

## **AE Explorers and Creators Series Ep. 1**

### **Chris:**

Hi I'm Chris Paradysz, I'm co-founder of Adventure Explorations, with my partner Cody Messic. We're located in Pennsylvania across the Boiling Springs Lancaster 100 mile radius area all the way down to Washington DC and Maryland all the way out to Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. We're gonna take something on a little different this time, interesting and a little bit different in perspective, coming through your ears. Straight into your heart and your soul, we're gonna use music. We're gonna come through a sense that gets used all the time but rarely talked about, but it is one of the most, if not the most memorable sense we have along with our smell and our taste. But this time it's our ears and we're gonna open up the outside and nature in fresh new ways through artists, through creators, through what we're calling explorers, but of a different kind. So often explorers get boxed in based on their adventures up rocks and mountains and water and so on. This is through music and through song and through creators, but talking about and singing about the outside and the implications of that on our lives.

We're gonna be joined by these 2 incredible co-hosts: Audrey Martells you'll hear from her shortly along with Sammy Wags. Both of them are incredible musicians in their own right constantly songwriting and traveling the world with their own music as well as covering and touring music of other song writers and creators. They both contribute at such an extraordinary exquisite level. You are really in for a treat, I can't wait to sit in and have a conversation. So I'll be different, this is not an interview, this is a discussion with 3 people, and I'm really there to spur things along and have Sammy and Audrey take us on a journey. So I'm going to pass it off to the 2 co-hosts: Audrey, and Sam.

### **Audrey:**

As Part of this new series called Explorers and Creators, I'll be co-hosting sessions with my dear friend, and brilliant musician Sammy Wags about the power of music to change peoples lives. We'll take a deep look into the lives of these artists and explore the journey into the create geniuses they became. Sponsored by Adventure Explorations, an outdoor adventure tourism company, we'll be exploring and discussing their inspirations, their history and their stories to discover their own brilliant magic.

### **Sam:**

Thanks Audrey, and this is all being created and recorded live at The Koop Studio in Irvington, NY. The home for all of my creative musical projects and a place that adventurous creative of all walks of life come to realize their artistic visions and to be inspired for their next creations.

**Audrey:**

First we're going to explore Bill Withers and his song "Lovely Day" recently performed by Demi Lovato at the inauguration of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, and then we're going to move on to our national treasure: Mr. Stevie Wonder and his composition of "Ribbon IN the Sky." Now you might not think that both of these artists had much in common, but one thing they both loved was Ray Charles's music. 2 Brilliant artists, a perfect place to start. So let's talk about them and their journey to finding their voices and their beautiful compositions.

**Chris:**

I remember calling Mike V about that, I said I have a crazy Idea. I don't know why I hear rap in this song, and it was because of Mike's arrangement, it just kind of had this different kind of R'n'B vibe to it. Cause Bill Withers didn't really sing an R'n'B vibe that was like not his...

**Audrey:**

No it was like Country soul Blues

**Chris:**

Exactly it was like working man west Virginia kind of thing

**Sam:**

Yeah that's really interesting digging into him I keep coming into that, I didn't think I would realize that, or come to that realization. The more you listen to the catalog, oh it's not what I thought what it was actually.

**Chris:**

And think about those times, those Motown time, I mean big time, but I didn't know your son rapped until you told me.

**Audrey:**

I didn't know he rapped either.

**Chris:**

I said to Nico, my son I said, who do we know who raps? And I know one kid and we was not right, I was like who do we know? And he said you know, I swear who's that woman in your band, I think her son raps. And I don't know where Nick heard that.

**Audrey:**

They were talking about Nile, cause Nile does everything and he's very vocal about it, he's always on the internet exploiting whatever talent he has, he's not shy

**Sam:**

We'll he'll do very well then

**Audrey:**

Yeah...But Cole is much more the under-cover-brother, so I know he has it in him, but I was like I'm not gonna ask Nile to this, I'm gonna ask Cole to do this, because I knew that it might be a nice segue into discovering his love for his own voice again.

**Chris:**

Well I'll tell...The part that was most impressive, the...modest scat almost at times the way he was doing it was cool, it's just very rhythmic, was all the undertone stuff he was doing, that was great and Sammy mixed it so beautifully, he just had those little vibes

**Audrey:**

Smooth yeah

**Chris:**

Underneath it, and it just worked really well with the voicing. Which is the whole thing was great, that was such a moment.

**Audrey:**

That's the beauty of art ya know, cause that can just, that little spark right there, the opportunity can somehow open up a whole career.

**Chris:**

Sure

**Audrey:**

Ya know, just that moment, that's what I love about the arts in general, but music specifically, just give it room and will take on a life of it's own.

**Chris:**

Cause it is there, it's sitting there waiting for you.

**Audrey:**

Yeah

**Chris:**

I was reading something about Bill Withers not playing an instrument, he didn't play piano or guitar, he could just sing, and so he just bought some cheap guitar and learned how to play some chords and such, and then he got himself a piano but he didn't know how to write or read or anything on the piano. It's just so interesting he said he just started plunking out the notes one note at a time, guess where lean on me comes from? And that's, it was like I just plunked it out, he said any little kid could play that. You don't need the chord, you know what I mean, sequentially it's the simplest thing in the world, it's like a sesame street song, you know?

**Audrey:**  
Simplicity

**Chris:**  
I think that's what punches through.

**Audrey:**  
But you gotta believe in it right? You gotta believe in simplicity and a lot of people walking into a music office with...and I can understand why you said that he thought somebody else was going to perform his songs because everything about him was just so simply stated and without the hype, the pop hype that was going on in the music, that tends to go on in the music business. But I think that's the beauty of who he was and why it resonated with so many people, part of it anyway.

**Chris:**  
I think umm I'd be curious of your takes too...he had something in his head like every artist does and every musician does you have something in your head, a sound you're trying to create. It answers a lot of questions when you say it's the simplicity and elegance maybe is overstated, but for Bill Withers to have never had a manager, except for like a very very short time, managed himself, produced himself, that really says something and he owns half his catalog which he and his wife manage. It's just like the simplest, his whole life has been simple. And then when he was done, he was done, just walked away, that was it.

**Sam:**  
Yeah it was the simplicity, I love that your initial reaction is that it's such a dry simple recording where you can hear everything, it is it's true, you take that for granted, when I'm so used to these big beautiful lush productions, and I think I would venture to say if you had asked me about this song before listening to it on headphones I'd be like, yeah it's an awesome production with strings and...but it's the song.

**Audrey:**  
It's where your imagination takes you.

**Sam:**  
Exactly, when you listen to it, I'm like, wow it really is, it's bone dry, everything is put in its spot, and its just presented to you in such a straightforward simple way, but the message is what it is.

**Audrey:**  
I have to assume that he's singing his backgrounds right, cause I couldn't find a background singer on it

**Sam:**  
Sounds like it, and I also couldn't find any additional vocalists yeah.

**Chris:**

The tune lovely day, where's that coming from? What's your read on that Audrey?

**Audrey:**

Well, I don't know, going back to the fact that you said that he wrote all his songs and kind of self managed himself, umm, it seems to me that he was basically just writing about things that were affecting his own life at that time, and it seems to me that he did that throughout his entire career, and it didn't have to be anything majorly special, it just had to be a life experience, something that resonated with him, so I'm not sure that lovely day came out of a specific lovely day, or a day that he wanted to be more lovely, but I couldn't find anything that said, oh I wrote it because of this particular day of life did you, have you any knowledge of that?

**Sam:**

You know what I uncovered is kind of the opposite of that, I only saw one interview where he mentioned it, because I was trying to find specifically this song, and there was one interview in the annals of Google he talks about, they ask a couple questions about this song and he actually downplayed if anything else, not only did he say, it was just a couple sentences, but he said something, cause he wrote it as a, I brought up some of the info here, he co-wrote it with Skip Scarborough, and he had said, to him, it was all about the collaboration, and he didn't have anything specific in mind and it was mostly about the energy they had, and they came up with an idea, they were happy with it, enjoyed it,

**Audrey:**

They were having a good time.

**Sam:**

Having a good time, and they just rolled it and he said he didn't, kind of briefly alluded to that he didn't have anything specific in mind other than they were really enjoying this song that was coming into fruition and just went with it, and he said in the interview he's worked with a lot of other people and songs come out differently, he said if it was a different day and a different person, it wouldn't be lovely day, it would be something else. So he didn't go into it thinking I have this song idea to write, he went into it saying, I'm working with this person, and that's what came out of it, which is kind of magical and incredible to like be open to it ya know.

**Audrey:**

It is, it's just, it sounds so basic as is the charm of who he is, it's just so basic, he's the songwriter, he loves to write songs, he's in the room with Skip Scarborough, who I did a little bit of research on, we always know Bill Withers with Lovely Day and all his songs, we know of his genius, but Skip Scarborough wrote don't ask my neighbor, which is the emotions song, I mean one of my favorite songs of my childhood. He also wrote with George Benson the song Love Ballad, Anita Baker he won the Grammy, Giving You The Best That I Got. This is a major songwriter that

got in the room with the budding Bill Withers and wrote this beautiful and amazing song.

**Chris:**

And so if you go back to what you were saying Audrey, earlier actually before we rolled, you said, sometimes the music is just there, and you gotta discover it and let it, I don't wanna steal your words from that, just kinda let it be possible I guess. If you go back to wherever Slab Fork is, I bet it hasn't changed a lot, and his simple life and where he came from. Then going into the Navy, and having the stuttering issue, What's your sense maybe, of how that early life carries forward in a song like Lovely Day which Sammy was saying, kind of where it came from.

**Audrey:**

He's one of six kids, his mom was a maid, his dad was a miner, a very simple simple life, and even when they ask him about his songwriting experience, just his experience in the music business he said well you know, not bad for a kid from Slab Fork West Virginia, but one thing he would say about himself is that he's not the greatest musician in the world, he doesn't consider himself a genius, but the one thing he knows how to do is write a song that resonates with a lot of people, just talk and sing about things that touches a lot of people's hearts, and so that's, that's what he's proud of, his achievements.

**Sam:**

If you ask anybody their immediate gut reaction of Bill Withers I feel like there's a lot of people that's gonna say, that man he knew how to get right to the heart of the matter, in simplest most effective way ya know, and universal.

**Chris:**

Questlove talks about him as his favorite artist.

**Sam:**

Funny I forgot until you just mentioned that, that I do remember reading a Questlove interview when he did the Al Green record, which is, if you guys don't know Lay It Down Al Green, it's one of my all time favorite records of all time, that record specifically with the way that Quest brought the old and the new together, it's unbelievable, but he saying in an interview they were like oh, this is unbelievable this is like working with one of your heroes, and he said absolutely, and they said who else now that you're getting to the point in your career you can pick, and he did, he said Bill Withers, I really wanna do the same thing with Bill Withers, I wanna do a record like we did with Al Green, but never got to do it, that's a bummer, who knows what that would have been like.

**Chris:**

The time, if we just rewind back to when these tunes were written and the context of what was going on in the world then, can we talk about that a little bit.

**Audrey:**

Jimmy Carter was president, let's see, what struck me is the TV mini-series Roots was on the air, 130 million viewers, I remember those days.

**Chris:**

Who played the male lead in Roots?

**Audrey:**

Which one there was so many? What's his name, gosh, Lavar Burton.

**Chris:**

And the writer was last name Hailey right?

**Audrey:**

Yes

**Audrey:**

Ant then, record of the year was This Masquerade, George Benson. Album, this is ironic, Album of the year, the year that Lovely Day was released Songs In The Key Of Life was Album of the year.

**Sam:**

I was gonna say too, that's such an interesting, to go back into the production, at the time you listen to songs In The Key Of Life and some of the stuff that's popular is just like this amazing sonic masterpieces, and then still Bill Withers, still able to break through and say hey, ya know, I've also got this over here.

**Chris:**

Right, punched through that greatness, that album we were talking earlier about Songs In The Key of Life...

**Audrey:**

Do remember the song, just to segue into Stevie for a moment, there's a song on that album called "Village Ghetto Land" and it's just Stevie, and it reminds me a little bit of the vibe of Bill Withers, very simply stated with a very very deep message and I don't know, ya know. Stevie had a way, just to cross over between the 2, two things struck me as I was listening to this Lovely day tune, was the amount of repetition that Bill Withers uses on a lot of his songs, repeating the same lines, or repeating, literally verbatim repeating, not just for a fade at the end, but in the tune and Stevie Wonder does that a lot too. Comparing Stevie to Bill Withers I've always felt that everytime Stevie would repeat a line, a melody, but have different lyrics, he would go deeper and deeper and deeper, and if he was angry or portraying anger, or portraying some kind of indifference which was often was in his music, even though was the same melodic line, he would just keep going deeper and deeper, and musically he go more and more and more intense, where I always felt Bill Withers kind of just stayed there.

**Audrey:**

Yeah kinda skates on top of the water.

**Chris:**

Yeah he doesn't like emotionally go as deep as a Stevie Wonder does, but the repetition of something that's so simple does kind of do that.

**Audrey:**

It kind of yeah, he's an interesting artist, he stands alone in a lot of ways because it is soul music, it is Blues, but at the time, thankfully there was such an eclectic amount of styles of music on the same pop stations, so even though it's a kind old-school bluesy style, he was on the same radio station with Marvin Gaye, got to give it up, the Bee Gees, Natalie Cole, Fleetwood Mac, you know, the emotions, Jimmy Buffett, I mean everything that was going on around that time, and he managed to stay in this very simplistic, almost country soul vibe and be just as viable and still fit in to the playlist.

**Sam:**

It's interesting when I've listened to Bill Withers, specifically the hits and the bigger stuff, it does for me, actually I had to figure out, I didn't actually know like when it came out, it kind of has this strange ambiguity with like timing, it's not as clear, the production doesn't tell me, oh it's exactly this time, it could have been earlier than that and I would've believed it, it could've been later than that, it did stand up next to the contemporaries.

**Chris:**

That universality to...I'm thinking of Aint No Sunshine, but the line I'm thinking of I know I know I know, but he doesn't go I Know I Know, he skates right on top, and you do wonder if you go back to who he was, west, no, Slab Fork West Virginia, 6 kids, went to the navy, stuttered, worked as you know a handy man in an aircraft facility.

**Audrey:**

An Assembler

**Chris:**

Right, then he went to Sussex Label as kind of his first move, and then when they tanked he went to Columbia. The as a black man in a white world, you think about A and R in that time, if you put Motown over here and compare the big labels at the time, I was just going through trying to keep digging, what happened at Columbia, only one that was one hit that came out of that which was kind of interesting.

**Audrey:**

I read some place that he was angry that they were going to do...we're jumping all around as far as the timetable is concerned, that doesn't matter, that he got angry at



Columbia because they were gonna put out a record for Mr. T. Was like yeah, I bet you were pissed.

**Sam:**

That doesn't surprise me at all.

**Audrey:**

But they didn't know how to promote him at all, he got swallowed up by the big label.

**Chris:**

Yeah but given who he was, a bit of like just the tow of us is a total kiss my ass song, like no you're not gonna do it your way, I'm gonna do it my way, you wonder if that, and also being in that time as a successful artist that came from where he came from, had a strong opinion, managed himself and black man in a white world. He managed to stay not getting compromised at a time where the whole label surrounded you with compromise...Mr. T...come on.

**Audrey:**

I mean that's the typical big label story right, they were following the fads and he was hot at that time, I mean look for something that makes some money.

**Sam:**

No Matter what's on the record people are gonna buy it. But so many, you know epic timeless songs aren't known in the time, and when you do look, when I look at his ya know his award reception, having in 1971 Aint No Sunshine, and then 81 Just The Two Of Us his 2 bookending in that point of his career , his like really powerful winning awards, ya know talking the world stage, that's 10 years in between where he's putting out music and this falls smack in the middle if it, so there definitely must've been some tough like ya know, has to be some tough decisions of like, cause we all know especially back then, labels if you're not getting these kinds of accolades, their not seeing this as a successful venture, so like how do we do that.

**Audrey:**

But also, back then they did tend to give the artist time to develop ya know, unlike today you burn out pretty quickly if you have a second big hit, you're very lucky.

**Sam:**

Yeah that's true too. Yeah even if you take lovely day, isolated you might start to think Oh its just another light pop song, but that's not and his catalogue is clearly not at all. So you're right, he did have this kinda of depth to his character. And there like okay it's not what we are used to make easy money on but somebody decided it was worth pursuing, which is amazing

**Audrey:**

And that was Clarence Avant who people called the Black Godfather have you seen that Netflix Show about him? I don't know if its still on Netflix but Netflix tends to come back around if you haven't seen it, try to find it. It's the story about Clarence Avant and his journey through the music business and he's got a really interesting life story. He signed him and he's also worked Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis and he's been one of those people, the movers and shakers behind a lot huge moments in both music and in film but nobody knows who he is. And so he signed him back in the day and had struggles with his label which actually ended up folding and that's why Bill went to Columbia records.

**Chris:**

Right yeah I said Sussex I meant Avant.

**Audrey:**

No his label was Sussex records but his name is Clarence Avant.

**Chris:**

Gotcha. Okay And he was the one that hooked him up with Booker Jones. Which was kind of the beginning of the magic because Booker had the access to the musicians that you know how would Bill Withers ever have found those people. Steven Stills kinds of just draw ?59.14 him out of whatever studio he was in in LA.

**Audrey:**

Ray Parker JR. ??? 59.21 Who was on every thing. I was watching an old clip of Steve back in the day and there was Ray Parker playing with Steve Wonder and Cheri Knight on bass and Rush Kunkel on drums for "Lovely Day" And Ralph McDonald playing percussion.

**Chris:**

There's a really great interview with him, talking about his percussion. You talking about Steve Wonder now?

**Audrey:**

No, Ralph McDonald on percussion for "Lovely Day"

**Chris:**

And then the bridge between, you were saying earlier to Bill Withers and Stevie Wonder and how a lot of those musicians of course were shared. You watch these videos...

**Audrey:**

A lot of those session guys got around.

**Chris:**

When “Chase the Moon” decided to do that and Mike Visceglia arranged that tune, he obviously had something in his head and we ended up getting to a very different place as a result of it and that whole process that we went through where we picked the songs as a group pretty much and then Mike would go off and arrange it on his own, mostly.

**Audrey:**

Mike V!!

**Chris:**

Yeah. And then we come back together after scrambling the parts and trying to read his charts and every musician writes their chart in a particular way, so figuring Mike’s charts and what we was intending to say. When we put this tune together and you were thinking of your respective parts, what was in your head? Before we play the tune, what was in your head? Did you try to put yourself in a certain space?

**Audrey:**

Well for “Lovely Day” I was basically singing background so I was just trying to support Susan and whatever she was going to do and not get in her way. But um I did help Cole Bullock get his rap together and just try encourage him to find his own voice within that production. I think it came out wonderful. It’s got a vibe of all its own.

**Chris:**

How about you, Sam? Those pretty infamous percussion tracks and hits...

**Sam:**

It’s funny when you were talking about, on one hand again, its again deceptively simple song when I first thought we were doing like, oh that will be really fun and it’s a groove and it’s a tune I love, and then an actually, as far as arrangement with Mike V. I think I don’t think there was anything that we tweaked so much actually.

**Chris:**

Not on that one.

No, I mean like, we actually did tweak a decent amount of the arrangement when he first sent it over I was back and forth with him for a little, like, oh no we have to shift a couple bars here, if you want this sounds here. It didn’t flow right out as like exactly as what you’re hearing cause it needed to be right. As simple as it is, it had to feel, had to have the right flow. So it makes me wonder when the original recording, I actually looked, to try to find, cause you know I’m a jazz and production geek I always love hearing “in the studio” song writing crafting stuff. I was very curious if they went in the studio and with a song like this I could hear it very easy being “okay this is it, this is the song we wrote everybody play their parts down, you all are like

experienced pros that know exactly what to deliver, or it could have been hey let's really figure out, lets really plan each section very carefully. I could see either way.

**Audrey:**

I could see it either way.

From what I understand he was a man of few words. You know, having never met him I can't say for sure, but I have to say lyrically I always ask myself whenever I come across these brilliant songwriters, like what is the magic? How do you do that? How do you take a simple sentiment and make it, say it in a way that has never been said before. I mean, a lovely Day, everybody knows what a lovely day is like but he's talking not about a lovely day he's talking about "just one look at you and the worlds all right with me". So he has the ability to not "mansplain", you know what I mean, he just states something in a way where you know if he was singing to a girl that girl would know, would be smitten because he found a way to say I love you in a way I I've never heard it before. That's magical! I mean, that's what we all look for when we're writing a song, how to do you say something, make it so clear, but in a way that no one has ever said it before. You know, and so simply said. It's hard, that's hard to do. But he found it, you know.

**Chris:**

Fresh is tough

**Sam:**

I think that's something that bridges him and Stevie, together for sure too. The Stevie thing, there's so many tunes where he's saying these very, ya know, as much as he's lyrically he can some really interesting creative stuff, he also can get very simple but like, putting the context, so like, Bill Withers gave us just a little bit of context for lovely day, and instantly I'm feeling this emotion of like what that would feel like. Stevie is the master at that, he'll give just a little bit of context, I just called to say I love you, these kind of things, there's a million examples where the way he's saying it, I can just close my eyes and see it, you can just feel it and see it. It's so well painted with words ya know.

**Audrey:**

Stated, yeah absolutely.

**Sam:**

It takes so little to add so much to it, which is so interesting.

**Audrey:**

Yeah, that in itself is a genius that we always search for.

**Chris:**

So Sammy and Audrey, why don't you introduce these back to back tunes, the original artist and creator, and then a different interpretation inspired by the Chase

The Moon band which you're both in. And brings a different perspective, a different arrangement, a different way to tell that story.

**Sam:**

Yeah, so we'll start off with the original recording of Lovely Day released in 1977 co-written by Bill Withers and Skip Scarborough. If you're not familiar with the original version, I'm sure you've heard one of the many incredible covers done over the years. We'll follow up with the Chase The Moon cover version sung by the incomparable Susan Didrichson and featuring MC Cole Bullock. Now, we not only added our own spin on this classic but we recorded it at the height of the early pandemic lockdown. So our version was done entirely remotely, taking on yet another interpretation of the optimism in this song.

### **EDITS OF ORIGINAL "LOVELY DAY" AND CHASE THE MOON COVER VERSION PLAYED HERE**

**Sam:**

Wow

**Audrey:**

So much fun

**Chris:**

That's an incredible mix ya did on that.

**Audrey:**

It really is.

**Sam:**

Thank you it means the world.

**Audrey:**

Tell me about the percussion, the congas or...are you playing live congas on that or is that programmed? Just for some reason really popped out at me when I'm listening to it this time.

**Sam:**

Yeah it's funny, I felt the same.

**Chris:**

When I first heard it, the first time I heard it back, you did that "slap sound" it was like what? So cool.

**Sam:**

Yeah that's a Mike V totally, I mean I'm always game to play some congas on there, but I remember him saying when we came up with the arrangement he was like,

yeah play some congas on it, I was like, OK, just like not even asking do you play congas or anything, he's just like put some congas on it, there's percussion on the original. You what's interesting listening back there's, it is very different actually, but not, you know what I mean? It actually...when I hear the different, we don't just cop the same guitar lines, there's no strings, but yet at the time, and still listening to it, there's still the heart and soul of the song, I didn't really think of it as that different at the time. I remember listening to the original a lot, but now listening to them I'm like, it is different, but it's not.

**Chris:**

Well no trumpet, the Mikes saxophone really jumped for me, I haven't heard it in a while, and I had forgotten that harmony that he created, that opening line. That was so fresh and picking up the horns right up front to create right out of the gate, create that vibe that was gonna come later. What struck me too was, and it didn't get me as much when I listened to the original, it just flows.

**Audrey:**

Just keeps skating on that water.

**Chris:**

There's never a moment where it just stops and goes another direction.

**Audrey:**

Yeah I mean the key is just great song-writing, you can change it a million ways, but the core of the song is just so beautiful, it's so beautifully stated. It gives you room to play around with it and have different arrangements, but it's still gonna be that song.

**Chris:**

Let's cross over into Stevie. How do you want to bridge Bill Withers and Stevie Wonder? We chose these two for a reason.

**Audrey:**

Well Ray Charles is a good bridge right there. The fact that Stevie, he used to do Ray Charles cover songs before he got signed with his friend John, they used to just do Ray Charles covers and make some side money when he was a kid.

**Sam:**

Yeah cause that's what people wanted to hear then.

**Audrey:**

It was popular music and Ray was Ray. Yeah Stevie wonder, where do you start, and it will never end, he's such a musical genius and has influenced everyone.

**Sam:**

Yeah, there's no question about that. I think that what we were last talking about as well is part of a transition between them too because we're talking about the bands that helped to back this artist, but personally me, my one of the things that gets me about Stevie is listening to the tracks and digging into what he played and what track. That kind of helps transition to Stevie as well, because there's so much of what we're hearing in his sound as well because he had such a hands on, I mean if he didn't like what somebody was playing or the way they were playing it, he would walk in there and play it himself the way he wanted to and some of my favorite drum tracks are Stevie Wonder Drum tracks, I just love the way he played drums, ya know all the different instruments. So I think that's an important step right there if you're gonna start comparing the artists, and talk about the time. There is that level of control. We talked about Bill Withers having, saying what he wanted to be done and really standing by the song, and then Stevie would stand by the song and then go the next step further and no, I know exactly what you should be playing, yeah, and so what we're hearing is, ya know, on most of the popular especially, the stuff where he got full creative control, we're hearing his true 100% vision, which always gets me. So remarkable.

**Audrey:**

Which just grew and grew, he got more control as he got older obviously so, yeah such an interesting life.

**Sam:**

Still blows me away to think about, I don't know many artists where you can say that at all, ya know.

**Audrey:**

And again, given the time to grow into who he was, not a lot of artists get that opportunity to start out somewhere and grow into who they become, ya know it's over before it's begun. My son actually asked me when I was doing some research and I told him that Stevie was born with sight, but because he was 6 weeks premature, they put him in an incubation, and the oxygen was too high, and it caused his retinas to detach and it caused him to go blind, so Cole asked me, well do you think he would be Stevie Wonder if that didn't happen? I said That's a good point, I wonder if he would've developed all these other gifts that he has, you know his sense of music, his sense of hearing, his ability to interpret lyrics, his ability to put his thoughts on music. Would any of that have faltered if he didn't have that handicap. I don't know but yeah.

**Sam:**

That's a really interesting question.

**Chris:**

And how does the jewel "Ribbon in the Sky" land in all of that?

I've loved that song since the first day I heard it but it always appeared to me like Stevie put it there for you. It wasn't part of this other mix of incredible music that just emotionally took you away. On it's own it just..I don't know he just put it there for us or something. Even as a kid I always thought that.

**Audrey:**

I always ask myself when I heard the song you know, cause I was song writing for a long time and its always been my way of expressing myself but the first thing I asked was like Knowing that it came from Stevie it's just a visual image. For someone that's blind, you know what I mean. So I right away wondered where it came from with him and I've been searching and searching to see if anybody's ever asked him that in an interview. I haven't come across that in an interview so but I have to say it surely didn't stand in the way, his handicap didn't stand in the way of giving us this visual that we all latched on to without an explanation, right? You don't need an explanation really. Right but that's the genius in that.

**Sam:**

Yeah, that's so so true. It's funny you say that cause there's a few tunes of his where there's such a visual element, how do you even know how you're describing that so perfectly to me as if you know you're seeing it and painting it as if you're writing it...yeah it's incredible.

**Audrey:**

It makes it that more special for me, you know. Once I thought about that it just made it that he went deeply inside of himself that he didn't have to see it visually outside of himself he could see it inside of himself and that's why probably why it connects with us so deeply, you know.

**Chris:**

Mhm...and his music like the comparison Bill Withers it sustains us in a nourishment kind of way. Right, like when you hear this song and most songs that deliver like that in such a simple way there's just something about this jewel that he gave us, it's just, I don't know I've always had this sense like that he was like here, And the words, my favorite line is "This is not a coincidence and far more a lucky chance" I'm like, really like you're saying earlier. How'd all that come up together to form exactly what he's saying. What's your reflection on the where he came from and his exposure I suppose to Gospel and the history. How'd all that pour in there?

**Audrey:**

Well, I know that his mom had a lot to do with him being in church and playing, um at a very, very early age and singers it seems like they always got to give the mothers some props because almost every story I always hear the mom's kind of guide their kids to where they should be. You know, and you can imagine the you know fearing for him having this uh challenge, what was gonna become of him and his life and the fact that he found music I'm sure he would easily say that music saved his life, he found something that he could communicate with.



**Sam:**

Yeah, I think that's spot on.

**Audrey:**

I think he said his Uncle gave him his harmonica it was one of his first instruments. And he liked the harmonica because he loved the way it bended the notes like a saxophone player would. He calls it his little saxophone.

**Chris:**

The Instrument's that he chose to be kind of his dominant voice he excelled in them as much as he could play drums and bass and I don't know if he ever played guitar, he probably did. I don't have a memory of it but um the chosen instruments that make it into so many of his tunes he's exceptional. It's not "oh yeah, he can play that too" He plays it like that's his primary instrument. I'm always struck being a guitarist by this tune how it opens with almost this like a flamenco sound. And it only happens once, just in the intro that kind of just brings that tune together early on, like what you were saying with the Bill Withers tune, Sammy you said that as well, you kind of knew what was coming it was not gonna be harsh, it was gonna tell me something, I need to pay attention. But I found that guitar, and to some extent the cymbal also, just his use of the cymbal is so, so spare. But it does make you really pay attention.

**Sam:**

Yeah, I think that's a great point with the song starts and if it didn't have that little element of that guitar it would be like okay were setting the bass, ballad groove...

**Chris:**

Right, and piano of course, yeah.

**Sam:**

It does add this like little extra magic to it, yeah.

**Chris:**

The guitars throughout it but that particular vibe.

**Audrey:**

It kind of tells you that "listen up, listen up or you're going to miss the magic. The little things.

**Sam:**

Yeah, he's like there's never a dull moment. Keep paying attention. That's the thing also I endlessly obsess with Stevie's you could just listen to it over and over there's always something more to find in there, you know. Yeah, and I liked that both the vocal and the piano playing um it's never like straight on perfection studio recording this is all gotta fit neatly in the rhythmic box or what it is, you know. It's like it's real

expressive playing. That's another thing again to come back to like a modern production stand point, I just think I don't know if somebody had done that in the studio there might be some producer that you know shouldn't be in there saying "You know well, let's maybe let's sing a little more straight. Oh that piano, do you have another take in you?" You know, that kind of thing, when I'm listening back to this, hopefully I think it seemed like it was at that point in his career where they were like no if that's what you want to say, that's what you want to say and thank God for that, cause that's right. It's very human; it's very real like you get the sense it doesn't feel multi tracked to me. It doesn't feel like produced it feels like a band playing a song.

**Audrey:**

And if it wasn't than he managed to make it feel like it was. You know.

**Sam:**

Exactly, and that's what I was just about to say, when he does stuff multi tracked there's a few tunes that I know that he specifically did do multi tracked and played a lot of the instruments himself but it feels to me there's a band in there playing, it's just him. He's the band. It feels very real.

**Audrey:**

Yeah, I found it interesting to found out that one of his first compositions was again the tribute to Ray Charles. One of the first things he was able to put out. With a guy named I think was Ronnie White of The Miracles. He was working with him at the time. I hope I got my facts right there. But either way that was a huge influence for him when he first started. What did he play? Piano? Harmonica? Drums?

**Chris:**

Synth, obviously.

**Audrey:**

And also that um after he was pout out by Motown as little Stevie Wonder, his voice started to change soon afterwards. And they were thinking of dropping him, and Sylvia who had such a huge influence on all the acts that were on Motown, convinced them to keep him. And then he went on to just discover his man-voice and can you image what we would have missed, if they dropped him just because his voice changed?

**Sam:**

Oh boy!

**Chris:**

How do we describe in a way for the people that are listening to this to get inside of what should stay with him. We picked these two tunes and these two musicians for a reason. Not just because they came out of the similar time frame. Both Black Artists at a time that was probably relative to today. A different environment

obviously to succeed. You didn't have Hip-Hop and Rap and things to support a community. What should people understand about these two artists that is either similar or different or whatever comes to mind.

**Audrey:**

I think it's just what you said, similar and different because as much as we can say they were influenced by certain grates that came before them or that were alive with them, both Bill Withers and Stevie Wonder have such a unique style. You know they may have similar influences but you say Ray Charles is a thread of artist that they both loved but neither one of them sound like Ray Charles. You know they have their individual magic that they somehow put in the pot and created. And they both know how to state things that seem so simple but they stated in such an original way. Very different artists, right? Bill Withers doesn't play multiple instruments like Stevie, but anything he says it doesn't sound like a waste of time he knows how to state it so that it stays with you forever. And you'll want to quote it again just like he said it because it was started so perfectly well which is why the songs get redone over and over again. You know.

**Sam:**

Yeah, that lasting legacy of both, are a big commonality, for sure. And I think to understand if you really enjoy music as an art form if this is something that speaks to you and listen to song writing, it's like learning history. It's like learning the Four Fathers. This is so much of what we're hearing today. Whether it's very obvious or more subtitle; it's just so strongly influenced by specifically these two artists, you know. And you listen these two specific tunes, I mean; you just can't hear a ballad after this came out without hearing Stevie. And you can't hear a feel-good tune that has that vintage soul kind of appeal to it without hearing "Lovely Day" in it too. Whether it was immediate or whether it increased over time, from a song writing/productions and just a listening to the pantheon of music. They both changed the landscape and you just can't go back after that.

**Audrey:**

I think especially with Bill Withers it took sometime for people to realize that, that simple song wasn't so simple. You know what I mean? it was actually genius. Took me a long time, I mean I always liked it but it took me growing up and still singing the song before I realized wow there's really something special about tapping into that ability to tell a story that resonates with so many people and it doesn't have to be big. It can be very small. You know, and very simply stated.

**Chris:**

I think we'll end on the Chase the Moon interpretation. Which took a lot of time to pull together, as you both said so eloquently. It is simple but not simply done. It is complex in its way and the arrangement for this Sam, if you want to throw back at all to you and Mike V. putting this together. And then Audrey realizing what this song meant to you, I think? When I first spoke to you I just felt this sense of like this song is really important to who I am.

**Audrey:**

You know, I have so much respect for Stevie that any time I'm asked to sing one of his songs I am a little fearful because. It's like Aretha or any of these people that are just pure geniuses what do you do with something that is perfect? You know. You have to take a step back and say "well, you know, it's never gonna be the same" you just have to find where the message resonates with you and hopefully it will resonate with someone else in the way that you deliver it. But I have so much reverence for Stevie's version. It's always hard. I have to admit it's hard.

**Sam:**

I think that's so important, I think that coming from the world of playing whatever you know, functional bands and cover bands and stuff where there's obviously a handful of Stevie tunes that are on the list. I don't know, there just always seems to be a little bit of dare I say irreverence to it, where it's like accepted, and oh we gotta do this one, oh we gotta do that one and it always frustrated me, it really did, even from the young age when I first learned about music, I was like no no, no matter what song it is, you gotta take these seriously, this is Stevie Wonder, ya know?

**Audrey:**

I think we get lazy, because I think we've heard it all our lives right? So you think you know the song until you actually have to play it, and sometimes when you don't take the time like you're talking about, ya think you're playing it, but that's not the way it goes, ya know?

**Sam:**

Nobody is playing superstition right, they're now doing it, you play me 20 bands playing it, I'm sorry, they're not playing it right, and I'm not saying that I can play it right either. When I hear it, it is deceptively simple, it's not an easy tune, and none of these tunes are easy tunes by any means, so to ever put that label is really really doing a disservice, so I'm honored to hear that, I think that's the right approach. Don't not do it, because it's ya know such a passionate thing, but really, just carry a little bit of weight to it and give it your all.

**Audrey:**

And with Stevie, he always finds this place in his voice that is just so emotional, it's just effortlessly soulful and emotional, it's so spiritual I can't think of any other word. So to sing something by Stevie, you have to take the time, you know I tried to take the time to find the place that feels vulnerable, and almost feels weepy, you know, make you feel like you're exposing something that you may not want everybody to see. But he does that so effortlessly, and everything that he does, he's just such a genius and a source of light in his music. So if you gotta find that in yourself somehow, or at least look for it before you attempt to mess with his shit.

**Sam:**

That's a really good point actually, to even build upon your point, finding it, how it relates to you, not even just saying ok this is Stevie I gotta take it seriously, but finding how you can get to that place authentically.

**Audrey:**

Yeah, at least go on the journey you know what I mean? It'll never be Stevie, but it will maybe be something else that's interesting ya know?

**Chris:**

Let's take another look at that original tune, it's composition and performance, the check in on Chase The Moon and get their version, their arrangement, the same tune, let's see what we can pull out of that comparison.

**Sam:**

Ok, so now we've got Ribbon In The Sky by of course; Stevie Wonder, released in 1982 this was one of a couple new original songs that were featured on his first greatest hits album: Stevie Wonders Musiquarium, and then the Chase The Moon version featuring none other than our very own Audrey Martells taking the lead on this incredible and powerful song, completely making it her own and giving us yet another reason to fall in love with it all over again.

**ORIGINAL STEVIE WONDER SONG AND CHASE THE MOON COVER PLAY HERE**

**Chris:**

Well thanks for doing this, it was great, a nice moment.

**Audrey:**

It was my pleasure.

**Sam:**

Very meditative.

**Chris:**

So we'll do this again, we'll work on our next combination, 2 is plenty, 3 would have been way too much.

**Audrey:**

Would have been way too much, I feel like we just touched on Stevie, there's so much more to say, but that would be another song, he's got a lot of them.

**Chris:**

I've always wanted to do Sir Duke with a full band, such a hot tune, we did once in rehearsal just for kicks, but you gotta have more horns than just Mike.

**Sam:**

I think we jammed on it once. I've always wanted to, I mean I've done it with some groups, but Master Blaster is personally is just. I just think it's one of the best drum tracks and that's him, My Stevie thing, I guess I'm gonna say it because it's my go-to Stevie thing is that I just love that, the rawness of that track where you hear, in the beginning, the click in the headphones and you hear him go behind the drumkit, if you listen super closely, you can literally hear him put the headphones on cause the sound of the click changes, and then he kinda like hits the rim of the snare, but then he rrrrat dat dat and he goes into this phenomenal groove

**Audrey:**

Who's playin...is he playin drums?

**Sam:**

He's playing drums and he played drums first with nothing recorded, he's playing to a click, doing all the fills and everything cause it's all in there, he knows exactly, I mean the whole, one take, playing it down, to tape, drums, knows the arrangement in his head.

**Chris:**

That's like, that's a Beethoven thing.

**Sam:**

Straight up Beethoven. So I've always had a passion, not only is it an awesome tune, but it's the way he plays it so perfectly and perfect on that song, god I love it so much.

**Audrey:**

I loved coming across it so much, cause you know when he one album of the year 3 years in a row, and then there was one year that he didn't make a record, and Paul Simon won still Crazy After All These Years, and he got up and he said I'd like to thank Stevie Wonder for not making an album this year. The brilliance of Paul to be so humble.

**Chris:**

Well this was great, thank you, this is exactly what I hoped would happen, just light the match, let the music do what it does and the artist and the two of you were amazing,.

**Audrey:**

I did sya Paul Simon not Paul McCartney right?

**Chris:**

You said Paul Simon, yep.

**Audrey:**

Yeah this was awesome.

**Chris:**

Great experience.

**Audrey:**

So we have 2 songs, 2 artists their original audio recordings, plus arrangements by other musicians. We're gonna look at different viewpoints to these same tunes. Music lights up all your senses and connects you to your own story, that's our formula, so we want to focus on that and take our time revealing each of these creative geniuses. I'm excited to dig deeply into these originally and figure out why they fit so well in today's culture. We're always gonna stay true to the mission to celebrate the difference, and we're gonna come at it and try to seek that truth with respect and appreciation for these artists always.