

Stories from the brainreels podcast

July 5, 2013

[Blogtalkradio signal]

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Introduction

CHERYL: Welcome to Blogtalkradio's Stories from the brainreels. I'm your host, Cheryl Green, from StoryMinders coming to you live from Portland, Oregon as I do every first Friday and some third Fridays at 1:00 pm Pacific time to share stories, news, art, comedy, and discussion on brain injury and disability culture.

[music]

CHERYL: Thanks for joining me for the show today. Today's show is actually gonna be all focused on art and artists. The first piece of news is that Kris Haas's online fundraiser has actually been extended to August 7th. It was supposed to be complete on June 30th. But she's gotten an extension, which is really awesome because it gives her a lot more time to do her fundraising. This is the fundraiser that I mentioned on this program a few times before. To check it out, you can go to USAProjects.org and search for Kris Haas. Go ahead and see what she's up to and make your tax-deductible donation to support her art project today, from now through August 7th. She's gonna be painting 10,000 new works in one year, all captured on live-streaming video. So that's the project you'll be supporting.

Kris also has some work in a local art show here in Portland that opens today, July 5th. It's called "A Different Perspective," and it will be up for the whole month of July. That show is up at the Art4Life and Splendorporium Gallery. Here are the details of the show: all of the artists in this group show have had a brain injury or have a developmental disability. The works include paintings, drawings, collage, and sculpture. And the gallery is open Monday through Friday, 11:00 am - 5:00 pm. So you can view and purchase the art any time during those hours through July. The Splendorporium Gallery is at 3421 SE 21st Ave. That's on SE 21st just a couple blocks South of Powell.

So tonight is our big multi-media art opening extravaganza for this show called "A Different Perspective." Many of the artists who have their work up will actually be there tonight. So I would love for everyone who can to come out and meet us and chat with us and learn more about our art. We'll have a few members from the ILR Music Collective who will be there performing. That's a group of folks with disabilities who started a really wonderful music performance group at the local Portland Independent Living Resources Center. They've been performing at a bunch of schools and events around town, and they're really getting a lot of requests for gigs. In addition to the ILR Music Collective, we'll also have a few numbers by singer-songwriter Brandon Michael Scarth. The event starts at 7:00 pm tonight, Friday, the 5th.

The Interviews

So on today's radio show, I'll be chatting briefly with three different artists: Brandon Michael Scarth, Jeff Black, and Nicki Sinner. All three of them will be at the reception tonight. And all three of them have actually been filmed for my documentary called "Who Am I To Stop It." So we've got a tight-knit little community here.

I'm gonna bring on my first guest, Brandon Michael Scarth.

Brandon Michael Scarth

BRANDON: Hi, Cheryl!

CHERYL: Hi, how are you?

BRANDON: Doing pretty good. Doing pretty good. I am excited to be here.

CHERYL: Oh, great, yeah. Thank you so much for being on the show today.

BRANDON: Yeah, you're very welcome.

CHERYL: Oh, good, yeah, especially since you've been on hold for 10 minutes, waiting for the show to start.

BRANDON: [laughs] Yeah, yeah.

CHERYL: But I'll tell you why I did that, Brandon. Almost all the other shows that I've done, I didn't call the person before and put them on hold. And a couple of times, the folks were 20-30 minutes late to be able to call in, just because of technology problems or sometimes forgetting that today was the radio show. So I thought, you know what?

BRANDON: Oh [giggles].

CHERYL: I'm gonna call my friend Brandon and make him sit on hold for 10 minutes.

BOTH: [laugh]

BRANDON: Well, I am so glad you did, honestly because it wouldn't be the same if you hadn't!

CHERYL: Absolutely. So much less stress for everybody.

BRANDON: Yeah, yeah.

CHERYL: So I wanted to talk to you today about art, which is something that we never, ever speak about, I'm sure, Brandon.

BRANDON: Yes, yes. That is a very interesting subject. I am very interested in art, and I'm not sure I've ever spoken about it with you.

CHERYL: No, definitely not.

BRANDON: I don't think so, no [laughs].

CHERYL: No, not in any of the interviews that I've conducted with you for my documentary film on art.

BRANDON: Oh yeah [laughs]!

CHERYL: There's always that.

BRANDON: Yeah.

CHERYL: But most of the time, we can't remember what we're talking about anyway, right?

BRANDON: [laughs]

CHERYL: So I don't usually goof off on this show. I think it's just that you're here.

BRANDON: Yeah, I'm pretty sure [laughs]. I tend to do that to people [laughs].

CHERYL: Yes, you do. And it's actually one of your artistic talents. You have a lot.

BRANDON: Yes, I do know.

CHERYL: Yeah, you have a lot of skill in just fast humor. You do a lot of improvisational comedy and improvisational acting and just taking on characters. It's a lot of fun.

BRANDON: Yep, yep, yep.

Brandon's arts background

CHERYL: [laughs] So you have a background, actually, in lots of different artistic things. You play music, you draw, you studied theater and performance back when you were in college, and you've been performing in plays since you were really young.

BRANDON: Yep, yep.

CHERYL: Did I get all that right?

BRANDON: Yes, you did.

CHERYL: Oh, good. Good. When did you first get in to the arts?

BRANDON: I think my dad being a music teacher had a big deal to do with it. He was always coaching us kids to don't forget the play tryouts are tomorrow and all that kinda stuff. And so we just kind of grew up with it as a normal thing that we did, whenever. And I'm thinking that that had a big part in my growing up was to have a father that really cared about the arts.

CHERYL: Definitely. And you said you he was a music teacher, right?

BRANDON: Yes, he is a music teacher. He is the choir teacher at Sandy High School.

CHERYL: Oh, that's wonderful. So did he give you music lessons growing up?

BRANDON: Not really. He basically left that to the skilled people that were doing that at the time. But he sang with us and did all kinds of stuff, you know.

CHERYL: Mmhmm. I was curious because my mother used to be a music teacher. And my sisters and I all took music lessons from here when we were little.

BRANDON: Oh!

CHERYL: But I think that I was a terrible student.

BRANDON: [laughs]

CHERYL: I had no respect for her because she was my mom. So I would always just goof off and sort of generally be a jerk.

BOTH: [laugh]

CHERYL: I thought, you're not my teacher. You're my mom.

BRANDON: That is really funny.

CHERYL: Your dad did a good job just avoiding that all together, right?

BRANDON: Yeah, yeah. I think so.

CHERYL: Mmhmm. So there's music in your family. Are other folks in your family actors and performers too?

BRANDON: Well, actually, my sister was kind of an actress but not as much as my younger older sister. She was more of an actress. And I was actually the actor extraordinaire, if you will [laughs].

CHERYL: Yes, I will.

BRANDON: Yes, yes, yes. I actually took that to a new level and actually went to college for a couple years and took classes in acting and that kind of stuff only to later [chuckles] get involved with church. And then start to become a music minister, only to later get into a car accident.

CHERYL: That's right. And that was the accident someone else caused that gave you a traumatic brain injury.

BRANDON: Yeah, yeah.

CHERYL: Which changed the course of many things in your life.

BRANDON: Oh, yeah!

CHERYL: Yes. That was 2007, wasn't it?

BRANDON: Yep, yep, it was.

CHERYL: In July.

BRANDON: Yeah.

CHERYL: Now, I know you still do music. Do you do any acting and performing onstage these days?

BRANDON: Not really just because I don't really have that much of a, what's the word I'm looking for? I'm trying to think of a word, a place to perform, I guess would be the things that I'm missing.

CHERYL: Right, right. So you're not in a theater company or working with a particular--

BRANDON: No, no. No, no.

CHERYL: Let's fix that.

BRANDON: Okey-doke, okey-doke [chuckles].

CHERYL: You and I did some improvisational standup comedy one time, sort of by accident a few months ago.

BRANDON: Oh yeah.

CHERYL: I forgot about that till just now.

BRANDON: [laughs]

CHERYL: If people are sitting in rows of chairs, I know both you and I will get up, and then there will be a performance.

BRANDON: Yes, yes, exactly. I am wholeheartedly willing to do that.

CHERYL: [giggles] Absolutely.

BRANDON: [chuckles]

Songwriting

CHERYL: Getting back to music, I know that you've written a lot of songs on lots of different topics, including the the Lord, love, compassion, confusion. That's just to name a few topics of some of the songs that I've heard from you.

BRANDON: Yes.

CHERYL: And I know that you wrote a lot of songs before your brain injury.

BRANDON: Yes, yes.

CHERYL: And you still are doing a little bit of song-writing even now, right?

BRANDON: Yes! I am. I am indeed.

CHERYL: Yeah--

BRANDON: Actually, I--Yeah?

CHERYL: Oh, go ahead, please. Go ahead.

BRANDON: Oh, I was just going to say that the newest song that I have out doesn't have a title yet. I'm not sure what to call it. But I don't know. I think I'll eventually come up with something.

CHERYL: Mmhmm. Is it the one that has "I don't know" in the chorus? Or is it newer than that?

BRANDON: Yes, yes, exactly. No, no, no, no. That's the one. That's the one.

CHERYL: Yeah, that one is lovely. And you performed that for the film crew recently. So we got you on film.

BRANDON: Yeah!

CHERYL: I wanted to play a little bit of that here on the radio show, but I realized that I don't have, hear at my house, I don't have a good version of the recording that we made.

BRANDON: Aw.

CHERYL: The other director has that version. And so I wasn't able to play it today.

BRANDON: Oh.

CHERYL: But on a future show, I'll pull that song up and play it.

BRANDON: Yeah.

CHERYL: Now, you recently mentioned that you were hoping to put together an album about what it's like to live with a brain injury. You remember saying that, right?

BRANDON: Yeah, yeah.

CHERYL: OK, good [chuckles].

BRANDON: Yeah, yeah [chuckles].

CHERYL: I was waiting for you to say, "I didn't say that, Cheryl! You're making it up!"

BRANDON: [laughs] Are you crazy? I never said that [chuckles].

CHERYL: I must be making it up. Since it turns out that it is the truth, and I didn't make it up, my question is what gave you the idea to focus a set of songs on that particular experience?

BRANDON: Well, I would say that the experience basically focused me more on that experience. And so I don't see how I couldn't write about anything else other than the brain injury.

CHERYL: Right, yeah. That's a fascinating answer. And it's a really good point. It's part of you now.

BRANDON: Yeah, exactly.

CHERYL: It is if you're writing songs, that's what you're writing about.

BRANDON: Yeah, exactly.

CHERYL: Yeah, excellent. Have you been working on any other new songs for that album?

BRANDON: Yes, I have, actually.

CHERYL: Oh, great!

BRANDON: Yeah, yeah. And I haven't given this new song a title either; however, it is a lot more lyrics than the first song that I wrote after my accident.

CHERYL: Mmhmm.

BRANDON: Yeah.

CHERYL: Exciting. I'm looking forward to hearing it.

BRANDON: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

CHERYL: Are you, by any chance, going to play that new one at the reception tonight?

BRANDON: No, no, no. I am thinking that I haven't even written down the chords to it. So it's basically just lyrics right now.

CHERYL: Got it.

BRANDON: Yeah.

CHERYL: Well, I will look forward to hearing it at some point.

Playing at Splendorporium tonight

CHERYL: And I know that a lot of folks are really excited to hear you play tonight at Splendorporium. And I'm so glad that you're coming. I have a music stand packed for you. I didn't forget.

BRANDON: [laughs]

CHERYL: I wrote notes all over the house: bring a music stand [chuckles]. So your job is to bring the music, and we'll have a lovely, lovely show.

BRANDON: Okey-doke.

CHERYL: [chuckles]

BRANDON: Mmhm. Well, now, now wait a second. Because I was thinking that it was also my job to bring my guitar. But is that not my job now?

CHERYL: Um, you know what? If you feel like multi-tasking, I say go for it.

BOTH: [laugh]

CHERYL: If you could bring your guitar, it would be wonderful because then you'll seem like a professional, unlike me, who has a musician on her radio show but has no music to play for the audience.

BRANDON: [laughs]

CHERYL: So you can bring your guitar. Your guitar and your music and your vocal cords.

BRANDON: You're funny, Cheryl.

CHERYL: Be sure to bring your vocal cords.

BRANDON: Okey-doke, okey-doke.

CHERYL: And I'll bring the stand.

BRANDON: Yeah.

Wrap up

CHERYL: Is there anything else at all that you would like to say to the radio audience or your friends or family, anyone who's listening? Anything else about brain injury or about art or about you?

BRANDON: Well, I am thinking that I would like to say don't just go about your lives like they're the same now that you have someone with a brain injury in your life. You know? You kind of have to live a little differently now because I can't live the same. And it just kind of stinks for everyone, but it's a fact of life that you kind of have to change a little bit after someone has a brain injury. And I'm thinking that goes for people that have had the brain injury but also for people that just know someone with a brain injury.

CHERYL: Well said, Brandon. Thank you.

BRANDON: Yeah, yeah, you're welcome.

CHERYL: When folks sort of go into denial or don't want to believe that we've changed, it's really hard to see eye-to-eye.

BRANDON: Yeah, exactly.

CHERYL: But if we all sort of roll with it and find out what works best for us now, we can show each other a lot more compassion and respect. And you know, you bring up a good point that it really affects everyone. It doesn't just affect the person with the mashed up brain.

BRANDON: Yeah.

CHERYL: Because when we, our lives have changed, and that ripples out to everyone who's around us. And we have to not forget about them. It's easy for us to focus just on ourselves and what we want and need.

BRANDON: Yep.

CHERYL: But it's important to remember all the people around us are seeing a changed person too.

BRANDON: Yeah, yeah.

CHERYL: Yeah, yeah. Thank you for bringing that up. That's wonderful.

BRANDON: You're welcome. You're welcome.

CHERYL: Excelente. So with that, my friend, Brandon, I'm gonna let you go and see if I can figure out how to call my next guest.

BRANDON: Okey-doke.

BOTH: [laugh]

CHERYL: See if I can get that right. For now, I'll let you go. And I will plan to see you in about oh 5, 6 hours from now at the reception.

BRANDON: Okey-dokey.

CHERYL: Bring everyone you know.

BRANDON: Okey-doke.

CHERYL: All right. Thanks again for being on the show, Brandon.

BRANDON: Okey-doke. I'll see you later, Cheryl.

Jeff Black

JEFF: This is Jeff.

CHERYL: Hi, Jeff. This is Cheryl and the radio show calling. How are you?

JEFF: It sounds like you. How do I know it's really you?

CHERYL: Because this is your very secret phone number that only very wonderful people know about. And so it would have to be me cuz I'm one of the wonderful--

JEFF: Look at that. You pulled it out.

CHERYL: [giggles]

JEFF: Nicely done.

CHERYL: Thank you. I think it's because I took my nap earlier today that I can lie on the spot when needed [giggles].

JEFF: Well, I took my nap earlier cuz you woke me up. And I can believe your lie, then.

CHERYL: [laughs] You know, I wondered if I--I did sincerely worry if I was gonna be waking you from your nap when I called. But I went ahead with it.

JEFF: The good part is I'll lie back down.

CHERYL: Excellent, yep. That's the nice part. We can be flexible in that way. Just take a nap at a later time.

JEFF: Yep, enjoying the brain injury.

CHERYL: As long as you take a nap. That's right.

JEFF: Yeah.

CHERYL: A lot of people say to me they're jealous that I get to take a nap every day. And I think, well, I have to take a nap every day.

JEFF: Yeah, they're stupid.

CHERYL: [laughs]

JEFF: Those people don't have their brains together, do they?

CHERYL: No, I guess they don't. The other thing is it's always people with full-time jobs who are actually earning a stable paycheck who tell me they're jealous of my naps. And I think, well, you can be jealous of my naps, and I'll be jealous of your paycheck, I guess [chuckles].

JEFF: Yeah, exactly.

CHERYL: But like my guest, Brandon, and I were talking about, you really have to roll with it. Changes come to you with a brain injury, and you roll with it.

JEFF: Yeah, that's true.

CHERYL: That's right: stop, drop, and roll.

JEFF: Nice.

CHERYL: [laughs] So Jeff, we are talking about art today, a topic that we always talk about.

JEFF: It's usually a lot better than talking about Simon or anybody else.

CHERYL: Talking about what? [laughs]

JEFF: Let's talk about art.

CHERYL: We'll talk about art. That joke definitely dated you. I can think of a lot of people I know now who won't even get the reference to Art and Simon.

JEFF: Yes, but that's the fun part of it too.

CHERYL: That's right. Art and Simon. So we'll focus on Art. And then this evening, the reception will be focused on Simon.

JEFF: There you go.

CHERYL: [coughs] Excuse me. The more I laugh, the more I cough.

Jeff's recent art shows

CHERYL: So a few months ago, I think--I don't know how many months ago, but a few months ago--you had an art show up at Beard's Framing in Vancouver.

JEFF: The first part of February.

CHERYL: February, OK. Good, so it was this year. It wasn't years ago that it happened.

JEFF: In theory, yes.

CHERYL: [laughing] In theory. So we came out--the documentary film crew, we came out--to your artist reception. It was a lot of fun. You had a great crowd. I just wanted to check: was that the first solo show that you've had in a while?

JEFF: In a while, yes. About a year or two.

CHERYL: Oh, OK. So that's exciting to have gotten a solo showing. Now, one of the things that you said at the end of the night--we asked you how did the night go, and one thing that you said--was that this was really exciting for you and that you're looking forward to doing some gallery shows. You remember that?

JEFF: Yes.

CHERYL: Excellent. So tonight is the opening reception for a gallery show! It's a group show.

JEFF: Ah, hooray.

CHERYL: Yeah, hooray [chuckles]! It's not your own show that you set up. It's a show that I helped to curate. And you are one of 10 or 12 or so--I'm not sure how many--artists are in this show. I've lost track. But how does that feel to be now doing a group gallery show?

JEFF: I wanna laugh when you say, "How does it feel?" Let me pinch myself. I have no idea the feeling part of it. But you know, I'm looking forward to it. And I know I'm gonna say I would not necessarily sit there and say, "Hey, it's gonna be exciting." But I'm looking forward to this, the straightest, most honest answer. Because other answers, people are looking like what? Huh? I mean, I'm looking forward to it. It's gonna be a different experience. So I don't know if that answers it. I don't know if that answers it.

CHERYL: Sure, sure. Is this your first time in a group show?

JEFF: Without thinking too far, um, dah dah dah, it's the first time in a very, very long time.

CHERYL: Mmhmm.

JEFF: Darn near more than 20 years because the last time I had a group show would probably be when I had my senior art show in college when I graduated with my art degree.

CHERYL: Oh, OK. OK. Yeah, so I think it will be a lot of fun. There's a really diverse group of folks who have their art up. My art is in the show. So I feel I am not a painter [chuckles]. I am not a visual artist. And I went out on a limb and stretched myself and tried some painting, and I'm really happy with what came out. But I'm very honored to get to share the wall space with professional artists like you. So I hope that I don't decrease the property value of your art by being on the walls there tonight [giggles].

JEFF: You know, I appreciate what you're saying, but selfishly, because you are a very dear and valued friend to me, I understand what you're saying. But I'm like, when you sit there and say "valued professional artist," I'm like what? Well, no. There's other people more professional than me. You're more professional than I am, but anyway. Going with the seriousness of what you're saying and the compliment, I accept it, and I appreciate it. It's also humorous. But to me, you already know that everything and anything is humorous, so.

CHERYL: Absolutely. That is why I called you to be on this show.

JEFF: And on that note then, on that note, I do need to ask you, you being the infamous animal lover that you are, what do you call a dog with no legs?

CHERYL: [laughs] I don't know.

JEFF: It doesn't matter. He's not gonna come anyway.

CHERYL: [laughs] Oh my goodness. Not. OK, you hit the two tops: an animal joke and a disability joke in one. I love it. I love it. Excellent. Excellent work [giggles]. I'm a cat person myself, but I would try calling that dog if I met that dog.

JEFF: Nice.

CHERYL: Now, there was an event late last month called Colored Pencils. Did you end up being part of that event?

JEFF: I inquired, and no, I did not get into it. I wanted. Now, I'm getting confused because is that the show that's not gonna happen till September?

CHERYL: Oh, I don't know. I don't know which one that is. So it's possible.

JEFF: And so it possibly is. But assuming it isn't, to answer your question, no I did not. I have talked to the gal, and for some reason I don't think I did make that one. But I asked to be kept informed of other future opportunities with them. It will happen.

CHERYL: Great. Yeah, that'd be wonderful. Colored Pencils is a really cool event. They put on multi-cultural arts and performance events. I can't remember how often they are, but they start with a sort of community mingling and potluck. And then they go to this beautiful performance event where people just bring to life arts from their cultures. And what's really nice about Colored Pencils is that they do consider disability to be a culture. And so they are regularly looking for different kinds of artists and performers with disabilities who can come and share art from their culture and from their perspective. So I've never been to a Colored Pencils event because there are a lot of people, and it's very noisy. And I don't tend to be able to handle environments like that. So I've never actually been, but I hear nothing but wonderful things about Colored Pencils.

JEFF: Interesting.

CHERYL: So definitely keep me in the loop. Yeah.

JEFF: That I will. I'm curious. Now that I'm learning from you that brain injury is a culture. So now I can refer to you as a vanilla yogurt then? Seeing as yogurt is also a culture?

CHERYL: [laughs]

JEFF: Or would you rather me refer to you as Greek culture?

CHERYL: It wouldn't be the worst thing you've ever called me, to call me yogurt.

JEFF: There you go. But on that note, we have to go with Mel Brooks: may the yogurt be with you.

CHERYL: [laughs]

JEFF: You know what movie that is?

CHERYL: Um.

JEFF: Come on. John Candy, Joan Rivers. "Space Balls."

CHERYL: Um, I forgot that year.

JEFF: "Space Balls."

CHERYL: "Space Balls?"

JEFF: It was "Space Balls." "Space Balls."

CHERYL: "Space Balls," that's right. I remember seeing it. That's all.

JEFF: Anyway, I keep interrupting you, so.

CHERYL: That's quite all right. I'm just sort of enjoying my new identity as a cup of yogurt. I love it. So another question for you is I know that you did, there was a Canby wine and cheese festival recently, and you got to show your art up in a booth there.

JEFF: Yeah!

CHERYL: Do you have any other shows or any other events coming up?

JEFF: No, not shows, but I'm always in the hunt for looking for something. I'm currently working to produce some artwork for purposes of getting into a major, worldwide catalog.

CHERYL: Oh!

JEFF: Not my artwork per se. It's just that I have an opportunity of doing some artwork that will be listed in a catalog that is circulated worldwide. If I can pull it off, I'm trying, yes.

CHERYL: Yeah. Are you working on any new subjects for that catalog, or just doing--?

JEFF: Yes, I am. No, I am working. It's still my minimalistic line drawings, but I'm working on focus on animals.

CHERYL: Oh!

JEFF: I'm enjoying after the Beard's frame show in February, I'm enjoying the possibility of potential dealing with scenery. And I'm venturing out into a new avenue of doing animals. But I'm more trying to focus on Northwest animals, like the bull elk and bear and cougar and stuff like that.

CHERYL: Mmhm. That's wonderful. Yeah, and I remember now that you mention it, that those different Pacific Northwest scenery works that you had in February, that was sort of a new thing for you. But you had wonderful things like Multnomah Falls, and there was bridges and just lots of yeah, it felt, oh I can't think of the word. But when you looked at it, it really evoked the Northwest. You could really feel it. So it's exciting.

JEFF: Thank you. That's where I was running.

CHERYL: Yeah, and I assume you'll be doing a lot of dog portraits with and without legs.

JEFF: I'll try to get there, yeah, you know.

CHERYL: Yeah [laughs].

JEFF: I'll probably run probably more closer to the spicy kielbasa, if we're gonna go with dogs.

CHERYL: Oh dear. [laughing] OK, different kind of dog.

JEFF: [laughs]

CHERYL: This is the cooking episode of our show: we've got yogurt and kielbasa today on the menu. So folks who wanna come out and see your art, it's gonna be up at the Splendorporium Gallery for the whole month. And would you tell folks your website address where they can go to your website and look at your art?

Jeff's contact info

JEFF: I will, and I'm glad that you will verify that with me also. But I think it's jefferyblack.com. Jefferyblack.com, I believe that's it.

CHERYL: Yep, that sounds familiar. That sounds like it. So is there anything else that you would like to chat about around brain injury or disability or art or humor?

JEFF: Humor's always at the top of my list. But I mean, as you say brain injury, I'm like well, on the top of my head, I don't know what part of my head's working. So at this point, there's nothing that comes to mind. Pun intended.

CHERYL: [laughs] Excellent. Maybe something came to mind, but it came to a spot in your mind where there's a hole. And it just fell through.

JEFF: Exactly.

CHERYL: Cuz I know that's what happens to me. I'll get a brilliant idea, and then it just sort of slips down into one of those blank spots where there are no brain cells.

JEFF: Exactly.

CHERYL: And then, it's sort of like cheesecloth. It just gets filtered out, and you've got your curds and your whey. And then before you know it, you've got brain yogurt.

JEFF: Nicely done.

CHERYL: Why thank you. I don't deserve the compliment. On that note, I'm gonna let you go, Jeff. I will see you at the reception tonight.

JEFF: Looking forward to it.

Tonight's reception

CHERYL: Yeah. Hope you've told a lot of people, and tell folks to come out. They're open Monday through Friday, 11:00 am - 5:00 pm. So for folks who can't make it out tonight, they can come any time for the rest of the month and purchase your art.

JEFF: Yes. Three pieces will be the three of the ones that were in the February show. But the other two are new pieces, and one within the last couple weeks.

CHERYL: Oh, that's wonderful.

JEFF: I've got five pieces hanging.

CHERYL: Right.

JEFF: There's one piece you have not seen yet.

CHERYL: Mmhmm.

JEFF: You've seen three, possibly four, but there's one you have not seen.

CHERYL: I'm really looking forward to it. I've seen maybe one third or one half of the art that's gonna be up on the walls tonight.

JEFF: Oh!

CHERYL: But I haven't seen the whole show yet. So I'm really excited to get to see all the artwork all up on the walls in one place, beautifully hung, for the first time tonight. So it'll be very exciting.

JEFF: Nicely done.

CHERYL: Yeah! Well, thank you again, so much for being on my show again. You were my first guest back when I started this show. I don't remember when that was, but I do remember it was you. And I will have you on again, and we'll do some comedy routines.

JEFF: I look forward to it. Cheryl, thank you and a good day to you, girl.

CHERYL: All right, you too. See you tonight, Jeff.

JEFF: All right.

Nicki Sinner

CHERYL: This section here is from a conversation that I had with Nicki Sinner a little bit earlier this week. She couldn't make it on the show this afternoon because she's rehearsing with her band. They're gonna be playing at the opening reception for the big art show tonight. There's a little bit of teasing at the beginning about how things always go wrong. Nicki spent about 15 - 20 minutes trying to call into this show, and it never worked. For some reason, her phone just could not connect. And it took that long for me to realize that, actually as the host of the show, I could call her, and she didn't have to call in. So we got started probably at least 30 minutes late going into this show, and we opened up with a little bit of joking around about that. And in Nicki's style of joking, the problem is not with the technology so much as the technology just hates us. So here are some excerpts from the conversation.

CHERYL: Lemme tell you: every single time I've done this show, something has gone wrong. Every single time. So it's just part of the deal! So how are you doing?

NICKI: Please. It loves to mess with brain injured people. Please.

CHERYL: I think it is the radio show's fault. We're doing everything right, but it likes to mess with us.

NICKI: Yeah, damn it. You know I'm fucked up enough already.

CHERYL: [laughs] I do.

NICKI: And this is just one more stupid thing.

CHERYL: [laughs] So are you ready to get started on the interview?

NICKI: Sure. Can I say bad words?

CHERYL: Uh, yes you can. Absolutely. You can say whatever you wanna say.

Nicki in the ILR Music Collective

CHERYL: You are in a band, and you sing and play some instruments. And I would like you to just talk for a minute about that.

NICKI: The band that I'm in, all the guys are blind except for one. He just is Autistic. And I don't know exactly what the music is. I know one of them is reggae. We do "Three Little Birds," "Let It Be." "Three Little Birds," "Let It Be," "A Little Help From My Friends," "True Love Will Find You In the End," and I think a few more songs. I don't remember. And I don't mind.

CHERYL: Do y'all do any original music, or is it all covers?

NICKI: No, there's one guy who makes songs. He's made "Trick" and "No Worries," and they're both pretty cool songs.

CHERYL: Is that Joe who does the original songs?

NICKI: Yes, yes.

CHERYL: What's the name of your band?

NICKI: The ILR Music Collective. You are a fatty cat.

CHERYL: I'm a what?

NICKI: Oh, talking to the cat over here. He's come over here, rubbing up on my leg. So I pat him. He goes, "Merow."

CHERYL: [laughs] I thought you were calling me something. You know, usually my kitties are over here with me while I do interviews. So I'm sorry that kitty's annoying you, though. OK, and so what is this place, ILR, where you met these guys?

NICKI: Independent Living Resources.

CHERYL: And what do you do there?

NICKI: First, I just had a counselor there, Sara Gerth. And she told me that they were gonna start a music group. So I joined, and now I play bass, have been for about a year or so. And I sing. I've been singing for

a very long time. When I was in high school, before my accident about five and a half years ago, I was in concert choir, a cappella choir, and jazz choir, and I had a ton of solos.

CHERYL: That's awesome. So talking to Sara there, she let you know about the group, and then you joined them?

NICKI: Yes.

CHERYL: You folks are coming to play at the art show that I've set up.

NICKI: Yeah.

CHERYL: And you, not only are you playing some music with a couple of people from the group, but you have some drawings actually in the art show.

NICKI: Yeah! I've been doing art for a long time, too.

CHERYL: So tell me a little bit about your art....Oh, you're cutting out!

NICKI: My phone hates me.

CHERYL: Yeah.

NICKI: See. This is what happens...you.

CHERYL: What happens when what?

NICKI: When I talk to you.

CHERYL: Oh, yeah. I'm pretty sure that your phone hates me, not you. Yeah.

NICKI: It hates both of us.

Making art

CHERYL: I wanted you to talk a little bit about the art that you make.

NICKI: Because my art expresses me. Like I do creative artwork, and I do serious artwork, fun artwork, and I think that's about it.

CHERYL: Have you had your artwork up in a show before at a gallery?

NICKI: I believe not. I've done art in high school.

CHERYL: So since leaving school, it sounds like the show at Splendorporium that we're doing is gonna be your first gallery show.

NICKI: Yeah, yes, especially after my accident.

CHERYL: Right. So how does that feel to you to have your work in a gallery show?

NICKI: Feels so cool, like I've actually accomplished something.

CHERYL: Ah!

NICKI: That and my band.

CHERYL: Oh right, yeah. Cuz you're doing double duty at the opening reception by selling your visual arts and then also performing with the band. Yeah.

NICKI: Yes.

CHERYL: Do you have any gigs coming up with your band soon?

NICKI: Mm, well I know of the one at your show for sure. And we have a few more gigs set up, but I have those gigs written down in my notebook, my planner. And I'm afraid I'll lose connection with you if I go back in my room.

CHERYL: Right, right, yeah. That's fine. Where do you think this band will go? Like, become professional, or what are your goals for being in the band?

NICKI: Well, we are actually talking about doing recordings because at one of our gigs at the school, there was a kid who had asked, "Where are your CDs?" And that was so cool. We were like, "We don't have CDs yet." So we're actually thinking about making CDs and selling them.

CHERYL: That's awesome, Nicki. I'm really glad to hear that. Yes, I will buy one as soon as they come out. What about your visual arts and your drawing? Do you have any goals for what you wanna do with that beyond this show?

NICKI: I don't know yet because I feel like the art I do now isn't that good. I'm not very confident in it.

CHERYL: Mm. Do you take any art classes?

NICKI: Well, I took art in high school, but I don't think I really had lessons with my art.

CHERYL: Mm. Do you want to get more professional or more confident in your work?

NICKI: Yes.

CHERYL: Let's find some art classes around town.

NICKI: I really don't want to do anything more. I already have a super busy schedule.

CHERYL: Oh, that's a good point. You have mentioned that before. All righty.

NICKI: Exactly as I want to do things, I really shouldn't.

CHERYL: Yeah, because you don't wanna wear yourself out.

NICKI: Overdo it.

CHERYL: Yeah.

NICKI: Yeah.

CHERYL: Is there anything else you want to tell me about either about art or about something that's going on in your life right now?

NICKI: Well, I have my adorable cat. I've had this since she was a kitten. She was like one year, I believe.

CHERYL: Aw. Remind me what your cat's name is.

NICKI: Brianne.

CHERYL: That's right. You probably tell me that every time. Do I ask that a lot?

NICKI: I don't remember.

CHERYL: Yeah [laughs]! I don't remember either if I've asked before. But I will probably ask again the next time you talk about your cat. Is there anything else you wanna share with folks who are listening to this radio show?

NICKI: Well, my brain injury. When I first got it and got out of the hospital and done with rehab, my memory, I was told something, then like five minutes later I would ask what they told me. I think people got upset with me.

CHERYL: Uh-huh.

NICKI: Because they didn't understand.

CHERYL: That is true. It is hard for some folks to understand that you're not goofing around; you really can't remember minute to minute.

NICKI: Yeah. Stupid people.

CHERYL: [laughs] It's hard. But your memory has improved a lot since the early days, right?

NICKI: Yeah, well, I remember what I want to remember. Like, if somebody tells me something, and then like five minutes later, I'll be like, "What?" Cuz there are things I don't really care about.

CHERYL: Mmhmm.

NICKI: I definitely remember the music I play, though.

CHERYL: Oh. Cuz that's something you really wanna remember, right?

NICKI: Yes.

CHERYL: Is it easy or hard for you to memorize the lyrics and memorize the notes?

NICKI: Hard. I have to replay it every time.

CHERYL: OK. Any last words you wanna say?

NICKI: Can I talk about the animals I used to have when my parents were married?

CHERYL: You bet.

NICKI: OK. I used to have 20 rabbits, four goats, three sheep, three cows, 100 birds, 100 pigs, two snakes, a macaw. My sister, I believe, had two turtles and a snake. And we had guinea pigs, and we were watching two iguanas for my Uncle Louis. And we had cats and three dogs.

CHERYL: That sounds awesome to have so many different kinds of animals around. I love it.

NICKI: Yeah, I miss them all.

CHERYL: I bet, yeah. Nicki, thank you so much for sharing on the show. And thank you for having your drawings in the art show at Splendorporium and bringing yourself and some members of the band to play. I'm really looking forward to it. All righty. So I'll see you Friday! Thank you, Nicki.

Show wrap up

CHERYL: So that was part of my conversation with Nicki. It's funny and interesting how much talk of animals and different just sort of dark humor came up with the different interviews. What's really exciting to me about these three guests who were on the show today, as well as the other folks who are in my documentary, is that they all did art before their brain injuries, and now they still do art. But there are a lot of other things that they're not able to do anymore: different career goals or educational goals or different social things that they were pursuing before their injuries they just can't do anymore. But art is still a part of everyone's life, a really active part of folks' lives.

The title of the film is "Who Am I To Stop It." And that actually comes directly from thinking about that drive and that spirit to create art. When something like a brain injury happens and some parts of your life are sort of put on hold, maybe temporarily, maybe permanently, that drive and spirit to create art is still there. And the idea is that if this is something that you can still do, don't stop it. Don't be the one to stop it. So that was really exciting to get to talk to those three different folks who'll be in the show tonight.

I do wanna remind folks about Kris Haas's online fundraiser. She's in the show this month at Splendorporium, and she's also on USAProjects.org. Look for Kris Haas. She's doing 10,000 pieces in one year.

And the Splendorporium show again is at 3421 SE 12st Avenue in Portland. The reception tonight is from 7:00 to 9:00 pm. There will be live music. I believe there will also be popcorn. That might just be a rumor, but I'm pretty sure there's gonna be popcorn. And there will be a lot of really beautiful fine art to check out.

Just a last note about this show, why this show is so important to me, the art show: I have been able to find quite a few very, very nice looking curated art shows all by artists with brain injuries in different places around the country. They're really beautiful, very high quality art. And they're in hospitals or medical centers or universities, or universities have co-sponsored them. And as much as I appreciate the art of people with any kind of disabilities being out there in the community, one of the shortcomings, I think, of having art shows in medical centers and universities is that we--the artists--then really are primarily in the role of patient. And we just happen to also make some art. But the primary role is patient. And I wanted to put together a show where the artists who have brain injuries and developmental disabilities--and really any kind of disability--where their primary identity in this show is artists. We're hanging their art in an art gallery that's got art gallery hours and a nice art gallery reception. And that was just really important to me for this community. The nice thing about having brain injury art in a hospital is that, say, maybe some new brain injury patients might see the art and feel

really motivated and inspired and be able to see that gosh, maybe my life has changed hugely, but it's not over. Look. There's this possibility out here. I could paint. But again, this is about the person who's creating the art. I want us to be seen as artists with brain injuries, not brain injury patients who also do art. So that was my motivation for putting this big show together.

Big thanks to Splendorporium for also helping in curating the show and getting folks from Art From the Heart and Albertina Kerr's Port City Gallery to also contribute art. So I said the word "art" enough times for one day. With that, I will wrap up the show. Thank you so much for listening. We'll see you or hear you next month.

Join us the first and third Friday of the month at 1:00 pm. This has been Cheryl Green of StoryMinders. Email at info@storyminders.com if you've got topics you'd like to hear on an upcoming show.

[music]