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*Run-DMC*⁴ Emily Kempf,
*Dehd*⁵ Lindsay Sanwald, *Idgy*
*Dean*⁶ Jay Dee Daugherty,
*Patti Smith Group*⁷ Jenn
Champion, *S/Carissa’s Weird*⁸
Jennifer Cardini⁹ John Grant¹⁰
Katie Lau, *Painted Zeros*¹¹
Mix Master Mike, *Beastie*
*Boys*¹² Natalie Ann Yopez,
*Maluca*¹³ Nile Rodgers, *Chic*¹⁴
Nimai Larson, *Prince Rama*¹⁵
Patty Schemel, *Hole*¹⁶
Peter Hook, *Joy Division/*
New Order/Peter Hook
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*Moby*¹⁸ Richard Lloyd,
*Television*¹⁹ Tyler Pope, *LCD*
*Soundsystem*²⁰ Elia Einhorn,
The Scotland Yard Gospel
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Sober 21

A zine by The Creative Independent
Edited by Elia Einhorn

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Sober 21

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Welcome to Sober 21!

This is a compendium of essays by, and interviews with, sober musicians. It's a free resource for musicians who want to begin the journey, or are new to the path of getting clean and sober from drugs and alcohol. Our goal is to help other alcoholic / drug-addicted musicians see the amazing freedom, and benefit to our art, that we found in sobriety by sharing our own experiences. We also hope to help them understand how widespread sobriety in the music industry really is.

Few professions are as incessantly perilous to the potential alcoholic / drug addict as that of being a musician. You are literally paid to be in rooms with alcohol every night you perform, and are plied with drink tickets and booze in the green room. Alcohol and drug abuse is quite often not only normalized, but expected, encouraged, and even celebrated. A booze company's sponsorship of a tour or campaign can make or break an artist's financial bottom line. Your night on is the audience's night to let loose. Outside of the current pandemic, these are realities we live with every day.

While there are shelves of truly wonderful books dedicated to sobriety, a dearth of material exists that specifically addresses the unique challenges musicians face in getting clean. Sober 21 isn't going to tell you how to sober up — you'll need to find that key foundation elsewhere. (Check out the list of resources we've compiled at the end of this book, and if that isn't enough — remember that bookshelf I just mentioned?) Instead, its intent is to help

you more easily navigate your new reality, and hopefully avoid dozens of potential pitfalls along the way. In this collection, there is wisdom shared that anyone hoping to get — or actively working on getting sober — can certainly incorporate into their recovery. Many other insights that these clean and sober artists share are specific to the quite unnatural lives that musicians lead. Many of us, when getting sober, fear we'll never be able to work in music again. Stage fright; being in bars for work; being away from your sober community while on tour; being infamous for intoxicated excess — these are real situations that our community faces. In this project, sober musicians share our hard-won experiences so that you don't have to feel as alone, desperate, and scared as we did when we first got clean. And we want to share how fucking amazing life can get once active addiction is over!!

Sober 21 brings together a group of musicians that varies in age, gender, race, sexual orientation, musical styles, amount of time sober, and years in the music industry. What they have in common is that they were actively addicted to alcohol and drugs, and that they share here that they are now free from that addiction. The contributors are all — save one, included intentionally — professionally active in music.

We hope that the experiences we share here can aid you as you turn your life into something more amazing than you ever dreamed it could be.

Let's go!
Elia Einhorn

Brief Notes On Sober 21

For the sake of this project, we use the terms ‘clean’ and ‘sober’ interchangeably. We no longer abuse mood and mind-altering substances, whether that comes in the form of liquid, powder, vapor, plant, or pill. (Whatever else there is, we don’t use those, either!)

Most, but not all, Sober 21 contributors have found Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous to be the foundation of achieving and maintaining their sobriety. A few others found different networks of support that, in conjunction with changing their old habits, have kept them sober.

We are not associated with any specific form of recovery, sober organization, or institution. No contributors received money for our work on this project — we happily share our experience here in order to help those still in the heartbreaking battle of active addiction and those in early recovery who are still healing see ways to not have all the difficulties we did. (The Creative Independent’s offered fee was donated to MusiCares to help those seeking recovery.) Those who mention their membership in Alcoholics Anonymous in their pieces here in no way represent AA or speak on its behalf. For official information on that organization, check out www.aa.org

These essays, as-told-tos, and interviews have been condensed and edited for clarity.

You can read this collection straight through, or flip around. However you use it, I sincerely hope you find what you’re looking for.

Please feel free to contact me directly at sober21zine@gmail.com with SOBER 21 in the subject line.

Yours, Elia

Annie Truscott,
Chastity Belt

On April 23rd, 2017, I was at a friend's BBQ when I overheard a very cool-looking person who I recognized from Instagram say, "I'm nine months sober and it's so crazy to think that people I meet now won't know the 'old' me." I was 23 days into my self-prescribed "sober month" when I met this very cool-looking person — who has since changed my life forever — named Lillie West. I didn't catch the rest of the conversation she was having with other friends across the table but the words "nine months sober" echoed in my head throughout the rest of the day. Weren't sober people supposed to be boring? And lame? And not fun or funny or interesting?

Lillie did not seem boring or lame. She's covered in tattoos and has pink hair! Lillie seemed fun, and although I didn't know her yet, I knew from the way the other partygoers were laughing at and captivated by her stories, she must be both hilarious and interesting. I didn't have the courage to open up fully to Lillie that day, but I did manage to squeeze a moment in with her before heading home. Leaving out the dramatic details of my frequent drinking-induced blackouts (she would learn all about those later), I sheepishly told her that I was taking a break from drinking and I'd be curious to hear about her experiences. Too shy to get her number IRL, I DM'd her when I got home.

A week after I met Lillie, my sober month was over. I did it! I made it 30 days sober, and celebrated my personal victory with a beer. It didn't taste good, nor did it make me feel good, but I had a second one anyway. And the next night, I went harder. I ended up blacking out, texting someone I shouldn't have texted in that state, and waking up in my own vomit with my former girlfriend yelling at me from the couch. That morning, I decided to take sobriety seriously. Starting on May 1st, 2017, anyone I met would never get to know the "old" me. Crazy.

The person I became when I drank didn't even come close to matching up with the person I enjoyed being while sober. I had felt a deep disconnect since first starting to drink as a late teen. I remember cleaning up the morning after a party I had thrown in high school, blasting "Never Going Back Again" by Fleetwood Mac, and thinking "Oh boy! I definitely don't want to get that drunk ever again because that was scary. I hope I didn't do anything stupid!" I'm sure most drinkers — alcoholics and non-alcoholics alike — can relate to this sentiment. But when the years passed and nine out of 10 times I drank, I blacked out and then became crippled with anxiety the next morning about what I might have done, I finally, very slowly, started to examine my relationship with alcohol through a more critical lens.

I've kept a journal since 2010, so I know for sure that the first real break I took from drinking was in 2015. Chastity Belt had been nominated for a "Stranger Genius Award" (the local Seattle alternative newspaper hosts an award ceremony every year, giving out a decent amount of money to the winners of each category). I decided to skip out on dinner and instead elected to drink endless glasses of free wine (one of the most excellent perks of being a musician is free booze everywhere you go!), so by the time we were supposed to perform a song live with the Seattle Rock Orchestra in a very fancy theater with my parents and one of my favorite authors in attendance, I could hardly even hold my bass, let alone play it. At one point, our drummer (bless her) told the monitor engineer to turn me off completely. I guess I had the mental faculties to turn my back to the audience so they couldn't witness how badly I was playing.

After the performance was over, I somehow managed to pack up my bass, steal my singer's leftover burrito (she still hasn't forgiven me), and with my sister's help, get an Uber home. The next day I woke up in the foggiest of fogs and went into the living room to find my drummer, who was also my roommate, on our couch with a look of disappointment across her face. It was the first time in all my drinking days that someone had vocally expressed their disapproval of how I behaved while drunk. I spent the afternoon feeling sorry for myself. Eventually, I began to channel the sadness and shame our conversation invoked into determination and healing. Soon after that incident, I took two weeks off work and I went to my parents' house in the woods while they were out of town. There I journaled and ran and drank smoothies and didn't drink any alcohol. I felt restored and new and excited to be reunited with the sober version of myself I liked so much.

But I struggled to remain sober. I don't think my body's physical, mental, and emotional relationship with alcohol would be different had I chosen a different profession, but being a musician means being surrounded—and sometimes literally sponsored—by alcohol. I can't think of any other job where alcohol is not only free, but its consumption is highly encouraged. Saying no to free things is hard! Getting drunk with friends on tour is easy, and also fun! Being a touring musician means accepting a certain level of instability—sleeping somewhere new every night, not

The more I talk about my journey to sobriety, the more creative, smart, hilarious, talented, sober people I seem to meet.

knowing where you are going to eat or get coffee, etc. Adding drunken nights with new pals and hangovers in the van the next day to the mix of unknowns exaggerated my feelings to an extreme degree. Tour always felt like a rollercoaster of the highest highs and the lowest lows. And, at the time, I think I

liked that part of being a “rock and roller.” Though a journal entry from 2015 listed “sober” as something I thought I “should be,” I liked this kind of rock and rolling so much that I spent the next couple of years fully embracing drinking, and all of the highs and lows that came along with it.

Until I met Lillie, I never knew an alternate sober musicians’ universe existed. This is likely partly because I never sought it out, but also probably because of how overwhelmingly pervasive drinking culture is within the music world. A month after I quit drinking, Chastity Belt embarked on a month-long tour. I was so anxious. I cried a lot. I felt so incredibly alone. Although I had only met Lillie that once, she let me text her at any hour of the day about anything. I often take technology for granted but I truly can’t imagine getting through that tour newly sober if I hadn’t been able to text Lillie to complain and for advice and words of encouragement. I texted her so I wouldn’t feel so lonely. My and Lillie’s friendship moved far beyond just being sober together, and last September she asked me to go on a tour with her band Lala Lala. What a blessing it is to tour with another sober musician.

Early in my sobriety, I didn’t think I would ever be so vocal about it. I was nervous that I might be assumed to be boring, or lame, or all the things I used to think sober people were. But the more I started opening up the conversation about drinking, the more people I met who were either sober or curious about it in the same way I was when I met Lillie. I have learned that the more I talk about my journey to sobriety, the more creative, smart, hilarious, talented, sober people I seem to meet. And those people have been encouraged by me to find their own path (shout-out to my best friend and partner).

When I was drinking, I used to strongly identify with my astrological sign. I’m a Gemini so I am sarcastically known as “two-faced.” There was drunk-face Annie, and then there was sober-face Annie. The mistakes that the “old” me made continue to remind me why I’m sober and encourage me to keep on this path which I have worked hard, with help from many friends, to forge. I have never been to AA, but I do take life one day at a time. In my journal from April 2017’s “sober month” I signed off an entry as I will here: Things are okay. Nothing is forever. You always have you forever, though, so like who you are and like who you surround yourself with.

Xoxo, Ann

Brad Truax, *Interpol*

Elia: Brad, when was the moment you knew you needed to get sober?

My clean date is July 4, 2004. I think there were many missed moments in the years before that. A year before I got clean, there was a friend of mine, a using buddy, who OD'ed and died. I remember going to see him on his deathbed, before they were going to pull the plug, and it was just too real. It was like the moment of clarity was just too real. I remember even going into the bathroom in the hospital and getting high, and then running out of there. That could have very well been the moment.

So, I guess technically it'd be the first day that I didn't use, which is when I woke up in a detox, July 4, 2004. I think that was the moment of...what do they call it? The moment of clarity, the moment of grace, the moment of surrender... but I always call it the sort of "black light experience."

I like that term!

Just everything is illuminated — how fucked you are, that dark, dark hellish place.

Oh, yeah, man. I've been there.

Yeah.

I'm trying to mentally frame that date in your music career. Is that around the time when you were TM'ing for Animal Collective?

Animal Collective was the first job I had when I was getting clean and sober. Up to that point, prior to July 4th, I had stopped playing music.

Oh, wow.

I was in a band with this guy Dan here, in Dan Melchior's Broke Revue. I think we were set to even go on tour, opening for The Fall, which is my favorite fucking band of all time.

Oh my god, yeah.

But I just quit. I was too sick. I was just too fucking sick. I remember quitting that band, thinking, "I'm too sick. There's no way I'm going to fucking make it on the road," with my habit.

I mean, particularly at that point, the last year, it was just bouncing back and forth between the misery and maintenance, just using not to get sick. I just gave up on the whole music thing, being in a band and touring and all of that

stuff.

So what was it like then, just starting to get sober and going out with a band like Animal Collective, who at that point did like to party?

I think right before I got sober, Dave [Avey Tare] from that band had given me a CD-R of their new record, which was *Sung Tongs*. I listened to it, and I was really blown away, but I was just too fucked up. But I remember it was one of the first things I consciously listened to somewhere in that first week of coming out of that detox. It was one of these fucking magical, extraterrestrial moments that happen in sobriety, particularly early on, where it was like I was hearing music all over again for the first time.

I love that.

Everything I had loved about listening to music and being transported or teleported into another fucking dimension came back. It was that record that really did it for me at the time, in 2004. It was right before it came out, and then, ironically, the other extraterrestrial thing that happened was that somewhere in my first 90 days sober they asked me if I wanted to come on the road with them and drive and sell merch and help out. I was going to this outpatient thing, which was super brutal. You'd have these group sessions, and the other residents and the counselor are allowed to give you feedback. I brought it up to the group, saying, "Oh, I have an opportunity to work and go on tour, working for this amazing band," who were unknown at the time, relatively. Everyone was like, "You can't do that. You're going to relapse." Then I talked to some people in the coffee club who were like, "You should totally do it. Yeah, you should do it. By the way, you can also go to the coffee club while you're on the road." It hadn't occurred to me that I would be able to stay connected to the fellowship on the road.

A sober support network.

Yeah, and I went, and it was fucking amazing. They were opening for *Black Dice*. It's not like *Animal Collective* loves to party. If anything, they love to play music. I didn't ever feel in danger. Because I felt responsible. Like I said, all these things aligned where I just didn't take for granted that people were inviting me into their life, or to work, or trust me to show up, because that was not happening prior. I guess you'd call it one of those early sort of spiritual awakenings that we have, where it's just like things are fucking aligning and happening in a way that I thought would not be possible. Because definitely in my first few weeks of getting sober, I thought my whole life in music was done. I was so fucked and desperate that I was just like, "There's no way I'll play music or go on tour or record music anymore." I had sort of accepted this sentence of sobriety. It was better than being in jail or an institution and a little bit better

than being dead, I guess. But I just sort of accepted the fact that my time was done.

Thankfully you turned out to be spectacularly wrong about that!

That's the beautiful thing about getting clean, getting sober. All of a sudden, I stopped destroying myself, and then the world opened back up in such a beautiful, inviting way.

I also remember expressing that fear to somebody who was sober, like — “Yeah, I’m never going to be able to play music again. My time is done.” And he looked at me. He’s like, “Man, not only will you play music again, you will do it better.” For whatever reason, it’s just one of those moments where I’m choosing to believe that he believes that, and it was fucking so hopeful, because he was kind of a cool guy. It wasn’t some crotchety old curmudgeon. It was just a dude around my age, who had experienced being sober and playing music and was like, “Yeah, don’t worry about it. You will do it, and you will do it better.” So that was the seed of like, “All right, hopefully.”

And it turned out to be very true. Then about a handful of years into your sobriety, you get the call to join Interpol.

Yeah.

Did the guys in Interpol know that you were sober?

I don’t know if they knew, or to what extent. I wasn’t in their close circle of friends. In fact, I remember getting a call from Daniel [Kessler], and I didn’t call him back because I was busy tour managing Bert Jansch, who was opening for Neil Young. Then he emailed me, and I didn’t email him back. But by the second time he emailed me, it was like, “Why is he trying to get in touch with me?” Then the third time, he called and was like, “Please, can you call me back?” So my immediate thought was like, “Okay, someone in the band probably needs help.” He’s calling me because he found out that I’m fucking sober, and someone needs help. So when I finally got back to him, I wasn’t expecting him to be like, “Hey, can you play bass for the band?”

When there’s a new album or a big LP anniversary, like there has been recently, Interpol are a super hard-touring band... When you’re on the road with them — I’m guessing a couple hundred dates a year during those times — what do you do regularly to protect your sobriety?

It goes back to that thing where something clicked when I got sober and started getting opportunities; that awakening of these unimaginable things, things I never thought were ever going to happen in my life because of the damage I had done to myself. And this is the grace of getting clean and getting

sober, that one thing that I always keep on the forefront of my mind, is I would not be here, doing any of this stuff, if I wasn't sober. So any opportunity I have, particularly in the music and the touring and all of that stuff, is a result because I made the decision to stop using.

Other than that, one of my favorite things about doing what I do is I get to go check out the other recovery communities globally that are strong and happening.

Beautiful.

So if there's an opportunity to do that on a day off, I do that, and I just stay in touch with people in my sober community back home.

I wonder, how did those conversations with Paul [Banks] and Daniel and Sam [Fogarino, all from Interpol] go regarding your sobriety, and maybe things that you needed, like for example, time away on a day off, like you mentioned?

I mean, I don't bring it up. If people ask me about it, I'm more than happy to talk to them. But it's just like, I'm the only one that needs to know this about me, and what I need. So it was never a thing. And also, just in general, getting clean and sober, it's like you do actually now have the choice to remove yourself from an uncomfortable situation. But, once again, just the grace of even that real surrender is I just never felt like what other people did threatened my sobriety, because it's on me. It's not on them, and they're not responsible for keeping me clean.

Something clicked when I got sober and started getting opportunities; that sort of awakening of these unimaginable things, things I never thought were ever going to happen in my life because of the damage I had done to myself.

And this is the grace of getting clean and getting sober, that one thing that I always keep on the forefront of my mind, is I would not be here, doing any of this stuff, if I wasn't sober.

Do you feel safe being around drugs and alcohol?

I honestly don't prefer it, just because I don't do it, but, once again, it goes back to that sort of grace where at a certain point we find ourselves in a position of neutrality where it's like,

“That’s not for me. I can’t touch it. You guys can do it.”

I’ve hung with those dudes and worked with them; Sam loves a smoke, and your Soldiers of Fortune bandmate Matt Sweeney likes to drink. They are, in my experience with them anyway, using things in a normal way, like people in the music industry often do. But that means you’re around that stuff.

Yeah. I mean, look, there’s just no way possible, doing what we do, to not be around it. There’s just really no way. Like I said, it always boils down to that number one thing, man — I’m here because I don’t do that. But the paradox is I have to be around that. So I have to hold myself accountable — I can’t have other people who I’m working with hold me accountable.

And listen, as far as the touring stuff, I mean, I learned early on like, dude, it’s exhausting enough, just the day-to-day normality of it all, to then throw on the sort of self-destructive or the self-medicative portion of it. Yeah, maybe it’ll numb out the fucking day-to-day thing, but it’s just going to keep piling up to feel worse and worse. It’ll just make it that much harder to be out here — it’s not something I want for me. If you can do it, I support you.

Fuck yeah, man.

But yeah, I mean, I think it’s always in the back of my mind that I don’t want people to treat me like I’m a sick person, like they need to walk on eggshells. Because I fucking hate that. It’s like, “I don’t want you to stop being yourself because I don’t partake in this stuff. I don’t want to rob you of anything here.”

I wondered about that, because I know you’ve played in Spiritualized, and that band is notorious as one of the big druggie bands. Were you able to maintain a healthy dynamic there?

Yeah, yeah, yeah. That was another amazing experience, because Spacemen 3, I just remember hearing that album, Playing with Fire, with my best friend in Florida; we were fucking already tripping without psychedelics. But it was definitely like taking drugs to make music to take drugs to. That planted the seed. Then yeah, however many decades later, I find myself clean and sober, playing with fucking Spiritualized, playing Spacemen 3 songs.

I definitely had to be vigilant. But once again, it just never looked attractive to me at that point. It’s just for whatever reason, when I’ve been around people, particularly of our age or older, who are still partaking in the lifestyle, it just never fucking looks attractive. There’s nothing about that that looks good or romantic, even, to me anymore. If anything, all I really see is the negative aspects of that lifestyle, like the real self-destructiveness and insanity and the unmanageability and the fucking people throwing the blame-thrower and being the victim. That whole thing just kind of becomes ultra-clear, to where it’s like, yeah, I don’t want that in my life.

Well, tell me, man, what advice would you give musicians who are either thinking about getting sober or just now getting sober and are afraid that they can't have a career anymore?

I think the thing that was most useful to me that I still stand by to this day is the whole "just give yourself a chance." Give yourself a fucking break. But also, in that same breath, it's like give yourself a chance to be wrong about thinking your career is over, because, like I said, I thought I was going to lead this miserable existence — even though I was completely living in hell and misery — because, I mean, I think that's sort of the breaking point hopefully most of us have who are chronic alcoholics or addicts, that thing of "I can't imagine my life with it or without it." I think that's the part that you really just need

It was one of these magical, extraterrestrial moments that happen in sobriety, particularly early on, where it was like I was hearing music all over again for the first time.

to give yourself a break on and give yourself a chance to live without it and be open.

The way that I look at it today, it's like if I drink or do dope, it's already predetermined what's going to happen, meaning very bad stuff like the "jails, institutions, and death" thing. That's a predetermined thing. Then by not doing it, it's like the world is full of endless fucking choices and possibilities. That's my advice, man, give yourself a chance for those possibilities and choices to happen. And in the meantime, particularly early on, you've just really got to give yourself a break. Get off the fucking hamster wheel of hell.

Cait O'Riordan, *The Pogues*

When I left rehab in 2007, I headed home and started the process of trying to build a social life that didn't revolve around drink.

But home is Dublin, and sometimes if you want to see people, you just have to spend some time in a pub.

Very occasionally, when I'd say "no thanks" to an offered drink, it would end there. Most times though, I'd hear some variation on "You don't drink? At all?"

For a long time after I quit I felt resentful that I was being asked to explain myself, and one time I got really angry when a guy at a party watched me pour a glass of water and yelled at me "Have a proper drink for fuck's sake, what's wrong with you?" That was very early in my recovery, and once the urge to smack him passed, I felt relieved that I wasn't him, that I was sober. But it shook me; my identity had been so entangled with drinking that it felt like a personal attack. I didn't like being challenged when I didn't have a comeback, and eventually I realised the easiest way to deal with this was to choose a honest response and stick with it.

I was advised in rehab to have phrases ready to use when refusing a drink — I'm driving, I'm on antibiotics, etc — but lying doesn't feel good. So now any time a straight "No thanks" isn't enough, I say "No thanks, I can't handle it — once I start I can't stop." I've found that saying this is

But sobriety still feels like a miracle, and I like talking to other people who may be struggling with it.

very effective in several ways — it stops people from trying to insist I take a ‘proper’ drink; it makes me feel good to speak honestly; and it opens the door for anyone who wants to talk about their own problems with drink and drugs.

I don’t know if it’s an Irish Catholic thing, but many people here seem to feel that addiction is a moral failure, that it’s shameful. Maybe being an agnostic musician has saved me from feeling that ‘stigma of addiction’— I have no problem conceptualising addiction as just a medical condition that responds to monitoring and lifestyle changes, same as diabetes and heart disease.

But sobriety still feels like a miracle, and I like talking to other people who may be struggling with it. My advice is always to cut out the drama, get real, and get help.

Darryl "D.M.C" McDaniels, *Run-DMC*

Elia: When did you know you needed to get clean and sober?

I first realized I needed to get clean and sober in 2004. In '93 I started heavily, heavily, heavily drinking. Everybody was telling me "You need help with this thing," but I was a functional drunk. I was never late, I never messed up anything, never had car accidents or nothing like that. But I was drinking 24 hours a day.

So it was 2004 and DJ Hurricane from the Beastie Boys called me to Vegas: "Yo, D. I'm doing a New Year's Eve party. And I want to bring you out to do a couple of songs. Come on out, I'll pay you whatever." So I was like, "Yes, a chance to go drink with purpose." So long story short, I went there and I drunk a fifth of... I think it was Rémy Martin. I drunk a whole fifth. Not a pint, not a quarter, a whole fifth of it. And this is without chaser. I looked at it and I said "If I don't stop drinking, I'm going to die. I have found my way to commit suicide."

That's powerful. And you had the new year to help you reflect; have you noticed how many sober anniversaries are in early January or late December?

Yes!

DMC, what do you feel the perception of alcoholism and addiction is in hip hop today?

The perception of alcoholism and addiction is that there isn't none! First of all, when people could see plain as day that somebody is having abnormal behavior with the drugs, they don't say anything because the whole idea of getting high in the first place has been accepted as a social norm in hip hop. After I got clean and sober, after I went through therapy, I realized the first time that I ever got high was because I thought I was supposed to. It's what the cool people do. It's how you're supposed to be down. It was 1988, and I was so naive. We was on tour: Run-DMC, Public Enemy, Jazzy Jeff and The Fresh Prince, EPMD and Eric B. and Rakim.

Oh man.

We all on tour, we standing on the side of the stage and we all looking at Rakim in awe. And then we just started discussing the most powerful thing about hip hop, and Chuck D said "It's not that we're selling out arenas, it's not that we're getting money, it's not that running them gutters getting speaker deals." He named all the material things about it. He said, "The most powerful thing about this hip hop thing is the power of communication."

And Chuck D who was only around 21 or 22 at the time,

he was the oldest one on the road. LL was 16, 17, I was 19. But Chuck said, "I've never got high a day of my life, goddammit. I'm a man." With that voice! And I remember being dumbfounded. I had weed in my pocket, coke in my pocket. We had the 40 ounces of Olde English on ice. I remember going back to my room and I sat down — this is a true story — I said, "Wow, Chuck D of Public Enemy never got high a day in his life. How can he rhyme so deaf?" The whole perception is that getting high is part of the culture, but it's not.

Mm-hmm. So how do you let people in the industry know that you're sober?

The way I let people in the industry know that I'm sober is I am not ashamed to talk about it. I talk about it with the same attitude and ego that I had when I was bragging about how many joints I could smoke, you know what I'm saying? And you got to say it in a way where they feel, see, and experience the power in what you're saying. I let people know that for years I was clouded. When I first started writing my rhymes, I wasn't getting high. What I mean by that, I didn't have to get high to do a show, or get high to go to the studio, or get high to go out or whatever. And everything that I wrote was the most powerful shit ever. Then I thought I needed the assistance of the Olde English and the weed to cope. Or the Jack Daniel's, the Jim Beam, whatever you had. When I look back, I notice the times that I did get high and write, there was a decline in my skill.

S o one thing that you have to do is not
 be ashamed to talk about it like
 it is the most powerful thing
 that anybody could ever do,

because it is. But then after that, they will see it in your demeanor. They will see it in your work. They will see it in your attitude. I have an attitude that makes anybody that gets high seem inferior. But that's in a good way, I'm not degrading anybody. But I talk about it like, "I was there too and you have no idea," you know what I'm saying?

Snoop smokes a lot of weed, but he don't make records saying "You should do it like me." That's different. I'm talking about the glorification of "I could sniff more coke than you, I drink more than you." Especially in this day and age, popping molly and Percocets, they talk about it like it's cool and acceptable and normal. So with the same attitude that they raise it

up, I use that same attitude to raise up my sobriety and my representation of that.

That's fucking awesome. How do you protect your sobriety when you're on tour or on the road for work?

Well, that's a great question. When I first protected my sobriety, it was because it was an in-my-face life or death matter. Prior to me first getting sober in 1991, I had to stop drinking because I had acute pancreatitis. Now this is funny, if it wasn't for that, there was no way in the world I was going to stop drinking. I woke up one day in '91, I had acute pancreatitis. I went to the emergency room, the doctor looked at me and said, "Admit this young man." I was in the hospital for a month and a half taking everything intravenously. They couldn't give me anything orally. Fortunately, my pancreas survived it; the doctor said "it's a miracle." I was drinking a case of Olde English a day.

Oh shit.

A case.

Dude, that's insane.

I was so alcoholic I put a refrigerator in the back of my monster truck so I didn't have to stop at grocery stores to get out to get them. That's during the day, then at nighttime, I would go out with Jam Master Jay. We'd go to parties, and back then it was Bacardi, rum and Coke, and screwdrivers. So to make a long story short, I got acute pancreatitis. When the doctor was releasing me from the hospital after a month and a half, he looked at me and said, "Son, you have two choices in life. You could drink and die, or not drink and live." So from '91, all the way to probably '98 or '99, I was sober cold turkey for that reason. During the first part, when I would see people, everybody would ask me, "Yo, D, how the hell do you do it?" I said, "Motherfucker, if somebody tells you if you drink then you die, every time you look at a drink you see it as death!"

But what happened was there were deeper emotional, psychological things. When I was 35 years old, I found out that I was adopted. And the only people that I thought could help me was Jack Daniel's and Jim Beam, so I started drinking again.

So it was January of 2003 when I was in Las Vegas and I said "I got to get sober." In April of 2004 I said, "All right, I'm going to commit myself to rehab." It was a month-long rehab, Sierra Tucson in Arizona. I was admitted April 1st, I got out April 30th. It wasn't a place where they just got you not to drink no more. They taught me about myself. They taught me about dopamine, they taught me about the physical, mental, and spiritual parts of addiction, all of that. They put up the ten characteristics of an addictive personality; I looked and said, "Oh shit, I'm all of them." So there was some learning that I got out of there.

A funny thing happened to me when I got out of rehab — I realized something. The thing that I liked about drinking, it made me feel like The Incredible Hulk. You know what I'm saying?

Totally.

The same power, that same energy where I want to drink real bad, I use it to say, "I'm not going to touch that drink." And it's easy for me. I believe everybody could do it, but you have to go through those experiences to see the extreme level of desire to reach for it, open it up, and chug it. I realized with the same desire that I want a drink, I can turn it around and say, "But I'm not."

Mm-hmm.

My higher power will help me. I realized that my higher power ain't out there in the world; if it's my higher power, that means it's mine. So if it's my higher power, that means somebody else don't got it; I don't got to go to nobody to get it. I have it. So I use my higher power. When I first got sober, every hotel room had a minibar; I had to almost step outside of my body and be my own guide, and my own sponsor, and my own willpower. When everybody said, "D, do you want them to come to remove the minibar out the room?" I said, "No." So even if my whole trip for three days was me fighting not to go to the minibar, and have no sleep, I could live with that because I notice now I'm building my own resistance. It's like lifting weights, it's like working out, it's a habit. So my thing was "No, don't remove the minibar because I want to fight for this whole tour with me not taking it." I put the energy of that desire into not doing the very thing that I wanted to do.

I just have one more question for you... What advice would you give to rappers or to musicians in hip hop who are newly sober or thinking about getting sober?

The main advice that I could give to somebody thinking about getting sober is this: you must find people, places, and things that's going to assist you in that struggle. That being said, you're going to have to change your whole existence. That's the hard part. So to make that a little easier, as gangster as y'all hip hop, rap motherfuckers think y'all are, it's not a sign of weakness. You're not a sucker, you're not soft — go get therapy. I went to get sober in rehab to stop drinking; because I took those steps while I was in rehab, I discovered this thing called therapy which gave me my power back. So you're not soft, you're not a sucker, you're not a weakling if you go seek out help, and seek out that help every day, every second, every minute, every hour until you reach that point where you know — or at least think — it's going to be alright.

Darryl, thank you so much.

Thank you, man. What you're doing is more necessary than the psychology book. It's what a lot of us and a lot of people struggling need. So I commend you on this, man.

Emily Kempf, *Dehd*

ELIA: Emily, I feel like there's a generation of people who are getting sober younger, and who don't really start their careers in music until after they get clean. You and I are both in this group. How old were you when you got sober?

I was 20 the first time I attempted any sort of restriction on my drinking and using. And then I was 21 when I actually got sober and have stayed sober since then.

How many years do you have now?

Now, I think 14. I'm 35.

Oh my god, you're an old-timer.

I call it "middle-timer." [laughs]

So, did you ever have a legal drink?

Um, I think I had one sad jello shot when I was 21.

Nice. That's hilarious.

Isn't that so weird? Yeah, 'cause I turned 21 in September and then I got sober in January.

It's so funny, I feel like people like you and I that got sober before drinking age, we sort of have this different relationship with bars.

Yeah.

So many people who are getting sober have a fear of going back to them, but we sort of got lucky in that they were somewhere that we only really occupied once we were already sober.

Sober, yeah.

And for me they were somewhere I would go to work, either as a musician playing or I was also a bouncer and ticket guy at a venue in Chicago. It occupies a different place in my psyche than it does for so many people who have to get over their previous life that was entrenched there in a negative way.

Yeah. I worked in bars and restaurants, but just like a little bit. I wasn't a bar-hopper, or, I don't even know what it's called. I didn't just go to the bar and hang out. 'Cause it was all parents'

basements. But I was like a daily drinker.

Oh, same.

By the time I was 17 I was drunk every day. When I think about it now, I'm like, "Jesus, how did I figure this out for so long?" Like, free drugs, I just slept with drug dealers and I just figured out how to always have a supply even though I was a literal teenager.

I sold it so that I would have enough, that was my strategy.

Yeah, perfect.

That was the only way! When did you decide that you really wanted to pursue music? How old were you?

I think I was 23 or 24. It was a couple years into my sobriety. Music became an option for me. And I just started pursuing it hardcore and I'm still doing it. [laughs]

That's amazing!

Yeah.

Did you have any fears about entering music as a sober person?

Yes. I don't have any experience playing music drunk or high. I see how other people do music at bars and stuff and I don't have any concept of what that's like. I was afraid to go onstage. There were fears around more like, stage fright, being in front of people. I don't know if I connected that with being drunk or sober. Or if it was just a human base fear of being — like when I was really little, I was terrified to be onstage and in front of people. Unless I knew them really well, like my family members. I was really performative at home, but then when I was in Brownies to become a Girl Scout, you had to stand onstage and say the little chant-promise or whatever in front of all the parents and I was, like, "Noooo way. I quit." I just quit Girl Scouts. [laughing] "I'm not doing that."

That was the extent of how afraid I was to be a performer. I do believe I could only do this as a sober person because I learned how to walk through fear sober. That was one of the major tests, how to walk through fear sober, to play music, and sing. I thought everyone was lying to me that I could sing and they were just being polite, and I was like, "But I just have this urge to continue doing this thing even though I'm pretty sure everyone's lying to me." [laughs] And it took me like a year to be like, "No, I think you actually are good at what you're doing and everyone's not lying."

I get it, that is stuff people drink over. I'd be curious to explore the perceived disadvantages and advantages you've experienced in music as a sober person. Can you think of any

specific things on either side of that equation that you experienced because you were sober?

[laughs] This is a funny example, one thing that is an advantage and disadvantage — slightly — is that I am happy and proud to always be the ‘DD,’ but occasionally [laughs] I want a night off. Just because I’m a sober person I always drive usually when it’s dark, and after the show I’m usually the driver on tour and such because my bandmates usually are drinking or whatever. But I always make it known that I love being that person because I would much rather drive us home safe or whatever than not. But occasionally if I’m really tired or if I want to go home early, I have this sense of duty of taking care of other people because I’m awake and everyone else is maybe—depending on who I’m around, really—I’m lucky today to have really respectful bandmates that respect my sobriety and also uplift it. Like if I’m drifting off the path, they will be like ‘you should uh no don’t drink,’ they support me or whatever.

I’m trying to think of other disadvantages. I feel like it’s mostly advantages because I’m at reality 1000% of the time and music is definitely my way of stepping into the void that I used to get into when I was drunk, but I feel like the void is different when I am performing than the void that I would go into when I was a blackout drinker because I’m present while being not present at the same time, whereas blackout drinking I was just not present at all.

You were checked out?

Yeah, checked out. And I would have massive memory loss from large years of my life because I was blackout drunk and when I’m performing it’s a different void to fall into that’s very fulfilling and invigorating, and I’m so glad I’m sober, and get to experience that energy. It’s hard to even talk about, and it’s fun to do that with a crowd; everyone’s in the same vortex and I would much rather be present for that and remember it. [laughs]

Moving back in time a bit: When you did get sober, at 21, did you think that any career in music was off the table because you were getting sober? Did that fear occur to you?

It didn’t occur to me because I didn’t consider myself musical; I didn’t think about it at all. I was just a visual artist only. That was my identity. I didn’t really think about a career because I was so young; stuff like that was just this far away thing. I never even went to college. I was mostly like, “My life is over now, I have to be boring and I have to join this [sober] cult.” [laughs] Whatever, that was my view. It turned out I was wrong. My life is not boring at all, it’s extremely exciting and I have several careers in creative fields, I’ve traveled. I like to compare it to a different form of party energy; you don’t have to be wasted to party.

But when I discovered music, I had this weird moment. It was the first time I ever performed with a band, it was like my friend's jazz-experimental-noise performance rock group. They're a bunch of older men-boys who are really cool and really scary and there was little me and they're like, "You should come perform with us," and I was like [little voice] "Okay," and I was onstage and they just told me to make strange sounds into the mic. They were like, "Just do whatever you want," like, very free, and there was this moment where the clouds parted, the light came down: [booming voice] "You will do this for the rest of your life!" I was like, "This terrifies me more than anything I've ever done and I love it so much and I can't imagine doing this again because it's so scary but I also can't imagine not doing it again." I'm going to do this for the rest of my life, meaning like, music, performance — and music was like this thing that I literally discovered.

I had one musician friend and I was like, "My one music friend, is what I'm doing musical or is this lyrics that I'm writing?" because I had no concept that that was a life for me. So I was like, yeah, the world is my oyster, I'm gonna become famous. I just decided that at 21, and I told one person that was my dream and I don't think I even meant it in the same way that a lot of people do, I was just, like, so sure this is what I'm gonna do and the world is endless for me and I'm gonna play music and travel everywhere. And she was like, "Yeah, you and everyone else." She was making fun of me. And I was like, "Ok, I'm never going to tell anyone my dream again, but I'm going to do it." And then I just quietly settled in. Basically I've been on tour for 12 years and I do make a living doing it.

Amazing, man. I never had alcoholics in my main group, but I definitely had people who loved partying hard. I never had anyone leave the band because of it, but as people left the band organically for other reasons, to start their own group or to go back to school, or move, or whatever, I would often replace them with people from the sober community. Because they were the people I was hanging out with, but also because I found that having other sober people on tour with me was so helpful when I was away from my sober community at home. I wonder if you had any experiences like that at all with your own groups? Do you have any sober members, or is it more what we could refer to as allies?

Yeah, definitely more allies. I mean, me and Lillie [West of Lala Lala] were in a band for a couple years, off and on.. I experienced Lillie on both sides of the [sobriety] road and our friendship stands.

Oh, so you knew her before she was sober?

Yeah. So, I had a couple tours where it was me and Lillie, and

a couple other people partying, but not me. And then a couple tours where we were sober. I don't have tons of experience with that. I've always felt alone. Like, in fact, Marshall, one of my best friends in the whole world-

Who introduced us, sort of!

-yeah, I met him, probably in 2009, a year after I started playing music, or maybe the year I started playing music, and he was touring with his band at the time Dark Dark Dark. And he was the first sober musician that I met and we became friends immediately, and then have stayed friends the whole time. So, for a long time, Marshall was the only musician/sober friend that I had and we would call each other on our separate tours and talk about sober stuff or relationship stuff or things that were bothering us. Nowadays a lot more young people are sober, a lot more creative people and a lot more musicians. It's so common, and I don't know if I just didn't know about it back then, or if it has become more outspoken, or more available now.

Creative stuff is almost like a replacement for being high because it's such a vibrant, active energy to create ... I see myself as a vessel and when I'm sober, my vessel is clearer and more stuff can come through.

Oh, it's changed! I've got 23 years sober now and what we have as a community did not exist back then. It didn't exist.

Yeah, it took me a long time to find young, sober, creative people, but when I did, it's always like, a unicorn in the room! Like "Yes!" Now it happens way more often. I'll be on tour and I'll find out that it's pretty prevalent that a band we're on tour with, or someone in the touring party, or someone at the venue will be a sober person and it's just like a breath of fresh air, like, "Woo-hoo! We're doing the same thing! We can bond!"

I often describe it to people who are just getting sober, but who are professional or semi-professional musicians as almost like a latticework or a map grid where you sort of had your favorite places to party or drink on the road and the people you love seeing, and those places still exist. But you start to overlay that grid with knowing who's sober. Like which bartender has been sober for six years, or which touring member from another band that you guys end up playing with a lot is sober. Or, like, the spot you used to cop at, for people who

go to AA, now there's sometimes an AA club on the same block! So people start to build these latticeworks of more sustainable, positive-

Yeah! It's like an underground network or something. 'Cause usually sobriety's not like a secret, but it's a pleasant surprise when I find out other people are sober or people find out that I'm sober 'cause usually people will be like, "Whaaaaat? You're sober?!" [laughs]

Totally.

Well tell me, looking backwards, what advice would you wish you had been told about the potential of a creative life after getting sober? For the people who are just getting sober now and maybe reading this and who are thinking maybe things are dead for them, that it's over, what would you share?

One of my favorite things about being sober, young-ish, and creative is that I can talk about it to other sober, creative people. Because I have found that sobriety has only enriched and fulfilled my creative paths and expanded them. I started out as just a visual artist and would've been happy doing just that for the rest of my life, and then, turns out I can also do music and performance art and sing. And now I'm also a tattoo artist. So, I dunno, I'm like, "Well, something else will probably pop up!" [laughs] It's endless. It's not even one career; I have several careers in creativity and I know it's because I got sober and the energy just funneled it. And creative stuff is almost like a replacement for being high because it's such a vibrant, active energy to create. Or, alternatively, when I draw, for example, I feel very calm and meditative and I'm just a vessel.

That's the other thing, I see myself as a vessel and when I'm sober — my vessel is clearer and more stuff can come through, so, whether that's writing a song, music, drawing, tattooing someone and connecting with them on a human level... Sobriety really looks good with creativity. [laughs] So anybody who ever talks to me about pursuing creative life, even without the sobriety involved with it, even just, like, in America with all the constructs of how you have to be as a human, just frickin' try, just do it, just keep trying, if that's what you want to do. That's what I did, and it's just worth it more to me to be creative and poor and sober than anything else, but I've been lucky that when I don't have the cart in front of the horse and I'm just focused on being sober and making stuff, I now also get the gifts of making money doing it. But if that wasn't the case, I would still do it. It's just an extra icing on the cake, that I do think is possible for everybody.

A-fucking-men.

I'm always like, "Do it!! And I will help you!"

Lindsay Sanwald, *Idgy Dean*

Elia: Idgy, when did you know you needed to get clean and sober?

I knew I needed to get clean and sober on August 19th of 2017. It was kind of this unconscious, cumulative feeling, like I'd been studying for years, unknowingly training for it. Back in 2014 I had gotten married and divorced very quickly. That was the first time I had been to an AA meeting, but I totally didn't gel with it. I felt like "I'm just here to prove something to someone and this doesn't feel right." And then later, I was in a relationship with a sober person and that warmed me to the lifestyle of sobriety. Years of yoga training and teaching yoga also started to invite me to a cleaner lifestyle.

Then I started to have little bits of cool success happening, but noticed I was self-sabotaging left and right. Actually right after I signed with my first major agent — literally the next day — I went on a tear and drank everything I could possibly get my hands on. And thank god I had an Airbnb guest staying with me, because if that person wasn't home with me, I tremble to think what would have happened; my last memory of that night was when I was skateboarding wasted down my block to get food at 4:00 AM, stumbling back up the apartment, and putting an Amy's Mac and Cheese — in the box — in my oven and passing out.

Oh god.

Next thing I know this guy is shaking me out of bed. Fire alarm, smoke everywhere. I sobered up real quick to deal with that. And then I got in the shower and realized I was still completely wasted, so I went back to bed and slept all day, right through important stuff I was supposed to go to. For 24 hours, I was just completely ashamed and shocked. And then the following day I was working through these yoga sutras which I had been studying and just came on this sutra that was — I'm paraphrasing here — "creative nature comes not from any exterior source, but when you remove obstacles; like a farmer irrigating a field, you remove the stones." I just started crying and it was a lightning bolt. And it was, "Okay, I'm definitely done. Get these fucking stones out of my field."

I had told myself for years that I was totally in control, and I was, for about 96% of the time; it was hidden behind my yoga practice, hidden behind my perfectionism, hidden behind my health obsession. But that 4% of the time when I would just want to go on a tear, I was on a death rampage.

So what do you feel like the perception of alcoholism and addiction is in the music culture of today?

I think society views alcoholism as this fringe loser sort of dysfunction. Which it is, in some sense. But then, on the other hand, musicians are glorified for it, and there's this really unhealthy perpetuation of the crazy wild addict type that people are obsessed with.

I would like to think I hold the artists and the musicians that I admire to a higher standard, and in higher esteem. I do believe artists are trailblazers and visionaries, and should be role models. I think we're at a place now where that's evolving, because the other view is a morbid death fantasy. It's part of our fascination with watching these tragedies play out, but I'd much rather celebrate people that don't need to do this boring bullshit. And I do think, also, that artists — and especially musicians — have this unique capacity to really feel things in a kind of an extra-sensory way. And that's of course why it makes sense that we turn to substances to calm those things down, or go balls-to-the-wall riding naked on the back of a dirt bike up the Grand Canyon. I'm finding the part of me that does want to have the ultimate experience, the ultimate high, can seek that by not having anything dulling my experience. I remember feeling this when I first got sober: stone-cold life is so fucking crazy and wild and out of control.

And so for the part of me that enjoys the thrill of being high, learning how to just understand that that's the nature of existence and have this cocky bravado of being able to withstand that without any substance frames what a newer perception of artists and musicianship can be. And also with music, before I started doing any drugs or drinking, there were certain songs that would make me feel high. And I think everybody has that. When you have your first formative memories of an incredible song or incredible music experience, you are high. And so it's already built into our art to give people that higher consciousness, that extra experience. I think it's built in, so let's purge these dulling experiences.

How do you carry wellness techniques into your touring and the rest of your musical world?

I rest upon them more than anything else. Ritual serves me well. And when I want to feel like I'm in control when I'm traveling or touring, I utilize sleeping well, eating well, doing an Asana practice; doing Pranayama breathing is huge. I'll go into the stall of every bathroom in every shitty punk club and do Nadi Shodhana alternate nostril breathing. And I can't imagine not doing that.

People laugh at me because I'll be smudging the stage and the artists with sage; it's silly, but I swear it works — everybody gets in a chill mood, and it's this exterior symbol that what we're doing in a live performance is we're communing, we're gathering.

And how do you feel like your relationship to performing and your audience has changed from when you were drinking to when you got sober?

It feels more centered, more grounded. Everything is clearer. In the past the part of me that would want to feel something extra would maybe smoke weed to feel that extra bit; now I find I get the extra feeling when I'm just completely awake and completely aware. If I'm standing in the integrity of what I'm doing, I feel impenetrable, nobody could ever take that away. And you clearly see people respond to that.

We played this great summer solstice show in House of Yes once. It was the same weekend as Pride weekend. And I remember being like, "Fuck, I'm proud of being sober. And I want to scream that from the rooftop. And I wish more people did that when I was growing up and going to shows and seeing these sort of crazy forays of music. And how cool would it be to have my rock legends and icons be as ascended and wild as they were and be like, 'Guess what? This is a 100% pure experience. There's no tricks here.'"

Did you say anything on stage?

I said just that, I said I was taking a moment to celebrate pride. And said, "I love pride. And I have to say, I'm fucking proud to be sober. And I want to really celebrate that with all of you tonight." And everybody went apeshit.

That's fucking amazing.

What advice would you give to musicians who are newly sober or thinking about being sober?

The advice I give to artists who are newly sober is — and this really helped me — just to think of the first year as traveling on a world trip; everything you're going to experience in that first year is a new reference point.

Being backstage was the hard one, and hanging out with famous people when they're offering you stuff, it's really hard. But remind yourself that you are a hero in your own right. And you're doing it for so many more people than just yourself, and that you already have to have a fair amount of courage if you're somebody who's going on stage and playing music. So you already are built for that sort of warrior spirit. And this is just the next level of that.

It gets easier and easier to learn how to navigate it. I remember the first few concerts I went to, it was hard because it was almost like I had to relearn how to be at a show. But then once you get through the first bit of it, you start to rediscover the very thing that you became obsessed with about music in the first place. You didn't start loving music or playing music because you were fucked up. You started going crazy for music and making it because you were this innocent kid who found something that you loved more than anything. Music was the ultimate antidepressant when I was 11, 12; there's this gift of getting sober where you get reacquainted with that. So let me really go to the source and feel that medicine in its pure state.

It's already built into our art to give people that higher consciousness, that extra experience.

Jay Dee Daugherty, *Patti Smith Group*

Elia: Jay, when was the moment you knew you needed to get sober?

It happened over time. It was a progressive thing. There were red flags, lines I gradually crossed — I would never let it interfere with my relationship, or playing, or little things like not getting evicted from a \$250 rent controlled West Village apartment! There was rationalization or denial until I saw I no longer had any choice and then it was too late. Unemployable — I actually got a cab license which was never used after I thankfully decided I wouldn't be able to drive sober but couldn't drive while drinking, so the citizens of NYC were spared. Getting fired from the few music gigs I had because of drinking, and from the succession of crappy \$5 an hour day jobs I needed to continue drinking. I couldn't afford drugs by that point. Sad! Almost drowning in a bathtub, dry heaves if I went too long without a drink. I couldn't imagine continuing or stopping. I was afraid to get sober — it might actually be worse than drinking and drugging. I was so full of fear. I think probably the decisive moment was when I got that thousand-yard stare from my then-wife, and I realized anything that came out of my mouth was going to be a lie.

What year was that?

That was 1986.

How did your bandmates take the news? What did Patti say?

I wasn't playing with Patti at the time, as the Patti Smith Group had dissolved in 1979.

Is this when she was on break with [her husband] Fred ['Sonic' Smith]?

Yes. Because I was drunk or high 24/7 for the last five years of my using, people didn't notice — at first! It's kind of funny how we think that people are paying really, really close attention to us when so much is going on with us internally. It wasn't until I had been sober for a little bit when I discussed with Patti that I was going to be divorced and she wanted to know what happened. I said, "Well, it had something to do with the fact that I'm an alcoholic." She was like, "What? You're an alcoholic?" She was kind of shocked.

You were high-functioning, huh?

Well, I did my best to hide it, which was a job in itself. Hard work. She had missed the last five or six years of it; I didn't start cratering until the last days of the PSG. Eventually I was drunk continually so there was a continuity in the way that I

showed up in people's lives. It might not have been apparent that I was under the influence because I always was.

I've hung out with Lenny Kaye, we've worked together, and I know he likes to smoke once in a while. And most normal people drink backstage. How do you deal with having to be around drugs and alcohol as part of your work life?

The very first time was when I was eight days sober. I flew to another city to work on a project and walked into a rehearsal room for the first time in many years sober. And someone said, "Oh, have a beer." It was a very strange feeling of, "Gosh, I can say no?" I could and did, because by that time I had desperately but reluctantly reached out for help and found a community of sober folks who became examples that it was possible.

Playing sober for the first time in years was weird for about the first 20 minutes. Then it was, "Wow, this is great!" After that first time, just for me, it wasn't hard. It became the natural order of things. Who knew? Plus, the folks that I worked with didn't really have problems like I did. There are

It was a very strange feeling of,

"Gosh, I can say no?"

some people who can drink and use drugs creatively, and there are people that might have drinking and drugging problems but can quit or moderate, and then there are people who cross that invisible line and can't turn back. I'm of the latter kind. I'm around some people who drink and get high, but not that many. I mean, I'm kind of a geezer, so if anybody's still doing that stuff and they're a contemporary of mine, if they used the way that I used they'd probably be dead. I'm sure my obit would have appeared some time ago.

Plus, the people that I hang with for the most part are very responsible to their art. I'm not saying that it's irresponsible to use drugs or alcohol, but they're just on a different kind of level and are able to make an individual decision that precludes them from doing anything that would interfere with their vision or their work.

Did you have any fear about performing, recording, or writing sober in those early days?

Well, before I got sober, all of the above. I didn't know how I'd be able to perform, or have a conversation, have sex, eat breakfast, let alone play the drums. I had no reference point. As it turns out, it wasn't a problem at all; it was all in my mind.

I think most active alcoholics and addicts can't stop from projecting ahead negatively. It's like, "What am I going to do on my birthday?" "What am I going to do on New Year's Eve?" It's like, "Well, dude, is it New Year's Eve right now?" "Well, no." "Okay. Well, just bring it back to the moment." I was encouraged by other people to do that, too: "Well, how are you doing right now?" My reply was, "Well, since you mentioned it, I guess I'm okay right now!" And it was important, when I first got sober, to talk honestly to my spiritual mentors and say that I was afraid.

Sometimes with Patti, or with other projects, you've been on the road for a long time at one chunk. How do you protect your sobriety when you're out on tour?

What I do when I'm on the road is keep in contact with my people. People that are doing the same thing; on the phone, through the internet, and there are recovery meetings that one can go to. Although that's usually tricky on the road, just because of touring timing. You're either traveling or you're at a sound check or you're performing — and then it's too late — when those things are happening, but every once in a while you'll have a day off. But now with Zoom, you can find a meeting any time of the day, no matter where you are.

Back in the days before there was the internet, you had to rely on printed material, which was usually out of date by the time it was printed. There were a few times I went to buildings that didn't exist anymore. You do what you can do. And frequently we encounter other clean and sober folks — there's more than I thought there'd be — and after I was sober for a while, I was able to recognize them by the cut of their jib! We're everywhere! I read a lot when I'm on the road. There's a world of inspiring literature. There's always something I can do at any particular moment.

You've encountered some incredible and tragic obstacles in sobriety, man. How have you stayed sober through each one?

Well, it's just life stuff. I mean, if you've made up your mind that it's your priority to stay sober and clean; no matter what, if you put in the effort and use the resources, you can get through anything. The circumstances, they don't actually matter, I've found. The things I've been through is stuff that everybody on earth has to go through. The best things, the happiest and luckiest things that have happened, have happened since getting sober almost 35 years ago. And the most difficult and sometimes tragic stuff has happened then, too.

There were times in early recovery when I had to think twice about whether I could afford to spend a dollar, or donate a quarter. I've been unemployed. I've been evicted. My mother died three months after I got sober, my father soon after, and my brother five years ago. I've dealt with the tragic death of my wife, Christine. I've survived cancer, and then a tumultuous breakup. One year it was an onslaught of one thing after the other, and I was asked to speak at a meeting. I told a friend that things had been so difficult I didn't know what I could say. They said, well you're a sober success story and I was like, "What? After all the stuff that just happened?" And he asked me "Well, did you drink?" Oh, yeah, there's that! It just didn't occur to me to use or to drink. It just didn't come up on the radar. But that's not me, or self will. It was being willing to do some stuff that was suggested to me by folks who had something I wanted.

For the way that I've been schooled in doing things, that's what happens; the obsession to get drunk or high is supplanted by something else. It's nothing that I've come up with using any kind of originality, I've just followed the format of the people that I knew who came before me, and it's working for me, too.

Well, as I think you know, it was hugely inspirational for me to watch you go through all that and stay clean and sober, and even be able to help other alcoholics like myself.

I can talk a pretty good game about a lot of spiritual stuff, but what does it really look like on a day-to-day basis? How am I bringing that forward into the world? Is there hypocrisy between what I'm saying and what I'm doing? I mean, that's where the rubber meets the road.

For sure!

Tell me, how do you see your recovery as having affected your music and your music career?

Before I got sober, that's all I could think about: how was it going to affect music? Counterintuitively, once I had decided to get sober, no matter what — even if it meant giving up music — it just took care of itself. I mean, the relationship to music itself is just like any other relationship. A friend who also had gotten sober a while ago and I were rehearsing, or jamming or something, and I was of course being my usual overly-critical self about my own playing. He said, "Oh yeah, well, once I play the note, it's none of my business." I was like, "Well, that's kind of an effective way of looking at things." Because perfectionism gets in the way, and it can dampen any situation. And it's all based on ego. It's all based on what I can get, or avoiding what I don't want, whether it's writing a song or playing in a band or being with a friend or doing community service or anything. It's being able to look at it in that light.

Tell me, man, what advice would you give musicians who are either thinking about getting sober or just getting sober and are afraid?

Don't be afraid. Fear not. It can be done! I mean, I know lots of sober musicians.

The fear is that you're going to lose your creative juices. How are you going to be able to do this stuff sober when you've never done it? For me, it's turned out to be the best thing that's ever happened to my playing, and my opportunities and relationships with people. The obstacle was my mind, so pay it no mind. It's like mind over matter; if you don't mind, it doesn't matter! The calls are coming from inside the house! There is a solution; it can be done. I would say if you're in the position of wanting to investigate this stuff and you're thinking about getting sober or you're afraid to, reach out to some people, maybe you might know somebody who's been through this, talk to them.

You need to have just enough willingness to make that first phone call—picking up the 500 pound cell phone—or step into that meeting. Recovery happens in bite-sized pieces.

I know that for me, I was so isolated. I was afraid if I talked to anybody that I might have
t o

s t o p ,
and god knows what that would be like. If you're an alcoholic or an addict, the cards are stacked against you, man. They really are. The most effective way out of that is just trying to break out of that isolation by any way possible. Talk to people. There's lots of opportunities. I'm sure a lot of the people that are reading this, if they're musicians, know about MusiCares, which is a fantastic organization that's powered by the organization behind the Grammys. They've done a lot to help musicians in general, but they especially know what it's like for alcoholics and addicts that are in that profession, and how difficult it can seem to get sober. They have been able to provide a lot of help in terms of opportunities, resources, and sometimes financial aid. Being able to put people through rehab or to get treatment, or just steer them in the right direction. That's just one thing I can

think of off the top, but there's a ton of stuff out there. There's

12-step programs which are simple, but not easy, and not for everyone. There's Buddhist oriented programs like Refuge Recovery, there's mindfulness based recovery and relapse prevention. There's more help than ever. [See Sober 21's list of resources on page 84.] It's just taking that one small step for your own sanity. You need to have just enough willingness to make that first phone call — picking up the 500 pound cell phone — or step into that meeting. Recovery happens in bite-sized pieces.

That's the story. It's like being given a suggestion about something and going, "Well, I don't want to do that." Or, "That's not a good idea." Or like, "Who would do that?" Then trying it and going, "Oh, wow." Then getting a result that my limited consciousness couldn't come up with and going, "Oh yeah, that makes sense... now."

When you can break things down into bite-size pieces of life, you don't really have to be afraid. All you have to do is just make a decision to take the action to get to the next moment. Bite-size pieces help when you're new. It's totally doable.

BOOM! Hell yeah.

I wanted to circle back to something you said a couple of minutes ago, which is that you noticed a big improvement in your playing and in your opportunities. Could you tell me a little bit more about those improvements?

I mean, I wasn't in such great shape by the time that I got sober, so of course physically my playing got better. I was finally listening to what was going on around me, instead of what I thought was going on, which was totally self-referential. I could contribute better, and I wasn't as tormented, and selfish, in a way. I stopped thinking how things would make me look — or sound — rather than the end result as a whole. In the beginning, booze and drugs shut up the negative inner voice, the eternal chorus of internal critics. It was a revelation! Playing high was so much better than being sober; it didn't seem like much of a choice. It seemed like the solution, not a problem. And it works for a while, because it temporarily short-circuits the ego and shuts off the negativity. Then it eventually becomes the problem that contains all problems. Which is great, because the solutions in recovery become the paradigm for the solutions in all things.

At the time I got clean and sober, I wasn't playing with that many people, because all it takes is a few episodes of unreliability or just being sloppy, the phone calls stop coming in, and you just curl up like a stale bagel. If you're not responsible, can't answer the phone, and are generally unpleasant to be around, or you're just being a dick, that can go a long way towards unemployment. After I initially got sober, someone I used to work with didn't recognize me. They actually said, "What happened?" [laughs]

It's very different being able to show up, look people in the eye, and they can see that you're present, and that you're interested, you're actually there. And that they wouldn't be afraid to let you on a tour bus!

Jenn Champion, S, Carissa's Weird

Soda water with a lime — but will you put it in a rocks glass?

I remember the first record I put out after I got sober was aptly titled *I'm Not As Good At It As You*. I didn't want anyone to know I had written and recorded the album sober. I was known as a sad, sappy, wallowing-in-a-pool-of-alcohol-and-tears type songwriter, and I just thought people would listen differently if they knew. And then they might say something like "She was a better writer when she was drinking."

I had thought about just that when I was in treatment: "If my life gets better, what am I going to write about? What will I have to say?" I had been so drunk for so long that even the decision to stop is hazy. What I know is that I wanted to live more than I wanted to die. And I am glad I am sober. My life is better.

And my life keeps getting cooler. The best tours and shows of my career have been sober. I play better. I laugh more. I write in a way I couldn't before. But there is a question that comes up all the time that puts me in a position I don't always want to be in — telling the story of how and why I got sober.

People aren't walking up to me at parties saying "I heard you don't drink, tell me about your rock bottom." People are walking up to me and asking if I want a drink. It is a harmless question. Drinking is the norm. But when they ask, I have to decide how much of myself I share.

If I say "No, thank you," that generous and polite person will probably continue to offer me a drink. They will probably say "Are you sure?" And then I will say "I am." And they will bargain — "Not even a beer, champagne?"

If I say "I'm sober," there is suddenly a chance that their next question is going to be "Oh what happened?!" And maybe I don't want to tell them about my many treatment centers, and that look on my mom's face — but is that what I am supposed to say?

I want to be clear about something. I love talking about being sober in sober-friendly places. I am proud of myself for getting sober and staying sober, and thankful for all the help along the way. But sometimes it feels like being sober is not just about what I am doing, but also about how people perceive sobriety. Some people fear giving up drinking because they are worried they will lose their friends. Because we live in a world where what we see is that social capital

comes in a shot glass. Some people worry that if they don't drink they won't be cool, or wanted, or seen.

For years after I got sober, I worried about not getting invited to a party, or not getting called back by a potential new friend, or a girl, or not getting booked on a bill/tour — and all of that stuff has happened. On the other hand, any time I find out someone is sober — be it a celebrity, a fellow musician or someone I'm just chatting with at a party — I AM THRILLED. There is a real solidarity I feel with sober folks.

*And my life keeps
getting cooler.*

Years back I was working as a bartender and this guy came in, I think he was on an internet date. He came up to the bar and ordered a soda water with a lime — “But will you put it in a rocks glass?” So I did, and I wondered if he was sober. He came in a few more times and every time it was the same thing: “Soda water with a lime — but will you put it in a rocks glass?” And he'd go back to his internet date and nurse the drink. He didn't seem creepy or anything, he was just protecting his story. One of the dates was going well, and he came back up for another round. The date followed; I was scared for him. I don't support trickery on a date, but also I got what he was doing, and wanted to say something to him like “I get it. Your secret is safe with me.” But I didn't.

And he said something like “I'll have another of the same.”

When people talk about how sobriety is hard, it is usually the dramatic stuff that comes up — the really hard stuff — not the paper cuts of being a sober person in a drinking world. Drink tickets. Hospitality. People assuming things about you. The truth about kombucha. First dates.

*The best tours and shows of my career
have been sober. I play better. I laugh more.*

I am pretty lucky to be at a point in my sobriety where I can turn down a drink or go to a bar and be okay; I know that not everyone can. But if you find yourself in the very common circumstance of being offered a drink, know that what you offer of yourself in response is up to you.

Jennifer Cardini

Prepare your trip!

Check where you can find a meeting or get in touch with someone from the program before leaving home. I've met fantastic sober people while touring and kind of built a little "safe" network that makes me feel safe wherever I play. Some even joined me at the club and danced!

Get the mini-bar of your hotel — and the backstage of where you are performing — emptied of alcohol before you arrive. Make sure your contract and rider information mention that you are not drinking. (Ask for snacks instead if, like me, you are the nervous type). If you are with friends and they wish to drink alcohol, get them drink tickets and let them manage on their own!

Get into a healthy routine and try to exercise even when touring!

Traveling, staying up late at night, and being on stage for two or three hours is extremely demanding for your body. You need to regain energy, and feeling good in your body is an important part of recovery; most importantly it brings relief and helps get rid of all kinds of trigger emotions such as anger and anxiety. This works hand in hand with working the program for me.

Accept that things are different, it will never be like it was before... It will be better!

If you have the feeling you were "better" on stage before, that you had this amazing connection with the crowd, that it was truly special and magic and that now it's all gone — remember you were high or drunk or both and grandiosity is real!

Playing sober is a lot more work for me in terms of DJ set and mental/emotional preparation.

Be patient and kind to yourself; it might take time until you feel content and happy. A gratitude list can help with that.

Bring a friend, stay away from the party monsters.

When I got sober, I had to say goodbye to some of my old friends; it took time to realize that most of them were only party friends. I felt a bit lonely at first, but eventually found out that some people were also clubbing just because they love it.

I met many nice people at parties since I've been sober, people with whom I share my passion for music, and that really helped me feel like I still belonged in that scene.

Stay in touch and work the steps.

After four years sober and things going pretty well, I made the mistake of stopping going to meetings and working the steps. I had a relapse.

Touring constantly is challenging, you are never fully somewhere, and it's really hard to keep routines that stabilize you when nothing is "home"!!! After the relapse I kind of made the program "my home" when I'm touring, making sure I have a safe place.

John Grant

Staying Weird in Sobriety

I was always told I was weird and I didn't want to be weird when I was young. I am a singer and songwriter who couldn't function on stage without alcohol, and I very quickly discovered that I couldn't function on stage with alcohol either. I thought the alcohol would make it possible for me to be myself, and enhance what was interesting and weird and cool about me, but it didn't. Something else was happening. I was becoming more introverted in spite of the fact that, on the outside, it looked like I was blossoming and relaxing when I was drunk. I made people laugh. I also made people never want to speak to me again. As I came to the end of my drinking, people were more alarmed than they were amused and I was barely even able to stand up on stage when I had been drinking because of the amount of booze required for me to even consider getting up there. I spent most of my first 30 years in deep depression and avoidance behaviors, just barely making it by.

I achieved sobriety from alcohol and cocaine 14 years ago and at first, being on stage in a completely sober state was a terrifying experience. Of course, one constantly

*There is nothing like being totally
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stranger than fiction.*

hears the myth that creativity gets thrown out with the booze and the drugs, but this doesn't make any sense. One of the things that propels many of us into addiction in the first place is what we perceive as our "weirdness" and inability to take part in community or the world in general. We feel we will never belong. We find it difficult to relax enough to interact with what are considered to be normal people. The truth is that what was there before is still there. Oftentimes many of the things which drove us to drink in the first place are characteristics which are an important part of who we are and why we were drawn to music and art in the first place.

Of course, initially, after the long winter of addiction, when spring finally appears and the thaw begins, there is nothing but used condoms and dog turds under the ice and snow and there is a lot of clean-up to be done. You also get to think up cool

metaphors to describe it. It is a daunting task. The process is difficult and doesn't happen overnight, but you get a lot of help from all sorts of people you know and people you don't know; you make it through one day at a time, and it is very much worth the trouble.

There is nothing like being totally awake and aware in a world that doesn't need any help from me to be stranger than fiction. My powers of observation, vulnerability (which I personally saw as a liability and something to be destroyed no matter what the cost) and ability to be aware of myself, others, and what is going on in the world around me on a daily basis — as well as awareness of who I am at my core — are what make me the artist I am and am continuing to become.

The longer I stay sober, the more and more intense it becomes and the more I am willing to take advantage of the myriad opportunities that present themselves to me throughout each day and the more I am the undiluted, unadulterated version of myself. I'm still just a flawed human, and obviously I don't get to skip the pain and hardship that is part of life just because I decided to get sober, but it is also no longer lost on me because I have a much better chance of learning the lesson and I am more aware of the mechanisms involved so I can navigate those waters more efficiently. I can even simply enjoy being the weirdo I am. This makes it a helluva lot easier to take other people just as they are, too.

Katie Lau, *Painted Zeros*

My name is Katie. I am a queer musician and audio engineer living in Brooklyn, and I am a recovering alcoholic who has been sober since 2017. As a live sound engineer in NYC, drugs and alcohol are ubiquitous and deeply ingrained in music culture. When you work at a music venue, the bartenders and staff become your friends, and part of that comradeship involves them hooking you up with drinks whenever you want. Having played a string of five-week-long national tours at the end of my drinking days, I thought that being on the road was only possible with alcohol use: “How else do you fall asleep in a strange place? How else do performers cope with the anxiety of singing their most personal, private thoughts? How can people not use these drink tickets?”

Getting sober seemed like an impossible task. My lifestyle revolved around working in venues where I drank, playing shows where I got free drinks, and hanging out in bars with friends. It was scary to think about losing my crutch, and I assumed that being sober meant I would also lose my social life and my career. The obvious irony is that alcohol was the real culprit when it came to my damaged relationships and problems at work. Over the years, my life became completely unmanageable due to drinking. Eventually, getting and staying sober became a matter of life or death. It was the only possible option if I ever wanted some semblance of a decent, meaningful life.

In the beginning, the single most important thing for me to hear was that I was not alone in my struggles with alcohol. Having an alcohol problem doesn't make you weak, and it doesn't make you a bad person. Some people just can't drink, and that's okay.

The next important thing for me to hear is that life would be so much better once I got sober. Before getting to live out the truth of that statement, I was fortunate enough to see it in action. In 2016, I was introduced to a couple who had both been substance-free for 11 years. He is an artist, she is a doctor, and their lives seemed amazing to me (especially compared to my life, which was a trash fire). I was struck by how fulfilled and happy they were, despite not drinking or engaging in the party culture that was my only experience of living in Brooklyn. They were cool, they were my age, and they were totally sober. Meeting them was an eye-opening experience. Sobriety had never seemed tenable or attractive to me, yet for the first time, I started to think that maybe my life could be like theirs.

In 2017, when it became clear that I was in really bad shape and needed some help, they gladly introduced me to a

wide community of sober people to draw strength and support from. If you're interested in talking about your drinking troubles with people who have faced similar experiences as you, all you need to do is ask around. Maybe you will be connected to a sober friend of a friend. There are so many resources on the internet, including tons of forums for people who want to stop drinking, and of course, there are resources about 12-step programs and meetings. There are many different meetings, including ones specifically for younger people, BIPOC-centered groups, queer/trans/NB groups—the list goes on and on. Sober people are everywhere.

In the early days, I stayed far away from situations and people that might lead me back to drinking. With my bandmates' blessings and encouragement, we chose to take time off from playing shows so that I could avoid being in triggering environments. I turned down tours in order to protect my fragile sobriety. I hung out with my then-girlfriend, and we planned daytime activities that were totally removed from drinking culture. I went to museums, watched movies, made coffee dates with friends, and spent a lot of time talking to other sober people who could relate to how difficult and weird it was to be dry after a lifetime of drinking. I also ate a truly incredible amount of ice cream and cookies (sugar is your friend in early sobriety; it really helps to cut those cravings). I kept cases of drinks in my refrigerator as a kind of stand-in for the nightly six pack I used to drink. Just having a cold can of something was a psychologically convincing replacement for my habit, and it had the added bonus of being tasty and hydrating.

At work, I went from having beers and shots from soundcheck until I was (unprofessionally) drunk at the end of the show, to asking the bartenders for sodas and seltzers instead. Energy drinks may taste awful, but the extra caffeine was another great replacement for the false energy that alcohol used to give me during shifts. It definitely made me a bit more "social" feeling, too, which helped with the anxiety that I used to rely on booze for (careful not to overdo it, though—too much caffeine makes for a bad, anxious time). I also allowed myself to anxiously smoke as many cigarettes as I wanted. I smoked for years, and have since quit, but while I was first getting sober, I was gentle with myself. It was hard enough to stop drinking—don't make your life harder by trying to quit every vice all at once. We all know that cigarettes will kill you in the long run, but alcohol was going to kill me in the short-term, so avoiding it at all costs was my first priority.

With friends and family, I found that it was helpful to

be totally upfront with them about my desire to quit drinking. If they are good friends who have your best interests at heart (rather than drinking buddies who want you to enable their own substance use) then 99% of the time they will be supportive of your decision. You may even be surprised to find that they're relieved for you, too; most people who are caught up in drinking too much don't realize how apparent their problem is to the people around them.

With strangers and initial acquaintances, however, I have found that it is not always in my best interest to discuss my sobriety. People constantly offer you drinks and/or drugs when you're playing music or working in a venue, and in my recovery, I have become good at gracefully deflecting and turning down drugs and alcohol, with anything from a simple "I'm good right now, thanks" to an honest "no, I can't drink/smoke weed with you/take a bump of your mystery, lint-filled pocket drugs, I'm working." When you've turned down mushrooms four times in a single 10-minute conversation from a tripping stranger who doesn't know your name, it's just not the best time to get into a heart-to-heart about your personal reasons for becoming and staying sober. In my early sobriety, I would sometimes make a vague and open-ended statement like "I'm not drinking right now" in order to avoid a long conversation about sobriety, because even the most ardent drinkers can understand a dry January or "taking a break." Now that I've been sober for a little while though, I feel completely confident simply saying "I don't drink."

It was incredible to realize that there was this fellowship of people all in recovery together, and that there are so many sober people all over the world.

At first, I was amazed to learn that even in the booze-centered music industry, there are so many people who live completely sober and clean, but now it makes perfect sense to me. I feel so grateful to have been helped out of my drinking spiral, and I am happier, healthier, and more fulfilled than I ever was while drinking. Life still happens, and it can be difficult and painful sometimes, but I no longer have to drink over my negative feelings. Getting and staying sober hasn't always been easy, but nothing in my life has been worth fighting for more.

Having an alcohol problem doesn't make you weak, and it doesn't make you a bad person. Some people just can't drink, and that's okay.

Mix Master Mike, *Beastie Boys*

Elia: Mike, when was the moment you knew you needed to get sober?

When I hooked up with Adam Yauch. When I hooked up with Yauch, and I hooked up with the Beasties, I knew that this was an opportunity of a lifetime and I needed to be me in a different form. I had to be on point, because one of the defining moments in my music career is hooking up with these guys. I knew I had to do it.

What kind of stuff were you doing before that didn't fly anymore in that new professional zone?

It started off with acid. And then it was mushrooms. It was the Hennessy Coke. It was speed; the speed I was on for a while to keep up. It was challenging. When we go through life as a survivor, you're not equipped with a manual. There's no manual to go through all this shit, so I had to learn the hard way.

What did the Beasties say when you told them you were kicking everything?

Oh, they had no idea.

It was a quiet thing?

Yeah, it was. It was, but our high was being together. That was our high, so we didn't think of anything else. And plus, for them, they got through to their clean point, which was perfect for me to come in, because then we were all clean together.

So all the Beasties were living clean and sober?

Oh yeah. Everybody, yes, our whole team.

I didn't know that.

Coming from where they came from — Licensed To Ill, Paul's Boutique — they had their challenging times with substances and substance abuse. It was perfect, a perfect way to be clean together. But it was all about the music. It wasn't about getting high at that point, because the music was our high.

I love it.

That is the beauty of being a creative, because you can turn to just being creative and that will keep you away from all the other bullshit. You know what I mean? Because it's like, for me, I was scared to get sober, because I didn't think I could be me.

Tell me more about that.

I didn't know if there could be a sober me as creative as I was and always continuing to push the art. I was scared of that challenge. And then I figured out, I'm 10 times more powerful than I ever was because I got sober.

That's fucking amazing.

Because I feel everything. You know what I mean? Nothing is numb. I go through my challenges head on. I man up, and I go through it without numbing myself.

I am a believer in the power of intention. And I have big, strong intentions; whatever I think and whatever I say and put out to the universe, it all happens.

Do you encounter many other DJs that are clean and sober?

I don't. A lot of them I know are under the influence. A lot of them smoke weed. And I know it's not the same thing, but they don't know what it's like to be completely sober. You know what I mean? I mean completely sober. And people these days will say, "Oh, well, it's just weed." No, no, that's a gateway, right? Although it's a medicine, it's a gateway to other things, especially when you're going through challenging times.

Totally. And a lot of it's how you use it. Some people can use it normally, and some people are addicts and can't.

Yeah, exactly.

What are one or two things that you do for self-care that are central to maintaining your sobriety?

Yoga and my faith in God. My faith has got really, really strong. I've got this relationship with God. And God is a real thing; if you can really tap into it, tap into the Lord. And He's a real thing. And I've been able to do that.

And in times when you feel tempted, you can turn to that power?

Oh, yeah, no doubt, no doubt. I don't even get tempted, though. I'm in the space where it's like, "Been there, done that." Now, if I go revisit that, that's such an old-school mentality to go back to what you've been doing back in the day. It's just like, "Wait a minute. It's backwards." And if I do that, I've done all this work throughout my career, I've busted my ass, why am I

going to tear it down now? You know?

And so I want to focus. I just want to be a sober, spirited person, giving. And I want to play my part and use my platform as a vehicle to help others. That's where I'm at.

What advice would you give musicians and turntablists who are either thinking about getting sober or are just getting sober and are afraid they can't have a career anymore?

Turn to God. Turn to Siddhartha. Turn to Buddha. Get a hold of your spirituality. You know what I mean? Get into the essence of why. What's your purpose? And what do you want? What do you want your legacy to be at the end, when it's said and done? You want to be somebody that just gave up? I'll be damned if I become that person, like, "Oh, he just gave up." No, I'm a warrior. I'm going to fight. I'm going to do that to the very last minute, to my very last breath. And that's my mindset. How do you want to go out? I don't want to go out giving up.

How do you feel that getting sober has affected your own musicality and career?

My music is more powerful than it's ever, ever been. It's more methodically driven. And it's pure. It's pure. For me, it's become more honest. It's an honest expression now.

Do you feel like there have been any career opportunities that you either missed out on because you were sober or that you got because you were sober?

Oh, no doubt. Talk about an abundance of opportunities that came my way when I got sober. It just magnified. I am a believer in the power of intention. And I have big, strong intentions; whatever I think and whatever I say and put out to the universe, it all happens. It really does happen. And the belief in that keeps me on the straight path, because I know it's going to help and inspire others.

But it was all about the music. It wasn't about getting high at that point, because the music was our high.

Natalie Ann Yopez, *Maluca*

I started my sober journey May 26th, 2014, right after a bender on Memorial Day weekend. Although I had attempted sobriety for many years, on Monday the 26th I knew my love/hate relationship with alcohol and drugs were over. I had no idea what to expect or what the hell this journey would look like, but I knew I needed an AA meeting.

As days went by, my thinking became clearer and the fog began to lift. I was in a life coaching workshop becoming my most authentic self: I was meditating and doing yoga regularly, volunteering, rebuilding a relationship with family and friends, showing up for people. I was on a motherfucking roll! Best of all my career was in an upswing: booking shows, locking in endorsement deals, securing the bag!

Okay, let's back it up a bit to give you guys a bit perspective.

Prior to this process I'd had crippling writers block. About four and some change years ago, my anxiety around writing records was so bad that I would literally be physically shaking, wanting to throw up, and crying every time I stepped into the studio. My head was bogged down with so much self-doubt and negative thinking that I just couldn't relax and have fun whilst making music without a drink. My music journey had started off so carefree, but as

Did the songwriting flood gates open up? Yes!

But the lesson here is the importance of sitting through the artistic process: the glory, the pain, the fun, the frustration.

The power of being present for all of it and not using! Of sitting in my feelings and really feeling them!

my career began to soar to skyscraper heights, so did my anxiety and using. The pressure to be the next (insert any ICONIC female recording artist) was too much.

Fast forward to being sober. In that life coaching workshop and living my life I was on such a pink cloud, and at six months of sobriety did not think alcohol was my problem; and it wasn't. Alcohol and drugs were the solution to stinking delusional thinking. Still in this way of thinking, I reasoned "now that I'm sober, all the songs are gonna come rushing out, my next song will go viral, I will be an Instagram success and win a Grammy within a year, no prob!"

HA! Dude, I was highly mistaken. Once the motivational workshop ended, so did

my pink cloud, and all the feelings and trauma I had suppressed with alcohol and drugs came to the surface...I was like, “Okay WTF?! I thought this shit was behind me! I don’t want to take inventory of myself and do all this inner work! I want success to come now and fast! God, why are you fucking with me?!” (And, yes, the God of my understanding has a helluva sense of humor!)

All the yoga, meditation, 12-step shit started to break my ego BS down. I wondered, “Do I even want to make music anymore?” “Is the music industry for me?” “Wait, maybe I should be a yoga teacher?” “What the heck is happening to me?!” I had to recognize that fame is also an addiction, and I was also addicted to that as well as the alcohol and drugs.

So ... Did the songwriting flood gates open up? Yes! But the lesson here is the importance of sitting through the artistic process: the glory, the pain, the fun, the frustration. The power of being present for all of it and not using! Of sitting in my feelings and really feeling them!

With the help of a 12-step program, yoga, meditation, and therapy, I had to learn to forgive myself for all my perceived “failures.” I had to acknowledge my successes — a number one record, world tours, writing records with some of the most prominent producers in music history, all the money I made because I was brave enough to put my music and myself out there for the fans, and all the friends I’ve made along the way. I had to unlearn and

relearn that my career isn't linear, and "success" means whatever the fuck I want it to mean and not what society and Instagram tells me. I had to learn to trust my process! I'm still making music, still booking gigs, and doing everything else that's involved in a career.

Today I don't feel stressed, or pressed for any outside validation — I feel free! And did I win that Grammy? TBC. But I'm just gonna drop the mic and end this with a Fiona Apple quote: "This world is bullshit...you shouldn't model your life about what you think that we think is cool and what we're wearing and what we're saying and everything. Go with yourself. Go with yourself!"

Nile Rodgers, *Chic*

Elia: When did you know that you needed to get clean and sober?

It's pretty funny. I was at Madonna's birthday party. It'll be, oh my god, I think her birthday is on the 16th, but the party was on August 15th. It was 1994. I had to be carried home from the party. I don't know if you remember an artist, he went by the name of Rico Suave?

Sure.

Gerardo. So Gerardo and a couple of other friends carried me to my hotel. And as soon as they left me, I snuck back out and went out partying. And I had my first bout of cocaine psychosis. I was hearing voices and that frightened me so much I never had another drink or drug again.

If you could go back in time and tell your just-getting-sober self about continuing your career with collaborations and talk to yourself about the fears you had then, what would you say?

If I could go back [I would] tell my newly sober self that the recording studio and having a career in music was going to be okay. Not only was it going to be okay, but it was actually going to be wonderful! Because the truth of the matter is no one has ever put a drink or a drug up my nose or in my mouth. Every time I did it, it was voluntarily. So I was the one who chose to do that, so I should also be the one who chooses not to do it.

The first time I ever had a recording session after I had chosen not to drink again was Michael Jackson called me up to work on the album *History*. And I was terrified to go into the studio because I knew that when I got into the recording studio, I was in this sort of closed ecosystem where people thought of me as somebody important. And when they think of you as somebody important, they want to give you the stuff that they believe you need. I no longer needed it, but I was afraid that once I was offered it, I couldn't say no. To my surprise, I couldn't believe how easy it was for me to say no because all I had to do was say no for one day at a time. I'd just say, "Nah, I'm not doing it today." And the next thing you know, it turned into a week, a month, a year, 5 years, 10 years, 20 years. I couldn't believe it.

The first time I went to any kind of [12 step] meeting and I heard somebody say, "I have 10 years clean and sober," I was like, "Whoa. Ten years?" I thought that that was impossible, but lo and behold, look now, you know? More than two decades later, I'm clean and sober, happier than I've ever been. I think I play guitar

better than I've ever played. I think my shows are better. My songwriting is better. I'm coming up with more hits than I've ever come up with before, more collaborations. So it just shows you that maybe I didn't have to relearn, I just had to not be afraid.

Do you talk to a lot of other sober musicians about sobriety?

God, what's really sad for me is that all of the people that I really used to be in awe of, like David Bowie [have passed away]. When I first met Bowie, he had the Serenity Prayer tattooed on his leg in asian characters, and I couldn't believe that. I'm like, "Dude, man, you really are committed." He's passed away.

Prince...I never saw Prince take a drink. I can't believe that he died of a drug overdose. It's unbelievable to me. So many of the people that I had amazing relationships with, a lot of it had to do with our sobriety. Chris Cornell wound up committing suicide. If you look on my Facebook page, you see him saying, "Nile, as long as you're around, you're my inspiration." So it's really difficult.

The only guy I know that we talk about sobriety is Elton John. Because I don't really like to talk about it, because as I said I feel uncomfortable 'cause I'm not really an anti-drinker. I'm just an anti-drunk person. If you can't do it safely, then you shouldn't do it. So I talk about it with Elton and I talk about it with Eric Clapton, but I don't really spend a huge amount of time talking about it. I'm not proselytizing like, "Don't you ever drink." Because I don't really believe that. I just don't believe it's right for me and so therefore I don't do it. But I certainly would never criticize someone else for doing it because I just don't think that that's the way.

As a matter of fact, when I got sober, I went to a meeting — and I don't think it's breaking his anonymity because he talks about it all the time — but Clapton just happened to be chairing a meeting. And I was so embarrassed to be in the room with him because he had only seen me drunk. This is the truth, God's honest truth. The loudest voice I ever heard was Eric Clapton never, ever criticizing me for being high.

That's amazing.

Never said a word. We were in the studio, and this is after his son had passed. I mean, it was just horrible. And I acted like a jerk. I was drinking every day, doing drugs, and all that kind of stuff, and he never said one word because he knew I couldn't hear him. When I got sober, I said to him, "The loudest voice I ever heard was your silence. And it was just incredible to me because you just showed me through example. You never said anything. You just showed up every day, and we did music, and I knew you were sober, and it was just a beautiful lesson. And I thought to myself, 'Wow, that's true strength.'" He didn't say a word to me because he knew I couldn't hear it, but he taught by example. He showed me what it was like to be sober

and be a great musician.

And now you can do that for other people.

That's what I feel like. I mean, you want to share the gift, and that was the gift. His gift to me was never, ever criticizing me. His gift to me was never proselytizing or sounding like he was better than me or anything of the sort. And it was wonderful.

You still go to meetings?

Of course, of course. I don't go as regularly as I once did. My men's group when I first started used to say that going to meetings was like putting money in the bank. When I was newly sober, I used to stay in meetings. I would wake up in the morning and just go to meeting after meeting after meeting.

The one thing I believe in is anytime someone reaches out and I can be there, I'm there. I got sober at Silver Hill [Hospital] and I just hosted their Gala. I'm so thankful to them and I think that being a counselor in rehab is the most difficult, thankless job in the world. Because when we make it and we get our lives back, very few of us go back and say thank you, because now we have our lives back.

I still call or DM my rehab counselor every year on my anniversary.

Oh man, that's great.

How has collaborating with other artists been different for you since you've been sober?

You know, it's funny — now that I have so much sobriety time, I can't really tell that there's any difference. The process really does feel the same to me. It was only in the very beginning that I thought that it would feel different. I remember doing a show [after] a good friend of mine had dropped dead. It was incredible; he had an aneurysm. No one knew that he was sick. He didn't even drink or drug or anything. It was a dear, dear friend. I had hooked him up with Paul Simon, and they were working on Paul Simon's Broadway show, and he dropped dead on the dance floor at a club that we used to go to all the time.

So I had to play his memorial, and it was the first time I played without being high. And I was terrified. As soon as we finished the first song, I screamed out to the audience. I went, "I belong out here!" They didn't know what the hell I was talking about. 'Cause we sounded so good. We really sounded great. It was Chic and we sounded amazing. I was like, "Wow, this is cool. I can do this!"

Have you had an artist want to use drugs in the studio since you've been clean? And if so, how did you deal with that?

Oh, it doesn't bother me if an artist uses drugs. It just bothers me if I use the drugs. I'm certainly not a hypocrite. When I was using drugs and drinking, I was having a blast. I thought I was having the time of my life. It was only after I had that first bout of cocaine psychosis that I realized that I was losing my mind. That I actually was crazy because I was hearing voices as clearly as I hear your voice now. And I was terrified. I was on what they call "window detail." I thought people were after me. I thought the mafia had a contract out on me. All sorts of crazy thoughts. And these were just things that I was making up. I don't know where those thoughts were coming from.

So I never tell people to not drink. I never tell people don't do drugs because I feel that that would be hypocritical. I stopped doing it because it wasn't right for me. And I think that people who know that it's not right for them, that they can't control it, I think that they instinctively know deep down inside that they have a problem. If I didn't have a problem drinking, I would drink. But I clearly have a problem, and so I choose not to drink. And I choose not to drink every day.

Nimai Larson, *Prince Rama*

Getting Sober and Quitting My Dream Job

I paid rent in Brooklyn, NY by traveling the world and playing music with my sister.

Being a touring musician with a decent following felt like “living the dream.” I believed the dream I was living — with the free alcohol and endless fans — was my reality.

Also part of my reality was the fact that the relationship between my sister and I had gone sour due to conflicting creative ideas, power struggles, and financial battles. Another part of my reality was my deteriorating physical health from the years of sleepless nights and intoxication. A huge part of my reality was my addiction to alcohol: the “freedom” from my insanity that it brought me and the comfort it provided through so many painful, lonely nights. An even bigger part of my reality was my awareness that I was selling myself short professionally and in personal relationships but did not have the courage to speak my truth.

Although my truth was vague, it was a truth I was aware of from a young age. I wanted to seek my life purpose through loving relationships, nurturing those around me, creating a stable home, and living in a creative community that is God-centered. My reality of being in a touring band — different city every night, disintegrating social and romantic life, worshiping the ritual of getting “fucked up” — was far from my truth.

As it says in the “Big Book” of Alcoholics Anonymous, I had but two alternatives: “One was to go on to the bitter end, blotting out the consciousness of [my] intolerable situation as best [I] could; the other, to accept spiritual help.”

These are not easy alternatives to face. I had done many crazy things in my life — robbing department stores and family members, placing myself in dangerous sexual situations, threatening my life and others’ by driving blacked out, accepting unidentifiable drugs from strangers — yet nothing appeared crazier to me than total abstinence from King Alcohol for the rest of my life, one day at a time.

When I went to my first AA meeting, I was seeking connection. What I

found was communion.

Through the spiritual support of a sponsor, a home group, a sober network of women, the greater support of

healthy friendships in AA, completing the 12 steps and sponsoring, I came to a realization that stopped me in my tracks: Being in a touring band, seeing the world and being adored by fans is certainly a dreamy life, but it's not my dream. While I was grateful for all of the opportunities my band had provided for me, gratitude should not be a prison, and the AA way is a design for living my truth, not hiding from it.

“Half measures avail us nothing.” “A program of rigorous honesty.” “God is everything or else He is nothing.”

When these AAisms began to mix with my newfound truth, a volcanic explosion — like an 8th grade science experiment — took place. My actions finally aligned with my truth and I was able to fearlessly communicate my desire to leave the band in a clear, honest, and compassionate manner to my sister, manager, and label. I was able to take the appropriate action of carrying out my calendar commitments with the band. Instead of being a conductor of chaos, whirling with self-righteousness and disconnection, I tried to be an example of a sober woman of grace and dignity, showing up capable and giving 100% until the very last show.

I got sober and quit my dream job. It was like holding my Higher Powers' hand, counting to three, and jumping off a cliff into faith. The sober life I have now is not a dream, it's a reality. And it's my reality that I'm committed to building with the help of my Creator and the encouragement of a supportive sober community. Like the Serenity Prayer says in its full form, may I be “reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with [God] forever in the next.”

*For this rockstar drop out,
the best is yet to come...*

Patty Schemel, *Hole*

Elia: Patty, when did you know you needed to get clean and sober?

The end, the bottom for me, was homelessness. I had to make a choice, either to be alive in the world, or continue doing what I was doing and [keep] using, and eventually the result of that is jails, and institutions, and death. I'm sure all along, just from my first drink, there was always consequences. And I drink differently, with a purpose — to leave my body. So I knew that it wasn't good for me, to put it lightly. People were always saying "Whoa, you were crazy last night," like at a party or whatever. And that was just the little stuff. I always knew that it was not the right thing for me and I had to get clean, or sober, and I shouldn't be drinking alcohol or consuming drugs. [But] to me, that was where I felt the best. I felt complete. Drugs did that for me; when I discovered drugs, I felt connected. And then drugs and alcohol connected me, too.

How did you perceive that your friends in music would take the news that you were now sober?

At the beginning, there was always attempts to get clean, to stop drinking. My parents were both recovering alcoholics. It seemed like my peers coming up and playing music in Seattle, my friends were all alcoholics, too. It was kind of what we all did. So everybody understood, but no one was getting sober. Nobody would get sober unless they really had to, I think. Someone would just drop out of things and we wouldn't see them for a while, and it wasn't like they were announcing that they were going to rehab or anything. But I always had some sort of connection and a foot in the door of recovery. So I knew that it was there, but I didn't want to do it. And I just wanted to try to function and maintain. As an alcoholic you become really good at trying to compartmentalize and put on this appearance that we're doing fine and that we can handle it. That was my main goal, to be able to function in daily life and be able to use drugs and alcohol, because it just made me feel okay and self medicated. [My friends] realized that I drank and used drugs a bit differently than they did and they were like "Whoa." When I got sober, people were like "Good!"

Can you share a couple of experiences of people's reactions to your having that conversation with them, telling them that you were getting sober?

I remember, there were a lot of attempts to just stop drink-

ing early on, and then when I discovered heroin, that was my first trip to rehab. I went to a rehab and I kicked cold, without meds. And coming out of that, at the time there were a lot of friends that were overdosing. Strung out, dying. And so I went into rehab to kick because — well first Kurt [Cobain] killed himself, and that was sort of a wake-up. So I was gonna try it a different way. It was really hard to reemerge and come back to Seattle and get back to playing drums and rehearsing, and then make recovery my first priority.

What was hard about it, Patty?

30 days, or actually like 21 days of rehab and then back into it, it was just too soon. Straight back to Seattle, straight back to my apartment, straight back to rehearsals. There was no change there, it was just [that] I had no drugs or alcohol in me. But part of me did it because I wanted to keep everybody off my case about being strung out. Because everybody knew. And then I was tired, and then I was devastated, and there was the grief. So it was a combination of things, but when things got hard, I just wanted to keep up appearances. I think that summer I managed to stay clean, and then September / October we did some traveling and did some shows, and as soon as I came home I went back to getting loaded again because I really hadn't dealt with anything. Didn't really want to feel anything, you know?

Yeah. And this was Hole that you were out with on that tour?

Yeah, Hole. And it was the summer of, what was it, '93? Or '94?

I know Kurt died in '94, yeah.

Okay, so that summer was my first official trip to rehab. They give you all the information, like [about] the physical parts of your addiction. What happens to your brain. They say that once you get all that information into your head, it really sucks up all your drinking use after that. It does, it's true. It's just so weird that they'll have like a film: "Here are your brain neurons. This is what happens."

Totally.

All of that. So that was my first trip, the first one out of like 28 trips over the years. Basically the thing was I just didn't want to get clean and sober. I didn't, I just did it because I wanted to get everybody off my back, and I wanted to keep my job. As soon as I got home and got quiet and was alone, that's when I... it's funny when people use the term "partying" when you're using drugs or drinking. For me, it has nothing to do with a party. Coming home to an empty room and slamming a bunch of heroin and just staring at the wall. That is not a party.

I lost all the stuff. I lost my job with my band. And then the homelessness. That's when it turned around and it was just

a day where I woke up where I just couldn't sleep in this empty dirt pile on the corner of Alvarado and Temple. And I just one more time reached out and got help. I had nothing to lose. And I didn't do it because someone asked me to or I was gonna lose my job or any of that. It was just, I was gonna try one more time. And then going into rehab, and then doing what they tell you. I had no place to live, so I had to go to sober living and live there, you know? And then I had to get a job. It was those kinds of things, the cliché of those self-esteem-building things. All the girls in the sober house were getting jobs, so you gotta get one, too. Gotta go out and fill out applications and get on the bus. It was crazy. It's like "Oh my god!" Just kind of shuffling along. Pretty soon I got a job, and then I got my first paycheck, and I had some money in my pocket. It was the first time that money actually stayed in my pocket longer than 20 minutes.

Those were the self-esteem builders that made me feel good. And getting away from friends, my usual crowd of friends. By the time I got to homeless-ville, I didn't have any friends. Everybody had given up. They were like "I can't with you, anymore." There were maybe four people that had gone through it all with me, and when they said "I can't talk to you because you're just such a mess," it hurt. And those were the things that helped me get clean, remembering them saying "You're just so... I can't." Just that humiliation, and that shame, and sadness. And then when I got clean, they were the people that showed up for me when I was trying to put it all back together in sober living.

I wanted to get right back into "Everything's cool with my life." But for them there's a thing called "Living your way back," and they're not gonna trust you right away. No matter what you say. "Hey, no really, this is it this time!" They're gonna look at you and go "Yeah, right." So what you do is you just kind of let it be and just stay the course. And pretty soon, when you say "I'll be there to help you pack up your garage," when you tell your friends you're gonna show up and you do, you live your way back, and they start to trust you again. But that's not gonna happen until they see it. So you have to just give it time. And just kind of let go. I wanted it all to be fixed right away. I wanted to repair it all: "I'm still friends with everybody."

Yeah, "It's all cool!"

It just didn't go that way. But if you have a little patience, which is so hard, and then focus on yourself, then I think it's better. And your friends will come back, and if they don't, fuck 'em. That's a good part.

Yeah. And so when did you start to get back into music?

It took awhile. I went up north to where I grew up in Marysville [WA]. My brother came up there, and we were taking care of my dad who had emphysema and was really sick. And so

my brother came up to help, and I was there, and pretty newly clean and sober. And we put together a studio in the garage; I mean, the most basic thing, and a little project. We just started writing songs and recording stuff. It was the safest place to be for me because that house was where I started playing drums. And also, my brother is my best friend. He's got like 22 years clean.

Oh, wow.

So he and I just played music. And like, I just didn't judge myself. It was tough some days because I felt like "Ugh, I sound like shit." So not inspired. But then some days it was like Larry, my brother, he would say "Listen to this by this band." And we'd listen. I remember the Strokes' first single came out and he was like "This is interesting." So just sort of like rekindling that interest in music and listening and being inspired by it. And then trying to maybe make something with that inspiration. And it's hard physically, it's hard. And then mentally, it's really rough. It takes so much time. So we just wrote a bunch of songs and then Courtney [Love] called me up and said "Do you wanna do a solo project?"

What do you think was behind her trusting you enough to call you?

I don't know, it was like maybe talking to a mutual friend. She reached out and said "I'm starting this thing." I had a lot of resentment still.

About getting kicked out of Hole?

Yeah. But the thing with her is she's always right up front, though. She was like "This is it," you know, when it happened. She just looked at me just like, it's business, it's not personal. I didn't get that at the time. And then when we talked, it was a phone call. And she was like "It was stupid to do that." And admitted [it], and that was enough for me. And she, as someone who has battled addiction, understands that sort of rebuild moment in your life.

It gives me gratitude to understand how it's a precious gift to be able to play music, and to not fuck it up and take it for granted. But also that nothing's more important than staying clean, you know?

I had to be a little bit cautious of where I went and what I did. And I looked at it as an opportunity to play music again. And I didn't want to fuck it up, I didn't want to pick up and fuck it up.

It was nice to play drums and work on ideas and stuff with her. And some of those songs, she actually reworked the songs that Larry and I had wrote in our little studio.

Wow. So you really feel like it was your sobriety that was the foundation of that decision to work together again?

Yes, because I felt like I had an opportunity to work on music again and do it differently. Eric [Erlandson, Hole's lead guitarist] wasn't involved in this solo project. And so the dynamic was different, and that was good for me. That it was just her and I, and it was kind of our project. So there wasn't some [old] triggers there, but there was like one big trigger, her.

Yeah.

But I'm used to that. As long as I kept that — again, the cliché — of keeping your recovery and sobriety first, and then everything else second, helped.

That's amazing. Did you ever have a moment where you thought "I can't believe I'm back."

Yeah.

Tell me about that.

My drums are up on this riser again, and we're working on stuff, we're at SIR [studio and rehearsal space], and I was like "What the fuck?" And just a year ago, I was eating a piece of free bread and slamming heroin at the Chevron gas station. Not to forget those things, [and] that it's even a further arc now that I have 13 years and I think about the things I've done since then. It gives me gratitude to understand how it's a precious gift to be able to play music, and to not fuck it up and take it for granted. But also that nothing's more important than staying clean, you know? Even though that's so amazing and I'm playing drums, and it's cool, and everything sounds good; there's nothing more important. I try not to forget it.

Don't let all that ego shit get in front of being clean. Little things start to add up. Like setting a boundary in a rehearsal, like "Well, I said we had to." This isn't about Hole, this is about like any situation I work in. If I say "We all agreed an 8:00pm rehearsal time," and we get there and someone's not there 'til 9:00, you know, that's fucked. And I never would have said anything to that person before. But now I have to say something. When we say 8:00, I mean 8:00. The boundary stuff, if I don't [set them], then it starts to build up. And then I'm fucking mad and the next thing you know I'm throwing shit at the person or whatever.

I can't live like that. Those fucking tiny things that just build. I'm just figuring out how to be that person that speaks up, and it's really hard to do that. 'Cause I don't want to make waves. I just want smooth sailing. But if I don't, I become an angry, resentful, horrifying person. "What do you think, that we're all gonna wait for you to show up to rehearsal? What, we all have free schedules?" I mean, that's a small example but that's like where it starts.

What advice would you give to newly sober musicians about reentering music? What would you like to have been able to tell your newly sober self?

Don't be hard on yourself. Do all the things — if you want to have a ton of sex, and you want to eat a ton of sugar, and you want to do all this stuff, just don't pick up a drug or drink. First of all, it's okay to do those things. Stay close to your friends in recovery and reach out to other sober musicians that can help you walk through stuff. Understand that you're really sensitive. You're fragile, and you're gonna be okay, and your music is gonna be a billion times better because you're there and present. And if something goes shitty, it's not because you're fucked up, it's just because the bass player's shitty. I don't know, I always blame the bass player; you know what I mean. It's not because you're not the weak link because you're shooting dope, or drinking or whatever. Just think about being different, like doing one thing different every day. And that's scary, you know? I've always had a hard time reaching out and asking for help, but it always makes me feel so much better.

Peter Hook, *Joy Division / New Order / Peter Hook and the Light*

I've been sober for many years.

Rehab was a hell of a thing to go through. Fucking murder. But nice to write about, because it was like writing about *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. I went to the Priory in Hale. And there was a mate of mine in at the same time who used to roadie. We had a laugh, being there together. Two rock and rollers. Made it a little bit easier, I must admit.

I got asked to leave an AA meeting in rehab. That is rock and roll, isn't it, getting asked to leave AA? What happened was, I went sober just before Christmas, and as it was coming up, the alkie all started panicking because of the 'Auntie Nellie with an eggnog' and all this lot. Everybody in the fucking room in the AA meeting at the Priory, they were all panicking like "Fuck, what about Christmas?! What am I going to do on Christmas Day? I don't want anyone to know. They bring the port round! Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." And I thought, "This is fucking ridiculous. Why would you be so bothered about Christmas day, man?" So anyway I said, "Right." I said, "Hang on, hang on, hang on." I said, "Listen, I've got an idea." This is fucking typical stinking thinking; weak, euphoric recall, only a week after getting sober: I said, "Why don't we have Christmas Day off of sobriety and then start again on Boxing Day?" And I thought this was the best fucking idea that I'd ever come up with. I said, "364 days on, one day off." I thought, "They can't begrudge us that." Fuck me, they went mental. The counselor guy stood up, "Get out!"

The problem, as you know, is that it's like that, some people get that one taste and they're stuffed. And I think I'm like that. That's why I've never had one since, because I know that I'd just be fucking straight down again.

I mean, I remember being at the meetings when I came out of the Priory and people would say, "Oh yeah, my name's so-and-so, I've been sober for two years." And I'd go, "Two years! Two years," I thought, "oh my god, that is unbelievable. Two years!" And then someone would stand up and go, "Four years," you know what I mean, and I'd be like, "Wow," flabbergasted. Now I have years and years sober! Like that, a snap! That's fucking amazing.

I have one piece of advice for musicians who are newly sober or trying to get sober: don't knock 'round with fucking musicians. What you have to think about is that you shouldn't put yourself in a situation, right? But now that, in rock and roll, is a waste of fucking time, isn't it? It always reminds me, when Ian Curtis was diagnosed as epileptic, and his fits were getting that bad that when he went to see the doctor, the doctor said to him, "Listen, if you lead a very quiet life — take it easy, relax, get to bed early, don't drink; no excitement, no mad peaks or anything like that, with your heart going up and down and all that lot, you should be okay." He was a fucking singer in a

rock band; he was doomed, straight from the diagnosis. It's like that for us; musicians have to be in clubs all the time. The weird thing about me when I got sober was that I could watch anybody do anything, but I couldn't watch me friends. The people that I used to do it with, Andy Rourke [of The Smiths], Mani [of Stone Roses], all these people, that's what I couldn't watch. I couldn't bear it. It used to fucking send me nuts. But anybody I didn't know, it never bothered me. Really weird. I'd be DJing in clubs and watching people racking out line after line, spliff after spliff, fucking boozing into oblivion and all that lot. Never bothered me. As soon as me mates did it, it used to scare the shit out of me. And that lasted for about four years.

And it's really, really difficult at first. Quite naively, when I got sober, I thought that when I got back to New Order, they'd make allowances. Right? Of course, no one made any fucking allowances, and they all went out of their fucking way to make life difficult. I always remember when I used to be in the dressing room and Barney [Sumner] would be near the table, and I go, "Pass us a water, mate. Pass us a water." And he'd go, "Right. Okay." And he'd go and grab a bottle of champagne and give it, "Oh, sorry." I was like, "You fucking cunt." But monotonously regularly, you know what I mean? And then at the end of the night, when you got back to the hotel, he'd go, "Hooky, Hooky, Hooky, are you coming to the bar, for a water?" "Oh, fuck off." It really was a hostile environment.

That is rock and roll, isn't it, getting asked to leave AA?

love because you couldn't started, could you? You had no fucking money. The best of it has to be that I did actually get a love for music back. A that I had when I started, afford to drink when we started, could you? You had no fucking money. You couldn't get pissed, you could have a pint a night if you were lucky. And you loved the music, and you loved what you were doing in music. And then after a while, as we know, it just becomes all about when the eagle's landed. Everything became about that, not about the music. And it was nice to get that love for music back, I must admit.

Richard Hall, *Moby*

Elia: When was the moment you knew you needed to get sober?

Well, there are a few different ways to look at that. The only thing that makes my sobriety in any way unique is that my first sobriety date was when I was 13 years old! I had a night out where I was 13, and a friend and I stole a bunch of pills and hash and vodka, and the night ended with him being intubated by EMTs while his parents watched.

Holy shit.

And so the next day at age 13, I decided I wasn't going to drink and do drugs anymore. Clearly that didn't last. That should've been the wake up call at 13, but what followed was decades of going in and out of sobriety. Sometimes it was more institutional sobriety, like the 12-Step programs, and sometimes just on my own. And then, finally, it was October 18th, 2008 when I had one of the few thousand horrifying nights and the next day I was just — you know, that old cliché of like I was just sick and tired of being sick and tired...

Yep!

And there was absolutely no evidence that anything was getting better. When I stepped back and looked I was like, "wow." I finally admitted to myself that from the time I first drank I've been a compulsive alcoholic. So October 18, 2008 I walked into a meeting on First Avenue and First Street and finally was able to like say, "I'm Moby and I'm an alcoholic," and fully to the core of my being believe that.

That's powerful, man. Being a public figure for a while at that point, had you had any embarrassing public consequences from your drinking or using?

More than I could possibly ever count. Luckily! The irony is that when I first started making records I was sober. I was sober from '87 to '95, but I was a belligerent, judgmental dry drunk. I didn't go to meetings. I would judge people for drinking even though recently I had been throwing up in bathrooms and passed out in parking lots. But then I turned around and judged the people I had been getting fucked up with.

So, early in my career, people understandably thought that I was sober because I was, but then that followed me around. So even in the 2000s when I was going out six nights a week and drinking 15 drinks a day and throwing up on Ludlow Street, I'd still be written about

as if I was sober.

Ha!

But to answer your question about public consequences: luckily it was pre-social media. Like, I can't tell you how grateful I am for that!

Oh man, same!

Because I was a very public alcoholic doing all sorts of either degenerate or horrifying or unethical or just deeply embarrassing stuff. I mean, one particular time I went to an animal rights fundraiser at the Highline Ballroom a couple of months before I got sober. I wanted drugs. Jesse Malin was performing in front of a few hundred people and I got on stage and stopped the band and I took the microphone and said "If anyone here has drugs, please give them to me or sell me your drugs, I'll be standing on the side of the stage" and I let the band start up again and I went and stood by the side of the stage. No one had drugs, and I was so offended that this crowd of hipsters wouldn't give me or sell me drugs that I then went back on stage when Debbie Harry was performing and stopped her and started yelling at the audience about what frauds they were that none of them had coke.

And I wasn't kidding. Like someone afterwards said, "Wow, that was sort of odd and funny." And I was like "No, I'm serious, I'm mad." Like with this crowd of hipsters, someone here should have been able to like give me drugs or sell me drugs.

And honestly that's kind of a light hearted example. I mean, we could spend the next 80 hours just with me rehashing all the horrifying, embarrassing, really just grim stuff I did in public when I was really messed up.

So when you decided to get sober for real, how did you handle talking about your sobriety in the press?

Well it's tricky. Because there's a [AA] tradition about having anonymity at press and radio. And I think they include TV, I'm not sure. And granted it was written in the '30s, so it's basically like anonymity at morse code. But at the same time, I was proud to have finally gotten sober and I had no misgivings about talking about it. And I didn't fully understand why we weren't allowed to talk about sobriety, especially when certain people did.

Like you know, I remember listening to a meeting on tape with Anthony Hopkins, and I was like "Well, that's pretty public." Like he's not just talking about it, he's recording his qualification. So I didn't fully understand why I wasn't allowed to talk about it if I had the potential to help people. And I still, 10 years later, try and straddle that line of how can I be of service by talking about it without violating the tenants of AA. I keep in mind

there's also that section of the Big Book where they say, "We know but a little and over time more will be revealed."

I'm not ever concerned about it hurting my career or my public figure status. I just want to be of service within the context of AA. One of the things that keeps me sober is the quality of early AA. You know when you read the Big Book and especially the 12 and 12 [the AA book Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions], they were smart, light-hearted, funny people who encouraged us to wear our sobriety like a loose garment.

And I was like, you know, there's nothing strident or dogmatic or judgmental in AA, at least as it's written. There are a lot of strident judgmental people in AA, and I just give them a wide berth; there isn't room for dogma or stridency or didacticism based on what's actually written in the Big Book.

Moby, what advice would you give musicians who are in the public eye who are just getting sober about how to handle talking about it in the press and with fans?

I'm trying to think what could have been said to me when I finally got sober. Because those first three months, the first six months, the first nine months, it's really challenging, you know?

Yup.

Especially if you continue to exist in an environment where everyone around you is getting fucked up, and where you used to get fucked up. I mean, I got sober in the Lower East Side of Manhattan where I spent years drinking and doing drugs, so it was very challenging on a daily basis walking by the bars where, you know, a few weeks before I had been passed out or having sex in the bathroom.

So I guess my big blanket statement to anyone who is getting sober is the generalization that over time sobriety always gets better and over time drinking and using always gets worse.

Sometimes we don't see that in the short term, but I can absolutely say that's how it goes. And the other thing I would say is that lots of people have gone through it already and have gone on to live really remarkable lives, so talk to them and learn from them. And realize that none of us are going through this alone. Every single thing we've ever experienced, someone else has experienced it and gone through it probably in a more difficult way than we have.

And what do you feel like you've gotten over time from being sober?

I mean not to overstate it, but it makes me think of one of the last scenes in the movie "Almost Famous." When William Miller finally gets to do his interview with the guy from Stillwater and he says "So what do you love

about music?" And the guy says, "Well, for a start, everything." And honestly not to indulge in hyperbole, but not just sobriety but the 12-Step program, it's everything. To me it's just the most remarkable spiritual program and program of self-diagnosis and self-understanding that I've ever done, and that's after a lifetime of therapy and meditation and different spiritual practices. Nothing has given me better insight and better understanding than really doing the 12 Steps.

And this saves me on so many occasions: it's sort of a first step thing — write down a list of the worst experiences you had with drinking and using, like the worst hangovers, and keep that list on your phone. And if you're ever tempted to drink, just take a look at that list.

That's amazing and it's so funny to hear you say that because I did that when I got sober, but we didn't have cell phones back then so it used to be "Write it down on a piece of paper and put it in your wallet!"

Yeah. I mean the the first couple of years when I was on tour, like, there are those moments after a show when you're lonely, and you go back to your hotel and you're like "Oh, if only I was

Lots of people have gone through it already and have gone on to live really remarkable lives, so talk to them and learn from them. And realize that none of us are going through this alone.

going out, I'd be social and I'd be able to go home with some one." And I would look at that list and it would immediately, like on a very hardwired, synaptic level, remind me of the consequences of drinking.

Fuck yeah, man. I've used that trick many times. It is so powerful.

Thank you for doing this. I think it's really going to help a lot of people.

Awesome. Moby, thanks again, man. Have a good one.

Oh it was my pleasure. It was really nice talking with you. Thanks.

Richard Lloyd,
Television

We musicians are on the front lines as far as drugs and alcohol go. We play clubs with no windows and black walls, so the bar can look very inviting. And people at our shows often want to buy us drinks or give us drugs. But we alcoholic / addict musicians play better — and socialize better — when we're clean and sober.

I remember one time Television was playing Max's Kansas City. I smoked a joint before going on stage, and was so messed up that I spent the entire set looking at my shoes. I've got lots of stories like that. My playing got much

better when I got clean and sober, and stuff like that stopped happening. I was able to rip solos that surprised me. I didn't think I was that good, but in sobriety I got much better as a musician.

I know that my guitar playing got better when I got clean and dry, and continues to improve. I also know that if I were to drink again, my playing would get sloppy all over again. Although, in the moment, I might feel as though it was improved, it just would not be the case. I advise all musicians if they are serious about their art to get off the sauce and get off the drugs posthaste. You'll thank yourself later.

Tyler Pope, *LCD Soundsystem*

I have heard it said that having a problem with drugs and alcohol is so common for touring musicians that it could actually be described as an occupational hazard. I know very few fellow touring musicians who haven't at one time or another in their career gone way beyond healthy drinking and using, so those of us who have the predisposition to be alcoholics and addicts don't stand a chance on the road.

I fell down the slippery slope of addiction when I was touring in my early 20s, and finally was able to get sober in my early 30s after a decade of incomprehensible demoralization. When I was 32, I hit an emotional bottom and my wife threatened to leave me if I didn't do something about my drug and alcohol problems. At this time my band was getting ready to do an extensive and intense world tour. I had no choice but to not only get sober but also play shows in early sobriety.

As soon as I got on stage, the feelings of insecurity surrounding performing I had been numbing out with booze came back with a vengeance. Playing shows felt so uncomfortable; I had to figure out a way of not focusing too much on myself. Being on stage provides many ways to get out of your head, but at first without drugs and alcohol, it took effort. I play bass, so for me it was easiest to pay attention to the drums and try and lock in with the snare and hi-hat as much as I possibly could. Some nights it was easier than others, but trying to meditate on the drums helped me with my extreme self-consciousness the whole tour.

Another thing I would meditate on is what a miracle music itself is, and what a strange phenomenon it is that our bodies are propelled to move to rhythm. As George Clinton says, "Free your mind and your ass will follow," but it works in reverse as well. If you free your body, your mind will follow.

When I see videos of our band from that tour, I am literally dancing on stage non-stop. If I stopped dancing, my mind

would take over and the self-consciousness would be painful. Basically, I tried to be in my body and not in my mind as much as possible when I was on the stage. It got better as the tour went on. Much like most things in sobriety, it was just a matter of doing it for a while and then I got used to it.

Another good thing about being sober while playing shows is that I could honestly look at what was working and what wasn't working for me on stage every night, so there was a progression to my performing. And since I was sober, for the most part my ego wasn't getting hung up on the things that didn't work and I could build on the things that were working. Before getting sober I would wallow in the fact that there were all these things I perceived myself to not be good at as a performer, and drank to deal with those false beliefs. Ego trips, of course, come with the territory of being on stage, and when my

*If you free your body,
your mind will follow.*

ego
wasn't get-
ting everything it want-
ed, I would drink until it didn't bother
me anymore. But sobriety is about ego
deflation and humility, and when I hon-
estly tried to live sober, it broke that de-
structive cycle. It took persistent effort to
change my thinking about it, but eventu-
ally it got much better. And in most ways
it's way better doing it sober. The highs might not be
as high, but those were few and far between. It was mostly lows,
and I no longer have to deal with that every morning. An easy
reminder of that for me is to look at the faces of all my hungover
bandmates in the morning at lobby call.

Coda: Editor's Note

Things that Work for Me; or How I Stay Sober in the Chaotic World of Music!

Sobriety isn't one size fits all, and everyone with clean time has found what does — and, importantly, doesn't — work for them. Here are some sober safeguards that have made it possible for me to have a two decades and counting career in the music industry.

Having a designated sober sleeping room.

If you're sharing rooms on the road, it's nice to have a designated sober room. That's not to say that the people sleeping in that room are necessarily all sober, just that it's not the designated (or assumed) party room, and that drugs and drinking take place somewhere else. This small distance can bring an enormous sense of relief and peace after yet another late night at a club on a long tour.

Avoiding accidentally getting high.

Unless someone pours alcohol down your throat, you're not going to get drunk. Alas the same can't be said of weed, and a contact high is a real possibility.

I found that most of the time just saying "no smoking weed in the green room / recording studio," and politely telling people where they can smoke (the lounge, out back, on the roof, etc.) is enough to keep that space weed-free without bad vibes.

Sometimes I'm in other people's sessions, or a shared green room, and when I feel like it isn't appropriate to say anything, I just step out while people are smoking. (The tour van becomes a good friend in this regard, as does the occasional pinball machine or Ms. Pac-Man game in the venue).

Excuses are your friend in this context — maybe you suddenly need to step out to return a call. You can also say you're sensitive to / allergic to smoke. (And if you're in recovery, you are, right?!)

Remembering that higher powers don't conform to city limits.

I used to feel like if I left my sober community and comfort zone, I was fucked.

My sober mentors have been Janis Joplin's Irish ex-heroin-dealer, an aging queer ex-club kid who after sobering up would've been a priest if the church had let him, a Nuyorican grandmother who once told me she should hit me with her newspaper for dating too many people at once, a Buddhist punk innovator, and other greats. It's been fun to learn about spirituality from each of them, and I've come into a hippy-esque understanding of my higher power that if anyone else described to me, I'd think they were utterly bonkers.

Once, when I was concerned about leaving my hometown of Chicago in early sobriety, the ex-club kid said to me: "You know your higher power doesn't leave you at the city limits, right?"

It was an incredibly powerful realization for someone who was just starting to get their shit together and was afraid of leaving their support community! Whether my higher power was group-oriented recovery (I used the acronym G.O.D. to mean "Group Of Drunks,") or the aforementioned hippy-esque understanding, this power was with me wherever in the world I went.

Actively being in touch with sobriety on the road.

Do you have any idea how many sober podcasts, AA & NA meetings-on-tape, websites, and books / pamphlets / magazines about sobriety there are? (And don't forget sober meme accounts on Insta...) It's insane, and conveniently, they all fit right on your phone! (Tip: always have a good international phone and data plan when you're out of your home country).

Going to sober meetups in other cities can be tough to fit in a tour schedule, but is fucking fantastic to do whenever possible. (And when you're just traveling, too!) I've ridden around town with a sober motorcycle gang in London, hung in sober clubhouses in Santiago, Chile and across Ecuador, popped into a sober pool hall in Dún Laoghaire, Ireland, and celebrated my 22nd clean and sober anniversary with an Indian recovery group in New Delhi.

Having friends and industry folks in recovery in other cities we played was always really refreshing. Seeing one of my closest friends every time I played NYC and another in LA; knowing one of the promoters we'd work with in a certain Midwestern market had years in recovery — these were sober anchors, and hangs to look forward to.

For me, ever since I discovered the paintings of Goya and the magic of ancient churches on a middle school trip to Spain, I've had a deep appreciation of art and edifices constructed by mankind to the glory of their perception of god. Popping into an open-to-the-public Hindu or Buddhist temple, Christian church, Islamic mosque, or Jewish synagogue that we happen upon while in another city always gets me reconnected to my own spirituality, even though the religion itself isn't something I practice. Finally, texting with and calling newcomers to sobriety always helps me get my own head on straight. It's also an incredible reminder of the shit you absolutely do not want to go through again!!

Taking the least strong pain medicine whenever possible.

I hope that it never happens to anyone reading this, but since car, van and bus accidents are unfortunately a real possibility when you're on the road a lot, I want to share my experience on this front. My band was in a horrible accident while heading to play a festival; though it effectively ended our career, it was a legit miracle that none of us died. A tire malfunctioned and our van flipped and rolled up to a dozen times, according to the police report. The three of us who were very badly physically hurt happened to all be recovering addicts with years sober. One person was in a medically-induced coma for weeks and underwent life-saving spinal surgery; another broke a ton of bones; and I fractured my back and neck, had road rash all over my upper body, and had gaping, blood-squirting gashes in my head that looked like the cover of NIN's *Further Down The Spiral* and took 26 stitches to close. But all three of us took only what we truly had to for the pain, and eased off as soon as was humanly possible. We told our doctors

about our addiction issues and recovery. And I'm happy to report that we are all still sober over a decade after the crash!

Having a 'No Drugs On Tour' Rule

I knew that for me, I simply couldn't tour with a load of drugs around me all the time; and if I as the frontman couldn't tour, the band couldn't tour. So early on I advocated for a no drugs on tour rule, and as musicians came and went over the years, it became one of the only rules our touring unit had.

You don't have to be part of the drink and drug-fueled insanity going on around you.

One time a musician in my band who was absolutely hammered stole a Cadillac that had been left running outside of our hotel at 5am. He intended to drunk-drive it around the block, but got lost along the way. Please be assured, I did not get involved in trying to fix up that dumb shit.

That's an extreme example, but I've closed down a club in the wee hours of the morning after hosting a DJ night, just hanging and bullshitting with the booker, only to leave with a pleasant goodbye when the bartender started cutting up and snorting lines off the bar. Or bounced from a show I was in the audience at when the high-school-looking kids around my friend and I who were drinking hard liquor out of Coke bottles started a mass brawl that included half the venue.

Occasionally you've gotta be in the mix in crazy situations in the music world, but the reality is that most of the time, when people start acting up in a way that doesn't suit your lifestyle, you can peace out and just let other people do their shit.

Saying 'I'm good, thanks!' to offers of alcohol or drugs.

Being offered alcohol or drugs can be a really friendly gesture. And I quickly found I can politely pass in an equally friendly manner!

Typically it's just a quick offer, a polite decline, and I grab a cranberry and soda in a rocks glass. But occasionally someone keeps offering or pressuring, and there are certainly cases when I've gently let a person who was persistently pushing alcohol on me know that I'm sober. An example: my bff and business partner Mark (who's also sober) and I were invited to an A-list producer's fancy studio to hear his upcoming LP. He does really dope stuff for the arts in close collaboration with a major liquor company, who'd sent their top mixologist to the studio to make him and his guests drinks. As we chilled in the lounge before the listening session, his staff excitedly offered us the mixologist's services. They were understandably a bit baffled that we weren't accepting — this was a world-class bartender! — and I definitely didn't want to look rude. So I shared with them that "we've drank ourselves into not being able to drink anymore!" with a laugh, and that was that, all good!

Resources

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)

www.aa.org

Narcotics Anonymous (NA)

www.na.org

MusiCares

<https://www.grammy.com/musicares/get-help>

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Colophon

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