

[cheerful, festive mix of the Season 5 intro theme fades slowly, Alden begins talking over it]

ALDEN: Hey everyone, welcome! It's Alden with the cast of *Mission to Zyxx* and *The Young Old Derf Chronicles*.

SETH: Hello!

JUSTIN: Hey...

MOUJAN: Hello!

WINSTON: Hiiiiii!

ALDEN: Uh, happy belated X-Marse to each and every one of you. as well as Happy New Year! We are all scattered to the winds, uh, on Zoom but we came together for a special New Year release. We're giving Shane the week off to enjoy family time and, like all of us, traveling with a bunch of screaming children.

JUSTIN: Mmm.

ALDEN: And instead, we're going to do a little bit of out-of-character mailbag. We've done a few mailbag episodes as our characters before, but it's been a while since we've taken questions from you about our deeply personal secrets that we all hold. All these questions today are going to come from our *Mission to Zyxx* Discord. and as always, if you'd like to contribute to the next *Mission to Zyxx* one-shot, you are welcome to support us on Maximum Fun and that gives you access to the Discord where you can meet a bunch of cool people, hang out with us, and also submit ideas and questions like the ones you're about to hear today. Keen-eared listeners may even notice throughout this mailbag that you'll hear two groups of the crew. One day we were recording with Seth, Shane, Winston, and Justin, and today we're recording with Jeremy, Seth, Allie, Moujan, and me.

SETH: Is it the same Seth both times?

MOUJAN: Whoa, two SETHs?

ALDEN: It is—Well, you do look a little bit different than you did yesterday.

JEREMY: Yeah, are you the stunt Seth?

SETH: I don't know.

ALDEN: Some of these questions I will be combining because I think they're good for both groups. And some questions will just be for one group and the other. So let's get right to the questions, shall we? Shane.

SHANE: Alright.

ALDEN: Shane O'Connell, from *Where's-the-Beefer*, who I think is also known on the Discord as Powerline. "Shane, what's your favorite part of sound designing for

the Zyxxverse? Is it the voices, the sound effects, the room tone, the music? Tell us, oh, Wise One."

JUSTIN: Is it the time you spend doing it? Is it the exposure to the blue light from your monitor screen?

ALDEN: [laughter] Is it the sleepless nights?

SHANE: Yes, the lower back pain. The, uh...

WINSTON: What about the crushing expectations of everyone? How's that?

SHANE: [laughing] The panic. Like, my favorite part... Well, I don't know. I like having an idea and then pulling it off. So, like, for episode two of *Derf*, I really got fixated on this, like, idea of him accidentally turning on his recorder and us hearing the real world through his pocket. I think that there's something, I mean, it's the least hi-fi part of the show. But to me, it's interesting because it's like, in a way, the most real part of the show.

JUSTIN: Hmm.

SHANE: You know what I mean? It's like the layers of like, we're hearing this device recording something that's in this world, to me, in a funny way, is more real than like the hi-fi?

ALDEN: It's not omniscient.

SHANE: Yeah, exactly. So like, I got really fixated on like how to do that, um... pocket effect? And that was really fun. I, like, ended up just stuffing a microphone down my pants. [clarifying] *Pocket* part of pants.

JUSTIN: Huh, interesting.

SHANE: Not... not butt pants.

JUSTIN: Controversial.

WINSTON: No judgment. No judgment.

SETH: Finally, you're doing that for a reason! Finally, all that practice has really paid off.

ALDEN: [laughter]

SHANE: Yeah, it's funny how the world works that way.

JUSTIN: You conquered hi-fi, and now you're conquering lo-fi. This is really...

SHANE: Yes, below the belt lo-fi.

JUSTIN: The ultimate lo.

SHANE: The other favorite part of mixing, I haven't done it as much for *Derf* because I'm in dad mode, But whenever I finished a show, like, I have to record it all in real

time. Like I have to start from the beginning and record the whole thing to make sure there are no mistakes. So once I got to that point, it would usually be very late at night. And I would—

SETH: You mean like play it and have it mixed down to two tracks? Like, y'know, a multi track session—

SHANE: Yeah, I literally open up like a new track in Pro Tools and press record on it. And it like records everything.

SETH: Yeah.

SHANE: And yeah, I would usually have a drink, sometimes smoke some grass, and get to listen to the whole show for the first time back to front and just be like, "alright, this one's good. It's funny."

JUSTIN: Audience member numero uno.

SHANE: That's right.

JUSTIN: Shane.

ALDEN: I think one thing that people don't maybe immediately recognize, although I hope they feel it in their back hearts, is just how different this show is from Zyxx, like, fundamentally. One of the things I think Shane was really excited about was like, "let's try a different approach to how we make the show so that we're not just doing more Zyxx episodes." But structurally, also, I think we all thought it would be fun to try something that wasn't a formulaic kind of mission structure and that we were exploring new stuff all the time. And, of course, as you may have already noticed by now, it makes the show way more complicated.

WINSTON: [piping up] I think it's been easier. I think it's been a lot easier to make!

ALDEN: It only has taken us three years to make.

WINSTON: I think it's been fine.

SETH: Easier things take longer, right? Yeah.

ALDEN: Yeah, yeah. But we've gone out of our way to come up with scenes that are weird and that are not the kind of linear scenes that we would have made on the show or I guess, we would have had to deprioritize on the show. So, that leads to a related question from Dariel. "How do you know how many scenes to have in a given sequence? Like, the 'Young Old Derf looks in weird places for his murderer' sequence in episode one. Do scenes mostly end themselves or does someone have to call end?"

SETH: That actually, wait, that, that sequence is interesting because I remember that we had finished a cut of the episode and Alden, you were like, "I think we need something here to show that, like, we had—"

JUSTIN: Right.

SETH: "—he's like looking around a little bit." Because originally it was just, like, cut straight to the bar and he meets Shae and GOOD_E—

WINSTON: Oh, right!

SETH: —and it felt like, and... and I kind of remember thinking like, "really, we need to—we need a bunch more scenes, Alden Ford?" And then we recorded them. I was like, "okay, those were fun. I still am not convinced we need them." And then when they were cut in, I was like, "damn it, these are really funny, and it totally works," for what he says—

JUSTIN: Right!

SETH: —as what Alden thought they were going to do. *And*, of course, you know, they created what... you never quite know what characters are going to jump out at the audience, like necessarily? I did not peg the, um, "cool cool single local twins!" I was like... [laughter]

ALDEN: Sexy and wow!

WINSTON: I forgot about that and then I was just, truly, like, laughing when I heard the episode and I was like "oh right, yeah."

SETH: Yeah.

SHANE: Yeah, I love that scene but I remember texting you when I was working on that being like "where is this happening? What is this?"

ALDEN: [laughter]

WINSTON: Doesn't matter, doesn't matter, Shane.

SETH: Yeah.

ALDEN: Doesn't matter! [Claro and Flaro voice] Doesn't matter!

WINSTON: [imitating] Doesn't matter!

SETH: All you're gonna have to do is write some noir music, Shane, you're fine.

SHANE: [laughs]

ALDEN: Yeah, yeah. Well, I think that that's something that is a little bit of a double-edged sword because on one hand, we are able to go do these sillier tangent scenes that we maybe wouldn't have had time or space for on the on the main show. But it also creates these extra obligations that we have... like, uh, not to get too in the weeds but like one of the reasons these first few episodes have been so much more work than, um, any of the Zyxx episodes or any of the at least the mainline kind of Zyxx, you know, standard Zyxx episodes, is that we've had to figure out not only who these characters are but like, what makes them interesting to listen to? Like, with

the... kind of the inherent pitch of *Mission to Zyxx* was "it's like a workplace comedy!" It's like, everybody has their thing—

SETH: Yeah.

ALDEN: —they all have very recognizable, um, analogs. You know, everybody knows Luke Skywalker, everybody knows C-3PO. And so having those analog characters just makes sense and there's episode structures very Star Trekkyy and, like, it's easy to figure out. With this it was totally different, where it's like... a memoir of a guy who's weird and his memories are weird and the things he did were weird and we want to be weirder about how we make the show but then we're also like "but what makes Shae interesting, and what makes GOOD_E interesting? Like what makes us want to listen to these guys for... for eight episodes, especially since they're not on a crew together, they're not doing the same kinds of missions every episode. So that's something that we've had to go back and plug in and and, and that, um, series of scenes with, uh, with the twins and the weapons dealers and stuff...

WINSTON: I think in terms of the actual scenes it's sort of like, I mean an improv scene, it's like, you're not going to top that. Right? Like, and so you, that's when you edit the scene, and so... usually something will happen and we'll be like "yeah, I think we got it" or, you know, I'll apologize and be like "I think I'm done, I don't think we can go any further." [laughter]

SETH: More, more! We need more!

JUSTIN: Yeah, a classic apology edit, as it's known.

SETH: More offensive!

WINSTON: "I don't... I think we're done with..."

JUSTIN: "I'm so sorry."

WINSTON: "Yeah, I'm sorry about that." But I do think that, right, it's more of just sort of a feel where it's like, "yeah, I think we got it, right?" I think that's like, kinda the kind way that all of us are like, "let's move on. I think we got what we got."

JUSTIN: Well, I think it goes in two directions. It's either like, if everyone's laughing, so that means no one's talking. It's like, "well, that's a cut point."

WINSTON: Yes.

SETH: Right, right.

WINSTON: Yeah.

JUSTIN: "We certainly ended that there." Or it's the opposite. It's like everyone sort of stops talking. It's like, "okay, we're done with that."

WINSTON: Yeah, it's sort of actively...

JUSTIN: We've literally, the go-kart has ended its long run.

ALDEN: That reminds me, and this is, we're veering off of the questions, but it does remind me of, you know, one of the things that was so hard about the '19s that we may have mentioned at some point in one of our many behind-the-scenes things, and the '20s, also the finales, was always about, like, taking everything from that whole season and being like, "what are the loose ends in this? What are the unanswered questions?"

SETH: Yeah.

ALDEN: And so there was way more sort of quote unquote writing in those episodes. We didn't write anything down, but it was always stuff where we kind of, like Winston said, kind of got on the same page about, like, "what's the real relationship between C-53 and the, and the Captain?"

SETH: Yeah.

ALDEN: "And like, wouldn't it be funny if this happened? Let's do a scene where this happens." Like, that kind of stuff where it's a little more prescriptive because it's in service of, like, making this satisfying season ender. And the thing that's kind of been tough, not only... Shane spoke to it a little bit about the sound design. That's happened not only in every episode, but almost in every scene.

JUSTIN: Yeah.

WINSTON: Oops all loose ends!

JUSTIN: It's all loose ends.

ALDEN: So we're like, "okay, what is Shae doing? Why is Shae agreeing to do this?" Or like, how do we justify—

SETH: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, especially because it's only going to be eight episodes. So with *Mission to Zyxx*—

ALDEN: Yeah, exactly, it has to move along.

SETH: —like literally 16 of the 20 episodes could kind of be like, as long as they're mentioning the overall goal, like, this can just be—

ALDEN: Whatever!

SETH: —whatever the guest comedian pitched. And like, they're all sort of bottley to a... [struggling with the understanding of how to pronounce this word. Bottle, like, bottlish.] Bottley.

WINSTON: [British accent] Bottley!

SETH: Yeah, so that's been more of a challenge with *Derf*, which is, like, is sort of, like, the premise is it's kind of, like, a loosey-goosey, like, this is a jam band, like, season—

WINSTON: Ramble.

SETH: —but there's also sort of more narrative onus on it to be, like, wrapping itself up.

ALDEN: We only have eight episodes to tell the whole thing.

JUSTIN: And I feel like sort of what you guys have been saying is, like, there is a lot more, like, direction in going back to, like, tweak things to make everything make sense. But I will say the first pass at everything is almost purely improvised.

SETH: Always, yeah.

JUSTIN: To the point where it's like, and that, that we... I think we just got to make sure that's clear. Because that's a wild way to make something so specific to start. And that's where we get these wilder moments that are then folded and sort of massaged, so it becomes one cohesive, nice piece by the end.

SETH: Yeah.

ALDEN: And I would say we've done that more aggressively in this than we did in the original show.

JUSTIN: Right.

WINSTON: Yes.

ALDEN: We were like "okay, the premise is prison, we're just doing a bunch of scenes in a prison."

WINSTON: That's it.

ALDEN: "And we'll figure it out." Like, you know there's no—there's, there wasn't even any expectation that we'd end up back on the ship, or you know doing a recap or even having a mission, really. Like, we knew we were going to meet Twinkle but that's because that was established in the second scene and that was pretty much it. And so everything else we kind of had to back into.

WINSTON: Yeah.

ALDEN: We have an interesting question here from PointNemo. "What did the ship design for the Bargarean Jade involve from the *Mission to Zyxx* credits? I've always been curious about that." [excited] That's a great question. I think before we even started working on the show, I was randomly trolling the internet for *Star Wars* stuff, and there was a *Star Wars* original art design contest. And one of those I thought was really particularly great, and it was by Eric Geusz, who we all know now as the designer of the Bargarean Jade.

JEREMY: AKA Space Goose.

ALLIE: [deep voice] Space Goose.

MOUJAN: [deep, excited voice] Space Goose!

ALDEN: spacegoose on Discord. So I reached out to him, just cold emailed him and was like, "Hey, I thought your design in that *Star Wars* contest was really awesome. We're designing a ship, and the aesthetic for it is right up our alley. Would you be interested?" And lo and behold, he wrote me back and gave me something like 30 amazing sketches. We all weighed in, chose the one we liked the best, and kind of refined it from there.

MOUJAN: He also does a cool thing where he kind of bases the spaceships off of an object sometimes or his like... so it's—

JEREMY: Yeah, he's got lots of great—

SETH: Yeah, like this garlic press is now a space station.

MOUJAN: Yeah, he did one for, like, Sriracha. He has one... He has, like, a bunch of them.

JEREMY: Yeah, he's got a bunch. If you check out his Instagram, there's tons of them.

MOUJAN: Yeah.

SETH: Well, I remember Alden looking over a few of the sketches and we were kind of like, "this one, like these are all great, but some of them look too kind of cool." And the Bargie shape was so awkward that it felt like it inherently fit with a comedy show.

MOUJAN: I do think since its conception, people have noticed that it does look like Bargie's, in fact, dabbing, but I don't think that Bargie is.

ALLIE & JEREMY: [laughter]

MOUJAN: It's not intentional. That was never the intention of Bargie, to be dabbing.

SETH: [astounded] That's so true. Bargie is dabbing. I feel like baked into this question is like, "wait, what does it mean to do the visual design for an audio show?"

MOUJAN: Yeah.

SETH: Like, is there something about the ship design that actually affects the acoustics? But I love that it's in the credits.

ALDEN: Yeah, and I do think it was deliberate for all of us to say going in, like, we don't want to design everybody.

SETH: Right.

ALDEN: In fact, we want to design as little, you know, we want to establish a visual for as little as possible. But I think we all decided, like, if they're all on Bargie pretty much every episode, having some sort of frame of reference, not only for, you know, what she looks like, but also, you know, just so we can get our heads around kind of

what the world looks like. And I think that was kind of what I had initially told Eric when I emailed him was like, if there's one design from *Star Wars* that I think is like truly iconic, besides maybe like Darth Vader or someone or something, it's the Millennium Falcon.

SETH: Mmhmm.

ALDEN: It's truly one of the perfect pieces of prop design I think I can come up with, it's just absolutely amazing. And I was like, if we could come up with something like that, where it's like, you don't have to know what Pleck looks like exactly. But if you know what Bargie looks like, it really... it sets the tone for the whole rest of the show. And if it's super legit looking, then it will make the rest of the show feel legit. And so that was kind of the philosophy we had going in.

Here's a related question, and this is... this came much later, it came six years later. "Who came up with the floor plan for the Bargie blueprint poster?"

CREW: [various mmm sounds]

ALDEN: Which, as most of you know, was a limited release blueprint that we made. and that was much more collaborative because at that point we had all been working on the show for a long time and we had a lot more ideas of what... what stuff was and where things were. I reached out again to somebody who I had found... some artist I'd found online who had done a bunch of speculative schematics for, like, *Star Trek* ships or something... this really great artist named Rob Turpin. And I think I said "Moujan, send me a list of, like, whatever you think would be funny. Not only what we've established on the show but like, what are other rooms?" Because you know, once you look at the size of Bargie, there's like, several dozen rooms that we've never talked about that have to be—you know, we'd have to figure out what they were. And so Moujan sent me a bunch of really funny ideas for rooms, as well as, like, funny names for the stuff that we knew existed. Like, like you had a "big wing," "medium wing," and then "little bitty tiny baby boop boop wing" or something like that, which is so funny.

MOUJAN AND ALLIE: [laughter]

ALDEN: Um, and so, that was a really cool process because the guy who designed the blueprint was not Eric Geusz. That was a different person who looked at Eric's drawings and came up with a blueprint for it, a floor plan, and then drew in a lot of the stuff that Moujan and I and the rest of us had sent along. And then another person, a twelfth person at this point, longtime friend Steve Uncles who has a really great architect's handwriting, I gave him that list and said to draw that in, in his handwriting. So it looked like an actual architectural drawing because architect... the architect handwriting is such a specific skill that people have and it's all very similar from architect to architect. Like, it's a... it's a font you learn when you—

ALLIE: It's like cue cards.

ALDEN: —go to architecture school. Yeah, exactly!

JEREMY: My dad has that because he took drafting classes in college and so his—

ALLIE: No kidding!

JEREMY: —his block capitals are, like, super precise, yeah.

ALLIE: Jeremy, I feel like every time we do one of these out-of-characters I learn something about your father that just, like—

SETH: Ken Bent, Ken Bent gets a regular shoutout.

ALDEN: Yeah, your dad is a real fascinating—

JEREMY: Ken Bent's an interesting guy, is what I'll say!

ALLIE: Yeah it just, it doubles down on what a great dad you have.

JEREMY: Just spent a week with him! Terrific, no complaints.

ALDEN: Yeah, yeah. Aw.

ALLIE: Aww.

SETH: My favorite thing on the blueprint is, there's... escape pod, which just like, obviously the show that's never established that that exists. [laughter] Otherwise it would have made lots of LOTS of shenanigans not necessary—

MOUJAN: Right!

SETH: —if they could have just escaped at any point.

JEREMY: That's true.

ALDEN: It also begs the question: If Bargie is sentient, is the escape pod sentient?

SETH: Oh right!

JEREMY: A fine Q.

MOUJAN: It's possible. I mean, the fridges. You got George. Wait, Allie, what do you think Dar's... the inside of Dar's room looks like?

ALLIE: It's full of mattresses.

ALDEN: A lot of mattresses, we know.

ALLIE: Full of mattresses.

MOUJAN: It's full of mattresses, right. [laughter]

ALDEN: Mattresses and sex toys.

ALLIE: And and and, oh, I imagine also, like, a lot of built-in bookshelves for all the bodice rippers.

JEREMY: Yeah, you got to have a built-in.

MOUJAN: Ah. Lovely. Yes, tasteful.

JEREMY: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

ALDEN: Let's move on. This is a very important Zyxx question from EnigmaFisheltoe: "So, the scenario is similar to *Freaky Friday*, but instead of parent and child, you wake up to find that you and your main Zyxx character have swapped bodies. How's that working out for both of you?"

MOUJAN: Nothing's changed. [laughter]

ALDEN: Wow.... yeah.

SETH: Next question.

ALDEN: Okay!

JEREMY: I guess it depends on which season's C you're talking about.

ALLIE: Oh, true.

SETH: Oh, wow.

ALDEN: I would definitely be much, much worse off if Pleck was me. Pleck would be better off with me in his position.

JEREMY: Midnight Shadow, Country Gentleman, I think I'm okay. Yumbassador frame...

ALDEN: Less good.

SETH: Loader droid.

JEREMY: Loader droid, I don't know.

ALLIE: Loader droid is what I was thinking of...

JEREMY: Loader droid is rough for my apartment. It's got a lot of narrow hallways.

ALDEN: Jeremy frame, lateral.

JEREMY: Jeremy frame, lateral move. Arguably worse off in some ways, better off in others.

SETH: I feel like somehow Nermut, me switching with Nermut, we'd be better suited, both of us. Because Nermut wants to be bigger, and I think of myself as just a scurrying little tiny guy.

MOUJAN: Yeah.

ALDEN: [laughter] You'd definitely have a big upgrade in your musical outlet. I feel like you want to make the kind of music Nermut makes, but you just don't have the time, and Nermut certainly does.

SETH: I have too much shame.

ALDEN: Alright, here's a question from Osito Surfshirt. "Who are you the biggest fan of right now?"

SETH: That's a great question.

JUSTIN: Who in, of any discipline?

ALDEN: I think like in pop culture. Don't say your wife or something weird, Justin.

JUSTIN: I love my wife! Is that what you wanted to hear?

ALDEN: [silly voice] I like to think I'm her biggest fan.

SETH: Can I choose Justin's wife? Or is it, *you* can't choose, Justin?

JUSTIN: Raises some questions. Raises a couple questions.

WINSTON: I've been listening to the Lonely Island podcast with Seth Meyers.

ALDEN: Really? Is it good?

WINSTON: And I've—Yeah, I think it's pretty good! It's just interesting because Lazy Sunday came out twenty years ago.

JUSTIN: [nervous laughter] Yeah, it's been a while now.

WINSTON: This December, and you're like, whoa.

ALDEN: Whoa!

WINSTON: And I just remember listening to their process and how they worked and how incredible the demands were and all that kind of stuff. It is pretty impressive, and... I don't know. It's a fun podcast to listen to, too, because they're all friends, and so it's... and known each other for a long time, so... It's kind of a good hang podcast. I don't know. I always respect somebody with an interesting big body of work?

SETH: Mm-hmm.

WINSTON: Anyway, that's something I've been listening to that I've enjoyed.

JUSTIN: I mean, this is a basic answer, but I did just watch *Marty Supreme*, and Chalamet absolutely destroys that movie.

SETH: Whoa! I was certain you were going to say Safdie.

JUSTIN: No, well, the movies, I mean, put them both together because the movie's excellent. It's incredibly well made.

WINSTON: Oh, great.

JUSTIN: Yeah, I've watched it twice, and it's only... It's new. So that's my, like, external pop culture thing. More... closer to home, there's a guy, an actor named Tim Baltz. I don't know if you guys know him.

SHANE: Love him.

SETH: Oh, yeah.

JUSTIN: I saw he was in an episode, or two episodes of *I Love LA*, and I didn't know he was in it until I was watching it. And when he popped up, that's the most pure joy. Seeing someone who I know and love doing something awesome and being very funny, was such a hit right there.

SETH: He's in *Gemstones*, right?

JUSTIN: *Gemstones*, yes. I worked with him at *The Opposition with Jordan Klepper*. I wrote with him a lot, he was a correspondent, and we've been buds since. And, man, he's just so good.

WINSTON: Speaking of, Jeff Hiller.

JUSTIN: Oh, yeah! What a year for him!

SHANE: Emmy award winning.

SETH: Talk about it couldn't happen to a nicer guy.

ALDEN: The nicest.

WINSTON: That's truly, if you want to know, listener, like, Jeff is the—that is... who you see on screen and who you see in interviews is Jeff. Like he is not putting on any sort of persona. That is how sweet and funny and nice he is.

SETH: And to be clear, yeah, what we're saying is Jeff Hiller won the Emmy for his performance in *Somebody Somewhere* and was like an absolute dark horse candidate, won against Harrison Ford.

WINSTON: He also wrote a great book, *Actress of a Certain Age*, which is really fun. It's a memoir. So anyway, big... And was, I think in his list of credits, he does list the first live episode of *Zyxx*.

JUSTIN: Famously.

ALDEN: Really?

WINSTON: Yeah.

JUSTIN: The Emmys really wanted to celebrate that.

WINSTON: [quietly] Lie.

JEREMY: You know who I like? There's a New York comedian named Cassie Wilson who does very funny videos, specifically, one about AI really made me chuckle. Where it's like "hey are you using AI?" and it's like "well, doesn't it do this bad thing?" "Uh-huh." "Doesn't it do this bad thing?" "Uh-huh" Doesn't it do this bad thing?" "Uh-huh." And it's like this very long sequence of those and it's, like, "Well,

no, I don't think I'm gonna use it." [annoying voice] "Well, you should probably get used to the new technology!"

CREW: [laughter]

JEREMY: And it really made me laugh and so I followed her and she posts lots of funny stuff.

ALDEN: That's great, nice.

ALLIE: Okay, I found the person on TikTok whom I love, um, and I think makes content that is just truly cozy. It's David... [pronouncing] Lahrbi or David Layrby but it's L-A-R-B-I and he's like a poet and an author and all of his posts are...

MOUJAN: Oh!

ALDEN: That's so nice!

ALLIE: Like they're... they all rhyme, it's all poetry.

MOUJAN: I love that!

ALLIE: It's just, like, I don't know, it's just, like really lovely. I was thinking about him too because I think he just posted that it was his birthday

ALDEN: Aw, happy birthday David Larbi.

ALLIE: Yeah.

ALDEN: Good recs.

SETH: I'm not a big SNL person, but I have noticed the stuff I've seen of new featured player Ashley Padilla is so...

MOUJAN: Oh yeah, she's awesome.

ALLIE: Oh yeah!

SETH: She's so good!

JEREMY: That haircut sketch is so funny, it's... a really really good sketch.

SETH: Like, she's a great actor, she's subtle, it feels like, I don't know, '80s rom-com energy sort of somehow in these sketches in like the best way possible.

ALDEN: Mm.

SETH: And, um, yeah. I feel like she came out swinging but it's like, pretty, um, impressive.

ALDEN: Here's a good one from Kajj Celsius! Topical for the date: "What did you accomplish this year that you're most proud of?"

ALLIE: Oh wow.

MOUJAN: Gosh, these are... I was hoping we'd be like [silly voice] "what's Bargie's favorite food?"

ALLIE & ALDEN: [laughter]

MOUJAN: Like, these are deep and hard.

ALDEN: Uh... well, you don't have to think too hard about it. I mean, I... this is an easy, this is an easy one, uh, but, uh, this show was a very, uh, heavy lift.

MOUJAN: Yes!

ALDEN: And it was several years in the making.

ALLIE: Yeah.

ALDEN: And in a lot of ways, feels much like a... much more of an uphill—a good one, but an uphill battle than the first show on pretty much every level. So getting it out and having such great feedback from our listeners and at Tribeca and everything was such a big accomplishment, I think, for all of us.

MOUJAN: I think... I have an answer for this. This is something I can answer.

ALDEN: [excited] Yes, great! Well, there you go. You didn't like that question!

SETH: Oh, she's flipping through a stack of cash. She's proud of that [emphasized] CAYSH!

ALLIE: [laughter]

MOUJAN: Now, I like, so I'm a... vocationally, I'm a television writer.

ALLIE: [hysterical laughter] Vocationally!

JEREMY: [baffled] Vocationally?

MOUJAN: [laughter] Vocationally, is that a word?

ALLIE: Okay, okay, okay.

ALDEN: Your day job is writing for TV.

MOUJAN: My day job is writing for TV, if that's possible, I'd like to also act, but, you know, things are hard. But this summer, because nothing was happening, I basically went inside for many months, became a hermit, and forced myself to be creative and make stuff, and I wrote a feature film.

JEREMY: Hey!

ALLIE: Mouj, that's great!

MOUJAN: Well, you guys know! Why are you surprised? And then...

JEREMY: [laughter] We're allowed to congratulate you.

MOUJAN: Thank you.

JEREMY: I maintain that right.

MOUJAN: [faux anger] Never congratulate me!

SETH: It's called *Avatar 3*. Maybe you saw it over the holidays.

MOUJAN: It's being produced. And maybe in 20 years, you will see it.

ALDEN: [excited] Really?!

SETH: Dude, that's awesome.

ALDEN: That is awesome. I didn't know it. I don't know it got produced.

MOUJAN: Well, it's early stages. So it's possible this may never happen. And you could delete my entire thing that I just said.

SETH: That's great.

MOUJAN: But the fact that I wrote the script, I think, is my biggest hurdle. And so I did it.

ALDEN: That's huge.

SETH: That's amazing.

ALDEN: Yeah, that's a big deal. One of the things, I don't want to blow up their spot, but there is a very lovely Discord person who we've all met several times in person who is really great, Alice. And they have a yearly tradition, which is now, this will be my third year doing it, and I'm always very excited about it. It's the following year bingo card.

JEREMY: I do that now too!

SETH: Oh!

MOUJAN: Ooh.

ALDEN: Where you do a five-by-five grid. Yeah, it's a great idea! You do a five-by-five grid, and you try to make it a mix of stuff that is attainable, but also the stuff that you might luck into. Like, every year I have "new directing work, new voiceover work." You know, like, I may not get it, I may get it, if I get it, it's great. But it feels like an accomplishment. And they're not resolutions. They're not like, I'm going to get into shape or whatever. It's all stuff like...

JEREMY: Here's a great example of the bingo card, is... I run normally a 5K distance a couple times a week.

MOUJAN: [skater voice] Hell yeah, hell yeah. Sick sick sick.

ALDEN: That's pretty good!

JEREMY: I wish I was more consistent with it, but I put on my bingo card "Run a 10k" which is a distance I have never run in my life. Um, and I meant to spend like a month working up to that and then attempt it. And then right before Christmas, the Sunday before Christmas, I just said "I have not..."

ALDEN: You gotta do it!

JEREMY: "I have not trained for this, but what if I just tried anyway?" And I did... and I did.

MOUJAN: That's awesome!

ALDEN: Yeah!

SETH: That's great!

JEREMY: And I really did not do great on that last mile... but I did it.

ALLIE: But you did it!

JEREMY: Yeah, I did it, and my feet hurt a bunch the next day.

ALLIE: [laughter]

JEREMY: But, like, I was okay. And now that's, like another thing I got checked off on the, um...

ALLIE: How did both of you do on your bingo cards? Are we talking like full... full board, or...?

ALDEN: The first year—no. No, no the first year I—I think I probably got half of them. I was more ambitious this year, there was a bunch of stuff that I was like, this... like, one of the things that's—that has been, and will be on the next year's one as well, is submit a crossword to the New York Times.

ALLIE: Oh, yes! Yeah, yeah.

ALDEN: Which I've been working on for a while. But it's the kind of thing like, I have to have, not only I have to be good at it, which I'm not yet, but also I have to have the free time to really sit down, which I haven't had. But it's that kind of stuff where I'm like, I could do it!

SETH: You could submit a blank piece of paper. Honestly, submitting, that's a low bar.

ALDEN: Yeah, exactly!

JEREMY: Yeah, did you ever think about that?

SETH: I like that it's like a really chill version of *The Secret*, like manifesting.

JEREMY: In some ways, yeah.

ALDEN: Yeah, yeah. You're not really manifesting it. Yeah, yeah. Next question, shreddtillderf asks: "What would you say is 'the thing' that kept the project moving forward in the early days and prevented it from becoming either 'that one idea a few of us had once and never ended up making, to never ended up continuing to make after a few episodes?'" I'm not sure if this is about *Derf* or about *Zyxx*...

SETH: I think that's about *Zyxx*.

ALDEN: Yeah. That's a good question!

SETH: I feel like for me personally it just worked way better than I dared to hope. Like, I think after we made a couple episodes, I remember listening to the edits and really going "whoa this is work—this is working." in a way that, like, things don't... like the, it felt like the thing we envisioned we actually were able to make, and it felt replicable. And then I think the next thing was getting a distribution deal where they put a little bit of real money toward marketing because the hard—the two hardest things are making something that's worth making and then, two, getting people to know about it. Um, and so, they were like... Audioboom actually bought ads on other shows, we... and I feel like we just came up with something that we were all excited enough about, and like... and just worked, was fun. And a lot of projects all of us have done have been good ideas that didn't work.

WINSTON: And I would say, for *Derf*, I do think the presence of Justin has propelled *Derf* forward in a great way, um...

ALDEN: Yeah.

WINSTON: Just because Justin is like one of the crew but it's also, like...

ALDEN: It really changes the flavor of the whole thing.

WINSTON: Yeah, and it's interesting to have—

JUSTIN: Describe that flavor.

SETH: It's like bacon and cotton candy, but like..

WINSTON: Yeah, like, putrid but—[laughter] No, but uh, like, uh no, but, no, I do think like, having like, not to like, embarrass you Justin, but having like—Justin is such a pro, so great. And like, we all really like him a lot. And I think, like, also so funny and so, like, structuring it around one person has been sort of interesting. Uh... and I, I wonder if it had been one of like somebody who was initially not like technically part of the, like one of us, like one of the seven people at first—

JUSTIN: Right.

WINSTON: It might've been a little easier for things to sort of have dissolved and be like, yeah, maybe we just don't. Y'know? Like... [laughter]

ALDEN: Yeah. I don't think we could have made, like, a Nermut or a Dar spinoff.

WINSTON: Yeah, I think it, like, I think it would be too—

ALDEN: We would be comparing it to the original show too much. It would be too hard to come up with different ideas and stuff. And I think the fact that we brought someone else in who is very, very familiar with the show—

SETH: Exactly.

ALDEN: —and, like, the idea of how we made the show, but also was going to immediately inject, like, a different kind of chemistry into the group, I think was a really important aspect.

JUSTIN: Well, you said it was important for this to feel different, and there's nothing more different than making it Derfferent the way that we did here.

SETH: A Derfferent.

JUSTIN: And I think it helped to still be similar enough that it felt good. And I think that's a good way to keep something going, to have it be new and old so it feels comfortable but with an edge to it.

SETH: Yeah, yeah.

ALDEN: You might say young and old.

JUSTIN: Right, right. You know, the ultimate dichotomy.

SETH: Yeah. I will admit I was skeptical that Justin records nude always? Like, and, it felt like—

JUSTIN: It's called getting into *character*, Seth.

SETH: Yeah, yeah.

WINSTON: But also when he yells at us, I am like, "okay, I get what you're saying."

SETH: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

WINSTON: You know, when he's like, screaming his demands?

ALDEN: His temper sort of justifies itself.

WINSTON: Yeah, the temper sort of does spur us along, which is good. And I've only cried—

JUSTIN: I've found it's easier to be mad when you're nude.

WINSTON: Yeah.

SETH: You have less to lose!

WINSTON: And I feel like I've only cried like once or twice, which is a lot less than I did over the course of *Mission to Zyxx*.

SETH: Oh, yeah. That's true.

WINSTON: I think that's... that's great.

JUSTIN: That's good. Save your tears.

WINSTON: Yeah.

JUSTIN: Yeah.

ALDEN: I want to leave you with one final little question from cbvolle as we launch into the New Year: "Given the dumpster fire that is the world—"

WINSTON: Sure.

SETH: What a premise...

ALDEN: "—what does the cast do that brings them joy? Like, 'maybe things could get better', or 'people aren't innately horrible' joy." That's a great question. I think the show is one for me. Yeah. Do you guys have anything when you're feeling down that lifts you up? Anything you're planning to do more of in the coming year that's going to keep your joy?

ALLIE: I add things to a cart.

MOUJAN: [cackle]

ALLIE: No, I do do that, though. I truly do think I have a spending problem, so I'm going to do like a no-buy January, but—

SETH: Allie's surrounded by Labubus right now.

ALLIE: Yeah, yeah, yeah. But I love them as if they were my children! I do think, oh my gosh, I know how cringe this will sound. Improv is so the thing. I feel like I went back to doing improv regularly at the UCB when I was, like, especially down. I think, like, you know, I, like, struggled with infertility for two years and I was so sad. And I was also just, like, so tired of, like, my identity feeling like, "oh, I'm the woman who cannot get pregnant and is desperately trying." And so I went back to doing improv at the UCB. And that was such a solve.

ALDEN & MOUJAN: Mmm...

ALLIE: Like, I feel like it was so nice to just return to something.

ALDEN: Yeah.

ALLIE: Like, this is how we all met. This is how we met all of our best friends. Like, you know, I feel like it was so nice to just do Zip Zap Zop with a bunch of, like, other adults.

CREW: [chuckles]

ALLIE: And just be so stupid and have like... and like, just really kind of be so present in that instead of, like, casting forward for like, "what am I going to do if I don't get pregnant? What am I going to do if—"

ALDEN: Yeah.

ALLIE: You know, like, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

ALDEN: That's so great.

ALLIE: And it was so nice to, like, rediscover this thing. [pained laughter] And I think, you know, still doing it because the world continues... to hurt. [laughter] Yeah.

ALDEN: I mean, I think it's funny how it's become such a cliché to, like, separate the world into like pre and post COVID stuff.

ALLIE: Yeah.

ALDEN: But like we were all at the theater at least once a week and a lot of us several times a week.

ALLIE: Yeah.

ALDEN: And the fact that that just stopped. And then... actually didn't seem like that big... I mean, you know, relatively didn't seem like that big a deal because everything went crazy for a couple of years. And now that things are evening out a little bit, I'm like, [laughter] that was such a huge part of my life. And we don't do any of that anymore. You know, and so, good for you for getting back into it. That's really, that's really awesome.

JEREMY: One of my lives that I lived before Zyxx was, I was a roller derby referee in New York City?

ALDEN: Hell yeah. Hell yeah.

MOUJAN: Hell yeah.

JEREMY: For three years. And then I announced for a few years after that. Technically one of the first people to announce roller derby on television in New York since the '80s.

ALDEN: Wow! No big deal?

JEREMY: Uh, yeah, um... but I love to roller skate. I don't do derby anymore, because I think my body would be very angry with me, but I love to roller skate. I especially love to roller skate in the street which I used to do in Prospect Park in New York. And then they would do an event a few times over the summer called Summer Streets—

MOUJAN: Oh, I love Summer Streets!

JEREMY: —where they would close down Park Avenue, you could skate basically from, like, almost from the corner of Central Park all the way down to like City Hall?

SETH: Oh wow.

JEREMY: And you would go through Grand Central Terminal. It was very cool.

ALDEN: Oh, cool!

ALLIE: Whoa.

MOUJAN: Oh, but, Jeremy this year they made it even longer!

JEREMY: [excitedly shocked] What?

MOUJAN: It goes all the way to Inwood—it goes from Brooklyn Bridge Park to Inwood.

JEREMY: Oh, hell yeah! But that's really fun, and I really like doing that, but I also want to make some time to... like, I also love skating at rinks and there's a couple of very good rinks in LA.

ALLIE: Oh yeah.

JEREMY: So I want to make more time to do that in 2026.

ALDEN: That's awesome.

MOUJAN: For me, something that's helped, but I'm trying to be better at it too, is to just be around people and be around community?

ALDEN: Yeah.

MOUJAN: And like, uh, we briefly mentioned it in another podcast episode but I'll go into it for real, yeah I am in an underground secret dominoes society.

ALDEN: Nice!

MOUJAN: And I'm not gonna say more than that but it's been fun, and I do have a keychain that has my tile number which is one six. [laughter] Thank you so much everybody.

ALLIE: Wow.

MOUJAN: Um, yeah, well just like special times of just like forcing yourself to be around—not forcing but like—

JEREMY: But having an appointment, like, "hey, Wednesday night!"

MOUJAN: Having an appointment to see people!

JEREMY: "We're gonna come..."

MOUJAN: Yeah, yeah, yeah, to not just like, be in your head and focus on how terrible things are sometimes.

SHANE: I've been, uh, getting back into playing guitar.

JUSTIN: Great answer.

SHANE: Very—like, trying to have a very mindful, real guitar practice.

SETH: Nice!

SHANE: Something I haven't done for a long time. Yeah, when I was a kid when I was learning to play, like I used to be at school and just couldn't wait to get home to, like, practice guitar, you know what I mean? And I wanted to have that feeling again, so like... I've got a real, you know, set aside time every day, and have like, some stuff I work through and it's been great. Doesn't make me feel better about the world, but uh...

SETH: That's awesome.

SHANE: Makes me feel good.

ALDEN: Makes you feel better about some sick licks!

JUSTIN: Yeah.

SHANE: That's right.

SETH: Um, I would say like occasional, just, small impromptu dance parties with the children are a good, uh, a good sort of dopamine boost, because it's both very joyous *and* really funny how little kids dance.

JUSTIN: Def.

SHANE: That's great.

SETH: It's great entertainment and great activity. My six-year-old does a lot of hands on the floor like, um... I'll name it, like—

JUSTIN: You may be at a gymnastics class.

SETH: This is called a hip, a hip out. Yeah it's... it's, um... yeah.

ALDEN: Wow.

[festive outro music plays over Alden speaking]

ALDEN: Folks, thanks so much for joining us for this question-and-answer forum. Um, thanks for sending in your questions, if you'd like to be involved in the next *Mission to Zyxx* one shot, you can by supporting the show on maximumfun.org, and thank you so much to everybody who submitted questions. Thank you to the crew for joining us for this. Happy New Year.

SETH: Happy New Year!

ALDEN: Happy New Year's Eve.

SETH: We'll see you all in Times Square.

MOUJAN: What?

ALDEN: We'll see you in 2026 for more *Derf!*

MOUJAN: *Derf!*

SETH: More *Derf!*

ALDEN: Yeah, we're all headed to Times Square.

MOUJAN: Yeah, we're all going to Times Square. Don't worry about it.

SETH: Put on our diapers and ride the ball.

ALDEN: We're going to strap on our pee bags. [laughter] Yeah, exactly! Have a good night, everybody!

JUSTIN: [festively] Happy New Year!

MOUJAN: Bye.

WINSTON: Happy New Year!

[outro music fades out, replaced by chill radio music]

[Promo: *Reading Glasses*]

HOST: Good evening. Thanks for tuning in to 101.1 MaxFun. It's midnight here on Host to Coast, and we've got Sarah from Michigan on Line One.

SARAH: [over the phone] Hi, 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. 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: Oh, I don't think they cover that. *Reading Glasses* every Thursday on Maximum Fun.

[radio music replaced by beeping, sci-fi music]

[Promo: *Greatest Trek*]

BENJAMIN: Hey, do you have a favorite episode of *Star Trek*?

ADAM: If you do, you should also have a favorite *Star Trek* podcast.

BENJAMIN: *Greatest Trek* is about all the new streaming *Star Trek* shows, and it's a great companion to *The Greatest Generation*, our hit show about back catalog *Star Trek* that you grew up with.

ADAM: It's a comedy podcast by two folks who used to be video producers, so it's a serious mix of comedy and insight that fits right into the Maximum Fun network of shows.

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ADAM: So if you're following *Lower Decks*, *Prodigy*, or *Strange New Worlds*, come hang out with us every Friday as we roast and review our favorite *Star Trek* shows.

BENJAMIN: It's on MaximumFun.org, YouTube, or your podcatching app.

[guitar strum]

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