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COMMUNITY STORIES

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SOUTHCOAST Artists Index

This story was collected through our partnership with the SouthCoast Artist Index, led by Ron Fortier.

These transcripts were produced using the Zoom transcription feature.

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Storyteller Name: Nick LeBlanc

Ron Fortier

Hey this is. Ron Fortier with another episode of the Artist Index in Focus Podcast. And remember, we're brought to you in part by the Mass Cultural Council and we're sponsored by the great folks at Heavenly Spirits Imports. Today is going to mark, I believe, our 110th podcast. I could be wrong. I'm. I'm I'm starting to lose a little bit of track, but to get back on track, I'm going to. Have our our. Our guests introduce themselves and we'll take it from there.

Nick LeBlanc

Hi, my name is Nicola Blank. I'm an artist and educator from New Bedford.

Ron Fortier

Spell your name, please, Nick. Because some people have trouble with our French names. You know that.

Nick LeBlanc

Yeah, so NICKLEBLANC.

Ron Fortier

OK. Yeah. It's amazing. Just with my name. Alone, I've been called Frontier Forest. Fournier it just it's like, no, it's four TR. So so.

Nick LeBlanc

OK. Yeah.

Ron Fortier

Yeah. Going back in the the way back machine, I I generally ask people, you know, where was that time, that place, that moment, that, that you knew. Damn. This is what I want to do. I mean some people came real late. I mean we had one guest on who was in his 30s, was a copywriter for an. Ad agency and woke up and went. I want to be a painter.



Nick LeBlanc

Just like that? Yeah. You know. Yeah, well. I'm getting things. For a very long time, almost almost as long as I can remember. In different ways I mean. I suppose I really started. When I was probably around. Sometime in middle school and I started with sound. Two of my friends and. I started a recording project. That we called pooped them out. And it was, you know, it started, as most things do sort of ingest, you know, making fun of. But it gradually got more extreme, more it really kind of started to push push some boundaries as to what it even was, you know it it. Entered into like. Experimental music later on, but a lot of it came from kind of a. Satirical place and. I think it was kind of since. Around that time that I've been pursuing some version of art ever since, you know, whether it's sound or writing or. Film or live performances or. I've kind of done it the whole way through my life.

Ron Fortier

It's interesting. So do you think in sound? Are you? Are your memories in sound?

Nick LeBlanc

Sometimes it it sort of depends. I mean most of the time. It's a it's a combination of a lot of different things, but. Sound, sound and ideas and sound and concepts kind of blend together. You know where like. For me it sounds. Can sort of express. Certain things you know where I hear something and it and it feels a certain way and you know. Of course I. Think a lot of nostalgia and memory is tied into sound like the sound of a rope on a flag. Pull that tinging sound in the wind, and anytime I hear that, I'm immediately transported to childhood for some reason I don't even have a specific memory associated with. It it. Just something about the sound. So yeah, I do.

Speaker

I think.

Ron Fortier

The proper term is pneumatic S. Where a a sound. I think one of the most popular or most famous one and I I don't even know if the term is correct but Maxwell House. Coffee back. I mean, we're talking classic days of television where somebody picked up on the fact that it was percolating in the pot. And this is the old stainless steel or aluminum pot on a gas stove with the little glass handle. But it was clear so that you could see the coffee as it's percolating and. And that that always kind of amazed me, but I don't know if it applies. To I've got this weird thing like we had an oven. It was the last of the analog generation when we bought it. That's probably why we got it so cheap, because the digital stuff came in the oven alarm. Was like the first chord to The Beatles I feel. I feel fine. I think it was. And it's like I'll get in somebody's car and they've got the door ajar chime. You know that, that. Kind of thing. And my head will just go right into a thing. I remember my first MRI ever. I freaked out to staff. This is when MRI was brand new and you had to do. It like, you know, Christmas Eve at. 1130 Yeah, cause yeah. And I they put me into the tube. And are you afraid of tight spaces? I don't know. We'll find out. And and you hear these bang, bang, Ding, Ding, bong. And I fell asleep and that's what freaked them out and be like. Are you alright? Are you alright? Like. Yeah, I fell asleep. Why? Well, you know what else you got to do in here? And I would hear these. Ding, Ding, boom and then all of a sudden my head would start putting together. So I'm wondering, I mean. How normal quote UN quote. Is that since you have the expert in that.

Nick LeBlanc

I think it's probably fairly normal, at least if you're a musical person. You know like. I sort of do the same thing. You know, I don't listen to it much, but I I kind of love, at least anymore. I used to. A lot more, but I I used to love the radio. One thing I love about the radio is just kind of. What we're talking about? Here where there are these. Commercials in between and then there's bits and pieces of song, and then there's, you know, sounds that are associated specifically with radio, where whether it drops out for a second and becomes staticky, so forth so on. But it kind of develops a world onto itself. I think kind of like playing around in that world when you're a kid sitting in a car, listening to that, idly staring out the window while your parent is driving. I think that stuff kind of



imprints and I think that you. As you get older, that practice of kind of putting sounds together or, you know, idly listening and and building patterns in your mind kind of continues even when we don't realize it's continuing. So then, you know, if we're isolated, you put us quite literally in a giant tube and play a bunch of weird binging and banging. Towns around us, I think it might just sort.

Ron Fortier

Sort of a way to survive. It's funny. You. You when you mentioned about the radio. Radio is so depressing. I mean. I I stopped. I only listen to like, you know, public radio, which is all talk news kind of thing and somewhat informative, but it's and I I'm the type in my studio, I can go and I can paint without anything on and if I do put anything on, it has nothing to do with what I'm painting, I don't need. The mood music, you know, that kind of thing. But you know, you brought me back to childhood because I was at the tail end of old time radio or radio theater. Who knows what? Evil lurks in the heart of men, you know. The shadow do. Henry and Henry Aldrich. And you know all the sound. Effects that they did. In fact, I think as late as the 70s WBRU. When it was still like almost. A pirate College Station. Did and it it just hit. Me now moon over Morocco. Phenomenal because there was this old, there's old story. This whole anecdote about a father and son and the father says to the son after dinner or and just think of the words after supper. So you want to listen to the radio, you want to watch TV. And he says, Nah, I'd rather listen to the radio. The pictures are better.

Nick LeBlanc

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, exactly.

Ron Fortier

You know, so. How long have you been doing this now?

Nick LeBlanc

With, with music or with art or with.

Ron Fortier

With the whole thing. Yeah. Yeah. Well.

Nick LeBlanc

Like I said, you know I've I've been doing it for years since since I was younger. I've been doing it more seriously. Now I guess over the past. Ten years or so, especially over the past six years, you know, I'm. Only I've been pursuing writing quite a bit and I I do a lot of readings. I've submitted a lot of pieces that published some books. I'm currently seeking A literary agent so I can kind of crack it into the the next, you know, tier of this. Kind of stuff, I. Have one novel. About that is currently like being queried and going through that whole hellish process. I've been doing it like I said for about 6 years and writing has kind of been at the center of it. But I mean before that I've been, I've been in bands and I've been doing sound art for a long time. I work with an organization called. The the collective in New Bedford. It's a nonprofit, and I'm I'm the president of the board and it's we do. A lot of. Live theater. But we've also done short films and musical performances and all that kind of that kind of stuff as well. So you know over the. Past four or five years, I've gotten more serious. In in the past. Couple of years I'm I'm trying to push it even. Outside of just the South Coast. I also work with another group called Anomaly Poetry, which is run by New Bedford's poet laureate, Sarah Jane Mulvey. You know, putting on performances and for you may have started with, I actually did the STAR series. A few months ago, which was at the Star store in the corner. The corner window. Did some spoken performances. I don't want to call them poetry specifically or short story or. Sometimes when you. Start thinking about what things are you can. Kind of get. Lost in arguing why, you know why?

Ron Fortier

Yeah, hang a label on them. Like a vintage Jack it.



Nick LeBlanc

Yeah, yeah.

Ron Fortier

Has to be for dinner.

Nick LeBlanc

Yeah, exactly. Yeah, you kind of get lost in that and and don't really focus on the. What's actually happening, you know?

Ron Fortier

Do you listen to the moth?

Nick LeBlanc

Oh I have.

Ron Fortier

Yeah. And there's another one. I think that's similar to a get more of I think a bit more of an edge to it. They're primarily. The primarily people who. It's, it's almost like a a survivors kind of grow people who have dealt with the abuse of some sort, you know, their their lives have been turned upside down.

Nick LeBlanc

Yeah, my my issue with a lot of like spoken word stuff and some of the. Most stuff is that. Anytime I get the whiff of. Self seriousness kind of going a little bit too far and an artist kind of using it. When I when I can smell it on an artist, I immediately I immediately want to satirize it. I you know, I I have. I have a hard time sitting through some. Of that stuff. In a lot of a lot of the pieces that I've written or performed are explicitly kind of about. You know, kind of subverting that idea, you know? So yeah, I like it and everybody. Likes hearing a good. Story you know, but sometimes when. I guess what I'm saying. Is sometimes you can tell that the performer. Not on stage for the story, but the performer is on stage for the performer and then it becomes kind of hard to to listen to and and and watch, you know, right.

Ron Fortier

I I decided to laugh because all of a sudden all Iago from a Latin but but and I was like, look at me. I'm surprised for not being surprised. And you probably really have to like contain yourself as best as you can, because you know it, it'll just take off on you. Speaking of your mask, do they still publish the temper?

Nick LeBlanc

I think they do. Someone actually just sent me like a link. I think they're doing. Last I heard they were doing online publishing. I'm not sure if it's in the physical world. Yeah. Someone sent me a link saying they should submit some stuff for them. I'm not sure. I think so. From from what I understand.

Ron Fortier

Yes. Yeah. I mean it would be great. I mean if. I don't if anybody's ever done it to because I remember being on campus. Back well, as far back as I got. I'm old 69 and it was, you know, really serious. They had a letter press. I mean, they would actually, this was a. Nice publication. So it was. You know the the, the, the, the publication itself was a piece of art and obviously you know the the the students who were really trying to hone their. Their craft. You know, it was recorded in there two people that popped to mind for literary agents. So you probably know them or you've probably spoken to them would be James Barbrick, who's published. And Chuck Boucher. Another Frenchman, he he's had several books. I don't believe they're like vanity press pieces, but no, he's been around so. And that's, you know, that's part and parcel of this whole artist index to try to. To at least identify and



contact all of the visual performing literary artists in the area. Because memory is great. But then when you're dead.

Nick LeBlanc

Right.

Ron Fortier

You know, there's there's no pan down or there's no pass down. That would would you know that that exists and and that's really what we're we're looking at at trying to accomplish. Now you teach at what grade level?

Nick LeBlanc

High school.

Ron Fortier

At the high school, New Bedford High. What are what are your impressions of of? I mean, the kids obviously grew up in a. Much more stimulus saturated environment than you did, and obviously you grew up in one that was more so than the previous. You know, your parents generation and so on.

Nick LeBlanc

Well, as of, yeah, I think that, you know, I'm, I'm 33. So I'm I'm a millennial and our our childhood was super saturated at the time in the 90s, you know then. Frankly, a lot of my adult life has been kind of shedding some of the some of the BS that comes with being, you know, subjected to an overly saturated world. And these kids it's, it's almost a hopeless cause. I mean for for who's out there right now, it's it. They're struggling pretty badly. UM. Now, there's certain things that they could do to. Improve the situation for themselves, like trying to read a book or sitting down for a full movie that you know isn't. Blasts of color and and distracting blasts of color and sound constantly. Not there's anything. Wrong with that. But I mean you know. These different the different types of stimulus is what I'm saying. It's it's kind of rough, you know, to to be around that, like even in literary stuff like Instagram, poetry and flash fiction. Are really what are.

Speaker

Do it.

Nick LeBlanc

You know anybody can be a poet on Instagram if you write a few words and you make them look like they they mean something. Like, what's your face, Ruby, cower. And it's hard to. An issue that I have for instance is that my my particular style is not about the immediate thing you know and and the immediate thing is kind of what gets grabbed onto and what's popular, and then it kind of fades. I I was lucky that you know, I I listened to a lot of music. I watched a lot of films. I read a hell of a lot of books and. I learned. The the gratification of kind of sitting with something you know and being an artist and having made albums with the music and having written a book that was 111,000 words. There is a real. Reward in a real benefit to sort of engaging with something like that, you know, and that's not not really super popular right now. It's not encouraged by many people. In fact, I I teach science, but I know that in some, like ELA English language arts classes, they're not even reading full books. They're barely even reading. Short stories, they're reading segments of short stories. They're segments of books and. I mean. Even putting out submitting short. Stories, right? One of the latest short stories I wrote. Was it's about between somewhere between 7 and 8000 words which you know isn't all that long, but that's at like the upper limit of what places are accepting for short story. They're looking like 2500 words and under and. It's like I don't I. Don't know what you're expecting with 2500 words and under like unless unless you're going to get like a Hemingway. Rip off or you know it's it's. It's just kind of. There is there has been a real effect. On culture, I think is is what I'm saying.



Ron Fortier

I mean the first word that would pop to mind when most people would be out the, you know, the instant gratification, but. I think before you have instant gratification is that instant access. And then. You know, there are people who, well, like me, who go into a restaurant and this is like a joke in a family. They give me a menu and I always tell the white person ask me last because in my head I'm flip flopping. I'll. I'll make several selections and I'll probably end up going back to the first one that I they. Chose in my head, but you know, don't ask me first, you know, and I would prefer it's spinner like on a game. For, you know, and whatever it lands on, that's. That's what I'll take. And then I've worked. In restaurants where there was a, you know? Multi page menu and you've got some. I guess I had to really some guest who says is that all you got?

Nick LeBlanc

Right.

Ron Fortier

We have too many choices, and then the other thing too is. How can these kids? Watch a movie while they're texting and they're listening to something else on their headphones. So then this supposed multitasking, yet they have no bloody idea what's going. On I mean you. Know fast forwarding. What I was teaching at the university. Getting them to read a chapter was. With something and then. It got down to. A paragraph.

Nick LeBlanc

Yeah. Well, I think you know as far as like the the film is a really good analogy for this. Yeah, cause it film is so. At least popular film is so reflective of the times, right? You know, there's so much big money that goes around that that millionaires and billionaires are only gonna throw money toward the things. That people buy, right? So that's why popular film you. See this like. Popular film is like car design. After a while everything looks exactly the same because it's, you know, just kind of pushing forward in that direction, which is why. We have CGI swelling messes and no character development. But to that point I I think. Watching something that's that someone now would consider slow like, even even something that I think is engaging in dramatic, like a corsola movie. You go watch Rashomon or seven samurai or you know anything like that and. It takes a while, right? As compared to what happens now and it's about sitting there and watching the cinematography and the beauty of those type of films is that when you engage with them and you truly engage with them, they're they're it's a feedback loop what you put into it gets pulled back to you. Now the problem is that a lot of entertainment because some of it isn't art, is empty. Where? If you watch it, the longer you watch it, the less there is, even though there's so much happening, the more you think about it, there's less there. And that's one of the problems that we have, you know, where? The media and the and the art and entertainment or whatever word you want to call it that's getting released. Doesn't have the same type of depth and not saying everything. Needs to have depth. Or be brainy a a good example. What I mean is like. Was it 2016? George Miller's film Mad Max Fury Road, right? If you ever saw it. If you're a fan of. The Mad Max. Franchise. But that film is amazing. Saturated colors, incredible compositions, full world built. It's nonstop action wall to wall. There's not a lot of words, but the more you watch it every time you watch it. There's something else. And and it's so much better than some of the stuff you'll see out there. That really is. Just more about, you know, smashing that dopamine button that's hiding in your brain or serotonin and making you feel good. Which you know is the same thing that our phones do, and the same thing that things like Instagram and Facebook are designed to do. They're designed to give us those. You know, hormonal injections. I think. That's what we're up against.

Ron Fortier

I mean. The Bang, bang, shoot em ups. You know these. Action films, even even the genre, the the terminology is is change used to be action heroes, and now it's it's all basically the, you know, rehashed comic book heroes and they're all the same. You just change Captain America for Superman, you change. Swap him out with Batman. It's the same crap. And then one of the probably better examples is watching a British crime drama. Versus American



crime drama, American crime drama is a lot of Bang Bang. Shoot him up. Car chasing after car chase scene. You know, a couple of rolls in the. Hay and you know, whatever the UK ones are totally, totally. Different this one that. And I've told several people to, and I don't normally watch any serial television and or or anything. I've just gotten away from that. I'm going back to reading and and that kind of. Thing but it's. Called stay close and. I tell people you have to have muscle relaxants or or or whiskey is something to watch this because the first the first episode of the first season alone, you're going. What the what the what the it's like. Yeah, you already. Your nerves are already, like, completely taught. They're ready to snap. And you're like, wow, that was tough. The next episode, you're like, OK, well, you know, they're gonna start settling in and.

Speaker

MM.

Ron Fortier

Stuff. It's like what? It just keeps coming at. You and then all of a sudden you're. You're sitting like. I've I'm like so over stimulated because my brain is trying to figure out. A solution to the problems they keep throwing in front and just when you think you have a respite, they whack you in the head again and it's really, you know, what they call a taught tense. And the character development is like absolutely for them. You get to a point where you can't trust. Anybody you know?

Nick LeBlanc

Yeah, well, character development I think is one of the things that's really lost. And I think part. Of the reason why. Big companies rely on things like. Comic books where they. Rely on things like adaptations because. Their assumption? The assumption is that there's a cultural awareness, you know, like pretty much everybody in the world knows what Batman is, right. And so if I'm making a film, I really don't have to get an actor who's going to convey character development in the same way, you know, it just it makes things a bit easier. You know, you throw in it. And again, I'm not trashing comic book. Because I think I think that there actually has been. Good stuff, but it's it's more just about the the big budget thing. I mean really ultimately the problem is where art and commerce meet, capitalism takes over and it and it creates consumables rather than, you know, pieces and and that's what happens. And occasionally in our world, things that aren't just consumables can slip through and have an impact. An example. Being like a like bong junho's parasite, you know where that got some press and it deserved it. And it it wasn't, you know, just a a capitalist shill. Yeah, yeah.

Ron Fortier

It's too bad I mean. Yeah, I I.

Speaker

And frankly.

Ron Fortier

I I I you have gone through periods of time where I've been rather snide, crass. You know, for example, you know American culture is an oxymoron. We ain't got no culture and so.

Nick LeBlanc

You know, I think I would. I'd actually pull apart from that idea a little bit. I think that there is American culture. I I just think it's not. I just don't think that popular culture represents, you know. American culture, like there are some incredible American songwriters who've come out in the past 30 years, even though it might not feel like it. There's, you know, there's been some Great American novels that have come out in the past few years. The part of the challenge. Is that what makes what people consider America generally is comes from, you know, white supremacy, right? It's it's kind of that white supremacist notion, like the one of the best American novels. That I've read that's come out in the past six years, seven years, is the sellout by Paul Beatty, and he's a black



professor. He's a black psychology. Professor and teachers writing he he had studied psychology, but he's by professor and it it's. It's and and for my money. It's probably like the best satire ever written. It's it's incredibly written, it's dense, it's it's so funny. It is so seething. And it's something that could only be written by an American because it's it. It explicitly is about the race problem in America.

Speaker

Which is sort.

Nick LeBlanc

Of the defining characteristic of America at this point, and you know, the older I get, the more that I sort of believe. That Toni Morrison yeah, was kind of the greatest American writer, period. Because her in in in I don't. I don't mean that in like the stereotypical. Woke white person way of saying that I mean that. And if you read her work and evaluate it from a literary perspective and understand her life, she was a Mark Twain scholar and. If you if. You read those things about her and you understand it, and then you go read a book like Sulla, which is, you know what, maybe 160 pages. It's short about two women. Growing up in the Midwest. Being in America. And it no, no one from any other country could write that because it is what America is, you know, and I mean. I think you could probably argue that. Like the. Beat Generation, you know, was a good example of American culture as well, because you you get stuff like you get stuff like William Burrows, who for my for my money, was the best letter of the. Bunch and and I and I'm not even referring necessarily to is like experimental cut up stuff, I just mean. On a sentence by sentence basis, the stuff that he can raise kind of more impactful and smarter and funnier than the other guys. But I really think there. Is some Great American stuff, but the problem is the capitalist nature of our country just upholds that Top 40 attitude. You know, where you basically just, you listen to a song and all you hear is compression drums and a bass line that gets your blood pumping.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, there's a lot of noise and I don't mean that in regards to the music. I mean just there's just noise, visual noise, auditory noise and cultural noise. And as you're speaking, you know you're sparking off these, these, these things. In my head of, you know, growing up in the 50s and 60s and.

Nick LeBlanc

Yeah, cultural here.

Ron Fortier

The 60s we, I mean, that's probably why a lot of millennials are are very much drawn to mid century, which is the 50s, but it's now, you know mid century because there's still some sort of sophistication. Clothing women's clothing, for example. Even though it's not all couture, it was something I mean, you know, Audrey Hepburn was like the cover girl for everybody. You know, that kind of thing. Automobiles, even though they were just big hunks of American steel, they were rolling sculptures and. You know, you mentioned before about how even with automobiles everything becomes homogenized. I mean, you really we did drive it down the road. You can't tell a Hyundai from a Honda from a Toyota from a. Kia, I mean.

Speaker

Right.

Ron Fortier

You have to look at the name plates. There's no distinct this, you know, they talk about branding. But there's no style branding. There's no design branding, you know, a Buick. You always knew it was a Buick because they had those three vent holes on on, on the Fender. You know, that kind of. Thing. Yeah, you.



Speaker

Think we'll ever.

Ron Fortier

Get back to that.

Nick LeBlanc

Ohh yeah, I think it's starting slowly in certain ways where there's there's more, there's more distinct stuff. Happening in in little tiny pockets independently, you know. It's a wheel, right? And time is a wheel and culture is a wheel. So as it turns, eventually we'll flip back over onto that. That way of being. But there'll be some something underpinning it, just like, you know that for us, whatever was underpinning the 50s and 60s that we might not understand because maybe we weren't alive a. 100 years before. So. We don't necessarily know what it was that. Had kind of. Caused the wheel to turn in the first place. So what I'm. Saying is, I think culture repeats itself in that. We'll be back. Yeah, we'll we'll be. Back, but I think that there'll be. There'll be something. Something about it that. Doesn't feel quite the same way, you know like. Like Nirvana, you know the band I'll you know. Oh my God. In the 90s it was so crazy that some band that.

Ron Fortier

Wrote effectively just.

Nick LeBlanc

Wrote pop songs was popular. No, it's not what? What was freaking people out is. That these guys, I mean Kurt Cobain looked like a movie star, so he had the looks. And I mean. So even something that's like, that's a more recent example, but I mean, you know something that's considered such a big surprise to step out of the underground. No, it's not. It's it wasn't underground. Those are the same song structures that The Beatles made popular, you know, like. In this in the 70s, there were moments of the same thing they. Just wanted to be. Phil Spector, you know, except instead of being Phil Spector with Tina Turner and Ronnie Spector singing, you got this weird New York guy singing. And instead of a wall sound, you got a wall of distorted guitar, you know, so it's like. What I'm saying is. Even the stuff that we. Think it's somehow subverting? Culture or is there's like some kind of a callback? It's not really it's. It's always kind of the same game, just wearing a different outfit, you know? So maybe yes, we'll see. We'll see more distinct design and cars. We'll see more distinct design and and and whatever. But, you know, they'll be. They'll be something to it. They'll be. There'll be a reason why it's. Happening there'll be. You know, it's again, it's that art and commerce problem. I think if in order to be an artist, you gotta sell, if you want to survive. Unless you have a side gig. Hmm so. And it's hard to be an artist with a side gig. I mean, luckily I'm a teacher, so I have time, you know, so I can take time to write, and I can take time to submit. And I can take time to make a short film. I also I make the fiscal sacrifice of. I don't, I don't, you know, make a ton of. Money. I'm a. Public school teacher, but. You know, that's the that's the thing.

Ron Fortier

No, no, no, no. You're absolutely correct. And again I I'm enjoying this conversation because you're you're you're triggering off all these, all these things. And that's what conversations are. It's basically, you know, you got a stream or a river and you've got you've, you know. There's stones. Some of them are visible, some of them are not. And you're trying to get your way across and you know, it's not like, dug the dog on the up, you know. Like squirrel, which I guess pretty much would. If that was the if, we would have sectionalized this conversation. That's where we really started. Off is there's just so much. A distraction and there's no focus, you know.

Nick LeBlanc

And as a as an artist. I I kind of. I think that those things I focus on some of those things like this, this book. That I wrote I should get some context that I I went to Holy Cross in Worcester, which is like a, you know, but fancy



pants girls at school that a lot of a lot. Of rich kids go to. I'm. I'm I'm I'm not a fancy pants. Just a little rich. Kid. But I wound up there and. The experience that I had of being a millennial who was exposed to the. The college machine. Of you know. You got to go to college. There's this. There's these opportunities. And then you kind of get spit into the system into the Elite New England College system and you see exactly what. Is happening and you can smell the business all over the place and you can see. The politics, you. Can see that a lot of the people who go there are effectively like. Like our Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, they're those sort of people. And it doesn't. Nothing is the way that. Anyone says it is? They say it's that way to. Sell it to you and to convince you of. Some you know system so in in that book which again is sort of there's some satirical parts of it parts to it as well. I addressed that general feeling, you know, and so. I think that. It's funny that our conversation is headed in this direction, like is. What I'm saying is because even in my work I I touch on a lot of those things like. For example, even Speaking of radio. I did this mini album that's sort of still in progress. It's called make jazz. Which is I had to joke to that as well, but the idea of it was. It's taking bits and pieces from different songs lectures. It's sample based stuff and then putting it together into some kind of a narrative that comments on itself. So when you listen to it, it's bits and pieces and there's jokes within. I call them jokes because I'm not sure what else to call them sometimes, but they're it's ideas that comment on. Itself as it develops, and it's in my mind, it's how a radio show should be if you know in in my ideal world where it's bits and pieces chopped up by somebody and turned into. A whole other thing.

Speaker

Right.

Ron Fortier

And so I I tend to like that idea.

Nick LeBlanc

You know, and and there's another short story that I'd written where. You start out thinking it's a story about. A. A young kid trying to help his friend. Do some kind of go on a. To document to accomplish some kind of a task. That seems like the type of. Task that a kid. Would accomplish a fantasy that when it ends up becoming something. Very different. And so it's playing with those ideas of expectations and playing with. The idea that you're given expectations by virtue of. Existing when we exist, and So what? What expectations you bring to something sometimes? Are the thing that end up biting you on the behind because. You know the the the piece was coming from a different angle, the.

Ron Fortier

Whole time, right? Right. Right. No, no, no. I I gotta. I gotta completely. Have you ever seen the? Movie. If it's a, it's a it was kind of a sleeper, but it's become a cult classic with Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks. And now it's Nestle in. Seattle it was Joe versus the. Which is a movie that you don't ever want to watch. When. You're depressed, or at least you know. I remember I was. I was, you know, out on a on a business trip. And, you know, I didn't really want to be there. And it was playing on the on the in the hotel room, television and. I watched it. It's like, Oh my God. But it's actually kind of a comedy in the way, but it's it's. Check it out, Joe versus the volcano. There are some funny parts in there. There are some funny parts in there and it's it's ludicrous. And it's satirical in a lot of ways as well. You know, brain. Well, it was a brain fog that they called it. Anyway, it's just about people just being stuck. In in, in. A place that they think they have to be. And they give up so much just to because. That's one of those American. Values put you know some rhinestone is shut. Up, you know. The other thing too is you know the paradigm shift and a lot of people throw that term around. But basically what it is, it's a revolutionary imposition on an evolutionary process. So, you know this pandemic is going to cause a paradigm shift. 9/11 obviously caused a paradigm shift and your generation and you know my my daughter has eleven years on you. So she's still within that bracket. They they were like into forced frugality in a lot of ways because they realize. That if they went to college, they'll never, ever pay off that student loan if if, if they if they. Took a bite out of that. They'd never be able to buy a brand new car. They'd. Never be able to. Own a home they'd never be able to



go on a vacation, so either a they got in debt and had to go bankrupt and you know, because there's always that element. Or be. They started to be. We're doing these end arounds, these hacks probably more with with a mindset of their grandparents and. Not their parents. And I I. Would you know when I was in marketing? It's to me very similar to being an artist because you have to be an observer of things you have to see trends and and, you know, fads, trends, patterns and such and younger people because at one point everybody thought microbreweries were dead because they came out. It was a big thing. Then the big conglomerates. I mean, like Anheuser-Busch wiped them all out, you know, absorbed them up and then all of a sudden you start seeing them pop back up again. It's like, what the hell? And then? You know, walking. With the dogs. Through the neighborhoods, back when we had those open recycle bins, I started noticing. I know these young couples and I'm looking at the beer labels and it's like, it's not a fitting rack of, you know, nothing a glass of bubbles, you know, cores on this other garbage. This is like pretty premium microbrew stuff we're talking. I don't know 12 bucks, at least for a six pack, which is, you know, when you get a case, you know, for a few bucks more, something else. So I would start asking my college students what gives with this and it's like, well, somewhere along the line, consumption without pleasure is just that.

Nick LeBlanc

And that's that's true. And you, you made me think of something, too, when you were talking, you were saying you talked about how, like, you know, like 9-11 would be a paradigm shift in this. The pandemic is a paradigm shift in. The I think what the next step of things is the next. This next step in critical thought, because the moment that you realize yes. Those incidences were responsible for paradigm shift and also there are forces at play that were using those incidents to then enforce the paradigm that. They there was, there was. Nefarious motivation behind enforcing certain paradigms, right? And and I say that from a non conspiratorial. Perspective. I mean, it's just what happens. You know you have businesses or you have politicians or you have somebody taking advantage of the situation and pushing culture in a certain direction. After an incident right, you know in the. Same thing happened after Kennedy was killed and when before Kennedy was killed, they tried to make that happen with Cuba with this thing called Operation Northwoods, right where they they were going to stage an attack, blame it on Cuba, and then do whatever they want to do. So the idea is that now we know that these incidences cost change. And change it feels beyond our control. But then you realize that some parts of those changes were constructed by certain individuals and some cracks start to show. And I think when those cracks start to show in the logic of a culture or society, that's where you end up with these type of problems with the that we're talking about with the generation below us where? They know this is all *****, I know. This is all *****, right? I'm 33. And I know it's all *****. And so these kids are like, 14, and they're feeling that same thing that I started to feel when I was 20, you know, now they're feeling it 10 years before I was. So why? Why? Why am I gonna read everything is propaganda at that point, even if it's not. And so, OK, what do you do if you got flashing colors in front of you? If you got a cell phone in front of you, headphones in TV, in front of your laptop, on your lap, it's very easy to stay distracted because the moment that you start engaging in critical thought you. Nice. Ohh wait.

Speaker

There is nothing I can.

Nick LeBlanc

Do because this whole facade that was built before me was built to crack and built to take advantage of me.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, we have a, our, our dog is getting older and. Just like older people, you know she's going to be watched a little bit. More. Yeah, it it's. And yeah, and then. You made me realize too, that your generation doesn't have the filters that ours had. We had. We had the quote UN quote family nuclear family. You know, everything was filtered through your parents. You spent more time with your parents in my generation than you do now because you know the distractions of work. It's it's it's gotten all jumbled and then of. Course there was church. Church



was another filter too. I mean it. Were those good things? I'm not saying. They are. I'm just. Saying that they were.

Nick LeBlanc

Right.

Ron Fortier

Filters and. Part of this this paradigm shift with the younger people, OK, so you know you can't own a car. You can't own a home. You can't do this. You can't do that. What do you do all of a sudden? We. Have these downtown areas you. Know that were they were manifest in in. In my generation, that's Thursday nights. That's where you went down. You hung out. Downtown and you know. All kind of innocent sort of thing. I mean, it's nothing that's ever, you know you cruise the Ave. So it happened all over. It was, that was American culture. That was the American culture that the that the Europeans bought into and were amazed at. And Levi jeans and. All of this other stuff. But all of. A sudden. There's this re urbanization or as the more cynical people would call it, reverse white flight. And you've got this generation saying, OK, well, I'll live in a home, but I don't mind having a really nice apartment above a cafe. Because I can go downstairs in my in my fuzzy pants and, you know, grab myself a latte and I'm like, well, you got a latte was like, yeah, well, I have, you know, I have a mortgage to pay. I don't have this to pay. I'm not like. Destined to but. The money I do have, I will utilize to enjoy. And I don't need a car. That's another thing I don't need. A car. I don't need a license because I can use Uber or I can just walk to the theater. Or I can walk to this restaurant. So we, you know, we used to call those conveniences, but I think there's a there's a whole other mind shift there, too. And you've got younger. Couples who are buying their, you know most of their foodstuffs and produce from, not from your your standard chain supermarkets, but from local providers. It's kind of interesting. It's kind of interesting. Yes, that's.

Nick LeBlanc

The good part? I mean, you know, I think. Returning to a certain degree. To self-sufficient in community living is ultimately what's going to end up happening, especially as you know. Any federal supports that we have continue to disintegrate? You know you're going to. You're going. To be forced to. Rely on the people next to you. The thing is, you know if. If my generation can be lucky enough to buy up some property, they need to start doing it now. Before all of Wall Street comes and buys them. Buys them out, you know, and myself and my friends. Most of my friends, we've been lucky in that regard and we actually my best friends in the world, live next door to me and. It was. It wasn't. We didn't plan it that way. It just it happened by chance. And we're lucky because now we have 2 properties that are one. You know, we're using my backyard. We're putting in raised garden beds. We're growing. Stuff you know and and I come from a family that did that as well. So you know, I I have that, which I'm lucky it's happening. There's a greater atrocity. That's occurring in places like Boston and places like Cambridge. You know where people once flocked to go live for relatively cheap and be around people and be around as popular now. You know, rent in Boston's like 2500 Bucks, 3000 bucks. That's just nonsense.

Ron Fortier

I mean you, you know, minimum wage doesn't doesn't cover. 600 I mean the 15 bucks, 600. Is not one quarter of of your. You know and. Now they're even saying that that old formula of one week's worth of of pay was for rent, and now the the formula is up to 30% of your pay.

Nick LeBlanc

Right.

Ron Fortier

So now that forces people you know and just really quickly about the pandemic younger couples especially. They're scratching their heads, you know, mid pandemic or one of them had to be laid off or couldn't go into work. The other ones probably working remotely or taking chances, going into a physical. And they're scratching



their heads at the end of the month, doing their their family bookkeeping and. Going how is this possible? There's only one of us working, yet we've got X amount of money left over. How is this possible? And then we start figuring it out. Oh, my God. We've been paying other people to watch our children. We've been paying other people to watch our pets. We've been traveling. Stupid amounts of time. Would you know, traveling an hour, an hour and a half used to be like. A small vacation. It's gotten that. Let's start winding this down so.

Speaker

What's in the?

Ron Fortier

Future for you. What's on that horizon for you and I really enjoyed this conversation. Let me tell you.

Nick LeBlanc

Thank you. Thank you.

Ron Fortier

Go even better with beer.

Nick LeBlanc

So I. Like like I said, you know, in the middle of trying to find an agent for for this novel, I'm currently writing another novel. I'm about 30,000 words in, and we'll see what that is. I'm submitting my short stories and my works to like, you know, notable journals and that sort of thing, trying to get. Trying just to improve my resume in that way, the collective, which is probably the most. Current thing, we just had a show in February right around the holiday. There's another one coming in April on April 16th at Gallery X. It was this thing called the 1440 project where in a period of. 24 hours. Usually somewhere between 4:00 to 5:00 shows meeting like short plays. Are written and staged, and they're not. They're not read from, they're memorized and actually staged. So that's probably the most. Recent thing that way I submitted a short film that my. Wife and I made to. A Film Festival up in Boston, which we'll hear back from in March, so hopefully I'll be going up there for that. And I'm currently working on. A remix of. Another local artist album that should be released sometime in May. He's actually performing on March 11th in Jamaica Plain. His name is Christian Camaro. He's got an album coming out. And I'm lucky enough to be working with him and he's giving me all the stems and letting me. Sort of recontextualize and have my way with them and it's a really good time.

Ron Fortier

Ohh great great great. So I'm gonna ask you that one of y'all, you know, Barbara Walters, she was famous always for pulling some, you know. Thing out of a. Bag if you were a tree. What? Kind of a. Tree would you be? Sort of a more. Of a. Psychoanalytical thing but. We were talking about culture and so on and so forth. And you know, I've used this. One several times. Before, how would you like to be remembered?

Nick LeBlanc

The people who love me and by the ones who I loved, and that's pretty much how I'd like to be remembered as a person, you know, as far as anything that I've been that I've created, you know, whether it's writing or music or whatever, I just hope. If anybody engages with it, it. Make somebody think, make somebody feel. That anyone who sees it knows that it came from a place. Of thinking and feeling itself.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, it's this time of reassessment, this time of of, of introspection. And you know, hopefully people like you, artists like yourself, will will help us. You know, put the hit the pause button so to speak, and take deep breaths and. And we keep talking about those things and you. Know we have to have. Life coaches.



Nick LeBlanc

Yeah. Well, I think I think. People need to work on their sense. Of humor that. Yeah. Yeah. I think I think our. Our culture would do a heck of a lot better if we started valuing. Humor and satire. Mm-hmm. And. In a way that. You know. It's it's good to laugh and. Laughing is not because not laughing because our nostalgia button was tickled or because you know. Ohh, this this thing cheekily referenced this other thing in some kind of meta way, laughing because you know of the reasons we laugh. Exactly. Exactly. Yeah.

Ron Fortier

That's, that's actually a good closer right there. That's a good closer right there. Well, Nicola Blank, thank you so very, very much. This is round 40 and we're closing out another episode of the Artists Index in Focus Podcast. And we'll see you next time. Thanks so much for joining us. Bye bye. Bye bye.

Nick LeBlanc

Thanks for having me.