

Joe Pan 0:00

From the Campus at City College you are listening to KSDS 88.3 HD2 San Diego. Listen live at sdcitytimes.com Welcome to a very special episode of Indie Live in San Diego. I am your host Joe Pan and I am interviewing the lead singer of indie pop band Transviolet. They are a 4 piece since 2011, starting right here in San Diego. They have released three full length albums along with headlining multiple tours across North America and opening for such big artists as Dua Lipa, Twenty-one Pilots and T-Pain. Everyone join me in welcoming lead singer, Sarah McTaggart! It's good to see you Sarah Welcome!

Sarah McTaggart 0:42

Thanks. It's good to see you too!

Joe Pan 0:45

Mainly hear you for the podcast listeners. uh I just, I know you very well, we've worked together for many years, and we've been friends for a long, long time. But you know, we're gonna have to tell everyone else about you. And I just want to start with when did you begin like that feeling of like, oh, music performing live. This that like that. That's that's something that I need. That's something I just have to do. Like the moment of calling. What do you remember a performance, or a day or a moment or something that made you finally like, fully decide, because sometimes it's hard to decide whether you that's what you actually want to go for,

Sara McTaggart 1:25

Right? I mean, from the time I was a little kid, I'd always tell my parents or anyone that asked me that I was, I was an artist, and I was going to be an artist. I think the medium has shifted throughout the years from like me, literally thinking I was going to be a painter or, you know, going to college and thinking I was going to be like media arts and animation and do like animation to then, you know, when I was like in college and started doing open mic nights, realizing like, oh, no, like, I am meant to do this as a career. Like I love performing. I love writing songs. I love performing the songs I've written and having that interaction with the crowd, like, this is what I'm supposed to do. And I dropped out of school. But yeah, I mean, from the time I was like, I remember like, the first time I ever performed in public was like at a church. And I was like, eight, and I was like, wow, that was such a I love that feeling like I would do anything to have that feeling again. So it started there, but then got solidified when I was in college and doing my next and it's like, yeah, this is this is what I meant to do.

Joe Pan 2:25

Yeah, it's a hard thing to decide this is what you're meant to do. Because everything you know, especially financially tells you.

Sara Mctaggart 2:33

This is a horrible idea. Yeah, I mean, I think I was lucky to where, like, I had a lot of people surrounding me that were really like, egging me on and encouraging me to do it. You know, my roommates would hear me kind of like in my dorm or would always be like, Oh my gosh, every time we have a party, like Sarah play that song that you were messing with the other day, or like, show our friends that song you wrote and so I was getting a lot of encouragement. And even though the open mic nights I was doing were super small at the time. I mean, you know, a lot of them were in front of like 10 or 15 people when I first started. There was a lot of people that were kind of like, hey, like this is what you're doing is really cool. Like, don't stop keep doing this. So it was those voices that kind of let me know. Okay, like I'm on to something. I'm not like completely delusional, like maybe this is something I should pursue seriously.

Joe Pan 3:19

Yeah, you do need some, you know, honest friends and some feedback.

Sara Mctaggart 3:28

Yeah.

Joe Pan 3:23

Some open mic nights. No you do you you keep going for your dream open mics, you go. Your comedian. Just Just keep trying, okay, it's fine. Okay. It's just that feeling is interesting to just be like, you know, this is what I need to do against all odds of like, a what, have all your other stuff because I feel like being an artist goes against almost everything that you probably want in a lot of other ways. Like, like, oh, stable job, I want to own a house in the future. At some point, I want to, I want to be able to do this and that. I mean, whether you want to have kids or not things like that. Those are all really expensive difficult. I'm gonna go travel the world, I guess you can do as a musician, but

Sara Mctaggart 4:03

Right.

Joe Pan 4:03

It's a it's a big commitment. You really sacrifice a lot of other things to try to go that route. So it has to be undeniable, right? You feel it.

Sara Mctaggart 4:13

Yeah, I think I think people that are artists, like there's just kind of like no. Like for me, there was no other option. It wasn't like I'm making this choice to like, do this thing. It was like one side had a taste. It was just like, there was no, I was in complete tunnel vision. And I was just like, I'm going to do this. I'm going to make this work. And there's just no plan B.

Joe Pan 4:34

I was thinking about this the other day, maybe in preparation of asking you this question specifically I was thinking. Are artists just the people that don't fit in society and then they just start doing random stuff to figure it out?

Sara Mctaggart 4:47

I think so. Because I mean, I have a lot of friends that are artists too and it's like you know, I'm not somebody that's been like super commercially successful but it's like I've had enough success to just kind of be like, okay, like, this is this is cool like I can, I can have, like my at least my addiction to my art is like, supported by my art. Like, I'm not like dipping into my own like, personal anything but like, it's like, okay, it's like it's self sufficient. That's cool. But I have friends that are, you know, even more indie than me and making the coolest s--- but like, it's yes, it seems like they do it just kind of like beyond all logic and reason. And even though it is just like driving them into poverty, they'll just like, No, I'm going to f----- do this I have to make this thing. And I don't think society was created for artists, I think artists are just something that live outside of societal norms and requirements.

Joe Pan 5:41

I think artists exists to to make sure that everyone else doesn't go insane. That's what yes, that everyone else doesn't turn into robots. So everyone that's not an artist, they, they, they need artists to keep them in the beautiful world of, of, you know, art and spirituality

Sara Mctaggart 5:57

Creating!. Yeah. Yeah, The abstract! Yes!

Joe Pan 6:01

You were an artist struggling playing open mics, and then you get signed by a major record label. And I imagined that day was pretty significant. And seemed like it was the

greatest moment ever, when that happens, like getting married to your career, or whatever you want to call it, you know, like, your career is born or something like that. What did you find out about the record, being in the record label versus what you thought? The record label would be? Like, when you were just a bright eyed, little, little singer?

Sara Mctaggart 6:37

This is such a good question. Yeah, I mean, it's funny, because I specifically remember having this conversation with one of my good friends at the time and being on the phone with her. And both of us, you know, had specific ideas about what it meant to be signed and her asking me, does this mean you're gonna get your makeup done, like every day professionally, like, Oh, my God, you're going to be famous. And I was just like, Yeah, I know. Like, that is like, I thought having a record deal was synonymous with being super successful. And being a superstar and having your songs on the radio and being famous. And like, I thought, like, this is it, like, I've got signed, I've done it, you know, like, I've done, the thing I set out to do, and like, all the work from here is like, somebody else's now, you know, like. I also like, play my shows and write my songs, the like, I don't have to worry about trying to promote this or market this like somebody else, like, has my back. And, you know, just is really naive, because, yeah, the second I got signed, it was like, This rude awakening of like, oh, no, that's not what this is at all. Like, they, they want me to still do all if not, like just all the worker promoting and marketing and trying to come up with these creative ideas. But they're just taking a huge, huge cut of it, and want to be super involved with the creative process. And you know, I wish I could just go back to my younger self, and just be like, hey, just make sure that the people that you're signing with, like, really understand your creative vision, because if you if they don't, it's gonna make it really, really hard for you. And it did, you know, you have all these old men trying to, like, tell you what's cool, and what's what you should be putting out there. And they didn't f----- know, you know, nobody really knows. But it just made things so much more complicated.

Joe Pan 8:30

Well, it's tough to because like, when you get signed in that situation, you're thinking, you're probably thinking this is you like, you are a talented singer, that has interesting ideas artistically and has music and has an image that you can, that can be sold, right, and they're gonna make money off of that image. And what they have is they have connections and money that can support you. Right?

Sara Mctaggart 8:50

Yeah.

Joe Pan 8:50

And they have money they can support you. They have people that can help you improve your art, improve your singing, improve your image, and, and make you a better everything you want to be better at. And they will do the things like book shows, and put things together and get people to your shows and get your music listened by more people and all that stuff. When it just seemed like, Oh, but wait a minute. No, no, they're not going to make my artistic vision better. They're going to, they're going to completely control the artistic vision. And they can just say no, to anything that you want.

Sara Mctaggart 9:31

Right? They can just shut stuff down. Yeah. And I mean, at the time, you know, when I signed I was 23. You know, like, I was so young. And to my credit, I did, you know, I was really competent about what I was doing. And I had a lot of opinions that I would push back a lot but there was just kind of like no use, you know, there was so many times I would push back or be like I don't listen, I don't know about this. I don't know because this is cool. Or if this is what I believe in, I'm not sure if this is going to work. And I would I would just get shut down and kind of be told like well, you're young and, like you don't understand, like this is how it works. Or this is industry standard, like that was a really popular one all the time, like, this is industry standard, you just don't get it like, this is how things work. And I've always been a smart, you know, I was a smart kid, I was a smart, young adult, and I'm like doing the math of like, how these things are gonna turn out. And I'm like, this is never going to be sustainable. You know, but I had so many people in my ear telling me that this was the industry standard. And I was like, I don't know, like, maybe there's something I'm missing, or I don't get it. And I, you know, I believed them, and I trusted people I shouldn't have trusted. And I wish I just would have trusted my gut and trusted myself. But like I said, you know, I was young, and I let people convince me that I didn't know what I was talking about, or they knew better, and they shouldn't have, I should have stuck with my gut and trusted that. No, I did. I did know. I did know what was gonna work, or what wasn't gonna work.

Joe Pan 11:03

I want to say isn't that like the telltale sign of a toxic relationship when you're in the relationship? And this person keeps telling you all these things that you think would kind of manipulate you into thinking that you don't know, right?

Sara Mctaggart 11:16

You don't know? Yeah.

Joe Pan 11:17

Oh, you're young, you're blah, blah, blah, Oh, this isn't just how it works It's just that isn't how it works. This is just how it works. Like, okay, maybe there's just a lot for me to learn. And then when the relationship is over, you think, oh, no.

Sara Mctaggart 11:28

no, they're just gaslighting me the entire time. Like, it's exactly what it was, it was gaslighting, because, like, you know, looking back now, I think of so many conversations that were had, and like, so many things that I let fly that like, it just wouldn't even it like wouldn't even go down at all now, because they would just be like, what, like, what the f--- did you just say to me? Or like, What are you suggesting? Like, absolutely not like, it's funny, because, you know, we're completely independent now. We don't have a record label. But we've been approached by some labels again, like recently, and one of them, you know, the conversation started. And obviously, like, you know, we've been through this a few times now. And I had all these questions. And I could, I could tell the second I started asking these questions, this guy was just like, aw f---, because his face just kind of like went pale. And like, he just you could tell he was kind of disappointed because he did. And he was like, embarrassed by the answers. He had to then give because it was like, Yeah, dude, like, this is like, this is f----- crazy that you're even offering people this, like, you should be embarrassed to be like, offering people so little for like, taking so much, like, That's nuts. But you know, it, you know, 10 years ago, it's like, I was offered this exact same thing. And like, either didn't ask the questions, because I was uncomfortable asking those questions, or when I did ask the questions and was given kind of like, wishy washy answers, I just assumed maybe I, I was too dumb to understand, or like, the person knew better than I did. And, you know, lesson learned. Lesson learned a very hard way.

Joe Pan 13:02

You started asking us questions. He just started sliding his chair back from the table.

Sara Mctaggart 13:05

Oh, yeah.

Joe Pan 13:06

I'm just gonna back up here and probably just slink out of this room. Really quick.

Sara Mctaggart 13:14

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Joe Pan 13:15

Yeah. So you, and then now you have, you know, gained a relative level of fame. I mean, you're more famous than people than most people, I guess. I don't know what percentage you'd be in famous. But so there are, this is about it this way there. I've been next year. And it happens. There are situations where we're walking, you know, in a parking lot, and two young women approach you over the moon and excited and can't believe that they're seeing you even I mean, granted, it's outside your show, but I've never I've never come across a person I definitely don't know react to me in that sort of way that doesn't you know, most most almost everyone does not randomly see a person they do not know,

Sara Mctaggart 13:56

right? right?

Joe Pan 13:57

That knows more about you, then you could ever probably know about them, because you're only going to talk to him for a minute. So talk about what you could talk about what that feels like all of a sudden, and where when you're before you probably think like being famous sounds amazing. To even the even the bit of fame that you have now. Kind of the downfalls of even being

Sara Mctaggart 14:23

this sort of famous Yeah, because it's weird because I am like this weird in between where like, I can go to my groceries, no one's gonna bother me for the most part, but then like every once in a while to somebody I am their favorite artists and they know everything about me. They know every lyric ever written. And they have this idea about me. And yeah, it's it's weird, even. Like, I think about when we went on tour with like, Mother Mother, for instance. You know, there's these just crazy big crowds and we're doing these like meet and greets and the way people interact with me on in that environment. It's like dehumanizing in this weird way. And it's like I want to. Oh my gosh, my cat's going crazy. Like I in those instances, I want to like, disarm the person and make them feel comfortable. I'm just gonna do it. I'm just like a stupid human. I live in this like two bedroom apartment. Like, I'm not, I'm not the thing you think I am. But then it's like it won't work, you know, like, I have to just, like, let them do their thing and yeah, it's, it's weird. It's like, if, by the end of that tour, I felt like just like weird like mentally, like, I can't imagine having to deal with that. On like a, like, all the time, I felt super disconnected. Like, I felt super disconnected from humanity to just feel like people weren't looking at me, like an equal, this human or able to just like have a normal conversation. Like, I can't imagine what it's like to be like, Taylor Swift or something, and

just have people like, See you when you start crying all the time. Like, I've had a very, very, very small taste of that. And just like the feeling of just being like, like, put on that pedestal is like, it's weird. It's I don't think humans are meant to feel that way. It's not it's I don't know. It's not it doesn't make me feel good. Maybe to some people, it feels good.

Joe Pan 16:23

I mean, maybe it does. And in based on the narratives around things, there's very little mean, remorse isn't is too big of a word, I would say. But more like, understanding, I guess.

Sara Mctaggart 16:38

there's little sympathy. Yeah, there's like little I think, like, because it's like, if, for instance, like me saying, this is one thing, I'm not a famous person, but it's like, if you were to hear Taylor Swift complaining about it, like a lot of people like Oh, suck it up, you're famous. That's like what you signed up for? Where it's like a lot of these artists, it's like, yeah, maybe Taylor Taylor Swift sign up for it in one way or another. But like, people that are just songwriters, or people that maybe just set out, you know, literally just to make music. And then famous is kind of like this weird side effect that happens. I don't know. It's just like, it's not what I expected it to feel like, like, I expected it to feel like so warm, and so like, validating and so like, I don't know, like, I just expected it to feel different. And instead it just makes me feel so like distant from people and and maybe that's a me thing, maybe that's something I have to like get over like work through or like that's But to me, having people like cry when they like meet me or like unable to speak or like having a panic attack is like, not like a good feeling. And there's definitely like, don't get me wrong, if not every interaction is like that. Like, there's people that meet me and genuinely, like, you know, want to just, like have a conversation and talk about the music I've made and the art I've made and how it's impacted them. And I love those interactions like that. That's me and like, that's why I make music, you know, like having people tell me, Oh, this song you wrote, helped me out of a really dark place, or helped me break up with my, like, toxic partner and get out of an abusive, abusive relationship or, like, helps me through the death of my friends, like, all that stuff. And like, that means so much to me. And that makes me feel so good and connected and great about the art I'm making. But then, like, yeah, the dark side of it is like, you know, being in this room of like 5000 people and then like doing these meet and greets after there was like literally points the mother Mother tour. I was like, this is like kind of scary. Like, because I'm I again, I'm not like super famous. I didn't have like security with me and not like doing that. But like just the mob mentality of people like wanting to swarm you or like, grab you are touch you or feeling this like entitlement to your body and your attention and your time is like really jarring and strange. And it's like, I don't know what that is, or, yeah, it's, it's weird.

Joe Pan 18:56

Something that's amazing that I've even seen just from my own experience of having YouTube channels and performing for people is, is the parasocial aspect of it where they've generated an entire relationship with you. And you don't know they exist.

Sara Mctaggart 19:11

Yeah.

Joe Pan 19:12

And that happens all the time. So when they meet you, you got to think about I mean, it's too much for you to think about it gets a lot like you're gonna think about it with literally every person but when you think about that person has spent hours thinking about me reading about me and creating me in their mind and they've never met me,

Sara Mctaggart 19:30

It's a different version of you.

Joe Pan 19:32

They know these personal things about you and you don't even know they exist.

Sara Mctaggart 19:36

Yeah.

Joe Pan 19:37

Their name their face their nothing.

Sara Mctaggart 19:39

Right.

Joe Pan 19:39

That's always a freaky, freaky idea.

Joe Pan 19:42

Thank you for listening to Indie Live in San Diego on KSDS 88.3 HD 2, right here at San Diego City College. That was Part one of my two-part interview with Sarah Mctaggart from Transviolet. I am your host Joe Pan and we will see you next time!

Transcribed using <https://otter.ai> and edited by one or more City Times Media multimedia journalists/producers.