McKeon. Our video editor is Daniel Speer. And our producer is Jennifer Marmor.

Alright, John, you ready for Swift Justice?!

John Hodgman: Yes, I am.

Jesse Thorn: Coinage Jeff over there on Reddit says, "My wife says our anniversary is May 29th, but I say it's always the Saturday before Memorial Day. Who's right?"

John Hodgman: W-wait a—wh—what? W-w-wait a minute. It's not like it's Easter! It's not like it changes every year. There's not a liturgical calendar. There's an actual year. Or date, I should say.

Jesse Thorn: My wife and I always celebrate our anniversary the fifth day of Lent!

John Hodgman: (*Chuckles.*) Your anniversary is May 29th. But if you wanna celebrate it on a Saturday night, what could be better than the Saturday before Memorial Day? Then at least, you won't be having to pay an arm and a leg for a hotel room! Let's say you're a DINK who wants to bonk, and you want to go out for your anniversary. It's a little bit cheaper the Saturday before. But your anniversary will always be May 29th, and forever.

By the way, speaking of Memorial Day, it is the unofficial start of summer. I guess it's—I guess it's actually the start of summer if you go to like a private college. If you're employed by the New York Department of Education, however, summer doesn't start until the end of June. And boy oh boy, summer ends in California for school kids—right?—like August 1st or something. Right, Jesse?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, it's real early in August.

John Hodgman: But Memorial Day is the symbolic start of summer. Get out your white patent leather shoes and your seersucker, because summer is starting.

Jesse Thorn: In summer, we are all Tom Wolfe!

John Hodgman: And probably you might have some summertime disputes!

[01:05:00]

Are you ready for summer vacation in Hawaii, but now you have to teach summer school? What is that? Is that the plot of the Mark Harmon movie *Summer School*?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, it is.

John Hodgman: Wow! Cool. Do you have any summer camp rivalries? What about—? I'd love to hear some rivalries between the Robinhood Camp and Nichols Day Camp in Brooksville, Maine.

Jesse Thorn: John, I was just thinking about that *Mr. Show* sketch about the summer camp rivalries, (*chuckling*) where Bob Odenkirk goes, “A rap, rap, rap! A rappity-rap-rap!” (*Laughs.*)

John Hodgman: Yeah! Do you have any disputes over rappity-rap-raps, or whatever? Do you want to go to the beach, but your partner wants to go to the lake?! Ugh!

Send us your summertime-funtime cases at MaximumFun.org/jjho. I personally can't wait for it to warm up, and I can't wait to hear your summertime disputes. And when I say I want to hear your summertime disputes, Jesse, that means we only want to hear specifically summertime disputes. Correct?

Jesse Thorn: Well, John, I have a summertime dispute that I want to air. Every summer I get—speaking of Alan Thicke—sweaty and hot! Cue the 1989 Crystal Light World Aerobics Championships and Alan Thicke!

Music: “Sweaty and Hot” by Alan Thicke.

Ready or not

I'm coming, baby I've got

Some muscle for you

Sweaty and hot

I'm pumping iron, and when I'm done

You're gonna beg me to have big-time fun

Oh, darling (ready or not)

I work my body out just for you!

(Music fades out.)

John Hodgman: Now that we've all heard and watched that, we do want to hear all of your disputes, not just summertime disputes. Right, Jesse?

Jesse Thorn: Indeed. MaximumFun.org/jjho is the place to submit your disputes no matter what their topic. Unless you have a dispute with Alan Thicke's kick-butt themes for the Crystal Light World Aerobics Championships, because that's not even the only good one.

Anyway, MaximumFun.org/jjho. We'll talk to you next time on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

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!