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### Episode 53: Running the Numbers

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## Show Intro

*Bouncy electronic instrumental music plays underneath.*

**Anooj:** 53. Running the Numbers. Hey, I'm Anooj—a New York Neo-Futurist. While our on-going, ever-changing, late-night show, *The Infinite Wrench*, continues to be on hold for the foreseeable future, we wanted to keep making art for you. And so we are back with season two!

If you're already a fan of The New York Neo-Futurists, or any of our sibling companies, hello! We cannot wait to hold hands and roll down hills in the park with you! If this is totally new to you—welcome to it!

We play by four rules: We are who we are, we are doing what we're doing, we are where we are, and the time is now. Simply put: we tell stories, and those stories are our own. Everything that you hear has actually happened or is actually happening. So if we tell you we are, I don't know, wearing a wig right now, we actually acquired said wig and are actively wearing it, like I am in this very moment.

Some of the work in this episode may contain sensitive topics. For more specific content warnings, check the timecodes in the show notes.

All of the plays in this episode have something to do with numbers. You can count on that.

**Anooj:** And now, Joey will Run the Numbers for this week's episode!

**Joey:** Hi, I'm Joey, an alum of the New York Neo-Futurists. In this episode we're bringing you 5 new plays. This week's cast is Michaela Farrell, me, Joey Rizzolo, Anooj Bhandari, Hilary Asare, and Colin Summers. That brings us to 216 audio experiments on *Hit Play*. Enjoy!

*Music winds down.*

## Play 1: In Which We Gear Up For Something Important! (1:49)

**Michaela:** In Which We Gear Up For Something Important! **GO!**

*SciFi tone in four notes.*

**Michaela:** No time like the present

**Joey:** The present is a time?

**Hilary:** Present O'clock?

**Colin:** Present thirty!

**Anooj:** PRESENTS?

*SciFi tone in four notes.*

**Michaela:** Should we try this?

**Joey:** I don't see why.

**Hilary:** There's no reason

**Colin:** just space and time

**Anooj:** There's no right

**Michaela:** just left and

*SciFi tone in four notes.*

**Michaela:** Ok are we ready to try this right now?

**Joey:** One second, I'm just putting on pants.

**Hilary:** One second, I'm just looking out my window

**Colin:** One second, I'm just sitting in bed.

**Anooj:** One second, I'm just finishing a pear.

*Anooj chews the pear.*

*SciFi tone in four notes.*

**Hilary:** Ok maybe I should wash my hands.

**Joey:** We should all wash our hands.

**Michaela:** When was the last time you washed your hands?

**Colin:** 30 minutes ago.

**Anooj:** That's healthy.

**Michaela:** Should we brush our teeth too?

**All but Michaela:** NO.

*Ambient noise as each Neo walks to their bathroom and washes their hands. All Neos sing Happy Birthday to You to themselves as they wash their hands.*

**Michaela:** Now! do we feel! like we! are ready?!!

**Hilary:** Yes!

**Joey:** Somewhat!

**Colin:** Yes.

**Anooj:** No!

**Michaela:** Life doesn't wait!

**Colin:** Life doesn't pause!

**Joey:** Life doesn't stop!

**Hilary:** Life doesn't hold your hand!

**Anooj:** Life just happens to you!

**Michaela:** a 5, a 6, a 5-6-7-8!

*Neos sing a base note in their register as a warmup and then do their best to recreate the SciFi tone in harmony.*

## Play 2: T minus 45 (3:45)

**Joey:** T minus 45. **GO!**

*Underscore*

**Hilary:** 1975

**Joey:** I don't know. I was a baby.

**Hilary:** 1976

**Joey:** I don't know. I was a baby.

**Hilary:** 1977

**Joey:** I don't know I w- ...man, humans babies are useless.

**Hilary:** 1978.

**Joey:** This I remember. I let a cat into the house while she naps. It climbs on her face. She is livid. This is when I learn that she hates cats.

**Hilary:** 1979

**Joey:** 'The baby is sleeping!' she whispers as we climb the stairs to her apartment. I repeat this every time we pass that door, long after the baby (who never existed) is grown.

**Hilary:** 1980

**Joey:** She lets me play in the storm drain.

**Hilary:** 1981

**Joey:** "What if I get scared?" she asks as we settle in to watch horror cult classic, *Frogs*. "I'll protect you," I say.

**Hilary:** 1982

**Joey:** I find out that she used to be a nun.

**Hilary:** 1983

**Joey:** I find out that she is an artist, so I decide that I'm going to be an artist.

**Hilary:** 1984

**Joey:** She teaches me art.

**Hilary:** 1985

**Joey:** She teaches me photography.

**Hilary:** 1986

**Joey:** She teaches me kindness.

**Hilary:** 1987

**Joey:** She sees me in my first play.

**Hilary:** 1988

**Joey:** She gets her doctorate.

**Hilary:** 1989

**Joey:** She picks me up from the police station.

**Hilary:** 1990

**Joey:** She takes me on the most culturally uplifting outing and the thing that excites me most is seeing a horse shit into a bag. She will tease me about this for the rest of her life.

**Hilary:** 1991

**Joey:** We can't find the Wintergarden Theater despite standing in front of the Wintergarden Theater.

**Hilary:** 1992

**Joey:** She forges a letter of recommendation for me.

**Hilary:** 1993

**Joey:** She watches me graduate high school.

**Hilary:** 1994

**Joey:** She tells me that she doesn't like my ex-girlfriend because she broke my heart.

**Hilary:** 1995

**Joey:** She drives us around the block, panicked. She pulls over. She comes out to me. She cries.

**Hilary:** 1996

**Joey:** She meets my son. They are in love.

**Hilary:** 1997

**Joey:** Colleen and her cat Maggie move in. She hates cats and she hates the name Maggie, so she must really love Colleen.

**Hilary:** 1998

**Joey:** Her sister announces that my son is going to projectile vomit. He doesn't, and she teases her sister about this for the rest of her life.

**Hilary:** 1999

**Joey:** She drives 500 miles to see me in A Midsummer Night's Dream.

**Hilary:** 2000

**Joey:** She drives 500 miles to help me pack a U-haul.

**Hilary:** 2001

**Joey:** "Talk about a stock market crash," she says, moments after the second tower falls.

**Hilary:** 2002

**Joey:** She drives 1 mile to help me pack up a U-haul.

**Hilary:** 2003

**Joey:** Maggie dies. She gets another cat, which is weird because she hates cats.

**Hilary:** 2004

**Joey:** She gets another cat. Collen really did a number on her, I think.

**Hilary:** 2005

**Joey:** I move in across the street from she and Colleen. It's one of the best decisions of my life.

**Hilary:** 2006

**Joey:** She sees me perform as a Neo-Futurist for the first time.

**Hilary:** 2007

**Joey:** “You should probably get married,” she says regarding my girlfriend, shortly before we break up.

**Hilary:** 2008

**Joey:** She meets my future wife.

**Hilary:** 2009

**Joey:** We go to my mother’s retirement party together.

**Hilary:** 2010

**Joey:** We see an exhibition of her favorite artist

**Hilary:** 2011

**Joey:** “I am proud of you,” she says.

**Hilary:** 2012

**Joey:** She teaches advanced college level courses in video game design. She does not play video games.

**Hilary:** 2013

**Joey:** She marries Colleen.

**Hilary:** 2014

**Joey:** My daughter gets to go to college because of her.

*Underscore gets louder, like a drone*

**Hilary:** 2015

**Joey:** A photo of her debut on the Neo-Futurist stage.

**Hilary:** 2016

**Joey:** She gets two more cats.

**Hilary:** 2017

**Joey:** We protest at women’s marches.

**Hilary:** 2018

**Joey:** We sit vigil together as my father dies.

**Hilary:** 2019

**Joey:** “You’re my best friend,” she says.

*Underscore cuts out.*

**Hilary:** 2020

**Joey:** She is gone. So much of me is gone too. That’s okay, because how else do you honor the dead if you don’t honor the empty inside that accompanies their absence?

## Play 3: Record Breaking Part I (7:02)

**Anooj:** Record Breaking Part I. **GO!**

**Michaela:** Chloe Zhao just became the first Asian Woman to win Best Director.

*Underscore music sounds like beats on a cassette deck.*

**Anooj:** In 2009, Slumdog Millionaire won Best Picture at the Oscars. I was in High School. I had a choir teacher who retired the year before and hadn't seen me for some 13-months who upon running into me, without a greeting or "how are you" looks me straight in the eyes and goes:

**Joey:** "Slumdog Millionaire was a great movie"

**Anooj:** And I stared at him and he stared at me and I stared at him and he stared at me and my bottom lip dropped a little and I giggled before saying, *[Music stops]* "Yeah, it was." *[Music starts]* And at the time I thought, hmm, can you imagine having so little to talk to somebody about and all these years later I think maybe he wanted to say much more, all to which, I may have had so, so little to say back.

**Michaela:** Mia Neal and Jamika Wilson just became the first Black winners of the Best Makeup and Hairstyling Oscar Awards.

**Anooj:** At the 2020 Oscars, Parasite won Best Picture. I watched it on a plane coming back from India two days before stay at home orders began. It was the first foreign language film to ever win for best picture and I wondered, had my old choir teacher watched it? I wondered if he had old students who he approached after years and said:

**Joey:** "Parasite was a great movie"

**Anooj:** and if his students stared at him and he stared at them and if they stared at him and if he stared at them and if their bottom lips dropped a little bit and if they giggled before saying, "Yeah, it was," and I wonder if they were just as nervous as he was about having so, so little to say to one another in response.

**Michaela:** Anthony Hopkins just became the oldest nominee and winner of Best Actor.

**Anooj:** There's no record of measurements for the space between breaking records and tension those records build between you and I. And I wonder what Asian women are being asked about Chloe Zhao and what Black girls are being asked about Mia Neal and Jamika Wilson, and if older folks are being asked about Anthony Hopkins at all, and as I scroll through my phone I see images of cremation fields being set up across India, and I know deep down that if somebody slapped the logo of Slumdog Millionaire on them that a lot of people would believe it and the space between *[Music stops]* "Yeah, it was," *[Music starts]* and not having much to say in response at all becomes more obscured than ever before. It's record breaking, I tell you. Just record breaking.

*Music fritzes out.*

## Play 4: Neo Superlatives (9:47)

**Joey:** Neo Superlatives. **GO!**

*Upbeat game show music starts loud and fades to underscore level*

**Joey:** This is Neo Superlatives, the play in which I poll this week's Neo-Futurists on some of the most intimate details of their lives and award them with their representations of an extreme. We begin with Hilary Asare and the razor's edge on which she lives. Congratulations Hilary, you have taken the crown this week for being the most traveled Neo-Futurist of podcast week number 53.

**Hilary:** Sweeeeet

**Joey:** It was close but I happen to know that your fiercest competitor worked on a cruise ship and as the fair-minded autocrat of this competition, I have ruled that this constitutes cheating.

**Hilary:** I won. I'm not arguing with your criteria.

**Joey:** Can I ask you for your own superlative regarding your travels?

**Hilary:** Uh, yeah, I'm ready.

**Joey:** Oldest architecture?

**Hilary:** A salt mine in Salsburg, Austria.

**Joey:** Kindest people?

**Hilary:** Ghanaians.

**Joey:** Biggest assholes?

**Hilary:** The Swiss.

**Joey:** Most dangerous.

**Hilary:** Malawi

**Joey:** Best cuisine.

**Hilary:** Madrid, Spain--patatas bravas for the win.

**Joey:** Nice. Hilary congratulations again on being the most traveled Neo-Futurist of podcast week number 53!

**Hilary:** Thank you! I am looking forward to traveling again when it's safe.

**Joey:** Colin.

**Colin:** Hey, Joey!

**Joey:** You take the crown for the healthiest Neo-Futurist. I would say the healthiest Neo-Futurist of podcast week number 53, but maybe ever?

**Colin:** That's my superlative?? Healthy?

**Joey:** Honestly, Colin, I thought when I took the data that I'd identify the sickliest Neo-Futurist, but I find your distinct lack of illness to be uncanny, if not suspicious.

**Colin:** It might just be an awesome immune response.

**Joey:** Perhaps. It might also be that you're so fastidious about your hygiene that no microbe could ever hope to penetrate your sterile field, though I don't think so, we've performed in the Kraine together and I've seen you come out of that bathroom.



**Colin:** Probably my awesome immune response. If there was ever a time to test that theory!

**Joey:** Colin, no.

**Colin:** You know, my 95 year old grandmother survived COVID with only normal flu symptoms. Maybe it's genetic.

**Joey:** Has it occurred to you that you and your kin are hogging all the health?

**Colin:** Very selfish of us.

**Joey:** It appears that, with a vast life before you, you have the luxury of setting ambitious goals. What's the long game?

**Colin:** No. No long game. I've read Greek tragedies. This is hubris. The gods will be angry.

**Joey:** I think the most hubric sin you're committing is thinking that the gods are concerned with your fate. Laugh at them, Colin. You are Achilles minus the heel.

**Colin:** Hahahaha, sorry I just added that myself, feel free to edit that out

*Colin's voice fades out*

**Joey:** Good news, Anooj! You are the most death-defying Neo-Futurist of podcast week #53!

**Anooj:** WOWOWOWOW

**Joey:** Anooj, in your most dauntless moments of madcap audacity, what have you learned?

**Anooj:** I've learned that I'm really obsessed with the feeling of freefalling, and I want to gift it to all the people I love. It's a kind of release or relinquishing that both makes everything stop and makes everything feel like so much.

**Joey:** Do you experience time dilation?

**Anooj:** Alllll the time. It's truly one of my favorite and perhaps sought after things to experience.

**Joey:** So this dragon you're chasing is adrenaline?

**Anooj:** Nahhh. More like the feeling after, like being lasso'd back into myself.

**Joey:** This isn't about you laughing in god's face, then.

**Anooj:** Only partly.

**Joey:** Is the rest about the gratitude of life, presumably after having yours flash before your eyes?

**Anooj:** I think it's a love of being removed from what I think is reality for a moment. The flash actually helps me remember all else that's not me.

**Joey:** Thanks, Anooj.

**Anooj:** Hey – who had sex with the most people?

**Joey:** Out of respect for the modesty of the person who did, that titleholder will remain anonymous. I will, however, talk to the person who has had the fewest sex partners. In fact, I'm going to talk to him right now. Hey Joey!

**Joey, distorted:** Everybody else has had more sex partners than me? Everybody?

**Joey:** If you had as much dick in your pants as you do in your personality, you might have gotten laid once in a while.

**Joey, distorted:** Really?

**Joey:** I wouldn't worry about it. Anyone who would have sex with you isn't worth having sex with.

**Joey, distorted:** I wish you weren't so mean.

**Joey:** And I wish you weren't an unfuckable weirdo.

**Joey, distorted:** Oh, come on!

**Joey:** Michaela, congratulations! Among the cohort of this week's Neo-Futurists, you have witnessed the most death.

**Michaela:** Thank you for this honor. Joey, I was originally, when you sent me back this, I got very concerned because when you asked how many deaths I had experienced and had to like, deal with grief for, and been rocked by...

**Joey:** *[whispering]* Michaela. Take the W.

**Michaela:** *[whispering]* Okay.

**Joey:** So I won't reveal the number but it included a .5.

**Michaela:** Yes. That's for my dad.

**Joey:** Right. Michaela, do you think you have a perspective on death and grief from which others might benefit?

**Michaela:** Um, I think benefit is a hard word for that question. But I will say that growing up, I did grow up in a world where death was very very normalized. When I was in 8th grade, the town I was supposed to go to high school in, had a very unfortunate suicide cluster and a big reason I didn't go there was because my parents wanted to shield me from that sadness. And of course, death follows. You can't hide from it ever. I learned that from Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows. So I think having a number of these experiences has forced me to look at life as a means to an end which is really really cynical and kind of like sad. But also taught me that you have to hold onto the time that you have with one another – which is something I'm practicing right now with my .5. So to answer your question, I think I'm lucky that I know what death looks like and that I've learned how to grieve, and how to be strong while grieving. So I don't know if others will benefit from having the experiences that I've had totally, but I know that everyone will experience death and grieving, so it's just kind of like, when is it going to happen for you, you know what I mean? And everyone turns out to be, you know, you can turn out to be stronger by the end of the day, and I think that that is a great thing and I think you learn a lot through death.

**Joey:** I think as Neo-Futurists, we share our stories as a means by which to help others make sense of their own. I think your story is a boon to anyone facing loss.

**Michaela:** Thank you. That's very nice. I have to say, I do not know what 'boon' means.

**Joey:** It used to be used as a kind of currency of favors. You could gift somebody a 'boon' or you could owe somebody a 'boon'. But now I think it just sorta means something that is beneficial to others.

**Michaela:** Aw, that's sweet. The Boon Artists. I like that.  
*Music fades out.*

## Play 5: Five Meditative Clangs, Bangs, Bonks, and Dings (17:25)

**Colin:** Five Meditative Clangs, Bangs, Bonks, and Dings from my apartment. **GO!**

**Colin:** #1: Glass on radiator

*Colin bangs glass on a radiator, continues under text.*

Old clocks use sound to signal the passage of time. I have now been in my rent stabilized apartment in Brooklyn for 10 years. I have left for periods of time and I've been home for extended periods of time. I've spent more time inside my apartment during the last 6 months than ever before. These sounds mark the passage of my time.

**#2:** Finger on Coffee Lid

*Colin bangs finger on coffee lid, continues under text.*

Every morning I make coffee in a french press. This is the sound of that ritual. The sound is not really the point, but I can't give you the listener, the smell of this coarse ground coffee via podcast. It smells amazing. I know, that you know, that it smells amazing....because all coarse ground coffee kept in fancy tins smells amazing.

**#3:** Bell

*Colin dings a bell, continues under text.*

This is a bell I've used in performances before. With the Neo-futurists, with my solo show, with my old band. But I haven't used this bell in performance for several years. This bell has now returned to its glory days. This bell is getting its groove back. This bell is making a triumphant return to the limelight. I am glad to hear from him again.

**#4:** Cardboard Tube

*Colin bangs a cardboard tube, continues under text.*

Many people have lived here for a year or two and then been on their way. They leave a lot of things. I don't know where this cardboard tube came from. It could have been here for years. Or one of my current roommates could have put it here within the past few weeks. I like it's short little burps. This tube will probably reside in my living room for quite a while.

#5: Wooden spoon on pot

*Colin bangs a wooden spoon on a pot, continues under text.*

Buddists use singing bowls for meditation , Catholics use church bells for mass, Orthodox Jews use an air raid siren to signal sundown on the Sabbath. Muslims use the call to prayer. I am not a religious person. But I appreciate a good clang. It signals I am here. It signals to everyone within earshot that you are here too.

## Show Outro

*Bouncy electronic instrumental music plays underneath.*

**Anooj:** Thank you for Hitting Play and then listening to *Hit Play*. If you liked what you heard, subscribe to the show, tell a friend, and leave a review on your listening app of choice! If you want to support the New York Neo-Futurists in other ways, consider making a donation at [nynf.org](http://nynf.org), or by joining our Patreon—[Patreon.com/NYNF](https://www.patreon.com/NYNF).

This episode featured works by: Michaela Farrell, Joey Rizzolo, Anooj Bhandari, and Colin Summers. Our brand new logo was designed by Gabriel Drozdov. And our sound is designed by Anthony Sertel Dean. *Hit Play* is produced by Anthony Sertel Dean, Léah Miller, and me, Anooj Bhandari. Take Care!

*Music fades out!*