

Min Hee-jin Debut, 4th Ensemble

October 29, 2024 - Kim Young-dae's School of Music, YouTube

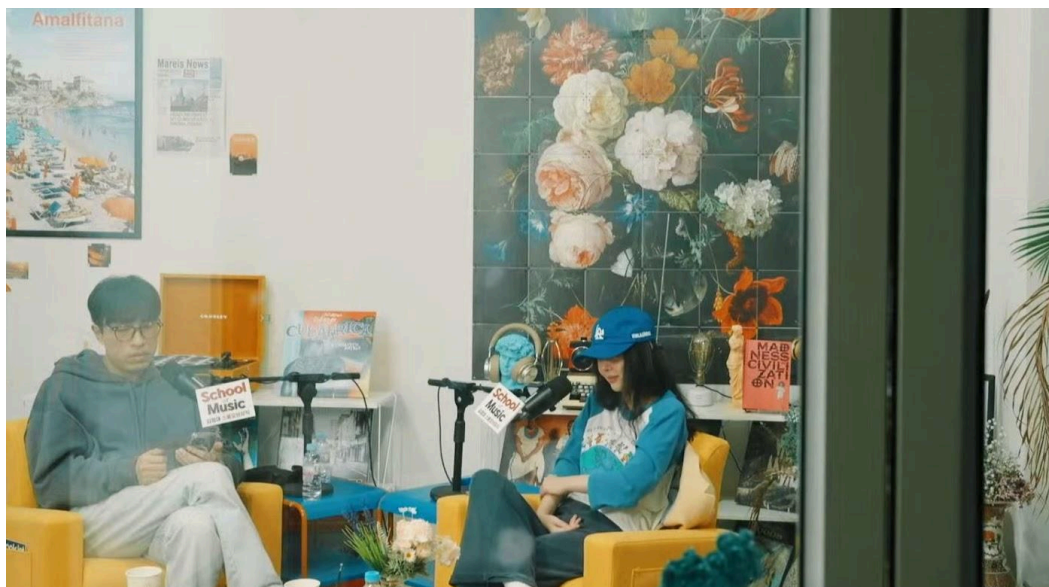
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English Translation: Itokki

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1. Securing an Interview on Bunnies Day and the Temporary Restraining Order

Kim Young-dae: Anyway, I'll explain shortly how this interview came to be, but first, let me introduce our special guest. We have producer Min Hee-jin with us today. Hello!

Min Hee-jin: Hello! (laughs)

Kim Young-dae: Why are you laughing right from the start?

Min Hee-jin: It's been so long since we last met.

Kim Young-dae: Yes, it's been ages.

Min Hee-jin: Exactly.

Kim Young-dae: I feel like I should provide some context. Initially, this interview was supposed to happen before you became so widely known for, let's say, other reasons.

Min Hee-jin: True.

Kim Young-dae: I first suggested an interview after "Hype Boy" came out and before "Ditto." I wanted to discuss music, and you kindly agreed. We even had a preliminary meeting as a sort of pre-interview, right?

Min Hee-jin: Yes, but that was two years ago.

Kim Young-dae: Two years, before "Ditto."

Min Hee-jin: Right, before "Ditto."

Kim Young-dae: I didn't realize that would be our last meeting. (laughs) After that, you got swept up in such big events.

Min Hee-jin: And, well, we were also extremely busy around "Ditto" and all the way to "Super Shy." That period was exhausting for us. So, I couldn't meet you again then. We were more like acquaintances at best.

Kim Young-dae: True. I would reach out about an interview, you'd agree, and then it would fall through. That happened a few times, didn't it?

Min Hee-jin: Yes.

Kim Young-dae: But now, finally, we meet again here at the new School of Music. It's nice to see you, but I have to admit, this is one of those interviews where I have no idea where the conversation will go. (laughs) We shared some topics in advance, but I don't feel like things will necessarily follow that script.

Min Hee-jin: Honestly, I haven't even read the outline. (laughs) I've been too busy, and I didn't have the time. Also, this is my first time on YouTube, so it feels strange.

Kim Young-dae: Really?

Min Hee-jin: Yes, so having a conversation with someone while being watched by others feels a bit awkward. Lately, I've mostly spoken in front of live audiences.

Kim Young-dae: With an audience, yes.

Min Hee-jin: I'm comfortable with that, but this is different. I also wonder how people who record alone on YouTube do it!

Kim Young-dae: They just talk to the camera.

Min Hee-jin: Right. I'll try to talk as we did when we first met.

Kim Young-dae: That was so long ago I barely remember. Wasn't it at the Rolling Stone office?

Min Hee-jin: Yes, in winter. I remember some strange things happening, like doors randomly closing.

Kim Young-dae: Yes, strange things indeed. I never expected we'd be here discussing this.

Min Hee-jin: I couldn't have imagined it either. And I never thought I'd be called "the subject of controversy" or "a hot topic."

Kim Young-dae: A controversial figure, a trending figure.

Min Hee-jin: Why say "controversial"? (laughs) But I didn't quite feel that way, to be honest. And today just so happens to be Bunnies' birthday.

Kim Young-dae: Bunnies Day.

Min Hee-jin: So when you suggested a few dates, I thought, why not do it on Bunnies' birthday?

Kim Young-dae: Oh, I see.

Min Hee-jin: But I didn't know the restraining order news would come out today.
(laughs)

Kim Young-dae: (laughs) Right from the start.

Min Hee-jin: Yeah, I didn't know then.

Kim Young-dae: None of us did; we didn't know the date.

Min Hee-jin: But now, with everything happening at once, I wonder if I'm destined to be a trending topic.

Kim Young-dae: Had I known today's significance, I might have chosen a different date.

Min Hee-jin: But I think I would still have said yes.

Kim Young-dae: (laughs) I do radio and other media, but I've never experienced such a frenzy simply for having Min Hee-jin as a guest.

Min Hee-jin: Has there been a buzz? Early this morning?

Kim Young-dae: Yes, I posted on Twitter and Instagram, and it set things off.

Min Hee-jin: Why?

Kim Young-dae: I'm not exactly sure. But some people dislike me simply because I invited you.

Min Hee-jin: Oh.

Kim Young-dae: Just for inviting you.

Min Hee-jin: Do people dislike you?

Kim Young-dae: Well, as a critic, I guess. It comes with the territory. I constantly evaluate people, meet people, and that can be polarizing.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, I see.

Kim Young-dae: Since I invited Min Hee-jin, people probably think I'm here to defend her or something. That's why I mentioned going back two years. The reason I said that is because, back then, none of this was happening, right? I was genuinely just thinking of *Producer Min Hee-jin*... (they laugh together). Wouldn't it have been better if none of this had happened?

Min Hee-jin: And you really liked NewJeans' music.

Kim Young-dae: Yes, I did.

2. The Press Conference, Communicating with V

Min Hee-jin: When I received feedback, one comment was, "I'd really like to meet this person." At that time, other critics were also reaching out frequently, but...

Kim Young-dae: That sounds about right, yes.

Min Hee-jin: But I was so busy that I didn't end up meeting anyone. Back then, I didn't feel like stepping out or doing anything public. I didn't have the right conditions, mindset, or energy, so I didn't act on it then.

Kim Young-dae: Right.

Min Hee-jin: But now, suddenly, my bare face has been revealed to the world, so I've lost all my shyness. *laughs*

Kim Young-dae: Does your bare face sometimes pop up in your feed via the algorithm?

Min Hee-jin: Oh, it pops up a lot. At first, I was horrified; I didn't even watch it. I'm not usually a YouTube person, so it felt very awkward. It was like that feeling you get when you hear a recording of your own voice, and you go, "Oh, no." There are photos where I look nice, but they always pick the scruffy ones. I used to hate it—it was dreadful. But we adapt, don't we? Now I'm just used to it. I think it's okay; maybe it's age.

Kim Young-dae: Have you grown a bit thicker-skinned?

Min Hee-jin: When I was younger, I was super sensitive. Even though I wasn't a celebrity, I felt a compulsive dislike for showing an unattractive side.

Kim Young-dae: Right, and there's self-esteem related to your self-image.

Min Hee-jin: It's not about self-esteem! *laughs* It's just that I was never comfortable standing in front of people. But after showing an unpolished version of myself, I got used to it. It's just like, "Oh, whatever." I can appear bare-faced now. *laughs*

Kim Young-dae: The current Min Hee-jin that represents you post-press conference—is that an image you'd ever imagined for yourself?

Min Hee-jin: Not at all.

Kim Young-dae: Doesn't it feel like it's you, yet not you? Like, you were the one speaking, but...

Min Hee-jin: No, it's definitely me. *laughs* It's so me.

Kim Young-dae: So now, you can look back and think, "Oh, I said that."

Min Hee-jin: V sometimes calls me from the military. (Does he?) It's like, "Is he even in the military?" That's how often he calls.

Kim Young-dae: Is he doing well?

Min Hee-jin: He's doing great. He's just a bright kid. We talk informally since we're close. I'd feel weird calling him "Mr. V." He's so bubbly, so cheerful. When this whole situation started, he called me with this bright, "Are you okay, noona?" *laughs*

Kim Young-dae: Oh, right when things started blowing up?

Min Hee-jin: Yes, shortly after. He told me that after some time, he began feeling awkward about when he should call. I was grateful for his concern, though. He even sent me a text at dawn from the military on my birthday, wishing me happy birthday. I thought, "He's such a warm-hearted kid."

Kim Young-dae: That must have been touching.

Min Hee-jin: It was incredibly touching. I thought, "How is he so kind?" That warmth in him is genuine, and I'm really thankful. But, wait, how did we get on this topic?

Kim Young-dae: We were talking about the press conference and how you presented yourself.

Min Hee-jin: Ah, right. V even said to me, "Noona, you just showed your true self to the whole world without hesitation. Can you really do that?" But I'm not a celebrity, so why should it matter? And I really held back during that conference.

I mentioned in my Hyundai Card lecture that I spoke quite respectfully. *laughs* I could've cursed non-stop for over two hours, but since it was a public setting, I limited myself to the minimum. How could you not curse in that situation? It was...

I spoke so rationally because I was thinking logically about everything at the time. I don't have a good memory, so I'm not the type to memorize scripts. I just say what comes naturally to me. Otherwise, I get tangled up. So, I went in thinking I'd just recount what happened in order.

People even suggested that someone had written a script for me. But no one, not even my lawyers, knew I was going to do this. My lawyers all discouraged me; they're used to scripted speeches. I was calling for a venue early in the morning and saying, "Just find me a place." They were confused, but I told them I didn't need anything special—I'd just handle it my way.

Some lawyers understood my style, others didn't. People who knew me figured I'd just say what I wanted. Apparently, people were worried during the first 15–20 minutes of the conference that I might lose my footing.

Kim Young-dae: They thought you might get nervous and struggle?

Min Hee-jin: Yes. Like, I asked them to turn off the flashes.

Kim Young-dae: Right, you looked a bit uneasy at first.

Min Hee-jin: I wasn't uneasy at all. I was angry, but I also found it funny. Funny might not be the right word, but since I knew all the facts, it felt like watching a comedy, like a hidden camera prank, or some dark comedy. It was a mix of anger and amusement. I knew people would be shocked to learn the truth, but it would take time for them to understand.

Some people said things like, "If I were her, I would've revealed everything!" I had so much to say, but I knew I couldn't cover it all in two hours. Ideally, I would've spoken for three to four hours. I think it ended up lasting around two hours and twenty minutes. But there's a limit to people's attention span. Also, giving too much information at once just confuses people.

It was a challenge because there were so many contexts people couldn't understand right away. We didn't have enough time, and I was bound by the stockholder agreement, so there was a lot I couldn't share.

I'm very precise about facts. But if people don't know the background, they misinterpret things. It's like the "Whispering Game" from the old TV show Family Arcade.

Kim Young-dae: Now that you mention it, it really hits home. I know that game.

Min Hee-jin: When people pass along what they hear, it gets all jumbled. To me, most office communication feels like the “Whispering Game.”

Kim Young-dae: Must have been incredibly frustrating.

3. Office Interior Design and Her Experience with ADHD

Min Hee-jin: I'm also quite frustrated. Thinking about this just makes all sorts of things come to mind. For instance, another team or department at another company filmed something in their office space, and suddenly, their workspace was revealed. Since our office is open-space, there were these comments like, "Look at them working in chicken-coop style. I heard Min Hee-jin designed it!" I really want to clarify that. I'm originally a designer, and I really like private spaces. So, when we initially planned it, my concept was to create a space where each person would have their own separate office, with beautifully arranged partitions. However, CEO Bang Si-hyuk said he wanted to see all the employees working at a glance as he walked through. He showed us open spaces at companies like Facebook and Google overseas as a reference and asked us to create a similar open-plan space. So, what could I do when the owner wants it that way?

Besides, we didn't even have enough space. HYBE's building was not large enough to accommodate everyone, especially if we wanted to create private spaces as I envisioned. So, I had no choice but to go along with it. However, to ensure some privacy, we installed moving racks, which I thought would help reduce visibility for those who preferred it that way.

Even though I put so much thought into it, people still blamed me for the design. But my personality isn't one to respond with, "I didn't design it; someone else asked for it." So, I just endured it. There are countless examples of things I've just endured like that.

We have great views in our office, and if you want everyone to share it, you must open up the space. However, some senior colleagues suggested, "Shouldn't higher-ranking staff get tucked away in nice, private corners?" I was infuriated and thought, "Why should someone monopolize that?"

HYBE has typical suppliers for things like coffee, but I fought hard to bring in specialty coffee brands like Fritz. I always wanted our employees to have a comfortable, high-quality space to relax in. But now, looking back, it seems almost ridiculous how much I had to fight to get a good brand up there. In the beginning,

they even proposed turning one floor into a music video studio! I fought every step, explaining the dust, soundproofing, and spatial issues. Now, everyone loves the Fritz coffee, but I get no credit.

Kim Young-dae: Oh, this is bad. Yes.

Min Hee-jin: Just talking about this... In the beginning, someone suggested building a filming set within the company to shoot music videos. It was so random. I thought, “Have they even dealt with hands-on work before?” It didn’t make sense—noise, dust, soundproofing—it was totally unrealistic. I received such proposals, and I had to fight each time, explaining how nonsensical they were! There were so many moments when I wanted to explode. Anyway, after battling through all that, we finally got the café. Now everyone at Fritz loves it. The coffee’s great, and everyone loves it now.

Kim Young-dae: I’ve had it a few times myself.

Min Hee-jin: But no one praises me for things like that. Nobody knows who was behind it.

Kim Young-dae: I never even thought about that, to be honest. It’s always about work—

Min Hee-jin: It’s so frustrating. Honestly, because of who created these spaces, I even worked hard to make the nap rooms and showers look nice. I even suggested the gym. I wanted employees to feel like they were at the Park Hyatt gym, where you can see the view. I wanted people to experience that feeling of being in an inspiring space. Our gym has a fantastic view of the Han River.

Kim Young-dae: The view is truly great, yes.

Min Hee-jin: You can feel better just running there. I think of everything in detail, down to the design of the door handles and tiles in the shower rooms. We didn’t have a lot of budget. But even if you look at small capsule hotels in Japan, the Japanese are great at design. They select materials well and create something unique, even on a budget. So, I meticulously considered how to allocate our budget. But no one talks about the good things, only what goes wrong. I’m even blamed for the air conditioning (laughs). I didn’t even install the air conditioning; there’s a separate team for that, but they stay quiet and leave me to take the blame.

Kim Young-dae: How long will we keep discussing this building? Just for context?

Min Hee-jin: I can’t leave it out because this frustration I feel towards the company originated here. I even talked about it for so long on *You Quiz on the Block* that Yoo Jae-suk humorously told me to stop.

Kim Young-dae: (laughs) It feels like your relationship with this building has become symbolic of something.

Min Hee-jin: In a way, it was foreshadowing.

Kim Young-dae: A sort of symbol?

Min Hee-jin: Fighting with the company back then made me realize how stubbornly unyielding they were. I met all the budget constraints they gave me. I get a lot of satisfaction from achieving things within set budgets. That's why I don't do fine art. Fine art is boundless; you're competing with yourself endlessly, which would drive me crazy. You don't have a finite resource to work with.

Kim Young-dae: You're a resourceful person who thrives under deadlines and limitations.

Min Hee-jin: YThat's why commercial art suits me. There's a deadline. I'm lazy, so I need deadlines. And there's a budget. I take on each project as a personal challenge. I delay things, but something always comes out in the end. That's why I feel that director Shin Woo-seok's working style is similar to mine—waiting until the last moment before a burst of creativity.

Kim Young-dae: People might say it would be better if you did things earlier, but it doesn't necessarily work like that.

Min Hee-jin: I'm constantly thinking, carrying these ideas around like a persistent condition.

Kim Young-dae: Do you constantly keep thinking about things?

Min Hee-jin: Absolutely. A photographer friend once told me I need to learn to cut off my thoughts. But it's hard; I barely get any rest, and I hardly sleep.

Kim Young-dae: I feel like you need some rest, but you just don't stop, right?

Min Hee-jin: I love working from home because time in the car feels wasted to me.

Kim Young-dae: You mean the time spent commuting?

Min Hee-jin: Yes, the time in the car is too precious.

Kim Young-dae: Then you wouldn't want to drive.

Min Hee-jin: I'm not interested in driving. I don't even have a license. I don't want one. I love listening to music in the car, but I prefer being a passenger. How would I

focus on the music while driving? With ADHD, it'd be impossible to manage that and listen to music properly.

Kim Young-dae: Why mention ADHD all of a sudden?

Min Hee-jin: Because I have ADHD. My thoughts jump around, so if someone doesn't know me, they might think I'm crazy. I'm preemptively letting people know. I'm not trying to downplay ADHD; it has its strengths and weaknesses. There's this flaw in me. So, I talk non-stop because my thoughts bounce around everywhere.

Kim Young-dae: Right, you're constantly branching out in thought, infinitely expanding...

Min Hee-jin: And then I come back around (laughs).

Kim Young-dae: Like a filibuster. You keep extending the conversation.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, I've been like this since I was young. So, it's a warning and heads-up: don't misunderstand me, I'm just this way by nature.

4. Dismissed Injunction, Documentary, HYBE Rumors, Surveillance, Threats

Kim Young-dae: Right. I can't remember what I was going to say. But there's one thing I wanted to bring up. Today, I've come up with my concept for the day. Someone mentioned this and said, "Today is like Min Hee-jin's fourth album." At first, I didn't understand what they meant by that—

Min Hee-jin: Yeah, I accidentally realized this when I was picking out my clothes today. My LA cap has become so popular, right? Someone from a U.S. brand in LA actually sent me this cap, but it's sort of a knock-off.

Kim Young-dae: Oh, wow. Really?

Min Hee-jin: Yes, they sent it to me, and I happened to put it on with this jacket. I wore yellow at the second press conference, so it felt like a blend between the first and second press conferences. And today, there was the injunction dismissal. But even though it was rejected, it was a difficult process whether we won or lost.

Kim Young-dae: I heard it was “dismissed.” I looked it up, and—by the way, I think I should mention that the concept for today’s interview with Min Hee-jin is to be a chance to express things you’ve maybe been holding back. Recently, you’ve been associated with this image of calling things out.

Min Hee-jin: Really?

Kim Young-dae: There’s a bit of that image.

Min Hee-jin: Isn’t that just your personal impression?

Kim Young-dae: (laughs) Sorry, anyway...

Min Hee-jin: I already addressed everything I needed to in the first round.

Kim Young-dae: But as the conversation goes on, it may return there again, right?

Min Hee-jin: Even if none of this was happening, I’d probably still be the kind of person who speaks out. (Kim laughs) That’s just who I am—filled with grudges and unresolved things.

Kim Young-dae: That’s kind of how I see it.

Min Hee-jin: Think back to when we met two years ago. Remember, I vented a lot about various things—

Kim Young-dae: Actually, I didn’t even bring any of it up, but...

Min Hee-jin: I was just going on by myself.

Kim Young-dae: Yeah, I think I just sat there and listened. The funny part was that after talking it out, we never actually did an interview.

Min Hee-jin: Right. I just let it all out that day.

Kim Young-dae: (laughs) Anyway, I guess my “concept” today, or what I wanted to see, was Min Hee-jin as a conversationalist. I don’t think I’ve seen you in that light before. I’ve seen you on stage, speaking passionately, clarifying your stance, or expressing frustration, but I haven’t seen you in a casual, everyday kind of conversation.

Min Hee-jin: Hmm.

Kim Young-dae: I think the audience hasn’t seen that either, right?

Min Hee-jin: But I'm the same in conversation as I am in other settings.

Kim Young-dae: So I wanted to set a warmer tone today. The weather's really nice, and I've been stuck at home lately.

Kim Young-dae: I tried to create a warm atmosphere, but... (He laughs as Min starts to say something unrelated.) All right, but I'll say this since it's important. I looked up the legal term "dismissed," and from what I understand, it means the shareholders cannot force the directors to make a decision. So it's like the case was just...dropped?

Min Hee-jin: It's almost like wordplay. The thing with law is...well, unless you've gone through it yourself, it feels like wordplay sometimes. Anyway, I won the first injunction and was notified to uphold the shareholder agreement. But then there's this dilemma: is HYBE and ADOR one entity or not? They interpret it as convenient—sometimes they're one, sometimes they're not.

That's part of the reason for the legal battle. Some wonder why I'm even doing this when it's so exhausting, but it's to reveal my innocence and sincerity. I wanted to pursue it as far as possible. What? I never planned on leaving, contrary to what they claim.

Kim Young-dae: So, you're standing by your original claims?

Min Hee-jin: Yes. And I was curious to see if it would go anywhere. (laughs) It went just as expected.

Kim Young-dae: Well, not quite as expected.

Min Hee-jin: No, I didn't really expect to win. My lawyers saw only a 10-20% chance of winning since there's no precedent for this kind of lawsuit. Still, I thought this could be a way to give HYBE one more chance. It's hard to just "let it go." And it also lets me prove my innocence. Who goes through all this expense and hassle just for the sake of it? You'd have to be a little crazy, like me, to pursue this. I don't think many people would go this far.

We've been framed, forced to prove our innocence in ridiculous ways. From the start, it's all been based on lies. At my first press conference, I even said, "Everyone, this whole story is a lie. It's unbelievable." Initially, I held back laughter—not because it was funny, but because it was so absurd.

Kim Young-dae: Just the fact that things have come to this point?

Min Hee-jin: Yes. And I'm just baffled, not even sure where to start explaining this situation. Up until recently, people thought we were really well-treated by HYBE

(laughs). But for three days straight, we were witch-hunted based on a string of lies, framed by that narrative. If you look back at what I first said, I mentioned how my life, whether it was creating a concept, working on an album... I've always tried to challenge myself to create new frames and perspectives. But now, in my personal life, I have to flip this frame too—it's ridiculous (laughs).

Part of me wonders if it's because I'm a bit unconventional. Did I unknowingly train myself for this? I've been flipping frames for 20 years, so maybe that's why I can respond to this? My life has been about thinking on my feet. I might not be one to meticulously organize everything, but I sort things out quickly, step-by-step. It's that "P" style of organizing, different from the "J" style. So now I wonder, how can I break free from this frame? It's exhausting.

And if the other side were lying just a little, that'd be one thing. But they fabricate situations from nothing. Most people think, "Well, there must be some truth to it," because they can't imagine someone would just make things up entirely. But no—there are situations that start from zero, everyone. (laughs) These things happen.

That's why I keep saying I should make a documentary. Many people have approached me to make one, but this would require a massive project. This story wouldn't fit in a single episode; it would need to be serialized, maybe even dramatized. And while I don't care about fame or making money off it—this is just exhausting—it should be documented.

Kim Young-dae: Something for the record?

Min Hee-jin: Yes. This is a major event worth documenting. Maybe it's because I'm a producer, but I believe in recording things of value. Documentaries, though... how truthful are they, really? I'm skeptical. When people are in front of the camera, how truthful can they really be? Some, like me, would be completely open, while others would get self-conscious and portray a certain image.

Kim Young-dae: Documentaries usually follow some plotline.

Min Hee-jin: I dislike structured documentaries. I don't want it to be staged. But obviously, I can't record every moment like a CCTV. How can we capture the truth as much as possible while keeping it engaging? Because if it's boring, no one will watch it.

So, I need to find a smart producer, one who understands K-pop, is dedicated to the project, and isn't in it just for the money.

Kim Young-dae: Someone who truly resonates with the purpose and significance of it.

Min Hee-jin: Right. But empathy alone isn't enough; they need knowledge, and wisdom too. It's a complex task.

Kim Young-dae: That sounds difficult (laughs).

Min Hee-jin: Yeah, I have lots of ideas and proposals, but now isn't the time. I'm not exactly free at the moment. The reason I'm even talking about it is to show how unbelievable this whole thing is. Why did this happen to me? Maybe it's because no one else would take on this fight. Since I've just been holed up, working hard with nothing to criticize (laughs), maybe this is what it takes to handle things at this level—because when they can't find faults, they just make things up from zero. They create lies and fabricate stories.

Today, I even heard something absurd. It's supposedly another rumor from HYBE—an insane, baseless personal attack, involving both me and the kids. I often see those things in DMs.

Oh, and I was actually followed recently. How did I find out? I never expected to be followed, but a taxi driver told me.

Kim Young-dae: How did he know?

Min Hee-jin: Well, near the end of the ride, not too far from my destination, he suddenly said, "Miss, I think someone's following you." I asked how he knew, and he explained that a car had been trailing us closely. He even tried turning onto an unusual route to check, and the car followed, even though it wasn't a logical path to take.

He told me the car had been following us since "the young lady's" house—thank you for calling me that (laughs). Anyway, I ended up getting out well before my actual destination. I told the driver, "I'll get out here," and he understood why. He even gave me the car's make and said, "If he follows you out, then it's 100%."

So, I got out, and sure enough, the car stopped, and the guy started eyeing me. I followed him, yelling "Hey, you!" (laughs).

Kim Young-dae: You really just went, "Hey, you?" (laughs)

Min Hee-jin: (Laughs) I started walking fast, but I was in Crocs, so I couldn't run. It felt like a movie scene. He noticed me and hurriedly left, looking like he was talking on the phone.

Kim Young-dae: And he ran away?

Min Hee-jin: Yeah, speed-walking away. I managed to get a photo of his car and his license plate, so I reported it to the police. They identified him.

Kim Young-dae: They caught him?

Min Hee-jin: Yeah, they found out who he was. And I've also received death threats, though it all feels a bit ridiculous. I laughed at first. But yeah, it's all absurd, and I've been through a lot of strange and unsettling things. Still, I feel like I'm not destined to die just yet (laughs).

5. There's Always Warmth, Even in Thrillers.

Kim Young-dae: But here, there's both a sense of wanting to resolve whatever injustices may have happened and a desire to just get out of this situation as soon as possible.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, that's there.

Kim Young-dae: And also, a desire to simply go back to doing what I originally enjoyed.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, I want that.

Kim Young-dae: Right now, it's like this balance is—

Min Hee-jin: No, it's completely broken.

Kim Young-dae: It's totally broken, isn't it?

Min Hee-jin: It's a total collapse, a state of "let whatever happens, happen." For now, I'll just go as far as I can with this.

Kim Young-dae: That's really sad, I think.

Min Hee-jin: It is sad. One big reason I thought I had to document this is the way some people all seem to join forces to drive someone to ruin while claiming they're fighting for justice. They write articles that practically aim to ruin me while saying they're reporting in the name of fairness. This double-faced approach—spreading complete lies from scratch and claiming it's the right thing to do—is, well, honestly, vicious. Watching mass media carry on like this is what sometimes makes me lash

out at reporters. I don't understand the inner workings of the media world, and frankly, I don't know the unspoken rules about how one should deal with them.

Kim Young-dae: You're not familiar with it, and you don't seem to care, either.

Min Hee-jin: I don't care (laughs).

Kim Young-dae: You really don't seem to care about it.

Min Hee-jin: Even if they explain, I don't do things their way. I'm the type to do things my own way. But then, sometimes, reporters who tell me they want to help me end up stabbing me in the back. Like, why would they write that article after saying they wanted to help me? They give some excuse or another, and some of them exploit relationships and turn things into bait. So for me—

Kim Young-dae: Through this experience—

Min Hee-jin: I learned about the world.

Kim Young-dae: You learned how things really work, the mechanics of it all—though “system” might not be the right word—but understanding the underlying ways things work.

Min Hee-jin: No, it's just messed up (Kim laughs). The reason I use that word is because there's no other way to explain it. And it's YouTube anyway, so whatever. But anyway—

Kim Young-dae: It's like this warm concept, but it feels like a thriller.

Min Hee-jin: It is a thriller. (laughs) But still, thrillers always have a touch of warmth, right?

Kim Young-dae: Where's the warmth here? (laughs) Come on.

Min Hee-jin: No, there is. I may have gone through crap, but I've also learned that there are people out there who want to help others with no personal gain.

Kim Young-dae: Yes, there are people like that, even if they're not always visible.

Min Hee-jin: Or, and I may reveal this someday, there have been many times I received a kind of profound comfort and support. Some people showed warm support, for example, by listening to my playlist. I enjoy a wide range of global music, and they understood that NewJeans came out of that. They realized I'm someone who loves music and pursues new things and wanted to support me because of it.

Their initial feelings came from listening to my playlist, which was incredibly touching for me.

Kim Young-dae: It's surprising that it was conveyed that way, really.

Min Hee-jin: Right! That someone would say, "That woman..."

Kim Young-dae: Just through the music you chose.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, listening to music from all over the world, they found their own style in it, and by listening to that music, they understood what I'm pursuing.

Kim Young-dae: That's pretty amazing.

Min Hee-jin: That's the power of music, I think. Not just music itself, but the power of having a real taste. And when that taste resonates, it creates a deeper connection.

Kim Young-dae: The precondition is having a genuine taste, though. But in today's world, most people think they have personal taste, but it's often an illusion. Real taste is rare. We're gaslit by media, thinking we chose something when in reality, we just picked up what's playing on the radio.

Min Hee-jin: I get so happy when I find people who see through that! It's not just a "back in my day" thing.

Kim Young-dae: No one said anything, but why the sudden frustration?

Min Hee-jin: Because I always think about the counterargument.

Kim Young-dae: You preemptively imagine a rebuttal and get upset about it.

Min Hee-jin: Exactly. I preemptively get mad.

Kim Young-dae: Ha, you're really a handful.

Min Hee-jin: I cushion everything I say with that in mind. I'm a bit of a crazy person.

Kim Young-dae: So you imagine someone's opposition, get mad at them for it, and then come up with a solution for it, too.

Min Hee-jin: I've been criticized so much, almost witch-hunted to the point where I think, "Geez, when will they start causing a fuss about me again?"

Kim Young-dae: Even when no one's causing a fuss.

Min Hee-jin: That's true.

Kim Young-dae: It's not like there isn't that kind of thing, though.

Min Hee-jin: But is there anyone in the world who's not making a fuss somewhere? Still, it annoys me, even if it's just one person.

Kim Young-dae: Well, what a strange thought (laughs).

Min Hee-jin: So (laughs).

Kim Young-dae: You're so cool, but—

Min Hee-jin: Cool but sensitive.

Kim Young-dae: Ah, so you're cool about it, like not paying attention to comments.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, that's right.

Kim Young-dae: But the parts of the comments that criticize you (Right!) are still super annoying.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, right! Makes me want to hit something and it can bother me all night. So, while I might seem bold, I'm also sensitive, petty, and on the other hand, I have a resilient side too. I tend to have these extremes within me. So, I've tried to balance myself over the years.

Kim Young-dae: How do you find balance?

Min Hee-jin: My body's very misaligned. Some people say that the mind controls the body, but—

Kim Young-dae: I asked how you find balance (laughs).

Min Hee-jin: That's what I'm saying! When I get physical therapy, they say I'm misaligned in a tricky way. Most people lean in one direction, but I'm misaligned like (makes wavy gesture). I feel my misalignment and work to correct it, over and over. From afar it may look balanced, but up close, it's a mess.

Kim Young-dae: Instead of just moving in one direction, you're constantly adjusting along the way?

Min Hee-jin: Yes, exactly. It's exhausting.

Kim Young-dae: Sounds really tiring.

Min Hee-jin: It is. But on the other hand, people say I'm bold in how I handle things. When I see things from a big-picture perspective, I can just kick aside what's unnecessary.

Kim Young-dae: I think instead of bold, you're more... relentless in sticking with your choices.

Min Hee-jin: I wouldn't say relentless. That word doesn't suit me, but I am determined.

Kim Young-dae: Right. So, when you make a choice, you—

Min Hee-jin: I consider it a responsibility. To me, relentlessness means pushing without regard for accountability, but I always consider responsibility. I'm not sure why, but it's innate.

Kim Young-dae: Responsibility for your choices?

Min Hee-jin: Yes... I think a lot about fairness and the greater good. Since we only live once, shouldn't we think about these things? What serves the larger purpose? What path helps everyone?

Kim Young-dae: Do you find meaning in your work?

Min Hee-jin: Yes, I look for it constantly. I also deeply believe in natural laws.

Kim Young-dae: Like the order of things?

Min Hee-jin: Yes, natural order. 사필귀정, or "right will always prevail," is based on this order.

Kim Young-dae: So, "justice always wins"? Or not quite?

Min Hee-jin: It does win eventually, but... we can't know when it'll happen.

Kim Young-dae: That's true.

Min Hee-jin: But people think if it doesn't happen right in front of them, it's lost. Justice sometimes wins in a way that feels almost abstract.

Kim Young-dae: That sounds like a religious belief, like divine providence.

Min Hee-jin: Kind of. But I don't think of it that way. For example... I believe that things happen because they need to. Decisions are made because they're necessary at that moment.

Even today's court decision, at first, I thought the judge could have made an exception, just maybe... but I'm sure it was a tough decision for them. They can't just think about one case in isolation, so it's a serious decision, and they would've considered many things.

I thought, since no cases like mine existed, there might be a slim chance. Maybe a human judge would consider an exception under these circumstances. Of course, I don't fully understand these laws, so maybe I was a little naive. But I did hope.

Kim Young-dae: So you were hoping for an exceptional ruling?

Min Hee-jin: Yes... But even if not, there must be a reason why it happened this way. There must be a reason why I'm going through this.

Kim Young-dae: Even if it's not favorable to you?

Min Hee-jin: Yes, even if it's not about winning or losing right now. I always think, in extreme situations, how to turn things to my advantage. I believe that if I'm not doing anything wrong, there'll be some reaction in my favor eventually. It's a kind of natural law of balance.

Kim Young-dae: That the balance will naturally come back in your favor?

Min Hee-jin: Yes, I believe in that, so I give it time. Normally, I'm quite impatient (Kim laughs), I want things to happen quickly, but going through this drawn-out 5-6 month ordeal... maybe it's a lesson in patience? I've thought about that a lot.

6. I Just Like Things to be Mellow. I Enjoy that Kind of Vibe.

Kim Young-dae: But isn't that a disadvantage in this industry, especially when long-term patience is required?

Min Hee-jin: What's the disadvantage?

Kim Young-dae: Needing to expect things to play out in the long term.

Min Hee-jin: Oh, I don't wait long term. I'm quick to make decisions and move on. So, where did this conversation even start? I just remembered.

Kim Young-dae: I think listeners might not know either. Weren't we talking about playlists and music?

Min Hee-jin: No, it was something before that.

Kim Young-dae: Oh? Back to—

Min Hee-jin: I was talking about why I prefer working from home.

Kim Young-dae: Do we need to go back that far?

Min Hee-jin: Well, yes. Before talking about driving, I wanted to mention how I feel like washing my face is a waste of time.

Kim Young-dae: Washing your face?

Min Hee-jin: Yeah, I'm the type to open my laptop right when I wake up.

Kim Young-dae: (Laughs) Oh, I can see that.

Min Hee-jin: We've even talked early in the morning, right? People often ask me when I sleep.

Kim Young-dae: It does seem like you hardly sleep. Sometimes we talk, and a few hours later it's morning, and you're already awake.

Min Hee-jin: I'm just sensitive to any noise and need to respond right away. You know the type who can't leave unread notifications on their phone? I need to check it, even if I don't respond immediately.

Kim Young-dae: Are you checking notifications now?

Min Hee-jin: Just curious about the viewer count.

Kim Young-dae: Around 10,000 people, I think.

Staff: 12,000.

Kim Young-dae: 12,000?

Min Hee-jin: Is 12,000 a lot?

Kim Young-dae: I've never done anything with that many people watching.

Staff: Considering we don't even have 4,000 subscribers, it's pretty impressive.

Kim Young-dae: I can't even bring myself to look at the comments.

Min Hee-jin: Why? We're not even talking about anything serious.

Kim Young-dae: No, it's not that—

Staff: The only comment is that Young-dae looks a bit drained. (laughs)

Kim Young-dae: No, no, no.

Min Hee-jin: That's just his style. (laughs) He's always been a bit low-energy like this.

Kim Young-dae: Low... energy, yes. So—

Min Hee-jin: But he's sharp with his insights. And about having personal taste—

Kim Young-dae: There aren't many people with genuine taste. Often, people pick from options society has already chosen for them, so they don't really explore what they like.

Min Hee-jin: That's the price of convenience in our times.

Kim Young-dae: Which is why we were talking about nostalgia. Back then, finding music was tough. You had to search and ask around.

Min Hee-jin: And we didn't just stumble upon it—we had to really look and sometimes ask friends, "Does anyone have that song?"

Kim Young-dae: You'd ask around and even make copies to share.

Min Hee-jin: I remember back in high school, before cell phones, my friends and I would plan to meet at the main gate in Hongdae on the first snowfall. Each of us had our own idea of what counted as the first snow, so it was interesting.

Kim Young-dae: Right, some would say the first snow is when it lightly falls, while others wait for a real snowfall.

Min Hee-jin: We didn't set a time because we didn't know when it'd start. It was really romantic back then.

Kim Young-dae: It involved personal interpretation.

Min Hee-jin: Exactly. It made people think more and have richer experiences. Nowadays, you can get anything delivered at the push of a button. Even garbage separation services exist now—I was shocked! (laughs)

Kim Young-dae: Really? So, what I'm thinking as I hear this is that maybe it was worth it for all the effort you put in.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, exactly. I do think this generation is very convenient, but it's also a generation that may lack some critical thinking skills. That said, I don't believe one generation is better than another; each has its own pros and cons.

Kim Young-dae: Absolutely.

Min Hee-jin: Right. Each generation has its strengths and weaknesses, but with this generation, since I've experienced a time without all these conveniences, I just think, "Ah, they're missing out on this kind of fun." When I was young, the way I discovered music was so different. Even when I was in the first year of middle school—this was around two years ago that I shared this memory—I still remember it vividly.

Kim Young-dae: I don't remember that.

Min Hee-jin: (Laughs) Right, we tend to forget as we get older. But back then, I would listen to whatever music was around me, but radio was really my only other source.

Kim Young-dae: Yes, radio was a staple.

Min Hee-jin: And even with radio, I had to find a station that matched my taste.

Kim Young-dae: Your taste in radio depends on what you listen to.

Min Hee-jin: Exactly, and the more you listen, the more you find what you like. I remember loving pop programs in the morning at 10 a.m., then the World Music program, and then a show with movie soundtracks late at night. I'd always have a blank tape ready to record a song I liked, but often, I'd miss the title or artist. Then I'd just remember the melody and search for it later.

When I was young, I was so driven to find the music I liked. To me, music has a way of transforming spaces—it has this intense auditory power, almost like visual power but different. Unlike sight, which we're all very accustomed to, sound has this strange sensitivity. It stirs thoughts and emotions in an instant—something unique that I find particularly compelling about hearing.

Listening to a piece I love feels like I'm in a different space. I loved that feeling as a kid, like how you can be in one place, but the music shifts you somewhere else.

Kim Young-dae: It's been called humanity's first time machine, right? Through music, you can truly be transported to another place or time.

Min Hee-jin: And feeling that at a young age brings this incredible adrenaline rush, this dopamine, this... what do I call it...

Kim Young-dae: Euphoria?

Min Hee-jin: Right, euphoria. It's this intense joy that feels so amazing. Since I'm sensitive to moods, creating an environment I want to be in instantly improves my mood.

Kim Young-dae: So, music's ability to comfort you—it must be important to you, especially since you have such a sensitive disposition.

Min Hee-jin: I actually dislike the word “comfort.” I find it a bit cringeworthy, to be honest. (Laughs)

Kim Young-dae: What word would you use instead, then? Something like “makes me feel at ease”?

Min Hee-jin: No, no. You know my taste in music.

Kim Young-dae: Let me try describing it. I'd say it's like “bedroom pop,” even with faster rhythms.

Min Hee-jin: I like mellow styles—something that's funky and maybe psychedelic but still mellow, a little melancholy. It's not an extreme sadness, though; there's a touch of brightness within it. I prefer a laid-back feel, but not blue and moody; just mellow.

Kim Young-dae: So you'd prefer the sadness of a major key over that of a minor key?

Min Hee-jin: Yes, exactly. I love that fine balance between extremes, where you almost want to laugh and cry at the same time. When I listened to my favorite type of music as a kid, it made me emotional—not from sadness, but from how deeply it moved me.

Kim Young-dae: You felt touched.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, and it felt so good that it brought tears to my eyes. I'd listen to it alone, crying and laughing simultaneously. There were moments when I could pick out every beat and every instrumental layer; I'd listen so intently that the sound changed each time. But even with my love for music, I never felt compelled to make it myself; it felt like too much effort, just like driving.

Kim Young-dae: It seems like a different area entirely.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, completely different.

Kim Young-dae: Many musicians don't experience music as sensitively as you do.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, exactly. The technical and emotional approaches to music are worlds apart.

7. Astrud Gilberto, Francis Lai, Art Books

Min Hee-jin: So, back when I was in my first year of middle school, I was listening to some music that just hit me so deeply—

Kim Young-dae: What was it? The first music that made you aware of your own identity.

Min Hee-jin: It was... Antônio Carlos Jobim. Yeah, "The Girl from Ipanema" and "Desafinado," stuff like that. I can't pronounce it like a Brazilian would, but anyway. Hearing Astrud Gilberto's voice, her style of singing, and her way of speaking English with a Brazilian accent... it just drove me crazy. She was exactly my style. Even now, when I hear her voice, my heart races. Then there was also Francis Lai. My dad was really into film scores, so we had a ton of LPs at home. Today, LPs feel nostalgic, but back then, they were just what people listened to music on.

Kim Young-dae: People bought them to actually listen to music.

Min Hee-jin: Everyone had LPs.

Kim Young-dae: We called them "records."

Min Hee-jin: Right. Not for some aesthetic, but just like people listen to streaming today. LPs were just the standard. And my dad loved his sound system.

Kim Young-dae: His stereo system. (Laughs)

Min Hee-jin: He had some really good audio equipment. And one day, while I was going through his LPs, I got totally captivated by Francis Lai's albums. He's a famous French film composer. Anyway, I ended up listening to a lot of his music. One day, I was visiting my grandmother's house, which was out in the countryside, the kind with cows, a big yard, a separate study room, a traditional Korean hanok house.

Kim Young-dae: Traditional architecture.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, exactly. I still remember it clearly. My youngest aunt, the seventh child out of my mother's big family, was there, and she wasn't much older than me. She was in college at the time, and I was just in elementary school, so I'd go through

the books in her room, reading random stuff like Yi Oesoo's *Stray Dog*. I'd just grab whatever was there, reading it just because it was available.

Kim Young-dae: Yes, exactly. Whatever's there.

Min Hee-jin: It wasn't to act smart or anything; it was just there. And while reading *Stray Dog* and other books by authors like Han Soo-san, I remember that winter break vividly. My aunt was roasting octopus tentacles in the traditional stove, which I'd never had before. I was in fifth grade at the time, and we were hanging out in her room on a snowy day. There was snow everywhere, and as I listened to Francis Lai's music, I could see the snow falling from her room, with the doors to the study open. The whole moment was just magical, and it stuck with me. So when people ask me about musicians that have left a lasting impression, that memory comes back to me.

And then there's Giorgio Moroder—

Kim Young-dae: Giorgio Moroder, who wrote *Hand in Hand*.

Min Hee-jin: (Laughs) Yes, the king of electronic music.

Kim Young-dae: And also *Take My Breath Away*.

Min Hee-jin: The king of disco. Italian disco.

Kim Young-dae: Yes, Italo disco. He also worked with Donna Summer.

Min Hee-jin: I just love Italian music, French music, and Brazilian music.

Kim Young-dae: European-style music was really popular back then, too, even though it's not as popular now.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, exactly. Those genres tend to be really evocative. They're melancholic but also kind of...

Kim Young-dae: They stimulate your emotions directly.

Min Hee-jin: They're intensely evocative. I was really drawn to that. So I still have memories attached to Moroder. And today—

Kim Young-dae: You weren't listening to the most common music back then.

Min Hee-jin: Yeah, but it wasn't to be unique; it's just what I was drawn to. When I talked about this with friends after vacation, no one could relate. (Laughs)

Kim Young-dae: Right, because no one else really listened to that.

Min Hee-jin: It was like, “What is she talking about?” (Laughs)

Kim Young-dae: Not many people would understand those kinds of references.

Min Hee-jin: Exactly. I still remember reading Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and enjoying it so much in elementary school. My dad was also a book lover, so our house was packed with books.

Kim Young-dae: That’s an amazing environment.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, because my parents both worked, my dad made up for it by buying new books for me every day.

Kim Young-dae: Wow!

Min Hee-jin: I remember it so well. Every day, a new book, and not just children’s books—he’d get all sorts of interesting ones. We even had art books that archived the collections of various museums around the world.

Kim Young-dae: I know those.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, big ones. We had a lot of those at home, so I learned about art that way. I was familiar with artists like Delacroix and Fragonard even before I went to the Louvre. When I was young, I’d see paintings like *The Swing* and think, “That’s my style.” And the book felt more impactful to me than seeing the original later on.

Kim Young-dae: Like *Liberty Leading the People*—I saw that at the Louvre too.

Min Hee-jin: It didn’t really resonate. (Laughs)

Kim Young-dae: Yeah, it doesn’t always.

Min Hee-jin: But to this day, if I look at that book in my parents’ house, it still excites me, like it’s the real thing.

Kim Young-dae: That’s so similar to my own experience.

Min Hee-jin: And *The Creation of Adam*—how I first encountered it was when *The Munhwa Ilbo* newspaper was just starting, right? Back then, it had peach-colored paper.

Kim Young-dae: I think it did.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, when it launched, it had peach-colored pages. Anyway, on the front culture page, there was this large story about the restoration of *The Creation of*

Adam from the Sistine Chapel, showing that famous image of the touching fingers. The colors printed beautifully on that peach paper.

Kim Young-dae: It had a certain aesthetic.

Min Hee-jin: It was just so beautiful. That paper was so lovely that I cut it out, and I still have that scrap because it was so beautiful. The restoration felt almost sacred back then—the process of bringing something so old back to life. The article was long, detailing the restoration process.

Kim Young-dae: I found it hard to believe. Like, how can they restore something like that?

Min Hee-jin: And the restored version was stunningly beautiful, so that printed image still feels vivid to me. But when I actually saw it in Italy, I was like, "Huh? Huh?" (laughs)

Kim Young-dae: There's something about that. I think it's because it feels so familiar.

8. Earth, Wind & Fire and Live Albums

Min Hee-jin: Anyway, after talking about Moroder, the next artist I remember being completely stunned by was Earth, Wind & Fire. But at first, I didn't know it was Earth, Wind & Fire. I just heard the song "After the Love Has Gone," you know that one? I didn't even know the title at first. But when I heard that song in middle school, it moved me to tears.

Kim Young-dae: Of course, it's an absolute classic.

Min Hee-jin: The melody was just so powerful; now that I think about it, it was one of those unforgettable hooks. The melody stuck with me, but I didn't know the title or the artist. So I went to our local record shop and sang it to the guy working there.

Kim Young-dae: You sang the chorus?

Min Hee-jin: Yes, hahahaha! (laughter)

Kim Young-dae: You sang like this? (hums)

Min Hee-jin: Yeah, and at that age, I didn't really know the lyrics, right? English wasn't that mandatory for us back then, so even if I knew some words, it's not like my pronunciation was good. I didn't even know what the words meant.

Kim Young-dae: Right, and sometimes you'd just write it out in Korean sounds.

Min Hee-jin: I had to explain it to him, swallowing my embarrassment. (laughter) But I don't know if you remember, back in those days, record shop owners were usually hardcore listeners. (Right) It might have been a small shop, but even as a kid, I could tell the quality of those record shops. (Oh, definitely) You could see the shop owner's digging skills and—

Kim Young-dae: Their recommendations.

Min Hee-jin: Their taste. Each record shop had its own flavor.

Kim Young-dae: Exactly, exactly.

Min Hee-jin: There was a record shop I trusted near my house. So, I went there, swallowed my pride, and sang the hook in front of the owner. And he miraculously found it for me. But the first album he gave me for Earth, Wind & Fire was, of all things, not a studio album, but a live album.

Kim Young-dae: A live album?

Min Hee-jin: It was "Live in Velfarre," I think, recorded in a Japanese live club. I didn't know it was a Japanese live club at the time, but it's a famous live album. (Yes, that's right) There are many live albums, but this one was recorded at a club in a hotel called Velfarre. The owner must have liked it a lot to recommend it to me at the time. I don't usually like live albums.

Kim Young-dae: Right. You generally like studio versions, the originals.

Min Hee-jin: Exactly, and I usually like things clean and tidy (laughter), and I hated it when artists strayed too much from the original.

Kim Young-dae: Yeah, you also don't like it when they change things in a live version.

Min Hee-jin: Right, why do they have to—sorry for the expression—overdo it? (laughter) I just want to hear it as it is; why sing it differently? I'd get so annoyed at concerts because of that. (laughter) But with Earth, Wind & Fire, the first album I ever heard from them was that live album. And it was such an insane experience; after listening to that live album, I found the studio album too bland to enjoy.

Kim Young-dae: It can work the other way around. (Yes) If you listen to Phil Collins' live album first, then the studio album feels lacking.

Min Hee-jin: Exactly!

Kim Young-dae: Like "Serious Hits... Live!"

Min Hee-jin: And that really famous rock band... the one... what's his name again? Ugh, it's so famous. I can't remember. The Eagles, the band that sang "Hotel California." You have to listen to The Eagles live!

Kim Young-dae: Exactly, exactly, exactly.

Min Hee-jin: Otherwise, it just feels too plain, you know?

Kim Young-dae: If you listen to the original "Hotel California," it's...

Min Hee-jin: Right, you have to hear the crowd reaction when the guitar riff comes in—the "Whoa!" You get chills hearing that energy. So that's how I got really hooked on Earth, Wind & Fire. Initially, it was "After the Love Has Gone," but through that live album, I started loving other songs like "Reasons"—

Kim Young-dae: "Reasons" is amazing.

Min Hee-jin: Yes. And other songs with insane ad-libs drew me in too.

Kim Young-dae: Like "That's the Way of the World."

Min Hee-jin: No, for me, it was a different song, one that goes "wait..." I've recommended it before, but I can't remember the name these days. Anyway, those kinds of songs. When they're performed live, the energy just explodes, and everyone has their own moment that resonates with them, right? Those moments when a certain song hits so hard are just incredible. So that's how it was for me at that time. I ended up buying the cassette because, you know, middle and elementary school students don't have much money.

My childhood dream was to buy Jobim on CD instead of listening to it on cassette. In middle and elementary school, I promised myself that once I had money, I'd buy it on CD. So, I finally bought Jobim's CD in high school or college. And the first one I got wasn't the famous "Getz/Gilberto"—

Kim Young-dae: Was it "Wave"?

Min Hee-jin: No, it wasn't even "Wave." It was a completely instrumental album. The funny thing is, I went to a big record shop, the biggest one near Sookdae, specifically

to get a Jobim album. But they didn't have "Getz/Gilberto." The only album they had was an instrumental one.

Kim Young-dae: You could've just gone to another store.

Min Hee-jin: I could have, but I didn't want to spend the extra fare. (laughter) And I didn't want to leave empty-handed after coming all that way. Plus, there was the excitement of it being my first time there, and I felt like I had to buy something. So I thought, "It's fate," and bought the instrumental one. And I got totally hooked on that too. These are the connections and moments that have stayed with me.

Kim Young-dae: Exactly, the sense of discovery.

Min Hee-jin: These moments become cherished memories, and each song gains its own story, becoming precious to me. Just hearing the music brings back that time and even the scent of that moment, you know? (Right) I guess that's how I've always lived.

9. NewJeans Traditional Play, Bunny's Day, and Team NewJeans' Affection

Min Hee-jin: Actually, when creating NewJeans, I wanted people to experience what I felt as a child. In today's world, music often feels overly polished, and I wanted to present something that stands apart. Also, I have a strong sense of pride in my own taste—thinking, "Why don't people listen to this? They'd love it if they did!" That's why I wanted NewJeans to be a group that makes raw, fresh music.

There's a kind of charm that really excites people when pretty girls sing these mellow songs in such a natural, unfiltered way—it drives people crazy. I get it. For example, there's an intense appeal in Mitsuru Adachi's manga, where you feel a crazy attraction to that wholesome energy. There's a deeper impression that comes from unexpected combinations.

I felt there was a lack of such mismatched pairings in popular culture. And from my perspective, drawing in people like me to idol music greatly expands the audience. People who never really cared about idols know me a bit because of K-pop. And while typical K-pop fans will check it out because it's something Min Hee-jin created, if I also capture the hipster types, the audience broadens. That's how I think the

market grows—arithmetically and emotionally, widening that appeal lets you bridge generations and genders.

If you can do that, bring people together across gender, age, and genre—then they're all on our side. And that's why I believe a girl group has a stronger position, and I want to show that a girl group can be incredibly profitable.

Kim Young-dae: So your artistic judgment, understanding of the public, and business strategy all go hand in hand?

Min Hee-jin: Yes, exactly. I love pushing my potential within a set time and budget; I get a thrill out of it. The lower the budget, the more exhilarated I feel. (Laughs)

Kim Young-dae: (laughs) Surprisingly practical in your decisions, then?

Min Hee-jin: Yeah, I'm very clear-cut. I dislike dragging things out and prefer clear, quick decisions in work matters since life is exhausting enough. I try not to complicate things for others as I'm already a complex person.

(1:20:01 It got cut off;; Heejin took off her jacket;;)

Kim Young-dae: Hearing NewJeans' music, I can sense that confidence in your choices and direction.

Min Hee-jin: I have this confidence like, "If I love it, others will too." Not because I'm special, but because I've had a unique ear and eye since I was young. When people don't like something, I think, "You don't like it because you don't know it yet. If you listen, you'll love it."

I know people often see me as being niche, but I see myself as very mainstream. It's just that the public hasn't discovered it yet—like Jang Won-ik introducing cotton in Korea. If people try it, they'll see how good it is.

Kim Young-dae: David Foster, who produced "After the Love Has Gone," once said that if he loves something, he thinks it will become popular. You have a similar approach.

Min Hee-jin: I absolutely love listening to music together, like at a listening party, you know? (Kim Young-dae laughs) But actually, for NewJeans' first showcase, what I originally wanted was a bit outlandish. Some of our staff at ADOR know this, but the original plan was somewhat ridiculous. I wanted to rent a space in Seongsu-dong, a small but big venue, like at Daelim Warehouse. We'd have 250 and Frank DJing in front.

Kim Young-dae: Oh, that would have been fun.

Min Hee-jin: We would set it up in advance and keep it very raw. They would just be, well, I call them "they" because they are people I know well, and they're younger than me. (laughs) So, they would be performing while the audience would be seated like they were watching a wrestling match. They'd be sprawled out like they were at an NBA game. You know how in the NBA, the VIP seats are right at the front?

Kim Young-dae: Yes. You'd see it from the same level right in front.

Min Hee-jin: Exactly! I wanted them to see it from the same level, just sitting on the ground. And—

Kim Young-dae: Like playing in the yard. (laughs)

Min Hee-jin: Yes, like playing in the yard. That's why I thought of wrestling. Not wrestling, but like playing in the yard. (laughs)

Kim Young-dae: It was like a yard play, yeah.

Min Hee-jin: So, just like that, with the kids in the middle.

Kim Young-dae: That would have been amazing, right?

Min Hee-jin: I wanted the performance to feel intimate because I believe the closer you are to NewJeans, the more charm you feel. So I wanted to create that closeness. And when they first walk in, we wanted it to feel like a club atmosphere. For example, we would hand out outfits, like giving each person a Gucci item. So when they came in, they'd just throw on that outfit.

Then everyone would be wearing the same bag, looking like they all had matching outfits. And even if the kids weren't right in the center, if the audience was seated in a trapezoidal shape, the kids would be performing in a way that felt very close. They could talk to the audience and just do whatever in between. I thought it would be great for the newbies, like, "Wouldn't it be fun to perform like this?" But—

Kim Young-dae: It sounds like a whole NewJeans festival.

Min Hee-jin: But then our staff were worried about security and safety issues. They said it wouldn't work since not many could come. And the fans were also very enthusiastic about it. I even suggested having someone like V suddenly appear as a special guest at a club, which I had proposed before. (Oh, really?) Imagine someone you wouldn't expect to see at a club suddenly performing live.

Kim Young-dae: Wow, if he sang "Slow Dancing" there, that would be something.

Min Hee-jin: Wouldn't that be cool? But V seemed really scared, like "Huh~~~"
(laughs)

Kim Young-dae: That's something you wouldn't even think of.

Min Hee-jin: But I think NewJeans would love it. They'd be like, "Wow! Amazing!" Because they're minors, they might have some hesitation, but they would definitely be like, "Oh! That sounds fun!" Back when I was brainstorming ideas in front of them, I kept saying how I wanted to do this and that, and we were all excited about it!

Kim Young-dae: You seem to have a style where you convey the pictures of your imagination in real-time.

Min Hee-jin: Yes. I share a lot of those ideas, and also—

Kim Young-dae: The process of developing them.

Min Hee-jin: Exactly! And NewJeans loves that. They're crazy about it, like kids who are obsessed with old stories. (Kim Young-dae laughs) They really want to do those things. They also want to come up with their own ideas. So we find that there's a fun aspect to this. They're imaginative and have ideas, but since their experiences are still limited, their ability to implement those ideas might be lacking right now.

Kim Young-dae: That's true.

Min Hee-jin: Then I boost it. And if I do something crazy first, the kids feel like they can jump in too. Because, you know, if everyone's naked, no one feels embarrassed. But if I'm the only one undressed, it's like, "Me? Just me? No one else is doing it?" Then no one does it.

Kim Young-dae: Just to clarify, she doesn't mean literally undressing.

Min Hee-jin: Right. But if I take the lead, the kids might think, "Oh? This is okay! If even our CEO does it, it must be okay." In a way, that's a natural learning process.

Kim Young-dae: That's a really interesting example.

Min Hee-jin: And that way, the kids have more fun. And our kids are spontaneous, like me. Sure, some might like routines, but they're young, curious, and full of spirit—artists have to be, right? So when I throw out ideas, they're all like, "Wow!! When can we do it?" They remember everything, like when a dad casually says, "Hey, let's go to Everland on a break," and the kids remember that for months (laughs).

Kim Young-dae: That's such a real approach to things.

Min Hee-jin: They remember everything and then later say, "Hey, you said we'd go to Everland! When are we going?" (laughs) It's like that.

Kim Young-dae: I think what's lacking in K-pop is that while talented kids are scouted and trained, there's no room for them to improvise.

Min Hee-jin: Exactly. But that's because people don't understand the training process; improvisation doesn't grow easily there. That's why I think the environment is crucial. I wanted to be involved in the training process to show them, "Hey, I won't abandon you. I believe in you. If you make a mistake, we can address it, but we won't criticize or belittle you. However, if you make a mistake, you must apologize because it's important to acknowledge errors."

That's why I use the term "discipline." I met them when they were young, so there has to be some nurturing. Training is founded on certain beliefs and values that require deep conviction.

Kim Young-dae: Helping them understand why they're doing what they do is essential.

Min Hee-jin: Absolutely. They need to know; otherwise, they'll feel frustrated. They're too young to do everything alone, and if you work with others, things don't always go your way, which is frustrating. To ease that, we tell them, "Hey, here's why we're doing this. It might not be enjoyable now, but it's necessary." When you explain things like that, it resolves frustrations.

Kim Young-dae: It sounds like parenting.

Min Hee-jin: I don't have kids, but I think about kids, employees, and artists similarly. The concept of "raising" them is a little different, but K-pop fans also tend to have very inconsistent expectations.

Kim Young-dae: For instance?

Min Hee-jin: One moment, they want idols to act like dolls; the next, they don't. Sometimes they want idols to be active and sometimes to be passive. They switch back and forth, like nitpicking in-laws who are never consistent. A bit of consistency would help idols and artists avoid unnecessary wounds. It's like when parents at home tell kids not to do something, then outside they tell them to do it—it can drive them mad.

Kim Young-dae: Consistency is important.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, though you can't be consistent all the time. But at the core, if there's stability, it builds trust. We're a team, a community, where loyalty and teamwork are paramount. For the team to function well, we need to act in ways that foster trust. When there's a conflict, we need ways to resolve it.

People handle anger differently—some get quiet, others need to talk it out. But if two people are upset, how do they make up? That's something they must figure out, and my role is to tell them they need to. But I can't make them do it; they have to find their way. If they don't, unresolved conflicts can fester like a couple on the verge of divorce (laughs).

Kim Young-dae: So you plant the idea that they have to figure it out on their own.

Min Hee-jin: Yes. It's difficult at the time, but if they keep talking and working through things, it builds bonds, even through conflict, creating a solid foundation.

I don't like forced behavior. I may act a bit differently at home than in a formal setting, but generally, I treat people similarly, whether they're my boss, subordinate, artist, or employee. And when we're all together, I might be tougher on higher-ups, not to undermine them but to break the ice for those below.

I treat the kids this way, but I also treat Bunnies (NewJeans fans) and my employees the same. Don't act petty, be honest, and solve problems by talking openly. I hate overly sentimental gestures like 'comfort' or 'healing' talks (laughs).

Kim Young-dae: I even called this a "healing" talk.

Min Hee-jin: And things like "warm-hearted" (laughs).

Kim Young-dae: I said it would be a "warm talk" today.

Min Hee-jin: Even "sincere" feels a bit much for me, but I let that one slide (laughs).

Kim Young-dae: Let's have a sincere conversation today.

Min Hee-jin: I'm naturally a sincere person, but I can't handle overly sentimental stuff; I instinctively hold back. I've always found it hard to say things like "I love you," even to my parents. But the girls say it so openly that it's rubbed off on me. I can say it now without feeling embarrassed. Even Minji, who's similar to me—she's direct and doesn't really go for flowery words—is so warm-hearted. She used to be reserved about saying things like that, but now, with Hanni and Danielle saying it all the time...

Kim Young-dae: They're making you a lot softer, I think.

Min Hee-jin: Yeah, they say things like “I love you” every day, and it starts to feel natural (laughs). It’s like we’re just absorbing it from each other, so the ice-breaking just happens naturally. I remember when Danielle would just call me out of the blue, “CEO, I love you!” and I wanted so much to say it back.

Kim Young-dae: But you’re thinking, “How do I respond?”

Min Hee-jin: Right! I’d be there, wanting to say something warm, but it didn’t come naturally, and I’d hesitate, like, what’s another way to show affection? (laughs) But now, I can just say it without hesitating. It’s amazing to see this change in myself.

Kim Young-dae: It really feels like the kind of love a parent has when raising kids, doesn’t it?

Min Hee-jin: It does, and I can’t help it. NewJeans is a very special team to me. They feel like a team with a purpose. I want to challenge some of the things this industry values. If I succeed, I’ll have a solid business model and a case that proves that what people think is important now might actually be unnecessary. But to make people believe that, I need to succeed first, and then, as a leader, I can show that we don’t need to cling to those things. You have to be at the top to dismantle that notion of “1st place.”

Kim Young-dae: Let’s take a break here.

Min Hee-jin: Mind if I play some music?

Kim Young-dae: Sure, we’ll take a quick break, and when we’re back, we’ll play some music, listen, and dive deeper.

Min Hee-jin: Let’s also check the audience’s reactions.

Kim Young-dae: We’ll be back in a bit. Don’t go anywhere, folks!

End of Part 1 [Intermission] 1:49:28 Start of Part 2

10. Playlist: Jean-Jacques Perrey, Beatmania, Bruno Nicolai

Kim Young-dae: I'm here with Min Hee-jin.

Min Hee-jin: (laughs) I'm detoxing, but other people are...

Kim Young-dae: It feels like other people are getting toxic.

Min Hee-jin: There's a dark shadow under my eyes. Ahahaha (laughs)

Kim Young-dae: Right? I just checked the reactions for a moment, and someone said, "Kim Young-dae is in a rough spot" (Min Hee-jin laughs) "INFP is getting crushed by ENTP."

Min Hee-jin: The reason we met today is just to chat, so if that bothers you, you don't have to listen. This is for those who want to hear private conversations!

Kim Young-dae: Right, a casual atmosphere. Today, that's actually my—

Min Hee-jin: I'm not usually like this; I'm just a casual person everywhere I go. But I hope only those who want to see something more comfortable will watch. Yeah, there won't be any provocative stories or anything like that.

Kim Young-dae: You've used the word "no" the most among the things you've said so far.

Min Hee-jin: It's a habit. It's a habit.

Kim Young-dae: If I say anything, you'll just say no.

Min Hee-jin: No, that's not it! (Kim Young-dae laughs) It's a habit. So it's not that I'm saying no; saying no also has a positive connotation. Right? It's like a verbal filler. Everyone understands.

Kim Young-dae: There's that regional dialect too, where people just say "no" when talking.

Min Hee-jin: Oh, right, right, right.

Kim Young-dae: Anyway, I can empathize. You've even had some of my drinks. But (Min Hee-jin laughs) we just worked hard adjusting the sound speakers. Because I wanted to share some songs. Today, it feels like a café atmosphere.

Min Hee-jin: I actually really enjoy listening to music together. Back in the day, I felt a bit disappointed as a music listener regarding DJing because it felt too focused on performance? When you DJ, you mix music and connect different songs, and there's a whole repertoire involved, right? But I found myself more focused on the performance aspect of the DJs.

When I was younger, I thought it was strange to enjoy DJing as if watching a concert. Music can be enjoyed lying down, sitting, or chatting anywhere, but it felt awkward to watch someone play music facing one direction.

So, in the past, I would mix my favorite songs and wanted to perform, but I didn't have the desire to perform like that, so I just wanted to mix well and play in a small theater or listening room.

Kim Young-dae: It's something you used to do a lot when appreciating music in clubs.

Min Hee-jin: Yeah! Just guerrilla-style playing the music I wanted to share. That would be so nice. And I would talk about how good it is. But now, the music I want to introduce is from a father of electronic music? Someone who captivated me when I was younger, Jean-Jacques Perrey from France.

Kim Young-dae: Yes, that's right.

Min Hee-jin: That Moog. I really like his performances. I don't know why, but I just like it. I love it. But the sounds from the Moog? He's a father of those sounds and is actually a pioneer of electronic music. Even now, he must have been born in the 1920s? Maybe 1926 or something.

Kim Young-dae: Right. It's from the era before EDM was called that, the era of electronica.

Min Hee-jin: Yeah, that's right. He exuded a futuristic vibe during the retro era, and even now, his music feels very sophisticated and good. I really want to listen to a song I like from him with the Bunnies.

Kim Young-dae: Really? Let's listen. Please introduce the title.

Min Hee-jin: Oh, but the title is in French, so just find and listen to it.

Kim Young-dae: Source and...

Min Hee-jin: No (laughs).

Kim Young-dae: Isn't it "Sso-wa?"

Min Hee-jin: No, the title is something like, um, it fits the music perfectly. So give it a listen.

Jean-Jacques Perrey - Indicatif Spatial (Spatial Jingle)

<https://youtu.be/jJNDmRVMiIE?si=-3fsUDyTHOrxqm8j>

Min Hee-jin: You need to listen loudly.

Min Hee-jin: The beginning was said to be a bit quiet, which is a pity, right? Oh, it comes back again. This is the beginning. I should play this, right? (laughs) Actually, I...

Kim Young-dae: Special, special.

Min Hee-jin: Indicatif? Yes. Indicatif Spatial.

Kim Young-dae: Does it mean cosmic or something like that? What does jingle mean?

Min Hee-jin: It means like a symbol? It's like a sign of some space or something; it has that kind of concept.

Kim Young-dae: Spatial? Right? I'm not sure about "indicatif," though.

Min Hee-jin: It sounds similar to "special." It's pronounced like "spatial."

Kim Young-dae: Yes, it's in French.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, yes, yes. Usually, in French, you pronounce it with an "ang" sound instead of "ing." (laughs) Something like "andipi?" (laughs) Anyway, I really like this song, and I felt really excited sharing it with the public and with people who might not be familiar with this kind of music. I felt so good! I thought, when will I ever enjoy such luxury? (laughs)

So, these kinds of events, even if they seem trivial, have their merits. (Kim Young-dae laughs) Otherwise, I wouldn't have been able to put myself out there like this, and

there have been many misunderstandings about me, and there have been people who have slandered me that didn't exist before. They have been there all along.

Kim Young-dae: They have, yes. You were quite famous.

Min Hee-jin: Yes. So, because of that, I could see through things more clearly. My weird personality shines through. I have a unique personality. So I feel much more comfortable dealing with everything honestly. And I'm grateful to be able to share music like this with everyone. I have deep feelings of gratitude about this.

Now, the next song I want to introduce is... hehehe (laughs) I won't play too much, just...

Kim Young-dae: I think it's great!

Min Hee-jin: I don't usually care about genres or styles. I just have a style I'm drawn to, and most Bunnies know I really like bossa nova. But I've loved bossa nova a lot. Back in college, whenever I had a project, I would listen to that kind of music, so our professor would say... (laughs) "Are you obsessed with this music?" (laughs) But I didn't just like bossa nova; it has a unique quality that can embrace all genres.

Kim Young-dae: It feels like a kind of template.

Min Hee-jin: It has that feature. But if it's played cheaply, it becomes really cheap, like a Misari style, but if it's not, it's really... what should I say? It's an extremely sophisticated aesthetic peak.

Kim Young-dae: It was music that pursued a very refined style. The name itself meant "new wave."

Min Hee-jin: Yes. It's music that reaches a completely different end. But it can be music that sounds very monotonous and simple. On the other hand, it can also be very dense and complicated, so I've loved singers who fit that kind of vibe when I was young.

So, when I was in elementary and middle school, I listened to really deep music, and in college, Beatmania? It was really popular at the time, but I was not into games. I had no interest in games. But back then, friends who played it said, "Hey, I think you'd like this music!" and sent me some tracks that I loved, so I still enjoy that music now because of those memories from when I was young. (I'm curious) So give it a listen.

Kim Young-dae: I guess I should listen without knowing the title.

Min Hee-jin: Yes. This title is also in French.

Kim Young-dae: Is it in French? Not Portuguese?

Min Hee-jin: Yes, it's in French.

beatmania YebisuMIX - La Bossanova de Fabienne

<https://youtu.be/vRjKrLijeM?si=mRMKtKHe19IFkLpO>

Min Hee-jin: Do you know this?

Kim Young-dae: I played this game.

Min Hee-jin: I haven't played it.

Kim Young-dae: I remember playing this game. Isn't it by a Japanese artist?

Min Hee-jin: It's probably a Japanese artist. And it's a remix version.

Kim Young-dae: It's a Japanese artist, wow... I haven't heard this song in a long time.

Min Hee-jin: I really haven't heard it in about 20 years.

Kim Young-dae: Wow, this is music I played in a game.

Min Hee-jin: But listening to it, it seems like a mix of French and Portuguese. I think a bit of Portuguese is coming out? Or is it all in French?

Kim Young-dae: I can't hear it well. You know Portuguese too?

Min Hee-jin: No, I don't know it, but I've heard it so much that I just picked it up.
(laughs)

Kim Young-dae: Ah, nice.

Min Hee-jin: It feels really good to hear it after such a long time.

Kim Young-dae: It's been so long.

Min Hee-jin: I suddenly remembered this.

Kim Young-dae: It sounds like New Jeans.

Min Hee-jin: I suddenly thought of it and was like, "I really want to hear that," so I found it somehow.

Kim Young-dae: How did you find it?

Min Hee-jin: I searched for it with Beatmania. Ahaha (laughs).

Kim Young-dae: Beatmania (laughs) soundtrack like that?

Min Hee-jin: I searched for Beatmania and bossa nova and found it. (laughs) So hearing it again after a long time feels really nice.

Kim Young-dae: Oh, so nice. Is there more?

Min Hee-jin: Yes, there is more. I could play endless tracks today, but...

Kim Young-dae: But all of that needs to carry some kind of story.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, I will hold back a bit. (laughs) But one of my favorites is, as I mentioned, Italo disco or Italian OSTs from the 60s and 70s. I basically love the artistic trends of the 60s and 70s. I really like the musical and artistic movements of that time. The year I consider the best, the best year in the world, is 1969.

Kim Young-dae: That was during the summer of love.

Min Hee-jin: Haha (laughs) The year "Getz/Gilberto" was released. And actually, genres like bossa nova and cool jazz, which are somewhat underground or (psychedelic?), were able to rise to the top of the Billboard charts. It was a time when popular culture was very rich.

Kim Young-dae: The last time people believed in a romantic revolution was 1969.

Min Hee-jin: It seems that way.

Kim Young-dae: From the 70s onwards, everything became conservative.

Min Hee-jin: Yes. So in a way, the connection between politics or social phenomena and music is very close, right? I generally really like music that jet set types listen to—lounge music that is a bit lethargic.

Kim Young-dae: Ah, right. Bedroom pop and...

Min Hee-jin: But bedroom pop that comes in as pop now...

Kim Young-dae: Not the defined ones.

Min Hee-jin: Exactly. The genre characteristics of the music I listened to when I was younger are lightly present in bedroom pop now. But I'm not really into light styles like that. (Kim Young-dae laughs) So there's a bit of confusion with that expression, but I really love Italian, moody jazz-based lounge music, so among those, I have a song I want to listen to together.

It's also in my recommended songs, and... someone collected my recommendations and made a playlist on Spotify and YouTube. But they almost perfectly replicated it, right? Just one or two songs are slightly different, but because an easy song is misplaced, I thought, "Can I fix this?" (laughs) But anyway, it's a song that's here too. But what it is...

Bruno Nicolai - Allora il treno

https://youtu.be/TEoKSjNZLd4?si=_3sypoRi44afJqkh

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Bruno Nicolai - Allora il treno

https://youtu.be/TEoKSjNZLd4?si=_3sypoRi44afJqkh

Min Hee-jin: There's a very famous composer named Bruno Nicolai, and it's one of his songs. There's a drama these days, and it's based on the OST.

Min Hee-jin: The feeling is very strange.

Kim Young-dae: I feel like I'm going to soar.

Min Hee-jin: Right? When I play the songs I loved in the office, some of my staff members who are close to me say that when they hear the music played by the director or manager from back then, it feels like they're going to fly into space. (laughs)

Kim Young-dae: Right. The vocals are like that, too, Bruno Nicolai, yes. "Allora il treno?"

Min Hee-jin: Yes, this is...

Kim Young-dae: Early 70s? It's 70s music.

Min Hee-jin: Yes... it's 70s music. But these types of songs are often compiled into something called easy tempo, and there were many famous Italian composers at that time, like Ennio Morricone. I really like the emotional essence from that era.

Kim Young-dae: Ah, I understand now.

Min Hee-jin: Yes. And especially in Italian cinema, it was the golden age, and I also like B movies a bit. I liked occult-themed movies and somewhat melancholic films when I was young, and these songs really raised me. They nurtured me. It's the kind of music that shaped my emotions and my creative desires. It's not about saying I want to create something specific, but it's about expressing the emotions and sensitivities that such music gives me.

Kim Young-dae: That's true; inspiration is like that.

11. Bunnies Camp in Tokyo Dome 2024

Min Hee-jin: This gets reinterpreted and internalized. In fact, this is very important. When I thought about it, I always felt that this time, during our Tokyo Dome performance, each solo stage was truly exceptional. It's about how each person embodies and sings someone else's song in their own style, and how that can evoke different emotions. And how that feels on stage. I get asked about "Blue Coral Reef" so many times. Even now, people are still asking questions about it.

Kim Young-dae: Because it was sensational.

Min Hee-jin: Yes. I actually anticipated that quite a bit. (Kim Young-dae laughs) If you like music a little, you know that song. The inspiration isn't about thinking, "I need to

make it like that,” but more about the unique feeling that Matsuda Seiko had at that time. It was very distinctive. It became trendy, but not everyone sounded like Matsuda Seiko. There’s a unique style she had. The energy she radiated is actually very close to the characterized image of a public singer, referred to as an idol.

If I were to specifically categorize that character, it closely resembles what I think an idol should be. There aren't many stages today that can exude that kind of charm. They are quite simple yet have a certain resonance. There isn't much music or style that can maximize an individual's charm. Not really?

Kim Young-dae: There's actually not much ornamentation; it's quite primal, in a way.

Min Hee-jin: Exactly. Most of today's music is specialized in what is visible, colorful, and very complex.

Kim Young-dae: It's the aesthetics of composition.

Min Hee-jin: Amidst all that complexity, I wanted to explore how the power of a solo can showcase someone's charm without it being a dull form. I wanted that to be a stage, and I believed it had to be the Tokyo Dome.

Kim Young-dae: Why?

Min Hee-jin: Because it's so big. And honestly, it's quite enviable—the sound system in our country's venues is very different from that of the Tokyo Dome.

Kim Young-dae: Oh really?

Min Hee-jin: Yes. There are people who go to see baseball games at the Tokyo Dome just to hear the sound of the bat hitting the ball, because of the way the sound is captured in the dome's design and structure. I was really envious of the visibility at the Tokyo Dome; there were no bad seats. I checked every single view when I performed there. Even at the obstructed view seats. I really thought about it deeply. I didn't want anyone to feel neglected. If we needed to make money, we could have crammed more seats together, but we didn't do that.

We really put a lot of thought into it... with BANA's CEO Kim Ki-hyun, we checked all the obstructed view areas and every view we could see. The biggest thing I focused on during the Tokyo Dome performance was the screen size. We had to go big. (Kim Young-dae laughs) Because that way, people in the back can see clearly. But at that time, we were in a very chaotic period, and we were fighting a lot.

Kim Young-dae: Right, it was during a very busy time.

Min Hee-jin: The Tokyo Dome performance was incredibly complicated and fun but difficult because we had all kinds of staff. We weren't working with our usual performance planning team or the team Hybe used; I had recruited a separate team. On top of that, the art, direction, and lighting were all completely different.

So the art direction and lighting team was from the US, and the team actually filming was from Japan. When I was giving directions, I was translating and interpreting in three languages from the booth. I had to do that because while Kim Ki-hyun and I discussed music and such a lot, he wasn't the kind of person who had a deep understanding of popular music or anything. He was just someone who created a company to do what he wanted. So the parts we wanted overlapped, and since I don't actually make music, I trusted that team a lot.

Individual producers have their strengths, but the role of directing those producers—like mine and Kim Ki-hyun's—is very important. There are directors among music video directors, graphic designers, choreographers, and musicians. Those who operate above technicians, the directors of directors, are actually very important, but people don't recognize that importance.

I've become somewhat known, so people are aware of me. Anyway, I want to express my gratitude to the staff, as it was during that chaotic time that they believed in me and waited for me. They thought, "We can perform when Min is ready." I didn't want anyone to feel abandoned during a moment of chaos, and while we could have packed more seats for profit, we didn't.

I just really wanted to say thank you to those staff members who waited for me. They worked really hard.

And there were also our staff members at ADOR who played a vital role in managing everything. Some of them have even left the company, but nonetheless, it's important to note that a performance is not something done alone; while the director is important, the capabilities of those who support that role are crucial.

But even with all that, it's strange that we couldn't find any time to rehearse at the Tokyo Dome. Every schedule was tightly packed in that stadium. It's not that they're being stingy; it's just unavoidable. So, in the very short rehearsal time we were given, everything had to sync perfectly. Since we couldn't rehearse at the Tokyo Dome on the first day and there was no similar space, we rented a large venue and painted a picture of the Tokyo Dome on the ground to practice. But that space was flat and didn't have any tiers, so the environment was very different.

However, our kids worked really hard and practiced for two days.

Min Hee-jin: NewJeans is truly amazing. They are really born artists. I felt that while performing at the Tokyo Dome, a lot of improvisation was needed. Because the space we practiced in was just a painted floor, we only had two rehearsals in the actual Tokyo Dome. But during that first rehearsal, the kids were fearless. Their improvisation was incredible. It was like, "Wow, these kids are insane." And then, when they got on the stage, they released their own adrenaline.

Kim Young-dae: It's the energy that comes from being on stage.

Min Hee-jin: Our kids were like the leaders of a revival meeting (Kim Young-dae laughs); they looked exhausted but kept getting up, sucking the energy out of the atmosphere. I felt really good seeing that. Anyway, the Tokyo Dome performance had such a good system that it was great from any seat. I wanted our Bunnies kids in our country to showcase that kind of performance as well.

But that's something we can't control, so I'm just saying what comes to mind (laughs). That was the sentiment I had.

During the first real technical rehearsal at the big screen in the performance venue, I was extremely worried initially. The sync was off, and I was pulling my hair out... I was going crazy. Because it was our first technical rehearsal, with staff from all over the world involved. Naturally, things wouldn't sync perfectly, but I was getting anxious.

So that day, we had a multilingual party (Kim Young-dae laughs)—it was a chaotic war. I couldn't sleep because I was so worried. So somehow we got it in sync, but on the second day, it got a little better. There were still mistakes, but I realized how incredible the professionals were. They had only experienced two days with us, yet they communicated a lot. They worked late into the night fixing this and that, but there were no mistakes during the actual performance. Everyone did their jobs perfectly.

They remembered everything and delivered flawlessly.

Especially when Hanni sang "Blue Coral Reef," there had never been a moment when the broadcast was that perfect during rehearsal. When Hanni first appeared, they perfectly zoomed in on her face! Wow. (Applause) That camera work!

Kim Young-dae: Instead, it was completed on site.

Min Hee-jin: Bravo. Absolutely. Those people must have had it in their heads. So even though I made various requests, we were all on the same page deep down. (Laughs) But honestly, I think it's rare to experience a picture you envisioned being perfectly realized, especially when working with capable people; it's a feeling that comes together at certain moments.

Kim Young-dae: The thrill that comes from that is also incredible.

12. Team NewJeans, Crew Bunnies, and the Gradual Growth

Min Hee-jin: It's amazing, really. We just have this mutual understanding. You know, the people I work with a lot—Director Shin Woo-suk, Eunju PD, our stylist Yumi, Director Choi Yu-mi, CEO Kim Ki-hyun from BANA, and our composers and producers like FRNK and 250. There's also our art director, Kim Yemin, who's part of our core creative team. When working with them, there's almost no need to explain everything in detail.

Kim Young-dae: You practically communicate without words.

Min Hee-jin: Exactly. And changes aren't that difficult either. It's just a matter of, "Oh, let's do it like this," and they just know.

Kim Young-dae: Because they already understand what you want.

Min Hee-jin: Right. So, there's no need to repeat things or get into petty criticisms. The atmosphere is more like, "Don't nag; I already get it."

Kim Young-dae: It's like, "Yeah, I know what you're talking about."

Min Hee-jin: (Laughs) Yeah, I really like this approach—it's so comfortable and pleasant. This applies to others I've worked with too, like Director Shin Dong-geul, Director Shin Hee-won, and Director Ja-kyung. It's this intuitive connection, where we're all on the same wavelength, hitting the right notes at the right moments. What makes this possible is the common ground we share in taste and understanding. Of course, there's professionalism on all sides, but there's also a sense of purpose. Each of us brings a different personal reason to it—

Kim Young-dae: There's that sense of a higher purpose again.

Min Hee-jin: Yes. When I created NewJeans, I shared with them why I wanted to create this label and what I aimed to achieve. I even held a presentation with them to explain my vision for NewJeans. We held meetings at my place late into the night, discussing what I wanted to achieve and why I decided to remain in the K-pop scene that I've had such a complex relationship with. People might think I love K-pop, but I've faced so many challenges in this industry that it's not necessarily my personal

favorite style of music. However, I do care about it—because it's been a part of me for so long.

At this point, it's about changing things and creating a different environment in the K-pop scene. We didn't go into it with lofty goals like "let's make a huge mark," but instead thought, "If we do well, the impact will naturally follow." I wanted to work on a project with my team that would not only enhance our individual portfolios but also make a meaningful contribution to a new wave. It's like a "bossa nova" in its own way—a new flow.

Kim Young-dae: A new wave.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, like the Nouvelle Vague. I really like François Truffaut, and "The 400 Blows" is one of my favorite films. It left such an impression on me. Throughout history, you'll find these impactful works that become turning points of their time.

Kim Young-dae: Absolutely.

Min Hee-jin: These impactful works stir up a powerful, constructive force in society. I wanted to create this type of natural new wave. Everyone I've mentioned shares that vision. So, we're just having fun and doing something we enjoy, hoping it will naturally bring about some change. We're not doing anything as grand as "Let's change the world!" We find that notion uncomfortable.

Kim Young-dae: Words like "revolution" or "overthrow."

Min Hee-jin: Exactly, we avoid those kinds of phrases. We're just here to do something fun and meaningful for ourselves. And while we don't outwardly discuss the potential ripple effects, there's an anticipation of what our work might inspire. Oh, I almost forgot to mention Director Young-eum, who's also been instrumental. It's challenging to mention everyone, but...

Kim Young-dae: Take your time to think.

Min Hee-jin: (Laughs) Right, and it might even make some people feel left out. But anyway, the staff who understand this vision all become part of what we're doing. For me, "Bunnies" feels less like a fandom name and more like the name of a crew or group of friends.

I even wrote in the NewJeans project proposal that I dislike the notion of offering "healing" from a place of superiority. Comfort is not something you give from above; it's something people choose to receive naturally. It's a voluntary, organic thing, so we just focus on the joy of entertainment—not in a shallow way but in a manner that's

engaging. That's when people find comfort without us needing to label it as such. It's about doing cool and fun things together, with an emphasis on quality.

Kim Young-dae: But at a high standard of taste?

Min Hee-jin: Right, and I think people naturally gravitate toward that style. Our crew, the Bunnies, includes people who resonate with this taste, though it might sound a bit self-flattering to say so. It's more about finding a group of friends with similar vibes rather than seeing them as fans.

Kim Young-dae: Like-minded people.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, exactly. That's why I found the idea of a "fan" a bit odd. It's strange to think of "selling" to a friend. In business, profit is generated through growth and sustainability, so I thought, "How can we maintain a healthy business relationship with these people?" The answer was to simply offer good things and foster a positive, self-sustaining cycle. It might sound idealistic, but I believe it's achievable. It's tough, though, and the perfectionist in me wants every moment to be meaningful without being stressful.

It's exhausting, especially when people who don't know me equate me to managers they've experienced, assuming I'm distant or uninvolved. But my style is quite different—I guide rather than micromanage. I may step in to preserve a certain level of detail because it's a project I've crafted. By pinpointing subtle aspects, it allows each collaborator to shine in their unique way, rather than everything becoming one-dimensional.

Kim Young-dae: Right.

Min Hee-jin: It's about amplifying their individuality while subtly adjusting things they might have missed. That takes skill and a lot of patience, something I've developed over two decades in K-pop. It's exhausting to work that way, but it's also my mission and goal to create an enjoyable process for everyone involved.

That's why I cherish the staff so much. They're people who work with dedication, even in the smallest details. People like Hannah, who did so much behind the scenes at the Tokyo Dome, deserve acknowledgement. She's a brilliant interpreter and did a lot more than that without needing recognition.

Kim Young-dae: I'm sure she'll be thrilled to hear this.

Min Hee-jin: (Laughs) Right, she's always working diligently behind the scenes. In those delicate roles, the unseen work accumulates and shapes you. It's not about showing off; it's about the personal fulfillment it brings.

Kim Young-dae: And everything at Tokyo Dome went smoothly.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, we managed it without mistakes, despite some intense rehearsals. It made me realize the importance of working with skilled people. Even with minimal communication, they understand what's needed. The members are the same—they excel without much direction.

Kim Young-dae: You described it as witnessing genius in the people you've mentored and seen grow up with you.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, it's not just because they're "my kids." I'm pretty realistic and critical when it comes to evaluating them. I won't tell them they did well if they didn't. So, when I say they did a good job, I genuinely mean it.

Kim Young-dae: So, praise is only given when it's truly deserved.

Min Hee-jin: Absolutely. I don't believe in excessive compliments because they can lead to complacency. I try to keep my evaluations clear and focused, so the members don't become confused or overly reliant on either praise or critique.

Kim Young-dae: Right.

Min Hee-jin: Because fostering unnecessary habits or "ku-se" (habits ingrained through repetitive critique or praise) in the industry can be detrimental. Instead, I believe in allowing room for growth. You want to celebrate each step and understand that each stage of maturity has its charm. Criticizing to push them to perfection deprives everyone of that enjoyment and authenticity. In K-pop, there's often an idealization of perfection fueled by the dedication of fans who invest deeply in their idols. But sometimes, the joy of unexpected growth and self-discovery gets lost in that pursuit.

13. HYBE Internal Report, Industry, Baited Compensation, and Surveillance

Min Hee-jin: So, the reason I actually rejected that widely-discussed document is that I wrote and sent a very harshly critical email about it. After holding it in for a year, I finally couldn't stand it anymore and thought, "What is this? Who is this writing for? Is this supposed to be amusing?" Eventually, I was so stressed by it that I stopped reading it. It was unreadable; I couldn't even figure out its purpose or whom it was for.

The scariest part for me was that as this industry grew, people who didn't understand the field started joining, often in head positions, each one a "specialist" in their own right. And teaching them the industry this way? That's what scared me the most.

Most of them became heads through hierarchical routes, which meant they were already worn down by the time they got there, simply following orders from above. And then, this is what's being taught to them? What will that make of this industry? At first, they may feel uneasy, but over time, they might think, "Is there something wrong with me? Or does everyone in this industry do it this way?" Weird perceptions can start to set in.

I wanted to break that cycle, which is why I sent that critical email. There's definitely someone who thinks, "This isn't right." And it's a bit strange, isn't it? If you're so confident, make it public. Show everyone, then. So, actually, that wasn't even something I revealed—it was something that came out through the National Assembly. Clearly, some people who thought it was unfair reported it. Among those who received it, there were people who thought it was unreasonable.

Kim Young-dae: They might not have acted, but they were there.

Min Hee-jin: They didn't act because most people are too timid to act. Even if they think it's strange, they think, "What will come out of me saying anything?" They just fear becoming a target.

Kim Young-dae: "What will change?"

Min Hee-jin: "What do you know?" So people just stay quiet, even if they dislike it. But leaders are like that, too; that's just how organizations are. But I don't want to justify or rationalize their silence. This situation persists because they kept quiet. If you don't like it, say so; if you find it strange, say it's strange. Why cater to them? Don't just say, "There was nothing I could do because of my livelihood." Am I the only one with responsibilities? I work, too. But that's just a difference in personality.

I was able to do this because I have a unique personality. I'm not uncomfortable speaking up—I'm uncomfortable when I don't. So I thought, "I guess I was meant to speak out," and took it on. Someone needs to say that something is wrong. I don't know what happened after, though, how it changed.

But anyway, this isn't an attack for the sake of attacking someone. This was an issue that needed to be exposed for improvement. This requires serious reflection to understand what the problem is. Otherwise, how can this industry change? Change doesn't happen overnight. It's a daily battle, a daily persistence, where one day you'll

find it has changed. Like water soaking into paper, change happens gradually. You can't just wait for someone else to fix it.

Why do you think I finally snapped? They provoked me, but there was a reason they did so. There were issues that had been piling up. Why did I become an annoyance to them? Because I consistently refused to ignore things and kept doing things they didn't like.

Aside from my shareholder agreement, I was offered additional compensation—things I neither wanted nor asked for, but as they stated, compensations. But I didn't receive any of it. I've only received my salary; I haven't gotten anything beyond that. Yet some keep lying about how much I've supposedly earned. I've just been paid my salary, nothing more.

I never even sold any shares until now. I didn't sell because I believed NewJeans would do well. I kept my shares as a gesture of loyalty, as I thought that was what an executive should do until the group reached a certain level of success. I held onto them, even amid this dispute.

So even though I work with my own beliefs, people talk as if I'm obsessed with money, which is absurd and downright idiotic. To understand my position otherwise, you'd have to be pretty thick-headed. If I have any compensation due, it's tied to my contract's end. Usually, stock options or equity rewards are granted only when the contract term is successfully completed.

Of course, some compensation can happen earlier, but all mine are set to be realized when the contract ends. What does that mean? They gave it as bait for me to keep quiet until the contract period ended. If I stayed quiet until then, I could claim it. But I'm not interested in that bait at all. That's just how I am. Whether they offer bait or not, it doesn't matter—I get paid for doing my job well. And I'm not the type to withhold speaking up just for the reward. It doesn't even cross my mind.

After this incident, I wondered why it even happened in the first place. Why did they try to drive me out with false claims? It made me think, "Maybe they hoped I'd stay quiet until my contract ended, thinking they could benefit from it. But seeing me act out, they might have assumed there's something even bigger at stake." That's my speculation. So they created fictitious scenarios, making up imaginary companies and other nonsense. Are you watching closely because I'm saying something risky? (Laughs)

Kim Young-dae: No, I was just watching your reactions. I just noticed the repeated "haha" reactions and wondered why.

Min Hee-jin: This is my honest opinion. Otherwise, this whole fiction wouldn't make sense. Why would they even have me followed? It's creepy and feels like something out of a movie. What's the purpose of that surveillance? What do they hope to gain? Even if they follow me, there's nothing to gain from it. I'm just holed up at home all the time. I think this fight happened because there was nothing else for them to gain from me. It's as if God chose me, the only one they couldn't fight easily. That's how I view this fight. So please, don't throw false equivalences at me; there's no one who lives as restlessly as I do.

14. Playlist: Francis Lai, "Volare Via"

Kim Young-dae: When we were talking about music earlier, the comments were coming in really slowly, right? (Yeah) I noticed when I glanced at it. Right after the "Pa-ga-sa-ri" bit, (Min Hee-jin laughs), it got too fast to even read the chat.

Min Hee-jin: My neck hurts from only looking in one direction.

Kim Young-dae: Too intense... I think it's because we're only looking this way. Do we have a song ready?

Min Hee-jin: Yes, should I play it?

Kim Young-dae: Play one and do some stretching. I need to talk about NewJeans, but we're almost out of time and I haven't even started talking about NewJeans.

Min Hee-jin: It's already midnight. It's already midnight.

Kim Young-dae: Didn't you keep talking yourself?

Min Hee-jin: I know. That was my way of apologizing. (laughs)

Kim Young-dae: Apologizing... (laughs) I was thinking we could go over NewJeans' songs from a retrospective perspective.

Min Hee-jin: That's such a new way to look at it.

Kim Young-dae: Right, like, from a contemporary—

Min Hee-jin: Let's save that for later. We can't get into that tonight.

Kim Young-dae: True.

Min Hee-jin: Yeah, how could we? (laughs)

Kim Young-dae: But that was what I planned to do?

Min Hee-jin: Let's save it for later. Instead, remember when I was in fifth grade, staying at my grandma's place with snow falling outside? This is a song I heard back then. Should I play it?

Kim Young-dae: Have some water.

Min Hee-jin: I have it right here. I'll start the song.

Francis Lai - Live for Life

https://youtu.be/MwjEV-LtdMM?si=IEM_LN7o88DzF8Sc

Kim Young-dae: People are asking us to go all night, but I'm already tired from just sitting here. (Min Hee-jin laughs)

Min Hee-jin: My neck hurts too. Should we switch seats?

Kim Young-dae: Switch seats? Sure, let's try it. (They switch seats.) First time doing this on air.

Min Hee-jin: Another song suddenly started playing. (restarts song)

Kim Young-dae: Not only is it the first time I've switched seats for a sore neck...

Min Hee-jin: (laughs) No, but it's really serious.

Kim Young-dae: It's also unusual that so much time passed without us talking much.

Min Hee-jin: But this song really suits the snowy atmosphere.

Kim Young-dae: Some people here still aren't sure of what's going on. Some are even suggesting a new host.

Min Hee-jin: (laughs hard)

Kim Young-dae: But this is Kim Young-dae's School of Music! Kim Young-dae's School of Music.

Min Hee-jin: Well, the tired ones probably went to bed already.

Kim Young-dae: True. About 2,000 probably went to bed by now. But people are suggesting I leave and let someone else host. That doesn't make sense! (Min Hee-jin laughs) This is Kim Young-dae's School of Music. We have some dedicated people who could listen forever.

Min Hee-jin: Really? They could listen forever? Wow—

Kim Young-dae: Don't take that too literally; it'll wear you out.

Min Hee-jin: Sounds like something a lover might say. (laughs)

Kim Young-dae: So don't get too inspired by it.

Min Hee-jin: Just hearing that makes me so thankful.

Kim Young-dae: Exactly.

(Staff comment)

Kim Young-dae: A "monster"? (Min Hee-jin laughs) Even after taking supplements, I'm not recovering. Maybe I haven't talked enough to bring my energy back. I need to talk to boost my energy, but I keep just mumbling "uh, uh."

Min Hee-jin: We don't want to come across as too demanding.

Kim Young-dae: Yeah, it feels like we're just in a little room playing songs and chatting.

Min Hee-jin: Right? I love that kind of atmosphere.

Kim Young-dae: I don't even feel like we're on a broadcast right now. (Min Hee-jin laughs)

(Staff comment)

Kim Young-dae: Don't encourage this; how long do you plan on going?

(Staff: I was just saying sorry)

Kim Young-dae: No, no, I'm not sorry.

Min Hee-jin: The people who'd complain probably left already.

Kim Young-dae: That's a very relaxed mindset. It feels like an old DJ's music café.

Min Hee-jin: I absolutely love that vibe.

Kim Young-dae: Right? There's charm in it. It reminds me of those music listening events where people would just sit and listen as someone played their picks. That's such a rare scene now. Who just sits and listens to music like that nowadays?

Min Hee-jin: But it's a heartwarming scene too.

Kim Young-dae: Exactly. That charm has faded away. Some ask if I regret inviting Min Hee-jin... (laughs)

Min Hee-jin: (laughs)

Kim Young-dae: But no, I don't regret it.

Min Hee-jin: If they don't want to listen, they don't have to. There's freedom of choice, freedom to speak. (laughs)

Kim Young-dae: But I don't have that freedom! (laughs)

Min Hee-jin: I don't really meet friends often anymore because my mind is constantly preoccupied. It doesn't feel right. This almost feels like a social gathering, which is rare for me these days.

Kim Young-dae: I get that. A lot of artists are like that.

Min Hee-jin: So suddenly, after isolating myself, it feels like I'm coming out of a cave. (laughs)

Kim Young-dae: When composers hear a song that inspires them, they can apply it directly to their own work. But for you, how do musical or artistic inspirations translate into your work if you don't directly create music or art?

Min Hee-jin: That's... a deep question.

Kim Young-dae: A deep one?

Min Hee-jin: It's hard to explain, but I want to.

Kim Young-dae: Give it a try.

Min Hee-jin: It's actually a big part of my work.

Kim Young-dae: The core of it, really. Should I invite you again?

Min Hee-jin: (laughs) Actually, it's the feeling that drives my work. It's not like I copy a song exactly, but I absorb some impressions or emotions that I want to express. Then, I translate that into something else—visually or through an experience, like a promotion. When I listen to music, experiences come to mind.

Kim Young-dae: Let's put on another song to keep the vibe going.

Min Hee-jin: I have an Ennio Morricone piece I love. I'm leaning towards an instrumental vibe now.

Kim Young-dae: I bet you picked a minor movie OST.

Min Hee-jin: Yeah, that's right.

Kim Young-dae: Sounds like you.

Min Hee-jin: When I find a song I love, I'll listen to it a hundred times. My playlist songs end up engraved in my memory.

Kim Young-dae: The play count must be through the roof.

Min Hee-jin: Yeah, but even just sharing it with others feels special. Sharing your tastes is like sharing a part of yourself. That's how it feels to me.

Kim Young-dae: "Heejin, can't you make Youngdae a regular?" But, guys, this is my channel. (Min Hee-jin laughs) It's my channel. You came today dressed in a very School of Music style.

Min Hee-jin: Really? Like the School of Music?

Kim Young-dae: People are even more mistaken now. You blend into the background better than I do. I just feel like...

Min Hee-jin: Oh, really? I didn't know the chair would be yellow; it turned out to be a yellow chair.

Kim Young-dae: Exactly. I look like someone who just tagged along.

Min Hee-jin: Ah, looking at this playlist, there are so many songs I want to play that I feel like I'll lose my way.

Kim Young-dae: No, no, no (laughs) Don't add more songs.

Min Hee-jin: But honestly... oh, I really want to play this one too. It's not instrumental, but I have an experience very similar to what you mentioned...

Kim Young-dae: I didn't mention anything.

Min Hee-jin: No, earlier (laughs).

Kim Young-dae: No, I haven't said anything about it today. What is it about?

Min Hee-jin: About listening to music and wanting to express it in a certain way. Actually, a while back, I did a photoshoot with Krystal, Taemin, and Kai. The reason I planned that photoshoot was because of this song. I listened to this song and thought, "I want to create something with it; I want to use this song," and that became the photoshoot. It's all connected in a kind of unexpected way. For the viewers, they see the photoshoot and a short video clip with a hint of this music in the background, but the original inspiration was this song. It all started with this song. With that in mind, I'll play it for you. I stumbled upon this song by chance back then.

Volare Via - Umberto Rosario Balsamo

<https://youtu.be/WW2BkylJdis?si=b-tOs7pBpa82O5Or>

Kim Young-dae: "발사모" (reference to a Korean expression). When Heejin doesn't say anything and just stays quiet, it feels like my HP (health points) are getting restored.

Min Hee-jin: (Laughs heartily)

Kim Young-dae: When I'm just listening, it feels like my HP is being drained.

Min Hee-jin: It's like that bittersweet feeling of youth, you know? Like when you're incredibly excited but just can't approach someone.

Kim Young-dae: There's a sense of youthful charm that only comes out when using that kind of language. You know what I mean?

Min Hee-jin: Right, exactly.

Kim Young-dae: It doesn't come across in English.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, each language has its own unique charm.

Kim Young-dae: With a song like that...

Min Hee-jin: I actually looked up the lyrics, and they were so poetic. It has that feeling that makes a person feel a bit lighthearted.

Kim Young-dae: You seem to really enjoy that kind of sentiment.

Min Hee-jin: There's this feeling that makes you blush, right?

Kim Young-dae: It's like you don't really like the heavy, melancholy vibe but rather that tender feeling.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, tender and bittersweet.

Kim Young-dae: "Bittersweet" is one of those words that's hard to translate.

Min Hee-jin: That's right, it is.

Kim Young-dae: It really doesn't translate well.

Min Hee-jin: I love the feeling that exists between emotions that are hard to describe. That's what "bittersweet" is, really.

Kim Young-dae: You're spot on. That phrase, "between emotions," is exactly it.

Min Hee-jin: That intersection, that expression I mentioned earlier, "fluttering" — you know, like when a bride's face is blushing with excitement, shy yet fluttering, tender but not overly emotional. It's that subtle feeling just before a strong emotion fully forms. I really love that feeling.

Kim Young-dae: It's a moving emotion, not a static one.

Min Hee-jin: Exactly, it's a subtle, delicate emotion that still moves.

Kim Young-dae: Yes, exactly.

Min Hee-jin: It's that feeling that only I know, and when someone else understands it too, that's when we fall in love. Instead of just saying, "I really like this," it's more like, "I think I like this..." And when the other person feels the same — "Maybe I like them too..." — that first feeling of mutual recognition. I think that's the most captivating emotion. And this song really captures that feeling.

Kim Young-dae: But the melody is all like (hums).

Min Hee-jin: Yes, yes.

Kim Young-dae: And if the lyrics were like “I’ll comfort you, comfort you,” what would you do? (Min Hee-jin laughs)

Min Hee-jin: No, no, those aren’t the lyrics. It’s about a bird flying — it’s kind of metaphorical.

Kim Young-dae: I was trying to make a joke and failed.

Min Hee-jin: Oh, that’s such a “dad joke”... Anyway, it’s a guy singing, but —

Kim Young-dae: (Laughs) I heard you say “guy,” and somehow I felt self-conscious.

Min Hee-jin: It’s this fluttering emotion conveyed so calmly. It’s an emotion that isn’t limited by age or gender — it’s universal. That subtle, fleeting moment is something that only someone who truly knows it can express and appreciate.

I really enjoy working with expressions like that. To bring it to life, I think of subjects who embody that feeling, showing a subtle exchange of emotions that’s not too intense. I also hope the subjects create good memories from the shoot, that they feel satisfaction with the whole experience. So when a song gets visualized, that’s the approach I take. That’s why I chose this particular song as an example.

Kim Young-dae: I see, I see.

Min Hee-jin: Yes.

15. Intuition and Ideas in Management and Producing

Kim Young-dae: Whenever I listen to NewJeans’ music, it feels intuitive. But the word “intuitive” is often misunderstood these days. For example, sometimes it’s like delivering something childlike and saying, “You get it, right?”

Min Hee-jin: Like, “This is intuitive.”

Kim Young-dae: I don’t think that’s intuition.

Min Hee-jin: Agreed.

Kim Young-dae: I was thinking of how to describe it. It's about capturing subtlety in a way that people can grasp — subtly.

Min Hee-jin: Exactly. There's an idea within intuition. But if we remove that idea and just focus on straightforwardness...

Kim Young-dae: That's exactly what I wanted to say.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, if we only focus on that, then intuition lacks depth. Real intuition includes thoughtfulness and concepts, which helps us catch subtlety. You know how certain people bond over these niche feelings? Like a “hipster mentality,” where they think, “This is something only I understand.”

Kim Young-dae: But often, it's not really unique.

Min Hee-jin: Right, but it feels like only they know. Then, someone brings it into mainstream culture, and they feel a mix of excitement and resentment. For people who don't usually pay attention to popular culture, it must be both exciting and annoying to see something they feel is “theirs” on display. So, people might feel mixed emotions when they see me publicly presenting something they thought only they knew.

Kim Young-dae: And then some people flaunt this and even profit from it, which can be annoying.

Min Hee-jin: Exactly. (laughs)

Kim Young-dae: It can feel irritating.

Min Hee-jin: But I respect those personal feelings. I think they're very unique.

Kim Young-dae: You're handling this well.

Min Hee-jin: I really do have that respect because these feelings are hard to express. People who appreciate those nuances really like NewJeans.

Kim Young-dae: Yes.

Min Hee-jin: There's this mutual understanding of tenderness. They want to protect that feeling. I think it's this unspoken sincerity that makes this team special. This sincerity led to a unique chemistry and created something new, something valuable that makes for precious memories.

For me, the merit of popular culture isn't in promoting an agenda. It's about balancing sensitivity. Sometimes, you let things be; other times, you guide gently.

This harmonious balance elevates the quality of pop culture. But if it turns into propaganda, people often feel resistant.

Kim Young-dae: Art loses value when it becomes a declaration.

Min Hee-jin: It becomes clumsy. The moment you say, “This is what I’m doing,” it devalues. People who understand real worth don’t make such declarations. They think, “Isn’t this just something everyone likes?” That’s why, in the world of hipsters, the ultimate aesthetic can even be something like a tracksuit. It’s more about comfort and the confidence it brings.

Kim Young-dae: Confidence — a language shared by those who get it.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, exactly.

Kim Young-dae: People who don’t understand won’t know why someone dresses like that. I think the difference between intuition and straightforwardness is this: Art is the creator encoding an emotion. The audience has to decode it. Without that encoding-decoding process, it’s not intuitive — it’s shallow.

Min Hee-jin: Exactly.

Kim Young-dae: And that’s what you create.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, that’s why I do this work. Producing and managing go hand in hand. When people without experience don’t understand this, they don’t see the need for balance. I aim to create what I envision fully — but that requires a seamless blend of business and art.

How would Powerpuff Girls meet Takashi Murakami otherwise? Making those connections is my role. When I work on a project, the excitement I feel comes from wanting to connect people and ideas. That’s the essence of business.

Apple succeeded because someone who understood details also had a strong business philosophy. That integration allowed them to control quality, which led to the loyal following. People accept the small inconveniences because they feel it’s worth it — that’s the power of art.

Kim Young-dae: We know they’re taking our money. But we play along willingly.

Min Hee-jin: It’s fulfilling if we’re happy doing it.

Kim Young-dae: There’s pride in it.

Min Hee-jin: Absolutely. I sometimes say my job is to create “beautiful trash.” People don’t need albums to live, just like we don’t need flowers to survive. But having beautiful things in life — that’s enriching. Just like how being around people who make you feel happy enriches your life. That’s pop culture’s role and power.

So that’s why I talk about integrating producing with management. It’s meaningless when people say, “But we’ve always done it this way.” I have records of the promises made when I joined this company. The agreement wasn’t like that.

Kim Young-dae: Can we wrap up with that point?

Min Hee-jin: It’s all connected! (laughs) For people who don’t understand, I find their unknowing criticisms frustrating. And honestly, I get criticized simply for being successful. But if I’m correct, I have to stand by it.

Kim Young-dae: Where did the arginine go? (laughs)

Min Hee-jin: (laughs) So my life isn’t all glamor, either. Celebrities live like celebrities, but for me, it’s all work. I still feel like a helper sometimes. Even though I lead and direct everything, I feel like I’m always cleaning up. So, it’s not like I always feel fulfilled. But life’s hardships lead to rewards; it’s an unchangeable truth.

16. Playlist: Astrud Gilberto, Slow Dancing, Music Video Directors

Kim Young-dae: I think we need the voice of an Italian. To restore HP.

Min Hee-jin: Shall we go? Should I go?

Kim Young-dae: Any other Italian songs?

Min Hee-jin: Oh, there are so many. Honestly, I can keep playing them without end.

Kim Young-dae: It’s not that, but the listeners really enjoy it when that music comes on.

Min Hee-jin: Oh, really? Then...

Kim Young-dae: The most posted topic in our community has been “Min Hee-jin’s Taste,” like Min Hee-jin’s song picks. We might have to do this again.

Min Hee-jin: There's an album by Astrud Gilberto, actually without her voice, with a saxophonist. It's still considered her album. Stanley Turrentine, a famous saxophone player, played with her on it, and it's dramatic and beautiful. I'll play it for you.

Kim Young-dae: Oh, DJ at work! (Laughs) Let's listen.

Vera Cruz - Astrud Gilberto with Stanley Turrentine

<https://youtu.be/NQgVxxCDXjo?si=d8S0YdeQHKJsmsLW>

Min Hee-jin: You can turn it up a little.

Kim Young-dae: Vera Cruz.

Min Hee-jin: Yes. It's very famous, often remade and revived.

Kim Young-dae: With these older songs, even if you don't fully understand the structure, you can feel them with pure emotion.

Min Hee-jin: They have a story!

Kim Young-dae: Right. I think that's important. Like, even without knowing the chords, just playing by scale feels like you understand the song's structure. That feeling is so common with old songs.

Min Hee-jin: Because back then, people listened deeply.

Kim Young-dae: True.

Min Hee-jin: Look, this Astrud Gilberto album has no vocals, right? But the instrumental just flows naturally. You need to appreciate that. That's why, in our "Get Up" album, we included a sort of instrumental interlude. It's to capture the flow, mood, and feel of listening to the entire album.

Kim Young-dae: That atmosphere is essential.

Min Hee-jin: It's about leisure. That relaxed vibe gives listeners a sense of richness, I believe. Even though it's popular idol music, creating an artistic atmosphere is crucial. When you get used to it, it feels natural.

Kim Young-dae: When you produced *Slow Dancing*, one of my favorite songs, it brought such a relaxed romantic feeling.

Min Hee-jin: It's quite laid-back—

Kim Young-dae: There's nothing like it these days. It's really rare now.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, and filling the middle with instrumental interludes like that...

Kim Young-dae: Exactly! It's so beautiful.

Min Hee-jin: That kind of leisure is really rare now. For example, we spent a lot of time deciding whether the interlude should be piano or flute.

Kim Young-dae: It was such a nice choice.

Min Hee-jin: Originally, it was supposed to be piano. But Kim Ki-hyun, who worked with us, searched for talented musicians, and we found a flutist with a unique vibe. At first, I worried it might feel old-fashioned, but the nostalgic mood felt right.

Kim Young-dae: That makes sense.

Min Hee-jin: You know, the flute brings a slightly old-fashioned vibe that feels a bit unfamiliar, but it also brings a nostalgic atmosphere. That's why we ultimately chose the flute, because we wanted to go in a nostalgic direction.

Look, the piano version was actually really good too. It was really nice, but we kept wondering, "Is there something even better?" I didn't ask for another version, but someone else brought it after thinking it through, without making a fuss about it. They just said, "Hey, listen to this. I think it's good. Don't you think so?" And then they waited for my response.

Then, V also heard a different version from the original and chose it after considering it further. That's how it is with projects; each person, whether it's the directors or anyone involved, brings their own ego and skill into their position. And when everything aligns properly, you achieve a high level of completeness.

I really feel this when working with music video directors. Each director has their own distinct characteristics. Hee-won has one style, Dongle another, and Young-eum another. When I give them direction, I tailor it to their unique styles. For example,

Shin Woo-seok is the kind of director you don't interfere with—he's someone you just let work on his own! (laughs)

Dongle is also someone you wouldn't normally meddle with, but she makes an exception for me. Hee-won, on the other hand, is the type who wants feedback and says, "Tell me what you think!" Young-eum is very meticulous and probably the most calculating, yet she's also a romantic. If you set the direction, she meticulously handles everything and is the clearest when it comes to making revisions.

So, because each has a different style, I adapt my directions to each of them. It's not necessarily out of consideration but rather because that's how I enjoy working. It's fun for me, and it elevates the work when they respond to me in their way. That's my role—to draw out their potential.

One thing that's frustrating is when we've carefully crafted something, but it gets compromised in the business process. Business is about timing, aligning with media, and all that—it needs to click into place at the right moments for that feeling of satisfaction to arise. True satisfaction comes when the designer has set everything up just right and it all flows naturally, step by step.

And home runs happen when skilled people meet by chance. I put a lot of importance on serendipity. Just because you want to hit a home run doesn't mean you always will, but when two skilled individuals' paths align unexpectedly, that's when you get that thrilling home run.

When I work, I don't always aim for a home run, but I strive to control things so that, even if we don't achieve that, we still have something valuable. That's the ultimate goal of my work, my ideal. It's why I talk about grand concepts like "management and producing"—because, ideally, the director should be one person.

This is something I can do, but it doesn't mean I impose it on others. For some people, keeping management and producing separate allows them to flourish more because it lets them complement each other. It's just that, for me, my style works best when I handle everything myself. That's why I wanted to create my own label.

It's not about saying that management and production always have to be unified. Why does everyone categorize things as either-or, as if there's only one right approach? This is who I am, and this is what brings out my potential. Respecting that is about respecting the artist. It respects the creator, and that's what contributes to cultural growth and industry development.

This issue has become complex due to conflicting interests, and it's something we have to tackle as the industry becomes more advanced. Because of that complexity, I

have this platform to speak now. Without these issues, no one would be paying attention. Who else would have ten thousand people watching this at this hour? That, in itself, is quite precious.

17. That's Really How I Feel Life Has Been For Me.

Min Hee-jin: Anyway, so I came here without a specific topic and just rambled on for quite a while.

Kim Young-dae: For the record, I did come up with a few topics beforehand.

Min Hee-jin: I think I've been talking for about three and a half hours. It's absurd. Anyway, here we are—

Kim Young-dae: I'm sure someone will check the total time I spoke compared to yours later. (laughs) But I really enjoyed it.

Min Hee-jin: Thank you all for listening so attentively for such a long time.

Kim Young-dae: Honestly, I mostly wanted to listen tonight. That was the plan.

Min Hee-jin: You were also a great listener, which made this really fun for me. I'm really thankful for everyone's interest and attention. The dispute we've been dealing with is almost at its end, and hopefully, we'll reach some resolution, though no one knows exactly what that will look like. At every moment, we're simply doing our best. We're trying to make the best decisions we can. That's really all there is to it. As I mentioned earlier about my approach to work, if we keep making choices with as few regrets as possible, I think it will eventually lead us in a meaningful direction—even if it's not exactly what we wanted.

I think that's what life has taught me. Maybe it's a sense of ease or a virtue that comes with age? A life virtue? A kind of wisdom, I suppose. Even though it's tiring and difficult, I'm trying to enjoy things as much as possible. Though saying "enjoy it" is easier said than done, right?

Kim Young-dae: (laughs) Nowadays, "enjoy it" is used like a punchline.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, it's lost a bit of its value, hasn't it?

Kim Young-dae: Right. I wonder if people really understand the weight of struggle or pain within that phrase, "enjoy it."

Min Hee-jin: Anyway, thank you so much for listening, and it's funny how this all came together from a promise made a few years back (laughs).

Kim Young-dae: Right, I'd almost forgotten about it until now.

Min Hee-jin: It feels meaningful to me that it finally happened.

Kim Young-dae: I hope one day we can sit back like this again and talk with music playing in the background.

Min Hee-jin: I'd really love that too.

Kim Young-dae: Yeah, that's what I'd like.

Min Hee-jin: I'm very thankful to everyone who listened tonight. What day is it today? Is it Thursday?

Kim Young-dae: I don't know; I have a schedule tomorrow.

(Staff: It's Wednesday now.)

Min Hee-jin: Oh, is it Wednesday?

Kim Young-dae: We're officially into Wednesday.

Min Hee-jin: Oh! So it was Tuesday. (laughs with Kim Young-dae) I lost track of the days.

Kim Young-dae: Anyway, thank you so much.

Min Hee-jin: Yes, let's meet again sometime soon.

Kim Young-dae: Will you come if we invite you back? Maybe we can talk more about NewJeans?

Min Hee-jin: If I keep talking so long, you might not invite me again. (laughs)

Kim Young-dae: Not true.

(Staff: Thank you very much.)

Kim Young-dae: Yeah. Hopefully, we'll get to talk again once NewJeans releases their full album or something like that. And to everyone who stayed with us until late, thank you very much. I'll keep bringing good interviews, analyses, and review content to School of Music, so I hope you'll keep supporting the channel and watching it

grow. One day, it'd be wonderful to invite Min Hee-jin back, play music like we did earlier, and just savor that kind of conversation.

Min Hee-jin: Ah... yes, it would be nice to talk casually. Tonight was comfortable, but—

Kim Young-dae: Yes, and I hope for a different kind of comfort next time.

Min Hee-jin: Anyway, thank you very much.

Kim Young-dae: Thank you. Thank you, everyone. That's it for tonight. Thank you so much.

Min Hee-jin: Thank you.

SHIBAL, I HAVE TO WIN THIS.