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John Moe: Here's what I'm thinking after listening to this week's show—the show you're about to hear. I think nobody chooses to have a mental health problem. No one opts into depression, PTSD, OCD, substance use disorder. Because who would? But everybody with one of those issues does have to decide what to do about it. Therapy, meds, denial, nothing. That's a choice that gets made one way or another.

I also think the people around that person always need to decide what they're going to do to support them and protect themselves. This happens in couples, in families, in friend groups and workplaces. And it happens in bands. Mental illness can potentially rip any of those units apart. Sometimes all the treatments and therapies and boundaries aren't enough to keep those units together. But sometimes they are. And then your band puts out a cool new album.

It's *Depresh Mode*. I'm John Moe. I'm glad you're here.

Music: “After the Setting Sun” by The Head and The Heart from the album *Aperture*.

When you least expect it

When you've reached the end

There's a door that opens up

After every setting sun

And when you step through it

With nothing left to lose

Leaving only memories of

All the days you filled with love

(Music fades out.)

John Moe: That's “After the Setting Sun” by The Head and The Heart, the first track off their new album, *Aperture*. The Head and The Heart have been together since 2009, originally coming together at open mic nights at the Conor Byrne Pub in Seattle's Ballard neighborhood. They've had gold and platinum selling records. 4,000,000 monthly listeners on Spotify. You've probably heard their song, “Rivers and Roads”. It's been on TV shows and in

movies, kids sing it at Summer Camps. The Head and The Heart are popular. They're a big deal.

Followers of the band might note that *Aperture* is more of a return to their earlier sound. More rootsy, less highly produced, not as poppy as some other recent records. And making it was a pretty collaborative process. More than on a lot of their last few albums, everyone in the band participated in songwriting. More of the music was recorded together in a big room. It was a real collaboration. It was a real team effort. And that's significant, because the band The Head and The Heart—as a team, as a unit—has been through some issues over the years.

They parted ways with the original lead singer, Josiah Johnson, several years ago due to a substance use disorder. Kenny Hensley plays piano in The Head and The Heart. He's also spent some time away from the band in recent years due to some mental health issues. But he's back now recording, playing live, and touring with the group. The story of his journey out of the band and back in begins during COVID.

Kenny Hensley: You know, obviously, I'm not the only person that went through it, but—every one of us did. But it was a whirlwind. I feel like the beginning of it was almost a refresher in a way. You know, we'd been really busy, and we had a lot of plans through 2000/2001—(*correcting himself*) or 2020/2021/2022—that were all canceled. And so, we ended up with a lot of free time, a lot of time off at first. Which at the beginning felt really, really nice. I remember thinking of it as a way to take advantage and get really healthy. I was like—didn't drink for a long chunk, and was running a lot, and exercising, and just getting in shape, and eating healthy. And I just thought of it as an extended chance to be as healthy and as happy as possible to prep myself for the future of the band and the next years, whenever we were gonna be able to get at that.

I had a couple curve balls. About a year into COVID, I had a shoulder surgery. My right shoulder was injured. I finally had the time to do it. I normally wouldn't, because we tour so much. And so, I finally decided to get that taken care of, since I was just sitting around at home anyways. So, I had my right shoulder taken care of. That was about six months of physical therapy. Ended up being really tough, because then you lose all the exercise; you lose all the healthy habits you were adapting during the early parts of COVID, and all of a sudden you're just sitting on your butt, trying to heal, trying to walk as much as you can, but having to medicate as well.

I always had pretty bad anxiety, and that was a period where I just started self-medicating a bit more than I normally would have. You know? So, I had this right shoulder surgery done. About a year later, it was finally back to 100%, and I was feeling really good and positive.

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And the band was starting to work on the next record remotely. And then I was playing basketball and injured the left shoulder and had to have the same exact surgery on the other shoulder a year after this one. And that one sent me into a pretty dark place. I just was—I put so much work and effort into getting back to where I was before having the first surgery and just getting healthy. I was really happy that I was finally through that, and I could get back to my routine and just try to keep that energy that I had in the early COVID months going. And

then I get slammed with this other surgery, had to have that done immediately. And that was even a worse injury. So, it took nine months to a year to fully recover.

And during that period, I really spiraled a bit. I started—I was always prescribed Xanax, initially for flying. I didn't like flying. And especially in the early days of the band when we weren't flying too much but starting to, I always had Xanax on hand. I would just take one for a flight, and it was perfect for that. But during COVID, after the surgeries, I think I just was dealing with a lot of anxiety because of everything happening—not knowing—you know, having all this uncertainty with the band and our careers and finances. Just not making any money for a few years, because we couldn't tour. Just a lot of stress, a lot of anxiety. It was really easy— And the inability to exercise, 'cause I had these surgeries, and I was laid out. It was really easy to start self-medicating more and more and more.

And as anybody, I think, would know—any drug, the more you take, the more you need. You take 0.5 milligrams once a day at the beginning, and then it turns into, “Oh, I need 1 milligram,” and then, “Oh, I need 2 milligrams.” And it slowly—it was never a recreational thing for me, but it slowly just turned into a full-on addiction to the thing. And if I ever tried to even go a day without it, I was hit with such intense withdrawal and anxiety that I just couldn't handle it for even a minute. And it was awful. It was really the first time in my life I felt like I was completely just stuck. I was like—I was owned by this thing. I couldn't get out of it. All I wanted was to be able to snap my fingers and be off the stuff, but I couldn't, and I didn't know how to properly, and—yeah.

And it was the worst timing in the world and also the best timing, because I needed the help. But we were—at the time when I was really getting to a bad place— And the band's unaware of this; we're all separated. And so, I'm just at home doing this. I'm still making our Zoom calls we have. I'm still doing the things I have to do. And so, from the outside, it probably seemed like nothing was wrong. But something was very wrong. I was very deep in this. And the band was just about to release our fifth record, *Every Shade of Blue*. And we all flew up to Seattle, and we had rented a house in a small town called Leavenworth, up in the mountains, just to go— We rented this nice house, just beautiful scenery to rehearse in. We just brought all our instruments, and we were gonna set up in the living room and spend a week just practicing and playing all these new songs and getting ready for, finally, a record going out into the world and finally being able to tour again.

It was kind of the tail end of all this time off. It was—this was in March/April of 2022. And we get up to Leavenworth, and the first day or two— First of all, I went in pretty unprepared, because of these things I was dealing with at home; I just wasn't on top of anything. I hadn't learned the music like I should have. So, I was extra anxious and extra nervous because of that, which leads to even more medicating, medicating, medicating.

John Moe: And it's all the Xanax that you're taking? (*Inaudible*) Xanax?

Kenny Hensley: Yeah. This was—yeah, it was Xanax. I mean, there was drinking too. Like, not as—that never became as big of an issue, but that mixed with Xanax can be a really bad thing, obviously. So, it was the mixture. And we get up to Leavenworth. The first day or two we're okay. And then we went out to dinner somewhere in town and had some beers, and that turned into drinking some more. And I think because of the amount I had in my system—I

vaguely remember it, but there was a night when, apparently, I was awake but pretty incoherent. I don't really remember it. And I had fallen down some stairs. The band had— You know, they knew something was up. They didn't know what I was on.

I think they went through my bags, and they found Xanax. At that point, it wasn't even prescribed, too. I'd been buying it illegally on the dark web, because my doctor wouldn't prescribe me what I needed. And so, who knows what was even in those pills? But I was taking these things. And they found those; they knew that something was really, really wrong. And I just have this really hazy memory of that last day and waking up and realizing it had been—like, you know, a whole day had passed. I had slept through a whole bunch of things, and the band was packing up and getting ready to leave.

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And they had packed all my stuff, and I was just confused. Like, what are we doing? We're still supposed to be rehearsing here.

And they just were like, “No, we're going, and we need to talk again.”

It was very hazy, very unclear, and I was—

John Moe: You're still in a fog when you're being told this.

Kenny Hensley: Oh, completely in a fog. And I just have almost little blips of images in my mind from those days, but not even clear, coherent memories. So, we drive back to Seattle. I stay at a hotel and then fly home the next day. And the thing was, too, we were leaving—two weeks from then, we were gonna be leaving on— The record was coming out, and we were gonna head out on tour. And so, I had mentally planned—in my mind, I thought this two-week period is when I quit cold-turkey, and by the time touring started, I'll be good. I had this kind of plan in my mind that I know I'm addicted to this stuff, but I had this little window away from everybody. I can just cut it, go through a week of withdrawals or whatever it might be—I had no clue—and then be good for tour.

So, I get home from the Seattle trip. I took my last pill. I had one more, and I hadn't bought any more. There was none at my house, none on the way. So, I took my last one right before my flight home from that trip from Seattle to LA. And I remember getting home and just doing my thing and going to bed. And I woke up the next day and actually felt okay. And I thought, “Oh my god, this is a miracle. Maybe I'm not gonna have horrible withdrawals.” But I was still really anxious and nervous about the whole—what had just happened with the band and not knowing what they were thinking. If it was gonna just take a conversation or if they wanted further action. I just didn't know.

So, that was really weighing on me. But I felt pretty good that first day. And I even went to the gym and went on a run and was thinking like, “Okay, if this is it, I'm good. I can handle a few days of this, and then I'll be totally fine.” Later in the day, it got worse and worse, and my anxiety just got really, really, really intense. I was pretty manic. I remember my girlfriend was here with me at the house, and I was at one point pacing back and forth, just looking out

the windows, because I was scared somebody was gonna show up at the house. I didn't know who that would be, even. But it just really—a really horrible place. I've never felt that way in my life.

John Moe: Delusional or hallucinating or what?

Kenny Hensley: Almost delusional. I was just really manic. I was really worried and really terrified. I thought I was—it was like the worst panic attack I've ever had in my life. And there was just no letting go of it. It was just pounding me in the brain. And I just—at every moment—thought I was either gonna pass out or die, or something was gonna happen. Really bad. And at the same time, we have a band call to discuss something.

Transition: Spirited acoustic guitar.

John Moe: We'll find out what that call was to discuss in just a moment. Here's a little more from The Head and The Heart's new album, *Aperture*. This is "Cop Car".

Music: "Cop Car" by The Head and The Heart from the album *Aperture*.

I'm riding in a cop car tonight

Looking outside as the blinks go by

Wondering how we gonna die

"So I'll see you in court", they say

How much money can ya get away?

Oh, I hear he's shameless

I hear he's dangerous

He wouldn't look me in the eyes

(Music fades out.)

Transition: Gentle acoustic guitar.

John Moe: Back talking with Kenny Hensley from The Head and The Heart. Where we left off, he was having a problem with substances, and he was trying to go off these drugs cold-turkey. He went into withdrawal. His anxiety was spiking. He was feeling manic. He was a mess.

And right when things were really bad, there's a band meeting scheduled to discuss something.

Kenny Hensley: And so, I'm starting to feel this manic state really horrible, and we have a call. And the band lets me know that I'm not going on this tour, and if I want to be a part of the band in the future, I need to go to treatment immediately. So, on top of already starting to feel this withdrawal and these feelings, I get hit with this—I mean, life-changing— We hadn't toured in three years. And like I said, finances were— I have a house. I'm very lucky to be in the position I'm in, but I had been just draining accounts over these few years, 'cause we hadn't been making money. So, I was really relying on touring to start up to get some finances in. So, that was an added stress.

But I was just hit with this kind of train wreck of “Oh my god, I really screwed up. I'm gonna have to tell my family this. I'm gonna—I'm gonna have to come out, basically, that like I'm a full-on addict and addicted to this stuff, and I have to go to rehab.” And the weight of that on top of the withdrawal and the intense anxiety and the manic feeling I was already feeling just was too much for me to even handle, literally.

A few hours after that call I was still in that manic state trying to get some food in me. My girlfriend was trying just to feed me. Just to like, “Eat something, eat something. Drink water; you'll feel better.” And I couldn't eat. And I just remember sitting on the couch with her. And I got up to walk to the kitchen. I vaguely remember this.

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And then the next memory I have is paramedics being in my house, and I was on my back on the living room floor and had collapsed and had a seizure. I didn't know at the time, but quitting Xanax cold-turkey can kill you. You know, it's something you have to wean off of. I had no clue. I guess alcohol and benzos are the only drugs that can kill you if you just quit cold-turkey, if you have enough in your system. And it literally was too much for my brain to handle. My brain stopped, and I had a seizure and was on the ground.

Luckily, my girlfriend was there to call 911. And I remember just not even knowing my name for a little bit. They were asking me questions and took me to the hospital in an ambulance. I spent the night there and after a couple hours was remembering what was happening. And yeah, they got me straight there. It was a really awful night. Everything—the last 24 hours just had been the worst 24 hours of my entire life. And now I'm sitting in the hospital, and two days before I thought I'd be going on tour soon and back to work, and everything's all good. And now I'm in a hospital knowing that I'm going to rehab in three days or whatever it was.

And that was it. And they got me some medication to help with the withdrawals. So, at least I wasn't completely freaking out anymore. But I still just felt horrible. And flew out to

Nashville and went to a treatment center for a month. The first week or so was detox. I finally was through all the withdrawals, and then spent a month out there that was really informative—or transformative—for me and life changing in a lot of ways.

It really—I think going through that experience, and just letting down so many people, and—you know, being in a band, and touring for 14/15 years. There's always—especially through our earlier years in our 20s—a lot of drinking, a lot of partying, and it's just part of the culture in a lot of ways. And I feel like I always tiptoed this line of it never being too much and always getting away with it. It was never a problem. And this was the first time I really—it was like, wow, I just shot myself in the foot more than I could ever imagine. I'm gonna lose out on all this touring and the income that comes with that. And I'm letting down the band in a huge way, right before putting out this record that we've worked so hard on. And two weeks before, they're put in a spot where they need to find a fill-in. And just the guilt and the shame, all of those things were really intense for a while.

And yeah, I got home from that month and talked to the band. I was still kind of in this idea that I'll go to rehab, and I'll come out, and I'll go right into touring. It's just gonna be a month, and I'll be good. And I came home from that month in treatment and spoke with the band. It was pretty clear that they thought I should take the year and not just be so quick to jump back in. Which was really disappointing to me at the time, because I just really wanted to get to work and put it behind me. I thought that was gonna be—like, the only thing I could do to make me feel like it's in the past was to get back to work. And now, I had to sit around and just think about it for the year. But you know, I just really, really made an effort to get healthy, and to stay busy, and exercise a ton, and eat healthy, and just stay away from any possible triggers and anything that would creep me back into that lifestyle—or addiction, or whatever it may be, or whatever you wanna call it.

But yeah, it was a really tough year. I can't remember a year that was more hard in my life, you know, and for a long stretch and— But I kept at it. And by early 2023, about 9/10 months later, I was back rehearsing with the band and talking with them. And they had seen that I had been doing really good for a while. And I think—I knew it was gonna take a lot of time to regain trust, and it felt like walking on eggshells for a little bit. I just felt like I had to do and say all the right things. And there was no arguing a point, or no “no” anything. You just had to be game for whatever and positive all the time and just try your best to be as easy of a bandmate as possible.

And now it's been a couple years since then, and I've been back full-time since 2023 and have not touched the stuff and will never do it again. And I feel healthier and happier than I have in a long time. I'm really proud of myself for getting through that and putting it behind me. And I know it's a constant process, and I gotta continue to work on it. And yeah. But that's my story for the last few years. And that's my COVID story, I guess, is the question you asked me. Sorry, it was long-winded. Long-winded, but there's a lot of information there.

John Moe: There was a lot going on. You talked about how you wanted to get back to work and put it behind you and sort of—you know—make it an event of the past. At some point, did you let go of that and kind of realize that the recovery and the sobriety needs to be an ongoing thing?

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Like, that's just part of who you have to be now? It's not a matter of making it a former thing?

Kenny Hensley: Yeah, no, totally. I feel like the first few months after I was home from rehab—or treatment, whatever you wanna call it—I was really hanging onto this idea that it was just a blip, and that I'd be back in the band asap, and they would be welcoming and want me back. And I thought that was the answer for me. I thought the second I'm back and I'm working again—you know, it's in the past, and I'm good. Not thinking I could just go back to partying and doing things that are bad for my mind and bad for my body, but I really did think that would be the cure for me. And once I realized that they weren't in the same mindset— They weren't as eager to get me back so soon. You know, I think they were pretty traumatized by the entire event. Again, I don't remember much of it, but I do remember the looks on their faces, and I remember the tones in their voices. And it was just pure worry, but also disappointment and fear.

And I just—those are the memories and the thoughts that make my stomach turn a bit. You know, it's just remembering that I put anybody through something like that and that I put myself through that. But yeah, it took a few months. I feel like once it was clear that they didn't want me back that year, that they wanted me to take more time—even if it was more than I thought I needed—and that we would talk after the new year and see where I'm doing, then I was really able— At first it was a really tough pill to swallow, but once I was able to swallow that pill, it actually felt like a weight off my shoulders. I felt free, finally, I think. Without the pressure of like, “When am I gonna be back?” and thinking it had to be as quick as possible.

'Cause now, looking back, I really shouldn't have. You know, I needed more time. And letting go of the stress and anxiety of wanting to be back and thinking I needed to be back was huge for my recovery and huge for my life, because it did just completely eliminate all these extra things I shouldn't have been thinking about or worrying about. You know, I should have been really focused on just myself and sobriety and recovery and being healthy. And fixing relationships, personal relationships. And I wasn't in that mindset for a while. I was just thinking about getting back to work. And once I was able to let that go, it was—there was a shift, and I did feel really good and clear for a while.

And I think without that, I might've been more susceptible to relapses, and/or I might have—it might have taken me longer to get back to the band. Because they might have seen me, and I might not have seemed so far along or so clearheaded. You know, if they had wanted to do some meetings or rehearsals, and I was still in that head space that I was the few months after treatment.

John Moe: We found an article from a while back that talked about your band going to therapy together as a group. Were you part of those therapy sessions?

Kenny Hensley: Oh yeah. Yeah, we started that. So, we—I mean my whole COVID story and me not being in the band and the rehab is not our first rodeo in that world. We lost one of our members, Josiah, to— We didn't lose him. He is alive and well and actually doing really well now, I'm happy to say. And really healthy and happy. But he was going through a lot in

the like 2013-‘15 years. Had some addiction problems we didn't know about that kind of slowly surfaced. And we just were noticing things that were odd about him and things he was doing. And whatever, long story. But he ended up having to, right in the middle of our third record—recording our third record, *Signs of Light*—he had to leave the band and go to rehab as well. And so, we'd been through all of this with another member. And we thought he was gonna be back. He ended up never coming back and was replaced by Matty—Charity's husband—who's now been in the band for longer than Josiah was, at the beginning.

But we had been through this in a way. And after that experience with Josiah leaving, it was pretty tumultuous for a while within the band. Just—not only were we spread apart, but we had gone through this major shift. He was one of the core songwriters in the group and John's best friend. The two of them were like our Lennon and McCartney in a lot of ways. You know, if you want to have an easy comparison. They just wrote really well together and kind of bounced off each other really well. And so, we didn't know how we were gonna move forward or how it was gonna look like. And we decided to work with a therapist and try it out. And so, we started doing sessions, group sessions with. Dr. Lee Norton, who is based out of Nashville most of the time; she's a trauma therapist.

Transition: Spirited acoustic guitar.

John Moe: What happens when a whole band—a six-person band—goes to therapy together? We're back in just a moment with more from The Head and The Hearts. Kenny Hensley, here's more music from *Aperture*. “Fire Escape” is the name of the song.

[00:25:00]

Music: “Fire Escape” by The Head and The Heart from the album *Aperture*.

I woke up in the alley by the ashtray

In the pink glow of the neon exit sign

When I looked up to see you leaning over me with eyes wide

(Music fades out.)

Promo:

Music: Playful rock music.

Dave Holmes: Oh my gosh, hi! It's me, Dave Holmes, host of *Troubled Waters*—the pop culture battle to the ego death. Okay, everybody. Word association with *Troubled Waters*. First one to fumble loses. Go.

Riley: Comedy.

John-Luke: Panel show.

Christian: Guests.

Riley: Celebrities.

John-Luke: Games.

Dave: Oh, sound rounds!

Riley: Improvised speeches.

John-Luke: Puns disguised as trivia.

Christian: A very niche *Flash Gordon* clip.

Riley: Umm, Chappel Rowan!

Dave: Oh no, Riley, I'm sorry; she will not return our phone calls. I am afraid you're out.

(Failure buzzer.)

Riley: A girl can dream.

Dave Holmes: Oh, but dreaming will not earn a girl any points.

Troubled Waters! Listen on Maximum Fun or wherever you get your podcasts.

Promo:

Music: Gentle, quiet acoustic guitar.

John Moe: *(Softly.)* Hello, sleepy heads. *Sleeping with Celebrities* is your podcast pillow pal. We talk to remarkable people about unremarkable topics, all to help you

slow down your brain and drift off to sleep. For instance, we have the remarkable Alan Tudyk.

Alan Tudyk: You hand somebody a yardstick after they've shopped at your general store; the store's name is constantly in your heart, because yardsticks become part of the family.

John Moe: *Sleeping With Celebrities*, hosted by me—John Moe—on MaximumFun.org or wherever you get your podcasts. Night, night.

(Music fades out.)

Transition: Gentle acoustic guitar.

John Moe: Talking with Kenny Hensley of The Head and The Heart: a group that had been together since 2009, replaced a member due to substance use, suspended Kenny for substance use, brought him back. When last we left off, the group—all six of them—headed to therapy together with a trauma specialist.

Kenny Hensley: She was just a complete game changer for us. Not really knowing it in the moment, but yeah; we started doing group sessions with her, and it really gave us the tools and the ability to just learn how to work with one another and learn how to extend the life of this band. I really, truly think that if we hadn't decided to start doing therapy, we would've broken up—probably back in 2017 or '18. I think that's when things without her would've finally just hit their end, and we would've split up in some way. But having sessions with her and learning how to talk through things—learning how to understand one another better—helped enormously. And we continue to. We do—periodically, we'll do sessions with her if we need anything very specifically.

You know, when I was going through all my stuff, there were more of them. For sure. You know, before and after. Now the band's in a really good place and has been for a while, and so we do check-ins every few months with her. But it's kind of an on-call thing.

John Moe: You talk about this being a trauma therapist. Was the therapy—or has the therapy—been based in traumas of things that have happened to the band as a band? Or is it about individual events that have happened in any of your lives?

Kenny Hensley: Yeah. I mean, it started as thinking of it as trauma within the band. I think losing a member in a lot of ways was pretty traumatic, even though he didn't pass away or something like that.

It was just a major shift in our worlds. And we also, individually, have our own traumas. You know, I can't speak—I don't wanna speak for everybody else in the band, but I know others do have personal traumas from their upbringing and lives, and I do as well. You know. And knowing that a lot of the members in this band would do well with a trauma therapist one-to-

one, we thought that would—why not just do a group trauma therapy? You know? And it's not very—it's not like—we're not doing EMDR together. It's not like we're doing these intense trauma sessions together. But she's privy to all of that stuff.

She understands what trauma does to a mind and especially in a relationship. She's worked with a lot of groups before too. She does—I think she did like trauma for the trauma therapy for the Las Vegas shooting, like the band that was on stage when that happened. She's done a lot of big things like that, and so she's just really privy to knowing what traumatic things can do to a group and how to best move through those things. And yeah, she's been a wonder. I feel like she's my only surviving grandma, it feels like.

John Moe: (*Chuckles.*) How does that work? Because there are—what?—six people in your band.

[00:30:00]

Do you go through the traumas in the incidents of each member for like, you know, five or six minutes apiece or—? How does—? I'm interested in the dynamic of therapy in a group that large and distant.

Kenny Hensley: Yeah. I mean, we don't go through a ton of personal stuff. Things have come up, our individually personal stuff. You know, it's hard to pinpoint exact memories of it too, because we've been doing this off and on with her for eight or nine years now. It's been a while. And I think in the earlier days there was some of that, like explaining in a group session more of those personal things and trying to explain to people like why you take that this way, or why you are the way you are because of past experiences. And so, there definitely was more opening up.

I mean, this band was kind of a whirlwind. None of us knew each other before this band started, really. The only two members—John, our lead singer; and Tyler, our drummer—went to high school together. And so, Tyler joined the band last—or second to last, because we needed a drummer. But the rest of us met at an open mic night, and it happened really quickly, and it immediately went into just writing music together but not really getting to know each other. You know? And before you know it, we're in a van touring, and we're sitting in a van all day with each other. And it's really fun, but we're just kind of shooting the shit. And it's not like we have this deep sense of one another and our lives and where we came from and—you know—what traumatic experiences we've gone through in the past. We just never talked about those things.

And so, this gave us a really—like, much needed late chance to learn one another. You know, it was like five/six years into the band, but I felt like we didn't really start to understand each other until we started doing sessions with Dr. Norton. You know? And like I said, some of them were taking turns explaining stories from your past and explaining why you tick the way you do. And some are just her asking what's going on in the band and this life and the life we live and the schedules and the separation and the amount of time away from home. And sleeping on a bus and living on a bus in close quarters can be really, really stressful and anxiety and inducing and really exhausting. And so, even just talking through what we're dealing with in real-time is really helpful. You know, whether it's relationships with our

management or relationships with the record label or decisions we're having to make or decisions we can't agree on.

You know, we're pretty rare in the sense that we are a band of six people, but we make all decisions together. Everything's split six ways evenly. You know, there's no one person in this band calling the shots. You know, onstage there's a lead singer and there's people that may look like they have more of a lead role to the general thing. But behind the scenes, it's really split. You know, every dollar's split six ways, and every decision's split six ways. Which is really beautiful, and I think is a huge reason we're still together. But it means there's a whole lot of arguing and back and forth and fighting for points and picking and choosing your battles. There's a lot of that. Because if we're split, it's just—you know, then it will boil down to management getting in and saying what they think. Or a therapist!

And so, there's a lot of therapy sessions where it's just like, "We can't come to an agreement; let's discuss this and dive a little deeper into why people feel certain ways about things." And that's helped us through a lot of decisions.

John Moe: That sounds like— You have to get really good at a group dynamic in order for something like that to work as a business, as an enterprise.

Kenny Hensley: (*Chuckles.*) It's really insane. I mean, it's one of those things— I wish so badly there were more people on earth who have been in The Head and The Heart for a handful of years, because I know that nobody outside of the six of us will ever truly understand it. You know? I mean, there's people that are close to us that get an idea. There's our management and record label. And our therapist, even, that—you know, she probably has the deepest connection in that sense. But nobody can really get it. And so, it's really tough to talk to about things with your family or friends or outsiders. Because as much as you can update them on what you all are doing, it's impossible for them to really understand the deep, deep dynamic of—and the layers to this band of how we function, and how we've been able to function. And how it's traumatic, and how it's really hard at times.

You know, it's not easy all the time. And there are times when I just wanna pull my hair out and wanna leave the band. And that's happened to every one of us. You know, I think I've quit this band four times, but it's always overnight. And then the next day I'm apologizing. And you know, I'm back in the band. That just happens, because it can be tough. You know, but at the other end of it, we get to do what we love doing, and we get to perform in front of people that love our music and are—you know, it means something to them.

[00:35:00]

And I just am constantly trying to remind myself of that and trying to remind myself of like why we do this and why I should be appreciating it. Because we're truly just so lucky and so lucky—I mean, just to be a band for 15/16 years who have all made decisions together and gone through losing a member, gone through me almost dying and ending up in rehab, and writing a record remotely, and management changes, and record label changes, and all sorts of things that could just be really difficult and break a lot of bands. I'm really—at this point, I feel like we finally have grown up and matured to a point to where we're starting to work together like we always dreamed we would—you know? Or hoped we would.

And it's just—I'm so glad that we're still together. Because if we had broken up seven/eight years into it, we never would've seen this. And right now, I feel like we're really—for lack of a better term—firing on all cylinders. And like I said, I can't be more excited for this record. I think it's gonna show—and I think a lot of people that were really big fans of our first record or our first couple records but might have fallen off a little bit, because things got a little more produced or poppy or whatever, are gonna be really, really surprised and happy. I think they're gonna feel like they got their band back. You know?

And I think a huge part of that is because we're just—after years of going through things, we're back at a place to where our relationship and our connection feels strong and real. And I'm actually excited about it. You know, I'm not dreading going on tour, because I have to be around these people every day that I am so tired of being around. You know, I'm actually excited to see 'em. And we're friends, and it's fun, and all the things you hope for out of a band. It's feeling that way now, which is really a beautiful thing.

John Moe: Is any of this drama, that stuff that you went through with your addiction or the therapy that the band has been through—the trauma response that the band has been through—is any of that in the lyrics on the new album?

Kenny Hensley: Um, you know? That's a tough question for me to answer, because—first of all—I don't write a ton of the lyrics. I write a lot of the music, and I don't like asking a ton of questions about the lyrics. I think even as— Like, one thing I love about music and about songs is making the song mean whatever it means to you. You know? I don't always love knowing exactly what a song means, because I like creating my version of what it means. And there are songs on this record where I— You know, there's a song Matty sings, and the lyrics like could be about charity; they could be about the band; they could be about something else. And I love the mystery there. I love not knowing for sure what it's about.

There is one song in this record I wrote all the lyrics to and sing on, which is my first time ever doing that. And that—

John Moe: Which one's that?

Kenny Hensley: That's called “West Coast”. It's a— And that's more a song about a long-distance relationship I was in, but also tying that into the COVID years and me just not being a human during that period, and not being there, and letting everybody down. It's kind of a combination of those things.

John Moe: Kenny, congratulations on the album, and congratulations on your health and on the hard work that you continue to put on—

Kenny Hensley: Thank you so much.

John Moe: —for both the music and for yourself. It's a real success.

Kenny Hensley: Yeah, I really appreciate it. It feels really good. I mean, it's wild to think that three years ago—three years ago, today—I was in a rehab. And you know, I'm glad it

happened now, because I have context; I have the ability to look back and remember where I could be and where I have been. But it makes—you know, it's made everything light. It's made everything in my life feel more meaningful and this band feel more meaningful. And you know, I couldn't say that five/six years ago I'd be really excited to fly to see the band and to be doing a bunch of stuff.

And I'm doing that today. I'm flying to Philadelphia today, and we have a show tomorrow night, and I am very excited. You know, I've been playing our songs, and I actually can't wait, and it's been a while since I felt that way. So, I'm really happy and really proud of my work and also just what this band's done to keep it all together.

John Moe: The album's called *Aperture* From The Head and The Heart. Kenny Hensley, thanks.

Kenny Hensley: Thanks so much.

John Moe: Let's hear some of that track that Kenny wrote and sings on. This is “West Coast”.

Music: “West Coast” by The Head and The Heart from the album *Aperture*.

We're both living on the west coast

But you're dreaming of the east coast

Does it really even matter?

La da da

I was living in a junkyard

Could've been a graveyard

If I only had a brave heart

La da da

Been going on the crash course

Looking out for the road signs

Still waiting at the red light

La da da

(Music fades out.)

[00:40:00]

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

John Moe: Hey, I hope you love the show. I hope you love listening to it. I hope it helps you. I know it helps other people out in the world. We need to pay for it, so we really appreciate your donations. If you've already donated to the show, thank you. If not, it's so easy to do. You can join at any level that works for you. Just go to MaximumFun.org/join. Find a level that works for you, and you'll listen differently. You'll listen knowing that you've helped the world a little bit. Be sure to hit subscribe. Give us five stars. Write rave reviews. That gets the show out into the world.

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 at [@DepreshMode](https://bsky.app/profile/depreshmode). Our Instagram is [@DepreshPod](https://www.instagram.com/depreshpod). Our *Depresh Mode* newsletter is on Substack. Search that up. I'm on BlueSky and Instagram at [@JohnMoe](https://www.instagram.com/johnmoe). Join our Presbies group, also. A lot of good dialogue happening over there, people helping each other out, talking about mental health, talking about the show. I'm over there. I'll see you over there. Please use our electric mail address to get in touch, DepreshMode@MaximumFun.org.

Hi, credits listeners. In case you're wondering, the story of the band's name—The Head and The Heart—is that it made more sense to them, when they were talking about it, to quit this whole music thing and get steady jobs. That's the head. The heart is what told them to stick with the music thing, and that worked out.

Depresh Mode is made possible by your contributions. 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.)

Maddox: I'm Maddox from Washington, DC, and it's not always gonna feel like this.

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!