

Transcript of Interview with Danny Denial by Kit Heintzman

Interviewee: Danny Denial

Interviewer: Kit Heintzman

Date: 03/08/2021

Location (Interviewee): Seattle, Washington

Location (Interviewer):

Transcribed By: Angelica S Ramos

Abstract: Some of the things we discussed include: The dysphoric experience of Black artists filtered through white talking points. Unstable work and income as an artist--audio and visual--pre- and mid-pandemic. 2019 was the first year that work as an artist and in performance communities was stable. Releasing the album Fuck Danny Denial in 2020 (<https://dannydenial.bandcamp.com/album/fuck-danny-denial>). Pandemic specific economic penalties of musicians in the case of live streams for Seattle Pride and Folsom Street Fair. The burden on artists to make ethical calls about canceling performances in the early stages of the pandemic, and needing to wear “new hats”, like health safety inspector. The pandemic as a shared experience of stoppage, and the need for adaptation. Aging and changing awareness about one’s needs for health care. Working to build equitable opportunities for artists. Since 2015-2019 doing gigs and video projects on contracts. Media outlets’ poor representations of the summer protests, acts of civil disobedience, and the autonomous zone in Seattle. Funding the serial project Bazooka (<https://ca.gofundme.com/f/dannydenialbazooka>) The ethical decisions associated with wanting to participate in amplifying and uplifting the BLM movement without exploitation for personal gain, engaging as a citizen. Witnessing a friend’s experience of hospitalization due to COVID-19. The value in studying patterns of human friendships and how the pandemic disrupted the conditioning of existence and the importance of local histories of resistance in Seattle.

Kit Heintzman 00:00

Hello.

Danny Denial 00:02

Hello

Kit Heintzman 00:03

Would you please start by telling me your full name, the date, the time and your location?

Danny Denial 00:09

My name is Danny Denial. It is Monday, March 8, it's 12:38pm. Pacific time. I'm in Seattle, Washington.

Kit Heintzman 00:17

And do you consent to having this interview recorded and publicly uploaded under a publicly available uploaded under a Creative Commons license attribution noncommercial sharealike?

Danny Denial 00:28

Yes, I consent to both.

Kit Heintzman 00:31

And would you please start by telling me a little bit about yourself introducing yourself to anyone who might be listening to this? What might you want them to know about you and the context you're speaking from?

Danny Denial 00:45

Well, I'm a audio visual artists that lives in Seattle, Washington, specifically in the realm of music and film. And also the intersection of the two. And a lot of my work deals in amplifying experiences and voices that are often underrepresented primarily in the black and LGBTQ plus community. And then that's, that's something that over time that my work has been diving deeper and deeper into over the years, which is something that I think as an artist I've only really come to terms with in the last few years, but it's been definitely both empowering for me and illuminating, to see reflected back in the ways that people have responded to the work.

Kit Heintzman 01:41

I'd like to start by asking what the word pandemic means to you.

Danny Denial 01:48

The word pandemic to me. i It means a shared experience of of stoppage for me, where the trains that we are all on between artists, and business people and entrepreneurs and students, all of the trains just stop. And everyone's kind of forced to reconcile how to either pause, stop, or try to adapt and continue to the stops, trains, the stopped infrastructure that have that have, that we've all been accustomed to. And I think that seeing everyone's responses to a pandemic is probably the most interesting part of of just the human experience. Do we fold and kind of cave in and disappear? Or do we try to adapt to and, and, and outsmart you know, the situation that we find ourselves in? So in a lot of ways, when I think of the word pandemic, I almost look at it in my head as almost like a labyrinth, you know, so I almost think of Pan's Labyrinth in a way. Because, to me, the experience of responding to the pandemic is more interesting than the pandemic itself, which is a whole other story. Really. That's That's science and, and, yeah.

Kit Heintzman 03:31

Would you be willing to say a bit about your relationship to health and healthcare infrastructure prior to the pandemic?

Danny Denial 03:39

Yeah, admittedly, you know, I health health and health care is something that I've always put off, because there was a, you know, being in my 20s, and having a very, like, artists lifestyle of kind of, very kind of below board a lot of times, you know, not working with corporations or companies that offer provide health care, you know, in a readily available way, as someone who works in software and tech or, you know, education system or whatnot would, so a lot of my experience with it has been avoiding it. So, just because it's not readily available, it's not very accessible. And to a lot of my peers, it's a lot of the same thing. You know, most people I think, have struggled to, to receive and maintain health care. And I've definitely gone through periods with, you know, other different jobs and whatnot where I've had health care, but it's it's a moment in time and then at that job, Andrew, this contract ends, I don't have health care anymore. So it's definitely something that I became accustomed to not having reliably and consistently, but that's definitely something that you know, as you get older and you're in your

late 20s, and you start thinking about it You know, your health and the reality of things catching up with you, you realize that, you know, there's certain things like health care that are going to become more and more of a need and necessity. And I think, coming into what happened with the pandemic, and realizing, oh, when you get sick in this, in this moment of time that we're in, that's going to be a huge problem. So I think more than anything, in this past, post 2020 world, the the landscape of living in the pandemic has definitely illuminated the anxiety around, you know, having a plan in place for healthcare, as an artist that is still working outside of the lines, in a lot of ways. So

Kit Heintzman 05:46

Would you talk a little bit about what your day to day looked like? And again, a pre pandemic world?

Danny Denial 05:52

Um, yeah, well, you know, I've been in Seattle, Washington, since you know, about 2015 2014, I was from Los Angeles. And since coming to Seattle, I've been working to maintain or to build a, an equitable, you know, artists kind of, you know, because a lot of artists work is unreliable, you know, their shows, there's freelance work, there's, you know, different ways to use my skill set, some of which are, is in live music, but then, in a lot of ways, it's outside of because a lot of music before the pandemic was very unreliable. A lot of even just the the ways of monetizing, that were just so wildly, just just up and down, really, I mean, there's shows where you get once you know, maybe even once a month or every other month, I have guarantees to them, or lino, something that's really substantial. And then for every one of those, there's four, three or four that you know, pay very, very little. And it just feels very arbitrary. So it's hard to really maintain stable finances like music. So, since 2015, to 2019, I was doing those types of gigs shows, video projects, you know, different contract things that involve just doing music and film, but then also doing side work with live events, booking live music, kind of using my skill set in a more stable way. But also not necessarily working a normal job, a job that could always work around my other, you know, either like music shows, or film shoots. So over the course of those five years, the music gigs, and the video projects did start to become more lucrative and more consistent, and the bookings became more consistent. So by 2019, I'd actually started to be steadily booked enough just to have, you know, just enough projects lined up any given time where, you know, it was all pretty equitable, or it was getting to a place is pretty equitable. And then, of course, 2020 happens, and then shows are gone. A lot of projects are gone. The side work has also gone a lot of my side work, day to day was events based, you know, so that was just decimated. So there was a period of just what's going to happen. Because the frustrating kind of played of working, you know, so consistently, you know, for six years to build up a, you know, a workflow that worked for me, you know, that was also financially stable. And then losing all of that was very frustrating.

Kit Heintzman 08:56

Could you talk a bit about how your day to day is looking like, now?

Danny Denial 09:01

Yeah, there's been a lot of ebb and flow. Um, you know, I think the big thing is, there was a period where, I guess I have three stages since the pandemic, there is an earlier stage. You know, in the spring when the pandemic for SIP last year through the summer, where it was just kind of panic and there was a lot there was a huge void in my workflow. There is obviously no side work anymore. Because the first thought is, well, the shows are all gone. And the you know, the video work in the music project gigs are all gone. But maybe there's side work, the decider has also gone because that also relied on the opera scene as well. So there was kind of a process of like regrouping

and figuring out and a lot of inactivity and trying to kind of keep myself busy. And at that point, like the cash flow is really not happening anyway. It was just staggeringly was all gone. And then in the summer, um, I released a project that I had been working on prior to the pandemic, with a label out in New Orleans, and it was already sort of, in the works, so it was this kind of, you know, very tense, anxiety inducing what's going to happen with this project? Luckily, in the summer, like the project did do well. And it was an album release. And I mean, yeah, the album as far as like the, the digital and the vinyl sales did very well actually, it became kind of a, there was a lot of cash flow in those two months. And then on top of that, the the band that I'm in, we started doing live streams, because at that point, that summer live stream started to kind of become organized by community leaders and a few some of the venues that were still kind of adapting to this new model. And some nonprofits and organizations, there were a couple, there's like a handful of them. And so we kind of circulated all of those, again, just like the old world of shows, some were more lucrative than others. We were asked to do things like Seattle Pride and Folsom Street Fair or virtually, they all offered guarantees, but they were much lower, they were much lower than they used to be, because they were they had less sponsors was their rationale. So they're kind of became this like, Okay, we sort of making money off music again, but it wasn't as much as as it was at the end of 2019. And it didn't feel like it was going to last. And it didn't. So it was strange. There's this period where things kind of trended upward again, and then in the fall, you know, after everything kind of been exhausted, he played a live stream avenues, you can't really do them again. And then, of course, when the winter when it started getting colder, again, you know, the numbers, the infection numbers, didn't make live streams kind of feel as safe as they did when they were lower in the summer. So we actually stopped doing those before that they kind of, you know, I think we went back into phase, the stricter phase in Washington with COVID regulations, and all of those avenues shut down anyway. And then what I did towards the end of 2020, was, I was just doing more private, like video work. So I started directing videos for other projects, other bands. And that kind of became the the the last phase, including my own kind of community project that I crowdfunded for, which kind of was a good avenue to avoid having to financially invest, because obviously, it's just not a place that I was in in 2020. So it really for me, like each, each phase kind of kept things afloat, really. And it never got as bad as it was in that earlier phase in the spring, where things kind of all were gone. And so it just became like different ways of adapting to the model different ways to monetize, doing a lot of work here through this pre production meetings, for videos through zoom. I mean, a lot of different, unique different kinds of opportunities, you know, that came through just whether that was, you know, I did everything from virtual workshops that was asked to do to virtual festivals that I was asked to be a part of, to.

Danny Denial 13:33

Yeah, I mean, it kind of just ran the gamut. It was all it was all different kinds of alternative ways of engaging, and being a part of the community and working in the community. But all together, when you look at it, you know, when you look at it, and you step back, like, well, this is all over the place, you know, this is not consistent. But yeah, I mean, luckily, since the summer, I feel like I've kept busy since that period of time. But it's been constantly changing what that is, because really, it feels like no one avenue has the gas to really be full time anymore. It's you know, you do a string of shows or you work on project or you do a few videos, or you're involved in a three week, you know, workshop, you know, or, you know, it's in things just kind of always find a way to replace themselves. So in a way, it's kind of like, you know, I am being just booked and having a booking calendar for myself. Most of it's just here on the computer. Which kind of, you know, I think for someone like me kind of makes it all sort of blend together a little bit. It's hard to contextualize, you know, what am I doing if someone is asking me You know, to state and explain, you know, what my, my job is, as an artist right now, it's a little hard to, to put that down in like concrete terms, because it's all it feels all just very. You Yeah, this feels very

dense and, and all over the place right now. But as a whole, you know, I do think that the productivities is definitely there. Um, and as far as financial stability, you know, it's back to the kind of the old way of what some things are, some things are more lucrative than other things, but the Juggle kind of keeps things mostly, you know, kind of linear. And I'm grateful that, you know, at least everyone is adapting to things, production companies, and venues and, and universities, and, you know, labels, and all of these entities and all these platforms are finding ways to involve people like myself, um, and, and to employ and to utilize. So that's, that's a positive thing. I think everyone's tried to adapt. But it's comparing it to the old way of things, it's definitely harder to it's harder to, to feel real, you know?

Kit Heintzman 16:27

Would you be willing to say more about what working with Seattle Pride was like, during COVID?

Danny Denial 16:32

Yeah. You know, I was really excited to work with with Seattle Pride, because, you know, it's, I think those kinds of institutions that are directly tied to both local community, but specifically like, you know, the black and queer community, in my own city, it's just, it's really important to me, I feel like it it. There's, I mean, yeah, the fact that they kind of see me as someone that could be representative of the community, you know, because it's like, the Seattle Pride lineup is, you know, that's, that's an honor to be asked. So I was really grateful that, you know, that was considered for 2020 to represent that. But definitely, you know, logistically, it was, it was hard, because, you know, it was, it was a newer kind of guinea pig, let's try this COVID model. And I found, I found that a lot, a lot of times, you know, me or my me and my dad, we felt like we were guinea pigs and what we had to be because it's like, well, you're, you know, you have a new album, and you're being active right now. And a lot of people are inactive. So therefore, you must be a guinea pig, in this experiment, how we can do this virtually. And with pride, you know, they, they had a guarantee, and they wanted us to play, but to submit the set, and then dance was the idea. Which makes sense, from their standpoint, makes sense that that, that would be the best way to make that work. But when you ask musicians to sort of produce themselves, it's a whole other world that doesn't happen, the old model of things, you know, you show up to a venue, they have a soundboard, a sound team, you know, like the Booker and a team together, you bring your instruments you bring, you know, your equipment, and you plug everything in, and they run your spat, they run your tech, and then you play. So to sort of do all of that, and then submit it just became a lot more legwork. And I think that we anticipated, and it but you know what it actually, you know, luckily, we had a lot of people in the community who, you know, just wanted to support us getting that produced. So that ended up being a lot less frustrating than producing the Folsom Street Fair segment, while the which that was a very frustrating experience. Seattle Pride. We know we worked with the Woodland Park theatre, who someone who works with my label had a connection there, and they were really busy asking about we'll get this produced for you. So you know, it really wasn't saddled pride that that helped us get that produced. But luckily, it all worked out where you know, just with community help do it able to get that. But the thing is, it's all conditional, because if you don't want that time we did have that help. And then when you don't realize oh my god, this is actually a lot to ask a band to do you know, and to me Folsom Street Fair stream that was a big lesson for me and, and, okay, there's a line where this becomes it becomes so much work we have to question like, is it worth still doing it in this way? You know? Yeah, I don't know if you want me to go into that, but it was.

Kit Heintzman 19:59

If you'd like

Danny Denial 20:00

Yeah, well, I mean, yeah, I'll be honest about I actually made a post about it. Just on my personal page for all of my artist friends who, since I since I was one of the bands of Seattle bands, it was like doing a lot of live streams along with, like Shana Shepard and the black tones, and few of us were doing a lot of streams and things. So I made a post for transparency, because to my peers and people that were not very active in most of them during during 2020 COVID. It seemed like, I was very active, and I was very involved. And it was things were going very well for me. But you know, I wanted to be transparent about the reality that like this, yes, it's great to get to be active and to still play shows and still make some money. But the reality is that, you know, it really feels like working against the grain. And to the point where you really question I don't know if this is worth it, and with Folsom Street Fair, you know, they offered us a guarantee that was half of what the guarantee was originally because they'd have their sponsors. And on top of it, we needed to provide a whole set. I mean, because we're talking originally pre COVID, our conversation with them was going to be a guarantee that was double what they ended up paying us plus travel to San Francisco. That was what was on the table, post COVID. In the summer, they said, We can do half of that for you to produce your sentence admitted, the thing is producing the sentence submitting it ended up costing so much money, because we wanted to do we want it to mean as a band, we have to record this set somewhere. And you know, a band doesn't want to be on a national festival, recording or garage. So we want it to work with another LGBTQ friendly venue, many weren't open. And we worked with the timber room, which is attached to a building called cram work. And I'd worked with them before. And understandably, they had their, their rental fee, they wanted to use their sound person turned out the sound person that was required and have couldn't record audio that was in the pre recorded set so that we had hired a second sound person. And it was the whole thing just became a technical nightmare, a financial disaster. And then Folsom Street Fair, only ended up pairing, they recut the package set and only aired parts of it. And it was just in the whole bandwidth just kind of just oh my god, you know, it was it was a really frustrating experience. Because we were all really excited about it. And I think because we really wanted to do it, you know, in that pressure of like, we can't say no to something like that. So, you know, we, we, we jumped through all the hoops to make it work. And then it really just felt like it backfired. So you know, I made a social media post just saying, you know, for transparency, you know, just so everyone knows, like, something like that, that looks like an amazing opportunity. The reality of it is that, you know, we were paid \$700 And we spent \$600. And they aired half of it, you know, and it's and it's that's that's the reality of it, you know. And so it definitely makes you stop and think, you know, as that was our last live stream, and we had done, we did seven in the summer we did a lot.

Danny Denial 23:24

We did pride ban in Seattle high dive set a screen, pump back to the festival, Folsom Street Fair, the ver project had their own pride, and oh, big building bash at Inscape Arts building, that was one of actually the few successful ones because that was a community driven, live stream that was packaged like a show they did every other week. And they had their they had a production team, they had, you know, a full team, you show up at the Inscape Arts building, they have it they set it up for you. And then they ran a Venmo handles and donations, which you would think if the stream doesn't do well, that's kind of useless, but they did a really good job with marketing their show. And our stream was being streamed, I mean, like it was streamed by, like 1000 2000 people, and they reraised I mean, we got like \$500 in demo, you know, just from our 30 minutes set. So that to me was like a more successful, like, it felt like it was worthwhile, and it was a positive experience. Um, but that was not the case for most of them. So especially the streams that required submitting your own package set is felt like, you know, after those experiences, we like stepped back and said, Okay, these are going to be our terms, because we're not going to lose any more on this. Like we're not going to go backwards, you know, because it's you

worked. You work so hard to get to a certain place and you'd be like, wait a minute, we're not going to go backwards. We're not going to get degress to where we're losing money to play shows again, like five years years ago. So, you know, we just said, Okay, well, if there's any festival that wants wants us to play, if they want us to produce a set, it's gonna be like, you know, \$1,200 something like, you know, this is our price there, they want to show up in play, it's gonna be, you know, you know, 400 \$500 for them to do everything, not just show up, if they want us to, you know, it's under 400, then it's going to be me acoustically. And if it's going to be like, I've we set up, these are our price points, you know, and so, you know, and the thing is, like, since then we haven't, nothing was really come through that has really kind of measured up to that to that tear. So we just say no, you know, and, and that's okay, with me, I'm just, I think, until things kind of either gonna get a bit more solidified and a little bit more. Because, you know, like, every once in a while, there will be opportunities where things come through, and it's, it may work, you know, or it may be something that makes sense for us. But I think, I think, after playing and trying to adapt to COVID, so much with live music, I think, you know, you just get to a point where you realize, okay, like, I've got to, I've got to put my foot down, you know, and that's kind of where I'm at with those I've stayed very busy with, and, you know, like, to that ML there, there have been, or programs where, you know, they couldn't accommodate that, but they could accommodate me to an acoustic set. So I'll sit on my couch and do an acoustic set and record that for them. And you know, and that's, that's fine. You know, it's not the ideal, but it's, that's most of what I've done since October for music. So since October, I haven't played a full band show. And, yeah, there's a couple things that we're talking about potentially, maybe doing them. But yeah, I mean, I think I think it's one of those things where we really do would love to be able to do those again. But it just not, the model isn't quite there yet. You know, I think, and people were getting there, but then the ebb and flow of COVID. And reality of that kind of made it impossible to you know, infection rates had stayed down since September, then maybe we would have be someplace, but we had to shut down again, November. And we're only just now reopening, although I don't. I mean, I don't think anyone's playing any real shows anytime soon. But if the live streams are kind of, you know, broached again, which, quite frankly, I'm not really seeing live streams really coming back the way they did in the summer yet, which is interesting, because legally they can. So it's interesting that you know, it must not be just me that had the issues that you know, we had. So, you know, I think there's a lot of there's a lot of restoration that used to happen. And I think a lot of yeah, there's a lot of legwork that needs to be done, because I think the way that it was the way that we were trying to adapt wasn't really cutting it.

Danny Denial 28:13

And for me, as a musician, I think, you know, I would love to return to playing shows, but I do feel like, you know, after the experience had the past year, I don't think that's going to be part of my productivity model for the for the near future. Which is okay, because luckily for me, you know, I am multimedia oriented, I do just as much fun work as I do music work. So I have peers of mine who are here musicians who Yeah, I mean, they're just they're recording at home, and they're doing things like that, but they're not really engaging, you know, with music the way they used to. And I think that it would be a lot harder for me if I was kind of in one camp. But since since the fall, I've definitely been doing a lot more film work. But, you know, of course, my, my work is really intersectional music and film. So what I've been doing a lot of is either working with bands who are trying to create visuals and do them in a way because a lot of the bands that that have hired me have like, you know, are a fan of the videos that I've had, you know, the music videos that I've had and they haven't really done music videos in the past and they don't know what to do because they can't play shows and music videos are this like a new adventure, you know of like, safely safely making content that can engage with people. So that's that's kind of a lot of the, the freelance work that I've been doing, which is interesting because it's all just, you know, it's all kind of from the same wallet, people that are trying to adapt and trying to kind of make their own platforms a little

bit um, which you know, I empathize with so it's, it's a lot of I think people just trying to to work together in new ways, you know, which is kind of, at least at the very least, it's, it's inspiring to see like, community sort of trying to get a creative together. Because yeah, this, the pandemic has just kind of created these huge roadblocks, like, how can you navigate this, while still staying in the lines. And it's really hard, because then, you know, when you're being active, and you're doing things, you know, you have to, you have to be mindful, you know, and careful. And, you know, you don't want something like, at the end of the day, it's like, creating a shoot, or a show or project, like, it's, it's not worth any, anyone potentially being exposed to COVID to so there's added, you know, pressure of, you know, navigating COVID safety on top of everything else. So I'm finding that like, the biggest thing about this pandemic, is, I think a lot of people like me have had to wear, like, all these new hats have all these new things, you know, like, now I'm a, you know, manager and Health Safety Inspector, and they, you know, it's just, it's, it's a lot of just learning new jobs.

Kit Heintzman 31:19

What do you remember about first hearing about the pandemic, and what the beginning was like?

Danny Denial 31:25

Um, I remember. I remember, one of my best friends was very, like, very, very, like, anxious and concerned, since the Christmas or December about what's happening and who had. So that was my first memory of it is just having him just like wearing face masks, and, you know, Christmas time, and I'm just like, are you seeing what this is? You know, I don't think this is gonna be like that, you know, I think at the time, people were worried about, about, you know, potential war happening, you know, and so he was, he was, he was definitely kind of like feeding a little bit of that. So I started following the news on it a little bit. So I was kind of watching it. And when it spread in Europe and said, Okay, you know, I guess I could get here and then, you know, just hoping I remember there's appeared, I was just like, I hope, I really hope it doesn't get to be, you know, stateside in the US. And then I remember in February hearing about that cruise ship, and thinking, Oh, God, it's gonna it's gonna come to the US. And, you know, and then I think at some point, there was the Italy story about, you know, the meaning the quarantine. And then. And I think, for me, I remember, in the start of March, when the first cases were talked about here in California and Washington, that's now it's just Oh, God. And I remember talking to friends about it, like, this is really bad. You know, I really hope that they contain this, like, they just got to contain this. And but I still didn't ever think that it would like, completely be widespread. Like I actually I just thought it was going to be like, they're going to have to create quarantines that contain this, I don't know why I had such faith and like, this will, this will be somehow contained. And then I remember I went to Portland in March production, my very first feature screening at a festival, which was the portly International Film Festival. So excited, because my feature film was screening there. And COVID was, it was just like, I was just like, like, you know, I was just running in, I just felt like it was happening. And I'm just like, Okay, let me just get through this festival, you know, because this is my first festival. And I was wearing gloves everywhere. And then the day of my screening, we get there in Portland. And then we go to the screening programs, and then our screenings the next day. And then I remember waking up in the morning of the 14th of March. And then I was just all the rest of the programs are all canceled, starting with this screen. And I just remember being like to so like, I felt like I would the universe just like struck me down like oh my god, you know. And then I remember after that moment we had, I was gonna come back to Seattle for two shows. That weekend, actually, one was a festival. And I remember actually, that week throughout the week, me and my band were arguing we, we were in disagreement about playing the show, and one of the festival directors because they were festival that was from Atlanta. And they called me at one point and they were asking, you know how everyone felt about this COVID thing you know, and if they'd be okay playing and I

remember like, it became this really awkward situation where it was an email thread first with me and all of the bands. And it was just a de offer comfortable playing the show on the on the ticket was going to be on the 16th the 15th or 16th. And all the bands are like yeah, like we're fine. That's totally fine. It's no problem and band members in mind. banned or just like, this is, you know, really bad, like, we should not participate in a event that tells people to come together. Like this is a very serious virus. And it's weird because I've been following it, you know, for a month or so. But I still was like, in denial, I guess, about the fact that it was here now, you know, I just thought it's only a couple cases, like, it'll probably get there, but let's just do everything we can do before we have to. I think that was my mindset, like this is all gonna, like it's a it's a domino effect happening. But let's just like, let's just like, grab as much as we can, before it takes, it takes everything. And so I think, yeah, I was thinking, like, can we still play it? Can we just do this last show, you know, which now in hindsight, you know, like, I don't know, I don't know why I was trying to hold on to things. But it was, again, my first film festival, this other great music festival wanted to do another show, and then my bandmates.

Danny Denial 35:54

With the other show, not the festival, the second show that we had, basically sort of went rode and canceled on our behalf. And the other band was playing was our friends. And so whether ban was like your bandmates canceled for the show, and then wait, I don't know why they did that. That's not we didn't decide fully talking about it. Um, so it actually really kind of created a little bit of this, you know, frustrating kind of inner turmoil. And then, you know, we pulled out of the festival saying, Look, we have band members that are comfortable. And, you know, we kind of just pulled the our band category, and we're all in disarray, sorry, we just can't do this. And then the festival got canceled the next day. So it's like, and the other show, they both got canceled. So it sucked, because we kind of imploded and then the next day, because those shows are like you decide. And it's like, Why do bands have to be I remember talking about this with my friend, that was the other band. He was like, why do we have to be like the health seat like, Don't the venues have, like, they're the ones that are, you know, public facilities, they should be making these judgment calls and telling us, you know, come or don't come. So um, that was a really frustrating week. But that was a really rough few days between the film festival in Portland, and then the shows in Seattle. So I remember coming back to Seattle, and just like just seeing everything gone, you know, canceled, canceled, canceled, canceled canceled, what am I gonna do? Um, so yeah, came back to Seattle, and everything was canceled, but it was a one fell swoop, every show to the summer that we had booked. And, you know, I think a lot of the conversation was, I remember then was like, Let's push everything to make. And by May, it'll be fine. So remember, that was the rationale behind making my solo album come out in June versus April, like, originally it was because by June, we can have a release show. But June, it'll be it'll be it'll be gone. Genuinely, I remember, I remember. We had so many conversations. I mean, the whole month of March was just me on the, like, phone with this person. And that person is like, like, you know, coordinating what we're going to do where what shows are going to be moved where this really is going to happen here. And then, you know, April happens and then getting the May I don't think this is gonna be over to the other man. Just came like this, ya know? And then and then me, you know, cuz I, I bagged the label, Christian records did a solo release, and they they hadn't done all of the vinyls already with their distributor. Is there any way that we can push this gift? Can we just push this? And then, you know, it's just like to want to win? Like, when do you want to push this? Do you know? And it's like, I don't know, whenever we can do a show. And it's just, you know, I don't think I don't think that's going to happen anytime soon. You know, major label people are shelving their releases indefinitely, like they're just, they can't tour so they're just like no one is releasing anymore. Um, I mean, I think some did, but I know a lot of people just did that where they just, you know, didn't release and they just held off on it. Or they just kept releasing one song every four months without releasing the album. But for me, I just felt

like okay, I guess, you know, you're right. What's the point of holding on to this until it's so old? So just, you know, fuck it, just release it, you know, it's fine. We'll just accept it. And then, you know, and then June and July happened. And then we got a little bit of an oasis with a live stream the things and yeah, it felt like we got to redo some things for it. So it all kind of worked out in a way that I didn't expect and it wasn't normal, but was definitely better than it would be if it was April. So yeah, from there, it just became like everything changing every month, just another you know, another phase of the same kind of thing which is adapting to the curve and finding a new way and it never really became this big surprise and things, they canceled their you know, it became part of the expectation. From that point on that anything, you book, anything you coordinate, anything could get canceled, because if anyone tests positive for COVID, or infection rates go up, or the venue gets shut down, because the big they just can't, you know, it's it was always, it just always felt like that was built into the plan, you know? Because two years ago, but I've never not like, you know, how do you plan things like, you know, it shows and tours and shoots? Like, how do you plan those with the expectation that they could just get canceled?

Danny Denial 40:38

So, yeah, it's, it's been a huge just learning experience. And, and, you know, I did a podcast, like, two or three months ago, and they asked me about, you know, you know, what's it like, being one of the active people during COVID, doing, you know, shows or projects and, you know, videos and albums and things, and it's, and I just said, you know, it's, it's, it's one of those things where you feel like, you're great, some days, you're grateful to get to have something to do. And then other days, you just want to quit and just go, like, do what other people are doing, and just go into hibernation for a year, or, you know, like, I have so many friends that used to be heavily involved in the arts community, and, you know, now you want to check in with them, it's like, all my med school now, you know, where I'm just or I moved back home across to the East Coast, and I had no idea, they just were really quiet. And I didn't realize that so many community members are just this, this opted out of this whole or the whole thing, you know, which when you think about it is just sort of like, you know, wow, because this was, this was a community that you would see every day, you know, it was, it was it was, you know, people that were the, you know, musicians and filmmakers, we all just, you know, he was, we were all just right here in the city. And we would go to car shows and events, and like, festivals and galleries, and, you know, and all these things. And now, if we were to have those things, again, those faces wouldn't be there. Half of them, you know, they're they're just gone, people have really just disappeared. And I don't think we feel that because we're not having that face to face anymore. So it's only when personally I look for people to go, Hey, like, you know, when I was doing this web series project that I did, where, you know, again, it became getting the tap in with people again, and it was all very limited because of COVID. So I couldn't, you know, involve as many people as I wanted, it was very limited, and you know, like to wear masks and whatnot. But, you know, it became an opportunity to get to see people in the community again, and I can't tell you like, how many people I reached out to, and it was just like, oh, you know, I don't actually live in Seattle anymore. I'm actually med school full time. And I'm going to COVID bubble, so I can't do anything, you know, arts related. So there was a lot of that. And I was like, Oh, wow, I I learned so much about people who just aren't like, in the game anymore. They're not in the pocket anymore. Um, and I understand why I get it. Because I've had those moments where I feel like, Oh, God, I just want to get get out of this, you know, this, this, this, this labyrinth thing. So, it's, it's a mixed bag. It's a really mixed bag. Um, I feel like for me, you know, I've always really, like doing arts projects, and being involved in making things is always what's what's fueled me. And, you know, ironically, I definitely, I, when I started doing art, and I did, I did it before Seattle, when I was in LA, but it was a little bit different. I was kind of all over the place, it really wasn't until I got to Seattle, I really had everything together. And I think that was kind of why I came to Seattle, it's kind

of a place right to kind of track that start, start clean, I know what I'm doing now. And, you know, start that trajectory. And I really kind of like steadily did like things kind of progressively got more and more successful and consistent. And I think, you know, I think it also kind of building a trust, both like in the community of people like knowing what I'm doing and trusting what I'm doing and supporting what I'm doing. And, you know, I think in a lot of ways, like I never really was doing it to have a stable income or to get to be making money. But I did find that over a period of time I realized, well, you know, I want to do this with my life. Well, that's a, that's a part that's going to have to, you know, develop itself is the stability of it, you know, we're talking about things like getting older and having health care, like it's a reality like, you know, it's it's it goes beyond the roof, the romantic aspect of being artists like it has to be sustainable. Um, and I think it's interesting that COVID is happening now at a time I think I've kind of fully both figured out the realities of what being an artist means or working artists means and figuring out the how. And then on top of it, having all of those models be ripped away, figure it out again, start again, go back to zero, figure it out again.

Danny Denial 45:19

It's just like, Ah, okay, because you know, if, I don't know, I don't know what's better. I don't know if I was doing what I was doing. From 2015 to 2020 in 2005 to 2010. And I got to live that life for 10 years, and now I had to do this. I don't know if that would be better. Or the flipside. Like what if 2015 was my 2020 Like, I know so many artists that were just starting out like now, you know, people that would send me messages on Instagram or say, Hey, I'm starting a band and I you know, love what you're doing and I want to like follow like, your path, like, how did you do this, how did you do that? And then, you know, that's you know, in the past year, you know, 2019 or so 2019 or so, and then they're starting for the first time, and then COVID starts, you know, and I don't know, maybe they're in a better place, because they, they are starting from zero at zero with everyone else. So maybe they'll figure out the new way that things are going to be and they'll have, they'll have the jump on the curve a little bit. I talk about it a lot with my drummer and dark Smith is that, you know, it's it's a weird place that we were in because it felt like we were kind of, we paid the initial dues, you know, your first few years, and then you start to get the momentum. And then you get put back. So it's a weird place to be in because you know, what it was like to get paid, you know, \$2,000 to play a show. But, you know, and you don't want to go back, but you're not, you know, you're not, you know, you're not a name, you're not, you know, on a major label, or you're not, you know, big time producer or have a you know, it's not one of those things. If you're not, you're not in that camp. So being like a, an underground mid level, kind of like local entity, it's like, okay, it starts to kind of feel a little bit like a smoke show, because the community kind of feels like, oh, you know, you're active. So you're doing things, but it's like, no, I mean, we're all having a really hard, hard go at it, you know. And it's interesting how I think this pandemic has also turned into kind of like a bit of a transparency, check with all of us. You know, I remember when I made that post about the Folsom Street Fair show, it started a dialogue with a lot of other musicians, you know, because like my peers in Seattle, like I mentioned, the black tone Seamus Shepard, like, you know, taco cat, like other Seattle, you know, folks that people really love and really support. And it became like us having conversations about like, well, how's it going for you? And you know, and it's, because it seems like you're doing great, but it's like, I think some people think I'm doing great, but I don't feel like I'm doing great. And it's like, yeah, you know, people are frustrated. There's once in a while there's like, these little windfalls that come through. And I know me and Shane have talked about this, where it's like, yeah, once in a while, there's one there was one really cool thing. But then, you know, for every one of those, there's like, five live streams I do for free, you know, as you said, and it's and, you know, to me, honestly, I was surprised because I felt like, it seemed like she was getting these like, really big, you know, and she she she did 1000 chains thing, mo pop and did a lot of like, you know, things with a lot of great big bands, you know, Duff Mckagan Pearl Jam, and you know, so to me, as a

peer, I'm like, well, you're doing, you're doing awesome, you're killing it, you know, you must be monetizing this really well. But I know that that's not, that's not the reality. So yeah, I don't know, I'm really curious about how other people are doing. Because I know in this age of social media, and everything kind of being very, like image image conscious and image heavy. I think there's this idea that artists need to display productivity and always having a thing and always, you know, and that just really gets really exhausting, especially when you're not all of your work is just so you know, in this screen, you know, just it feels like yeah, it's, it's really frustrating. Um, but the flip side is, if I wasn't doing anything, if I was just, you know, on vacation or hibernating, or just, you know, going to med school or something, I just, I don't, I would be very frustrated by not having any of it. So, what do you do? Like what is the solution? And I hope that this is a transitional era where, you know, I think I do worry that I do worry that

Danny Denial 50:00

The way that the culture has responded to this strain on the Arts, which, honestly, honestly, feels kind of callous and really like, ignoring it really, that makes me worry that, you know, I think that that a lot of the support and funding and those things may not come back, maybe, you know, like, if they're letting kind of a lot of the arts and die on life support the way they are right now, then I worry that when things like shows return or whatnot, I mean, I think realistically, the arts will, will, will, we'll preserve your find a way to write regardless of, you know, anyone stepping in and saving, saving music, as always campaigns I've been saying, but it is it is telling that they've kind of just had to be on pause. And a lot of ways. And I wonder, you know, if, if, if we, like, if shows, it shows the way they are, can't just come back, and things are gonna have to be adapted or scaled down. And a lot of people on my level can't make a profit anymore, than I think a lot of people on my level just won't do it anymore. So then I wonder, I wonder what's going to happen to like, yeah, the, the surviving artists, you know, the, the artists that kind of gets by on having the one or two big shows, you know, a month or, you know, playing the just coastal tours, or, you know, that sort of thing. Because that's a model that I think a lot of people are just sort of skating by on, you know, a lot of people that seem like they're doing quite well, or at least highly respected. You know, and I think a lot of people don't realize that they just look at a band, you know, that's on even bands that are on like, subpop, or whatever here, where they say, Oh, they're doing great, and it's well, it's, it's no, they're, they make their money on playing the shows, like, you know, that's that's the reality of it, because music sales don't translate anymore. You know, even the music that sells well on Bandcamp. It's like, Yeah, I mean, I could pay my rent on it for the first two months, it was out. And then after that, most people have the album, you know, and then the people that discover along the way, you're not, that's not paying, that's not paying the bills anymore. So it just becomes this kind of hard reality of, if you're going to do it for life as a lifestyle. How are you going to sustain it, if those If those things aren't in place anymore? So yeah, I mean, I've, I've been trying to kind of waited out a little bit in those ways. And at the same time, try to use this this waiting period of time to experiment with maybe creating new platforms. My focus in the last few months of the last few months of 2020. And now these first few months, and 2021 has been this community driven web series project bazooka that basically just compiles all of the musicians of color and bipoc, fronted bands and musicians, and kind of creates this narrative, musical visual document a little bit. That also then includes things like a Compilation Soundtrack, that we're trying to raise money for King County equity now, but we're also crowdfunding to produce the series itself. And the goal is to get enough funding to pay all of the artists because just like me, I know that those opportunities aren't out there. So, you know, and we partnered with the central saloon here, and they've provided the venue so we can record the performances. And, and you know, right now, where we're at right now is that we've raised a couple \$1,000 enough to pay the, you know, the people, it's a limited people that we can get an because of COVID. But on a micro scale, it's like I'm seeing some potential there. But you know, we'd have to

secure additional funding. So we're now moving to grants. And yeah, both like local and national grants, and we're trying to see if partnerships could provide just finding new wells. So if we can kind of create this idea of a, of a collective, you know, here we all are, how can we monetize for all of us? That's kind of an experimental venture that I'm working on right now, while I'm waiting to see what the larger model does. And, you know, I think there is nothing to lose in a sense because that that out there is still not change anyway. So, you know, while we wait to see what's going to happen on a larger scale, what can we do on a smaller scale? And the jury's still out, as of March 2021.

Kit Heintzman 54:54

It's been a persistent refrain throughout 2020 and now into 2021. That's been a big year, exceeding the issue of COVID-19. And I'm wondering what some of the other big issues on your mind have been over the last year?

Danny Denial 55:09

Yeah, I would say, me, definitely, I think the, the recognition of the social rights movement, and Black Lives Matter has been a huge part of it. And I think, you know, for whatever reason, whether whether the pandemic leaned into it, you know, a little bit, which I think it did, I think it exposed a lot of glaring like inequities that were in place on the way that our society is built in the way that people are expected to preserve your when they like those privileges, now, we're just kind of jumping right out, you know, and I think that's a good thing, because I think a lot of people were a little shielded from that, in, you know, for me, it was a little bit of a, it was tricky, because a lot of the things are things that I, you know, have been seeing and saying and expressing even just in my work for a while, and then all of a sudden, there seemed to be this, like public interest. And, and it was kind of hard to grapple with, okay. I guess it was hard to grapple with how to incorporate that and elevate that without being exploitive at the same time. And, you know, and I know that, obviously, it's, you know, and I know, there was a lot of exploiting happening with corporations and companies and, and even just people co-opting the movement, you know, just to promote. And to me, like, that is just, it's, it's seeing a lot of that was so frustrating, although I knew that it's, it's unnecessary, not necessary, but it's just, it's an it's a natural evil that comes with any, anything that kind of gains, you know, traction like that.

Danny Denial 56:55

But for me, like, I was having a hard time, because I felt like on one hand, it's things that I was always championing and saying, but now, they're at the forefront and also just as far as identity politics of it, just being a black artist. And, and, quite frankly, a lot of people just like, asking me and, and, and just putting me on all these lists and things. And it kind of felt a little confusing for a moment. Just okay, hold on, let me just get my thoughts together here. Yeah, because in a lot of ways, like, I did feel like a lot of the attention in the summer, because I obviously had an album coming out. But then at the same time, the summer was a hotbed for a lot of the Black Lives Matter. Movement progress that was made, both in Washington and across the world, really, I mean, I had people that were messaging me, you know, from, like, the UK saying that, Oh, we knocked down a statue like, and it's like, and they're telling me, like, you know, checking in with me to let me know. And it's just, you know, and I get it, because on one hand, people were looking for just like black artists to like, be representatives of you know, how they can get plugged into this. And since my work has already always been kind of politically charged, I had a hard time knowing which way to lean with it, you know. And that's why I think it took me a while to kind of find my footing again, because I was really actively involved in the local protests here in Seattle, and the autonomous zone and all that was happening in the summer. But I had a really hard time. Integrating my artist self with that, like, a lot of my peers, for example, who are artists and musicians of color? Like would

would, we'd play music there. And like, in partner, we don't actually like involve their artists selves. I and I really didn't. I was asked a few times, I really feel comfortable because when I was there, I was like, I want to do this as like a citizen and an activist and I don't. And it was it not to say that, that my peers who did there was anything wrong with that. And there wasn't, and I think, you know, there there, there could be people who approach it exploitively, you know, and I think the plight of the artists is that there's this pressure that when you have an opportunity taken into me, I just felt like I don't want to be using this movement to like, propel myself in any way. Not that I think there's anything wrong with any artists that are doing that I just had a hard time personally myself. Like, I just, I just wanted to just be true to like the moment and to like my own catharsis in that experience, after things kind of kind of swelled a little bit here. Anyway, I think I found a way to sort of talk back a little bit. And a lot of the current project that I'm working on the web series project has been a lot of that which has been kind of fun. Because honestly, the whole project was a reaction to that experience, because I felt like a lot of a lot of artists of color were being used as sort of this, like talking point in response to Black Lives Matter. And that was kind of dysphoric, because it felt like, I wasn't hearing black voices, I was hearing white voices talking about black artists. So I felt like, Okay, this is where the culture is, or quite frankly, kind of was, because we've already seen a shift away from that, which again, was dysphoric, on top of what that initial experience was, because then it feels like, oh, where we all just been used for all these lists, and these things, because I can't tell you every day in June in July, I was tagged within, like, another article or a list about these are the black artists, you need to support [makes sounds], but they just became, it became something that I didn't know how to respond to, because it just felt like, it wasn't about me, it was about it was it was this kind of mass virtue signaling in a lot of ways, but then some of it was rooted in, in a positive thing, you know, that was actually like, changing that conversation a little bit. So I try to look at it positively. But my own, like my own orientation, and it was hard to reconcile.

Danny Denial 01:00:23

So afterwards was when I found a way to talk back to all of it, and in that way, was letting me tap in and, and kind of collaborate with all these other people that I feel like had a similar experience, and let's make something together. You know, that's not really necessarily just promoting, you know, just my music or my, it's all of us. And that, to me felt like the right way. For me, for me, in particular. So yeah, and I mean, in the irony is, by the time we kind of figured all that out, it felt like the culture as a whole moved on, you know, and, and I, in a weird way that kind of emboldened that feeling of well, let's remind them, you know, so, social issues have definitely been at the forefront. I think that they always will be I think it happens in waves. I think that I think that the election in 2020, distilled a lot of things for for people, I think there without, without getting too political, I think that people want it to feel safer again. And I think that, in a lot of ways, looking at someone like Donald Trump as like the boogeyman, and getting him out of office was kind of this big win that now we can just heal from. And I think that was sort of a watershed moment in the, to me, the white and black American experience, because I feel like my, you know, white peers felt differently about that than they, my, my peers of color did. And I think we're still reconciling that. And I think the art, the art that comes from, from all of us is also going to reflect on that too. And I think it already has been. So that's why I really do think it's important that the arts is able to stay afloat or find new platforms, because I think the things that people are going through, are going to create really valuable works, you know, and I know, for me, it's definitely been informing everything that I've been creating and doing. It's hard to separate it now, you know, because it's like, this was the, this is the everyday lived experience. And in a lot of ways, you know, there's not, there's not there's a lot of distractions that aren't there anymore, you know, you know, socializing and seeing people and playing shows, and all these things are in there. So we're really kind of left to deal with ourselves and our, our humanity and the infrastructures that has been put in place, and my questioning, like, why they're there, like, why are things like this? Why does a pandemic has to handicap you

know, certain people, but then seemingly help other people who are actually getting richer, you know, why is that the case? Like why are we living in a world that, you know, just not only wasn't equipped for this, but just, you know, widens that gap? So yeah, I think I think I think being exposed to these things and getting angry about these things is all part of I think a catharsis that probably needed to happen. I would have to find one positive thing about this shared pandemonium is pandemic

Kit Heintzman 01:04:55

May ask what health means to you?

Danny Denial 01:04:58

What health means to me? I would say like, I would say, yeah, to me, I would say health means security, you know, just knowing that, knowing that you'll have a way to kind of continue to preserve. You know, it's, it's kind of scary when you think about the idea of, you know, not, you know, doing doing doing arts and being a musician and playing shows, you know, when you're just out of school, like you're 21, you know, is, you don't really think about the realities of all these things, you know, you don't really think about getting older, and dealing with different health things, whether it's illnesses, or chronic pain, or, or cancer, or family, or all these things that happen in life, you just don't really start to think about it. Until I think you get, you know, until you get older. And I know, for me, when I look at people that I just really admire, who, you know, are artists that I admire, who are maybe, you know, a decade or two older than me, you know, and just seeing, like, the things that they go through just being older, you know, whether that's going through illnesses, and you know, sharing their experience with battling yeah, battling a chronic condition. And, to me, it's like, that really does stop and make me think, you know, that kind of enforces this fear of like, okay, like, I gotta, I gotta get some things in place, you know, to kind of find that security because health health isn't I think the biggest thing is health isn't guaranteed, is where I think we start to learn, which I never thought about before. But it just starts to feel like a ticking clock eventually, it's something like, there'll be some need for some help somewhere. They don't know when that is, I've been very lucky knock on wood, but it's like, going knock on wood for so long. So, you know, I, I yeah, I don't know, it's something that I definitely being more mindful of. And I think the pandemic has illuminated that a little bit, you know, just put that in my mind a little bit more.

Kit Heintzman 01:07:34

How do you perceive, with that sort of definition in mind, how do you perceive the current medical infrastructure to be addressing COVID-19?

Danny Denial 01:07:42

To be addressing?

Kit Heintzman 01:07:44

Yeah.

Danny Denial 01:07:46

I mean, I feel like it's pretty clear that our current medical infrastructure is not equipped, like i It seems like, all you hear about is how overwhelmed and how just shortchanged and kind of buckling that the system is. And, you know, and it's kind of alarming that, you know, I think, as a culture lead, we kind of just ignored all of that, you know, it not only ignored but like, disbelief to, you know, it's kind of a boggles my mind, you know, my, my own

sister thinks that, you know, those pictures of or did, maybe not anymore, but at some point, was thinking that those pictures of, you know, hallways being filled with bed weren't real, you know, because but I think that's something that we as people that aren't, you know, ill or in dire need, you know, or in ER, or, you know, in hospitals or COVID have the luxury of, you know, again, like ignorances is bliss does not seem to be out of sight out of mind, until have until it happens to you. Like I have a friend who I don't know of someone I met online, just through music and whatnot, who lives in a different state. But I know that he was he was diagnosed COVID. And then he was hospitalized, and he was posting updates about it. And it was scary. He was in hospital for a long time. And all he would just kept saying was you just you just don't believe it's real until it's you and then you're in there and then you don't can't grasp that like this is a life or death situation. And you know, I'm absolutely guilty of the same thing. I can't wrap my head around it either. And I think that you have to you have to really question what you know, what our, what our infrastructure is equipped and equipped to do. You know, given that so many people, I mean, there have been so many deaths, just in the past three months, so many people I know have died or no or no have have died of just medical issues that are not COVID related. And to me, that's really telling, you know, that's like, more people I know, have died of medical related non COVID deaths than anything else. So to me that says, obviously, people aren't able to get medical attention, you know, and so, you know, if God forbid, if COVID is the may not be the only pandemic that we have to deal with the next few years. What does that mean for, like, all of us as a society that what does that mean for people dealing with illnesses and, and conditions? And, you know, and, you know, the guarantee of being treated is no longer there. That's terrifying to think about, let alone for someone that doesn't have reliable health care like this even someone that that does. But yeah, I mean, that. It just, it feels like there's a whole generation of people that that are just sort of biding time a little bit, you know,

Kit Heintzman 01:10:57

How are you feeling about the immediate future?

Danny Denial 01:11:07

That's a tough question. I would say it's strange, if it's not, there, there are good days and bad days, you know, kind of like when you're going through something really traumatic or losing a loved one or a breakup, or you just have days, where some days, it's just so bad. You're just like, Oh, my God, you can't do this. And then some days, okay, I know, I'll get through this, like, it's not good right now. But I know that there is, you know, I think this is just a distilled period of that. And, and, you know, I think it's gone on for so long, that there's almost this like, lived kind of numbness a little bit that's at this point, you know, we're, we stopped talking about when things open up again, or when did that happen? You know, I know, I've stopped doing I used to say, oh, when, when that we should do this, you know, to everyone, anyone that I message or talk to or have a phone call with. And there's less of that now, because it's just like, let's just stop the speculating and the planning and calidat is just impossible. I've tried to stop planning really is the big is the big part, you know, is, is making big plans, and just sort of following the wave a little bit, letting things kind of happen. And I think that has helped. Letting go of the control, you know, I'm someone that you seem to have my whole year planned out, you know, my whole everything, just in March, we're going to do a tour, and then in May we do album, and then in December, we'll do a video, you know, it's, that's, that's gone. That's not something I hold on to anymore. And yeah, and I think I think from there, it's just, it's, it's all just very wait and see. So I would say I don't feel optimistic about the future. I don't feel like it's all doom and gloom, either. I have things that I hope for. And I think that, you know, there is a possibility for things to get better. There's also part of me that thinks, you know, maybe, maybe I may be getting to a point where it is time to, to step away for a little while and pop back in, you know, in a few months. You know, I start

to kind of question, this mode of working and, you know, taking out doing video things and doing like that, maybe maybe do something else for a little while for a few months. I have? Yeah, I think I think I have some ideas that maybe ways that I could make, make the work a little less requiring me to be on the field and do things, you know, maybe I can do some more virtual kind of, yeah, maybe just something that's a little bit different. Which I don't really know exactly what that is yet. But you know, I think part of me will, almost wants to explore traveling when it's a little bit safer, and maybe stepping away from being just in Seattle for a little while and coming back when things are a little bit more sustainable. But that's definitely something I've been hearing a lot from my peers to is just wanting to just get out of here and just sort of like do something different for a little while. And I'm feeling that too and I think, I don't know if that is quite the answer. It could be. But I do feel like regardless of what happens, I mean, I do have faith in myself in the sense of like I will find the right thing to do at the right time. So I think if anything, the last year has kind of taught me that like, you know, no matter what happens, I'll find a way to adapt to, to whatever it is, regardless of I want to continue being as productive as I am, or I want to do things a different way, and maybe, you know, take take a step back, and then, you know, take a break, period. But yeah, I think, whatever, I decide that based on the few things that I'm looking out for in the world vaccination rates like this, you know, all these things that I'm kind of watching, and waiting to kind of make some decisions about, I have at least the faith that things will all kind of pan out in a way that, you know, I can, I can work with, you know, whatever that is, because it could be very little, or hopefully, it's more, you know, but I think that, you know, it's, I look at everything like barometer of what we had, we have as much as we did last summer, versus how much we had an April 2020, which was nothing, you know, so I think I have a bunch of possible plans, and I'm not really married to any of them, which is a good place to be in, because I think, for me, the hardest thing, like the soul crushing loss of like, not being able to do the thing you wanted to do the way you wanted to do it, I think that's what I kind of like, go over with COVID. And now what I have instead is possibilities of things I would like to explore, you know, that I need to, I need to kind of have a willingness to explore either of them, you know, depending on the outcome that we're living in. So it's, it's definitely a freeing in some ways, you know, to kind of take the control out of your own hands, you know, because you got to roll with the cards, you're dealt a little bit, it's kind of like playing back.

Kit Heintzman 01:16:59

Would you be willing to share some of the ways that you've been taking care of yourself over the last year?

Danny Denial 01:17:05

Um, yeah. Do you mean, did you be taking care of myself emotionally or physically or

Kit Heintzman 01:17:11

Any way that matters to you?

Danny Denial 01:17:13

Well, I guess I mean, health wise, I've been very, very COVID conscious, like, you know, wearing masks everywhere I go, whenever I'm working, you know, in a shoe, I, I'll do double mask and visors, you know, I'll just have extra layers on. And yeah, just really being very careful about my health. You know, just because this is not a good time to be sick, so I'm gonna turn to the hospital. And then yeah, then mentally, I think. I mean, mentally, I've always coped by just by working on a project, you know, so I think I've always, there was never a point in the pandemic, where I wasn't working on something, you know, I was always writing for the series are working on a kind of side project, kind of graphic novel project I've been working on or making music or, you know, just

writing a lot of things that were Yeah, just for myself, you know, for a lot of 2020 when I wasn't able to do anything in person. So that's always that's always a good thing. And then always kind of helps like, to feel that in on days, where I don't have a booking or a job, you know, I'll still go you know, get coffee and work on designate to work on my own project. So no, to be quite honest, like, a lot of times, I've gone to times in the year where the projects really do like it's one after the other and it's like, it's it's pretty breakneck. But yeah, the times that are quieter, I'm definitely I guess, when schedule is on even and bookings are uneven. I always kind of fill those gaps and kind of keep myself, you know, at a baseline. So that's always been a really good thing for my like, own mental health is just keeping that productivity going. And then yeah, and I think, other than that, it's pretty much it

Kit Heintzman 01:19:16

Alright. I have two more questions that are a bit odd.

Danny Denial 01:19:20

Ok.

Kit Heintzman 01:19:21

The first is we sort of know that we're in this wave of biomedical research happening right now. I'm wondering what kind of research you think people in the social sciences and the humanities have to contribute to this moment?

Danny Denial 01:19:36

The people in the social sciences and the bio

Kit Heintzman 01:19:40

Social sciences and the humanities so beyond the scientific sphere.

Danny Denial 01:19:45

Okay, okay. I mean, I think there's a lot that can be learned from the, the, just the way that humanity has responded to, to what's been going on Like you see all these studies being done about like, the patterns of human friendships, the ways in which those are changing. I mean, I've always been really interested in like human psychology, and anthropology. When I was in school, I would definitely love to take those as like, you know, Humanities electives and whatnot. So I always think, like, that's why I think to me, like when I say the pandemic, I'm more interested in the human response to it than the actual science of it, even though the science is fascinating, but I think the ways that we are so conditioned to live our lives, I think we underestimate, like those conditionings. And then having having that all being undone, you know, in the span of a year, especially when you're putting into consideration the time element, you know, if this was a six month pandemic, where we quarantine for six months, but this is an ongoing year plus, complete, like transformation in our lifestyles, in our social lives and our work lives. And, you know, I just, I'm fascinated to see how, like, our society could change. Like, I don't think that the infrastructure of our capitalist society will change.

Danny Denial 01:21:14

But I'm curious about how, like we on a, on a, on a social level. Like, I mean, people say, when bars and clubs open up, who are going to be running out to them? I don't know if I agree with that. I think I know, so many people who have said, like, it's been so long, I don't really want to go out and to see people like I don't, it's, you

know, it's just uncomfortable. Now, you know, we're people that say, you know, like, it's, they're vaccinated, but, and obviously, just because they're vaccinated doesn't mean they should be going out, but people who say, they're thinking about the prospect of like, seeing people again, and that gives them anxiety. So it's, you know, there's a lot of interesting facets of, like, human communication and response that I feel like, I don't know, we may, we may be looking at, like, changed species, you know, or at least in the Western world, the United States, I think that that may change the way we do things, you know, we're talking about people changing the way that they work, like permanently, potentially, right, like people doing this virtual thing. And, yeah, I'm, I think there's a lot of work that can be done a lot of social studies that can be done to sort of figure out what resources we're going to need. I mean, on top of that, you know, mental health and illness, like how does that manifest now, you know, when you have all of these barriers gone, and people are living with themselves? Is that does that make for a better or worse mental health? You know, like, what does that do to people? You know, I think we were talking about things that the suicide rate at some point, you know, the way that was being impacted, and that conversation has, has kind of gone away, I think a little bit in the culture sense, which is interesting. I don't know if that means the number has plateaued, or if we're just ignoring it. But I think, after whatever settles, whatever, whatever new order that we live in, I think we're going to have to reevaluate, like social studies of our, of our world as a whole. So I mean, I think I could see a lot of just really compelling literature literature out of that. I mean, I know personally, I would love to see studies of the ways that people change the ways that human communication changes. And the ways that mental health is impacted. Definitely. It's hard to it's hard to, there's just so much speculation now, but it's like, you can't you can't speculate a stuff. You don't you don't We don't have the data yet. I mean, we have trends that are happening, but we don't even know where this is gonna land, you know. So I think it's really important that, that people are tracking these trends in this data so that whenever this does land, we can really have a, a full picture, you know, of the ways that people have no real change.

Kit Heintzman 01:24:17

Okay, the last question is, so this was an oral history interview, and I come in with a few assumptions. As a historian, one of my, one of the things we're taught to value as historians of my generation is, what our historical actors value, so writing about the kinds of things that people who are living through it, saw and witnessed and experienced. And so one of the questions I would like to ask you is imagining someone who was never alive during this part of time, thinking about this moment. So someone who comes after, what would you want to be sure that they didn't forget about this moment? Or maybe otherwise put. What do you want to make sure isn't forgotten in the future?

Danny Denial 01:25:04

Okay, is that? Could I get a context of you mean as far as the lived experience of, of COVID, in general in America, or in Seattle, Washington, or as an artist and in the community, or...

Kit Heintzman 01:25:23

At whatever scale you like, because there will likely be historians writing about Seattle, and musicians and America. So,

Danny Denial 01:25:31

Right.

Kit Heintzman 01:25:32

Pick who you want to talk to you.

Danny Denial 01:25:34

I mean, you know, I really think that I really think that I don't know why I'm leaning more into a political kind of aspect right now. Because I feel like I could see that sort of being maybe misconstrued, but I really think that there's a lot of fascinating things that when I look back now, because I lived them at the time, but last year, and 2020, just the way that I think the community in Seattle sort of just responded, responded to everything was happening, you know, because because it was, it was not only the pandemic, but it was Black Lives Matter. And it was the mayor, it was Jenny Durkins response to the protests. And, and then it was response to all the gentrification that that had been happening for years and years here. And it just became this groundswell where people were just so just people just kind of had had had had it, because this was it. And people went up every night on Capitol Hill, and we're actively demonstrating every night, being tear gased every night, you know. And even so, our Seattle police precinct is still, you know, guarded up with fences and boulders, and, you know, just this huge wall that's blocking a major intersection in Capitol Hill.

Danny Denial 01:26:58

And that's all because of what happened in the summer. And to me, that's just sort of, it's, it's actually kind of strange thing about it. Now, it feels like it was almost a weird dream that happened. But it was definitely, I think, kind of a watershed moment for like this community in response to everything that was happening, I don't think it would have happened. If it wasn't for COVID, I don't think it would have happened. If it wasn't for George Floyd, I don't think it would have happened if it wasn't for what this city has been through for the past 1015 years, with gentrification in the tech boom. And all the people that have just been driven out and kind of broken down. I mean, we had people that were fighting police who were breaking up and camping and camping spots in the park, that on Christmas Day, because police were, were sweeping people on Christmas on a really cool Christmas in the Park that the mayor had ordered. And the community just came out at like 6am, for call to action, to fight against it. And then to help, you know, rehome all those people. I think that's kind of incredible that I think in a weird way, the community really the community really kind of banded together, I think a lot in the past year, which was really cool to see. I know Portland has kind of had been known to do a lot of it in a different way than Seattle, I think. But then again, I live in Seattle, so maybe I'm biased. So the Portland stories always seem a bit boring. I don't know a little bit more just dramatic and scary and violent, and you know, and whatnot. But with Seattle, I think it really was from a deep care of this community and what had been done to it for so long. And I think the commitment to the commitment to that cause is something that I think Seattle shouldn't be remembered for. That I don't know, it's, it's, it's kind of scary, because I don't know, if we're in this kind of point where it's hard to tell if we're at the last legs of the city even having like this, this this community of people who aren't, you know, tech workers who, you know, are musicians and, you know, people that are living below the line and just kind of surviving. Because, you know, if this progresses, those people are gonna be gone in the next five to 10 years. But also we're seeing this moment where there's kind of a battle being won in the larger war. You know, you're seeing people who work in tech moving out of the city. I mean, I know, countless people just staying they being scared off from his living here because of what's been happening. But who knows, maybe that's a blip in time. Maybe it's I don't have a war. I'm really curious to see personally, what this city is going to look like in five years. You know, like, I wonder what this 2020 is going to mean for that. Is it going to, is it going to be this Out of a reoccurring pattern of the community kind of taking back, it's, it's, um, it's, it's itself a little bit? Or is this kind of the last stand? You know, and I think Seattle is a good representation of a lot of cities that are going through that.

Danny Denial 01:30:16

I mean, San Francisco went through it, it's definitely, you know, this, this battle between mom and pops and artists and communities versus the tech, you know, the tech boom, and big business and, you know, capitalist proponents and, and I think that we were kind of the, the quintessential, you know, like, testing round of it a little bit. We're just example of it, I think. And I think that's something that I would like to see in history at one point, you know, where we had a moment in time, regardless of what happens, where, you know, the community became just, you know, basically soldiers, you know, for half a year. Um, yeah, I mean, that's, I think that's, I think that's probably the biggest, the biggest thing that I would like to and also that, you know, on top of that, there was a lot of, there was a lot of, there was like a lack of understanding, there was a lack of like, communication of even what was happening. Because I think the biggest thing that I noticed, even, like, in the middle of it, what was happening was that the media outlets that were reporting what was happening in Seattle, were getting it so wrong, like a while it was happening live. So I can only imagine if it's remembered in, you know, in 510 years, like, what are they going to say, you know, the autonomous zone was, was was misrepresented. I mean, the irony is, it became what they, what they, in a way became what they presented it as media in the beginning, but it wasn't that at all, when they presented it that way. And it was, it was a self fulfilling prophecy, like the media painted this, anti capitalists, communist, you know, paradise where people were, you know, threatened to, you know, you know, at the gates and told that if they weren't participating in the commune, and they were, you know, all the stuff that wasn't true. And inviting all these people who were just so enraged by it come in and come in and drive up from other states, you know, and then, and then it got weird. And then they got it just started getting really strange. And, you know, eventually that happened. But that's just that's just goes to show you the power and like, the power and misrepresentation, and, you know, what, things like media and, and sort of looking for? Yes, retelling can do, you know, so I think that it's important that whenever it is retold what, what people and, and again, I can't speak for Portland, but what happened here, and I know what happened in New York and others, other other cities in LA, were that people were responding directly. And with intent with intent, you know, people that the reason that protesters in Seattle were attacking Starbucks was because Starbucks was funding spa, the car, the police union, but that was never presented in the stories that were saying that the protesters destroyed Starbucks, you know, for no reason. So I think that's, that's also something that I think, should be documented is that, you know, I think the community was really organized in a lot of ways and, and did their homework and really had, you know, they had demands, and those demands were presented and explicit to the mayor.

Danny Denial 01:33:47

And, and, and, you know, the police forces and all these institutions, and those institutions, did everything in their power to pacify without without meeting any of the demands. So I think that, um, yeah, it's not, it's not to make that all about the protests and that, but I think of all the things that happened in COVID, I think I could see that kind of being either forgotten or just sort of misconstrued as this kind of haywire moment. And I think that yeah, I think there's a lot to be learned from it. And yeah, and also, I think, the other thing that I would say that should be remembered is that, you know, as far as, as far as things like music goes, and things like shows and people trying to make events during the pandemic. I think people should remember that a lot of it came down to artists, and then us making moral and ethical judgment calls. Really, like it wasn't this. I don't want to be remembered as this time where like, oh, music was outlawed, and no one you know, it wasn't because you're seeing in other places people have done on these reckless, you know, shows there, I don't know, Smash Mouth played a show where 100 people got affected COVID, you know, people still were doing things that were within the within the ground, but a lot of what, what people had to do and COVID was, was kind of autonomous, like, epic cults, you know. And I think

that, that I don't know, it says a lot about I mean, that goes back to my situation with the first show that we kept canceled, we were asked, Do you make the call? You know, because you can play if you want to? Or you can, you can say no. And I think that's something that definitely makes me question like, this society at large, you know, that we look at other societies where it was never an option for anyone, like they all have to get it, you look at places like Australia or Japan, or like, you know, other places where, you know, they just, this was the rule, they just had to, they just have to comply.

Danny Denial 01:35:58

And then you know, in America, we just see this wide disparity, you know, you different people's experiences with COVID, range state to state, city to city, and a lot of it is comes down or personal choice. So, I think, you know, it comes down to a lot of people have come to make hard decisions, and then stand by them.

Kit Heintzman 01:36:23

I want to thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me and all I've learned from you. And at this point, I just want to invite you, if there's anything you want to say is that the questions haven't given you the space to say, here's a place to say them.

Danny Denial 01:36:41

I would say I think yeah, I think a lot of the I think a lot of the questions and answers that I've I've I've answered have been trying to speak from a state of mind, very present state of mind. But obviously, you know, the thing about living in this climate, or this landscape it rained was that it's just changes so constantly. But you know, so I would say that, I think I would answer maybe a lot of these questions very differently two months ago, and even maybe two months from now. So I just want to kind of state that. It's, the experience is so relative to this to really, at this point, the day of the week, let alone the month in the year. And I think that this this work, of documenting and kind of tracking that is really important. When we look back at things. I mean, if we look at, if I look at even just my experience in the summertime, you know, with everything going on, and looking back on it after and having to piece together, how we got from point A to point B, in a vacuum. It's just so hard, you know, so I think that this tracking of history is is important. And I think I would just Yeah, I would just say to I don't know what I get to keep the keep in mind that it's all just so fluid. Like any emotional sense in the physical sense. That, you know, just maybe take into account just how, how much how malleable it all is really because the last thing I would add is, it's just that and I think it's gonna continue to be you know, for better and worse and then better and worse.

Kit Heintzman 01:38:40

Thank you so much.

Danny Denial 01:38:41

Absolutely. Thank you