



Hit Play Transcription

69: In re(view)

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Michael: 69. In Review. Hi, I'm Michael John Improta—a New York Neo-Futurist. Our live show is in a state of flux right now. But here we are, making art for your ears in Hit Play.

If you're already a fan of The New York Neo-Futurists, or any of our sibling companies, hello! We can't wait to jump up and down with you and make strange geometric patterns with our jumping! If this is totally new to you—welcome to it!

We make art by four rules: We are who we are, we're 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 is actually happening. So if we tell you we're recording while sitting our kitchen table while sipping on a coffee that's a little too cold, then—

Michael sips his coffee

—we're really doing that thing. Like I am right now.

All the plays in this episode either deal with looking back to last year, or looking forward to the year ahead.

And now, Kyra will Run the Numbers!

Kyra: Hi, I'm Kyra-- a New York Neo-Futurist, currently recovering from tonsillitis.

Kyra takes a deep breath.

In this episode we're bringing you 10 new plays.

This week's cast is Michael John Improta, Michaela Farrell, Shelton Lindsay, Hilary Asare, and me--Kyra Sims.

That brings us to 305 audio experiments on *Hit Play*. Enjoy!

Music winds down.

Play 1: If you remember, then follow. (1:58)

Michael: If you remember, then follow. **GO!**

Rhythmic piano builds and layers, starting slowly and sparsely, then growing more intricate over time.

Anthony: So tell us, what was it like?

Michael: It was like, seeing America from a thousand feet. Wrinkled land that looked like skin below, meeting a horizon where I would be... later

Hilary: It was like hugging my family after 18 long months apart

Shelton: It was like baking a really fucking amazing burnt sugar and caramel cake. No, really it was that good!

Michaela: It was like returning to the work we missed before, returning to the work face to face

All: with you

Michael: It was like shedding irony

Kyra: and meeting new love. Comfort, wonder, joy. Love

Kyra/Shelton: It was like a free cruise

Shelton: And sunburning my ass on ship decks,

Michael/Shelton: and beaches with island dogs

Michael: and snorkeling with turtles.

Michaela: And working on Broadway!

Kyra: And helping to create Ratatouille the tik tok musical.

All: IT WAS LIKE TIK TOK

Shelton: And Like me performing in my first off-broadway musical that I was told made bringing your Vaccine card to Chelsea worth it.

All: *Various cheers for Shelton like "Damn right"*

Hilary: It was like remembering what I love about acting, and then making peace with why I need to stop.

Kyra: It was like fresh deep snow

Michael: diving into crisp mountain waterfalls

Michaela: driving in a new car that I paid for

Hilary: Moving into a divine ew apartment with my partner.

Shelton: like road trips where I saw bears... 4 Bears!

Kyra: It was like, being surprised by our company for my birthday

Shelton: Directing four videos for It Gets Better

Michael: Finally finishing a draft of a script after 4 years

Michaela: winning a championship with my soccer team.

Kyra: Watching my mom run a half marathon in her 50th state

Michael: Like pissing in the ocean

Michael/Shelton: Quitting that super Toxic Job!

Michaela: learning how to accept the things I cannot change!

Hilary/Michael/Michaela: Still working on it

ALL: But hey! It's a process.

Music has a final build, then fades out.

Play 2: Speaking a past discovery while picking up the old desk you gave me. (4:39)

Michaela: Speaking a past discovery while picking up the old desk you gave me. **GO!**

Sounds of Michaela picking up the desk. Her voice strains as she speaks.

The best thing that ever happened to me
Was the best thing that ever happened to us.
It was something we did together,
For the good of each other.
It was when we started thinking before we spoke
It was when we realized our words held weight.

Michaela drops the desk, then a deep exhale.

Play 3: Quick reviews for the gal on the go. (5:22)

Shelton: Quick reviews for the gal on the go. **GO!**

Heroic movie music plays underneath.

Shelton: Thinking about all content you didn't get to watch

Michael: read //

Kyra: binge last year?

Michela: well we've got you covered

Hilary: with reviews of everything you can avoid.

Shelton: No Time To Die: more like no time to write the plot.

Michael: West Side Story 2021 is a shitty ex who comes back around saying this time they've changed, but really they've just learned how to use their red flags in a choreographed color guard routine.

Kyra: Dune: if I wanted to look at a bunch of pretty shots and watch a woman of color be exoticified I would read National Geographic.

Michela: Don't Look Up: I hope the parties during production were good because there is literally no other reason that this movie should have been made.

Hilary Dexter New Blood could use a transfusion of real stakes.

Kyra: All you cowards won't say it but I will: Single All the Way is the Driving Miss Daisy of gay Christmas movies.

Michela: Le Chat Noir (a play I saw in France that sucked balls) I am very glad Edgar Allen Poe is dead so he didn't have to see what you pathetic losers did to his words.

Hilary: The White Lotus was only "revolutionary" and "eye-opening" to white people.

Michaela: Cherry, the movie: The Rousso brothers should stick to playing with their action figures.

Shelton: The Matrix Resurrections: somethings are better left dead.

Michael: The only thing more insistent about its existence than The Matrix Resurrection was that reality show where Andrew Dice Clay tried to mount a comeback.

All other neos: oooooooooo!

Shelton: I did enjoy imagining that every time they said Neo was the savior they meant us.

Michela: I could see that being a silver lining.

Luke Palmer: Hi Luke Palmer here, long time writer, first time watcher. Just popping in to say When Trinity says "maybe I'll make the whole sky rainbows". It was like... Trinity... messing with the sky is what got us here in the first place....HUMAN BEINGS ARE IDIOTS WHO SHOULDN BE TRYING TO FUCK WITH THE SKY.

Michela: And that's actually a hot take we can all take into the new year.

Shelton: I mean we should be trying to do something about global warming.

Michael: Or who knows maybe we will all be forced to live in strange pods.

Michela: It would fucking suckkkkk if we all ended up in The Matrix.

Luke Palmer: yeah especially if it was the matrix 4.

Shelton: Sick burrrrrrrnnnnn.

Luke Palmer: Also, um...Hi, Mike, Kyra, and Hilary. I miss you guys and hope everybody is having—doing—doing well and having a happy new year! Michaela, who I assume that is your name, um I assume you're a good person too so happy new year to you as well...And all the other Neos. Large and small.

Music reaches a climax, then out.

Play 4: what I want on the other side of this soak in the tub (8:34)

Water sounds.

Hilary: what I want on the other side of this soak in the tub. **GO!**

Hilary submerges herself in a bathtub, expels all the air in her lungs, and holds her breath for as long as she can. When she emerges she takes a breath and recites lines until the next dunk.

just enough
just enough air for the next moment
just enough water to wet my lips

Hilary does 2 second dunks until indicated

just enough forgiveness to let that go and
just enough wisdom to avoid the thing that hurts

Another dunk

just enough bravery to say I'm scared and
just enough courage to face those fears

Another dunk

just enough patience to keep fucking up and
just enough curiosity to seek new answers

Another dunk

just enough hope to imagine

just enough light to see the next steps and
just enough energy to move my feet in that direction

Another dunk

just enough
just enough air till the next breath
just enough water till I pour another glass
just enough grace for expired dreams and
just enough focus for new ones
just enough honesty to say I don't fucking know
just enough courage to start finding out
just enough patience to be a beginner
just enough curiosity to keep going

Another dunk

Just enough to keep going

Brief dunk

Just enough to keep going

Faster dunk

Just enough to keep going

Fastest dunk- this repeats with Hilary dunking and saying "just enough to keep going" and fades out.

Play 5: American Spirit blues (10:20)

Shelton: American Spirit blues. **GO!**

*Cowboy music plays in the background Aka the intro of Cattle call by eddy arnold on loop.
Shelton delivers these lines in his best coboy voice.*

I miss smoking tobacco
There I said it.
I'm addicted.
I crave it.
It does nothing for me.
It's been 18 days on January 8th since I smoked last.

Which yeah. Means I stopped before the new year.
Figured somethings were best left in 2021.
I've quit before
I'm good at quitting.
Cigarettes in 21 and a toxic men in 22.
Stops with the cowboy voice
Which means I should probably quit idolizing men with problematic masculinities
But I'm a sucker for abs and daddy issues.
But Here's to hoping things i quit stay quit partners.
See y'all some where down this dusty trail
Music swells and then dies down.

Play 6: A review of a woman, written by the woman, read by a woman with the same birthday (11:49)

Slow synth pulsing music.

Mara Wilson: A review of a woman, written by the woman, read by a woman with the same birthday. **GO!**

Beat.

"Why review myself?" thought the woman, staring at the ceiling from her hand-me-down bed in Inwood. "What good does it really do to look back and take stock? Do I ever really learn from my mistakes, or is my changed behavior just a trauma response?"

She looked to her left at the red notebook sitting on her blue nightstand. A goal journal, one that she'd taken to with relish at the beginning of 2021, abandoned for months, and then sheepishly returned to as the year was coming to an end. She cringed at the idea of looking at those first few pages- the year goals, brazen and full of hope. It would be easier to look away, to turn off the light and go to sleep, to stop writing this very play in her Google Document titled "Play ideas 2021."

Killing for time, the woman moved her eyes from the red notebook to the red roses sitting on her coffee table nearby. They were a welcome distraction from the long days of isolation and canceled gigs. She changed their water every day and trimmed their stems, hoping to keep them around for as long as possible, urging their petals to bloom for her forever. (Update: They did not.)

Suddenly, the woman turned onto her side, reached a hand out to the blue nightstand, and opened the red notebook.

Beat. Music stops.

I would like to take a moment here to talk about how I, the narrator, feel about things like yearly goals and progress journals. I'm all for journals and journaling. I've been inconsistent with my journals over the years. But I remember participating in a psychology or behavioral study when I was in college. I did a lot of those. They were usually about 10-12 bucks an hour. And I did one where I had to journal every day for a week or two, and then say how I felt about it. Apparently there are some studies, and I guess I participated in one, that say something about how people who keep journals tend to be more content with their lives because they see what they've done. Yearly goals and resolutions though, I kinda don't see the point in. I mean, I think if you want to improve your life or improve yourself, why not just try it at any time? Self-improvement and self-acceptance, these things can be done any day of the year. Maybe that's awfully Californian of me, but that's the way I feel about it. Anyway, back to the woman who shares my birthday.

Beat. Piano music plays under.

The woman has always cherished the strong bonds she holds with her past selves from many years ago. She loves to dance in her tiny kitchen to music she listened to in high school, imagining that her 16-year old self is in the room with her, chin in hands, getting to see the life they both worked together to build.

Bonding with the self from the same year, however, felt different. Harder. Not enough time had passed, and they knew each other too well. The woman in January should have known not to expect so much of the woman in December. The woman in December should have lived up to the woman in January's expectations.

The smooth white pages of the red notebook sat open, simple, ready to be read.

Piano sustains and reverberates, then goes away.

She looked at the first entry.

The notebook had asked her:

Mara sounds far away and tinny, like over the phone. She can only be heard through the left ear.

How will you improve yourself this year? How will this year be better than last year?

Mara sounds normal again.

And the woman in January had written:

Kyra sounds far away and tinny, like over the phone. She can only be heard through the right ear.

I will take better care of my body
I will grow as a musician and writer
Anything is better than last year

Mara sounds normal again.

The woman in December had to agree with that last sentence, though in retrospect the sentence felt less like a relieved statement of fact and more like a challenge to the fates.

She looked at the compression band on her right wrist and thought about the mobility exercises she'd done earlier in the day.

She thought about how much she'd written that year, and how much she played horn despite not always having paid work to do it.

"Ok, not bad," she mused.

The slow synth pulses from the beginning of the piece return.

She thought about what "better" could even mean in a world like ours. Are we better if, even with improvement, we still land at a net negative? Or are we better because we are still here, hearts beating, every new breath a defiant act of staying alive?

The woman who shares my birthday doesn't know. What she does know is that she is glad you are here. Yes, you. Things are fucked, and we're all so tired, but here you are, despite it all, taking time for yourself to be here with us. *Wanting* something. Wanting *something*. (That was a Sondheim reference). I'm actually very glad the woman who shares my birthday included a Sondheim reference. Especially from *Company*, one of my favorite musicals.

The woman who shares my birthday went to bed and finished this play a couple of nights later. She is taking time for herself, too, despite it all. And despite it all, despite everything...she feels better.

Music resolves, then fades away.

Play 7: Cyclical Thoughts on Joy and Doom (17:53)

Michaela: Cyclical Thoughts on Joy and Doom. **GO!**

When i think about the future all i see is bed sheets
Drifting in the warm sun drenched bedroom which i assume is my own
I see water everywhere, maybe a waterwall or a water fall or shower that's always dripping

Single acoustic guitar notes create a melody.

I breathe and it feels like my lungs fill up for the first time
And the air I breathe out moves the grass and the flowers
and the birds fly with my current.

When I think more about the future i don't see many other people in it
I don't think that means that I'll be lonely, really,
But I do think that means I am keeping my expectations low
Maybe I won't grow from the hurt
Maybe i won't dig myself out of my hole
I don't expect that my brain will be rewired.

Music speeds up. So does the speaking.

When I think too hard about the future I stop thinking about my future
and I start thinking about my past
I start thinking about how I was in Washington DC last Sunday dressed in a long sleeve t shirt
And the next day a blizzard hit the same place I was sweating in.
I start thinking about the shoes I lost in the Vietnamese city Hoi An
As I attempted to trudge through the flash flood that submerged the main streets
I remember how we call it "rainy season" now

Static.

And i start to think about what we will call it in 20 years
Then i don't want to think about that.
Then I stop thinking.

Static and guitar stop suddenly.

In the next section, Michaela's voice is doubled where bold, and tripled where underlined.

Then I go back to the bed sheets.
Drifting in the warm sun-
The birds fly with my current-

Guitar plays again.

Maybe i won't grow from the hurt,
Maybe i wont dig myself out of my hole,
A blizzard in the same place i was sweating in.
The shoes i lost in the flood
20 years from now
40 years from now
Then i stop thinking.
Then i go back to the-

When I think about the future all i see is

Michaela's words become distorted in this next section. Sometimes her voice is pitched down, sometimes pitched up, doubled, tripled, only in the left or right ear. It is faster and building. The guitar gets louder. Her voice becomes staticy.

bed sheets,
Warm sun
Water
Breathe
Grass
Birds
Lonely
Hurt
Hole
Rewired
Past
Blizzard
Sweat
Shoes
Flood
Remember
20 years
40 years
60 years
80 years
100 years

The distortion stops. It is just Michaela's voice and single guitar plucks.

When I think about the future all i see
When i think about the future all i
When i think about the future all
When i think about the future

When i think about the
When i think about
When i think
When i
When
When
When

Play 8: How I feel about buying a return flight back to New York City instead of just staying in Puerto Rico for the rest of 2022 (20:24)

Michael: How I feel about buying a return flight back to New York City instead of just staying in Puerto Rico for the rest of 2022. **GO!**

Michael opens a can of beer and takes a sip.

Michael: Maybe tomorrow

Sounds of coquis and waves layered in, then fades out.

Play 9: How I like to imagine the author John Green would rate my butt, featuring audio stolen from his podcast, The Anthropocene Reviewed (21:02)

Kyra: How I like to imagine the author John Green would rate my butt, featuring audio stolen from his podcast, The Anthropocene Reviewed. **GO!**

John Green: Five stars, obviously.

Play 10: Another year's here/Farewell 2021/Some Haikus we wrote (21:15)

Hilary: Another year's here/Farewell 2021/Some Haikus we wrote. **GO!**

Starts with an overlapping edit of everyone's haiku recordings interrupted by chimes that reverberate as the haikus begins.

Kyra:

Two entire years
Living without guarantees
Will make your hair grey
chime

Toni:

ah ha ha ha ha
I've cried more for all reasons
damn, I love to cry
chime

Shelton:

so many questions
too few answers that I liked
fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck.
chime

Michaela:

"Normalize chaos!!!"
We screamed from our apartments.
And now we are here.
chime

Julia:

I have become an
Actuary of my days.
Risk or not to risk.
chime

Hilary:

2021
Debridement of our old wounds
Better healing comes
chime

Michael:

Nobody tells you
How years can slip through fingers
This time, Grip tighter.

Everyone's last lines are repeated and overlapped. The plays end with a final chime.

Show Outro

___ electronic instrumental music plays underneath.

Micahel: Thanks 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! We'd love to hear from you - leave us a voicemail at (646) 820-4733. If

you want to support the New York Neo-Futurists in other ways, consider making a donation at nynf.org, or by joining our Patreon - [Patreon dot com slash NYNF](https://www.patreon.com/NYNF).

This episode featured work by:

Me, Michael John Improta
Michaela Farrell
Shelton Lindsay, featuring Luke Palmer
and Kyra Sims, featuring Mara Wilson

Our logo was designed by Gabriel Drozdov and our sound is designed by Anthony Sertel Dean.

Hit Play is produced by Anthony Sertel Dean, Julia Melfi, and me—Michael John Improta. Take care!

Music fades out!

Katharine: Hi everyone, it's Katharine. In honor of this being our 69th episode, I wrote this song for you. They're my personal opinions about 69.

Jazzy tune begins. Katharine sings:

Hey everyone, how are you doing out there?
Mmm
Niiiiiiice
If you're like me you love talking about
Numbers
And here's some numbers I'd like to talk about
6 and 9
Two numbers that sound perfectly fine
But
Unlike birds of a feather
It fails when you put them together
Why oh why
Yes I love to be licked
But not when I'm sucking your...
Penis
Because I like to focus on that
You're welcome