

EP. 4: **Cultivating a Studio (with Chan Leonard)**

In this inaugural guest feature, host Aleyna Neivandt-Brown invites producer, engineer, and studio owner Chan Leonard to explore what it means to cultivate a studio. From retrofitting an unconventional space to building one from the ground up in Tallahassee, FL, Chan shares the lessons and discoveries that shaped his approach to acoustics, gear, and creating the conditions for great music to happen.

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[Aleyna] Hey guys, welcome back. This is the Red Pin Podcast, and I'm your host, Aleyna Neivandt-Brown. Today's episode is a little bit different than what you have grown accustomed to so far in the show, and that's because I'm not alone! Today I am joined by none other than Chan Leonard, hailing from his studio in Tallahassee, Florida, here to talk with me about cultivating a studio environment that feeds not only the music but the soul, and of course, what kind of room and gear can make that happen.

[*Red Pin Podcast Intro Music*]

[1:17] [Aleyna] Let me just start by saying, Chan is one of those people who is simultaneously a force to be reckoned with and the most humble person you'll come across, especially in this industry. So I'm gonna have to do a little bit of bragging for him. Chan and his wife Tracy are pillars in the community, as kind as they are talented and incredibly entrepreneurial. First they retrofitted a studio in downtown Tallahassee called Indianhead Factory. Then, they built one from the ground up on their own beautiful Florida property, called The Shire. They give everything they can to making great music, supporting the artists they work with and the community at the same time, and of course to their lovable dogs and cats. All around they are just good people who I have the privilege of not only calling collaborators but dear friends, so it's very special for me, and an honor to have Chan joining me for the inaugural guest episode of the Red Pin Podcast. Chan, thanks for tuning in!

[Chan] Thank you for having me. This is an extreme honor and pleasure, and so thank you. I'm just super happy to be here.

[2:44] [Aleyna] Well to get us started, how about we give our audience a bit of backstory—how we started working together and what we're up to now? So I'll go first and then you just jump in and tell us what I missed. So I first met Chan when I had just graduated from FSU and wrapped up an internship at another local studio. I wanted to just start making a name for myself as an engineer especially as I was finishing up production on my debut album, *EXHALE*. Through a mutual friend of ours, Miles—shoutout to Miles—I was recommended, or at least vouched for, and to this day I credit Miles for helping me forge a connection to someone who has not only catapulted my career forward, but has become like family. Chan gave me the opportunity to engineer clients at Indianhead Factory, and was even gracious enough to let me finish *EXHALE* there as well. Then I moved to Texas, but of course we stayed in touch, and we continue to collaborate on productions whenever we can. I've had the privilege of recording in Chan and Tracy's new studio, The Shire. And our mutual friend Miles still drops in on my projects. On my latest single "becoming," Miles actually tracked drums at The Shire with Chan engineering the session and

looping me into Pro Tools through AudioMovers—a technique a lot of engineers started using during COVID, and has just been a great way to continue working with my favorite people even from a thousand miles away. Speaking of, we're actually remote recording this episode right now—each from our respective studios—me from Red Pin Productions, and our guest, Chan Leonard, from the control room at The Shire. So, Chan, how's it going? It's good to see you!

[4:51] [Chan] I'm doing good, man. I think the only thing you missed was detailing how much you brought to the Indianhead Factory. I think it's really understated, the contribution that you made to my life, but the community in general. The idea for me was I—like, just taking a step back—the Indianhead Factory for me was really, it culminated in a few different goals that we had, and that was surrounding ourselves with the best talent we could in the area. It was really a big sticking point for us to just make sure that we were getting better, me and Tracy getting better at what we do, by surrounding ourselves with people that were better at what they do. And so that was—you were a big part of that. And so, to answer the direct question, how I'm doing now: doing great. You know, I can't—got no complaints. You know what I mean? We're just like hanging out here in the hot Florida sun. That is always an issue, but I ain't going to complain about it. It's just Florida stuff. But doing the same things we've always been doing, you know, trying to help artists that have a gumption to get in the studio and create their art. And then also trying to broaden my role in mentorship. This is something we haven't talked about, like, a lot. But Florida State has a production group now, and I'm really, really excited about spending time with those students and volunteering time and telling stories about you. A lot of stories about Aleyna when you were here. But watching them grow and seeing, like, you know, what is cool to them because they never get younger—I mean older, right? Like, every year, it's the same age groups that come through. And so you get to see sort of what is happening in their worlds. And I can't get enough of that. I feel like a vampire in that, like, you get to just suck the blood of the younger people while you just, you know, and that blood becomes yours. So that's what I've been doing, trying to maintain that and, you know, making sure my family is happy and healthy, you know. Same old stuff.

[Aleyna] Awesome. That's really neat about the new program at FSU. I didn't know that. I know they've built up a new facility that's going to have some Dolby Atmos mixing.

[Chan] I saw that, yeah.

[Aleyna] Yeah, so that's, those are some big steps. And, of course, that being my alma mater, I really love to see that program thriving.

[Chan] Same.

[Aleyna] And, yeah, that's really great to see that investment and success.

[*brief musical transition*]

[7:24] Okay, well, let's dive into what it meant to create **Indianhead Factory** and to **renovate that space** into the studio that it became. Because when I met you, it was already beautiful, had great acoustics in there—

[Chan] I don't know if I'd go that far!

[Aleyna] Well… But, you know, you had the lighting down. You had the communication between control and live room down. You had the part ISO booth, part kind of **decoupling** of live room and control room with that space. And so I just wanted to pick your brain about how you went about outfitting that studio space and what **challenges** you faced in renovating an existing space versus building one up yourself.

[8:15] [Chan] Sure. So it really starts—that building—it started with that it was built with non-parallel walls, right? So that is an obvious advantage when you're looking for an audio space. It was, you know, we didn't have to do any magic chicanery to make sure that the walls were not parallel, which is an odd construction decision for, like, what it was beforehand, which was like a thrift shop and like a beauty salon. So why they decided to do non-parallel walls is a mystery, but it worked out in our favor. And that was what sold us on that building, because Tracy and I had been looking for a spot forever. And I don't know if you remember, we were going to open it in Railroad Square. We had looked at purchasing the big warehouse there, and the negotiations for that warehouse just took so long and we were like bidding against other people, and that it was just like this—the actual purchasing of that space would have been a project unto itself, let alone retrofitting it. And so it just so happened while we're looking at that space and, you know, looking around, a realtor friend of ours was like, hey, this—you know, what you know as the Indianhead Factory—that building just was vacated and we think you can get it for a song. [Editor's Note: Chan later clarified that Tracy Horenbein originally found the building for sale.] And so we took Pat Puckett down there, and that's who pointed out, he's like, "Dude, these walls are not parallel, and you need to get this, like, grab this thing right away." It was not parallel and we had cinderblock, right? So the, like, it was just killing the outside noise right off the bat. And so that was the first challenge: finding something that was natural for acoustics, and as natural as you can be without it being purpose-built for that was like the number one selling point for that. And then, as you know, the other selling point was

there was two sides of that building. And the original design was going to be to knock down the wall that was in between those two, and that would have been the live room, whereas what is the traditional studio would have just been control, right? And so that was our main goal. But then—when you talk about challenges—what we learned was the city likes to weigh in on design goals and design ideas in a way that made it just **prohibitively expensive** for us to do that design. So that's when Tracy just decided, well, one side will be like a cafe hangout spot and then the other side will be the actual proper studio. And so that's the layout that it ended up being, because we just couldn't afford to, like, knock down the wall and then do the permitting that the city wanted. It would have, I think something like tripled the price of the building itself. It was more to do that retrofit than buying the building, so it didn't make financial sense to do that.

[Aleyna] Wow… wow.

[Chan] So that said, then the other challenges were just how do you make a studio, period, right? Like, what does that even mean, right? Like, what is building a studio space mean? And so that's where Pat Puckett became valuable. And so, I don't know if you know his history, but there's a really famous studio here in town called Pegasus Studio. As a matter of fact, I think the school, the college, now owns that studio, if I'm not mistaken. Or I think the film school does now, and they use that studio as like a Foley ADR space now. And so the lore of that studio, though, is that was an Allman Brothers studio. The Allman Brothers built that studio back in the '70s and '80s, and they really went a whole hog. Like the studio itself, it was like state of the art at the time. And it's a huge facility. I think I want to say like the main building is like a 10,000-square-foot building, right? Like just as a studio. No, it's insane. Well, Pat was around back then. Pat was like the snotty-nosed kid hanging out with those engineers back then. And he helped them with the build. He helped them do that full build and so learned studio building in that regard. I'm sure I'm missing some details in there, but that's the gist of it. He was around for that and picked up everything he could. And Pat himself is by trade a carpenter. So it was like really up his alley to sort of just understand building and how that works. So he was the one that sold us on the shape of the building and then also the design was just like, you know, proper studios, like **a building inside of a building**, right? So we built that one-foot gap in between the exterior walls to create the walls that actually made up the studio. And that is why I chuckle at the idea of acoustic treatment and the like, because honestly it was like me, Kells and Cruz doing the mirror tests. That's basically all we did for it. It's like, “Oh, I can see you in this mirror. That's where some foam should go.” And we were like really unsophisticated about that. I mean, I wish I knew then, of course, what I know now in terms of acoustic

treatment. But it was so fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants and not scientific in any sense of the word. Other than we knew about the mirror trick, we knew that. Like that much we knew about first reflections. Let me put it that way. We understood that was something we needed to tame. And that was, you know, relatively easy. But when you talk about, like—and I know you know this now, I mean, I'm sure you knew it coming into it—no, we did not acoustically treat that room. It was like, it was a bad room! Like I feel like we had to fight against that room a lot. And so what a learning experience that is, right? Like, the idea was that was our space, but we subsequently would go to other studios and you just listen in their rooms. You're like, *our room doesn't sound like this. I really don't get why*. And then you realize, oh, there's absorption and there's deflection and there's diffusion and all of the things that you do, not just making sure the first reflection points are taken care of, right? Like that's the bare minimum you can do. So as we move forward, we realize that. And actually, the scientific part of it becomes really like a—you did this too—it becomes real human-based, right? Like you start training your ears around those deficiencies. You, like, I knew the deficiencies in the room after recording in that room for so long. You just know, right? Like, oh, man, like at 70 hertz, it just bumps hard here. And, like, we need to always be looking out for that. Like, so that I feel like it's an education unto itself for the, for the viewers that maybe are recording at home or, like, in mostly not ideal spaces is, it really trains you on that room, on that space. And it behooves yourself to just become really good at **knowing your room** as opposed to just throwing everything at treating it because, you know, that's a thing. That's a whole science unto itself, and doing it badly is almost worse than not doing it, you know? And that was something I learned. And then subsequently had reinforced in our heads when we went to some of these amazing places that you and I would go to record, and it was like, *this place is awesome*, or like, you know, you just see things and you pick up on things. So the **Indianhead Factory, to me, was truly a lab** and not like—I really cringe at the idea it's a commercial space. As a matter of fact, if I could go back in time and give everyone their money back for the work that we did there, I would. I swear to God, I think about that all the time. Like, it's because we really did have to make, you know, we had to make concessions around the novice nature of all of us being in there. And that, I—you know, again—I really do think about, like, man, if I only knew then, we'd be so much more efficient, right? Like, we would have finished so many more projects and so many other things.

[15:50] [Chan] So that segue is—you know this journey, sort of—we just got an offer in that building that was too good to turn down. It was during COVID that we were just seeing the loss of business. Again, you were there, so, you know, I'm not telling you stuff you don't know. But for the benefit of your audience, we were at a **crossroads**. Cruz at the time, our business partner, Kells had already bugged out because

Kells is a volatile person. And he was like, *done with music, I'm done with music*, because COVID was so, so hard on everyone. Cruz had decided to move back to Tampa to do roofing with his brother at his roofing company. And so we really were like, if the team isn't going to be around, really, what is this thing we're doing? Because I really loved the team that we had there. It was really, Nove had moved to Atlanta at that point. And so the main core team that we grew up with, for lack of a better term, they were all dispersing and going on to bigger and better things. And so Tracy and I were like, because the commercial side of it is so fraught and we were in such a weird place in the world during COVID, it really was like, *what's the goal here*? The goal isn't necessarily to put food on our table through clients at a studio because it just wasn't viable at that time. But **we always knew we would be making music**. Like, there was no way we wouldn't make music. So during that time, when we're in flux, while we were waiting for that building to sell, and we just weren't doing much, that's when Cruz went to Shangri-La with Dominic Fike. That's when that was going on. And they were recording there, and, like, daily, Cruz would be sending me these videos, right? Like, he's like, *dude, you won't believe it. Like, it's just sick. Like, we live here for a little bit. And, like, you just wake up and you just can start playing a piano*. And it's like, everything's there, right? Like, everything's on always. And it's, like, so peaceful. And it just dawned on Tracy and I. It's like, **that's the model**. That is, like, really actually the ideal way to deal with, whether it's COVID or not, right? Like, you know, you can say a ton about Rick Rubin. The guy's a genius, right? Like, there's a reason why they think of him as a genius. And I think Shangri-La is a lot of that. I think it's right there in the name, right? And so **that's what The Shire is**, you know, our very, very modest version of what that could be. And we thought **the setting was great**. It's just us out here, you know, and like, so the contrast between Indianhead Factory, which is literally downtown Tallahassee—for a lot of people that don't know Tallahassee, it's like, you know, two minutes from the Capitol downtown—and so all of the problems that are associated with that, like trucks driving by, all of the things that you don't want in your environment when you're trying to pristinely record audio, was happening there. I mean, granted, we had room inside of room, but then the other things rear their ugly head, and I'm sure a lot of studio owners will feel me on this statement: So, like, say your client wants to go outside and just have a smoke. Well, there's like random people walking around, and the moment they see the door open and there's a studio inside, it becomes like a tour for somebody. And so, like, those are the sorts of things that you're like, *man, this is not ideal. This is not cool.* And so those decisions—both COVID, the ability for the realtor was like, I can get you an offer—all-cash offer—on this building in like a week—and we didn't believe them, but we're like, all right, go for it. Try it. So all of those things came together and it was just like, that's the, you know, **it's time to move**.

[19:29] We **originally started**—before the Indianhead Factory—we had a **shed** built here, right? Like, that was our studio. It was like our bedroom studio that was **all one-room thing**, right? Like, it was like the recording equipment was there. If you were playing guitar, you were playing the guitar in there. I would bring drums in there and like track drums in the one room, sitting there, which again is—I have to have my head checked. I don't know if I'd do that ever again, but that was the sort of thing. And so that dawned on this, we still had that structure. And it was like, well, why don't we just really go in on that structure to **create a room** that basically was like Mark Needham's room, right? Like, okay, like the **fabric wall** and you do the measurements on how you're like, what are these **reflections**? Just to take this back—that was a huge influence for The Shire, was like seeing how Mark's setups were, was a huge influence. Like, oh, like, again, sound treatment. *Oh, I didn't know fabric wall existed.* I didn't know that was a thing. I had no idea. And then when you do the research it's like, *oh wow, this is an instant way to flatten your room.* And I, again, [pshh] like my brain blown. I had no clue that these things existed. And then that's, that gets to the point of like **being around better people**, right? Like the people you're around influence a lot about decision-making and not spinning wheels on bad decisions, which can really ruin your creativity and your financial abilities if you make the wrong decisions. So piecing those two things together, the Mark Needham situation in Nashville and Shangri-La was like, this is what **we can do it on our own scale. And that's what The Shire is.** And so I don't even consider The Shire commercial at all because, you know, like, it's really just whoever I really want to work with, and if they're really great people, it isn't a commercial deal. It's really much more of **a labor of love**, and The Shire really means that. Like, you know, you come back home from these adventures and then you can just spread out and be peaceful. And so those, that's it. And so challenges with building here were the same challenges you would have building anything, with **shady contractors** and **weird delays** and all of the crazy things you got to do to build anything. Like, nothing special there, but if you have the horror story with building something, we can probably match stories on that. Like, everything that could go wrong did. But that's it. That's the story. That's what brings us up to today.

[Aleyna] I didn't know that The Shire's building existed before becoming The Shire. But was it always that wooden interior too?

[22:14] [Chan] Yeah, it was janky, bro. It was wood. Again, I think I had—it's so funny—I could track the sophistication of audio, like, room treatment through that. Like, because back then, I had like four bass traps, and that was it. And I was like, *bro, I'm killing it out here. Like, I'm so killing it. Like, I'm killing these bass, these standing bass waves*. And like, no, I wasn't really, because again, it would come out in the

recordings, right? And you're like, *oh wow, there's just weird resonance here that,* like, I just didn't know. So yeah, it was that. And that is a real, like, that is, again, working against yourself. If I knew then what I knew now, right? Once again, it would have been like, oh no, this would have been fabric walled, and, you know, all of the things that you do to make sure that stuff is good. But, yeah, it was janky, bro. It was like the murder shack, but way doper than that. But it was basically the murder shack. And we shall not tell these people what the murder shack is. We have to have some mysteries. But it was that, man. It was—I'll have to send you some pictures. But I'll tell you what, though, we got a good **sync from Netflix** of this band I recorded back then. It was like, it was easy seven, eight years ago. And so I really feel great about, like, **we did a lot with a little**. We did another really cool punk album there that—you know, if you're a skateboard fan, you'll understand this. But Jake Phelps, who was the editor-in-chief of Thrasher magazine for probably a good 30 years, he's like synonymous in that world and skateboarding. Well, he has a band, and—crazy Tallahassee story: one of the members of that band is from Tallahassee, and so she comes back to visit her family every year, right? Her family still lives here, but they live in San Francisco. So one year she comes back to town and she's like, “Hey, we're here. Like, we're all here. The band is actually here with us. Can we, like book you to record the record?” And so of course I've jumped at it because, it's another thing is her husband is a very famous skateboarder who was, like, Skateboarder of the Year a couple times. Like, he's just a really famous guy in that world. So I jumped at the chance, and then that was before I knew Jake Phelps was in that band. So it was like one of those really surreal, like, this guy's my hero, this other guy's my hero, his wife happens to be from Tallahassee, and we **stumbled into this crazy punk band thing**. But that was great because I mentioned these two things because the one punk band got the Netflix thing, but that record ended up being the last record that band ever made because Jake Phelps ended up dying unexpectedly the following year. So, like, that's the only recording of that band that exists. [Editor’s Note: Chan later clarified that Jake Phelps was not physically present for the recording; his band recorded at the studio, while he joined remotely and later recorded his parts in San Fransisco.] And so it's like really janky, but super the ethos of that, right? Like, they went in a room that was basically a wood shack, drums in the room, guitars in the room. I think we're singing—like, I think the singer was—it was all screaming anyway. So it was like, you know, I think the SM7B was in effect and it was in the room. Like, all of it was tracked in the room together, and the worst room you could ever think to be tracking in. **But that was the ethos**. They—that was what they're used to, is like they're punk, right? Like, they're playing crappy instruments, they're not playing those instruments very well, I mean, so it was like that was part of their ethos. And man, it turned out to be great. That's why I'm really—**I love bedroom producers** and the like and how proliferated that has

become, because man, you can strike gold in those scenarios where it's just like, all right, we're plucky little whatever, we're going to just go do this, and then, you know, you end up making things that could turn out to be special, you know? And so yeah, **that little room was janky**, but we pushed out a couple things that I'm really proud of from that room. I wouldn't play them for anyone, but it's just knowing that they exist is like, oh my God, it was such a feather in our cap at the time.

[26:14] And so I don't know if you remember, that's how—that's a segue, I don't know if you remember this band, because I'm blanking on their name. There was another really big punk band, big for Tallahassee, that that got me their gig as well. And they came and recorded at the Indianhead Factory too. I'm just blanking. And you were around there too. I think Cruz produced their second album after we did it in Thomasville. I can't remember. I'll have to remember that. But that gig directly led to like a ton of other gigs because they saw that band. And it was Jake Phelps and Tony Trujillo, which, again, he's like a skateboarding legend. So tons—every punk band in the city after that was like, *can we record at your crappy little shed?* And so, yeah, that's what it was. What you know the control room as was the studio at the time.

[Aleyna] Was that B.A.E.T.?

[Chan] It was B.A.E.T! How do you remember that? Oh my gosh. Yeah, it was B.A.E.T. exactly. So there was a **really special time back then** that, like, we were really surrounded with—I think, you know, I'm biased, but I think it was probably the **most concentrated amount of talent** that was viable in the same place at the same time that wasn't like, I don't know, like the Allman Brothers studio back in the '70s. I can't think of any other time there was just so many people coming in and out that were like really great at what they did. It was a great time, man. I miss that time. It's not like that anymore in Tallahassee at all.

[Aleyna] Yeah, I feel very lucky that that's the time that I was there and that's the impression that I have and what I keep from Tallahassee is that it was that hub, and not just for the classical music that I was studying, but for all of the jazz and all the live music and punk and rock and getting to play shows at Wilbury.

[Chan] Yeah, yes, man.

[Aleyna] A lot of that isn't happening anymore, so...

[Chan] No, it does not. It is a different town. It's really different.

[28:13] That being said, the **School of Music**, right? [Editor's Note: The Florida State University College of Music] They're doing things that are really, I think, picking up some of the slack. I mean, of course, you have to be kind of university-affiliated to know a lot of those things, but it is a **driver**. You know, it is a real driver. Whereas I felt like V-89 and radio was a driver back in the day, and that's so much less. So somebody had to pick up the slack. But when you're talking about building immersive studios and Atmos rigs, right? Like, that is where kids can dream and not just get a viable future, you know, like a professional grounding in these arts and sciences, but also, like, again, it is a different experience going into an immersive experience as an engineer or mixer, right? Like, just so many tools and techniques that you can bring to bear that you wouldn't do in a stereo environment. And that is, that's a driver to me. That is a real driver of creativity that is necessary. And thank goodness we had the university that has deep enough pockets to be able to provide that, right? But if we didn't have Florida State and the FAMU and it was just government here, I can't imagine any art scene at all. You know, I think those **universities** really, really helped that.

[Aleyna] Yeah, yeah, I agree. Oh, well, yeah, what a walk down memory lane. There were some of those old band names. Yeah, I haven't thought about them in a while, but I know they're doing great things where they are now. So that's crazy about the old all-wood, all-in-one studio shack. I didn't know that lore. That's awesome.

[Chan] Well, I mean, it was not. I mean, again, like the next time I see you, I'll have to pull some of the records out. It's awful. Like, we couldn't do acoustic guitar in there. And again, it's counterintuitive, right? Like, the idea is like you go to any of these, like, Guitar Centers in the acoustic room is wood, right? Like, but the difference is it's actually good wood. You know, like, it's wood worth having in a room like that. That's not what we did here. Or, again, it wouldn't be all fabric wall right now. Or, you know, like, if it was good wood, which is actually the segue—

[30:31] so the **live room—that is good wood**. Like, the live room, the wood was picked out so it would be exposed because of the quality of the wood and the sound that you get off of that. So that has actually been really cool, because—you know, you've been in a lot of great rooms—the idea is we get **both of those surfaces**. So, like, in the live room, right, we can get—it's live. **It can sound live**. You know, we've got gobos. We've got things to deaden it, but it sounds like it's a live room. And then in here [speaking from The Shire Control Room], it's, you know, everything's fabric. And so if you bring something in here, that vibe is just different, right? But back then, no, dude, there were some things I

just wouldn't record in that room because it just never turned out good. And it would be like a disappointment to the artist, right? Like, and that's the last thing... And there's, this is another segue.

[31:18] It's always good to be able to **refer** too, right? Like, "Hey, you know, like, I can't really do justice to this instrument, but you know who can?" Pat Puckett. Go record with him, right? Like, or whatever. And that helps because, again, we're in a small town with not a lot of prospects. So you got to share that love. And then it makes you look like a genius too. Like, it makes me look smart to refer people to Pat Puckett, right? It's like, it makes me look smart referring people to Aleyna. Like, no, bro, it's a no-brainer. But they don't know, right? So that I found it as a benefit too. And then, again, being really **true to the artist** and being like, *can I really do this well*? Like, is something that I had to learn in that space where it was like, at the time, I'll do anything. And then the next time you see somebody frowning at their performance and you know it isn't the performance, you do that once or twice and it's like, no, that isn't the right way. Let me refer you to somebody that you can really get the most out of this on, was what I'd like to think people think of me as being able to do as well.

[Aleyna] Yeah, and that's like a **business integrity** thing. That's an **artistic integrity** thing. And it's recognizing that we—in this industry—we don't work in a vacuum. We aren't the only one with these skills. We aren't the only ones who can or should be making this art. And so being able to share the love is really special. And then it can pay dividends. I mean, it's been such an honor to even, you know, continue to be able to work with you at The Shire. But then also through your connections and generosity with the references you make, I got to work with Pat Puckett on my own music, you know? And so those kinds of connections, they do pay dividends. So I definitely agree with that. And **knowing where your specialties are**, **knowing what your room can do well** and what would be better in a different space. I certainly know at this point in time, multi-tracking or having drums in here, not really something that I'd be able to do to the benefit of the artist, like we talked about. But that's why I have, that's why I have you, that's why I'd rather, you know, jump on an AudioMovers session and bring Miles in. But then also grand piano—a lot of classical and jazz players want to play grand piano. And I don't want to limit their ability and their tone by saying, "Well, all I've got is a digital piano here, so that's what you have to use." So, I love to refer people to a place here in Dallas called Crystal Clear, and the engineer there is named Kent Stump. He's such a nice guy, and in that live room, he's actually built-in a baffle for the piano and can really set up the perfect sound out of that piano, and in terms of microphones and setup, and he's got an SSL in there. So it all sounds amazing.

[Chan] Right.

[Aleyna] So I have no issue. In fact, I consider it an obligation, a responsibility to artists to be able to share that love and have those contacts because, you know, maybe next time Kent needs something or, you know, down the road we can exchange clients and have that relationship and just refer people back and forth. So that is a really, really great point to make about **knowing where your room thrives** and **where to share the love**.

[*brief musical transition*]

[35:13] Can we talk about the—so you said the live room wood is good wood and it sounds intentional and has a great resonance in there. Something else that really stands out to me about the live room is the **stained glass window**. Can you tell us that story?

[Chan] It's a super simple story, right? It's, we're lucky that **Tracy's family** had these huge stained glass windows in their family home growing up. And we salvaged them and brought them into the studio. That's the warm and fuzzy part about it. The technical side is, again, it's room in a room, right? So those stained glass windows are actually encased in two panes of glass that encompass the **outer wall** and the **inner wall**. That was kind of a—not an engineering feat. It was a contractor nightmare. Like, that was something our contractor wasn't familiar with. They understood room-in-a-room, but the idea of getting **natural light** in on those scenarios is a—it was different for them. They didn't realize that that could be done in a way that was **still acoustically sound**, right? And so that's the story of those. It's the absolute need. Again, let's take it back. The Indianhead Factory—there were no windows in there, right? So it was like, you turn off a light, it's pitch black in there. There's no sense of what is going on in the world. There's none of that, the warmness of the sun, you know, coming in. So that was something Tracy was really, really clear about, like, we have to incorporate these stained glass windows, not just for the sentimental thing, but it just feels better in the room when you can see the natural light. And so that's the story of that. And it's beautiful, right? Like, the idea is when the light hits that stuff in the right way, it's really inspirational. And we don't have to use, like, overhead lights a lot. You know, people vibe when it's sort of like natural light. And at least that's what I've seen in our experience.

[Aleyna] Yeah, it is special in a way that you can feel the **sentimentality** of it. You can feel the **intentionality** behind it, and it definitely gives you an **inspirational vibe** in there.

[Chan] For sure. Glad to hear you say that. No, it's my wife's family, so I'm biased. I'm not going to be able to say anything other than I love it, right? I just think it's great.

[37:40] [Aleyna] Do you get any—I mean, you are positioned really beautifully in the middle of North Florida nature, but is there anything in particular that you do notice can kind of **bleed in through the walls**?

[Chan] Yeah, no, all the time, right? Like, if it's a really crazy **storm**, I'm not tracking anything, right? Like, I just don't want to risk that. But no, I mean, the vast majority, no. You know, we're not near roads. We're not near neighbors or anything. So, no, we haven't had anything ruined other than, like I said, a storm. Like, if it's a crazy storm, no, there's just not any reason to do it here. Like, we're not like the Indianhead Factory. It was like, we couldn't hear the rain outside. It was, you know, you just couldn't hear it. Here, that's not the case. It's a lot more bucolic, right? And so, no, we haven't had that ruin things, but it's only because we use the **good judgment** of, like, no, like, if there's something that's going to ruin it, like, you know, let's not do it right now. That's another reason why it's tough to say commercial, right? Like, you know, in a commercial sense, it's like you better get it done, right? Like, if these people are here and they're paying you the money, like, it's got to get done. And that's a valid and true way to live, but since we can't offer that, like, that's the difference, right? And thankfully our clients get it, right? Like, the clients that we're working here, they understand it. And I think some of them prefer like a little less of a stringent sort of like—and again, our pricing structure, all of the things that we do, I think lend into that thing. If we are going to charge the cost of the project and the like, we know right prior to tracking, so again those things are built into any negotiation. It's the part of, you know, the **uniqueness** of what we're working at does pose challenges, and if you're willing to work through those challenges, then we're willing to make sure that you do that in a way that makes you feel good as opposed to just spending money and feeling stressed.

[Aleyna] Yeah, yeah. And that definitely takes a certain pressure or, like you said, **commercialization** of us making music off of the table and allows us to prioritize different things and **prioritize ourselves** and our **creative energy in the space** and the natural light. And when the sun goes down, you can call it a day and those kinds of maybe **healthier mindsets of creating**.

[Chan] Right, exactly.

[Aleyna] Yeah. I like that.

[*brief musical transition*]

[40:22] Okay, well let's see. We've talked a lot about the room, the space, the walls. Can you tell us a bit about the **gear**? What did you first **invest** in? How did you **prioritize**, you know, adding to your **collection**? And what have you kind of landed on as your go-to pieces of gear?

[Chan] The two phases. Like, the first phase when it was just the room that was wood and stuff, it was like all **Universal Audio** stuff. It was like, you know, you can't go wrong with their gear, right? So it was strictly Apollos, and I think I had one great mic. I think I had one mic that I was like, this is a good mic, and it probably wasn't even a good mic. I don't remember what it was like, but I think it was like better mic than like a Rode NT1, which is actually a good—that is a story unto itself, because that was like my main mic for a really long time in that era. Because I'd gone to a John Kurzweg session, right? And so, for those—I don't know. John Kurzweg was the producer of Creed. He was the guy behind all of the Creed records. And so his wife and Tracy were friends. And so one night she was like, "Come over, like John's recording people at the house," right? And I think it was some crazy—I think it was like Puddle of Mudd, some crazy band at the time. It was like a big band. I was a rapper at the time. I wasn't doing recording so much, but I was really interested in engineering and the like, and I knew John Kurzweg's name. I knew he was the Creed guy. And so, like, it was a no-brainer. Like, yes, we'd love to come by and check it out. And so John was super sweet that day, like, let us hang out and just watch him work and do the things. And there's—when this is going to date me—this was when the NT1 first came out. They had sent him, like, demo versions of them before they were out, and that's what he was using on that record. And it was like, I thought the NT1 was like the best thing ever at that point. I was like, *holy crap, John Kurzweg's using it on these huge records*, and it's like, so it's obviously good. I think he ended up giving me one of those mics. So I think that was like my first, like, *ah, man, like, this mic must be good because John Kurzweg's using it* and he gave it to me. And this was surreal—he had a diamond plaque. He had one of those diamond plaques, but it was like—I don't know if he does this on purpose to be like a humble brag or not—but it was like a doorstop in his laundry room, right? Like, it was—like you'd have to go in his house through the garage, and that was through a laundry room, and he was propping up the door with one of those diamond plaques, and it was just like holy crap. Like, I didn't know at the time. I had no idea that was what that was. His wife had to tell me. She was like, oh, like, once you get past—I think it was like 10 million—and it's a diamond plaque, you know? And I was like, *oh crap*, *this is insane*. And then I saw that he was a full Neve guy. Like, he was, like, in his house, he had full Neve as much as he could. So that's when I was like, it, again, I have to really just let you know how dorky I am. I felt like if John Kurzweg's doing it, like, oh, that's what you got to do, right? Like, that's just how it is. And so that's when I was like really getting into gear—like hardware, like analog gear—ike where it was like, what's cool

about that and so, again, as Universal Audio as my guide and seeing what John Kurzweg had, I sought out the pieces that we could afford that would be within that realm. And that **started with good microphones**. That was one of the first things that I was like, oh, you can capture a good performance in a good microphone, and your preamp can be decent, right? As long as it's not clipping on like one decibel, like, as long as you have some headroom and it's not noisy, a great microphone comes in real handy, you know? And so that's when I started seeking after, like, Telefunken gear and, like, things like that. Like, what is in our price range? What can we afford that you can't just get in any studio? Like, you can go to any studio and get a U87. You can go to any studio and find a C414 or whatever it is, right? Like, I'd yet to go to any studio that was like doing Telefunken microphones. And I was really, you know, again, the lore around them are, you know, just outsized. So that's—I think maybe you were around—I think I got my first, like, stereo pair of Telefunken microphones and used those, and it blew me away. Like, and again, you know, I didn't have bad microphones. I didn't have great microphones, you know? And so the moment I pulled those up on something, it was like a revelation. Like, you didn't have to work to get the sound right? Like, it was just like you throw the mic up and it's like there, and that's the sound, and you're like stoked. So that's when I realized it's just like anything. It's—there are brands that you know them for a reason. You know why their **reputation** is for what they are. And so, when—this is kind of jumbled—I knew we were going to need a **desk**. We knew we needed **a brain for the studio**. We definitely knew that. Like, that was one of the things that was like, there's not many desks in town. I think there's only one. I think there was only one person, other than George Clinton, who's got a famous Neve. But I think there was only one other room other than George Clinton's room that had a desk. So we knew that was like **a missing thing for this market**: bands that want to track their record together at the same time. It's **rare**. It's rare. You'd have to go to a couple places. And so that's when we started looking for desks. And again, *ding, ding, ding*, my head just like, oh, John Kurzweg loves Neve. So, like, let's find a Neve that we can use as the brains for that. And so that's that story. We found a really great **Neve** desk, and that really took care of a lot, right? It's got dynamics on it, it's got the EQ on it, so there really wasn't much need for anything else when you augment that with software, when you're augmenting with plugins and the like. It was really like we're at the holy grail. That kind of stuff. You know, like, if you can swag out and be like, *bro, I'm on that Neve. I don't know what you're talking about*. That's like a **big attractor to some people**. And engineers, right, when they're looking through your gear list, you know, they see the names they know. That gives them **confidence**, and that does it. But it's like catnip to some people, right? Like, just the unattainable names. Like, when you're saying, "Oh, I'm going into my SSL," well, people know what that means, right? Like, people understand that the quality that

you're bringing to the table is bound up in the **lore** of that, and **discerning ears** would pick those things out. And that is the philosophy: **to not let down any discerning ears within our budget**. So if you're conscious about sort of like where your spend is going, spend on the best that you can and then, you know, rest your laurels on the lore of those companies and the hard work that they did to get to where they are, you know. But that's my philosophy.

[47:20] [Aleyna] Yeah. I love what you said about how the Neve was like catnip, because I felt the same way when I found out that you had a Neve.

[Chan] Yeah, bro. Same. Same here.

[Aleyna] I was like, *oh man, this new studio I'm working at, they've got a Neve*. So, yeah, it carries weight. It carries **respect**. And it is a draw to those wanting to have a professional experience, not only in places where it's rare or uncommon, but in terms of being able to market yourself as a professional, is having that professional gear. That definitely makes sense. And to consider gear as investments, not just expenses, not just general operating expenses that come out of the budget or a different part of the budget, but as actual **capital investments**—

[Chan] Correct.

[Aleyna] —in what you're trying to create, if that's a company or if that's your own name as a producer, because cutting those corners does cut back on your quality too, so that makes a lot of sense.

[Chan] **Quality** and **time spent**, especially if you're looking at it from a commercial viewpoint where it's like, it's really, time is money everywhere, but certainly in this context it's way more apt of a description.

[Aleyna] Yeah, and when you've got the artist in there with you and they see you operating this gear with **efficiency**, like you talked about, and **professionalism** and **confidence** because you know what you can get out of your gear and you're not constantly compromising, cutting corners, or trying to combat unreliabilities or inconsistencies in off-brand or cheaper gear that can get the job done but, you know, not as well, they will see that confidence. They will feel confident. And then you're going to end up with a product that's better. It's more than just the sum of its parts.

[Chan] Right.

[Aleyna] It's more than just the name or just the quality. It creates a name and quality for itself as well. And I feel really strongly about having **reliable software** and **reliable gear** for my own, like, **peace of mind** when I'm recording.

[Chan] Yeah.

[Aleyna] That's—the last thing I want is to be crashing or, you know, having something not work and then I'm kind of in a jam to troubleshoot in front of somebody else.

[Chan] Yeah. Right.

[Aleyna] So I try to impart that upon my students as well, that troubleshooting and keeping calm under pressure and being able to get the most out of your gear and handle things when they go wrong and recognize what is going wrong when it happens is a huge part of that **confidence-inducing engineering**.

[50:14] [Chan] Couldn't say it better. I mean, it's true. All of that is absolutely true. There is—there is just, when we're talking shop, right? Like, there will always be the potential for **troubleshooting**. There will always be that. There's always a gremlin somewhere looking to rear its head. So yeah, it is good to feel confident in the room that you're in and with the gear. So like, there's one thing I know: unless it's broken, that 1073 is going to sound great. Right? Like, and if it doesn't, it's broken! And that's like a real easy, like, oh, okay, well that's the issue, right? Like, so no, I couldn't say that better. Just getting the confidence in the room comes from your ability to know how to handle an issue if it arises, and that's going to happen. And that's like a really great point. You got to feel confident about that. No, I would hate to be like, "I don't know, bro. I don't—so I don't know. I guess we're just done for the day. Sorry. I just don't"—No, no, that would be awful, right? Like, that's awful. And, yeah, I think you—I can't say it enough. **Get the best that you can afford.** Just always do that. And don't be penny wise and pound foolish. Just get the best that you can afford always.

[Aleyna] And a lot of my students, and maybe a lot of listeners, who are just starting out, it can be really intimidating to be hearing things like Neve and SSL when you know the price tag that's associated with that. But that's why **internships** are incredible, and getting your foot in the door by getting to use this kind of highly professional gear as an assistant engineer or even as a fly on the wall is still really valuable experience. So even if all you can afford right now is a simple Focusrite into GarageBand in your bedroom and you can't afford acoustic treatments or fancy microphones, at least go experience what it's like to be in a room with that kind of gear and around the engineers who have the proficiencies in that

gear so that you can **learn what to aspire to** and learn what artists who are really in the higher tiers, who you want to work with in the future, are looking for in the engineer they work with. So just a caveat because I know we can't all—we can't all have a Neve Genesys, as much as I would want one…

[52:47] [Chan] Well, but again, again—I don't think it can be overstated that you can shortcut that by really getting good at the **software**, right? Like the idea is there are Neves out there in a software form. Getting to understand why those things are in those **plugins** and why you would reach for them allows for you to build your monetary strength at working and getting good and then saying like, "Yeah, I know I'm going to use 1176 on this vocal, and then one day I'll have my own 1176," right? Like, the idea is just to get familiar with why are these things there? Why do these companies say SSL is great? Why are they choosing to package the **analog equivalents in their own software environment**? And get good at that, because that's how you make money. And then, you can **monetize yourself** enough to, if you care at that point, if you even care **to get the real stuff**. But that, I would argue, getting that real stuff just opens you up to **another market**. You know, because the great equalizer is that plugin. Everyone can pull up a million 1176s. Like, you can have unlimited SSL channels on something nowadays. So anyone can do that. If you're looking to get that extra 2%, that extra 10% rather, that there are people that are discerning that are looking for, you may want to get into the real knobs eventually.

[Aleyna] Yeah, I totally agree on the value of using plugins that emulate analog gear as a means to learn and hone your skills and style and then, hopefully, upgrading to the real thing, "getting into the real knobs." And I think part of this gear conversation is not only what it can bring to the space and what it can bring to your services and how the reputation of the gear can help with your own reputation as an engineer or producer and what you bring to the table, a special flavor if you do have the analog, not just the in-the-box emulator. But also, it's like you said, once you kind of have that formative experience where something that you've tried has blown your mind, has absolutely worked, and now you have a standard for how you want something to sound and you know how to achieve it, you're going to gravitate towards that gear. So, you know, that's kind of why I am an SSL fan. I learned on that. That was my first console. That's the console I'm teaching on as a professor. And so, you know, it has like a special place in my life, but it's also been where I've had these huge **lightbulb moments** of how good I can get something to sound and therefore **raising my bar**. I've been raising my bar consistently over using an SSL the last decade. So that's why that's what I have. And I think everybody has to, like you said, dive into all the plugins that are available, figure out why they have the legacy that they do and how it can help you

raise your bar, and then once you have the budget, raise the bar for your studio gear too and get the real thing. So that's a great point.

[*brief musical transition*]

[56:23] So, let me ask you this—how else, besides the space, besides the gear, how else are you creating an environment that is productive, that is creative, or even **collaborative**, how do you cultivate that?

[Chan] I will insist on people **mixing with me** at least for the first round. I insist on it. Like, I will not argue about it. You have to be in the room, and it's much more efficient. And if we can do revisions afterwards, fine. But that first setup, you're in the room with me. And the other exercise in that is I put them in the control room, and when they say, "Can we do this?" I'm like, "Go do it. Here, here's the thing that is on there. Put your hand on that and turn that thing until it sounds like the thing you're thinking in your head," right? Like, that is another technique I found that is really helpful recently, because we'd be doing revisions back and forth. I was going to do the car check and then come back, and it's like, do the car—no, the first time we're here. Like, it sounds like this. We all left the room at the same time knowing that it sounded like this thing. So any revision is in that **same headspace**. And then also they get the **ownership** in the room. "I don't like that reverb." "Cool, here's the reverb plugin on the thing. Do the thing that you want. Like, do whatever it is that you think you need to be done," and then you don't have the, O"h man, I don't know about that move you made on the thing." No, we made that move together, and that was because you were listening in that moment. You thought that needed to happen. I'll do the basic prep on the mix, get a faders-up sort of situation happening, and then **sit them down in the chair** and be like, *okay, cool*. Wait for them to have a note. "Oh man, can we do this?" "Yes, we can do it. You're sitting right there. Here's the mouse, or it's in that compressor right there. Go turn the thing." And oh my gosh, that becomes another, like, I think it can save an engineer, right? Like, I don't—I'm sure we've all had that thing where it's like *I can't get this right*. *The band's just not happy. Everything I've done is just not working out, or like we're just missing each other*. It's like that's really hard to do when it's then that—did the—"Oh, you did the compressor move on that. That was your vocal that you said we needed more 10K on," you know? Like, that is so helpful because it makes them make that decision, right? Like, as opposed to coming from a detracting scenario, they're coming from a like a real **collaborative space** in that version of it. I think it's an—I can't get enough of that now. I love it.

[58:58] [Aleyna] Yeah, I definitely agree on the supervision, or the collaboration of mixing. I just had that with a client who came into Red Pin and wanted me to mix all of her live show stems because after

performing with all these tracks, with all these different live sound engineers, she really wanted some more consistency.

[Chan] Of course.

[Aleyna] There were some cues or there were some parts or levels between songs that she always had an issue with but just couldn't fix herself, and so having her insight and **her decision-making** behind me or beside me, or when we just needed to drop in another backup line or voiceover because she always had this idea but couldn't make it happen, having her in the room with me was just really **productive** and **collaborative**, beneficial mixing time. And it felt like we had **co-ownership** of it and agency over making it sound better.

[60:03] [Chan] Again, I think that that **hands-on experience**, though, creates a mind state for them as well. And the idea is they get how hard it is to make these critical decisions in terms of the three-, four-decibel increments, right? How does that change? But also, change the **methodology**. Get the person involved in it, because I think we all had that trepidation: *I want to mix by myself, and I don't want them over my shoulder and telling me this is the wrong move*. Well, the move for that is you put them in the chair and you're over the shoulder and now you're guiding it and being really much more of a **curator** of their process, and then you lean in on the techniques you know when they're not able to define what they need, right? Like, but it's a real—it's been a revelation for me. Again, and I love the **social media opportunities** when they're in the chair or when they're leaning over the thing, right? When they're doing the thing, that's a natural picture for them to be taking, a natural video for them to be taking. It's showing them in the studio doing stuff beyond just "Look at me, look at me," it's like, oh I'm doing this thing. I'm trying to make this right. That's another opportunity that I've been really taking advantage of, is like, make sure you've got somebody taking video of you when you're in the mix session doing these changes and it's instant content, right?

[Aleyna] Yeah. And in this day and age where we need to be marketing ourselves and the artists want—I mean, that's part of this whole gear conversation and the space conversation we've had about being in the studio—it's an experience that is elevating their craft, their presence, and they should take every opportunity that comes with it, which definitely includes marketing themselves as being in that echelon of working in the studio and getting to participate. I go a little bit less hands-on with the client themselves, but something I think I naturally lean into is my teacher side, and I'll always be **narrating what I'm doing**. And if I say, or for example, this past week when I had the artist with the live show

stems, she would say, “Oh, I really hate the background vocals.” And so I would say, “Okay, well, what about them?” Because I think if I had just been working from notes just by myself, I could say, *okay, she doesn't like these. Let me turn them way down, let me just bury them*. But it was actually that they had this kind of warped sound to them that an EQ absolutely fixed. So, you know, and just kind of saying, “Oh, okay, well, I hear them kind of this way. What would you think about this? Does this make it better for you? Would this be better in your ear? Does this complement your voice better?” And then showing her what I was doing and then going back and forth on bypass.

[Chan] Yep, yep.

[Aleyna] This is what it used to be. This is where it is now. And having that instant approval and like, *oh, okay, this is how I can make it better.* It allowed her to trust me.

[Chan] Yeah, sure.

[Aleyna] And it allowed me to trust that **I'm making decisions that the artist approves**. And like you said, that emotionally carries a lot of weight as the mixing engineer to satisfy your clients.

[Chan] Yeah, we're **pleasers**, man. We're pleasers, right? Like, we're trying to please a few different things. Like, certainly pleasing the artist in the room at the time, but also their **audience**, right? Like, we want them to be pleased. And so we're naturally in that *I'm a pleaser* position. Yeah, the reason why you don't do much more hands-on is because you're way smarter than me, and so my idea is really to do least work. It's like, again, like, I could set the threshold on that compressor, but you're right there, dude. Just go for it!

[Aleyna laughs]

[Chan] I will never go back from that. I think it's a great, it's been great for me, at least.

[Aleyna] Yeah, no and I always feel that way when I’m in the Shire control room with you. You definitely are a “Okay, you’ve got an idea, take the reins,” and I love that about you in the way you encourage participation with your artists.

[*brief musical transition*]

[64:29] I think we have a cool way to kind of bring this back around to studio design, because in this conversation of how to have a collaborative environment, we have to think about the **layout**.

[Chan] Yep.

[Aleyna] We have to have intention behind our space, even the control room, where we might think it's just us, you know that's just where we work. No, if you're inviting the artist to participate in that, either hands on or supervising a mix, or just listening, you have to be conscious of where you put your **seating**, how you arrange your **speakers**. You know, you don't want to isolate them over to a corner where there's a bunch of standing waves, and then, you know, they're critiquing the mix from outside of the **sweet spot**. So, for example, here at Red Pin Productions, I have the couch for the artist or producer behind me. So, they can come closer, they could sit up right next to me if they want to see a little bit better. But by having the seating for listening behind me and not off to the side, they are pretty close to the sweet spot. They're hearing a balanced left-right, so we're at the very least making panning decisions together. But yeah, having that mindset and that intention behind designing your control room space as a collaborative environment—the arrangement can make a big difference. So can you tell us how you set up the control room for not only yourself, but for having guests?

[Chan] Same thing. I mean, yes, the main couch is right behind me in the room, focused on as close to that sweet spot as they can get. I think you're right. I mean, I don't think that there's any serious control room that isn't set up that way. I think that that is a real, like, a staple. That's a staple arrangement. It's almost like you go back to the Greek architecture and the things that they always did, right? Like, that is something you always do. Or if you're not doing, you should, right? Like, that is, I think I've seen relationships really bond on the couch behind you when they're listening to the music they just finished playing. Or in the other scenario where there's like, oh, you know, a couple of people are finished and they're just in the control room listening to the last person do their parts, and that kind of **camaraderie**. And they're just relaxing in the room. Again, it's chill vibes and people need to be very **comfortable**. Again, that's a part of The Shire, though. It's a great thing to be able to look out the window and there's like a deer or something, right? Like, that kind of stuff really lends itself to what we're talking about. It's like being really comfortable in that room and while you work, right? Like, you're working and they need to be comfortable. So yeah, couch behind main spot and then there's some seating off the side with, you know, a refrigerator for people to have **refreshments** when they need it.

[67:35] [Aleyna] Yeah, because I think it's important to remember when you're a studio owner and not just a guest engineer in someone else's studio, but when you have invited an artist into your workspace, you're not only the engineer, you're a **host**.

[Chan] Correct. Oh, my God, yes.

[Aleyna] And to be a good host means to provide that comfort and provide that environment that the artist will actually be able to relax in and thrive in and create good music in and look out the window and see a deer, or if you're at Red Pin, look out the window and see—

[Chan] Skyline.

[Aleyna]—downtown Dallas

[Chan] Yes, that's not so bad! It's not so bad.

[Aleyna] And maybe we have to pause for a siren every once in a while, but, you know, I think I've spent a lot of time trying to create this space as being very inviting and unique and creative. We have this beautiful custom, like, acrylic painting. It's huge right above the monitors. And so, you know, if someone is sitting behind me where I have the wall of guitars and everything and the couch, they're comfortable, they're listening. But they're not also just staring at a blank wall. They get to, you know, admire some **original art**, and I just hope, kind of **vibe** in the space that I've created. And it's not just for when other people are here. It's also because I'm spending hours and hours and hours of alone time in this space. I need it to be a space that I want to go to and want to spend, you know, those burning-the-midnight-oil-in-here editing. It's got to be a space that I feel comfortable in and creative in. So, yeah, that is huge. And hospitality goes a long way.

[Chan] Yeah, super long way. I'd love to see Red Pin. I haven't seen it yet. I'd love to come check it out.

[Aleyna] Ah, please do! Yeah, anytime.

[*brief musical transition*]

[69:36] So, we've talked a lot about your studio and your journey from retrofitting Indianhead Factory from a thrift store and salon into the recording studio and venue that it became, some of the challenges, and then of course moving into your old wood shack that turned into The Shire with its new fabric walls and all of its amazing gear like your Neve Genesys, and of course the live room with all of its intentional wood—good wood—paneling and the beautiful, sentimental stained glass windows, how that natural light just brings in a lot of creativity and flow and vibes for the artists, because that's what you are creating with that space and your mission as a producer and as studio owners, what you and Tracy bring to the community is that opportunity to create, **not just another commercial space**.

[Chan] Correct.

[70:48] [Aleyna] So that being said, are there any particular projects or artists that you've worked with in the past or are working with right now that you want to give a **special shout-out** to?

[Chan] Yeah, I mean, I've been working with this—she's a PhD, but she's an amazing artist as well. Her name's **Angela**. She's a gospel artist, but she's like most of her productions are like in-the-box, you know, like, you know, traditional sort of like gospel pop, but she came to me with the idea of doing a live jazz version of her gospel set. And so we did that, and it's great. I think she's just amazing. She's just a really kind, sweet, and talented woman, you know, like, just a very good woman. And so I'm very excited about that.

[Aleyna] Does she lead, like, a music business conference?

[Chan] Yes, it's called the **Institute for Music Business**. Yes, it's a—I mean, it's an amazing. I volunteer there as well. That's how I got connected with the Florida State Producers Club is through her and her organization. Yeah, I mean, shout-out, Institute for Music Business. It's great. Her mission was to give places an after-school program for kids that are in disadvantaged communities and give them a trade within the music industry. So whether it's engineering or actually singing, you go to her after-school program. Well, actually, it's expanded so much in the last few years that they do a full music conference in town every year now, and she's helped a ton of people. So yeah, I—you know, I'd run through walls for her because she's genuinely a great force in the community. So yeah, I mean, shout her out. I mean, they deserve it for sure.

[Aleyna] Oh absolutely, that's **Angela Moss Poole** and the Institute for Music Business. I'll be sure to link it in the transcript.

[72:43] So lastly—I know we could talk shop for hours, but for the sake of our listeners I have one more question—you've mentioned a lot of the mission or mantra behind your work and behind the design of your business, behind the space and how you approach being a studio owner. What **advice** do you have for people wanting to kind of embark on this side of the industry, of owning and operating a studio, to not become jaded and not become too sucked into nickel-and-diming or being so commercial that it can kind of suck the artistry out of it? How do you keep that **mission** at the forefront?

[Chan] Oh, that's a—I mean, good question. I don't know. I made it a point to be around people that I knew could make me better at what I did first. That was the first thing. It's just like, **surround yourself**

with people that can do what you cannot, and therefore you can learn that. That is what I would say. And if you do surround yourself with those people, it's hard to become jaded because you're always learning, right? Like, you're always learning something new or being challenged in the ways that don't allow for you to be jaded. But I mean, that's just my experience. I'm grateful and lucky for the people that I've been around, right? Like, it's just been a lucky experience. So, you know, that's all I would say is just seek those people out. That would be the easiest thing for you to do is seek out people that are way greater than what you are and then hold on to them. Be around them as much as possible. That keeps you, you know, **mossy**.

[Aleyna] Mossy. Yeah, stay mossy. And collaborate. And invest in yourself and in your gear and your space and your community. Don't take shortcuts. I'm trying to think of what other nuggets you gave us.

[Chan] Learn. **Learn plugins**. I think plugin learning and why they're there is so, so important for an engineer. Producers, maybe not. Producers, like, get really good at your instrument and get really good at the theory and get good at being in the room with other musicians and making them feel good. But if you're engineering, get good at—and you don't have access to, like, you know, million-dollar rooms—learn those plugins, man. They're, first off, they're amazing. They're all great sounding. But if you do want to up your game. And you're looking for what is that extra percentage that I can get that's not everyone else, then that's in the analog world. I would, I would say. And then learning why you want to be in that world is the journey for sure.

[Aleyna] And it's a never-ending journey too. You know, there's always going to be more gear that can kind of, you know, give you those aha moments. And as you're creating and collaborating with people who you admire, you will learn from them and how they've mastered their gear. And then your journey just continues and you just elevate and elevate. And so that's definitely an ongoing process and one that is part of this career and is part of being in music, in a field that is changing every day as technology changes and as we grow and adapt and as new music genres become popular and new styles are being produced. It's our job to keep up with that and to keep making great music and keep innovating and collaborating and not losing sight of ourselves and what we do.

[Chan] Well said.

[*brief musical transition*]

[76:50] [Aleyna] So I just want to close by saying your studios, Indianhead Factory and The Shire, have been so formative in my career. They've absolutely inspired what I want in a space, not only in their design, but in the way they've made me feel and the way they've welcomed me and the artists that I've been able to work with there, as well as you and of course Tracy. So I just want to give you a huge shout-out for being that person and that space for me. And I love you, and I'm so grateful for you.

[Chan] Well, I love you too. No, it's this hard to be formal. I love you so much. You know, it's really, it's a pleasure to always see you. I wish I saw you more. I really miss you a ton. That sucks. I'm not happy about that, but I'm also happy that you're killing it out there. Like, you're absolutely killing it. And so thank you for having me. I'm really, really excited for Red Pin. I mean, let's make this thing happen. You know what I'm saying?

[*Red Pin Podcast Outro Music begins in the background*]

[Aleyna] Thanks! Yeah I am extremely proud and excited about everything Red Pin Productions has going on. We have new content all the time between the *Red Pin Review* and the new Red Pin Podcast. And it’s all mission-driven, to empower and elevate. So thank you for being part of that today. And to our listeners, thanks for tuning in.

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Tracy Horenbein, aka Tracy Chow | Artist, Producer, Co-owner of The Shire
Pat Puckett | Carpenter, Studio Designer, Guitarist, Songwriter
Miles Bozeman | Drums and percussion
Angela Moss Poole, Ph.D. | Institute for Music Business
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