

*Xavier:* There's a lot of lessons out there like, no, none of that shit is gonna make you happy. None of it is. What's gonna make you happy is getting to know who you are, and getting to accept that, you know what, hey, when I wrote *Have You Lost Your Mind Yet*, this album, it was about this: you're feeling depressed? It's okay. I woke up this morning. I felt like shit. Okay. Now we've got somewhere to go. Let's put on some music. Let's feel better. Ooh, Stevie Wonder. Oh man, I feel good now. Yeah.

[Music]

*Lily:* I'm Lily Cornell Silver, and welcome to *Mind Wide Open*, my mental health focus interview series. Today, I am talking to my friend Xavier Dphrepaulezz, who goes by the stage name Fantastic Negrito. I met Xavier when he was opening for my dad on tour. So I'm super excited to have him here today, and he's going to talk about his music and his deeply personal lyrics, and some of the songs that he's written about mental health. Thank you so much for joining us and I hope you enjoy. Hi, Xavier. It's so good to see you.

*Xavier:* Man, it's really good to see you. I want to say, first, that, hey, the world has changed so much since I last saw you.

*Lily:* I know. It's like completely, a completely different world, I think.

*Xavier:* Well, it's an honor to be here.

*Lily:* Thank you.

*Xavier:* An amazing person. Chris's daughter, and, you know, that that connection I had with Chris that year-and-a-half was life changing. And I'm really happy to be here with you now.

*Lily:* Me, too. I wanted to start this by saying I – like the first time I saw you perform, I think you were touring off of *The Last Days of Oakland* was the album at the time.

*Xavier:* Right.

*Lily:* And I remember like walking into the theater during your set, and just being so floored. Like, holy shit. This is crazy. I mean, you have that ability to draw people in because it's like so raw and so real, but also the lyrics, like the music was clearly so personal to

you and like very vulnerable to you. So do you feel like music for you like represents, you know, it's part of your soul? Is it a mental health coping strategy for you in any way?

*Xavier:* Well, first of all, I just want to say that, and I always tell people, I say Chris Cornell had great taste.

*Lily:* [Laughter]

*Xavier:* I want to say that first. And he put me on before anybody knew anything about me. Told me when I met him that, "Man, you know, I just – we saw you on YouTube. And we're like, 'Oh, man.' We just went down the hole."

*Lily:* Right.

*Xavier:* Oh, absolutely, for me, it's extremely visceral, you know. I'm much more of an artist than I am a musician, I always say. And the album that I just wrote, *Have You Lost Your Mind Yet*, when I wrote that album and I went to conceptualize what the album was gonna be, I wrote it about mental health.

*Lily:* Wow.

*Xavier:* And the album was about how do you, Lily, and how do I, how does my bass player, all these people, I'm **rolling** with what's our state in this mental health crisis as we're living in in this era of information or misinformation, whatever you wanna call it. And you get on the Internet, and it's like holy fuck. Like, you're on the Internet, and it's like this place where all this information is coming at you. Information. Information. Information. Information.

*Lily:* Right.

*Xavier:* But, somehow, we're supposed to process that and still be normal people. What I was saying when I was writing the album, that this very abnormal, and that most of us are walking around undiagnosed with some form of mental illness from daily – my keyboard player, my bass player, listen, you gotta go and you gotta watch on the news this state-sponsored agency we call the police. And they're arbitrarily executing African American people. So we

keep taking this in, and we're taking in every day. And it's become as normal as Starbucks. And then we – that's the issue one.

Issue 2 has been just violence. In America, you know, it's synonymous with, hey; maybe someone may walk in here and just decide to shoot up people like they did it at Sandy Hook. Because we don't even talk about Sandy Hook anymore. These were little kids. You know what I mean?

Lily: Right.

Xavier: So the album was basically about how are we dealing with that? Hey, man, people may just shoot up 56 people here, 22 over here. They go into a church, 11 here. But still, we're like, cool, let me see how many likes I got. You know, that's like our next kind of questioning.

Lily: Right. Right. Right.

Xavier: In that system of how do we value ourselves or what our values are based on, how many followers. My 11-year-old goes, "Hey, check this video out, Dad. It has ten million likes." And I always tell him like, "What does that mean?"

Lily: No, I really appreciate you speaking to that. One of the recent episodes I just did was with six of my friends. It was like a youth panel talking about, you know, how people our age navigate mental health and navigate the world right now. And one of the main things that we talked about was that total desensitization in like the world that we're living in right now in that age of overwhelm is, you know, like how do we deal with that constant influx of information and how do we take care of our mental health when we're constantly seeing tragedy, when we're constantly, you know, being overwhelmed by bad news, horrible, horrible news.

Xavier: Yeah.

Lily: So I mean, you said that you wrote that album about it, and how you deal with it. How do you think you deal with it? *[Laughter]*

Xavier: Well, I want to say this, too, and I want to be specific because I think my two previous albums, you know, extremely macro. This was micro. This was like I wanted to – when you say how did I

deal with it, I like that because I'm like, hey, I'm gonna deal with everything, and especially my mental health, which is my mental wealth, I call it, is I can really affect the things that happen on a micro level. The things that happen on micro level, we all have access to those things. Because why? They're right in front of us.

How do we treat people? Somebody calls you an asshole. Somebody calls you this. Somebody drops the "n" bomb on me. I mean, that happened to me, and I remember just looking at the person like, cool. Like all right. Fine. I mean, like that's my war back on this micro level is I don't have to let that determine me, who I am. Because I look around and I don't feel like that. I don't look in the mirror like, "Oh, you..." That's not me. So how do I deal with it? I dealt with it by looking at all my friends, taking each song off the record and secretly, this is in secret, so I'm vaulting this now, I wrote every song about every person that was around me. And the story was how are they coping with this mental health challenge.

There's a song that I wrote called "King Frustration". And I wrote that about my cousin because I'm right here in West Oakland, and she has been a lifelong drug addict, a prostitute that's a drug addict. So I just saw her walking like doing her movement, and I was just like, man, I could just feel the baseline based on her movement. *[Makes a beat]* and I was like that's it. I remember rushing home right *[makes a beat]*. And I was like her movement is worth more than any words.

So, again, the album is about the mental health of real people. It's about friends. It was hard to write that album, but it was explosive in that room, extremely cathartic. You had that feeling of like, it was a feeling of like healing and accountability.

Lily: Wow.

Xavier: Healing and accountability. And they were meeting up and that's weird.

Lily: *[Laughter]*

Xavier: Healing doesn't always like accountability. Healing likes blame.

Lily: Right. Right.

*Xavier:* You know what I mean?

*Lily:* Yeah.

*Xavier:* And accountability is lonely. It's like, hey, I'm trying to just be accountable over here [*laughter*] and there's no one in this line. I'm looking behind me and there's no one here. I'm trying to be accountable. And people are like, "Whoa, accountability sucks."

*Lily:* [*Laughter*]

*Xavier:* We like blaming – literally, you know, we like blaming – I do.

*Lily:* Yeah. And I think, yeah, I think that idea of healing and accountability kind of have to go hand-in-hand in order for it to be real healing with [*crosstalk*].

*Xavier:* Damn it. I love you. I love you for that.

*Lily:* [*Laughter*]

*Xavier:* I keep saying that to people. And, listen, hey, that's gonna get you onto a road you may not like either because we can – let's not – Lily, we agree on that right. So now let's take that equation and try to apply it to all the problems that are happening right now today, and see how many people shot me down.

*Lily:* Totally.

*Xavier:* See how many people won't be with you because as you said and I said, if you want it to be real, they go hand-in-hand. And that's gonna go for Black Lives Matter. That's gonna go for whoever's life matters. [*Laughter*] That's gonna go for social justice, racial justice. That's gonna go for inequity and how we distribute finances. That's going to go with, hey, why do we celebrate billionaires? Why? In my life, I see more billionaires equals more homeless people.

Like, I grew up at a time, I didn't see that many homeless people. Now, the tennis courts we used to play on in Oakland, that's a homeless encampment. And right down the street in San Pablo Avenue, where we I grew up, that's a homeless encampment now. So that accountability, you know, I mean we still keep making

Amazon rich. Why? What do we love about that? We complain like, "Oh my god. This is terrible." We complain, like Trump, and complain about all these things. But we seem really complicit also in enabling that machine, that monster, to exist.

*Lily:* Totally. I think that idea of blame like always, I always think about like the narcissists in my life in terms of like wanting, you know, wanted to play place the blame somewhere else and it being difficult to take accountability. And something that you've said is that you're a recovering narcissist. And curious about like what did that look like before and what does it look like now for you to be like in recovery?

*Xavier:* To me, Lily, I was, you know, at a young age in my twenties, I was signed to this massive record deal, and I thought I've made it. I'm gonna be famous. You know, I want the best women, the best drugs, the best house, the best cars. Yes, number one. Me. So I lived my life like that until one day, I'm in Los Angeles, I'm coming down the street. Bam. I wake up with a beard and three weeks have passed. And for all you viewers out there, this is what's left of my hand, my playing hand. A lot of people don't know this story.

*Lily:* Oh my god.

*Xavier:* I was never able to move my hand again, and, you know, my nails were really long and I had this beard, like what happened? Well, I remember waking up, and for the first time in my life, I was like you know what, maybe it's not the record company. Maybe it's not this person. Maybe it's not that person. I had all that time after waking up from three weeks in a coma. There's a lot of recovery time. And I really started to look at myself and a lot of my actions and a lot of my choices.

And the first time I discovered that my choices were landing me in the positions that I was finding myself in, that my mouth was getting me basically where I wanted to be. And that was like my recovery, I remember that day, my life changed. I didn't know if I'm ever gonna be able to walk again, speak clearly again, even use my hands. You know, I found a way. But it looked like before this, every day it was I lived for me. Every day was about me. Every day, it was my birthday. When I wanted to be a musician, it was about me. Like I said, the best of this. The best of this. Man, what

car do I have? I'm gonna be a famous star and I want to write these songs. I want hits. Well, that's what it was before, and then I think we go years later, and I decide five years ago as a middle-aged guy to go play on the streets, and I became Fantastic Negrito. That guy was a recovering narcissist, and he was about – don't care about fame, don't care about cars and material things. I just care about connecting, man. I need that connectivity. I need to live for other people. So if I'm gonna live for other people, I need to get out into the streets and play. And people are like, "Wait a minute. You're a middle-aged guy. You got a funny haircut."

*Lily:* *[Laughter]*

*Xavier:* "You dress like some weirdo." And then they be like, "Your music – these are industry people. Your music is genre non-specific. How dare you?"

*Lily:* *[Laughter]* Music that's like – like you can't – music industry people?

*Xavier:* Yes. Like, no, so they're like – a

*Lily:* *[Laughter]* *[crosstalk]* genre. No.

*Xavier:* Yeah. So that's what happened. But the recovering narcissist was like I don't care. I'm doing this for something much bigger. I'm actually doing it for my kids. Hey, every song I've ever written as Fantastic Negrito, I wrote for my kids as a map, as a – if something happened to me, they could go back and they could look at that, what Dad wrote. And I'm really writing to them. They'll get older now and realize that and maybe they'll be embarrassed or whatever. But I gotta say that that's why I went out as a middle-aged guy.

And the real people notice me. Like Chris Cornell. When I went to England, people like Robert Plant, or people like Taj Mahal. People like Buddy Guy. You know, these were the people that were like, no, this is great, man. Keep doing what you're doing. So that's what it looked like. One guy wanted everything. One guy lived for himself. And the recovering narcissist lives for other people, and he's really happy contributing. And he really doesn't want much. He just wants to get up there and contribute the song.

- Lily: That's beautiful. And it honestly aligns very directly with like the one major piece of advice that my dad gave me over and over and over again in my life was don't do anything with the intention or the goal of success. Like do things because you love to do it.
- Xavier: Yes.
- Lily: And he would say, like, "Success came from me, and that was great. But I didn't play music because I wanted the best of everything. I played it because I loved it, and that's why success came to me." So it seems like you're living that right now.
- Xavier: Yeah. I was a dude like coming from Oakland. I didn't really listen to rock and big hair bands, but I remember amongst all my peers, even in L.A., we were just like – in Oakland, we're like, man, you hear these white boys in Seattle?
- Lily: [Laughter]
- Xavier: Like this is kind of cool. Like everybody was coming. Nirvana. Pearl Jam. Soundgarden and all these...
- Lily: Right.
- Xavier: I remember like having – playing *Death Certificate*, which is an Ice Cube album, and maybe it was a Seattle tape, too. These were cassettes. I remember having that music. I remember I made *The Last Days of Oakland*, I had no record deal, man. I got nominated for a Grammy. I'm like what? I'm walking in, and there are people – I'm looking around, and they're like, "Hey, man, what record label are you with?" And I was like, "I don't have a record label. It's just me and my friends," you know.
- Lily: Right. Right. Right.
- Xavier: And I believe I'm the first artist to – uh-oh, that narcissist is showing up. Back, back narcissist.
- Lily: [Laughter]
- Xavier: I be like, "I was the first. I was the first." See, I gotta stop that.
- Lily: [Laughter]



*Xavier:* Well, yeah, so I remember I made that record. Grammy's...oh man, crazy. And then I made the next record, *Please Don't Be Dead*, and I remember I was like, hey, I took that Grammy and I just put it away. I don't want nothing to do with it because I'd be sitting there, Lily, and I'd be like writing. And I would turn, and I just kept looking at that Grammy. And it's like, wait a minute...

*Lily:* [Laughter]

*Xavier:* I was like "are these Grammy chords?"

*Lily:* Right. Right. Right.

*Xavier:* It was just kind of some weird evil. Like, no offense. [Crosstalk]

*Lily:* No, I totally get that.

*Xavier:* No offense to the Grammy community. Keep giving me Grammys. But I gotta –

*Lily:* [Laughter]

*Xavier:* Hey, Lily, I gotta put that shit away because there's something very weird about it.

*Lily:* Right.

*Xavier:* So I remember making that record, *Please Don't Be Dead* and people are like, "Oh my god," like calling me up, like, "Man, what are you doing? Like, you won a Grammy, man. You're supposed to sound like *The Last Days of Oakland*." I remember someone was like, "Is this a rock record?" Like, all these – this fear. And I was just like get away. I don't need – no, leave me alone. Because I didn't become an artist, especially at my age now. I mean, the don't give a fuck meter is like [makes sound].

*Lily:* Right.

*Xavier:* I just – I can't. So it's so imperative as artists, as an artist and creative community that we really cling to that notion that we really embrace the don't give a fuck meter. Because I think that's where amazing art comes from. And myself, you know, being a

black person, an African American person, I'm very aware that I come from a tradition of human expression in order to survive.

Because coming from that Trump trauma and that transatlantic slave trade, that's what I call what I do, black roots music, I know that tradition was those handclaps and those hums, and that we had to survive that. And that is incredible that this music came out of it. Rock and roll. Soul. Blues. Funk. Hip-Hop. Jazz. Electronic. House music. All this stuff came out of that, and so I'm always really trying to embrace that feeling, that sense of urgency.

*Lily:* And you touched on something I was going to ask you, anyway, I mean with everything going on in terms of systemic racism coming to light, and police brutality coming to light, which has always been a thing. But now it seems like everybody, everyone is talking about it, which is, you know, as it should be. People should be talking about it. If you felt like intergenerational trauma has played a role in your mental health and like witnessing the things we're witnessing now, like, what that trauma has done to your mental health and how you're coping with it?

*Xavier:* That's a very, very, very good question. And, first, I want to thank you for asking me it. Because I did a song once – and there I go, the narcissist. *[Laughter]* I did a song once, and it was called “The Suit That Won't Come Off”. I want you to think about that. “The Suit That Won't Come Off”. And I can't tell you, white people, whom I love dearly, and we're only 13 percent of the population so we need white people to be on our side. We're only 13 percent.

*Lily:* Right.

*Xavier:* I can never explain to you, like, probably you can't explain to me what it's like to be a woman. I'll never get it. I can't explain to you what this suit feels like. Every day, it's there. Every day, you deal with systemic racism. You need tools. The one good thing my abusive immigrant daddy, was also brilliant, did, he gave me tools. I didn't know he was giving them to me, but he was like, “If the police stop you, they will blow your head off. They will blow your head off,” in his accent. He kept – and I'm just like, oh my god. “They will beat you brains out.” That's how he talked.

And so I remember all these things he drilled into my head. And then when I was 14 and a policeman pulled a gun on me, on a 14-

year-old, and I was like, wow. This is weird. This police seems afraid of me. And I'm looking around *[laughter]* like he seems terrified of me. "Do you have a gun? Do you have this?" No, I don't have a gun. I have a water gun. I'm 14. But it clicked. And I had the tools to deal with that systemic racism that you're talking about.

And I feel like that drives me batshit crazy that that's the accountability that we need to come – with our community, we need to make sure we have the tools to deal with this systemic racism. Because it ain't going nowhere. And arguing with a police officer ain't gonna help our cause. You know, we need to get their badge numbers and deal with them with lawyers.

*Lily:* Right.

*Xavier:* So I want to say that first just as an elder. I'm a 52-year-old dude. I want to say that that's what I want to try to impart on younger people to say you need tools to deal with racism. It ain't going nowhere. When the police stop you and you're a black man, you're not a pretty white girl. Let me say that again. Look in the mirror. It's not gonna happen. You're not going to be treated equally. But I always tell my historian Ph.D. brother, we talk and we argue, and I go, listen, man. And he goes, "Man, you oversimplify things."

But I want you to listen to this. white people, from the day one when we started transatlantic slavery, they cut you out of the deal. Because white landowners, they were like half a percent. They opened up a factory in your neighborhood. Let's take that in. When you open a factory in someone's neighborhood, people are happy. Why? Because if there's a factory, they're gonna get jobs. Those jobs are gonna have benefits. Those jobs are gonna empower their community. So a small percentage of rich white male, they're a very small percentage, landowners moved their cotton/tobacco companies into neighborhoods with a factory, and they didn't offer jobs because they sold white supremacy.

They're like, "Hey, we can't give you jobs picking cotton. Sorry, we're millionaires. We got people from Africa that are going to do it free. But check it out. At least you're not those animals. You're not – they're animals. You're white." Holy shit. White people need to think about that. They fooled poor white people on day one.

- Lily:* Right. Right.
- Xavier:* They should have been like, “Nope, turn that ship around. Sorry.” For all the racist people to say go back to Africa, they’re late.
- Lily:* I was gonna say. *[Laughter]* I was gonna say *[crosstalk]*.
- Xavier:* They should have done it then.
- Lily:* Yeah.
- Xavier:* They should have said it then, “Sorry, you rich white people. You want to have cotton? We need jobs. We need unions. We’ll pick cotton, not from sun-up to sundown. And, no, you can’t sell my kids. I will pick cotton from 9:00 to 5:00. I will have medical –.” You know what I mean? Then you have something.
- Lily:* Right.
- Xavier:* When I think of white supremacy in the concept of racism, the victims, and I’m sure a lot of my stuff is controversial to people, the greatest victim of white supremacy are white people. They don’t understand that this wealth that was created by a small group of people, it’s not for them. Got the good schools, and they’re not for you. Got the good diets and the good food. It’s not for you. I traveled the states in the South people are suffering. Poor white people, they tend to be like obese. Poor white people tend to be in marginalized communities that don’t offer education, and they tend to be real racist. Think about all that stuff. And they tend to be supporters of very wealthy white politicians.
- Lily:* Right.
- Xavier:* And your nervous system is frayed and you’ve been dealing with this your whole life. But then, you know, you got to say to yourself to like, hey, man, I deal with it like this. Hey, I ain’t no victim. Sorry. I don’t need anybody. I don’t need a slogan. I don’t need a sign to tell me my life matters. I already know my life matters. So there’s also something going on with our white brothers and sisters that mentally and mental, that they think that that needs to be addressed. Because if we address that, then all of this stuff is going to go away because then people will realize that they’ve been fooled for all these years.

- Lily:* You know, as I've learned about politics that one of Trump's main tactics is, obviously, I don't know how he did this, but convinced like the poor white population that they have the same, you know, best interest as like the one percent. And that those Venn diagrams are two different circles. Like the best interest in those two populations are not at all the same. And that's – yeah, I totally agree.
- Xavier:* You're saying exactly what I'm saying in a way because he can do it because they've been doing that to poor white people since the beginning. Why would a poor white person like a rich land owner that the grows tobacco and cotton and has people from another continent working free, why would they like that person? I would hate that person. And it doesn't benefit white people. And when they wake up from that, which I feel like is a mental health crisis, then we can start getting some things done. Then we can have healing and accountability.
- Lily:* Right. Do you talk to your kids about it?
- Xavier:* Oh, absolutely, man. All the time. And I share with my nephews. And even on *The Last Days of Oakland*, I have a skit called "What Would You Do? What Do You Do?" And that whole skit, if people want to go back, it's an interlude. It's about what do you do if the police stop you? I put in a record. Like I said why? Because I put it for my kids. And that's my responsibility to say these things. And, again, people may disagree with me because I'm not looking for like victims. I'm not going to be a victim. I'm not looking for someone, who can I blame? I'm not doing that because I know it doesn't work.
- Lily:* Right.
- Xavier:* Lily, it doesn't work. If it worked, I'd be like let's do that shit. That shit works. But it doesn't work.
- Lily:* Yeah. Thank you so much for speaking to that so openly. It's, obviously, I think, you know, if anything has come out of this time, being able to have these conversations and like facilitating them is something that's so, so, so important.

*Xavier:* I'm sorry, I'm probably – what happens when you're the eighth of 14 kids, you talk a lot.

*Lily:* [Laughter] No, no, this is what this is for. [Crosstalk] You get to talk however much you want.

*Xavier:* Otherwise, I wouldn't eaten. I wouldn't get socks. I wouldn't get underwear. I had nothing. It's like it's hell being eighth of 14.

*Lily:* Right. I wanted to ask because something that obviously my dad struggled with was self-medication, and even when he was like in the height of his music career and doing well, there was untreated mental health issues that he was treating himself with things like drugs and alcohol. Is that something that you ever struggled with?

*Xavier:* You know, man, I tell you, I grew up hustling. And I grew up in Oakland. And Oakland, it was like make the drugs and sell them. And so it was a different culture that I was coming from. I was coming from poverty. I was coming from, like I said, man, my 14-year-old brother killed, my 16-year-old cousin killed my best friend growing up killed – man, I was going through like being in a war zone.

So for us, we were so poor, and we didn't have nothing, so it was about destroying your community. Let me just introduce that. So I was – I'm guilty of that. I cooked up drugs and I sold them, and I helped destroy my own community because I felt like the American dream would only come to me if I had money. A really screwed up value system. So I didn't really struggle with using drugs. I struggled with narcissism and self-importance. And I struggled with the mental illness of thinking that, oh, if I have this car, then I'm okay. That's very sick.

*Lily:* Right. Right. Right.

*Xavier:* Oh, if I have X amount of dollars in the bank, yeah, then I'm good. Hey, well, it didn't help Michael Jackson. It didn't help Prince. It didn't help Kurt Cobain. It didn't help your dad. So there's a lot of lessons out there like, no, none of that shit is gonna make you happy. None of it is. What's gonna make you happy is getting to know who you are and getting to accept that, you know what, hey, when I wrote *Have You Lost Your Mind Yet*, this album, it was about this. You're feeling depressed? It's okay.

I woke up this morning. I felt like shit. That's okay. Now, we've got somewhere to go. Let's put on some music. Let's feel better. Oh, Stevie Wonder. Oh man, I feel good now. Yeah. You know, or – it's okay. It's okay. We don't have to be perfect. Somebody told you that lie that that stuff, that that fame, that that money, that you are going to find happiness in that. No way. So I think, I didn't become super famous when I was young.

And I think it was because I got the record deal and all that, but it was to prepare me to be this guy. It makes me feel good. And, again, it makes me feel very useful. And I'm fortunate that I didn't struggle with drugs and alcohol, but as I told you, I struggled with other things.

*Lily:* Right. Absolutely.

*Xavier:* Which is just as damaging.

*Lily:* Totally. And a different form of self-medication.

*Xavier:* Exactly. A different form.

*Lily:* You were touring with my dad, and, like, you know, that's how we crossed paths. Is mental health ever something that like you guys talked about because I know he, you know, being on the road, like for all musicians, is a very different, like your mental health looks very different when you're living on a tour schedule, which can be super difficult.

*Xavier:* One of the those things that, pointed things that stays in my head that you dad said to me. We were backstage. Maybe it was Italy. I forgot. He goes, "You know what," he goes, "I still to this day can't believe that Kurt did that. Kurt was my friend. I just can't believe that. To this day, it's still a shock that that happened."

*Lily:* Right.

*Xavier:* I remember that moment that Chris and I shared talking about that. And then when I got the news of your dad, I just, I thought of that moment that we had that conversation. So yeah, we definitely, we talked about, you know, getting up there and having to do it every night, and, you know, what that – people expecting you, people

pushing you out there, hey, go. Go do it because a lot of people are making money.

He was like a big brother in the sense he was really proud of everything I was accomplishing. Because he was like, "I told these people," he goes, "That I'm right. You know, this is guy is –." And when I won the Grammy, no one was more excited than him. I remember he tweeted like, "Sometimes, they get it right, bro. Sometimes, they get it right." He's like, "They don't always get it right." But I felt like NPR and then Chris Cornell were kind of the people that kind of pushed me out into the world.

When I met Chris, he was like, it was in Norway, and I thought this dude is crazy. Like, what do you – your fans are gonna hate me. We're so different. He was like, "No. Man, I'm so excited, man. Go out there, man, and play –." And he's like sitting there at the side of the stage watching me. And I was like Norway, and there's like 2,000 Norwegians sitting there.

*Lily:* Oh my god.

*Xavier:* Very stoically. And I was like, I'm used to like action, the funky front man. So I kind of had to learn from Chris Cornell the first couple of shows. I honestly tell people, like, how do you stand there and command people with the guitar? So I was like studying him like. And so I took what he did and just did it kind of my way, so...

*Lily:* Beautiful.

*Xavier:* But I remember you the first time meeting you after a show, and you were like real excited about my show. And I thought, wow, she's young to be excited. I was surprised, like you understood the energy of my –.

*Lily:* Right.

*Xavier:* And I thought, like, she's kind of advanced.

*Lily:* [Laughter]

*Xavier:* Because you had to be like 15 or something like that. I can't remember.



Lily: Yeah, I think so. I think so.

Xavier: I was like, but I can tell when people really have – because I call my show church without the religion. It's church without –.

Lily: *[Laughter]*

Xavier: So I always can tell when people have felt my message. And it was on your face. And I'm like, oh, this is cool. She's young.

Lily: *[Laughter]*

Xavier: It's the young crew. Oh, I had a guitar, a song, you know, I did – one of the songs that I played every night while touring with your dad was my rendition of "In the Pines". And I took that and I changed a lot of the lyrics to honor the strongest people in the community that I grew up in, and that was women had to bury their own children. And I'm proud to announce that that guitar has now been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and it's on display.

Lily: Oh my god. That's amazing.

Xavier: Yeah, so I'm right next to Tom Morello's shirt. I have his shirt and my guitar for "In the Pines". So those are my talking points.  
*[Laughter]*

Lily: Cool.

Xavier: There you go. That quick, I'm done.

Lily: *[Laughter]* No, that's amazing. That's amazing. Thank you. And, honestly, like, yeah, so deserved and so happy that you're able to receive that, you know, receive the success and receive the beauty of it in a way that feels meaningful, and not in a way where it's, you know, like you're just wanting more and more and more.

Xavier: No, I'm always surprised. Oh, cool. *[Crosstalk]* great. I come back home to my kids and my dog, and none of them care, so it's great.

Lily: Right. *[Laughter]*

*Xavier:* I love that.

*Lily:* Exactly. The last question that I like to ask everybody at the end of each interview is what is something that's giving you hope right now?

*Xavier:* Oh, I thought you were gonna say something like Fruit Loops or Trix.

*Lily:* [Laughter]

*Xavier:* None of them. Anyway. Oh man, that's a beautiful question. You ask good questions. What gives me hope is that I can breathe. What gives me hope is that I can see. What gives me hope is that I can hear. What gives me hope is, you know, we have an opportunity every day when we have obstacles and we have challenges. But they're opportunities for amazing things to happen right now. Pandemic. Racial strife. Trump. Biden. Neofascism is a great opportunity to make a connection.

A great opportunity to reach out to someone. A great opportunity to collaborate. It's a great opportunity to forgive someone. It's a great opportunity to reach across the street to the neighbor you've hated for ten years and make up with them. We have so many opportunities, and that is what gives me hope is that we can practice this religion of gratitude, man. And if we can do that, it just leaves no room for the bullshit, the negativity, and all the horrible stuff.

And, you know, making albums gives me hope because I'm able to communicate with people on a very primal level. And nothing makes me happier when someone sends me an e-mail like, you know, "My mom was passing away, and we played your record. And she went out to your record." Or, you know, "Hey, I'm a black kid, and I'm different, man. And I see that you're different, and it's okay to be different. Thank you. And here's my album I'm working on."

And, you know, that gives me hope, man. I see hope. I'm positive. I don't look out and see, like, what I said, like, I don't wake up every day to racism going and go, "Oh my god. What can I do? Oh, shit." I don't look at it that way. I look at it as like, okay, that's someone else's problem. Let's create some music. Bring me those

handclaps. Bring me them organs. Bring me that bass. And I see hope and positivity everywhere. Look what you're doing with your show. That gives me hope. Hope is all around me.

*Lily:* Thank you so much for being here, Xavier. Such a joy to see your face and get to catch up, and, you know, talk about how much different the world is right now compared to the last time we saw each other.

*Xavier:* Well, thank you for giving me the platform and thank you for using your voice. And I'm really proud of you, and, man, I know your dad would be so proud of you right now with what you're doing.

*Lily:* That truly – that means the world to me. That means the world to me. And having your voice on the series makes it that much more special, truly. And, you know, having that connection too with my dad a super special.

*Xavier:* Well, thank you, Lily, and I'll see you in Paris.

*Lily:* *[Laughter]*

*Xavier:* This time, lunch is on you.

*Lily:* *[Laughter]*

*Xavier:* *[Laughter]*

*[Music]*

*[End of audio]*