

Transcription completed for: 7. LIFERS - Who The Fuck Is Ben Reiser?
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Transcript with identified speakers:

Gabe: You don't have to prove nothing to nobody except yourself.

Ben: And after what you've gone through, if.

Gabe: You haven't done that by now, it ain't gonna never.

Scott: How is everybody?

Gabe: Okay.

Scott: You're okay. You're okay.

Ben: Gabe.

Scott: Gabe. I noticed there's no records in the background this time. I'm really kind of disappointed.

Gabe: Well, there's records back there, but I got nothing on display.

Scott: That's what I mean.

Ben: This episode is a blank slate.

Gabe: I'm kind of feeling weird because I got these records showing every week in the background, but my turntable is not plugged in. I feel kind of. I feel like I'm putting up charade here by showing my records, and my turntable hasn't been plugged in since I moved in, so.

Scott: So you feel like a poser?

Gabe: I didn't say that. I said charade. This is like a synonym for poser, I guess.

Scott: But, yeah, here's what I'm saying. I'm seeing a guy who every episode tried, basically found something that. That was, like, his. His thing on this show. And this week he said, fuck it. That's what I see. I see somebody who decided not to try this week. Now, am I right in that way? Poser.

Gabe: I will call the poser once in my life. I don't even think you're serious now.

Ben: But did the guy live to tell the tale?

Scott: Who was the guy that called you a poser and what was.

Gabe: I don't want to say. Don't want to say.

Scott: All right, well, what happened? I mean, how. What was the instance that you were called a poser?

Gabe: I think I might have put a patch on my jacket at some point in high school. And it wasn't a band that I was very familiar with or something, you know, it's something stupid, high school stuff. You know, those battle jackets, jean jackets with patches.

Scott: And you don't remember the band?

Gabe: I don't remember the band. I just remember being called a poser. And it was stupid and we got over it.

Scott: Listen, I think you remember the band. I think you remember the person, and I think you remember the day it happened.

Gabe: I don't remember the band exactly. I remember the person, but.

Scott: Come on, you gotta tell me the bridge.

Gabe: No, no, it's like the Orange Crush story. It'll go to our grave.

Ben: Oh, Jesus. You just brought that up again. It finally died to death. Wait. There is something on your shelf that I do see and I want you to tell me what it is. There's some. Is it a mug? What am I Seeing there's some figure, it's.

Gabe: I'll bring it closer.

Ben: Yes, please, for God's sake.

Scott: It's a Stein. It's a Frankenstein.

Ben: No, it's like a bobblehead.

Scott: Oh, it's the Eddie. Eddie Bobblehead.

Gabe: Bobblehead.

Scott: From Peace of Mind.

Gabe: From Peace of mind.

Scott: You have two peace of mind, bobbleheads or.

Gabe: No, one is this one and the other is alive after death. But that's the only one that bibles. The other one is regular. These are toys, man.

Scott: I knew we'd find a way. I knew we find a way to talk about something in there.

Gabe: I bought these toys. My wife called them toys. They're like dolls. When I was probably 20 years old, or 25, whatever I was. And then 20 years later, here we go. I'm just selling money.

Scott: So it was Heidi that called you a poser? Is that what you're telling me?

Gabe: No, no, she wasn't. She wasn't the one.

Ben: What? So Eddie is always there, but he's usually covered up by what you put on display, right?

Scott: Yeah.

Gabe: Well, I found this. I've been going through my stuff. You know, I'm 49. I'll be 50s next year. This year. And I'm just going through some of my old junk. When you moved, you go through your old drunk.

Scott: You're so old.

Gabe: I know, but I got a lot of stuff I forgot I even had.

Scott: You're saying it's time to put childish things away. You're gonna turn 50? Is that what's going on? So at 50, it's time to get rid of the bobbleheads?

Gabe: I think so. I mean, the Beanie Babies I still have, but the Eddie bobbleheads, they might have to hang around a little longer unless I can find a buyer that wants them more than that.

Scott: I think if you still got eddie bobbleheads at 50, you hold on to those fucking things. They should not be going anywhere. They are. You are. But by you selling them and get rid of getting rid of them, you're not going to change, you know, that's not going to. It's not going to be the thing that makes you turn into a man. It's too late. It's too late for us. Manhood is not what we do.

Gabe: Do you guys have anything like this? Like an Eddie bobblehead that you forgot you had, and then you realize maybe it's a little childish? I'm sure you.

Scott: No, that's childish. That's ridiculous. I don't have one of those.

Gabe: I'm sure you got some. I can find them toys, Ben. You don't have any old movie posters or something?

Ben: You know.

Gabe: You know, I'm sure you got something.

Ben: I've got this thing on my desk right here that's a. It's a. It's a Snoopy coffee mug. And then it says, curse the early morning hours. I should probably just send this to Scott. This seems with his new coffee fixation and his aversion to doing stuff early in the day.

Scott: Listen, I'm not drinking coffee this week. Cause you were right last week, Ben. That coffee fucked me up for two or three days. Like drinking coffee after seven. I'm not a coffee guy anymore. I was just. I was like, whoa, I cannot sleep. It was bad. It ruined my whole week. You were correct on that.

Ben: That was a very quick coffee phase you went through.

Scott: It was. That's how I do. That's how I do.

Gabe: What about the idea of the coffee mugs? The podcast coffee mugs, though? You gotta put something in it.

Ben: Yeah, you gotta. We gotta cut this part out because we still want to sell those.

Scott: Fuck the Lifers podcast coffee mugs. Yeah, we still. We've got to do that. I still think that's a good idea. Oh, so I have to pretend that I'm drinking coffee in order to sell Lifers podcast mugs.

Gabe: You can put, like, Tang in there or something.

Scott: Now who's the poser?

Ben: Drink your whiskey.

Scott: Cheers.

Ben: Oh, look at that. Look at us again. We're twinsies. We have dawn of the Dead posts and Whiskey with Ice. I was gonna. I put ice in my whiskey, and I was like, Scott's gonna see this and he's gonna go, o.

Scott: But you guys have been drinking ice in my whiskey. We just started. What are you drinking? Pee.

Gabe: This is Mango Juicy Juice. I'm the only straight edge one in the group. And I thought. But I didn't know you guys were drinking on the job here.

Scott: We just started because I decided that the coffee thing last week. Really? I'm still trying to find my feet here. Gabe, on the Lifers podcast. Welcome.

Gabe: Number seven.

Scott: Number seven. And we don't have a guest this week.

Gabe: We don't.

Scott: No. It's just us hanging out. So goodbye, everybody. Tune out.

Ben: But I tell you, there's so much local H news to talk about. Yeah. There's tons of stuff.

Scott: That's right. What we do have this week is we've got tour dates, and it excites me to no end. And I was so excited to post these things today and so excited for the response that we got from people and how excited they were that we were coming and, you know, it's just an endless loop of excitement.

Ben: But you got a response. You got these responses that I see all the time when tour dates go up and I wonder if this annoys you or makes you happy or what. Which is. Most of the responses are, what? No fucking blank on my town here. What happened to blank my fucking town?

Scott: That is. That is mildly annoying. And we get that every time. And it's like, usually you want to say, you know what, drive an extra hour, because I'm pretty sure you're not driving as far as we are. You know, it's just like, shut the fuck up. We're doing the best we can. But in this instance, Eagle Eyed Watchers will see that there are some holes in these dates and that should tell those people that we have not announced all the dates yet. There's some clubs that have not announced their own openings and they're not ready to announce anything. But there are a few shows that are happening that we can't talk about.

Ben: Yeah, speaking of that, what? No fucking Madison.

Scott: Right? Well, screw Madison. You could drive to Milwaukee.

Ben: I know I will be there. Shank hall opening night.

Scott: The tour starts in Shank hall in Milwaukee. Opening night is August 31st in Shank Hall. Now, we have been to Shank hall many times before, so this is going to be a lot of fun. But some of these places we've never been to before. Like some of these clubs we're playing the

1st of October in Sacramento at this place called Holy Diver. Holy Diver, which I'm very excited about, but it's a great fucking name for a club. Now the thing is, is we've never played there, but we have drank there. And so we're very excited to come back there and actually play a show. Like in New York, the show on September 4th at this place called LPR. It's La Poisson Rouge or something like that. I don't think we've ever played there before.

Ben: I've never heard of it. And I'm from New York.

Scott: Yeah, I mean, well, you know, what is it? Some of the places.

Ben: Was it formally someplace else?

Scott: We don't know what's going to happen. I don't know. But you know, there's a lot of clubs that, that we're used to playing that I don't know if they're there anymore. You know, so we've got. Should I run down these dates or is this something we should just tell people to look up.

Ben: I just want to say one thing about Shank Hall. The most. The most. The most fascinating thing to me about Shank hall, and I've been there myself a couple times, is that it's the only club I've ever been to that seems to be wall to wall carpeted. Do you. Have you experienced this elsewhere? Have you ever been to carpeted clubs other than Shank Hall?

Scott: The only thing I can think of that's got wall to wall carpeting is the pizza place on the south side. Shit, now I'm not gonna get any. What's that pizza place on the south side?

Gabe: Is that Alexa?

Scott: Somebody will know. But there's.

Ben: I don't even. Actually I don't even know if Shank hall is wall to wall, but I do remember carpeting on the floor and being like, wow, this is weird.

Scott: Yeah, that place has been there for a while. That was like one of the first places that. I mean, we. We played there way back in the day. Right, Gabe?

Ben: Yeah.

Gabe: There's some older clubs in Milwaukee that we've been to, but Shane Collins was one of the first. The first places we played with new cases. Roadcast.

Scott: There was that show we played with Steam and we just happened to get new cases that day. And they come rolling in while we're playing with this touch and go band. And I am mortified that we've got all these new cases and they're just sitting there on stage looking at us like, you fucking posers. Well, the other really good show at Shank hall was when we were on tour with

Tripping Daisy. And there was nobody at the show, so we decided to play Rock from the Crips circa now in its entirety.

Gabe: We didn't end up Tripping Daisy.

Scott: And, you know, by the time we were done, we did with that. With Tripping Daisy. Right. And so by the time we were done, you know, the place was starting to fill up, but it was too late. We had decided this is what we were going to do and there was no turning back. So not that.

Ben: And you learned the whole album that day?

Scott: No, that was something we always had in our back pocket if things didn't go well.

Gabe: We.

Scott: We had that in our back pocket if there was nobody there. It's like, look, we're just gonna play this Rock from the Crypt record and that's it.

Gabe: That wasn't the only time we did that before. We did that at Jesse Mendoza. Is that his name?

Ben: Jesse Mendoza.

Gabe: J Street in his basement at Halloween. That one year. Is that New Year's Eve.

Scott: That sounds like a New Year's Eve type of thing. I remember that show. I don't remember playing that record, but I do remember that show.

Gabe: We played that record, that show.

Scott: All right, so am I going to run down these dates or are we just going to tell people to look them up? What do you think?

Ben: I don't know. Run them. Run them down. I can always cut it out if it's totally fucking boring. I think it might be 8:31. Hopefully you've got stuff to say about these places. That would be fun.

Scott: All right, well, stop me. Yeah, let's talk about them as we go on. 8:31, we're at Shank Hall, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Ben: Great gig. Can't fucking wait. Carpeting, wall to wall. You played rock. I want you to. By the way, even though this is the opening night of your Lifers reboot tour, I still think you should do the Rocket from the Crypt album, start to finish.

Scott: Yeah, we're doing Circa now. That's right. That's it. You're right. And a Betty Savier cover. That's what's gonna happen.

Ben: Right?

Scott: So I could read these dates, but fuck it, let's just look them up. Dates are up. By the time this airs, tickets will have already gone on sale.

Ben: Everything will be sold out by the time people hear this shit anyway.

Scott: Yeah, let's hope so. Yeah, we won't read the dates. Screw that. We would just ask Gabe if. How's the hunt for the Mexican food going? Have you found a place yet?

Gabe: We went to a different place last week in. I think it was in Greer, South Carolina. And they. They. They do something more with their salsa here. They do this where they make their. It's like a bean dip that's kind of a little spicy.

Ben: Yeah.

Gabe: So. And it was okay. And then they said over there they got a salsa bar. So I went to the salsa bar and I mixed the salsa with the bean dip. Then it turned out pretty good.

Scott: So.

Gabe: But the enchiladas weren't very good, though, so it's hard to. It's hard to get the whole combination. The whole enchilada, if you will.

Scott: Yeah.

Ben: So how many different.

Scott: You like. You like a wet bean dip?

Gabe: It's not bad. Bean dip that's got, you know, the pico de gallo or salsa, whatever you want to call it, mixed in it. It's pretty good.

Scott: Ooh, he's speaking Spanish.

Ben: Have you heard how many salsas did they have at the salsa bar?

Gabe: There's probably six or seven. That's kind of it's common around this area because I've seen it a few places. Most of the time it's hit or miss. But this one had some really good salsa in it.

Scott: So what? All right, what about pizza? Have you guys found a pizza place that you did?

Gabe: Oh, that's a dirty word down here. They don't know what pizza is all about down here because this is. We've gotten some pizza where you ate one slice and threw the rest out. That's how bad it was. Like, when you're throwing pizza away, it's bad.

Scott: That's really bad.

Gabe: You got some work to do because Charlotte sucked for pizza. I'm going to say, you know, we've.

Scott: Had that barstool pizza guy prick hanging around Chicago the last week or so. I mean, this guy is probably the biggest douche on the planet, right? But. But he's been going to different places and doing his little, you know, you know the rules. Once, one bite. So I've been watching him and it. It's like. It looks to me like this guy doesn't even know how to eat pizza the way he eats pizza and sticks it in his face. I don't understand you guys know about this guy. You know who this is?

Ben: I've watched a few of his things and been like, this guy.

Scott: Yeah, something about. He's got that mouth breathing, douche type of thing where he'll like walk into a place and like, okay, here's what you got to do. You know, tear this down, do that. Blah, blah, blah. He has that thing about him. He's got a very. He's got that kind of face, you know, I'm talking about.

Ben: But he's part of an army of these YouTube douchebags who do that thing. Like, these guys are like, nobody eats a jack in the box hamburger like I do. This is how you do it. You know, they. They tour some city and they go to every fucking fast food place that there is and show you how to open up a box at McDonald's or something.

Scott: It's like, well, watching him. Watching him try to open a pizza box in Chicago is. It's special. It's pretty funny. But the one thing that this guy does say, which I'm totally down with, and I agree with him, God help me, is this idea. He goes to someplace, he eats the thin crust and then he eats a deep dish, and it actually looks like it's a stuffed slice, not deep dish. There's a difference. And. And he can, you know, he barely eat because he he's not in control of his faculties or whatever, but he. He says he's like, look, Chicago, don't run from the deep dish. Own it. He's like, I like the deep dish better than. Than the. Than the thin. He's like, well, I like it better than the thin. It's like, yeah, who gives a fuck? But. But the fact that Chicago should own the deep dish, and I get so tired of hearing, like, well, I don't even like deep dish. Or, you know, it's like, all right.

Ben: I do hear that all the time from people in Chicago now. Like, deep dish isn't Chicago pizza.

Scott: Right?

Ben: That's bullshit.

Scott: Right? You know, maybe there are other kinds of pizza, but, you know, deep dish is one of those kind of pizzas. I mean, I prefer stuffed, but it's like, if you were to eat, you know, go to an UNO's in LA or something like that. It does. It's not. It doesn't taste the same. So people all over the country think they know what this stuff, what this stuff is supposed to taste like, and they don't. They have no idea. So whenever I see somebody go, oh, yeah, you're right, it sucks. I'm like, move, move. Go somewhere else. I mean, the pizza in Madison's pretty good, right, Ben?

Ben: You know, it took me a long time. I've been in Madison over 20 years, and I'm at the point now where I don't feel qualified to say because, like, stuff that I wouldn't. That I. When I first got here, I'm like, these aren't bagels. This isn't pizza. This isn't Chinese food. Now I'm like, yeah, give me the fucking bagels and the pizza and the Chinese food.

Gabe: I don't care.

Ben: It's all good. So I don't know. I feel like I've lost my New York mojo when it comes to those things. Things. But yes, there's. There's, like, Ian. Ian's Pizza, which I think even has opened up in Chicago, is. Is a pretty good pizza place.

Scott: They'll do slices and stuff like that.

Ben: And honestly, you know, even though I'm like a New York purist, like, some of these sort of more interesting, modern pizza things are pretty good. Like, I've had a lasagna slice at Ian's, which I'm like, this is fucking good. A nice lasagna noodle on top of some ricotta cheese and a slice of pizza. Yeah, right on. And the Mac and cheese pizza. This is pretty good, you know? So I think Totally broken down is.

Scott: What New York does that I've seen plenty of, like, sort of, but not.

Ben: When I was growing up. Now every. This is. This is the same thing as my whiskey sour problem. It's like, okay, it used to be that, like, shit from the coast would slowly infiltrate the country. Now it's the opposite. Now it's. The Midwest has crept over to the coast. And so, yeah, all of a sudden, in New York, you order a whiskey sour and they do it with squirt, and you fucking order a slice of pizza, and it's got a lasagna noodle and some Mac and cheese on it. So, yes, you're right. You can get that in New York now. But that's not legit.

Scott: Listen, I. I love a great New York slice. I. I love it. And every time we go to New York, you know, I mean, the last time I was there, I had five or six slices. I love it. But if. Yeah.

Ben: Do you have a favorite place in New York that you go to?

Scott: I like Rosario's down in the Village. I dig that place a lot. Hopefully it's still open. But if. If I'm being honest, my favorite pizza is the stuffed spinach and jalapeno from Chicago. Pizza here in Chicago. It's called Chicago's pizza. And that.

Ben: That.

Scott: That pizza is so good that I don't understand. Anytime somebody gets high and mighty and douche and it's like, I don't like pizza like that. Or Debt's casserole. It's like, you. It's got a crust, there's sauce on top, there's cheese on top, there's meat. Whatever you want. It's pizza.

Ben: Stop it.

Scott: You know, can we. Can we stop this?

Ben: Yeah. What I. What I. What I found to be much more regional Chicago stuff that I never heard of before and didn't know was a fucking thing or is like, all the stuff that you can get at Portillo's, like, the Italian beef and.

Scott: Right.

Ben: And everything with giardiniera. I didn't know what Gardner was. I'm like, what. What is this? And it's, like, all over everything in Chicago.

Scott: So you love it though, now, right?

Ben: No, I've never tried it. I'm like, I don't want that. It looks like relish to me. I've never liked. So I. I'm just not into that whole thing.

Scott: It might look like relish, but it's not relish. It's really, really good. Ben, I'm gonna send you a jar.

Ben: Thank you. No, we can have. When I come see you at Shank hall, we'll, we'll find some. You bring it, bring it there.

Scott: And when I go to the, you know, when I go to North Wisconsin, up in the north woods where my, my dad lives, there are some places there, like. And they do the tavern style, of course, because there's Tavern. Yeah, yeah. You throw a rock and you hit a tavern. Their pizza is some of the best pizza I've ever had. There are places up there that I'm like, this is so good. Like, you know, it shouldn't come as a surprise that Wisconsin knows how to do pizza, considering the cheese. But, you know, even growing up in Zion, we had great fucking pizza.

Gabe: My favorite pizza in all time is Pizza House in Zion. I can't top it anywhere else, even though, you know, some of the stuff in the city is top notch. But Pizza House in Zion, there's a picture, there's a picture of that pizza in the inserts for as Good as Dead.

Scott: Yes, there is pizza.

Gabe: The only pizza that ever made its way onto a local age record.

Scott: Well, they, they. Was that a double decker that we were eating?

Gabe: No, it's just a pan.

Scott: That was a pan, yeah. Because the way they do it, it's not like when you go to Uno's or something or Gino's east and it's too much bread, it's too thick. I don't dig that. And the way Pizza House does it is. It's kind of in between. Like, it's really good. Are you sure? Who does the double decker?

Gabe: Double D's, Double deckers Double D's.

Scott: Now Double D's rules. Like a double decker pizza from Double D's, man.

Gabe: Yeah, we had a show in Waukegan with, with Fig Dish. Remember right before the show at Beckman's in Waukegan.

Ben: Yeah.

Gabe: We took Fig Dish over to double Ds and never heard the end of it because it was the best pizza around at the time.

Scott: It's good. Do you know about this? So there's a pizza.

Ben: No.

Scott: And then you put another pizza on top of it.

Ben: Like a whole other pizza. Double decker pretty much sounds fantastic.

Scott: It's a double decker.

Ben: You know what? I saw somebody show somebody that I know on Long island posted something recently. There's a, there's a pizza thing that they do in Long island now where they, you know, everything on the east coast is by the slice. You know, you don't have to order a pie. You walk in, you order a slice or two or three and so they heat up the slices, and then when they serve it to you on the paper plate, which is how they do it there, right as they serve it to you, they grab a fistful of shredded mozzarella and they dump that fresh mozzarella on top of your freshly heated pizza, and you eat it before that mozzarella heats up. So it's like cold mozzarella on top of a hot pizza slice. And people tell me that's a fucking experience. Yeah.

Scott: Who is doing this?

Ben: Some pizza places in New York City. I don't know. I think they. I think it's sort of spreading.

Scott: I've seen the extra sauce pizzas where they ladle on some sauce, and I love that.

Ben: Yeah, that's bullshit. Yeah, that's all right.

Scott: No, no, no, no. Nancy's in Chicago, down the street from our old practice space. They go, you want some extra sauce? I was like, fuck, yeah. And they put it on there. It was great. But that is a great idea.

Ben: What's the place that. There's a.

Scott: There's back in New York on September 4th at the.

Ben: Yeah, send us the information, east coast people, on where you can get the fresh mozzarella d. Pizza slice.

Gabe: Pizza, everybody. I was gonna say everybody's gonna bring slice of pizza to you now at all these shows. Here's the best pizza in town. You got to try it.

Scott: Awesome.

Ben: Hooray.

Scott: Hooray. I'll be my own. I'll be, you know, my own barstool pizza douche. That. That's great. I don't want people on the east coast to think that I don't like the pizza. We love the pizza on the East Coast. I just cannot.

Ben: I don't think you said anything like.

Scott: People coming into our city and talking shit about our pizza. I can't handle it. I won't deal with it. And, you know, and not that this fucking douche was doing that. He wasn't. But there are some people here who just, you know, they're like, that's. They'll. They'll open up a pizza place and say, because Chicago pizza sucks. And it's like, just go away, Go away, go away.

Ben: You know how Tom Jones used to get. Or maybe still does get, like, panties thrown at him at every show? Like, people are going to throw slices of pizza at you.

Scott: I hope it's with love. You know what? There's something that occurs to me. We don't have a guest tonight, but we also don't really know a whole hell of a lot about Ben Rizer at Least our listeners don't. So maybe the rest of the episode we try to figure out who the fuck is Ben Reiser.

Gabe: Yes, who the fuck is Ben?

Scott: Yeah, who the fuck is Ben Reiser? I mean, are there people out there that are like, okay, I know who Scott is, I know who Gabe is. All right, but who the fuck is Ben Reiser? So, Ben, let's figure out who you are. What do you think about that?

Ben: All right. All right, so, I mean, I'll just say. I'll just say I've been. I've been. I've been expecting. Not this, but I mean, I. I did expect a lot of that. I mean, and maybe, maybe the cold manner people behind my back are saying, like, who the is this? And I sort of feel like there are people who are in. In the sort of local h. Super fan group that. That are doing their own podcasts and they're probably like, wait a minute, what just happened? We were the one doing the podcast and now there's all this going. How did. If. If we only knew, all we had to do was write Scott an email and he'd start doing a podcast with us. We would have done that three years ago. So. But I haven't. Nobody said that to me yet. And they seem. They all seem like nice people, kind of nice people.

Scott: They're wonderful people.

Ben: They are. And they don't mess with them. No. And they've all friended me on Facebook and send me personal messages and they've made me feel very warm and welcome. You know, I'm still sort of waiting for the other shoe to drop, but. But yeah, it's been great.

Scott: I think if the other shoe drops, they probably would do it in secret.

Ben: But they'll just vote me off of some Twitter polls.

Scott: Yeah. Right. So the first thing that would probably come up on your Wikipedia is that you wrote a song for the presidency of the United States of America on their big first hit record. But the thing is, is, like, how did that happen? Like, you wrote that song previously for another band that you were in. Were you in it with one of the guys from the Presidents or How'd that happen?

Gabe: He wrote Lump.

Ben: I wish.

Scott: He wrote Lump in my throat.

Ben: Yeah, I. Yeah, I always thought, oh, it would be great to be in a band. But this one I was in, and when I was in junior high school, that's what we called it back in the day. Did you guys go to junior high school or middle school?

Scott: Junior. Junior high. Yeah.

Ben: Right. You know, it's all middle school now.

Scott: Is middle the same as junior high, kind of.

Ben: It's weird. I think it starts like a grade earlier. Like, it seems like elementary school only goes up to fifth grade now. And then middle school is sixth through eighth, and then after that you're in high school. I don't understand it. That's. But I've seen my kids go through it. I'm like, oh, that's what you're doing now? Okay, wait. Yeah, wait, fifth grade. You're done with. With elementary school. Okay, cool.

Scott: Right.

Ben: Anyway, I don't know. I went to school for filmmaking and. But I was. Somebody else from my high school in Brooklyn was there at the same time also in the film program. And I. One day I walked past his dorm room, and suddenly he had a drum kit in his dorm room, and he was playing with this. With a guitar player and somebody else. And I was like, whoa, what the fuck? I didn't know that this. I didn't know this guy Meryl, my friend, could play drums, and he really couldn't play drums, but they were just doing it, and I was like, God damn it. That's all you got to do. Just do it. And so I convinced Meryl, the drummer, to start a band with me. And we would go home to Brooklyn on the weekends, and we hooked up with two of our other high school friends and we started this band and we wrote a bunch of songs and we played a concert in my parents living room. And then we wanted to do a real gig, and we got booked in on audition night at CBGB's, which they would do maybe twice a week where they would. I think normally there'd be like 20 bands a night at CBGB's, and on audition night there'd be like 40 bands. And they would put an ad in the Village Voice every week that listed the entire week's worth of bands. And so there would literally be like a. An ad with a hundred bands right in the CBGB's ad. And so we wanted to come up with a name for our band that might get people to notice us in the middle of that 100 bands. So we called ourselves Tracy Lords, Ex Lovers. And Tracy Lords was this porn star who was underage and then was a big scandal. And we're like, okay, we really.

Scott: I've never heard of her.

Ben: You know, I don't know. You guys are younger than me. I don't know. Come on.

Scott: What?

Ben: Through the years.

Scott: Gabe was 50.

Gabe: Not yet.

Ben: So anyway, so we had this band for a while, and we were terrible. None of us knew how to play. I was the singer and the guitar player. I didn't know how to do either one of those things.

But we wrote some sort of mildly catchy songs. And we wrote. I wrote this one song about the band called We're Not Gonna make it, which was all about how terrible we were as a band and how we weren't gonna make it. And we would occasionally get gigs on campus at the college we were going to, but those gigs would be opening up for this other band that was called Asleep Standing. And the guys in that band were this guy Chris Ballou, and a bunch of other guys. Now, Chris Ballou turned out was from Seattle, but he was in New York at this school. And so he would see my band play opening for his band. His band was great. They were. They knew how to play. They knew how to really write songs and really sing. And they were, you know, had great ears. They could play cover songs at the drop of a hat.

Scott: What were they called?

Ben: They were called Asleep Standing. Okay, so. But when we would play and open for them, like the on campus pub, people would throw salt shakers and shit at us. I mean, we really were no good. But cut to, 10 years later, I'm back in Brooklyn working at a copy center and doing nothing with my filmmaking degree that I got, but still playing in bands with those same guys. Although by then we had changed our name to All About Chad. And we had a couple different members. Chad was my bass playing friend from Brooklyn. And we thought.

Scott: I was just gonna ask that. Look at you.

Ben: Yeah, we thought. We thought, like, you know, after shows, if anybody liked us, they would come up and talk to me because I was a singer or sometimes the guitar player. But nobody ever wants to talk to the bass player. Which is probably why there is no bass player in local age. Because nobody wanted to be the odd man out. But we thought if we named the band after him, then somebody would focus on him. But the problem was people thought my name was Chad since I was like the front man. So it was like, oh, all about Chad. You must be Chad. I'm like, no, this is a whole fucked up thing anyway. But through a long series of things that we won't have to get into. But I got this call eventually from Chris Ballou, who had moved back to Seattle, apparently had started another band. Apparently they'd been, like, tearing up the fucking clubs all along the West Coast. Everyone loved them. They had been signed to Columbia Records. And just now, just at that point, he was calling me to say, I've got this album we actually released it on Sub Pop a couple years ago, and now Columbia Records bought it. It's coming out on Columbia. And by the way, your song, We're Not Gonna make it is on that. And we've been actually using it as our anthem for the last four years. And we close every set with this thing. Is that cool? And I was like, huh? And he was like, you know, it's a great song. It just really needed somebody to do it. Right. I'm like, oh, thanks. By the way, I still have a band. And by the way, I'm pursuing my own record deal. You know, I'm not a fucking garbage man here. It was not a good conversation. And I did have a lawyer at the time because we were actually getting signed to a ridiculously stupid indie label. But I said. I said, lawyer, I'll figure this out for me. Is there any way I can get. So they sent me a copy of this album. I was like, this isn't going to sell a single record.

Scott: So this record was on Sub Pop, and. And. And they were releasing it as.

Ben: No, I'm sorry. I said Sub Pop, but it's not. It's Pop Llama. Do you know that?

Scott: Yes. See? Yes, that sounds right.

Ben: Sorry. Yeah.

Scott: That's the Conrad. That's posies, right? It wasn't.

Ben: Maybe. Yeah, probably. They were all Conrad.

Scott: Conrad Uno. Right?

Ben: Yes. Yes.

Scott: Okay.

Ben: Eventually, I got a call from Conrad Uno because I. Because what? I. I did this thing. I was like. I was like, I don't want my song. I don't like their version of my song. It's a song about my stupid band.

Scott: You. You stupid, silly little asshole. I mean, really.

Ben: Well, wait a minute. It worked out fine for me.

Scott: I know it did. But it's just amazing. Just the attitude that we had back then.

Ben: Yeah. Yeah.

Scott: Oh, my God.

Ben: Oh. Oh, boy. And I said, see if you can get. All I wanted was a nice tv. And I said, can you get me an advance on royalties? Like, see if you can get me 5,000 bucks in advance because they're not going to sell any records. But I want to see some money out of this or else they can go fuck themselves. I'm not telling you the part of the story where they were even more insulting than the thing I told you about what he said to me on the phone. Why not? Fucking weird thing. You want to hear that part? See, I feel like at some point we should get Chris Ballew on this show and I'll have it out with him, because I've never talked to him again in the. In the ensuing 20 years.

Scott: All right, well, if you want to save it for that, you know, we want to burn those bridges right now. We can also do that, too.

Ben: Well, no, the bridges are already burned. I would. This would be like a. Have it out and maybe reconcile. Not that he has any.

Scott: So, I mean, what. Why were you so pissed because they had recorded it without asking you?

Ben: I was. They were. Because. Here's what happened.

Scott: It was because he was basically saying, like, this is good for you.

Ben: No, he wasn't saying it was good for me. He was like, we saved this song from the garbage can. Which is true, I guess, but he was also. Here's the thing.

Scott: That.

Ben: Here's. Here's how I first got wind of this whole thing is that friends of friends came to me at some gig I was playing.

Scott: I thought you were gonna say they were a band. I thought you'd say friends of friends were a band, but they came to me. Friends are friends. All right, I'm sorry.

Ben: They came to me and they said, hey, Chris Ballou needs to get in touch with you. But the. Can we give you his number to call him? And I'm like, why does Chris Balloon need to get in touch with me? Oh, well, they recorded your song, and it's going to be on an album. And I said, well, why tell me? Give me a call. That's great. That's the best news I ever heard. And. And. But. But I found out that he didn't want to. Like, he didn't want to call me. Like, he was, like, being shoved into, like, calling me to get permission. Because I think, you know, the lawyers at Columbia were like, you can't put this song on your album. It's never been released. Like, you can't do this unless you get permission from the songwriter.

Scott: Oh, okay.

Ben: Which would have been fine, but. But all I had been released.

Scott: It wouldn't have been a big deal.

Ben: Right, Exactly.

Scott: Okay.

Ben: Right. Interesting. So. But. But he didn't want to talk to me, and I don't know why. Like, it was this weird thing. And then eventually I came home one night and there was a voicemail on my answering machine from him saying, hey, it's Chris Ballou. I heard you were trying to get in touch with me. Give me a call. And I'm like, I. I wasn't trying to get in touch with you. I don't have

your number. I don't know what the fuck you're talking about. And so I. I was just like, if this asshole doesn't want to talk to me. The whole thing.

Scott: Well. And eventually you guys left on bad terms before this?

Ben: No, no, we'd left on no terms other than us playing some gigs together. Our two bands. We weren't particularly friendly. He must have had a copy of my demo that had that song on it. I thought he was fine. I liked his band. But no, we didn't have. You know, I think it was clear from the first day I met him till now that he didn't respect me as a musician or as a singer or as a songwriter. Which two out of those three things. Fine, I get it. But, you know, I thought, like, I can write some fucking songs. Fuck you. And apparently I can write a song good enough that you want to use it as your fucking band's anthem and you want to end every one of your fucking sets with it, but you don't want to tell me. You want to just leave it there for 10 years and do your own fucking thing. And only when lawyers tell you, you need to let me know, then you're going to come to me. Fuck you, Chris Ballou.

Scott: All right, Ben. I. I think he actually kind of does respect you as a songwriter because he put one of your songs on his record. I mean, there's got to be something else going on here. Is there something else going on here?

Ben: No, I just. I. I just felt like. Here's the other thing. I. I will say this other thing, that the other three guys in my band were like, don't let them do that. Don't let them put that song out. That's our fucking song. That's a song about us. How dare they? And that is kind of true. It's like. Sort of like. It's one thing to. To. To sing somebody else's song. It's another thing to sort. It's sort of like if I took all the Kids Are right and. And used it as my band's closing song every night for some reason, you know that's a song about local H, right? It would be weird if Tripping Daisy. Oh, okay. So the Joe in that song is a different Joe.

Gabe: Did you get TV out of the dealer?

Scott: You got me. You got.

Gabe: The story.

Scott: Well, yes, I did. I guess I did name names in that song. All right, you. You got me.

Ben: I did get it. So, yes. So I had my lawyers say, like, yeah, well, that's fine. He'll sign the papers. He'd like to get an advance on the first 75,000 albums sold. And then Chris Ballou called me, and he Said we're gonna. They're telling me we're gonna have to pull your song off the album because there's no fucking way that we're gonna pay you. What is your lawyer talking about? And I'm like, I don't know. This is all news to me. Meanwhile, I had masterminded the whole goddamn thing. But I was like, chris, do you have a lawyer? He's like, yeah. I said, do you listen to what he says? Yeah. Okay. So that's all I'm doing. I'm listening to what my lawyer says. He says I should get an advance on royalties. So they fucking coughed up 5,000 bucks. And I

was like, I'm so ahead of this game. I bought myself a nice TV. I still had \$4,000 left over afterwards. And then I lived above a record store that for some reason would po. Would like, tear out the charts from Billboard and paste it to their window every week. I don't know why they did that, but I would come downstairs. I actually lived in the building above where I worked at the Park Slope Copy Center. And right next door was this record store. And the record went on sale, and Lump the Video was on mtv. And every week I'd come down in the Billboard charts. I'd be like, oh, presidents, United States. Whoa, they're on the charts. And then, Whoa, they're number 50. Whoa, they're number 26. What the fuck is going on? And then I started getting these royalty checks, and I'm making \$6 an hour at the Park Slip Copy center, and suddenly these checks start coming in the mail for, like, \$10,000, \$20,000. What the is going on? And so then. Yeah, so I. So. So cut to sort of early on in that process, they. Before they really broke, they played a gig at Brownies in New York City, small club.

Scott: Remember Brownies? Gabe Brown.

Gabe: Oh, yeah. A lot of memories there.

Ben: Did you guys play Brownies?

Gabe: Local HC broken into outside of Brownies. Remember that?

Ben: Yeah.

Scott: Oh, it got. Oh, it did. Yeah. I don't remember that. We played a lot of shows at Brownies. Yeah.

Ben: So I went. So they went and they played Brownies. And this was, I think, before the record started selling at all. But they. After Columbia had cut a check for me, and I went to this show, and I was, like, happy at this point, and I didn't know that they were not happy.

Scott: So you did get. You did get your. You did get your advance, right? You got the advance, right? Okay.

Ben: And then here's. But here was it. But my stupid idea that I'm so glad didn't work out. Was. I told my lawyer, I said, can you just. Can we sell them the song? Like, would they buy it outright for like 50 grand or something?

Scott: You would have been fucked.

Ben: Yeah, yeah. So thank God that didn't work. But anyway, so I went, I went. Not that there's a. There's sort of a backstage at Brownies, but I went back there and I saw Chris. I was like, hey, Chris. He's like, oh, hey, did you get your check? I'm like, yeah, yeah. And then he didn't want to talk to me. And they didn't play the song that night, but cut to like four months later when the album was like at the top of the charts. And they came back and they played maybe

Tramps, which is also. Isn't that big of a place, but pretty big. And then they weren't talking, you know, there was like. I tried to reach out. I tried to like, say, oh, this is so great. Thank you so much. And I'm sorry. There was this friction and I tried to. I wanted to sort of explain, you know, it's just a weird way that it all came about where I heard you didn't want to talk to me, and then when you did talk to me, you acted like I was the one trying to get in touch with you. And so then I'm back. So then, so, so they come to, they, they come to play Tramps and it's a sold out show. And my lawyer is like, I got a ticket for you. And I'm like, I don't know that I want to use Go, Go. So I went. And it was one of the more interesting kind of rock and roll experiences I ever had because I'm in the back of this sold out club that's packed and packed with teenagers because it was like, you know, teenage girls who were into the Presidents and Lump and. Or teenage boys or whatever.

Scott: Yeah.

Ben: And they played their set and they ended their set with we're not going to make it. And the whole fucking place went wild. And all the kids were like pogo dancing. And I'm at the very back of the club watching all this and I realized this is kind of a unique experience because it's sort of my rock and roll fantasy. But I'm watching it from the back of the club. Like you've, you've probably never gotten to experience this. Like to see a band play your song.

Scott: Yeah.

Ben: And have the crowd go wild, but you're able to watch it as an observer, I think That's. That was a lot of fun.

Scott: That's interesting. Yeah.

Ben: The other fun thing was that when Rolling Stone reviewed the album, they started their review with a quote from my song, and I'm like, oh, my lyrics are in Rolling Stone. That's pretty cool, too. Yeah, that's it. That's my.

Scott: Well, you know what? It. It all. It all sounds very adult and like, you know.

Ben: Really? It sounds adult?

Scott: No, it doesn't sound adult at all. It sounds like you're a bunch of whiny little bitchy 20. 20 year olds. Yeah, yeah.

Ben: Yes. That's exactly.

Scott: I mean, it's just when you lay it out, it's. It's kind of like, what was his problem? He should have just said, hey, we did this.

Ben: Right?

Scott: Cool. And you should have said, yeah, fucking go for it. You know? I mean.

Ben: Right?

Scott: But it sounds like it worked out for both of you.

Ben: Well, that's the thing.

Scott: But on the other hand, when you're that age. Yeah.

Ben: If everything had been, to coin a phrase, copacetic and smooth the whole way, I wouldn't have this story. And I also don't think anything else would be different. It's not like, if I. When I think about it, it's like if I had just said, oh, yeah, right, and not gotten the advance, what would have happened? Would they have taken us out on tour with them? No. Would they have been my friends for life? No. Like, they live on the other side of the planet.

Scott: It might not have been a chip on. On Adrian Ballou's shoulder. I mean, Chris Ballou's shoulder.

Ben: Well, I don't think it is. I don't think he gives a fuck because he gave out money I made. He must have made ten times as much.

Scott: And this is for Gabe. Chris Ballou and Adrian Ballou are not the same person. Gabe.

Gabe: But they're the brothers from the Presidents. What?

Ben: That's pretty good.

Scott: I knew that's what he was thinking.

Ben: Can I tell you, I love the relationship that you and Gabe have. It reminds me so much of my relationship with the aforementioned Chad. And as soon as I saw you guys talk to each other, I was like, oh, my God, this is me and Chad. And I really. It warms my heart to see that other people have.

Scott: What does Chad do now? What's he up to?

Ben: He's a massage therapist.

Scott: Oh, really? I know a massage therapist. Where does he work?

Ben: He should wear this. Weird. No, it's fine. He lives in New York and not in New York City in some weird green lake. New York and he's been, he's been doing this thing all through the pandemic. He's been growing his victory garden, which I didn't even know what that was.

Scott: I do.

Ben: Right. So he's big into gardening. Chad Polari.

Scott: So after all that and you've got, you've got all that presence of the United States of America money, it changed my life.

Ben: It totally changed my life.

Scott: That's awesome.

Ben: But I wouldn't be out here on.

Scott: Your shoulder about it.

Ben: Well, I probably wouldn't be taught. Here's the thing. If not for that song, as sort of far fetched as this whole thing and how to connect the dots, I wouldn't be talking to you right now. I don't think I never would have moved out to the Midwest that that song gave me enough money to say, oh, I can maybe buy a house somewhere and have some place for my dogs to run around where I'm not walking them 25 times a day. Which is all that I did when I lived in Brooklyn in a one bedroom apartment.

Scott: Yeah.

Ben: And so we thought, well, we could move to New Jersey and commute to our dumb day jobs or we could just do something entirely different. And my wife's from Wisconsin and we'd been to Madison many times when we visited her parents who lived in the middle of the state. And we're like, why don't we move to Madison? We can afford a house in the middle of Madison and just do our own shit. And then everything that happened once I moved here, you know, eventually getting a job at the university and getting into all this film stuff again after not doing that stuff for such a long time. And, and then, you know, meeting, meeting back up with my friend Mike McPadden who was a friend from college but had moved to Chicago and I hadn't talked to him in 20 years. And then hooking up with him and starting to do that podcast, it all led to this. And it's all from we're not Going to Make it, which is a song that I wrote in 10 seconds in my bedroom for my dumb band that I knew was terrible and we should just come out and admit it. And then one of the things that one of my favorite stories is my dad, who heard the song like the first 50 times we played it, because we used to play it all the time, said to me, you know, it's really catchy and it's a good song, but it, I don't know that people are going to be that into that kind of negativity. And you know, maybe you should change it to we are going to make it. And I'm like, I don't think so. And then it was. It was really heartwarming and a fun and sort of

obnoxious thing when I got, like, my \$30,000 royalty check and I said, dad, here's that negativ. Not paying off for me.

Scott: So after that, your dad lost his job as a. And I.

Ben: That's the Ben Reiser story.

Scott: That's not bad. That's not bad. And, you know, Madison's. Madison's a cool town.

Ben: I would love to get Chris Ballou and hear his side of it.

Scott: How did you, like, start working at the university? Like, how did that happen?

Ben: Well, that's a whole other crazy story. We should save that for another episode. It could be. We could have a segment every. Every other week that's like, tell the other funny Ben Reiser story.

Scott: So we're gonna do it because that is all Ben Reiser Part 2.

Ben: The. The story of me working at the University of Wisconsin Madison is almost as crazy as that one.

Scott: Well, I think we're in it right now. This is it. Come on. How did. So you get all this presence of the United States of America money. And I love saying that, people. And then you move to Madison, Wisconsin.

Ben: Which is without a job, a great.

Scott: Fucking town, and you've got no job.

Ben: No jobs. Me and my wife had no jobs. She didn't even know how to drive. We were like 30 years old by the time we moved out here. And she finally learned how to drive. And I got it. I went, you know, and that money wasn't that much money. Right. It was maybe like \$300,000. Yeah. But then after taxes, it was more like \$150,000. And took half of that. Yeah.

Scott: Do you live in England?

Ben: Because. Because I made it all in that one year. And so it was like, how much did you make this year? I made \$300,000. Oh, you're in this. It was pre Trump tax cuts, so it was a big problem.

Scott: Yeah.

Ben: You know, and I put as much away as I could. I don't know anything about money. I still don't. I didn't know anything about real estate. I didn't know anything about investing. I don't any. Any fucking idea. I was lucky I have any money left after that.

Scott: Right.

Ben: And the truth is, I didn't. We put like \$30,000 down on this house, which was a great investment, because now it's worth way more than we paid for it. Like, we were Lucky in that we moved here in 97. Right before property values went through the roof.

Scott: Yeah, that's about all you need to know about investing is buy a fucking house.

Ben: Right? Well, but on the other hand, if we had just invested in an apartment in Brooklyn when we were living in Brooklyn at that time, we would have made a lot more money. So, whatever.

Scott: You would have your dog more, but you'd be right. Slum lord.

Ben: That's right. But so I pretty much quickly had to, like, get a job here because that money wasn't going to last very long. And then.

Scott: So you went through all that money that quickly? Like, were you like. Like a fucking cokehead? I mean, what the hell was going on?

Ben: You.

Scott: You came to Madison to just live like Scarface and you just burned through all the money like that?

Ben: Well, no, because there was a couple years between first getting the money and then eventually moving out here. And in that time, I was the sole songwriter of record. So all came to me and I felt some amount of, you know, guilt and. And debt to my other bandmates. So I just. I be. It's true. When I was in Brooklyn for those first couple years, I was taking everyone out to dinner all the time, like throwing lavish parties. And Yeah, I was. I spent some money.

Scott: Wow.

Ben: You should have known me back in the day, man.

Scott: Yeah, I should have. So now you're in Madison and.

Ben: Yeah. And so I.

Scott: The Scarface days are over.

Ben: Yeah. And I got a job at Copy Max, which is part of Office Max, because this is all I knew from day job, you know, this place, working at Copy Center.

Gabe: I didn't know there was a Copy Max. I guess it's like petsmart and Petco.

Ben: Well, no, there was like Office Max and Office Depot, which are what you just said, those two different things that eventually merged. Copy Max was like a division of Office Max. And some of the fancier Office Maxes would have like a Copy Max sort of built into the back of them, or even its own separate entrance. And so I started working at this Copy Max and there was. They had no business. And I just was like sitting around for a year and I was like, fuck this. Then I got a job with Xerox, with the actual company, Xerox, which had this thing where they would put people into bigger businesses and have them run. Like, big businesses would contract out with Xerox to have people come in and run their mail room and run their printing machines for them. So Rayovac Battery company had its world headquarters here in Madison, and Xerox Had a contract with them. And so I was working at Rayovac battery company in the mailroom, sort of running the operation from there. And then Rayovac. And then when there was that world financial crisis in 2010, I guess, 2008, Rick. 2008. 2008. Ray of Chapter, right. Ray of Ack. Went Chapter 11 and canceled their contract with Xerox. Xerox had nowhere to put me, and so they laid me off. But I've been working for them at that point for 10 years. And so I had like 10 years worth of unemployment insurance, and they were. And Obama was like, yeah, you know, extended out for years. So I really had like two years to like, sort of look for jobs and collect unemployment, which I did. And one of the first things I thought was, like, well, I could try to find another one of these dumb copy jobs or I have a little bit of, like, leeway. I have some. Some time to kill now. While I don't really need to find a job, maybe I should finally start doing something with films again. And so this was right around the time that high def video came into being and that you could actually buy equipment and shoot things that kind of looked like film. Because that was one of the big things when I graduated from film school that kept me from being in making movies is that it was so insanely expensive for film. Yeah, yeah. To make a film. And if you wanted to, like, try to make a cheap film on video, you would shoot something that looked like a soap opera. But now with high def video like that, that shot at 24 frames a second and really felt more like film, like, oh, I could buy one of those cameras and I could try to do something with that. And that's what I did. I spent like 5,000 bucks on a camera and then thought, okay, what do I do with this? And I didn't know how to use the camera, and I bought some sound equipment. I didn't know how to use that either. And then somebody, one of my next door neighbors said, hey, the Wisconsin Film Festival is accepting submissions for this year's festival, and the deadline is in like three weeks. And so I called a bunch of friends and neighbors and told them to come over one night and we would drink some beers and we would come up with an idea to make a movie that I could learn how to use the equipment while we were making it, and then I could submit it to this film festival if we could finish it in time. So we all got together, tried to come up with an idea for a movie Instead, everyone got drunk and got into weird fist fights and stuff, and nothing really worked except that there's. I had this.

Scott: That was your movie. You up?

Ben: No, I totally. That. I was like, oh, I just should have shot this meeting. That would have been. That would have been movie. But I was not thinking right. But I did. My next door neighbor, Alberto, seemed like a fun guy. He's an. He's an electrical engineer. And then my other friend Steve is a medical doctor. And the two of them together around this table while we were. The rest of us were arguing, seemed to have some good chemistry. And I thought, well, it'll be kind of fun to put these two guys in a movie together. But neither one of them had ever acted or done anything like that. And then I knew my neighbor across the street. Christina was a. Worked for children's theater, and she had gone to school for theater and directing and dramaturgy. And I said to her, can you teach these two guys? Can you give these guys an acting lesson?

Scott: Excuse me. Excuse me. Excuse me. Drop. Excuse me. Dramaturgy.

Ben: Yeah, you know it.

Scott: That's what you want.

Ben: Dramaturgy.

Scott: Dramaturgy.

Ben: You down with Dra? Yeah.

Scott: You know, what's the difference between drama and dramaturgy?

Ben: Dramaturgy is the is like the study is like the is. I'm gonna do a bad job of explaining it. It's sort of all the background material that you might want to bring to a production, such as, like, the research. Like. Like, if you're doing a Shakespearean. If you're doing a Shakespeare play, you might want a dramaturgist to be on your team and to say, here's how this play would have been presented in the 1700s. This is what Shakespeare was really referring to with these lines. Sort of like the context of that work.

Scott: Right.

Ben: Somebody who can explain and explore, which will hopefully sort of like, enrich the current production so that the actors and the director.

Scott: So this is for theater? A dramaturgist is for theater.

Ben: Yeah. Although I think it could be applied to other dramatic art forms, I think.

Scott: Okay, all right.

Ben: She's gonna listen to this and be like, what did you just say?

Scott: Good.

Ben: The fuck is wrong with you?

Scott: Proceed.

Ben: Anyway, so I said, can you give these guys an acting lesson? She said, sure, I'll do that. And so I grabbed my equipment, which I didn't really know how to do, and we went over to this studio that she had access to, and plop the three of them down at a table and said, okay, you guys are getting an acting lesson from this person and just kind of be yourselves or just see what happens. And so she gave them this sort of 20 minute acting lesson. And it was kind of, they were kind of being funny and interesting. And then when it was over, I said, okay, let's do the same thing again. I'm just going to move the camera to another angle. And so we did the whole thing again, like improvising this acting lesson. And then I, then that happened. And then I said, okay, let's do it one more time. And I was like hand holding the camera. And so at the end of the night, we had done this sort of 20 minute acting lesson that was kind of the same, but kind of different every time. They were kind of doing characters, but not really. And I took that stuff home and I cut it together on like a editing system I had on my computer. That's the first time I'd ever done that. And it turned it into like a 10 minute scene. I showed it to my wife and I showed it to the people who were in it. And they all thought it was kind of good and funny. And I was like, okay, great, let's do this. Let's make a movie with you two guys. But now we have this scene, I don't want to waste it. So now I need to figure out what is a movie that I can make that revolves around these two guys getting an acting lesson. So I came up with this idea that one of them had just lost his job and decided he wanted to become an actor and enlisted his next door neighbor to help him learn how to act and then get a part in a local production of the Grapes of Wrath. And so I wrote like a 10 scene outline for a movie, like one sentence for each scene. And then over the next week we shot those other nine scenes. I quick cut them together on the very last day that you could submit the film to the Wisconsin Film Festival. I sent it in. And then a month later I was shocked to get a thing in the mail saying, you've been, your film has been accepted into the festival. I was like, holy shit. It was like 40 minute long film. And I was like, wow, that's because it's a weird length for a movie. It's not really a short and it's not a feature. I was like, they're not even to watch this thing. But they watched it. And then a couple of weeks after that, I got another email from the festival saying, you've won an award. You've won an award for breakthrough performance for this medical doctor who was like, the star of the movie. And they'd never given an award at the festival for acting before.

Scott: But somehow this jury breakthrough to what, what seemed.

Ben: I don't know. Right. I don't know. I have no idea. They. Apparently they were just making this category up especially because they loved his performance so much.

Scott: Right. And he wasn't good enough for best actor. It was.

Ben: Well, there was no best act. There was nothing. It was just that that's the only acting award they've ever given in the entire 20 something year history of the festival. Yeah. So. And that came with 250 bucks. And then our film was in the festival. The first day tickets went on sale, it sold out. We took the \$250 and rented a party bus, a school bus.

Scott: You were back.

Ben: We all took the party bus to the premiere. We did all sorts of. And it was like crazy. It was a crazy thing that happened. And then.

Scott: I love that you learned nothing. I love. Yeah, learning nothing. It is the best.

Ben: So a couple years later I like infiltrated my way into actually working at the festival and then got another job on campus and the rest is history.

Scott: So you got. You got a job on the campus from film festivals?

Ben: Basically, yeah.

Scott: That seems like that doesn't happen often. It seems like it's no way around.

Ben: It's magical. It's an absolutely magical story. You know. The other thing that doesn't happen is you don't write it. You know how often it happens? You write a bullshit two minute song about how bad your band is and you end up making \$300,000 off of that. That doesn't happen, by the way. You know how many bands wind up selling. You know, any bands with a novelty record like the President end up selling like 3 million copies. That doesn't happen too often either, by the way.

Scott: Well, it was a glorious time.

Ben: Yeah. Were you into Lump?

Scott: There was Fat Andy. There was Mickey Eyes. What was I in the Lump.

Ben: Yeah. That's not a bad song. I don't think.

Scott: It's fine. It's totally fine.

Ben: Peaches, I think is awful. Like everything else that was a hit.

Scott: Off that album Gabe Loves Tortures. Gabe, you're a piece, right?

Gabe: Weren't they the first? Are they a two piece?

Ben: No, they're a three piece. But they're bases, right? They have a git. They have a git bass and a bass. They have like. They have like three and four stringed instruments that are like. It's a four string guitar and like a two string. Something else.

Scott: Something's weird about them. But I like the fact that, like. And I think Conrad Uno produced that stuff. Right?

Ben: Sure, why not?

Scott: So Conrad Uno, he did some Mud Honey records. And so I like the fact that when I listen to those records, like, just, you know, if you'd gone a little over to the left, let's say you get into Mud Honey territory, you know, and they went over to the right, which, say, is maybe Muppets territory, which is fine. I love the Muppets.

Ben: Yeah.

Scott: But, you know, it was.

Ben: They literally have a song called Dune Buggy, which is about like, I don't know what, like a raccoon driving a little dune buggy.

Scott: Sure. I mean, it's in the same swamp, but, you know, if you want to go to the Mud Honey, you go to the left. But. But you could hear some of that stuff that. That was going on. It didn't seem that crazy that it was out of Seattle.

Ben: Mm.

Scott: That's. That's all I got.

Gabe: So let me. Let me ask this though. Ben.

Ben: Yeah.

Gabe: How did you two actually meet? Because people are gonna still try to say, who the fuck is Ben Reiser?

Ben: That's another whole story. Yeah, I mean, not really much of a story, but I. I was doing this podcast, so. So my friend Mike, who I knew from college, and that's another crazy whole story that I really don't want to talk about tonight because it's like, oh, Jesus. But he. We didn't talk for 25 years. Then all of a sudden we hooked back up in the Midwest and started doing this podcast together at the beginning of the pandemic. He became like a. Like a well known writer raconteur who talks all about films. He wrote a movie. He wrote a book called Heavy Metal Movies, which is like A compendium of 666 movies that are somehow heavy metal related. And

those connections can be pretty obscure, but kind of fun to read about. And then he wrote a more recent book called Teen Movie Hell, which is like a catalog of all of the sort of teen sex comedies from.

Scott: Right. So he was basically carrying on the. The legacy of books like the. The cult movie book.

Ben: And with these books, he's a huge Danny Perry fan and. And yes, exactly that kind of thing. And so he. So actually. So Mike and I met in college and spent a couple years after college being friends. And then we had a bad breakup where he was getting into drugs and alcohol and I was trying to get married, and it was like, I can't talk to you anymore. And we didn't talk forever.

Scott: And then the adult relationships again. Here we go.

Gabe: Yeah.

Ben: Yeah. But when I. When I. When I moved to Madison and then found out he was living in Chicago and he was writing for Mr. Skin, I was like, oh, this guy's successful. And I. I. Mr. Skin, Gab.

Gabe: I don't remember what that is. The movie. Movie magazine.

Scott: Go on, go on, Ben, let's.

Ben: So I reached out to him and I said, hey, I hear you're living in Chicago. I'm living in Madison. I'd love to see you. He invited me to Mr. Skin's annual. I don't know what party they have. And I went, was that, like.

Scott: Was. Was that weird, wild stuff?

Ben: It was. I'm not that weird. Not that wild. But I was impressed because at some point, Mr. Skin had been bought out by Playboy. So they had all this Playboy money and they had a fucking spread, man. At this party. I was like, I've never seen so much food.

Scott: Pun intended.

Ben: And. Right, exactly. And then this very sweet thing happened. Mike introduced me to Mr. Skin himself, and Mr. Skin looked at me, said, oh, my God, Ben Reiser, I've been hearing about you for 10 years. Mike said he stole his entire personality from you. And I was like, whoa. Because in my mind, I was like, I'm this fucking loser who's working in this copy shop and had this fluke thing with this song. But otherwise, like, you know, I'm not doing anything that I thought I was going to do back in college, and Mike is having this kind of brilliant career as a writer, and

it was really like, oh, my God, I can't believe Mike's been, like, talking about me like that and that people remember that. And so it was very nice.

Scott: Yeah.

Ben: But anyway. But we still. It's not like we spent a lot of time together. And then cut to last year. I discovered that Mike has started a podcast with this friend of his, Aaron Lee, who's, like, a writer in Hollywood, who.

Scott: And to people that don't know, like, Mike was definitely kind of like, you know, like, he was in the local movie scene here in Chicago. Like, he was definitely showing up at lectures and stuff, and you'd hear him on podcasts and contributing to, you know, articles left and right online.

Ben: So he was kind of this guy.

Scott: Who's everybody knew and that kind of.

Ben: Thing, and hosting, like, movie nights at the Music Box and.

Scott: Right.

Ben: And things like that.

Scott: Exactly.

Ben: And so I suddenly discovered that he had started a podcast with this friend of his who's a famous Hollywood or successful Hollywood TV and movie writer. And it was called Crackpot Cinema. And every week they would die, talk about these insane movies that they loved and nobody else had ever heard of or thought anything of. And I listened to, like, the first three or four episodes, and I loved them. I thought, these guys are so funny. And it's so interesting hearing about these movies and hearing their perspectives on it. And the only thing. The only thing in my head was also like, but this podcast sounds like. And especially, like, the fourth episode was all fucked up. Like, the sync was off so that they were talking over each other. And so I wrote him an email, and I said, dude, I've been listening to your podcast. I love it. I'm sure you got a million people around you who can fix this for you, but I want you to know the sound is all fucked up, Especially on this latest episode. That's all. Goodbye. He wrote me back and he said, dude, I know it's all fucked up. Can you help? And I was like, well, I don't know. I don't do anything like that. But sure, I'll give it a shot. It can't be any worse. So.

Scott: And ding, ding, ding. You're a producer, right?

Ben: Ding, ding, ding. I'm a producer. And then, ding, ding, ding. He also says to me, listen, I've been thinking about this other podcast that I want to do with you. And it's about us growing up in Brooklyn in the 70s and the movies that we saw when we were kids. And I said, I don't. I have a

terrible memory. I'm not gonna be good at that. Let's not do that. And he's like, no, no, no, really, let's try it. And I said, okay. And so we tried it, and it was. It was so much fun, and was immediately like, oh, my God. I never thought I'd be having these kind of conversations with this guy ever again, because we had this really fun, intense relationship in our teens and twenties. And then I just never thought it, you know, it was like, we're done. And I thought, even if we become friends again, we'll never get back to that place and never have that kind of chemistry. But we immediately did, of course.

Scott: Right?

Ben: And it was beautiful and great, and we were having the time of our lives. Then he just fucking died. Like, just drop dead.

Scott: Like, can you. Do you know what happened? Can you tell us?

Ben: I. I don't. I think he had a heart attack. I mean, he was overweight. He had been talking to me about having, you know, heart issues or that he was, like, working on losing some weight and working on being more physically fit and doing more exercise. Yeah, but he. But he had recently become a foster parent, and so for the first time. And he was 50. 50. He was a couple years younger than me, so he's like 52, 53, and dealing with, like, an infant for the first time.

Scott: Right.

Ben: And only time. And there was a lot going on and. And he was insanely active as far as, like, projects and things he was doing with these couple of podcasts and appearing on everyone else's podcasts and promoting these books. He was writing and dreaming of all these other projects for us to start. He was really, in a weird way, it felt it in retrospective, it felt to me like that one way of looking at it was him having some sense that he didn't have that much time left and was doing everything he ever wanted to do and, like, making the most out of every day. Then he was gone. And I just thought, okay, well, that's the end of everything as far as these podcasts. And, you know, I was, like, crying for, like, two weeks straight. I was like, it was such a weird. Like, that's not. That was. This is the first time anything like that has happened to me, like, one of my peers and one of my close friends and especially somebody who I just reconnected with a year earlier and then suddenly started this intense relationship with again, and suddenly they were just gone. But. But people kept writing me saying, hey, you should, you know, you should keep going. Like, Mike would want you to keep going. You know, Mike was totally into this podcast. We all love this thing. You should try. Try it. And I was like, I. You know, we'd had a whole bunch of guests, and there are plenty of other people in my life who are equally interested in movies, who I talk to all the time about movies, but nothing in my head was like, oh, yeah, that would be a good person. And then, I don't know why, I can't remember if it was something specific, but I remembered discovering about Scott that he was into film and. And reading some kind of an interview or hearing him somewhere a couple years ago talk about. And have I told you this, Scott? Like, what. What the. What. The one thing was you were. You were somewhere talking about this movie souvenir that you had seen.

Scott: Oh, the souvenir.

Ben: Right, the souvenir. And you were saying like, oh, she's. She's really doing something interesting. And I'm like, oh, this is. This is an obscure film for this rock star dude who. And so, I mean, I've been A local Age fan since. Since. And this is something else I just figured out since Pack up the Cats. And I. And I realized only recently that it was the Robert Chris Cow review that got me to buy that album. Yeah, I read that review, and he's like, this is the best rock album of the year. And I'm like, whoa, okay, I'm. I'm. I'm down with that.

Scott: Chris Cow was an early supporter. He was, like, one of the first guys who, like, crossed the picket line.

Ben: Yeah. If I had. If I had heard Bound for the Floor, it didn't really register with me. Like, I think it was sort of like, okay, so. But that wasn't. And I hadn't heard anything on Pack up the Cats. I just read his review and bought the album just based on that review. I must have bumped into it, like, a couple days later at a. At a local, you know, record store. Probably like a promotional copy that I bought. Yeah, that's all I ever bought, was like, whatever was 4.99. Um, and then I listened to that album, and I was like, oh, I think he's right. I think this is, like, the best rock album I've heard. Not only this year, but maybe ever. It's still, I think, like, one of the greatest things I've ever heard. Anyway, this thing about the souvenir. And then a couple other things. I was like, oh, no, Scott's into movies. And then I read the 25 years of local H. The. All that stuff that's on. That's on the website. And I was like, oh, my God, this guy is such a good, funny writer. And this is such great, smart writing about his own art and about his own career. And this is such a. This is the. I wish I could write like this. I wish I could talk this way about my art and stuff that I've done. I don't know. I just was sort of, like, in love with Scott. And I thought, but. But, But. But for some reason, he came. Maybe I saw something online or whatever, and I was like, you know who I think it would be really fun to do this podcast with is Scott Lucas. But I had no way of getting in touch with him, and I sent him a friend request on Facebook, which he ignored for maybe three months after we started doing the podcast. I think he still hadn't friended me, but I realized that through Mike McPadden, I probably was now friends or at least connected on social media with people who might know Scott. And then I reached out to this guy, Mike Vanderbilt.

Scott: Yeah, Mike Vanderbilt.

Ben: Who? I. I don't. I've never talked to you about him. I don't really know what your relationship with him is at all, but I was like, hey, do you happen to have contact info for Scott Lucas? And he's like, why? I said, well, I want to ask him to do the podcast with me. And he's like, sure, I'll introduce you. And I said, okay. He goes, well, he can be a bit prickly. I said, that's fine, I don't care. You know, I'm just gonna do. I know he's gonna say, no, yeah, sorry, I will cut that part out.

Scott: No, no, please, please keep it. I am a prickly pear. He's absolutely right.

Ben: Yeah. But I just was like, I was just in this frame of mind where I'm just gonna write this honest email saying, this is what happened. This is what I'd like to try. Do you have any interest? I wrote a lot. It was a long email.

Scott: Extensive email. It was unnaturally extensive.

Ben: Right?

Scott: Not unnaturally. It was, it was. It was unnecessarily extensive. Like you had me at the first couple of sentences, so.

Ben: Right. But I didn't know. I didn't know that anything.

Scott: Like I appreciated it, but so. But I back you up.

Ben: Yeah, that's cool. Let's try. He wrote back, like I wrote him a seven paragraph email and he wrote back, sure. It was like two. It was like two words. I was like, okay, this is going.

Scott: To be good back. I was like, ah, that's cool. Let's do. Let's do Race with the Devil.

Ben: Yeah, yeah.

Scott: And, yeah, and that was the thing, like doing those. Like Eddie had been pushing me to do these podcasts for about a year and I dragged my feet like I usually do with Eddie. And. And then, you know, once we started doing those, I was like, this guy knows how to do this stuff. So this is probably the way to do this. So, yeah, it was all, thank you, presidents of the United States of America.

Ben: Yeah, thanks, Chris Blue.

Scott: Well, if you didn't know then, now you know.

Ben: Now you know who the fuck. Now you can really say. Now you can stop saying who the is Ben Reiser and say Ben Reiser.

Scott: I don't think Gabe is ever going to stop saying who the fuck is Ben. Ben Reiser?

Ben: But he doesn't say. He doesn't actually say, Gabe.

Gabe: Before I might have said, who the hell is Ben Raiser? But I wasn't even thinking of Ben Riser when I sent it. I was thinking of the other guy. We were talking about that day. Who was it?

Scott: I don't know what you're talking about.

Speaker A: You haven't done that by now, it ain't gonna never.

Speaker C: How is everybody?

Speaker A: Okay.

Speaker C: You're okay. You're okay.

Speaker B: Gabe.

Speaker C: Gabe. I noticed there's no records in the background this time. I'm really kind of disappointed.

Speaker A: Well, there's records back there, but I got nothing on display.

Speaker C: That's what I mean.

Speaker B: This episode is a blank slate.

Speaker A: I'm kind of feeling weird because I got these records showing every week in the background, but my turntable is not plugged in. I feel kind of. I feel like I'm putting up charade here by showing my records, and my turntable hasn't been plugged in since I moved in, so.

Speaker C: So you feel like a poser?

Speaker A: I didn't say that. I said charade. This is like a synonym for poser, I guess.

Speaker C: But, yeah, here's what I'm saying. I'm seeing a guy who every episode tried, basically found something that. That was, like, his. His thing on this show. And this week he said, fuck it. That's what I see. I see somebody who decided not to try this week. Now, am I right in that way? Poser.

Speaker A: I will call the poser once in my life. I don't even think you're serious now.

Speaker B: But did the guy live to tell the tale?

Speaker C: Who was the guy that called you a poser and what was.

Speaker A: I don't want to say. Don't want to say.

Speaker C: All right, well, what happened? I mean, how. What was the instance that you were called a poser?

Speaker A: I think I might have put a patch on my jacket at some point in high school. And it wasn't a band that I was very familiar with or something, you know, it's something stupid, high school stuff. You know, those battle jackets, jean jackets with patches.

Speaker C: And you don't remember the band?

Speaker A: I don't remember the band. I just remember being called a poser. And it was stupid and we got over it.

Speaker C: Listen, I think you remember the band. I think you remember the person, and I think you remember the day it happened.

Speaker A: I don't remember the band exactly. I remember the person, but.

Speaker C: Come on, you gotta tell me the bridge.

Speaker A: No, no, it's like the Orange Crush story. It'll go to our grave.

Speaker B: Oh, Jesus. You just brought that up again. It finally died to death. Wait. There is something on your shelf that I do see and I want you to tell me what it is. There's some. Is it a mug? What am I seeing there's some figure, it's.

Speaker A: I'll bring it closer.

Speaker B: Yes, please, for God's sake.

Speaker C: It's a Stein. It's a Frankenstein.

Speaker B: No, it's like a bobblehead.

Speaker C: Oh, it's the Eddie. Eddie Bobblehead.

Speaker A: Bobblehead.

Speaker C: From Peace of Mind.

Speaker A: From Peace of mind.

Speaker C: You have two peace of mind, bobbleheads or.

Speaker A: No, one is this one and the other is alive after death. But that's the only one that bibles. The other one is regular. These are toys, man.

Speaker C: I knew we'd find a way. I knew we find a way to talk about something in there.

Speaker A: I bought these toys. My wife called them toys. They're like dolls. When I was probably 20 years old, or 25, whatever I was. And then 20 years later, here we go. I'm just selling money.

Speaker C: So it was Heidi that called you a poser? Is that what you're telling me?

Speaker A: No, no, she wasn't. She wasn't the one.

Speaker B: What? So Eddie is always there, but he's usually covered up by what you put on display, right?

Speaker C: Yeah.

Speaker A: Well, I found this. I've been going through my stuff. You know, I'm 49. I'll be 50s next year. This year. And I'm just going through some of my old junk. When you moved, you go through your old drunk.

Speaker C: You're so old.

Speaker A: I know, but I got a lot of stuff I forgot I even had.

Speaker C: You're saying it's time to put childish things away. You're gonna turn 50? Is that what's going on? So at 50, it's time to get rid of the bobbleheads?

Speaker A: I think so. I mean, the Beanie Babies I still have, but the Eddie bobbleheads, they might have to hang around a little longer unless I can find a buyer that wants them more than that.

Speaker C: I think if you still got eddie bobbleheads at 50, you hold on to those fucking things. They should not be going anywhere. They are. You are. But by you selling them and get rid of getting rid of them, you're not going to change, you know, that's not going to. It's not going to be the thing that makes you turn into a man. It's too late. It's too late for us. Manhood is not what we do.

Speaker A: Do you guys have anything like this? Like an Eddie bobblehead that you forgot you had, and then you realize maybe it's a little childish? I'm sure you.

Speaker C: No, that's childish. That's ridiculous. I don't have one of those.

Speaker A: I'm sure you got some. I can find them toys, Ben. You don't have any old movie posters or something?

Speaker B: You know.

Speaker A: You know, I'm sure you got something.

Speaker B: I've got this thing on my desk right here that's a. It's a. It's a Snoopy coffee mug. And then it says, curse the early morning hours. I should probably just send this to Scott. This seems with his new coffee fixation and his aversion to doing stuff early in the day.

Speaker C: Listen, I'm not drinking coffee this week. Cause you were right last week, Ben. That coffee fucked me up for two or three days. Like drinking coffee after seven. I'm not a coffee guy anymore. I was just. I was like, whoa, I cannot sleep. It was bad. It ruined my whole week. You were correct on that.

Speaker B: That was a very quick coffee phase you went through.

Speaker C: It was. That's how I do. That's how I do.

Speaker A: What about the idea of the coffee mugs? The podcast coffee mugs, though? You gotta put something in it.

Speaker B: Yeah, you gotta. We gotta cut this part out because we still want to sell those.

Speaker C: Fuck the Lifers podcast coffee mugs. Yeah, we still. We've got to do that. I still think that's a good idea. Oh, so I have to pretend that I'm drinking coffee in order to sell Lifers podcast mugs.

Speaker A: You can put, like, Tang in there or something.

Speaker C: Now who's the poser?

Speaker B: Drink your whiskey.

Speaker C: Cheers.

Speaker B: Oh, look at that. Look at us again. We're twinsies. We have dawn of the Dead posts and Whiskey with Ice. I was gonna. I put ice in my whiskey, and I was like, Scott's gonna see this and he's gonna go, o.

Speaker C: But you guys have been drinking ice in my whiskey. We just started. What are you drinking? Pee.

Speaker A: This is Mango Juicy Juice. I'm the only straight edge one in the group. And I thought. But I didn't know you guys were drinking on the job here.

Speaker C: We just started because I decided that the coffee thing last week. Really? I'm still trying to find my feet here. Gabe, on the Lifers podcast. Welcome.

Speaker A: Number seven.

Speaker C: Number seven. And we don't have a guest this week.

Speaker A: We don't.

Speaker C: No. It's just us hanging out. So goodbye, everybody. Tune out.

Speaker B: But I tell you, there's so much local H news to talk about. Yeah. There's tons of stuff.

Speaker C: That's right. What we do have this week is we've got tour dates, and it excites me to no end. And I was so excited to post these things today and so excited for the response that we got from people and how excited they were that we were coming and, you know, it's just an endless loop of excitement.

Speaker B: But you got a response. You got these responses that I see all the time when tour dates go up and I wonder if this annoys you or makes you happy or what. Which is. Most of the responses are, what? No fucking blank on my town here. What happened to blank my fucking town?

Speaker C: That is. That is mildly annoying. And we get that every time. And it's like, usually you want to say, you know what, drive an extra hour, because I'm pretty sure you're not driving as far as we are. You know, it's just like, shut the fuck up. We're doing the best we can. But in this instance, Eagle Eyed Watchers will see that there are some holes in these dates and that should tell those people that we have not announced all the dates yet. There's some clubs that have not announced their own openings and they're not ready to announce anything. But there are a few shows that are happening that we can't talk about.

Speaker B: Yeah, speaking of that, what? No fucking Madison.

Speaker C: Right? Well, screw Madison. You could drive to Milwaukee.

Speaker B: I know I will be there. Shank hall opening night.

Speaker C: The tour starts in Shank hall in Milwaukee. Opening night is August 31st in Shank Hall. Now, we have been to Shank hall many times before, so this is going to be a lot of fun. But some of these places we've never been to before. Like some of these clubs we're playing the 1st of October in Sacramento at this place called Holy Diver. Holy Diver, which I'm very excited about, but it's a great fucking name for a club. Now the thing is, is we've never played there, but we have drank there. And so we're very excited to come back there and actually play a show.

Like in New York, the show on September 4th at this place called LPR. It's La Poisson Rouge or something like that. I don't think we've ever played there before.

Speaker B: I've never heard of it. And I'm from New York.

Speaker C: Yeah, I mean, well, you know, what is it? Some of the places.

Speaker B: Was it formally someplace else?

Speaker C: We don't know what's going to happen. I don't know. But you know, there's a lot of clubs that, that we're used to playing that I don't know if they're there anymore. You know, so we've got. Should I run down these dates or is this something we should just tell people to look up.

Speaker B: I just want to say one thing about Shank Hall. The most. The most. The most fascinating thing to me about Shank hall, and I've been there myself a couple times, is that it's the only club I've ever been to that seems to be wall to wall carpeted. Do you. Have you experienced this elsewhere? Have you ever been to carpeted clubs other than Shank Hall?

Speaker C: The only thing I can think of that's got wall to wall carpeting is the pizza place on the south side. Shit, now I'm not gonna get any. What's that pizza place on the south side?

Speaker A: Is that Alexa?

Speaker C: Somebody will know. But there's.

Speaker B: I don't even. Actually I don't even know if Shank hall is wall to wall, but I do remember carpeting on the floor and being like, wow, this is weird.

Speaker C: Yeah, that place has been there for a while. That was like one of the first places that. I mean, we. We played there way back in the day. Right, Gabe?

Speaker B: Yeah.

Speaker A: There's some older clubs in Milwaukee that we've been to, but Shane Collins was one of the first. The first places we played with new cases. Roadcast.

Speaker C: There was that show we played with Steam and we just happened to get new cases that day. And they come rolling in while we're playing with this touch and go band. And I am mortified that we've got all these new cases and they're just sitting there on stage looking at us like, you fucking posers. Well, the other really good show at Shank hall was when we were on tour with Tripping Daisy. And there was nobody at the show, so we decided to play Rock from the Crips circa now in its entirety.

Speaker A: We didn't end up Tripping Daisy.

Speaker C: And, you know, by the time we were done, we did with that. With Tripping Daisy. Right. And so by the time we were done, you know, the place was starting to fill up, but it was too late. We had decided this is what we were going to do and there was no turning back. So not that.

Speaker B: And you learned the whole album that day?

Speaker C: No, that was something we always had in our back pocket if things didn't go well.

Speaker A: We.

Speaker C: We had that in our back pocket if there was nobody there. It's like, look, we're just gonna play this Rock from the Crypt record and that's it.

Speaker A: That wasn't the only time we did that before. We did that at Jesse Mendoza. Is that his name?

Speaker B: Jesse Mendoza.

Speaker A: J Street in his basement at Halloween. That one year. Is that New Year's Eve.

Speaker C: That sounds like a New Year's Eve type of thing. I remember that show. I don't remember playing that record, but I do remember that show.

Speaker A: We played that record, that show.

Speaker C: All right, so am I going to run down these dates or are we just going to tell people to look them up? What do you think?

Speaker B: I don't know. Run them. Run them down. I can always cut it out if it's totally fucking boring. I think it might be 8:31. Hopefully you've got stuff to say about these places. That would be fun.

Speaker C: All right, well, stop me. Yeah, let's talk about them as we go on. 8:31, we're at Shank Hall, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Speaker B: Great gig. Can't fucking wait. Carpeting, wall to wall. You played rock. I want you to. By the way, even though this is the opening night of your Lifers reboot tour, I still think you should do the Rocket from the Crypt album, start to finish.

Speaker C: Yeah, we're doing Circa now. That's right. That's it. You're right. And a Betty Savier cover. That's what's gonna happen.

Speaker B: Right?

Speaker C: So I could read these dates, but fuck it, let's just look them up. Dates are up. By the time this airs, tickets will have already gone on sale.

Speaker B: Everything will be sold out by the time people hear this shit anyway.

Speaker C: Yeah, let's hope so. Yeah, we won't read the dates. Screw that. We would just ask Gabe if. How's the hunt for the Mexican food going? Have you found a place yet?

Speaker A: We went to a different place last week in. I think it was in Greer, South Carolina. And they. They. They do something more with their salsa here. They do this where they make their. It's like a bean dip that's kind of a little spicy.

Speaker B: Yeah.

Speaker A: So. And it was okay. And then they said over there they got a salsa bar. So I went to the salsa bar and I mixed the salsa with the bean dip. Then it turned out pretty good.

Speaker C: So.

Speaker A: But the enchiladas weren't very good, though, so it's hard to. It's hard to get the whole combination. The whole enchilada, if you will.

Speaker C: Yeah.

Speaker B: So how many different.

Speaker C: You like. You like a wet bean dip?

Speaker A: It's not bad. Bean dip that's got, you know, the pico de gallo or salsa, whatever you want to call it, mixed in it. It's pretty good.

Speaker C: Ooh, he's speaking Spanish.

Speaker B: Have you heard how many salsas did they have at the salsa bar?

Speaker A: There's probably six or seven. That's kind of it's common around this area because I've seen it a few places. Most of the time it's hit or miss. But this one had some really good salsa in it.

Speaker C: So what? All right, what about pizza? Have you guys found a pizza place that you did?

Speaker A: Oh, that's a dirty word down here. They don't know what pizza is all about down here because this is. We've gotten some pizza where you ate one slice and threw the rest out. That's how bad it was. Like, when you're throwing pizza away, it's bad.

Speaker C: That's really bad.

Speaker A: You got some work to do because Charlotte sucked for pizza. I'm going to say, you know, we've.

Speaker C: Had that barstool pizza guy prick hanging around Chicago the last week or so. I mean, this guy is probably the biggest douche on the planet, right? But. But he's been going to different places and doing his little, you know, you know the rules. Once, one bite. So I've been watching him and it. It's like. It looks to me like this guy doesn't even know how to eat pizza the way he eats pizza and sticks it in his face. I don't understand you guys know about this guy. You know who this is?

Speaker B: I've watched a few of his things and been like, this guy.

Speaker C: Yeah, something about. He's got that mouth breathing, douche type of thing where he'll like walk into a place and like, okay, here's what you got to do. You know, tear this down, do that. Blah, blah, blah. He has that thing about him. He's got a very. He's got that kind of face, you know, I'm talking about.

Speaker B: But he's part of an army of these YouTube douchebags who do that thing. Like, these guys are like, nobody eats a jack in the box hamburger like I do. This is how you do it. You know, they. They tour some city and they go to every fucking fast food place that there is and show you how to open up a box at McDonald's or something.

Speaker C: It's like, well, watching him. Watching him try to open a pizza box in Chicago is. It's special. It's pretty funny. But the one thing that this guy does say, which I'm totally down with, and I agree with him, God help me, is this idea. He goes to someplace, he eats the thin crust and then he eats a deep dish, and it actually looks like it's a stuffed slice, not deep dish. There's a difference. And. And he can, you know, he barely eat because he he's not in control of his faculties or whatever, but he. He says he's like, look, Chicago, don't run from the deep dish. Own it. He's like, I like the deep dish better than. Than the. Than the thin. He's like, well, I like it better than the thin. It's like, yeah, who gives a fuck? But. But the fact that Chicago should own the deep dish, and I get so tired of hearing, like, well, I don't even like deep dish. Or, you know, it's like, all right.

Speaker B: I do hear that all the time from people in Chicago now. Like, deep dish isn't Chicago pizza.

Speaker C: Right?

Speaker B: That's bullshit.

Speaker C: Right? You know, maybe there are other kinds of pizza, but, you know, deep dish is one of those kind of pizzas. I mean, I prefer stuffed, but it's like, if you were to eat, you know, go to an UNO's in LA or something like that. It does. It's not. It doesn't taste the same. So people all over the country think they know what this stuff, what this stuff is supposed to taste like, and they don't. They have no idea. So whenever I see somebody go, oh, yeah, you're right, it sucks. I'm like, move, move. Go somewhere else. I mean, the pizza in Madison's pretty good, right, Ben?

Speaker B: You know, it took me a long time. I've been in Madison over 20 years, and I'm at the point now where I don't feel qualified to say because, like, stuff that I wouldn't. That I. When I first got here, I'm like, these aren't bagels. This isn't pizza. This isn't Chinese food. Now I'm like, yeah, give me the fucking bagels and the pizza and the Chinese food.

Speaker A: I don't care.

Speaker B: It's all good. So I don't know. I feel like I've lost my New York mojo when it comes to those things. Things. But yes, there's. There's, like, Ian. Ian's Pizza, which I think even has opened up in Chicago, is. Is a pretty good pizza place.

Speaker C: They'll do slices and stuff like that.

Speaker B: And honestly, you know, even though I'm like a New York purist, like, some of these sort of more interesting, modern pizza things are pretty good. Like, I've had a lasagna slice at Ian's, which I'm like, this is fucking good. A nice lasagna noodle on top of some ricotta cheese and a slice of pizza. Yeah, right on. And the Mac and cheese pizza. This is pretty good, you know? So I think Totally broken down is.

Speaker C: What New York does that I've seen plenty of, like, sort of, but not.

Speaker B: When I was growing up. Now every. This is. This is the same thing as my whiskey sour problem. It's like, okay, it used to be that, like, shit from the coast would slowly infiltrate the country. Now it's the opposite. Now it's. The Midwest has crept over to the coast. And so, yeah, all of a sudden, in New York, you order a whiskey sour and they do it with squirt, and you fucking order a slice of pizza, and it's got a lasagna noodle and some Mac and cheese on it. So, yes, you're right. You can get that in New York now. But that's not legit.

Speaker C: Listen, I. I love a great New York slice. I. I love it. And every time we go to New York, you know, I mean, the last time I was there, I had five or six slices. I love it. But if. Yeah.

Speaker B: Do you have a favorite place in New York that you go to?

Speaker C: I like Rosario's down in the Village. I dig that place a lot. Hopefully it's still open. But if. If I'm being honest, my favorite pizza is the stuffed spinach and jalapeno from Chicago. Pizza here in Chicago. It's called Chicago's pizza. And that.

Speaker B: That.

Speaker C: That pizza is so good that I don't understand. Anytime somebody gets high and mighty and douche-y and it's like, I don't like pizza like that. Or Debt's casserole. It's like, you. It's got a crust, there's sauce on top, there's cheese on top, there's meat. Whatever you want. It's pizza.

Speaker B: Stop it.

Speaker C: You know, can we. Can we stop this?

Speaker B: Yeah. What I. What I. What I found to be much more regional Chicago stuff that I never heard of before and didn't know was a fucking thing or is like, all the stuff that you can get at Portillo's, like, the Italian beef and.

Speaker C: Right.

Speaker B: And everything with giardiniera. I didn't know what Gardner was. I'm like, what. What is this? And it's, like, all over everything in Chicago.

Speaker C: So you love it though, now, right?

Speaker B: No, I've never tried it. I'm like, I don't want that. It looks like relish to me. I've never liked. So I. I'm just not into that whole thing.

Speaker C: It might look like relish, but it's not relish. It's really, really good. Ben, I'm gonna send you a jar.

Speaker B: Thank you. No, we can have. When I come see you at Shank hall, we'll, we'll find some. You bring it, bring it there.

Speaker C: And when I go to the, you know, when I go to North Wisconsin, up in the north woods where my, my dad lives, there are some places there, like. And they do the tavern style, of course, because there's Tavern. Yeah, yeah. You throw a rock and you hit a tavern. Their pizza is some of the best pizza I've ever had. There are places up there that I'm like, this is so good. Like, you know, it shouldn't come as a surprise that Wisconsin knows how to do pizza, considering the cheese. But, you know, even growing up in Zion, we had great fucking pizza.

Speaker A: My favorite pizza in all time is Pizza House in Zion. I can't top it anywhere else, even though, you know, some of the stuff in the city is top notch. But Pizza House in Zion, there's a picture, there's a picture of that pizza in the inserts for as Good as Dead.

Speaker C: Yes, there is pizza.

Speaker A: The only pizza that ever made its way onto a local age record.

Speaker C: Well, they, they. Was that a double decker that we were eating?

Speaker A: No, it's just a pan.

Speaker C: That was a pan, yeah. Because the way they do it, it's not like when you go to Uno's or something or Gino's east and it's too much bread, it's too thick. I don't dig that. And the way Pizza House does it is. It's kind of in between. Like, it's really good. Are you sure? Who does the double decker?

Speaker A: Double D's, Double deckers Double D's.

Speaker C: Now Double D's rules. Like a double decker pizza from Double D's, man.

Speaker A: Yeah, we had a show in Waukegan with, with Fig Dish. Remember right before the show at Beckman's in Waukegan.

Speaker B: Yeah.

Speaker A: We took Fig Dish over to double Ds and never heard the end of it because it was the best pizza around at the time.

Speaker C: It's good. Do you know about this? So there's a pizza.

Speaker B: No.

Speaker C: And then you put another pizza on top of it.

Speaker B: Like a whole other pizza. Double decker pretty much sounds fantastic.

Speaker C: It's a double decker.

Speaker B: You know what? I saw somebody show somebody that I know on Long island posted something recently. There's a, there's a pizza thing that they do in Long island now where they, you know, everything on the east coast is by the slice. You know, you don't have to order a pie. You walk in, you order a slice or two or three and so they heat up the slices, and then when they serve it to you on the paper plate, which is how they do it there, right as they

serve it to you, they grab a fistful of shredded mozzarella and they dump that fresh mozzarella on top of your freshly heated pizza, and you eat it before that mozzarella heats up. So it's like cold mozzarella on top of a hot pizza slice. And people tell me that's a fucking experience. Yeah.

Speaker C: Who is doing this?

Speaker B: Some pizza places in New York City. I don't know. I think they. I think it's sort of spreading.

Speaker C: I've seen the extra sauce pizzas where they ladle on some sauce, and I love that.

Speaker B: Yeah, that's bullshit. Yeah, that's all right.

Speaker C: No, no, no, no. Nancy's in Chicago, down the street from our old practice space. They go, you want some extra sauce? I was like, fuck, yeah. And they put it on there. It was great. But that is a great idea.

Speaker B: What's the place that. There's a.

Speaker C: There's back in New York on September 4th at the.

Speaker B: Yeah, send us the information, east coast people, on where you can get the fresh mozzarella d. Pizza slice.

Speaker A: Pizza, everybody. I was gonna say everybody's gonna bring slice of pizza to you now at all these shows. Here's the best pizza in town. You got to try it.

Speaker C: Awesome.

Speaker B: Hooray.

Speaker C: Hooray. I'll be my own. I'll be, you know, my own barstool pizza douche. That. That's great. I don't want people on the east coast to think that I don't like the pizza. We love the pizza on the East Coast. I just cannot.

Speaker B: I don't think you said anything like.

Speaker C: People coming into our city and talking shit about our pizza. I can't handle it. I won't deal with it. And, you know, and not that this fucking douche was doing that. He wasn't. But there are some people here who just, you know, they're like, that's. They'll. They'll open up a pizza place and say, because Chicago pizza sucks. And it's like, just go away, Go away, go away.

Speaker B: You know how Tom Jones used to get. Or maybe still does get, like, panties thrown at him at every show? Like, people are going to throw slices of pizza at you.

Speaker C: I hope it's with love. You know what? There's something that occurs to me. We don't have a guest tonight, but we also don't really know a whole hell of a lot about Ben Rizer at Least our listeners don't. So maybe the rest of the episode we try to figure out who the fuck is Ben Reiser.

Speaker A: Yes, who the fuck is Ben?

Speaker C: Yeah, who the fuck is Ben Reiser? I mean, are there people out there that are like, okay, I know who Scott is, I know who Gabe is. All right, but who the fuck is Ben Reiser? So, Ben, let's figure out who you are. What do you think about that?

Speaker B: All right. All right, so, I mean, I'll just say. I'll just say I've been. I've been. I've been expecting. Not this, but I mean, I. I did expect a lot of that. I mean, and maybe, maybe the cold manner people behind my back are saying, like, who the is this? And I sort of feel like there are people who are in. In the sort of local h. Super fan group that. That are doing their own podcasts and they're probably like, wait a minute, what just happened? We were the one doing the podcast and now there's all this going. How did. If. If we only knew, all we had to do was write Scott an email and he'd start doing a podcast with us. We would have done that three years ago. So. But I haven't. Nobody said that to me yet. And they seem. They all seem like nice people, kind of nice people.

Speaker C: They're wonderful people.

Speaker B: They are. And they don't mess with them. No. And they've all friended me on Facebook and send me personal messages and they've made me feel very warm and welcome. You know, I'm still sort of waiting for the other shoe to drop, but. But yeah, it's been great.

Speaker C: I think if the other shoe drops, they probably would do it in secret.

Speaker B: But they'll just vote me off of some Twitter polls.

Speaker C: Yeah. Right. So the first thing that would probably come up on your Wikipedia is that you wrote a song for the presidency of the United States of America on their big first hit record. But the thing is, is, like, how did that happen? Like, you wrote that song previously for another band that you were in. Were you in it with one of the guys from the Presidents or How'd that happen?

Speaker A: He wrote Lump.

Speaker B: I wish.

Speaker C: He wrote Lump in my throat.

Speaker B: Yeah, I. Yeah, I always thought, oh, it would be great to be in a band. But this one I was in, and when I was in junior high school, that's what we called it back in the day. Did you guys go to junior high school or middle school?

Speaker C: Junior. Junior high. Yeah.

Speaker B: Right. You know, it's all middle school now.

Speaker C: Is middle the same as junior high, kind of.

Speaker B: It's weird. I think it starts like a grade earlier. Like, it seems like elementary school only goes up to fifth grade now. And then middle school is sixth through eighth, and then after that you're in high school. I don't understand it. That's. But I've seen my kids go through it. I'm like, oh, that's what you're doing now? Okay, wait. Yeah, wait, fifth grade. You're done with. With elementary school. Okay, cool.

Speaker C: Right.

Speaker B: Anyway, I don't know. I went to school for filmmaking and. But I was. Somebody else from my high school in Brooklyn was there at the same time also in the film program. And I. One day I walked past his dorm room, and suddenly he had a drum kit in his dorm room, and he was playing with this. With a guitar player and somebody else. And I was like, whoa, what the fuck? I didn't know that this. I didn't know this guy Meryl, my friend, could play drums, and he really couldn't play drums, but they were just doing it, and I was like, God damn it. That's all you got to do. Just do it. And so I convinced Meryl, the drummer, to start a band with me. And we would go home to Brooklyn on the weekends, and we hooked up with two of our other high school friends and we started this band and we wrote a bunch of songs and we played a concert in my parents living room. And then we wanted to do a real gig, and we got booked in on audition night at CBGB's, which they would do maybe twice a week where they would. I think normally there'd be like 20 bands a night at CBGB's, and on audition night there'd be like 40 bands. And they would put an ad in the Village Voice every week that listed the entire week's worth of bands. And so there would literally be like a. An ad with a hundred bands right in the CBGB's ad. And so we wanted to come up with a name for our band that might get people to notice us in the middle of that 100 bands. So we called ourselves Tracy Lords, Ex Lovers. And Tracy Lords was this porn star who was underage and then was a big scandal. And we're like, okay, we really.

Speaker C: I've never heard of her.

Speaker B: You know, I don't know. You guys are younger than me. I don't know. Come on.

Speaker C: What?

Speaker B: Through the years.

Speaker C: Gabe was 50.

Speaker A: Not yet.

Speaker B: So anyway, so we had this band for a while, and we were terrible. None of us knew how to play. I was the singer and the guitar player. I didn't know how to do either one of those things. But we wrote some sort of mildly catchy songs. And we wrote. I wrote this one song about the band called We're Not Gonna make it, which was all about how terrible we were as a band and how we weren't gonna make it. And we would occasionally get gigs on campus at the college we were going to, but those gigs would be opening up for this other band that was called Asleep Standing. And the guys in that band were this guy Chris Ballou, and a bunch of other guys. Now, Chris Ballou turned out was from Seattle, but he was in New York at this school. And so he would see my band play opening for his band. His band was great. They were. They knew how to play. They knew how to really write songs and really sing. And they were, you know, had great ears. They could play cover songs at the drop of a hat.

Speaker C: What were they called?

Speaker B: They were called Asleep Standing. Okay, so. But when we would play and open for them, like the on campus pub, people would throw salt shakers and shit at us. I mean, we really were no good. But cut to, 10 years later, I'm back in Brooklyn working at a copy center and doing nothing with my filmmaking degree that I got, but still playing in bands with those same guys. Although by then we had changed our name to All About Chad. And we had a couple different members. Chad was my bass playing friend from Brooklyn. And we thought.

Speaker C: I was just gonna ask that. Look at you.

Speaker B: Yeah, we thought. We thought, like, you know, after shows, if anybody liked us, they would come up and talk to me because I was a singer or sometimes the guitar player. But nobody ever wants to talk to the bass player. Which is probably why there is no bass player in local age. Because nobody wanted to be the odd man out. But we thought if we named the band after him, then somebody would focus on him. But the problem was people thought my name was Chad since I was like the front man. So it was like, oh, all about Chad. You must be Chad. I'm like, no, this is a whole fucked up thing anyway. But through a long series of things that we won't have to get into. But I got this call eventually from Chris Ballou, who had moved back to Seattle, apparently had started another band. Apparently they'd been, like, tearing up the fucking clubs all along the West Coast. Everyone loved them. They had been signed to Columbia Records. And just now, just at that point, he was calling me to say, I've got this album we actually released it on Sub Pop a couple years ago, and now Columbia Records bought it. It's coming out on Columbia. And by the way, your song, We're Not Gonna make it is on that. And we've been actually using it as our anthem for the last four years. And we close every set with this thing. Is that cool? And I was like, huh? And he was like, you know, it's a great song. It

just really needed somebody to do it. Right. I'm like, oh, thanks. By the way, I still have a band. And by the way, I'm pursuing my own record deal. You know, I'm not a fucking garbage man here. It was not a good conversation. And I did have a lawyer at the time because we were actually getting signed to a ridiculously stupid indie label. But I said, I said, lawyer, I'll figure this out for me. Is there any way I can get. So they sent me a copy of this album. I was like, this isn't going to sell a single record.

Speaker C: So this record was on Sub Pop, and. And. And they were releasing it as.

Speaker B: No, I'm sorry. I said Sub Pop, but it's not. It's Pop Llama. Do you know that?

Speaker C: Yes. See? Yes, that sounds right.

Speaker B: Sorry. Yeah.

Speaker C: That's the Conrad. That's posies, right? It wasn't.

Speaker B: Maybe. Yeah, probably. They were all Conrad.

Speaker C: Conrad Uno. Right?

Speaker B: Yes. Yes.

Speaker C: Okay.

Speaker B: Eventually, I got a call from Conrad Uno because I. Because what? I. I did this thing. I was like. I was like, I don't want my song. I don't like their version of my song. It's a song about my stupid band.

Speaker C: You. You stupid, silly little asshole. I mean, really.

Speaker B: Well, wait a minute. It worked out fine for me.

Speaker C: I know it did. But it's just amazing. Just the attitude that we had back then.

Speaker B: Yeah. Yeah.

Speaker C: Oh, my God.

Speaker B: Oh. Oh, boy. And I said, see if you can get. All I wanted was a nice tv. And I said, can you get me an advance on royalties? Like, see if you can get me 5,000 bucks in advance because they're not going to sell any records. But I want to see some money out of this or else they can go fuck themselves. I'm not telling you the part of the story where they were even more insulting than the thing I told you about what he said to me on the phone. Why not? Fucking

weird thing. You want to hear that part? See, I feel like at some point we should get Chris Ballew on this show and I'll have it out with him, because I've never talked to him again in the. In the ensuing 20 years.

Speaker C: All right, well, if you want to save it for that, you know, we want to burn those bridges right now. We can also do that, too.

Speaker B: Well, no, the bridges are already burned. I would. This would be like a. Have it out and maybe reconcile. Not that he has any.

Speaker C: So, I mean, what. Why were you so pissed because they had recorded it without asking you?

Speaker B: I was. They were. Because. Here's what happened.

Speaker C: It was because he was basically saying, like, this is good for you.

Speaker B: No, he wasn't saying it was good for me. He was like, we saved this song from the garbage can. Which is true, I guess, but he was also. Here's the thing.

Speaker C: That.

Speaker B: Here's. Here's how I first got wind of this whole thing is that friends of friends came to me at some gig I was playing.

Speaker C: I thought you were gonna say they were a band. I thought you'd say friends of friends were a band, but they came to me. Friends are friends. All right, I'm sorry.

Speaker B: They came to me and they said, hey, Chris Ballou needs to get in touch with you. But the. Can we give you his number to call him? And I'm like, why does Chris Balloon need to get in touch with me? Oh, well, they recorded your song, and it's going to be on an album. And I said, well, why tell me? Give me a call. That's great. That's the best news I ever heard. And. And. But. But I found out that he didn't want to. Like, he didn't want to call me. Like, he was, like, being shoved into, like, calling me to get permission. Because I think, you know, the lawyers at Columbia were like, you can't put this song on your album. It's never been released. Like, you can't do this unless you get permission from the songwriter.

Speaker C: Oh, okay.

Speaker B: Which would have been fine, but. But all I had been released.

Speaker C: It wouldn't have been a big deal.

Speaker B: Right, Exactly.

Speaker C: Okay.

Speaker B: Right. Interesting. So. But. But he didn't want to talk to me, and I don't know why. Like, it was this weird thing. And then eventually I came home one night and there was a voicemail on my answering machine from him saying, hey, it's Chris Ballou. I heard you were trying to get in touch with me. Give me a call. And I'm like, I. I wasn't trying to get in touch with you. I don't have your number. I don't know what the fuck you're talking about. And so I. I was just like, if this asshole doesn't want to talk to me. The whole thing.

Speaker C: Well. And eventually you guys left on bad terms before this?

Speaker B: No, no, we'd left on no terms other than us playing some gigs together. Our two bands. We weren't particularly friendly. He must have had a copy of my demo that had that song on it. I thought he was fine. I liked his band. But no, we didn't have. You know, I think it was clear from the first day I met him till now that he didn't respect me as a musician or as a singer or as a songwriter. Which two out of those three things. Fine, I get it. But, you know, I thought, like, I can write some fucking songs. Fuck you. And apparently I can write a song good enough that you want to use it as your fucking band's anthem and you want to end every one of your fucking sets with it, but you don't want to tell me. You want to just leave it there for 10 years and do your own fucking thing. And only when lawyers tell you, you need to let me know, then you're going to come to me. Fuck you, Chris Ballou.

Speaker C: All right, Ben. I. I think he actually kind of does respect you as a songwriter because he put one of your songs on his record. I mean, there's got to be something else going on here. Is there something else going on here?

Speaker B: No, I just. I. I just felt like. Here's the other thing. I. I will say this other thing, that the other three guys in my band were like, don't let them do that. Don't let them put that song out. That's our fucking song. That's a song about us. How dare they? And that is kind of true. It's like. Sort of like. It's one thing to. To. To sing somebody else's song. It's another thing to sort. It's sort of like if I took all the Kids Are right and. And used it as my band's closing song every night for some reason, you know that's a song about local H, right? It would be weird if Tripping Daisy. Oh, okay. So the Joe in that song is a different Joe.

Speaker A: Did you get TV out of the dealer?

Speaker C: You got me. You got.

Speaker A: The story.

Speaker C: Well, yes, I did. I guess I did name names in that song. All right, you. You got me.

Speaker B: I did get it. So, yes. So I had my lawyers say, like, yeah, well, that's fine. He'll sign the papers. He'd like to get an advance on the first 75,000 albums sold. And then Chris Ballou called me, and he said we're gonna. They're telling me we're gonna have to pull your song off the album because there's no fucking way that we're gonna pay you. What is your lawyer talking about? And I'm like, I don't know. This is all news to me. Meanwhile, I had masterminded the whole goddamn thing. But I was like, Chris, do you have a lawyer? He's like, yeah. I said, do you listen to what he says? Yeah. Okay. So that's all I'm doing. I'm listening to what my lawyer says. He says I should get an advance on royalties. So they fucking coughed up 5,000 bucks. And I was like, I'm so ahead of this game. I bought myself a nice TV. I still had \$4,000 left over afterwards. And then I lived above a record store that for some reason would po. Would like, tear out the charts from Billboard and paste it to their window every week. I don't know why they did that, but I would come downstairs. I actually lived in the building above where I worked at the Park Slope Copy Center. And right next door was this record store. And the record went on sale, and Lump the Video was on mtv. And every week I'd come down in the Billboard charts. I'd be like, oh, presidents, United States. Whoa, they're on the charts. And then, Whoa, they're number 50. Whoa, they're number 26. What the fuck is going on? And then I started getting these royalty checks, and I'm making \$6 an hour at the Park Slip Copy center, and suddenly these checks start coming in the mail for, like, \$10,000, \$20,000. What the is going on? And so then. Yeah, so I. So. So cut to sort of early on in that process, they. Before they really broke, they played a gig at Brownies in New York City, small club.

Speaker C: Remember Brownies? Gabe Brown.

Speaker A: Oh, yeah. A lot of memories there.

Speaker B: Did you guys play Brownies?

Speaker A: Local HC broken into outside of Brownies. Remember that?

Speaker B: Yeah.

Speaker C: Oh, it got. Oh, it did. Yeah. I don't remember that. We played a lot of shows at Brownies. Yeah.

Speaker B: So I went. So they went and they played Brownies. And this was, I think, before the record started selling at all. But they. After Columbia had cut a check for me, and I went to this show, and I was, like, happy at this point, and I didn't know that they were not happy.

Speaker C: So you did get. You did get your. You did get your advance, right? You got the advance, right? Okay.

Speaker B: And then here's. But here was it. But my stupid idea that I'm so glad didn't work out. Was. I told my lawyer, I said, can you just. Can we sell them the song? Like, would they buy it outright for like 50 grand or something?

Speaker C: You would have been fucked.

Speaker B: Yeah, yeah. So thank God that didn't work. But anyway, so I went, I went. Not that there's a. There's sort of a backstage at Brownies, but I went back there and I saw Chris. I was like, hey, Chris. He's like, oh, hey, did you get your check? I'm like, yeah, yeah. And then he didn't want to talk to me. And they didn't play the song that night, but cut to like four months later when the album was like at the top of the charts. And they came back and they played maybe Tramps, which is also. Isn't that big of a place, but pretty big. And then they weren't talking, you know, there was like. I tried to reach out. I tried to like, say, oh, this is so great. Thank you so much. And I'm sorry. There was this friction and I tried to. I wanted to sort of explain, you know, it's just a weird way that it all came about where I heard you didn't want to talk to me, and then when you did talk to me, you acted like I was the one trying to get in touch with you. And so then I'm back. So then, so, so they come to, they, they come to play Tramps and it's a sold out show. And my lawyer is like, I got a ticket for you. And I'm like, I don't know that I want to use Go, Go. So I went. And it was one of the more interesting kind of rock and roll experiences I ever had because I'm in the back of this sold out club that's packed and packed with teenagers because it was like, you know, teenage girls who were into the Presidents and Lump and. Or teenage boys or whatever.

Speaker C: Yeah.

Speaker B: And they played their set and they ended their set with we're not going to make it. And the whole fucking place went wild. And all the kids were like pogo dancing. And I'm at the very back of the club watching all this and I realized this is kind of a unique experience because it's sort of my rock and roll fantasy. But I'm watching it from the back of the club. Like you've, you've probably never gotten to experience this. Like to see a band play your song.

Speaker C: Yeah.

Speaker B: And have the crowd go wild, but you're able to watch it as an observer, I think That's. That was a lot of fun.

Speaker C: That's interesting. Yeah.

Speaker B: The other fun thing was that when Rolling Stone reviewed the album, they started their review with a quote from my song, and I'm like, oh, my lyrics are in Rolling Stone. That's pretty cool, too. Yeah, that's it. That's my.

Speaker C: Well, you know what? It. It all. It all sounds very adult and like, you know.

Speaker B: Really? It sounds adult?

Speaker C: No, it doesn't sound adult at all. It sounds like you're a bunch of whiny little bitchy 20. 20 year olds. Yeah, yeah.

Speaker B: Yes. That's exactly.

Speaker C: I mean, it's just when you lay it out, it's. It's kind of like, what was his problem? He should have just said, hey, we did this.

Speaker B: Right?

Speaker C: Cool. And you should have said, yeah, fucking go for it. You know? I mean.

Speaker B: Right?

Speaker C: But it sounds like it worked out for both of you.

Speaker B: Well, that's the thing.

Speaker C: But on the other hand, when you're that age. Yeah.

Speaker B: If everything had been, to coin a phrase, copacetic and smooth the whole way, I wouldn't have this story. And I also don't think anything else would be different. It's not like, if I. When I think about it, it's like if I had just said, oh, yeah, right, and not gotten the advance, what would have happened? Would they have taken us out on tour with them? No. Would they have been my friends for life? No. Like, they live on the other side of the planet.

Speaker C: It might not have been a chip on. On Adrian Ballou's shoulder. I mean, Chris Ballou's shoulder.

Speaker B: Well, I don't think it is. I don't think he gives a fuck because he gave out money I made. He must have made ten times as much.

Speaker C: And this is for Gabe. Chris Ballou and Adrian Ballou are not the same person. Gabe.

Speaker A: But they're the brothers from the Presidents. What?

Speaker B: That's pretty good.

Speaker C: I knew that's what he was thinking.

Speaker B: Can I tell you, I love the relationship that you and Gabe have. It reminds me so much of my relationship with the aforementioned Chad. And as soon as I saw you guys talk to

each other, I was like, oh, my God, this is me and Chad. And I really. It warms my heart to see that other people have.

Speaker C: What does Chad do now? What's he up to?

Speaker B: He's a massage therapist.

Speaker C: Oh, really? I know a massage therapist. Where does he work?

Speaker B: He should wear this. Weird. No, it's fine. He lives in New York and not in New York City in some weird green lake. New York and he's been, he's been doing this thing all through the pandemic. He's been growing his victory garden, which I didn't even know what that was.

Speaker C: I do.

Speaker B: Right. So he's big into gardening. Chad Polari.

Speaker C: So after all that and you've got, you've got all that presence of the United States of America money, it changed my life.

Speaker B: It totally changed my life.

Speaker C: That's awesome.

Speaker B: But I wouldn't be out here on.

Speaker C: Your shoulder about it.

Speaker B: Well, I probably wouldn't be taught. Here's the thing. If not for that song, as sort of far fetched as this whole thing and how to connect the dots, I wouldn't be talking to you right now. I don't think I never would have moved out to the Midwest that that song gave me enough money to say, oh, I can maybe buy a house somewhere and have some place for my dogs to run around where I'm not walking them 25 times a day. Which is all that I did when I lived in Brooklyn in a one bedroom apartment.

Speaker C: Yeah.

Speaker B: And so we thought, well, we could move to New Jersey and commute to our dumb day jobs or we could just do something entirely different. And my wife's from Wisconsin and we'd been to Madison many times when we visited her parents who lived in the middle of the state. And we're like, why don't we move to Madison? We can afford a house in the middle of Madison and just do our own shit. And then everything that happened once I moved here, you know, eventually getting a job at the university and getting into all this film stuff again after not doing that stuff for such a long time. And, and then, you know, meeting, meeting back up with

my friend Mike McPadden who was a friend from college but had moved to Chicago and I hadn't talked to him in 20 years. And then hooking up with him and starting to do that podcast, it all led to this. And it's all from we're not Going to Make it, which is a song that I wrote in 10 seconds in my bedroom for my dumb band that I knew was terrible and we should just come out and admit it. And then one of the things that one of my favorite stories is my dad, who heard the song like the first 50 times we played it, because we used to play it all the time, said to me, you know, it's really catchy and it's a good song, but it, I don't know that people are going to be that into that kind of negativity. And you know, maybe you should change it to we are going to make it. And I'm like, I don't think so. And then it was. It was really heartwarming and a fun and sort of obnoxious thing when I got, like, my \$30,000 royalty check and I said, dad, here's that negativ. Not paying off for me.

Speaker C: So after that, your dad lost his job as a. And I.

Speaker B: That's the Ben Reiser story.

Speaker C: That's not bad. That's not bad. And, you know, Madison's. Madison's a cool town.

Speaker B: I would love to get Chris Ballou and hear his side of it.

Speaker C: How did you, like, start working at the university? Like, how did that happen?

Speaker B: Well, that's a whole other crazy story. We should save that for another episode. It could be. We could have a segment every. Every other week that's like, tell the other funny Ben Reiser story.

Speaker C: So we're gonna do it because that is all Ben Reiser Part 2.

Speaker B: The. The story of me working at the University of Wisconsin Madison is almost as crazy as that one.

Speaker C: Well, I think we're in it right now. This is it. Come on. How did. So you get all this presence of the United States of America money. And I love saying that, people. And then you move to Madison, Wisconsin.

Speaker B: Which is without a job, a great.

Speaker C: Fucking town, and you've got no job.

Speaker B: No jobs. Me and my wife had no jobs. She didn't even know how to drive. We were like 30 years old by the time we moved out here. And she finally learned how to drive. And I got it. I went, you know, and that money wasn't that much money. Right. It was maybe like \$300,000. Yeah. But then after taxes, it was more like \$150,000. And took half of that. Yeah.

Speaker C: Do you live in England?

Speaker B: Because. Because I made it all in that one year. And so it was like, how much did you make this year? I made \$300,000. Oh, you're in this. It was pre Trump tax cuts, so it was a big problem.

Speaker C: Yeah.

Speaker B: You know, and I put as much away as I could. I don't know anything about money. I still don't. I didn't know anything about real estate. I didn't know anything about investing. I don't any. Any fucking idea. I was lucky I have any money left after that.

Speaker C: Right.

Speaker B: And the truth is, I didn't. We put like \$30,000 down on this house, which was a great investment, because now it's worth way more than we paid for it. Like, we were Lucky in that we moved here in 97. Right before property values went through the roof.

Speaker C: Yeah, that's about all you need to know about investing is buy a fucking house.

Speaker B: Right? Well, but on the other hand, if we had just invested in an apartment in Brooklyn when we were living in Brooklyn at that time, we would have made a lot more money. So, whatever.

Speaker C: You would have your dog more, but you'd be right. Slum lord.

Speaker B: That's right. But so I pretty much quickly had to, like, get a job here because that money wasn't going to last very long. And then.

Speaker C: So you went through all that money that quickly? Like, were you like. Like a fucking cokehead? I mean, what the hell was going on?

Speaker B: You.

Speaker C: You came to Madison to just live like Scarface and you just burned through all the money like that?

Speaker B: Well, no, because there was a couple years between first getting the money and then eventually moving out here. And in that time, I was the sole songwriter of record. So all came to me and I felt some amount of, you know, guilt and. And debt to my other bandmates. So I just. I be. It's true. When I was in Brooklyn for those first couple years, I was taking everyone out to dinner all the time, like throwing lavish parties. And Yeah, I was. I spent some money.

Speaker C: Wow.

Speaker B: You should have known me back in the day, man.

Speaker C: Yeah, I should have. So now you're in Madison and.

Speaker B: Yeah. And so I.

Speaker C: The Scarface days are over.

Speaker B: Yeah. And I got a job at Copy Max, which is part of Office Max, because this is all I knew from day job, you know, this place, working at Copy Center.

Speaker A: I didn't know there was a Copy Max. I guess it's like petsmart and Petco.

Speaker B: Well, no, there was like Office Max and Office Depot, which are what you just said, those two different things that eventually merged. Copy Max was like a division of Office Max. And some of the fancier Office Maxes would have like a Copy Max sort of built into the back of them, or even its own separate entrance. And so I started working at this Copy Max and there was. They had no business. And I just was like sitting around for a year and I was like, fuck this. Then I got a job with Xerox, with the actual company, Xerox, which had this thing where they would put people into bigger businesses and have them run. Like, big businesses would contract out with Xerox to have people come in and run their mail room and run their printing machines for them. So Rayovac Battery company had its world headquarters here in Madison, and Xerox had a contract with them. And so I was working at Rayovac battery company in the mailroom, sort of running the operation from there. And then Rayovac. And then when there was that world financial crisis in 2010, I guess, 2008, Rick. 2008. 2008. Ray of Chapter, right. Ray of Ack. Went Chapter 11 and canceled their contract with Xerox. Xerox had nowhere to put me, and so they laid me off. But I've been working for them at that point for 10 years. And so I had like 10 years worth of unemployment insurance, and they were. And Obama was like, yeah, you know, extended out for years. So I really had like two years to like, sort of look for jobs and collect unemployment, which I did. And one of the first things I thought was, like, well, I could try to find another one of these dumb copy jobs or I have a little bit of, like, leeway. I have some. Some time to kill now. While I don't really need to find a job, maybe I should finally start doing something with films again. And so this was right around the time that high def video came into being and that you could actually buy equipment and shoot things that kind of looked like film. Because that was one of the big things when I graduated from film school that kept me from being in making movies is that it was so insanely expensive for film. Yeah, yeah. To make a film. And if you wanted to, like, try to make a cheap film on video, you would shoot something that looked like a soap opera. But now with high def video like that, that shot at 24 frames a second and really felt more like film, like, oh, I could buy one of those cameras and I could try to do something with that. And that's what I did. I spent like 5,000 bucks on a camera and then thought, okay, what do I do with this? And I didn't know how to use the camera, and I bought some sound equipment. I didn't know how to use that either. And then somebody, one of my

next door neighbors said, hey, the Wisconsin Film Festival is accepting submissions for this year's festival, and the deadline is in like three weeks. And so I called a bunch of friends and neighbors and told them to come over one night and we would drink some beers and we would come up with an idea to make a movie that I could learn how to use the equipment while we were making it, and then I could submit it to this film festival if we could finish it in time. So we all got together, tried to come up with an idea for a movie. Instead, everyone got drunk and got into weird fist fights and stuff, and nothing really worked except that there's. I had this.

Speaker C: That was your movie. You up?

Speaker B: No, I totally. That. I was like, oh, I just should have shot this meeting. That would have been. That would have been movie. But I was not thinking right. But I did. My next door neighbor, Alberto, seemed like a fun guy. He's an. He's an electrical engineer. And then my other friend Steve is a medical doctor. And the two of them together around this table while we were. The rest of us were arguing, seemed to have some good chemistry. And I thought, well, it'll be kind of fun to put these two guys in a movie together. But neither one of them had ever acted or done anything like that. And then I knew my neighbor across the street. Christina was a. Worked for children's theater, and she had gone to school for theater and directing and dramaturgy. And I said to her, can you teach these two guys? Can you give these guys an acting lesson?

Speaker C: Excuse me. Excuse me. Excuse me. Drop. Excuse me. Dramaturgy.

Speaker B: Yeah, you know it.

Speaker C: That's what you want.

Speaker B: Dramaturgy.

Speaker C: Dramaturgy.

Speaker B: You down with Dra? Yeah.

Speaker C: You know, what's the difference between drama and dramaturgy?

Speaker B: Dramaturgy is the is like the study is like the is. I'm gonna do a bad job of explaining it. It's sort of all the background material that you might want to bring to a production, such as, like, the research. Like. Like, if you're doing a Shakespearean. If you're doing a Shakespeare play, you might want a dramaturgist to be on your team and to say, here's how this play would have been presented in the 1700s. This is what Shakespeare was really referring to with these lines. Sort of like the context of that work.

Speaker C: Right.

Speaker B: Somebody who can explain and explore, which will hopefully sort of like, enrich the current production so that the actors and the director.

Speaker C: So this is for theater? A dramaturgist is for theater.

Speaker B: Yeah. Although I think it could be applied to other dramatic art forms, I think.

Speaker C: Okay, all right.

Speaker B: She's gonna listen to this and be like, what did you just say?

Speaker C: Good.

Speaker B: The fuck is wrong with you?

Speaker C: Proceed.

Speaker B: Anyway, so I said, can you give these guys an acting lesson? She said, sure, I'll do that. And so I grabbed my equipment, which I didn't really know how to do, and we went over to this studio that she had access to, and plop the three of them down at a table and said, okay, you guys are getting an acting lesson from this person and just kind of be yourselves or just see what happens. And so she gave them this sort of 20 minute acting lesson. And it was kind of, they were kind of being funny and interesting. And then when it was over, I said, okay, let's do the same thing again. I'm just going to move the camera to another angle. And so we did the whole thing again, like improvising this acting lesson. And then I, then that happened. And then I said, okay, let's do it one more time. And I was like hand holding the camera. And so at the end of the night, we had done this sort of 20 minute acting lesson that was kind of the same, but kind of different every time. They were kind of doing characters, but not really. And I took that stuff home and I cut it together on like a editing system I had on my computer. That's the first time I'd ever done that. And it turned it into like a 10 minute scene. I showed it to my wife and I showed it to the people who were in it. And they all thought it was kind of good and funny. And I was like, okay, great, let's do this. Let's make a movie with you two guys. But now we have this scene, I don't want to waste it. So now I need to figure out what is a movie that I can make that revolves around these two guys getting an acting lesson. So I came up with this idea that one of them had just lost his job and decided he wanted to become an actor and enlisted his next door neighbor to help him learn how to act and then get a part in a local production of the Grapes of Wrath. And so I wrote like a 10 scene outline for a movie, like one sentence for each scene. And then over the next week we shot those other nine scenes. I quick cut them together on the very last day that you could submit the film to the Wisconsin Film Festival. I sent it in. And then a month later I was shocked to get a thing in the mail saying, you've been, your film has been accepted into the festival. I was like, holy shit. It was like 40 minute long film. And I was like, wow, that's because it's a weird length for a movie. It's not really a short and it's not a feature. I was like, they're not even to watch this thing. But they watched it. And then a couple of weeks after that, I got another email from the festival saying, you've won an award. You've won an

award for breakthrough performance for this medical doctor who was like, the star of the movie. And they'd never given an award at the festival for acting before.

Speaker C: But somehow this jury breakthrough to what, what seemed.

Speaker B: I don't know. Right. I don't know. I have no idea. They. Apparently they were just making this category up especially because they loved his performance so much.

Speaker C: Right. And he wasn't good enough for best actor. It was.

Speaker B: Well, there was no best act. There was nothing. It was just that that's the only acting award they've ever given in the entire 20 something year history of the festival. Yeah. So. And that came with 250 bucks. And then our film was in the festival. The first day tickets went on sale, it sold out. We took the \$250 and rented a party bus, a school bus.

Speaker C: You were back.

Speaker B: We all took the party bus to the premiere. We did all sorts of. And it was like crazy. It was a crazy thing that happened. And then.

Speaker C: I love that you learned nothing. I love. Yeah, learning nothing. It is the best.

Speaker B: So a couple years later I like infiltrated my way into actually working at the festival and then got another job on campus and the rest is history.

Speaker C: So you got. You got a job on the campus from film festivals?

Speaker B: Basically, yeah.

Speaker C: That seems like that doesn't happen often. It seems like it's no way around.

Speaker B: It's magical. It's an absolutely magical story. You know. The other thing that doesn't happen is you don't write it. You know how often it happens? You write a bullshit two minute song about how bad your band is and you end up making \$300,000 off of that. That doesn't happen, by the way. You know how many bands wind up selling. You know, any bands with a novelty record like the President end up selling like 3 million copies. That doesn't happen too often either, by the way.

Speaker C: Well, it was a glorious time.

Speaker B: Yeah. Were you into Lump?

Speaker C: There was Fat Andy. There was Mickey Eyes. What was I in the Lump.

Speaker B: Yeah. That's not a bad song. I don't think.

Speaker C: It's fine. It's totally fine.

Speaker B: Peaches, I think is awful. Like everything else that was a hit.

Speaker C: Off that album Gabe Loves Tortures. Gabe, you're a piece, right?

Speaker A: Weren't they the first? Are they a two piece?

Speaker B: No, they're a three piece. But they're bases, right? They have a git. They have a git bass and a bass. They have like. They have like three and four stringed instruments that are like. It's a four string guitar and like a two string. Something else.

Speaker C: Something's weird about them. But I like the fact that, like. And I think Conrad Uno produced that stuff. Right?

Speaker B: Sure, why not?

Speaker C: So Conrad Uno, he did some Mud Honey records. And so I like the fact that when I listen to those records, like, just, you know, if you'd gone a little over to the left, let's say you get into Mud Honey territory, you know, and they went over to the right, which, say, is maybe Muppets territory, which is fine. I love the Muppets.

Speaker B: Yeah.

Speaker C: But, you know, it was.

Speaker B: They literally have a song called Dune Buggy, which is about like, I don't know what, like a raccoon driving a little dune buggy.

Speaker C: Sure. I mean, it's in the same swamp, but, you know, if you want to go to the Mud Honey, you go to the left. But. But you could hear some of that stuff that. That was going on. It didn't seem that crazy that it was out of Seattle.

Speaker B: Mm.

Speaker C: That's. That's all I got.

Speaker A: So let me. Let me ask this though. Ben.

Speaker B: Yeah.

Speaker A: How did you two actually meet? Because people are gonna still try to say, who the fuck is Ben Reiser?

Speaker B: That's another whole story. Yeah, I mean, not really much of a story, but I. I was doing this podcast, so. So my friend Mike, who I knew from college, and that's another crazy whole story that I really don't want to talk about tonight because it's like, oh, Jesus. But he. We didn't talk for 25 years. Then all of a sudden we hooked back up in the Midwest and started doing this podcast together at the beginning of the pandemic. He became like a. Like a well known writer raconteur who talks all about films. He wrote a movie. He wrote a book called Heavy Metal Movies, which is like A compendium of 666 movies that are somehow heavy metal related. And those connections can be pretty obscure, but kind of fun to read about. And then he wrote a more recent book called Teen Movie Hell, which is like a catalog of all of the sort of teen sex comedies from.

Speaker C: Right. So he was basically carrying on the. The legacy of books like the. The cult movie book.

Speaker B: And with these books, he's a huge Danny Perry fan and. And yes, exactly that kind of thing. And so he. So actually. So Mike and I met in college and spent a couple years after college being friends. And then we had a bad breakup where he was getting into drugs and alcohol and I was trying to get married, and it was like, I can't talk to you anymore. And we didn't talk forever.

Speaker C: And then the adult relationships again. Here we go.

Speaker A: Yeah.

Speaker B: Yeah. But when I. When I. When I moved to Madison and then found out he was living in Chicago and he was writing for Mr. Skin, I was like, oh, this guy's successful. And I. I. Mr. Skin, Gab.

Speaker A: I don't remember what that is. The movie. Movie magazine.

Speaker C: Go on, go on, Ben, let's.

Speaker B: So I reached out to him and I said, hey, I hear you're living in Chicago. I'm living in Madison. I'd love to see you. He invited me to Mr. Skin's annual. I don't know what party they have. And I went, was that, like.

Speaker C: Was. Was that weird, wild stuff?

Speaker B: It was. I'm not that weird. Not that wild. But I was impressed because at some point, Mr. Skin had been bought out by Playboy. So they had all this Playboy money and they had a fucking spread, man. At this party. I was like, I've never seen so much food.

Speaker C: Pun intended.

Speaker B: And. Right, exactly. And then this very sweet thing happened. Mike introduced me to Mr. Skin himself, and Mr. Skin looked at me, said, oh, my God, Ben Reiser, I've been hearing about you for 10 years. Mike said he stole his entire personality from you. And I was like, whoa. Because in my mind, I was like, I'm this fucking loser who's working in this copy shop and had this fluke thing with this song. But otherwise, like, you know, I'm not doing anything that I thought I was going to do back in college, and Mike is having this kind of brilliant career as a writer, and it was really like, oh, my God, I can't believe Mike's been, like, talking about me like that and that people remember that. And so it was very nice.

Speaker C: Yeah.

Speaker B: But anyway. But we still. It's not like we spent a lot of time together. And then cut to last year. I discovered that Mike has started a podcast with this friend of his, Aaron Lee, who's, like, a writer in Hollywood, who.

Speaker C: And to people that don't know, like, Mike was definitely kind of like, you know, like, he was in the local movie scene here in Chicago. Like, he was definitely showing up at lectures and stuff, and you'd hear him on podcasts and contributing to, you know, articles left and right online.

Speaker B: So he was kind of this guy.

Speaker C: Who's everybody knew and that kind of.

Speaker B: Thing, and hosting, like, movie nights at the Music Box and.

Speaker C: Right.

Speaker B: And things like that.

Speaker C: Exactly.

Speaker B: And so I suddenly discovered that he had started a podcast with this friend of his who's a famous Hollywood or successful Hollywood TV and movie writer. And it was called Crackpot Cinema. And every week they would die, talk about these insane movies that they loved and nobody else had ever heard of or thought anything of. And I listened to, like, the first three or four episodes, and I loved them. I thought, these guys are so funny. And it's so interesting hearing about these movies and hearing their perspectives on it. And the only thing. The only thing in my head was also like, but this podcast sounds like. And especially, like, the fourth episode was all fucked up. Like, the sync was off so that they were talking over each other. And so I wrote him an email, and I said, dude, I've been listening to your podcast. I love it.

I'm sure you got a million people around you who can fix this for you, but I want you to know the sound is all fucked up, Especially on this latest episode. That's all. Goodbye. He wrote me back and he said, dude, I know it's all fucked up. Can you help? And I was like, well, I don't know. I don't do anything like that. But sure, I'll give it a shot. It can't be any worse. So.

Speaker C: And ding, ding, ding. You're a producer, right?

Speaker B: Ding, ding, ding. I'm a producer. And then, ding, ding, ding. He also says to me, listen, I've been thinking about this other podcast that I want to do with you. And it's about us growing up in Brooklyn in the 70s and the movies that we saw when we were kids. And I said, I don't. I have a terrible memory. I'm not gonna be good at that. Let's not do that. And he's like, no, no, no, really, let's try it. And I said, okay. And so we tried it, and it was. It was so much fun, and was immediately like, oh, my God. I never thought I'd be having these kind of conversations with this guy ever again, because we had this really fun, intense relationship in our teens and twenties. And then I just never thought it, you know, it was like, we're done. And I thought, even if we become friends again, we'll never get back to that place and never have that kind of chemistry. But we immediately did, of course.

Speaker C: Right?

Speaker B: And it was beautiful and great, and we were having the time of our lives. Then he just fucking died. Like, just drop dead.

Speaker C: Like, can you. Do you know what happened? Can you tell us?

Speaker B: I. I don't. I think he had a heart attack. I mean, he was overweight. He had been talking to me about having, you know, heart issues or that he was, like, working on losing some Weight and working on being more physically fit and doing more exercise. Yeah, but he. But he had recently become a foster parent, and so for the first time. And he was 50. 50. He was a couple years younger than me, so he's like 52, 53, and dealing with, like, an infant for the first time.

Speaker C: Right.

Speaker B: And only time. And there was a lot going on and. And he was insanely active as far as, like, projects and things he was doing with these couple of podcasts and appearing on everyone else's podcasts and promoting these books. He was writing and dreaming of all these other projects for us to start. He was really, in a weird way, it felt it in retrospective, it felt to me like that one way of looking at it was him having some sense that he didn't have that much time left and was doing everything he ever wanted to do and, like, making the most out of every day. Then he was gone. And I just thought, okay, well, that's the end of everything as far as these podcasts. And, you know, I was, like, crying for, like, two weeks straight. I was like, it was such a weird. Like, that's not. That was. This is the first time anything like that has happened to me, like, one of my peers and one of my close friends and especially somebody who I just

reconnected with a year earlier and then suddenly started this intense relationship with again, and suddenly they were just gone. But. But people kept writing me saying, hey, you should, you know, you should keep going. Like, Mike would want you to keep going. You know, Mike was totally into this podcast. We all love this thing. You should try. Try it. And I was like, I. You know, we'd had a whole bunch of guests, and there are plenty of other people in my life who are equally interested in movies, who I talk to all the time about movies, but nothing in my head was like, oh, yeah, that would be a good person. And then, I don't know why, I can't remember if it was something specific, but I remembered discovering about Scott that he was into film and. And reading some kind of an interview or hearing him somewhere a couple years ago talk about. And have I told you this, Scott? Like, what. What the. What. The one thing was you were. You were somewhere talking about this movie souvenir that you had seen.

Speaker C: Oh, the souvenir.

Speaker B: Right, the souvenir. And you were saying like, oh, she's. She's really doing something interesting. And I'm like, oh, this is. This is an obscure film for this rock star dude who. And so, I mean, I've been A local Age fan since. Since. And this is something else I just figured out since Pack up the Cats. And I. And I realized only recently that it was the Robert Chris Cow review that got me to buy that album. Yeah, I read that review, and he's like, this is the best rock album of the year. And I'm like, whoa, okay, I'm. I'm. I'm down with that.

Speaker C: Chris Cow was an early supporter. He was, like, one of the first guys who, like, crossed the picket line.

Speaker B: Yeah. If I had. If I had heard Bound for the Floor, it didn't really register with me. Like, I think it was sort of like, okay, so. But that wasn't. And I hadn't heard anything on Pack up the Cats. I just read his review and bought the album just based on that review. I must have bumped into it, like, a couple days later at a. At a local, you know, record store. Probably like a promotional copy that I bought. Yeah, that's all I ever bought, was like, whatever was 4.99. Um, and then I listened to that album, and I was like, oh, I think he's right. I think this is, like, the best rock album I've heard. Not only this year, but maybe ever. It's still, I think, like, one of the greatest things I've ever heard. Anyway, this thing about the souvenir. And then a couple other things. I was like, oh, no, Scott's into movies. And then I read the 25 years of local H. The. All that stuff that's on. That's on the website. And I was like, oh, my God, this guy is such a good, funny writer. And this is such great, smart writing about his own art and about his own career. And this is such a. This is the. I wish I could write like this. I wish I could talk this way about my art and stuff that I've done. I don't know. I just was sort of, like, in love with Scott. And I thought, but. But, But. But for some reason, he came. Maybe I saw something online or whatever, and I was like, you know who I think it would be really fun to do this podcast with is Scott Lucas. But I had no way of getting in touch with him, and I sent him a friend request on Facebook, which he ignored for maybe three months after we started doing the podcast. I think he still hadn't friended me, but I realized that through Mike McPadden, I probably was now friends or at least connected on social media with people who might know Scott. And then I reached out to this guy, Mike Vanderbilt.

Speaker C: Yeah, Mike Vanderbilt.

Speaker B: Who? I. I don't. I've never talked to you about him. I don't really know what your relationship with him is at all, but I was like, hey, do you happen to have contact info for Scott Lucas? And he's like, why? I said, well, I want to ask him to do the podcast with me. And he's like, sure, I'll introduce you. And I said, okay. He goes, well, he can be a bit prickly. I said, that's fine, I don't care. You know, I'm just gonna do. I know he's gonna say, no, yeah, sorry, I will cut that part out.

Speaker C: No, no, please, please keep it. I am a prickly pear. He's absolutely right.

Speaker B: Yeah. But I just was like, I was just in this frame of mind where I'm just gonna write this honest email saying, this is what happened. This is what I'd like to try. Do you have any interest? I wrote a lot. It was a long email.

Speaker C: Extensive email. It was unnaturally extensive.

Speaker B: Right?

Speaker C: Not unnaturally. It was, it was. It was unnecessarily extensive. Like you had me at the first couple of sentences, so.

Speaker B: Right. But I didn't know. I didn't know that anything.

Speaker C: Like I appreciated it, but so. But I back you up.

Speaker B: Yeah, that's cool. Let's try. He wrote back, like I wrote him a seven paragraph email and he wrote back, sure. It was like two. It was like two words. I was like, okay, this is going.

Speaker C: To be good back. I was like, ah, that's cool. Let's do. Let's do Race with the Devil.

Speaker B: Yeah, yeah.

Speaker C: And, yeah, and that was the thing, like doing those. Like Eddie had been pushing me to do these podcasts for about a year and I dragged my feet like I usually do with Eddie. And. And then, you know, once we started doing those, I was like, this guy knows how to do this stuff. So this is probably the way to do this. So, yeah, it was all, thank you, presidents of the United States of America.

Speaker B: Yeah, thanks, Chris Blue.

Speaker C: Well, if you didn't know then, now you know.

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<https://feeds.soundcloud.com/stream/1016534881-robotlaunch-ep-7-lifers-who-the-fuck-is-ben-reiser.mp3>Transcribing: 7. LIFERS - Who The Fuck Is Ben Reiser?

Status: Starting transcription process with assemblyai...