

This is a transcript from the Creative Venture Podcast, where Mark Levien interviews Live Sound Engineer and Music Producer Mike Hill.

The Podcast is available on all good streaming platforms via this link:
<https://liinks.co/thecreativeventure>

FOLLOW THE PODCAST:

Instagram: www.instagram.com/thecreativeventure

Facebook: www.facebook.com/thecreativeventure

Web: www.thecreativeventure.co.uk

Auto-generated Transcript:

00:00

[Music]

00:12

hello hello

00:13

my name is Mark Levien and welcome to

00:15

this episode of the Creative Venture

00:17

podcast

00:18

this is the podcast where i sit down

00:19

with successful and aspiring creatives

00:22

to better understand how they've

00:23

achieved their success

00:26

today i'm talking to live sound engineer

00:28

mike hill

00:29

who's worked with artists like Arlo

00:31

parks and the band island

00:34

[Music]

00:38

not only did mike tour with Island

00:39

across europe north america and canada

00:42

but also used to own a recording studio

00:44

where he produced their album

00:46

feels like air which has had over 30

00:48

million

00:49

downloads i have a great chat with mike
00:52
where he skillfully dissects the
00:54
opportunities decisions
00:55
and people that helped him achieve in
00:57
his career
01:00
[Music]
01:03
in this episode we discuss learning how
01:06
long a job really takes
01:07
the importance of sharing your work and
01:10
why relationships matter
01:12
relationships that form in strange ways
01:14
just become massively
01:16
important you run into these situations
01:18
where you meet people and it just seems
01:20
like you're probably never going to meet
01:21
them again but it can be the beginning
01:23
of like the next chapter of your life
01:24
every time you walk into a room bear
01:26
that in mind
01:27
[Music]
01:39
mike hill thank you very much for coming
01:41
on the podcast dude
01:42
how are you doing yeah i'm very well i'm
01:45
currently
01:46
in oxford and i'm in quarantine right
01:49
now with my girlfriend who's come over
01:51
from the us so
01:52
i'm kind of in my happy place currently
01:55

yeah that's amazing man
01:56
well it's so great to catch up with you
01:58
you know i'm very very fond of your work
02:00
having
02:01
seen you work and work with you
02:02
previously and
02:04
it has been a little while since our
02:06
last catcher but even then your
02:08
experience was you know just next level
02:10
and now it sounds like you've done some
02:11
even more incredible things
02:13
working with artists like Arlo Parks and
02:16
island
02:17
doing the north america canada eu tour
02:20
some crazy venues so
02:22
yeah i'd love to learn a little bit
02:23
about what you've been up to in recent
02:25
times
02:26
and then maybe we can jump into a bit
02:27
about your history
02:29
i mean it's funny you mentioned like the
02:31
experiences because
02:32
most of us can relate to this but you do
02:34
tend to normalize everything i'm sure if
02:35
you told me
02:37
during our last meeting like the
02:39
experiences
02:40
that i was due i probably wouldn't
02:41

believe you know i'd be super excited
02:43
but now they're in the past they just
02:44
seem like
02:45
you know what what's coming next it
02:47
tends to be the mindset i get stuck in
02:49
but i think it's really important to
02:50
reflect on
02:52
you know a the opportunities and be the
02:55
experiences and
02:56
actually at this point mostly just the
02:58
friendships that i've made
02:59
like through what was the plan of
03:02
finding work and you know earning money
03:04
doing what i love it's just
03:06
it's led to loads of good relationships
03:08
which is kind of the
03:09
memory that i take away from each of
03:11
those experiences at this point um
03:13
yeah so to be more specific since i
03:15
spoke to you last i've been
03:17
pretty much fully working as a live
03:20
sound engineer on a freelance basis
03:22
but with a kind of relatively small
03:26
roster of clients so yeah like you said
03:29
Arlo Parks is my most
03:31
recent artist who i've been working with
03:33
and she's just exploding at the moment
03:35
and it's really been one of the success
03:37

stories of
03:38
the covert 19 situation is that her
03:40
music's really exploded particularly
03:42
like radio 1 have picked her up and been
03:44
really really encouraging
03:46
multiple djs they're not just playing
03:48
her tunes but they're talking about her
03:49
and they're kind of creating a hype
03:51
which
03:51
is really nice when you know the person
03:53
individually and you know she's
03:54
just a beautiful human being really when
03:57
you when you know them like that and
03:58
then you hear
03:59
people just picking them up you're like
04:01
yeah right you know
04:04
but then there's also for me this kind
04:05
of funny
04:08
feeling of well you know i'm her life
04:09
sound engineer so if this all goes
04:11
as well as it appears to be going what
04:13
does this mean as soon as
04:14
gigs are on again you know potentially
04:16
she'll be selling out big shows
04:18
yeah yeah and then the other two main
04:20
artists that i've been working with
04:22
are island who are in london four
04:24
people i've been working with for years
04:26

i've recorded music with them we did an
04:28
ep
04:29
another ep and then their first album
04:32
which was
04:32
feels like air which was a really great
04:34
experience that's had like
04:36
i think 30 million streams on spotify
04:38
that is a wicked album man i mean i
04:40
remember when we last spoke and
04:41
you just finished working on the album
04:43
and i think it was just before you went
04:44
on the tour and i had to listen to it
04:46
and
04:46
like literally that that album for a
04:48
long time was like in my car and then
04:50
subsequently in my mates cars and
04:52
that's it's just uh it's just me it's
04:55
absolutely like next level so
04:57
thank you for sharing that with me oh
05:00
that's fabulous to hear man and honestly
05:02
it's the greatest thing about these
05:03
is you do start talking about the
05:04
metrics oh it's got a million plays this
05:07
song like that's so
05:08
cool but you know ultimately it's heart
05:10
and for me as well you know i'll finish
05:12
an album and
05:13
i normally have a little break after
05:14

i've finished recording something
05:16
where you know you've been listening to
05:17
on repeat in isolation
05:19
it becomes a technical project rather
05:21
than a piece of art for me coming back
05:24
to it and
05:25
realizing it in its art form is just
05:28
an incredible moment to have and i've
05:31
had it with that album a few times and
05:32
then
05:33
going out with them live and that album
05:35
in particular was
05:36
supposed to mimic their live performance
05:38
it's supposed to be quite an organic
05:39
sounding thing
05:41
and when you see them live and you're at
05:43
a certain venue which sounds a certain
05:44
way and
05:45
you suddenly get that sonic of the album
05:48
in the live
05:49
arena with an audience it's like
05:50
suddenly a strange combination of
05:53
memories from the recording sessions
05:55
meanwhile you're kind of sharing the
05:57
experience
05:58
yeah yeah that's so cool so for anyone
06:01
that's listening that might want to
06:02
follow a similar career path to yours
06:04

it's like a
06:04
studio engineer or touring live engineer
06:07
that's thinking
06:08
oh my gosh you know i'll never be able
06:10
to end up doing the sort of
06:11
work that mike's doing could you just
06:13
join the dots for us and
06:15
take us back to how you got started with
06:17
all this
06:18
i started off playing in a band my band
06:21
recorded some music on like
06:23
my dad's computer at home and
06:26
i remember i was kind of walking through
06:29
my
06:30
very small town and someone drove past
06:34
it was one of my bandmates older
06:36
brother's mates
06:37
and he pulls down the window oh he might
06:40
you're that guy mike i'm like yeah
06:42
yeah and he's like yeah have you got a
06:44
recording studio and i was like
06:45
no i've been recording stuff at my
06:49
parents house he's like
06:50
well can i come and record um this guy
06:53
is called alex coleman still a musician
06:54
now
06:55
um i still occasionally work with him
06:57
actually but yeah he came over to my
06:59

parents house
07:00
and we recorded a few demos i wasn't
07:03
an engineer i just recorded my mates
07:05
playing in the band and
07:07
you know he paid me for the session i
07:08
said i don't know if i'm gonna charge
07:10
you like he said yeah of course i'll
07:11
give you know just a bit of cash in hand
07:15
and i think that was it it was it was
07:16
trial by fire completely ran into it
07:19
yeah the plan for me was just to record
07:21
my own band and yeah i fell into this
07:23
role of recording other people
07:25
and you know my band split up but the
07:28
recording of other people didn't end
07:30
so that was kind of the start of that
07:31
journey yeah man that's amazing
07:33
um i think that's also something that
07:35
most people experience you know those
07:37
random opportunities that just sort of
07:39
come out of nowhere because as far as
07:41
you're concerned you know you're just
07:42
living your life and you take on a
07:44
project or meet someone and
07:45
that can open you up to a whole world of
07:47
like new possibilities
07:49
uh so yeah i think that's a cool message
07:51
and a reminder to just take the
07:52

opportunities that present themselves to
07:54
you
07:54
i mean have you thought about what might
07:56
have happened if you hadn't recorded
07:57
with this guy and yeah
07:58
do you think things would have turned
07:59
out differently yeah well i remember i
08:01
considered saying no
08:03
and i do wonder to myself sometimes you
08:05
know yeah it was a genuine consideration
08:07
like i don't really want
08:08
a random guy to come to my house and he
08:10
probably won't like it
08:11
all those typical doubts came into my
08:13
mind but i don't know
08:14
it was almost his enthusiasm for it i
08:16
was like yeah so that was a bit of a
08:18
weird moment when you suddenly realized
08:20
that
08:21
something that you had no idea was worth
08:24
anything
08:24
that you're able to offer is to someone
08:26
else actually
08:27
of interest to them and i think i've
08:29
learned a lot just from that experience
08:30
and you can't ignore them because now
08:32
i'm doing live sound at alexandra palace
08:34
but i still remember that conversation
08:36

and
08:36
the takeaway from it was that yeah maybe
08:39
i can do something you know
08:41
yeah man and i think that's really
08:42
relatable possibly for a lot of people
08:44
listening
08:45
and when it comes to learning where did
08:47
you learn all the skills to do these
08:49
things because in a way it sounds like
08:50
you almost just ran into engineering
08:52
did you pick these skills up just by
08:54
trial and error or you know
08:56
and also i'm interested to know your
08:58
thoughts on the debate of
08:59
learning on the job versus a more
09:01
traditional education
09:02
yeah it was a kind of running intuit
09:04
situation meeting these bands
09:06
kind of getting hyped by their
09:08
enthusiasm by it and then
09:10
when it came to learning i think it was
09:12
really that desire to be able to get to
09:14
the next level always kind of pushed me
09:16
and
09:17
that translated for me quite naturally
09:19
into the technical element of it i got
09:21
excited if there was a
09:23
sound that i wasn't able to achieve but
09:24

someone else could it would excite me to
09:26
go and
09:27
find out how that was achieved at the
09:29
end of the day it did lead to me
09:31
studying at university which i think i
09:34
hadn't really anticipated going to like
09:35
an audio university is
09:37
it's quite a specialist kind of subject
09:39
to study at that level
09:40
but i was pushed in that direction just
09:43
because
09:44
there was an opportunity to learn in a
09:45
kind of more formal environment which
09:47
i think is actually really positive i
09:49
mean a lot of people
09:50
particularly in this industry and
09:52
particularly
09:53
in the older generations they didn't
09:56
have these opportunities and i think a
09:57
lot of them
09:58
look at the colleges as a kind of easy
10:00
way out because you could go and learn
10:02
on the job
10:03
or you could go to a college and kind of
10:04
be spoon-fed the information almost
10:07
and i can see that there's an argument
10:08
in both directions but for me personally
10:10
it really
10:11

helped almost being spoon-fed the
10:13
information because it puts it in a
10:14
straight line
10:15
sometimes when learning on the job you
10:17
don't have the interim steps
10:19
you just learn something which you've
10:21
come across at an event or
10:23
in a studio without the building blocks
10:25
that got to that point
10:27
um what about mentorship have you ever
10:29
like interned before you studied because
10:32
you were working in the industry for a
10:34
few years before studying right
10:36
yeah so for me personally as i said
10:39
i studied at university which is one
10:41
sort of mentorship
10:43
and i certainly think that it's a great
10:45
way of a guaranteed mentor because for
10:46
so many of us
10:47
you just don't have access to these
10:49
people yeah and i would put myself in
10:51
that boat coming from a small town
10:53
going to university was like oh there
10:55
are people that
10:56
do this stuff for a living not just go
10:58
oh you're the
10:59
guy in the town who plays with the sound
11:02
at the
11:02

the parties you know suddenly it's oh
11:05
these people make records like
11:07
this is a real thing so for me that
11:09
element of mentorship was great
11:11
um and then i went through one of my
11:13
lecturers pmc
11:15
the speaker manufacturer so i was
11:17
working for them
11:18
um and then when i was working there i
11:20
was also interning with steve rispin who
11:22
you know he's worked with
11:23
asia king crimson just you know a great
11:25
engineer
11:27
great live engineer as well for me that
11:28
was kind of inspirational because he's
11:30
like a jobbing live engineer who has a
11:32
studio
11:33
we did an ep with some young guys i've
11:35
forgotten the name of the band actually
11:36
but they're a really good band
11:38
and just working with him just for a few
11:40
sessions so interested in what he was
11:42
doing
11:43
and he just seemed to it came so
11:45
naturally to him he'd throw a mic
11:47
up it looked to me like he didn't even
11:50
think about what he was doing we go into
11:51
the control room really nice studio
11:54

i remember he put a fat 47 on the kick
11:56
and i think just the d112 right next to
11:58
it i was always sticking kicked from
11:59
mike's right in the kick i said oh don't
12:01
you stick it right in the kick there
12:03
because that's what i do and he was like
12:04
why would you do that but
12:06
just really like dismissive of it and i
12:07
was like fair enough i went into the
12:09
control room with him he turned up these
12:11
two kick mics i was like oh
12:13
and i've tried to do it myself and you
12:15
don't get the same sound
12:16
yeah so something about the way he was
12:17
doing it it just sounded
12:19
you know more realistic than any kick
12:22
ever i was like that's cool
12:24
like he just didn't think about it he
12:25
put the mics where he wanted to put them
12:27
like i suggested saying to him it wasn't
12:29
offensive towards me just
12:31
let that slide that's like i won't make
12:33
any more suggestions
12:35
and i learned more that day about
12:37
recording drums than
12:39
you know i've ever learned recording
12:40
about drums just from him doing what he
12:42
does
12:43

he was more of a mental like socially he
12:45
kind of told me about his time on tour
12:47
with various bands
12:48
but in terms of engineering just he just
12:50
got it done and i just watched
12:52
yeah and i personally think that's
12:53
really valuable because
12:55
in the beginning just having that point
12:57
of reference where you're seeing how
12:58
things are done in a professional
13:00
setting can really help
13:01
but in your opinion just thinking about
13:03
advice for people wanting to achieve
13:05
success
13:07
you know they're on their own they're
13:09
perhaps self-taught
13:10
is mentorship something that you'd
13:12
recommend these people seek out
13:14
i think if you're on your own you're
13:16
probably at a big disadvantage
13:18
you can get so much from youtube videos
13:22
i mean i still watch youtube videos if
13:24
there's a new digital technology that's
13:25
come out
13:26
yeah i'll watch a youtube video with
13:27
some person demonstrating explaining it
13:31
but for me nothing comes close to
13:34
communicating with a real person even if
13:36

it's like just watching them work
13:38
and interning at studio people talk
13:40
about it as oh but you know you don't
13:42
get paid and all this
13:43
but for me looking back i mean that was
13:46
years ago but i still look back as that
13:47
is the most valuable bit of studio
13:49
experience i've had
13:51
and when i kind of sent him an email and
13:54
it
13:54
i was it wasn't an application i just
13:56
literally sent him an email saying i'm
13:57
in
13:58
the area i found your studio
14:01
and i remember getting an email saying
14:02
how did you find my studio it's not on
14:03
google
14:05
yeah i kind of did some digging on some
14:08
of the artists that have recorded
14:09
at this mysterious studio of yours and
14:12
he was like well yeah fine
14:14
come in so didn't require any sort of
14:17
planning i didn't need to show him a
14:18
show reel he just literally said come in
14:20
for a session and if it goes well
14:22
maybe you know we will think about it
14:24
maybe nothing and i came in this
14:26
session at the end of the day ah you
14:27

want to come back tomorrow and that you
14:29
know that was it i was like yeah
14:30
i can't come back the day after i got
14:31
work but i'm in next weekend and he was
14:33
like sure
14:34
so yeah that just became a thing like
14:36
completely organically
14:38
i offered him pretty much nothing yeah i
14:40
just came and
14:41
admired i mean i moved some stuff in if
14:44
you want me to but
14:45
for me it was just a bit of free
14:47
experience got to experience his studio
14:49
his clients the way that he worked with
14:51
his clients he had a great rapport with
14:52
his clients as well
14:54
and as much as anything that was so good
14:56
to see a professional working
14:57
environment
14:58
with like a band assigned to an indie
15:00
label
15:01
and a producer doing what a producer
15:02
should do and me just kind of being a
15:05
fly on the wall there
15:06
and going like okay because obviously
15:08
being an educational institute the bands
15:10
that come in
15:11
you know they won't be assigned banned
15:12

they won't really have a deadline so
15:14
it's a kind of a different
15:16
atmosphere and that for me was a real
15:18
eye opener it's like okay this is how
15:20
people function and it was actually so
15:21
much more chilled than i thought it was
15:22
going to be
15:23
wow um which was a big relief i was like
15:25
oh i could do this
15:28
so you were obviously very highly
15:30
motivated to seek out these positions
15:32
and also to be doing
15:34
you know related work building
15:35
loudspeakers for a great brand like pmc
15:39
but i'm interested to know where does
15:40
this motivation come from because i
15:42
think
15:43
in the beginning people's journey is
15:45
mostly uphill
15:46
so that can be a bit challenging that's
15:48
a really hard question i think
15:50
um i have mornings when i wake up and
15:52
want to do absolutely nothing
15:54
and days where i wake up and do
15:55
absolutely nothing um i think we all do
15:58
it's kind of in our psyche somewhere to
16:01
kind of naturally balance ourselves
16:04
but in terms of motivation again it's
16:07

definitely
16:09
listening to music and want to make it
16:12
like i'm listening to it so
16:13
for me if i've had like a few if i'm
16:16
having like writer's block or if i'm
16:17
not producing anybody or if i'm having
16:20
just a break in general from going to
16:21
the studio find myself not going to the
16:23
studio for three or four days in a row
16:24
and i'm thinking
16:25
i wonder why like something in the back
16:27
of my mind saying don't go to the studio
16:29
this week um and for me
16:32
personally it's always coming back to
16:35
listening to music if i put itunes on i
16:38
plug my headphones in i can't help but
16:41
listening to more than just the message
16:42
of the song i
16:43
accidentally start delving deeper and
16:45
going i wonder what they've done with
16:47
the guitar there to
16:49
make it do that thing um it's something
16:52
refreshing in a way
16:53
so if you're in one of those situations
16:55
where you're needing a break
16:57
you take however long you need and then
16:59
you you know pop your headphones in and
17:01
you're like oh yeah
17:02

like this is why i'm interested yeah i'm
17:04
like thank goodness yeah it's back
17:06
and you do have those moments and
17:08
sometimes it takes a while for them to
17:09
come around
17:10
and you start to consider oh what if it
17:12
doesn't come back around but sometimes
17:14
it's even i'll be watching a movie
17:15
i'm taking a real proper break just
17:17
enjoying a movie and you know something
17:19
within the sound design is kind of
17:22
interesting
17:22
there's so many triggers and i guess
17:24
what's happened is
17:26
although i'm probably less inspired or
17:28
proactive than i was when i started out
17:31
i've got more triggers than ever almost
17:33
in that i can kind of
17:34
take something away from almost any
17:37
situation that i can relate to how i
17:38
could produce music
17:39
yeah and i think that is probably
17:42
one of the reasons why people tend to
17:44
like to work with me it's because
17:46
if i've got an idea and they don't like
17:49
it i'd be like sweet
17:51
and i'll come up with a new one not
17:53
necessarily instantly but
17:54

something will inspire me that's totally
17:56
not my original idea and i'm
17:58
super happy to try something else and
18:00
see what will work with the artist
18:02
because for me
18:02
a production is not the producer's eyes
18:05
it's the artist's art
18:07
and the point when i realized that and
18:09
went from being a
18:10
recording engineer to being a producer
18:12
and started to enjoy
18:14
searching for what the artist wants
18:16
rather than what i want and
18:17
i think that's that's what gets me out
18:19
of bed in the morning i guess it's
18:20
finding what you like in the job
18:22
even if it's something that's really
18:23
strange and quite niche
18:25
identifying that for me was a big thing
18:28
and that made that motivation come a
18:29
little bit easier when i was kind of
18:31
stuck for ideas
18:32
i mean i think that's really relatable
18:34
because everyone's going to have a
18:35
certain area of their
18:37
their role that they particularly like
18:40
and
18:41
some area that they're particularly
18:43

interested or passionate about
18:45
and yeah i suppose if you do have that
18:47
raw passion in the beginning then
18:49
and you can sort of cling on to that
18:51
that does really help
18:53
so before your live sound endeavors used
18:55
to run your own studio which is how you
18:57
came into contact with bands
18:59
like island could you tell me a little
19:01
bit about like how
19:02
that relationship came about yeah so in
19:05
2013 myself and my
19:08
best friend tom gill started studio
19:11
focus recording
19:12
i've been recording since i was younger
19:15
in a very limited capacity
19:17
and i just knew that i wanted to start
19:20
recording studio i was doing tons more
19:22
and more recording
19:23
in other locations and i was just
19:25
building up gear as was tom so
19:26
we went in this together and it was
19:28
really something that
19:30
we would talk about it every day for
19:32
almost like two years before it happened
19:34
and it was really an ambitious project
19:36
that even i look at it now
19:38
and i really question like could i do
19:40

this now
19:41
and i don't know probably not it was
19:44
again
19:45
a little bit of ignorance was almost the
19:48
driving force behind it
19:50
yeah yeah passion and naivety yeah
19:52
precisely
19:53
i can't agree more and i think those two
19:56
things are a beautiful
19:57
cocktail again i did this with tom and
20:01
he was really the catalyst for me i had
20:03
all these ideas and
20:04
he was just the guy who'd say go on then
20:07
get on with it and
20:09
it was an amazing experience so we
20:10
started out we had two clients and we
20:13
were opening the studio just on the
20:14
assumption that we would find more
20:16
a lot of individuals talk about the
20:18
point of no return
20:20
if let's say you're quitting your
20:21
full-time job if you're looking to go
20:23
freelance
20:24
for me it was that as well actually i
20:25
was working full-time at this speaker
20:27
manufacturer
20:28
and i wanted some speakers for my studio
20:31
i said to myself i'm going to work here
20:32

until i can afford a pair of speakers
20:34
and i learned so much from that speaker
20:36
manufacturer actually looking back i
20:38
almost feel like
20:40
i probably undervalued its importance at
20:42
the time i think we're all
20:43
to blame for this you know you're doing
20:45
something and you're thinking about
20:46
something else
20:47
yeah as soon as you've completed that
20:49
thing you realize how beneficial it was
20:51
or
20:52
how many opportunities there were that
20:54
maybe you minimized because you were
20:57
you know too busy thinking about other
20:58
things but yeah then i was in studio
21:00
focus and we did a bunch of recordings
21:03
and eventually that's how i ran into
21:05
island so island came
21:07
and did a live session with me there
21:10
that was a few years in so i'd been
21:12
recording local bands
21:14
from oxford um for a long time just you
21:16
know
21:17
turning over we were making a bit of
21:19
money we were spending
21:20
all of our money on guitars like
21:22
anything that we'd earn boom another
21:24

guitar
21:25
which actually i mean at the time seemed
21:27
like the silliest investment ever but
21:29
when we wrapped up the business we sold
21:32
like three guitars each and
21:34
walked away with like a fair bit of cash
21:36
yeah
21:37
so it turned out to be a less terrible
21:39
move than we thought at the time
21:41
and you started out with island doing a
21:45
live session right and then a couple of
21:47
eps yeah
21:48
um so they came to our studio and did a
21:51
live session
21:52
it was just a little job they came and
21:55
played we set up some cameras it was
21:58
like a cool live session really
21:59
um really good atmosphere and
22:03
a couple of years after that they've
22:05
moved back to london at this point so
22:06
hence their london band
22:08
and their manager said to them ah you
22:10
know
22:11
you know ep's all right but what about
22:13
that live session that you did at that
22:15
studio
22:16
he didn't even know where it was but
22:17
they were like what uh you know at
22:19

mike's place
22:20
and he was like yeah you should go there
22:21
because that's that's the sound of you
22:23
guys
22:25
and they were like cool like we really
22:26
get on i don't think they're expecting
22:28
to come
22:29
to a rural part of oxfordshire to record
22:31
when they're a london-based band but
22:33
they came back and we did an ep and it
22:35
was brilliant they were really happy
22:36
with it the manager was like
22:38
bang on ali raymond he's called he's a
22:40
great guy
22:41
and he kind of initiated that even
22:42
though it was you know i was directly
22:44
friends of island he he's again the
22:45
name that kind of
22:46
free linked us and then we did another
22:49
ep and then we did acoustic ep and then
22:51
we yeah now we've done the album and now
22:53
we're doing the tour so
22:54
it's just yeah ridiculous yeah man well
22:57
i mean i remember picking that up
22:59
and hearing it all over the place and
23:02
just thinking wow this is amazing this
23:03
is you know
23:04
your work it's got to be really
23:06

satisfying yeah that was the first
23:08
record that was you know released
23:10
properly and was recorded and
23:12
done at my place and then it was you
23:14
know played on radio 1 and
23:16
i was literally driving past someone
23:19
else's car with a window open and
23:20
i heard their songs playing out of
23:22
someone else's car and i was just like
23:24
that's got to be such an experience yeah
23:26
that was so surreal
23:28
and i had that strange moment because
23:30
i've been listening to that music so
23:32
much it was
23:33
when i heard it it felt completely
23:34
natural but then i had that
23:36
sudden feeling in my stomach this is
23:38
incredibly unnatural because
23:39
it's not coming from anything that i'm
23:41
controlling yeah
23:44
so one of the things i'm really aiming
23:45
to do with the podcast is
23:47
make people's journeys relatable and one
23:49
of the themes we cover is this idea of
23:52
coming outside of your comfort zone and
23:54
cultivating courage
23:55
because courage and confidence are quite
23:58
different things
24:00

confidence is where you've you know
24:02
landed the ball in the basket multiple
24:03
times
24:04
before and you know you have a pretty
24:06
good shot at doing it again
24:08
but when you're starting out quite often
24:10
it's courage you need where you're you
24:12
know able to walk into the unknown
24:14
and i know you've had like live sound
24:16
experience previously you know you've
24:18
worked on
24:19
some medium-sized festivals and stuff
24:20
like that but i'm interested to know if
24:22
this sort of change of direction
24:24
from studio into live sound has sort of
24:26
been any of that
24:27
experience or brought up any of those
24:29
emotions for you
24:30
uh yeah courage versus confidence it's
24:34
it's a really nice concept i feel like i
24:36
was unaware
24:37
of my courage for the most part which i
24:40
think
24:41
was a blessing and a curse perhaps and i
24:43
think anyone listening to a podcast
24:45
like this is probably searching
24:49
a bit harder than i was and i kind of
24:52
wish that i'd done a little bit more
24:54

research
24:54
at this point and i think actually you
24:56
talked about i've kind of
24:58
restarted a little bit with the live
24:59
sound thing and you're not wrong
25:01
yeah i had a surrounding knowledge of
25:03
the subject
25:04
which maybe made it more intimidating
25:07
like the thought of
25:08
that when island asked me to do that
25:10
first live tour i was kind of aware
25:12
of the scale of the stuff that they were
25:15
doing
25:16
and i knew that i hadn't done anything
25:18
like that before so
25:19
yeah there was an awareness that the
25:21
unknown
25:23
was it was ahead of me much more than
25:25
previous jobs that i'd taken on i would
25:27
say
25:28
so there was an element of courage there
25:30
but as i've mentioned
25:31
the key for me was probably the little
25:34
prod i had from the band
25:36
and from their manager as well and none
25:38
of those guys
25:39
are technical none of them can work a
25:41
digital mixing desk so it wasn't as if
25:43

they were saying ah
25:44
you can definitely do this because i've
25:45
made a judgment call based on reason it
25:47
was purely
25:49
we believe in you regardless of what the
25:51
task is
25:53
what happened with island is we did the
25:55
album that we've been talking about
25:57
and then they actually had a live sound
25:59
engineer they were working with amber
26:01
runs
26:01
live sound engineer and then they did
26:04
another tour and he was out with amber
26:06
run like
26:06
and amber and touring engineer was like
26:09
i i can't do it there are too many
26:11
date clashes and i've got to stick with
26:13
you know my main artist so they were
26:14
like cool so they
26:15
approached me and said right do you want
26:17
to come out on the road with us and be a
26:19
live sound engineer
26:21
i guess this was my next big break i was
26:23
like i don't know how to do live sound
26:25
at that point i'd done pub gigs and um
26:28
i'd done some festivals
26:30
for lots of different bands but i'd
26:32
never been
26:33

a live sound engineer who's bringing you
26:35
know
26:36
the sound of a band on tour and they
26:38
were like oh well it'll be fine because
26:40
you know you literally recorded our
26:42
album so who better to to do our live
26:44
sound
26:45
yeah um and i was like yeah yeah you're
26:47
right so again a little
26:48
little push in the right direction and
26:50
that is totally to their credit
26:52
i remember that conversation in the
26:53
kitchen of studio focus
26:55
they were like you can totally do this
26:57
and you know they didn't really know
26:59
what the job of a live sounding engineer
27:00
was and neither did i like i was only
27:03
ever working on analog consoles before
27:05
that and
27:05
yeah it was you know the first tour i
27:08
literally had to learn about 15
27:10
digital mixing desks because i'd never
27:12
used one really
27:13
it's taught me an important lesson which
27:15
is that if another opportunity comes up
27:17
and i don't have that prod i kind of
27:19
need to
27:21
tell myself you've done this before i
27:24

believe in you
27:27
whatever it is um so maybe that's really
27:30
that's so cool man that's maybe it's
27:32
courage yeah but what would you say i
27:35
mean let's say that someone wants to
27:37
follow a similar sort of career path to
27:39
yours
27:39
and they're in that position where maybe
27:41
they don't have the go ahead to just
27:42
give themselves a little nudge
27:44
in terms of advice for other people like
27:46
what would you say if they're in that
27:48
position where
27:49
you know people are saying oh you should
27:51
go and do an eu and north american tour
27:53
and they're like oh i don't know if i
27:54
could do that like what would you say
27:56
the great thing about touring is you get
27:57
lots of practice goes and i
28:00
got the first couple wrong and
28:03
because it's a tour you've kind of just
28:05
gotta
28:06
crack on until you you get it right and
28:08
like after the first few shows
28:11
which were just absolutely terrifying
28:13
and
28:14
and i remember like after maybe the
28:16
third gig thinking like maybe
28:18

you know this isn't for me and then i
28:20
think the fourth gig was absolutely
28:21
astonishing and it was suddenly that one
28:23
where
28:23
i felt like i got their record to sound
28:26
like that live
28:27
i felt like the audience were completely
28:29
with me it was such a different
28:31
experience and
28:33
as soon as you crack it it feels great
28:35
and it kind of sticks i would say
28:37
if something seems impossible it's only
28:40
impossible short term i would definitely
28:42
argue that point
28:43
there are ways to prepare yourself as
28:45
well asking people
28:47
who have done it before i do think find
28:50
your trusted source
28:51
would be probably my advice at this
28:53
point
28:54
there's always someone out there who
28:55
will be that for you i used to be a
28:57
teacher so i'd constantly be asked
29:00
for advice around you know these kind of
29:02
subjects and the amount of students who
29:04
were way better
29:05
at engineering than i was before i
29:07
studied they didn't have enough
29:08

confidence to
29:10
go and do a show like a live sound gig
29:12
we used to have the opportunity to do
29:14
stuff at the o2
29:15
and i remember that's a really tough nut
29:18
to crack
29:18
you know jumping from actually knowing
29:20
what you're doing to actually running
29:22
something because i just didn't know
29:23
what could go wrong
29:24
until they did and then after they did
29:26
you go ah you don't do that
29:28
but i think i was lucky enough not to be
29:30
in the o2 when those things happened
29:32
yeah i was in a pub where everyone's
29:34
like oh well you know
29:35
yeah yeah they've got more time so i
29:38
think
29:39
my advice like for people aspiring to
29:41
you know move up a chain is
29:43
is don't be afraid to do shows that
29:45
you're not proud of because
29:46
you'll probably learn something way more
29:50
important than the prestige of doing a
29:53
show
29:53
somewhere fancy right away if that makes
29:56
sense
29:57
yeah a really good point so tell me
30:00

about how you rest
30:01
and recharge because i think today more
30:03
than ever the line between home and work
30:05
can get pretty blurred
30:06
and it can be quite difficult for
30:08
self-employed creatives and
30:10
likely even more people actually during
30:12
covid
30:13
to sort of get this balance i'm
30:15
definitely guilty of not recharging on a
30:17
regular basis
30:18
so i'm interested to know like do you
30:20
recharge and what does that look like
30:21
for you
30:22
yeah it's a really good question and
30:25
it's something that i hadn't even asked
30:26
myself until about two years ago
30:28
i honestly think that i didn't used to
30:30
recharge
30:32
i was kind of in hyperdrive particularly
30:34
that learning period when there's always
30:35
some like you just don't know everything
30:36
there's so much to learn and
30:38
the more you learn the more you realize
30:39
ah i don't know any of this stuff
30:41
and i'm not even trying to pretend that
30:43
i know everything now like not at all
30:45
but i've learned enough that can get me
30:47

by
30:49
and yeah i think i've i kind of value
30:52
the balance of like a home life and a
30:54
work life
30:56
i'll work on an album really full-on i
30:59
can't even count the hours in a week but
31:01
it's
31:01
it's crazy hours when you've got a
31:03
deadline and
31:04
it's either we get to this deadline and
31:06
it's not what we want it to be
31:08
or we get to this deadline and it's
31:10
exactly what we want to want it to be
31:12
and the closer you get to it the more
31:13
you realize that you know in the next 48
31:15
hours
31:16
there's 46 hours of work to be done you
31:18
know i mean
31:19
you know that's kind of an extreme
31:20
example but you get the picture
31:23
and then when you finish that project
31:25
yeah i think at that point you
31:27
think you know i deserve a little rest
31:28
now and i can switch off it seems
31:31
like not all the time probably 50 50.
31:34
sometimes i go home and i just can't and
31:36
it's just i may as well have stayed at
31:37
the studio
31:39

and other times yeah i can completely
31:41
just i mean
31:42
for me i really have to put my phone
31:44
into airplane mode yeah i have to close
31:46
my laptop
31:47
because they are my sources of
31:49
communication for work
31:51
that's the right being in the creative
31:52
industry facebook
31:55
for if you ask any creative person is a
31:58
tool
31:59
it's hardly a social network which is
32:02
obviously what it's
32:03
originally designed to be i think it's
32:04
different for for creatives because
32:06
they've probably got a page because you
32:08
have to have a page
32:09
and as soon as you open your phone you
32:11
see oh you've got a message for your
32:12
page
32:13
you can't ignore that maybe it's you
32:15
know warner brothers
32:19
and it's the same for me and the only
32:21
way to remove it is to put it in
32:23
airplane mode
32:24
and literally put it in a cupboard
32:25
because if i've put it in my pocket in
32:27
airplane mode i'll be like yeah
32:28

what what if someone's yeah yeah message

32:30

me now so be desperate yeah

32:32

accessories of any sort especially

32:34

mobile phones

32:35

um they can throw me out the zone and i

32:38

think we've all had it where you're

32:39

pretty busy doing something you get a

32:41

message from someone

32:42

something's going on or someone's just

32:45

asking you how you're doing and it's

32:46

like totally throwing you off your game

32:48

sometimes you need to put aside time for

32:51

personal life because otherwise if you

32:53

don't give it any

32:55

will interrupt your professional life at

32:56

an inconvenient time

32:58

yeah so actually giving personal life

33:00

some time is

33:02

the key to improving your professional

33:03

life as well as just losing time on it

33:05

and i've definitely run into that in the

33:07

past i've upset people by

33:11

being frustrated about the fact that

33:13

they were trying to contact me whilst i

33:14

was on a job yeah and they're like yeah

33:16

but when was i supposed to contact you

33:17

you've been on a job for the last 48

33:19

hours so

33:20

you know it's however 5 a.m when you're
33:22
trying to get some sleep in or
33:24
you know that's that's my time so you
33:26
know realistically
33:27
you've got to phone me otherwise i'm
33:30
going to try and phone you at some point
33:31
aren't i
33:32
and i think that was a big moment of
33:33
realization for me yeah yeah
33:36
and if you think about all your
33:38
experience as a whole now
33:40
what would you say is the most valuable
33:42
thing that you've learned so far
33:44
but the main thing that i've learned
33:46
from like doing a bunch of productions
33:48
and there are loads now
33:49
i've been doing it for you know a good
33:50
few years is that
33:52
things get released before i was
33:54
studying i was
33:56
chucking everything on cd and giving it
33:58
to my mates
33:59
went to university realized that
34:03
there were people way better at this
34:04
than i was and suddenly i never released
34:06
anything
34:07
i just wouldn't want people to hear it
34:09
because i knew that they'd be like yeah
34:10

but it's not as good as
34:11
what they're doing then i left started
34:13
working with clients
34:14
they're paying you cash they need to be
34:16
happy with the files so you begin to
34:18
go okay so i do need to finish things
34:20
now because
34:22
there's a deal being made here when i
34:24
look back at when i first opened my
34:25
studio
34:26
the first few recordings were like
34:28
pretty good then they started like
34:30
getting a bit rushed
34:31
i don't think i even noticed at the time
34:33
but i think i just became aware like oh
34:34
my goodness i'm running a business i
34:36
need to
34:36
get things out the door in and out and
34:38
in and out and then
34:40
i kind of had that guilty conscience
34:42
when someone came back to me or from the
34:43
mix of saying you know
34:44
this isn't what we wanted and it's not
34:46
that it just wasn't what they wanted it
34:47
just wasn't good enough because i'd
34:48
rushed it yes the reality and it was
34:50
like oh
34:51
that hurts but it's true
34:54

um and i knew i could do better the
34:57
business mentality had taken over
34:59
and whenever creative stuff and business
35:02
kind of intertwines which
35:04
that is the industry is tough and i
35:07
think
35:07
a lot of people will either be able to
35:09
relate to that or will be able to relate
35:11
to that when they come across a
35:12
situation where they're being offered a
35:14
certain amount of money for a job and
35:16
that's another thing it's like learning
35:17
how long a job really takes
35:19
and you get offered the job you go oh
35:20
sweet 200 quid down for that
35:23
you put in the hours it takes a bit
35:24
longer than you expect
35:26
you give them the thing and they're like
35:27
oh you know that's not actually what we
35:29
wanted can you do a re-edit
35:30
if you're you know a film or something
35:33
and you're like
35:34
i've put in way more like that 200 quid
35:36
suddenly doesn't seem like the right
35:38
amount of value
35:39
but that's because you quoted them the
35:41
wrong price it's not because
35:42
they're douchebags i think in the
35:46

beginning though
35:47
quite often people are just charging in
35:50
order to get people through the door
35:52
and just get those first few clients you
35:54
know and
35:55
it is really difficult like you say to
35:57
balance
35:59
all of these things making sure that
36:00
they're charging appropriately for their
36:02
time
36:03
and they know how long a job takes
36:04
because when you just don't have the
36:06
experience in the beginning it's
36:08
really really hard to strike that
36:09
balance i still find it hard when people
36:11
say to me
36:12
want to do a full track ep how much and
36:14
i'm like well
36:16
at first you go 300 quid
36:19
yes oh sweet whereas now i go well you
36:22
know let's look at what you want to do
36:23
how many piece band is it
36:25
have you got any previous releases
36:27
what's you know your normal workflow and
36:29
you get all these questions and
36:31
as people who've done more jobs will be
36:34
able to give you more
36:35
specific answers it does become easier
36:37

to estimate
36:38
so you're able to quote them the right
36:40
price and they can turn it down
36:42
obviously if they're not happy with it
36:43
or they can take you up on it and the
36:45
project will go a little bit smoother
36:46
if you've under quoted for a job i would
36:49
recommend
36:50
you just get it done to the best of your
36:51
ability bite the bullet
36:54
learn from that next time if you do a
36:57
similar job
36:57
ask for a little bit more information so
36:59
you can be a bit more accurate with your
37:01
quote
37:01
try and enjoy it um yeah that's really
37:03
great advice
37:04
i think we've covered a lot of ground
37:06
here man and you've made some really
37:07
great
37:08
points but i'm wondering if you feel if
37:10
there's anything we haven't covered
37:12
or if you've got any additional thoughts
37:14
again thinking for those people that
37:15
want to follow
37:16
in a similar career path to your own um
37:19
i'd just say you know if they've got
37:21
this far through it um
37:23

then they're on the right kind of lines
37:26
you need to be a researcher you said it
37:28
yourself
37:28
you need to be looking into you know
37:31
technologies you need to be looking into
37:33
artistic
37:34
angles and things like these just
37:37
chats with people who've been there or
37:39
seen that or done that or
37:41
what have you i mean that's the right
37:43
step and i think
37:44
what i'd say would be the next step
37:46
would be just to phone up
37:48
and try and get an internship it sounds
37:51
so unachievable i remember when someone
37:53
told me why don't you get an internship
37:55
i was like
37:55
you can't just phone people up and ask
37:57
to interrupt their life
38:00
that's going to be awkward and you know
38:03
the the idea of it was but
38:04
for me that was probably the start of
38:08
kind of the next chapter was making that
38:10
phone call and
38:11
when they say like oh do you know how to
38:12
operate pro tools and you go
38:14
yeah uh i think i do like from what i've
38:18
learned so far i've done everything i've
38:20

had to do like
38:20
i don't you know just just to go yeah
38:23
and give it a go
38:24
like i said being out of your comfort
38:26
zone getting in the deep end
38:28
and even for me going on tour with
38:29
island working on a different console
38:31
every night
38:32
there's always an element of uncertainty
38:33
there you know i've got this
38:35
confidence that oh i'll be fine because
38:37
i've dealt with those situations so many
38:38
times now
38:39
but there's still a small part of me
38:41
that's like what about this time i can't
38:43
make something work well something
38:45
horrific happens and i think that's the
38:46
same in almost any industry
38:48
um there's always a chance of failure if
38:50
you work in an accountancy and you get a
38:51
new job
38:53
it's not going to be exactly the same as
38:54
your old office so you can
38:57
put this across anything but you have to
38:58
push yourself just occasionally
39:00
and there's nothing wrong with being
39:01
comfortable either but if you want to
39:04
progress which
39:04

if you're here then there's obviously a
39:07
part of you that wants to progress
39:09
and you need to make those calls nice
39:11
well mike
39:12
it's been such a pleasure catching up
39:14
with you thank you so much for coming on
39:15
the podcast
39:16
thank you mark yeah it's been really
39:18
nice big love
39:20
big look
39:23
awesome guys thank you so much for
39:24
listening and if you want to follow mike
39:26
he's
39:27
at big hairy audio on instagram and i've
39:30
got his links
39:31
in the show notes below and just to plug
39:33
some amazing artists if you haven't
39:35
heard of
39:35
Arlo Parks or island for that matter go
39:38
and check them out you definitely will
39:40
not regret it
39:41
and i don't tend to make much reference
39:42
to covid on the podcast but these are
39:44
really testing times for creatives
39:46
particularly those in live and
39:48
event-based work
39:49
so i feel it's really important to
39:51
highlight support in these industries
39:52

like live sound

39:54

when it's safe to do so again so guys

39:56

we've got some

39:57

epic epic interviews in store with some

39:59

great guests

40:00

so peace and love and i will see you on

40:02

the next one

Episode End.