

Episode 245

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SPEAKERS

Carissa Andrews, Andrew Cloninger



Carissa Andrews 00:01

Well, hi, Andrew, it's great to have you on the author Revolution podcast. This is gonna be a really exciting episode. But before we get started and dive into things, do you want to tell my audience a little bit about who you are and what you do?



Andrew Cloninger 00:11

Sure. Well, thanks so much for having me. Number one, but yeah, my name is Andrew Conacher. I, I'm a producer, I'm a musician. I'm an author. I live in upstate New York. And yeah, you know, I dabble in a lot of things. But you know, these two disciplines, art disciplines, as they say, are really what I'm really passionate about. So I'm really excited to be able to dive in and talk about it.



Carissa Andrews 00:37

I am super excited as well. So let's do it. So can you walk us through the journey that led you to intertwine that writing and music together? Because you did it from like, a very young age from what I understand. So how it goes, Yeah, early experiences, like impact you?



Andrew Cloninger 00:51

Well, it's crazy, because I, you know, I was I was actually I was talking to my wife the other day, because we were talking about it. And it was like, you know, I've been performing since I was like, eight. And I wasn't really even pushed into it. Just kind of that, you know, like, my dad's side of the family. They had like a family band growing up.



Carissa Andrews 01:13

So good.

A

Andrew Cloninger 01:14

My grandmother was a musician. She's now since passed. But she was she was a she was a piano player. My dad played guitar. My uncle plays banjo and guitar. And so then they all ended, like all my aunts and uncles saying and stuff like that. And then on my mom's side, my cousin, who was a huge inspiration for me growing up because we're like, we're about four or five years difference. So you know, in kid years, that's like, right, my son will be 20.



Carissa Andrews 01:44

Right? Your whole life?

A

Andrew Cloninger 01:46

Yeah, he's like, it's so much cooler, you know, but his name is John Churchville, and he's a percussionist, and drummer, and he does plays other instruments as well. But he's mainly known for playing tabla, which is a hand hand drums out of India. He went to Cal Arts and yeah, he he recently earned a Grammy playing on Billy strings record home. So that was a big deal. Yeah, super proud of him. Like it was it was the weirdest story too, because I had gotten Billy strings record at my local record shop. And upstate, my cousin lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan. And so, you know, I was just, you know, I'm a music nerd. So I go through the credits as well. And I was like, No, that's not real. Because Billy strings is for Michigan. And so my cousin was in the credits. And I was like, I better text and see if this is the this is him. Because his tablet, the whole thing? Yeah. And so I text them and I'm like, I'm like, Is this is this you like it? He's like, Yeah, and I was like, No way. You got to be kidding me. That's awesome. You know, so, you know, it's really cool. It was a really cool moment. But, you know, growing up, though, you know, he had his, he had his, like, GarageBand and stuff, and he was practicing. And so he was a big inspiration for me, because, you know, I got to see it done. This is how you do it, you know, like, and I was a lot younger, too, you know, and he was like, you know, a 16. And, like, you know, this but, and I was just like, you know, look at through the looking through the doorway, you know, checking them out, you know, and, and so I've always been a huge fan of him. But yeah, I kind of grew up in a musical family. My sister is a classical pianist. I have three siblings. Besides myself. My My oldest sister is a is a classical pianist. My brother who's a little bit younger than me, he can play a little bit of guitar and he played some horns and stuff like that. And then my youngest sister, same thing. She can play a couple different instruments and you know, I play a little bit of piano. I really tortured my piano player. piano teacher not love it not in a good way it was for her. She earned her Mani, let's just put it that way. But I know a little bit about you know, I can get around on a little bit and then you know, there's a couple of various you know, different instruments that I play. But yeah, that's for the most part though. I'm primarily a guitar player. That's kind of my my that's really where my real passion is. I love that. And yeah, so much boring. Yeah. Like it doesn't feel like work. You know, it's always it's always a good time especially you know, trying to find different sounds and different things and so, you know, that's always been a big passion of mine is the is play guitar, but yeah, I I kind of started out. Well, I've always loved music, you know, from very early on, but I still kind of started out as like the page turner for my grandmother. Because in church, we, you know,

you'd sit in church. And so I used to sit right next to her because then, you know, I could feel the piano. Like, I remember that love to feel it, like, not just hear it, I love to feel it, because, you know, the bass notes and everything, right? And so she was like, Well, if you're gonna sit there, you might as well be abuse, you know, Depression era, you know, not to work, you know, so she would kick me in the shin and I would turn the page, you know, because I couldn't read the music, you know, so. So, you know, I was just kind of follow along, as she was singing. And then she kicked me in and I turned the page and it was worked out. Okay. But yeah, she, she was a big inspiration for me, you know, as a kid and my dad to, like, you know, seeing music played by people, you know, is, is, I think is a big deal. I think it really helps you understand that it's attainable. You know, like, you know, because when I was growing up when I was a kid, you know, Aedes, like, you had like Eddie Van Halen, or slash, or somebody like that, and they're just like, these guys are ridiculous, I will never be able to do that, you know, right. And, and, you know, because they're the mainstream people there at the time. And so, like, you don't realize that there's whole sub genres, you know, especially because I grew up in northern Michigan, it's pretty limited as far as like, access to in this is pre internet to, there was, it was, it was, like, there was the access to like, all the genres of music was pretty limited. So like, I learned, I learned music from the like, especially rock and roll, I learned it from like the ground up, you know, because you listen to all the, you know, we had like, an old the station, and then we had like, a, maybe a pop station. I think there's like a country station up there. And then like classical, you know, like the public radio, you know, which they didn't play cool music, they played like classical. And then maybe they have something like a blues program, like, late at night or something. But, you know, it's not like now where they have like, the triple eight format where, you know, you can hear like Wilco or, you know, the old 90 sevens or the national or some, you know, some bands like that, which is I was super angry. I mean, I listen to all that stuff now. But at the time, it was it was not like that, you know, so this is pre Nirvana and all that stuff, too. So, I feel like I was able to really appreciate like, the, the Beatles is a big, big deal for me, because this like, in seventh and eighth grade, I had this great music teacher named Connie Lim bloom. And she, she was like, she worshiped the Beatles. That was like, her thing is like, you don't understand these guys are geniuses, you know, I mean, like, she would like look for excuses to explain the Beatles to us. I love that is hilarious. He was the greatest teacher of all time, I really took it to heart because I really loved what I was hearing. I don't, I don't love like some of the early stuff, you know, just like the Love Me do kind of stuff. But I really love like Rubber Soul, and like revolver, and like all all that stuff in like, Sergeant Pepper and the White Album and the later stuff. And so like, because it really evolved and matured is is musicians and songwriters. And, and that kind of thing. And I'm a big Bob Dylan guy, too, you know, you know, he's a Hibbing guy, for sure. You know, and so that's kind of a nice, you know, nice little thing, because we would, sometimes we would, we had friends in Hibbing and in Duluth in the Twin Cities and stuff like that. And so we would, we'd go through so you know, it's, it's hilarious, because Hibbing is the hometown of Bob Dylan. But it's also the hometown of Kevin McHale that he was like, juxtapositions that I can't even reconcile. I'm a big Larry Bird guy. So, you know, but I always thought that was the funniest thing of all time.



Carissa Andrews 08:45

So I didn't know that fact. Oh, yeah.



Andrew Cloninger 08:49

It's checked out. That's hilarious. Funny. That's why he worked with the Timberwolves for so

long as so anyway, but yeah, it's just, you know, but, you know, they're two diametrically different types of human, you know, right. It's like, the coolest thing ever. But, you know, as a young kid, you know, you play a little league, and you're playing soccer and all this stuff. And, you know, I wasn't like the best player or anything like that. But what I learned from all that was teamwork. And so once I got into once I got into music, like music more seriously, like when I was in my teenage years, I really understood what it meant to play to work as a unit and to work as a team. Right, because of because of the you know, some of the athletic stuff that I did as a younger person in high school I was I played soccer in high school and stuff like that, but I really understood what it meant to work together and that was that was always something that that really stuck with me was I really wanted to be on a team and and really, you know, work with people and I think you're always better when you when you get to work with a bunch of people. So that was kind of a fun thing, but you know it It's funny too, because I was thinking about this too the other day was writing in music, how they went hand in hand and how much I loved. You know, I spent a lot of time focusing on on lyrics, that was always a big thing for me. You know, and then you kind of do the, the backwards dive of, okay, where does all this stuff come from? You know, and, and like, and especially with, with Dylan, he would always I mean, he was, he's a notorious, like, he rips people off, like any steals from all the, you know, there's the old adage, like, if you ain't stealing ain't trying, you know, that's kind of like, what he what he was all about. And so I'd run into these like passages in his songs. And I was like, oh, that's from TS Eliot. Oh, that's from, you know, this guy, or that guy, or this is Carl Sandburg. Or you know, and so for me, like, taking that deep dive, and then also, like, I remember as, like, in sixth grade, just being determined to be able to write, because one of the big things for me was, I'm a chronic, Miss speller. And, and to this day, you know, all my rough drafts are hilarious, because there are so many misspellings. And it is, you know, because I do hardcopy that's kind of part of my process is hardcopy, and then I then I type it out, which is kind of like how I edit, because I had this terrible experience in when I was like, 18, I had like, 500 sets lyrics. Wow, I lost them all. Oh, I lost them all on a computer crash. And so I was like, I will never do that. Again. Everything's hardcopy. So I write everything out. And I have notebooks full of stuff. And it's like, some of its good, some of it's not good at all. It's just Yeah, worker, you know, it's like your workbook. You know, you're you're working things out. And you're, you know, you're trying to do things. And so I've done that since since I was like, 1819. You know, and it makes total sense. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, it's just a foolproof way of, you know, as long as your books don't get burned, you know, you pretty much have them, you know, and so you can always reference stuff. And I've, I've put together songs from different, you know, different things that didn't work out, like, I'll take, oh, this line is really good. This line is really good. And I'll put them all together. And it's a it's a good thing, you know, so yeah, things that I've been able to do in the past, but yeah, like, you know, they both for a long time, my music and, and lyrics and poems, and writing kind of went hand in hand, I, you know, you know, I toured regionally, which is kind of, you know, which in New York is kind of funny, because it's like, buffalo, Albany, Rochester, New York, you know, New York City, you know, so regionally, it's kind of, it's kind of a weird deal, you know, and so, it's kind of fun, but you know, because you get some decent sized cities, and you get to play around, and there's a lot of great musicians out here and in that kind of thing, and I got to open for some really cool people and, and stuff like that. And so, you know, that experience really gold and I, you know, galvanized that a, I'm talented enough. But also, you know, the determination to keep going even when it wasn't necessary, you know, because I say, unless, unless you're like Bondo or something, most musicians are by vocational. Yeah. Like, you know, it's just the way it is. And so to be responsible, I've always had a day job until, you know, fairly recent. And so, I got married in my late 20s. And so, you know, I kind of, I kind of, like, you know, we bought a house and the whole, you know, we did the whole picket fence thing, and it was like, I kind of took a step back from it, it was necessary step, you know, to, like, you know, I wasn't on the road as much and

like, I would do some local gigs. And then both four years in, I kind of stopped playing out. And I was just like, recording at home, and putting things online, more instrumental, more kind of experimental stuff. I just felt, I don't know, I don't know, if I just felt burned out, or if it just like, I don't know, it was something about how I was feeling at the time was like, you don't want I'm just gonna do this and focus on doing the home life and doing that, right. I didn't want to screw that up. Sure. So so I just really focused on doing that. And, and I was, you know, writing as a compulsion. Like, it's not like, I don't have to try hard to do it. Like, I have to do it. Like, it's unnecessary. And I don't journal. I'm not a journal guy. I'm not like that kind of person. But I at least write something once a day. That's, you know, like, it could be nothing, you know, it could be like a sentence, but it's something you know, and so like, I still do that, like, you know, and every once in a while, I'll still write like, you know, because right now my main focus right now is instrumental music for the music side. things and so like, I kind of I kind of like every once in a while I'll write a song with music and stuff just to make sure I could still do it. You know that sir? Just dust it off a little bit every once in a while. That's not too bad. You know, I show my wife, what do you think? Yeah. Right. You know, so she's, you know, you and your wife are always the toughest critics, you know, that's you always, you always show the people you love first because then they'll they'll let you down easy, but also tell you that it stinks. You know? That's kind of that's always a fun, fun little exercise to do to you know, do you really love me? Yes. Go back to work, you know? Yeah, she's always been real honest with me. And I value her input very much. It's very important, you know, so great input. So great. But yeah.



Carissa Andrews 15:47

So now you've got an upcoming album with your band, red Cove, and it's titled movement. So can you share the significance behind the title and how those experiences have influenced the album's creation?



Andrew Cloninger 15:59

So yeah, so this is this is the thing is, it's actually, so I put out a haiku book, but almost not quite a year. And it's entitled C 67. It's about my, about some of my will get into a little bit later. But just like, it kind of details a lot of what, you know, it's kind of a memoir, in a lot of ways. And so, movement is about the sea, it's like a, what I call companion piece. And it kind of, in a way, it kind of it kind of gives a musical soundtrack to the book. And so I conceived it of well, you know, I work with with my bandmate Melissa, who is a fantastic cello player, she's, she's amazing, super awesome. Just the best bandmate you could ever ask for. She and I, you know, we're kind of like disk, you know, because we made a record called trees. And we were kinda like, that was cool. But, and I was like, I got, I got this vision of like, the, you know, kind of like the trajectory of what we could do. And the idea was, I have this old drum machine that somebody pulled out of like an old electric organ or something like that. And I bought it, like, Oh, my God, I want to use it. I bought it like 20 years ago, at a garage sale for like five bucks. Okay, for whatever reason, this, this drum machine sounds great. I don't know why it shouldn't, it should sound really terrible. It's from the 70s. It should drift. It should do all these things. It doesn't, it's great. And so I was like, I have this drum machine. And it has all that like traditional rhythms. So like Fox Trot, waltz, Roomba, you know, all of the different traditional Tang, you know, like all that different ones. And I think it's like 10 settings or something like that. They have like two rock settings, but they're terrible. So we didn't include those. You know, because let's not do that, you know, let's get all drums in there for that. But so we started there, we got

the drum machine, and then I sent it through my guitar pedals to like warp it and change it a little bit to get some like vibe going on. So we went into studio and I was like, hey, engineer, guess what? We're gonna we're gonna really screw up a drum machine. How about that he's like, this is weird, but cool. Let's do it, you know, so we were able to, to lay that down. And then I added some synthesizers, and I have some, like, weird handheld handmade synthesizers that I got from eBay, and some, you know, various travels and stuff like that. We put those through it. And then we got some tape loops. And we put those through it. My grandfather was a was a ham radio operator. Unfortunately, he never recorded anything. So like, I wasn't able to, like, get any recordings of him. But I did find some online I found some, like, people doing call outs and stuff like that on on ham radio. So I was able to like, kind of do an homage to him by putting those things elements into the into the music. So I was pretty excited about that and like, and then also, I brought in three drummers. So they all play it's it's hilarious because they all play the songs different and the same at the same time. It's really interesting because I hadn't play it. I hadn't play all the all the all the rhythms. Like they didn't come in together. They all came in separate and they all play the same songs. And then so then we're gonna like intersperse and like what what you know, one part in one part, you know, so we're gonna do some editing and get it all in there. They did a fantastic job. They're geniuses they're great great drummers and, and then was really cool full circle moment. I was able to we recorded a like a raga. It's kind of an Indian style song. And so Oh, just so happens. I know a tabla player, so like to call my cousin up and I was like, I was like, Could you do something with this song? I hope you don't hate it. You know, like, any email back, he goes, this is fantastic. I'll make something for you. So he, he played on it. And I was super excited about that. Because, you know, we have never played together just because of distance. And you know, but now the technology is the way it is we can. I'm in upstate New York, and he's in Michigan, and we can collaborate, which is so cool. It's so cool. And so I was really excited about that, because it's first time we get to work together. So that was a, that was a big, big, big, big deal for me. And so yeah, I'm like halfway through tracking the guitar parts right now. And then I actually am going in next week and finishing up the rest of the guitar tracks. I recorded a piano part for one of the songs and so yeah, like, one of the songs is just like a, there's going to be a piano part with the cello and a guitar part as well. So that one's a pretty cool part of the song too. But yeah, and then after that, Melissa comes in and then she lays down all to cellos, which is kind of fun, because, you know, she like, she layers, all her cello. So it sounds like a big orchestra. It's gonna be super awesome. It's gonna be so cool. Really? Yeah, she's unbelievable. Like, she always comes up with the coolest parts and like, you know, makes everything you know, like, my stuff's okay. You know, like, I'm a bricklayer, like, I like, you know, I do all the foundation. Yeah, I'm a foundation guy. And then she comes over the top with all the the melodies and all the like, really sweet parts. And she she makes it all sound way better than I could have you ever thought? Oh, you know, so. I'm a lucky I'm really lucky in that in that, you know, in that aspect. Yeah, I'm, I'm primarily the bricklayer.



Carissa Andrews 21:55

So cool, though it Well, it sounds to me, it's like I've never really been much into like, I'm myself. I'm not a musician. I used to play flute. And that was about it. Oh, yeah. It sounds to me like it's so similar. You know, in the way that you orchestrate everything for the album's at the same that authors are doing for their books, like they're thinking about subplots are thinking about characters and thinking about all the things depending on what they're writing, obviously. Yeah, it's so cool to hear from that perspective. And you're obviously multi passionate creative, because you've written your book as well, you've got the narrative haiku

does the C six C seven? Yeah. So it explores that profound transformation. So let's, let's talk about that, too. Because it was all about a life altering experience. So what happened there and what made you want to explore the Haiku book?

A

Andrew Cloninger 22:42

So it's very, very fascinating, because, you know, my whole life, like I was saying, you know, I was by vocational so I would work in warehouses and like, you know, because it's flexible, you know, it's, it's good pay for good hours, in you know, you get a lot, you know, it's, it's flexible. And so, and I was really decent Adam, you know, as I was pretty healthy person, in the sense that I was strong enough to do all the work. And so, you know, I worked in a coffee roaster, I worked for a big grocery chain in their distribution center, like, you know, I did a lot of that, like, a lot of the industrial stuff I, you know, use forklifts all that stuff. And so, it was also a cool way to, like, work out all my creative stuff while I was working, you know, so they're paying me twice, you know, as far as like, is, you know, I was rent free as far as my brain goes, because I was able to work things out, I work a lot of things out in my head before I even like, put it on paper or, or put it on, you know, on record or whatever. That's a big thing. That's a big part of my process, as well is mulling it over and over and over and over again. And so, you know, as I got older, you know, I get aches and pains and stuff like that. But as I started, I was getting into my, like, mid to late 30s. And I started getting a lot like it was getting harder and harder to get out of bed. You know, like after work and I wasn't, I wasn't in full disclosure, I wasn't the healthiest person at the time. Like, I was about 300 plus pounds. And, you know, for for reference, I'm about I'm about 200 to 10 Somewhere in there, right now. So like, you know, I was I was big. I was I was, you know, definitely obese. But, you know, it's still fairly helpfully, you know, as far as you know, because I don't have a lot of vices, you know, I was lucky in that sense that I, you know, I don't drink and I don't smoke and all that kind of stuff. Otherwise, I'd be I would have been, I would have been a lot more trouble a lot quicker. But at the time, I was definitely pre diabetic, and, you know, I'm Scandinavia. And so that's kind of like the kind of pounds and the kind of stuff you know, it's kind of pre you know, jeans kind of thing, you know, yeah, there's a lot of big people in my family and so Like, I didn't really know what to do with it, because I just kind of grew up around it. Like I didn't know what to do with it as far as how to help myself. I mean, other than not eat, which is not a good idea, especially if it's not working. Like that's dumb, you know, like, so I didn't really have any good information, I wasn't really, I was pretty ignorant about the whole health situation and what to do, you know, when you're that far gone, it's hard to like, dig yourself out of the hole. Right, so to speak. And so, and so I was just kind of plodding along, you know, just kind of doing my thing. But I always had like this persistent pain in my, in my shoulder. So I thought I pulled something. And, you know, no big deal. I'll live with it, you know, because that's what you're supposed to do. And, you know, that's kind of how I grew up. You know, I got aches and pains of all you know, it could be worse, you know, yeah, yeah. Growing up, my grandfather worked for Cleveland cliffs up in the Upper Peninsula, Michigan, he was electrician for the Empire mines up there. And so, you know, that's, you know, that's kind of the, you know, bring your lunch pail to work kind of mentality that I grew up around, my dad didn't miss, you know, he was a, my dad worked. He was he was a nurse, but he worked at the maximum security prison up in Michigan. And he also he didn't miss he didn't miss work. They didn't miss. Yeah, even when they were sick, they didn't miss. And so that's kind of the work ethic that I grew up around. And so you know, I emulated that a lot. You're, you're feeling a little sore, well suck it up and do it. You know, that's kind of what I learned later was maybe you should listen to your body every once in a while. So, I currently live in upstate New York. And so we traveled to my my uncle has a place in Michigan. So it's like a, like a camp kind of place on the lake. And one of the lakes, you know, it's not the big lake but

it's one of the lakes and so I was with my cousin we were like chopping wood, you know, just trying to get get stuff ready for camp and stuff like that. And, and so we were chopping all this wood and stuff and no big deal, just kind of going through it and, and then it was almost like slow motion. It was like, I could feel my neck crumble. Oh, hi. And being stubborn and stuff. I just kind of worked through it and got it got the work done. You know, oh, man, I must have pulled something, you know, blah, blah, blah. And then, you know, two days later, I couldn't sleep at night. It was so the pain was so high. I didn't sleep hardly at all. But one of the cool things about being in the UP is that's where they train all Olympic athletes for the winners for the you know, so they do a lot of like the I forget what it's called, you know, they do they have, they have boxing up there. They have ski jumping. They got Lodz, they got, oh, you know, and so my, my aunt at the time, she's retired now, but my aunt was actually part of like, the Olympic business, and she will get the call at Northern Michigan University and kind of like, was part of that whole program anyway, so she knew a really good chiropractor is small, you know, short story long. She knew, she knew a really good chiropractor up there. And so I was able to get a little bit of an adjustment just for relief to get me back home because it's like a, it's like a 14 hour trip, I think, to get back from from Upper Michigan to to upstate New York. And so, you know, so I made it back home. And I still had a ton of pain. And I didn't know what was wrong. And so I went to my my chiropractor, and he's like, No, you're really messed up, you're really you need to go get an MRI, you need to go get X rays. And so I did all that. And it came back that I had a huge bulge in my in my C 67 area. And on top of that the nerve in my left arm was pinched. So I was numb. My my bottom of my pinky and my ring finger. And partial on my middle finger were numb. So I couldn't operate my hand. So I couldn't play guitar anymore at the time. So I was like, devastated. I was just like, I'm done. This is it, you know, like, my life's over. And, you know, one of the biggest, you know, I kind of alluded to earlier but you know, one of the biggest things is that I have faith and that's a big it's a big catalyst for not giving up for me. Sure. Yeah. And so, you know, my wife and I, and, you know, we just kind of got together and was like, we don't know what's going to happen, but, you know, we're gonna we're gonna pray through this and see see what's going on, you know, and really trust that this is, you know, this is just a trial. You know, this is just something that we can work through because I was devastated. I was beyond devastated now, and on top of that, to what happened as well was in the process of trying to figure out like, pain management, I got steroid shots, because that's kind of a normal protocol. But what I didn't know was, you can have a significant weight gain with steroid shots. And so I went from like 350 to 420. Oh, wow. So in like two weeks, it was unbelievable. I was huge. I was just unbelievably, like, I couldn't move. Like, I couldn't walk. And on top of that, I had, I had lymphedema, I didn't know what at the time, but I had lymphedema, which is your lymph nodes in they, they quit working, because you're so big. Sure. And so I had I started get water gain in my legs. And so I was having trouble walking. And, and stuff like that. So I was in all kinds of trouble. And so I went to my doctor, and she was like, my primary doctor, and she was like, Well, this is your options you can get, you can get gastric sleeve bypass surgery, or you can figure out a way to get to lose weight, because you're not in a good shape. Your you know, your neck broken, you know, essentially your necks broken, you're obese, and something's got to you got to fix it. Right. And so like, essentially, you know, and for people to to to understand, too, it's like, it's basically what paint Manning went through. At the end of his career, he essentially broke his neck, where people don't quite realize, and so I actually went through a lot of the same PT and OT that he did, at least that's what was explained to me, you know, I'm not really a medical person. So I couldn't exactly tell you, but, you know, he was actually very fortunate to be able to finish out his career the way he did, he should maybe be stopped a little sooner, but what you know, but that was, you know, because one of the MRIs the guy looking at it goes, Did you have a, you know, because they knew I did industrial work. And so like, did you have a door fall on you? Like, no, I was like, No, I was chopping wood, like, and they were just like, it disintegrated like, so in the surgery, they

took 15 millimeters off my desk to get it back into my neck, to get the ball to and to relieve the pinched nerve. And that took like a six, that was like a six month process. And during that time, I did manage to lose like 50 pounds, which Thank God, I was able to do that, because it was I could barely fit in the MRI machine. It was it was a bad, bad state of affairs. And then, you know, a lot of people, you know, there's a little bit of controversy with the with the good old Joe Rogan there. But, you know, one thing he did talk about was, was the keto diet, and and that he tried it and that, you know, and he's like, for what it is, it's not a bad deal. And I was like, Well, I'm game to try whatever, because what I'm doing is working, you know, so So I actually, but the caveat is I didn't just start doing it. I went to my primary and I was like, Okay, is there any doctors in this area in my area that does weight loss, you know, because there are specialists out there that do that. And I say because I want to lose a ton of weight. I want to lose as much weight as I possibly lose, you know, and be healthy. But I want to lose it. I don't want to crash. I don't want to do like, I want to you know, so I found this great doctor, shout out to Dr. Connolly. She's She's one of the best in there, at least for me. And so I told her I said straight up I said, I don't know what we got to do. But we got to do it now. You know, so it was a two year process, but I lost 220 pounds in two years. And so like, you know, it's a lot of changing the way I eat like, like I said, low carb works for me, it doesn't work for everybody. But for me, it was life changing.



Carissa Andrews 33:55

I understand that my husband and I have been it was funny because he listens to Joe Rogan as well. And he wanted to go carnivore, and I wanted to go no sugar, no grains, and we ended up meeting in the middle Aikido. Yeah, it's where we met.



Andrew Cloninger 34:08

So it's a great it's a great compromise. My wife and I have the same way you know and and that's the other caveat, I'd say too is like, people have to understand too though men and women are completely different as well. You know, like, what I lose and what she loses might be different and like you cannot compare the two like I don't I don't compare weight loss with anybody else. It's an individual journey. And I even say like keto might might not be your thing or carnivore might not be your thing like you know there's I tried carnivore for a couple of seconds that is not for me. Right you know and I love venison and I love all elk and all that like I grew up and all that stuff. And I love it I still eat it but I just can't go full carnivore that's just yeah, that same i It's a mess. Like I'll end up Yeah, it's not that was that was not even on my brain Darwin he was when he was describing it. I'm like, no, no, did you did it? So yeah, a lot of the health stuff. Do I like to put a lot of caveats in there? Because it's like, I don't want to say that I found the answer. It's disingenuous, because my what works for my body chemistry might not work for another person. And, and it might be unhealthy for that person. So I don't want to like, Oh, this is the way you got to do it, you know. And the other thing is, I did it under the guidance of Doctor Who took my vitals every month, you know, all that I still get my vitals checked. Because I think it's important to make sure that, you know, I'm getting all the different things that I need, you know, and the only way you can do that is draw blood, you know, because your blood is going to tell you exactly what's in there.



Carissa Andrews 35:46

Yep, I literally just did that this morning.

A

Andrew Cloninger 35:48

Yeah. Yeah, I mean, it's important. It's important in all, and that family history is always important, too, you know, there's a lot of different things that you get to, you know, be and as I get older, you know, I'm getting a little bit older now. So it's like, I started to get into the old man health stuff, you know, like, you know, a lot of that stuff is kicking in now, you know, so aside from my other health issues, going through, that was a big change, too, because I couldn't work anymore. So no, and so obviously, financially, it was a big blow, but also, like, identity wise, I was big, strong man going to work every day bringing home the bacon and not wasn't, you know, I could, I can't even take out the garbage, that's frustrating. So I had to, I have to change, you know, like, I can't even like when I play guitar, I used to stand up and do the Pete Townsend thing, and, you know, I have to sit down and like, like, you know, and play it that way. Because I can't stand and support the weight of the, you know, guitars alone, like, you know, at the most, maybe 10 pounds, I can't even support that with with, with a shoulder strap or anything like that, I have to sit down and play that way. Because then there's no, there's nothing on my neck. Right. And so, you know, it changed a lot of a lot of you know, things but also to even get back to being able to play competently in front of people was at least a two to three year ordeal as well. You know, just for like, reference point, you know, better or worse. So, I'm a right handed person. And my right hand was not affected by all the all the neck damage, for whatever reason, just, that's the way it worked. Because I didn't get my nerve pinched on that side. So they measured my my hand strength, my grip strength. For reference point, my right hand was about 105 per square inch, give or take, you know, sometimes more, sometimes less, whatever. My left hand, what that was affected by the nerve was first measurement was 25 per square inch. And then as I got a little bit better, it was like 45. And so now it's around 80. Okay, but the caveat is, I'm able to do pretty much, I'm not as good as I once was, but I can pretty much do everything guitar wise, that I was able to do. Previously, with a few caveats. I mean, like, sometimes my, my brain tells my hand to do something, and it won't do it. And that's usually in the most I can play at a time is two hours. So, you know, and that's playing lightly. You know, that's not like jamming out every every cert. So like, for someone that's used to playing because a lot of places they they want you to play three hours sets, or you know, one hour, three sets with, like a break or something. Yeah, so you know, so now nowadays, I tell places, I can't do that, you know, I have to sit down so it's not going to be so but I find some really accommodating venues that are found in for the kind of music that we that I play now. It's totally fine. And everything because cello player sits down and the guitar player sits down. It's all good. Right? So worked out, you know, the style of music that we play, it works out great. You know, that's kind of another reason why I kind of shifted to because I just couldn't play the singer songwriter stuff anymore. So that makes sense. It just didn't work, you know, for what I was doing. But I was definitely angry about the whole situation like it definitely bitter. Really. I didn't you know, my family doesn't need this now, you know, like I was Yeah, I was, I was a little angry about the whole thing. And just trying to figure it out. Like, what what are we going to do? You know, like, you know, because I've always been wanting to work and you know, you know, it's not like the most prestigious kind of work, but to be able to do my art I needed to be able to do this. Sure. So not what do I do? Because what a lot of people don't understand about disability is it a free ride number one, but also, you're making a third of what you what you normally would make as a working person so it's not like you get your full salary Hurry, and everything's good and gravy, just sit home and it's all good. You know, it's actually in every five years, you get a full inventory. Like, they have

their doctors check you out, they go through all your paperwork, make sure you're not doing anything crazy. Like it's a full exam, you know, all the way around, you know, make sure that you're not you're not cheating the system and stuff like that. So, you know, sometimes I take a little bit of umbrage with people like, Oh, you got it easy now. You know, it's like, Listen, you know, I have a 10 year old car, and there's a reason for it, you know? Like, you really have to, you really have to focus on what you're doing to make things go round. You know, my wife said that to add some stuff to her workload as well, you know, just to make things work. And that doesn't feel good. You know what I mean? And so, I don't know, that's why sometimes I bristle. Yeah. When when people are like, oh, yeah, it's all good. No, no, it's not all good. You know, and so, so I had a lot of that stuff going around, you know, like, just in me and just like, so I was like, I need I don't know how, because, you know, like, back in the day people Oh, man, you should write a song about working in the factory like Bruce Springsteen. That was like, Yeah, Bruce Springsteen never worked in a factory. If you worked in a factory, you would never write about it. Right?



Carissa Andrews 41:22

Let it fade into non existence.



Andrew Cloninger 41:23

He would that in his brain? Like, Yeah, same with Paul Simon. I always take umbrage with those guys never worked a day in their life, you know, like, at least not Not, not that kind of work. Because they romanticize it. You know, it's like, yeah, you're romanticizing things you don't understand. And so, which is a classic writer thing to do? Yeah. Jack Kerouac does the same thing. Well, he kind of you know, it, I have to I have to take that back a little bit, because he was he did work on the railroads. And he did a lot of like, blue collar. He kind of did my route, which is kind of you know, he had make enough to make things work and then go do is art thing. Yeah, yeah. And so that I understand that a little bit more than maybe Bruce or Paul Simon there. You know, not to not to knock those guys. I mean, they're great artists, and they're, you know, they're fantastic. I love all their stuff. But, but it's just like, you know, just it's hard to romanticize something that you that you understand you've experienced Oh, yeah. is definitely a that's a writer thing. For sure. You know, I can romanticize, you know, having a yacht I think that's kind of where I'm at.



Carissa Andrews 42:39

Right. Let's romanticize that what is that?



Andrew Cloninger 42:42

Yeah, let's let's let's, that would be great.



Carissa Andrews 42:46

Wouldn't that be wonderful

wouldn't that be wonderful.

A

Andrew Cloninger 42:48

Yeah, I got my matching going on, you know, right. manservant, Alfred. That's great. Little, little DC reference for everybody, you know, yes. You know, so, so it's interesting how all that kind of works out and, and stuff like that. So you know, but my wife was funny. She goes, you're gonna write about this? And I was like, then yeah, no, not you know.



Carissa Andrews 43:15

Never.

A

Andrew Cloninger 43:16

She's never wrong. Let's just put it that way. You know. And so so we went up. It's funny because we're in upstate New York, but then there's an upstate upstate New York, there's a near like, they call it the 1000 Island region, or, and Iran DAX area. And so we rented a, we rented a small, little cabin on Ontario lake there. And so I wrote the book in three days. Oh, my gosh, and so amazing. Yeah, but it was like three years into it, though. So like, I had remodeling all this stuff, you know, dealing with insurance, dealing with doctors, with outside people, with, with your family with the feelings that you have inside of you, like, all that stuff? was in me. Yeah. And I just needed to exercise it, just get it out. Like, just a big purge. You know, we kind of did it on purpose. Like, my wife was like, you're ready. And I was like, yeah. And so she, you know, she does all the arrangements and stuff gets it all, you know, so we took the dog we, we took our son and, and so we went up there. So I would swim during the day in the morning with my son, you know, it was great therapy, great, great way to start the day. And then she would take them on a on a like a, you know, like, sightseeing thing or, you know, there was some attraction or something. And I would write, so I would have like three or four hours of writing time and just really just work it all out. And, you know, haiku is interesting too, because it's three lines. It's all about the syllables and stuff like that. And that was one of the biggest things for me was you know, I kind of changed up the syllable quotient a little bit to you know, so I went to seven Five, seven kind of thing so that I could get more information. And so the middle line was kind of like, the glue piece in between the top two, you know, lines just to kind of like so I was able to give people more information than I would in a 575 scenario, which is more traditional. Yeah, haiku. And so, you know, I kind of flipped it a little bit. And you know, which is fine, because, obviously, haiku is a Japanese thing. And Japanese symbols in English letters don't jive at all. So like, what we do, what we consider haiku is actually not really the same additional thing. Yeah, it's just not. And so taking liberties, I didn't feel so bad about it, it is not a sacred cow, in my opinion. And so, you know, it's not like, oh, sonnets or something like that, where it's like, you really got to be on the money, you know? Yeah. Otherwise, people are gonna know, and they're gonna be able to call you out on it. Because, you know, there's a great sonnet, I've never been able to tackle those, and I stay away from, you know, haiku I can get away with, but I know those songs. They're there to hurt you. Yes. Dangerous. Yeah, very dangerous, you know, so, you know, I stay away from the dynamite, that's for sure. So I was able to write, you know, to write these things. And then I would get feedback from my wife and some friends that I trust. And, you know, and she loved it, too. So she was able to read it. And it just, it was cathartic. But it was also painful. You know, to this day, it's, it's pretty painful to

read for us, because of the, you know, the kind of the trauma that we went through to get to that place of knowledge. You know, it's like, you know, not all knowledge is gained through through books, you know, sometimes you gotta live it. And this was definitely one of those those times where we lived it, and we survived it. I would say, we survived. It wasn't, it wasn't easy. Go for sure. You know, there was there was some weeks, we didn't know where the money was coming from, you know, we didn't know what was wrong with me. Or if I would ever be dealt Well, again, like, our functional, you know, like, I thought she thought I was gonna be in my, my, you know, I, I slept in a in a lazy boy for two years, because I couldn't get up the stairs. You know. So those are real things. Those are the those are those are, you know, she didn't know if she would have to, like, take care of an invalid for the rest of her life. She didn't know. I didn't know. You know? Yeah, from my background. That's That's shameful to be in that situation. It also gave me motivation to to not be that. Yeah, yeah, no.



Carissa Andrews 47:41

I get that.



Andrew Cloninger 47:41

You can you can give up or you can dig in. And I think I think I didn't want to I didn't want to give up. I didn't want that. So that was that was really the most important part for me was not giving up and not giving in to whatever this is.



Carissa Andrews 47:56

Well, and that's obviously some motivational to to those who are listening. So do you have any advice for creatives who might be going through their own challenges of their own disabilities, for getting that motivation for being able to dig in?



Andrew Cloninger 48:10

Well, I would say the biggest thing is, I heard this great quote. I don't know if you know, he's a movie director. His name is Robert Rodriguez. He did. He did a lot of big films. He did the the Spy Kids series, he did the SimCity series, Desperado. Yeah, he's a big director, and his first movie mariachi, I'm probably butchering that really bad. But he made it for like, an obscene low amount of money. And he got it into like Sundance, and then his career took off. But I always took this quote, he goes, Well, I had a guitar. I had a turtle, and I had a camera. And I made a movie. And all those elements are in the in that movie, because you know, it's about a mariachi guitar player. That's also like an assassin, you know, so it's kind of like an action movie. But he took stock and what what I took from it was he took stock and what he had, what do you have? Do you have a guitar? Okay, say say you can't use your hand. Well, you know, we were talking earlier about gypsy music, like, you know, gypsy jazz, you know, that kind of thing. One of the greatest gypsy jazz guitarists of all time is Reinhardt. Yeah. And so But what people don't quite understand about him is he was paralyzed. He had two fingers. And he used two fingers up and down the fretboard. And so another great guitar player that had a disability was Jerry Garcia. He was missing a middle finger. Another another one that comes to mind too that was

missing middle finger was Phillip Peggy who's also a very Prominent guitar player. And so these guys, they were like, how do I get around it? Well, Reinhardt, he found a different way to chord. And it was musically very sophisticated. But he was only using two fingers up and down. And you can there's film of him doing it. It's It's unreal, like because he actually had to speed up his his picking hand. So it's almost like this like surf thing that he's doing, you know, in the 30s. And he's like data. And it's just moving his hands up and down the fretboard with two fingers. It's amazing. Like, I encourage anyone to just check it out, even if that's not your flavor or music, like check them out, because it's like, you're seeing a guy that many consider one of the greatest guitar players to live. Right. And he's only got two fingers. And there's many examples of other guys that and gals, you know, I'm not as familiar with many some of the gals that have disabilities. Well, there's the painter, free to the Mexican painter. She did a lot of murals and stuff like that. Simon, Salma Hayek did a did a biography, film on her back in a day. And she got crushed. She got crushed by a public transportation bus. Oh my gosh. And so she was in a brace for the rest of her life. And so, you know, she had to go through like pain management and like, try to figure out, you know, but she was a muralist. She was a writer, she was, you know, a lot of different things, you know, great, great artists. It's about what do you have, you know, take inventory of what you have what take stock on what you have, and what can you do, not what you can't do. If you focus on what you can do, then you can achieve something. You know, I mean, you hear all smiles. There's another there's another great guitar player, his name is Michael Brecker. And he I can't remember if it's als he has, he can't, he can't play at all. He was like Randy Rhoads, like us a shredder guitar player in the 80s. But they were able to design software for him to compose music with air. So he's got a he's got to air to like a TalkBox, like Peter Frampton, you know, why don't why don't why don't why. So, so what he does is he puts that thing, they put it up to his mouth. And then he, he, he sings the notes. And then it writes the music for him on on the software. And then he gives it to someone else to play. So it's like, he's still composing the music and doing all that kind of stuff. But he can't physically do it anymore. And that actually happened to me. Like when I couldn't play, my wife was a piano player as well. Like, I would say, What does it sound like, if we did F, C, G, you know, B minor, you know, something like that, like, and she would play it on the piano for me. And like, I would write lyrics to him, and then she would play and sing the parts. And, you know, just to, to ease my mind, because that stuff is it doesn't stop, it doesn't stop, even though you physically can't do it. Right. And so she was a godsend in that sense that she was able to do that. And then I found an app on on my phone on, you know, Google Play, or whatever. And it was like a bunch of samples. So I was able to create music with samples. And it was actually my first solo record that I made, was, I put all the samples together and I synthesized them through my guitar pedals that I that I own that way, because I couldn't, I couldn't play the guitar parts, and do all that stuff. But I could hear it in my head. So and then I just sent this wreath synthesized all this stuff, and I and I made a I made a five song EP out of it. And, you know, it sounds cool. But I was able to do that, because I was like, What do I still have? Well, I still have my mind, I still have some physical tools that, like, my hands still kind of work. I just can't do the work that I normally would do. And so like, that stuff saved me to be able to still work, and I could still write, and that was, that was the thing, I thought, well, I can be a writer for the rest of my life, you know, you know, I've always done it. So I might as well just continue to do it, but go deeper. Yeah, and that kind of thing. And so as a writer, it's not that I, I, you know, I took it for granted, but I was a little gun shy about about that, because in college, I had a, I had a weird episode with a professor. I had shown him some stuff and he just kind of blew me off, you know, and I was like, okay, my stuff stinks. But really, he didn't really tell me whether they stunk or not. Yeah, you know, it was probably like, I don't have time for this, which is probably what it was, but I didn't know that you know, so I was a little gun shy about submitting or showing things to people or anything like that. So when I finished writing, and then my wife and I, we edited the haikus you know, because some times in your head, you

think you got the right amount of syllables, but you know, right, it's counted by one or something like that. So it's always good to have someone to kind of like, make sure you're in the right. And then sometimes I had to change a word because it was a little, you know, was one over, you know, whatever, there was a little, it was more nuts and bolts kind of, as long as I'm of the opinion, you can edit as long as it doesn't change the meaning of the of the piece. So there's a word that you need to change because it didn't quite fit or whatever, go ahead and do it. I'm not one of those people. Like, this is what I said, this is what it's got to be, you know, like, I think if you if you're so rigid, like that, you're never gonna get anything done. And so that was a that was a big, big thing for me was just to make sure that technically it was sound that was a big because I was like, if people are gonna read it, I don't want them to think I'm a sloppy, or that I'm lazy in what I'm writing, because I think, I think a lot of people think of poetry as free verse. And some of it is terrible, in the sense of it's sloppy, it's not well thought out it's you know, I mean, you get the guys that like you get the Robert for us and stuff that are impeccable tacticians, as far as Ryan goes and, and stuff like that or you get you know, but then you get the Walt Whitman's that are like, Okay, I don't I'm not sure exactly what he's doing. But you know, it sounds cool. You know, like, he's got his own kind of rhythm going on, which is all right, I'm not against it actually inspired by a lot of Walt Whitman stuff. Since He only wrote one book in his whole life. It was just fascinating to me. That's such a fascinating, that's a rabbit hole to go down. But you know, but but as far as like, guys that I really admire I, you know, like, I'm a big TS Eliot guy. And I'm a big, you know, I'm big into that, like, very technical writing, even though like at first when I when I first read wasteland when I was a teenager or whatever, I didn't understand that it was super tactical. Like I didn't get, you know, you don't get it the first. First eight rounds, a lot of books like that. Yeah. And I think that's important too, because I like Easter egg type things same get to reread and yeah, digest a little bit more. You just keep rereading it until you're like, Oh, I get it now. Oh, this is amazing. So that was that was a big deal for me. But also, for this book. The biggest inspiration was this book that I read in college called songs and napalm by Bruce Weigel, which, which was a big inspiration for my book. Well, he, his book is about his experience of Vietnam. So it's very traumatic. Book, you know, it's kind of like the poetry version of that Tim O'Brien book, the things that carry, you know, kind of that kind of vibe, like, he's talking about burn and whole villages, and just the trauma of war. Yeah. And trying to suss it out in these short increments. And I loved his philosophy of we can deal with pain, we can deal with trauma in short period, you know, in short, dosers Yeah, yeah. And that was what haiku for me was, was I was so bitter and so angry about this whole situation. I was able to get catharsis through the short spurts of verse and be able to get it out of me and be safe with it. And, you know, and keep my mental health intact. By doing this, that's a big important part of the whole process is keeping your faculties intact.



Carissa Andrews 58:32

yes.



Andrew Cloninger 58:34

That's a big, it was funny too. Because, you know, when COVID came around, I was actually already ready for it, because I had already been at home already kind of had, you know, and that's a big thing, too, is have a routine. We were talking about Joe Rogan, you know, or no, it was it was Jaco Willick podcast that I was listening to it was with a POW that was in Hanoi. And he he said that when you're in isolation, or when you're in, you know, confinement, which I

wasn't, but I was like, by myself a lot. Yeah, have a routine. Make sure you brush your teeth, make sure you make sure you change your clothes, make sure you're so I don't stay all day in my you know, if I'm home. I'm not in my pajamas all day. You know, that's, that's important not to do that. You know, you see a lot of people these days, they go to Walmart in their pajamas, and that's a big nono. That's a sign. That's not okay. You know, there's something else going on. At least in my estimation. I mean, you know, obviously I'm not a psychologist but but to have a routine have have those things that you need those tools because I have scheduled now I've got these things that I do. It's not monetarily satisfying, necessarily. But it's, it keeps me It keeps me occupied. It keeps my brain working. And I'm able to do the things that I need to do safely and mentally intact, which I think is my word.



Carissa Andrews 59:58

Oh yeah, for sure. Do you foresee yourself writing more books in the future?



Andrew Cloninger 1:00:02

I actually I have another book already done. Do you? Yeah, great. It's just not published yet. And I'm working right now. Yeah, this was more of a free verse, this is kind of like, it's called Winter and other songs. And it was kind of, like, it's not all written during COVID. But it was kind of inspired by COVID, in the sense that, you know, it's about winter and the different forms of winter. In, like I said, before, I'm Scandinavian. So there's, they have different words for winter, you know, the, the Finnish words are a little bit different, you know, like, they have different meanings to them. And so I broke it up into three different types of winter, using the, the finish words, and and, and so, you know, it's kind of a homage to my heritage. And also, like, you know, it was a way to suss it out as well, like, be able to categorize that because some of it's a little more political, and then some of it is, is, you know, just kind of like musings about, you know, the day or whatever. So there's different types of winners that you can be in, you know, and so or like, like I talked about earlier, like my mental health, like, if it was a little bit darker day, there's, there's winter for that, too. And so that book is done, it just needs to be edited. And, and like I said, it's a little bit more, there's, there's like some different types like, that one is a little it's not as as structured in the sense that there's different types of poetry in it. So there's some free verse, but there's also some, like different types of rhyme in it, there's like, there's this new structure that I'm trying to, to figure out where the poem works horizontal and vertical at the same time. Oh, so I'm trying to work that out and trying to make that a thing. Or the other thing too is that we're, I'm using one word. So one word works this way. And this way at the same, like, you know, at the same time, it's a little bit convoluted, but I want it to work, like you're reading a sentence, that rhymes, but it's all one word on each line. So it's kind of a new form that I'm that I'm toying with. And then also on top of that, so that's done. And then now I'm working on my, what, I guess would be considered the third thing, which is a short story, but it's called forge road. And it's, it's a collection of like short store like memoir, short story type things, where I kind of extrapolate philosophically on stories of things that happen to me as a kid, or, you know, my 20s, or things like one of the stories is about me driving 100 miles an hour, oh, my God by the police. There's some things that you can extrapolate from that. Yeah. So that's kind of what I'm working on right now, as far as writing goes. And then of course, I'm always kind of like working sketch type things out. And I just did a, I just wrote a poem called Beatles as Adams, which is, it's going to be for experimental piece the producer is doing like he's making, like what they call Lo Fi music, which use the samples, and then you

like you synthesize them and kind of make it's kind of a long form a little bit. And then you, you know, people put the poems in there and you kind of like, sample through them. It's kind of an interesting forum. There's a lot of examples on YouTube and stuff of Lo Fi type. Music, it's a lot of people use it for studying, and it's kind of ambient type music. And so yeah, I did a piece for that for that producer. His name's Eric Anderson, he's, he's a good producer, in my local area. So that was a piece that I did. And then yeah, and then we're just working on the record. That's kind of right now that's kind of like the the focus right now is, is finishing up the record and making sure that we can get it to that sound the way we want it to. And so we're pretty excited about finishing it up. And we're all we're always to the finish line, which is kind of good. And then we got to pull our hair out trying to mix the thing, which is always the toughest part of the whole process. So I'm looking forward to it. But yeah, it's, it's, it's a good time, we're doing some good things. And, and I'm really excited about the future as far as you know, the writing goes. And that was the other thing I wanted to talk about two is like, the biggest thing that because I know a lot of people, they self publish, or they you know, there's different ways to you know, there's traditional publishers, there's different ways to do it. And I chose to do a hybrid, in the sense that because I was just going to self publish, I was just going to jump on Amazon and throw it on there. And sure, whatever, you know, because I didn't you know, I didn't have a ton of money and you know, I didn't really know what I had never been polished before. So I didn't really know what what the ins and outs were like what were the pros and cons and so but my wife talked me out of it, she's like, well just submitted some places and see, just see if there is any interest. And sure enough, I got some interest from atmosphere press down in Austin, Texas, and they're a hybrid. So what people might not know about hybrids is you kind of front a lot of the production costs, and then they do a lot of the promotion for you, which is pretty awesome. Because then you're not. That's, that's the hardest part of the whole deal, in my opinion. And so, you know.



Carissa Andrews 1:05:29

Many other authors, too.



Andrew Cloninger 1:05:33

You spend so much time by yourself, you know, doing the thing doing the work, and it's like, Okay, I did the work. What are we going to do? You know?



Carissa Andrews 1:05:41

I have no idea how to converse with people.



Andrew Cloninger 1:05:44

Like, I have no social skills, you know, a certain experience, or you feel weird about selling yourself, you know, I think that's the biggest for me. I always, I always want the work to speak for itself. And so that's why I like to third party type, PR situation, you know, where it's a little bit not directly me asking my friends and family to buy my book. That's kind of weird. Yeah, no, I get that. And so I just encourage people to just try, what did the guest say? No. That doesn't

mean you're not good. How many rejections that Ernest Hemingway get, if you really look into it, like the history of book writing. There's a lot of great writers that have been passed up by other Bibles. Yeah, they got screwed in the end. Because, you know, so Ansel was awesome, you know, and, and I also think that, like, you grow as a writer, going through these processes as well, I think I think that sharpens your sword a little bit, it makes you a little tougher, you know, Oh, yeah. I think me as an independent musician, DIY it for most of my life, I was kind of like, had a thick skin already about my work, because it's like, Well, okay, I'm not one of the 1% that has a record deal. And I'm not with Harper's Collins or whatever. I'm used to kind of like huffing it a little bit. And so I didn't take rejection as they didn't like me. Yeah. And it's not about that at all. It's really not. And I hope people understand that whatever your art is, it's not about that. It's not, it's you. It's you contributing to society, the way you contribute. I feel like a lot of times, we get so bogged up in how much does it sell? How much does it?



Carissa Andrews 1:07:28

Well, that's what the publishers and the big the big names are doing. They're, they're looking at it from that perspective of, can I sell this uses the merit of the piece? Yeah.



Andrew Cloninger 1:07:38

And that's the thing is, if we, if we had that mentality, for every piece of art, some of the greats would never be great. Van Gogh sold one to his brother, like one painting to his brother in his lifetime. Yeah, like, think about that, that blows my mind. You're looking to how much Iggy Pop and the Stooges sold those records in the 70s, maybe 25,000 copies, maybe they're failures, they got dropped, but they changed a whole generation of musicians in the 70s. You know, there was no punk without them. There's no green day without the Stooges. There's none. You know, that's, that's a fact. And so, like, Guess my thing is, the commercial part of it, in my opinion, is a byproduct of you going out there and doing your art? That's nice. It's icing on the cake, but it's not the thing. Yeah, you know, the, the thing is doing the art, you know, you know, the grades weren't great, because they knew how much they were going to sell. That's, that's, that's 100% True, you just got to do it. And I guess that's what I would encourage everybody to do. Just do it. And I know like writing is kind of a weird thing. Because you know, you're sitting there by yourself staring you know, I don't write on computer. I don't write. I can't do it. It takes away from me getting my thoughts directly because I'm a terrible typist. So I'm from back in the day when you actually had to take typewriter class need to I got my hands slapped with a ruler a couple of times, let me just say, you know, home row, not good. I'm still a hunter. I'm still 100 on packer, you know, like that's that, you know, that's never going to change. So, to me, it gets it gets in the way of the writing. And so I write everything out, you know, whether it's a short story, whether it's a long thing, whether it's a short thing, I write everything out on hardcopy, and I thought I got myself a Smith Corona Deluxe, like several years ago, and I was like, I'm gonna I'm gonna learn how to type real well, you know? Yeah, I quit doing that after like two weeks. That was terrible.



Carissa Andrews 1:09:48

I always think it's interesting when guitar players and piano players do that with their keyboard like with, like, you would think that you guys would be like the best of it. So amazing.

A

Andrew Cloninger 1:09:59

Like, it's like it's like when people say, Oh, you're you know, you're a performer. So you'd be great at speaking. No, I'm not, not without that wooden box in front of me. I don't know anything like, you know, you know, I always say, you know, musicians should shut up and just play. That's, that's real. You ever hear onstage banter? It's the worst that hurl. Unless it's like hello Cincinnati or whatever, that's fine. But like, they start talking, the worst that gets it's not good. Shut up and sing is a real thing.

**Carissa Andrews 1:10:33**

But, yeah, thank you for being a part of the show. I mean, my audience has a lot that they're going to take away from it. So if they want to find out more about you about your journey about your book about your music, where did they go to find you.

A

Andrew Cloninger 1:10:45

So I have AndrewCloninger.com, which is, I do a lot of the writing stuff on there. And the music is www.wrencovemusic.com. And we also have a YouTube channel called basement factory music. And that has all my different projects, I have several different music projects on their on their different videos. And some of it's a little bit older, some of its newer, that type of thing. So, you know, just check it out, you know, and then you know, if you want to buy some music, you can buy it on Bandcamp just look up Wrencove or basement factory music and you can you can, you know, you'll you'll be able to find us there and you can purchase we have an EP out right now called trees, which is it's pretty fun. So that's a that's a good record to check out. And, yeah. You know, like I said, hopefully, hopefully the record comes out this year, but you know, with mixing and stuff like that, you know, I can't I can't promise anything, but yeah, so we're definitely, we're definitely looking at different ways to release it. We're not exactly sure how long it's all gonna work out business wise, but But yeah, we're definitely, definitely gonna finish that up. And hopefully that'll be out soon.

**Carissa Andrews 1:11:54**

Awesome. Well, thank you so much for being here and telling my audience all about your story and everything that's that you're working on. It's an amazing journey. So thank you for being here.

A

Andrew Cloninger 1:12:03

Well, thank you so much for having me. This has been a lot of fun. So thank you so much.