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As told to Sammy Maine, 2512 words.

Tags: Music, Comedy, Writing, Mental health, Process, Beginnings, Success, Multi-tasking.

On finding the path right for you

Writer, actor, comedian, and musician Lane Moore discusses the joy in connecting with your audience, inviting the right people into your world, art as self-care, and the importance of creating art that aligns with your values.

When you look back on the choices you've made throughout your creative career, are there any that really stand out to you?

I didn't always feel like I had as many choices as I wanted. I have a lot of conflicting feelings about it. I made a choice to be myself and do what I thought was right. I didn't make the choice that was the easier choice. The easier choice as an artist is always going to be, I think, doing the cheapest, easiest version of what you do. It's going to sell faster, probably more people will gobble it up more quickly. If you are the worst, cheapest version of your art, it's going to move faster.

I saw how easily that was received, the "let me just get what I can get and get out of here" kind of work. I made a choice to have no interest in that. I wanted to do the joke that had the most pathos. I wanted to write a song that had something real to say, that I didn't think people were talking about. It wasn't interesting to me to write something that was just for show. I had so rarely seen myself reflected in art. The art that I related to was that type of art where it felt like this is somebody who had to say this or else they would die, as opposed to somebody who was saying this for shock value or to be titillating. That was just never what resonated with me. I made a choice, but I also feel like there was no other option. Nothing else would've been interesting to me.

As an independent artist, how did you establish and navigate a path outside of the way things usually work?

So much of it was difficult because I didn't know what it seemed like so many other people knew. It seemed like so many other people were not only being shown the doors, but they were being escorted through them with candy and thrown at them. I wasn't told what the path was, where the door was. The door was locked, the door was covered in bolts, and I felt like there was something I wasn't seeing. It was incredibly challenging and frustrating at times. Why is this person getting in before me and this person isn't? The most surprising thing for me, and this is something I'm only realizing now, is you don't know how many people are watching what you're doing, and they appreciate the hell out of it, because we don't often tell each other maybe as much as we should. It's really only recently that I'm seeing people say things like, "I have watched you build this for yourself your own way and carve your own path. I've been so proud to watch this and I've been rooting for you."

Sometimes it's easy to feel like no one out there sees that. You don't know who actually sees how hard you're working, actually sees the choices that you're making to do things in a better way, to do things in a meaningful way and can see how much harder that is. In that way, to see that there are people out there who have been really rooting for me, even though I have felt like this very little mouse trying to navigate this weird maze, there are these people out there, you might not even know it, who are so excited for you to make it. I wish I had known that years ago.

You've written two books that highlight the difficulties you've had in finding that support and finding your community and healing from that. In what ways do you nourish your mental health?

I'm not always very good at it. I think there are people out there who are like, "Yeah, every single morning I do these 12 mental health practices and I'm really diligent about it." I really struggle. I want to be that person so bad but when you struggle with mental health, sometimes you can't do that. I will say

that creating has always been one of the biggest things for my mental health. So much of the music that I have made has been me writing songs to help myself process these things, to help myself feel better. They are songs that will make me feel seen, and will hopefully make others feel like there's somebody out there who understands. It's that positive self-talk. I think that that is something that I have done a lot through music and writing. There are times when someone on social media will post a quote from one of my books and it's something I really needed to hear that day. I really want to reach other people who struggle with these things and don't have those words. Then, just as much, sometimes, I need to be reminded of my own inner wisdom there. It's great to be able to create music, to create these books, these different forms of writing that are out there that even I can go back to. Making art is a form of self-care a lot of the time.

You're a comedian, you're an actor, you're an author, you're a musician. What does your day look like when you are creating art in so many different ways?

All of my processes have always been really intuitive. When I have the idea for a song, it comes at me fast and I have to grab an instrument, and I have to hit record fast or else the song will go away. I think in a lot of ways I'm writing in my head all the time. I'm mulling something over constantly, which is going to look different, I guess, to somebody who has a really regimented schedule. That's not how I work. Sometimes it's going to come out as a song. Sometimes it's going to come out as a written piece. Sometimes it'll come out as something that I want to talk about on my podcast. I've been holding it in and this is the perfect vessel.

Sometimes that urgency lends itself to, "Oh, maybe I'll talk about this on the podcast. Maybe I'll talk about this on social media." Because with writing and with music to a certain extent, with so many of these creative forms, you have to find the right place to put it out. There's a whole long process of how you put it out. You have to get this person on board and this person on board. Sometimes I know exactly what I want to say. I know it's worth talking about, and I don't want to wait for 90 people to tell me it's a good idea and that it's ready to go out into the world. That is the great thing about having a podcast or having an idea for T-shirts for the merch store, or posting something on social media, because I know it's good.

How do you avoid burning out?

Oh, I don't! The toughest thing too is it took me a long time to realize that I needed to communicate. A lot of it was boundaries and sometimes the people that you're working with don't give a shit if you burn out. They don't give a shit about your boundaries, and that is one of the most upsetting things to realize. You want to think that everybody in the arts and everybody that you're working with wants you to be a whole healthy, happy person and to create things together. A lot of the time, people don't care as long as you keep turning it out and making them money. It's about really taking a look at the people who are around you when you're creating and doing as much as you can to make sure you don't have people who are totally fine if you burn out. That's a big thing.

What are you thinking when you're going into those initial discussions to see if they're the right fit for your world?

I was on my own for pretty much my whole career. That's not anything that I was really thinking about. I know that a lot of the people that I met with over the years, I just thought, this isn't it. Really the thing that I wanted when I was looking, whenever I was looking for that, is I wanted somebody who worked as hard as I did, who cared as much as I did. That's rare, especially if you're used to being a DIY artist, an indie artist. You've had to work a lot harder than a lot of people, maybe who've had a full team since the start of their career. That sounds like a dream. There's good and bad with that, I know, because sometimes they shape you to who they want you to be and things like that. In some ways I would've given anything to have had support right from the jump but if you didn't, then you have to make sure that somebody's not just looking at you like, "Oh, this person works 20 times as hard as a lot of people I've worked with, cha-ching." You want to make sure that they're seeing how hard you work and they're going to work just as hard for you instead of just cashing in on years and years of something you've been building. I think it's really important for independent artists.

Witnessing you from afar, you've had a lot of achievements and it seems like you just keep going, going, going. What's your relationship like with success?

Success is about being able to enjoy your life and not feel like you're in this circle of survival where you can't ever rest, where you're thinking "Well, how am I going to pay my bills if I take even a little bit of a break?" That to me is not success. Success is being able to have balance.

Success is being able to take your foot off the gas and rest and say, "I'm really tired. I need to take some serious time off because I've been working almost 24 hours a day for two years. This is not sustainable." It's a balance between getting to make the art I want to make, and also getting to enjoy my life and take breaks and live a life where I can use it to create more art. Get to be a person, and have wonderful relationships that I have the time to build instead of being like, "I can't talk right now. I have to work. I have to get this done. I have to produce more. I have to make more money. I have to get these bills paid." That's such an unfortunate thing because I think that making art should be separate from so much of that.

I feel like in order to create, we have to be bored first. We have to have the space to daydream. We have to literally let our nervous system just relax for five minutes. That's why so many people have their best

ideas in the shower.

If you're caught up in a system or you're worried about paying bills because you made a huge mistake of not being born to a massive trust fund, it's so much harder to do that. It's so much harder to feel like you can take your foot off the gas and let yourself daydream, let yourself be bored. I would love that. That is success to me.

What is the most fulfilling and nourishing aspect of what you do, of the life you've built for yourself?

I really love seeing people live; meeting and connecting with people who connected to my work in person. Whether it's seeing people dancing at one of my band shows or seeing people laughing at a *Tinder Live* show and at the end just being like, "I haven't laughed that much in years. That was so great." Or signing people's books and they're telling me they've never felt this seen before. There was one time when I met a couple after a *Tinder Live* show, and one person was like, "Oh, my gosh. I'm the biggest fan of *Tinder Live*, and my girlfriend is a huge fan of *It Was Romance*. I didn't even know you had a band. She didn't even know you had a comedy show. We all went together in this." That's the type of career that I've always wanted, where I'm making all these different things that people connect to. It makes me feel very seen.

So often you are told to just pick one or two things and most people, I guess do one or two things, if not just one. But I always, always, always wanted to do this, everything. I think that's the most gratifying thing, is to have people who are just so into every single thing that I'm creating. They're into all of it. They get it, they see it, they love all of it, because it really reminds me and that little kid part of me, that knew she could do all of them. Even though everyone around her was telling her to pick one, and that this didn't make any sense. They couldn't understand it. The people who cast judgment on that or tell you to stop it, it's like, no, I think there's a lot of people out there, myself included, who are able to absorb that somebody contains very many things and that all of them can be wonderful.

If somebody only sees you one way and they only like one side of you, that's been something I've struggled with my whole life in a lot of different ways. That was something that came up in my career a lot in the beginning, where I was like, "Okay, well I'm really funny and people know I'm really funny. Will they allow me to also be a musician and write about really serious things? Would that be something that would ever be allowed?" There was so much fear around that, and feeling like I had to keep these parts separate. Then, the more that I started playing shows with my band and realizing, "Oh, I can be really funny in between songs. This does not have to be separate." There is actually so much overlap with musicians and comedians that it doesn't have to be this, you have to put this over here and this over here. I think people will get it, I think people will love it, and they did.

Lane Moore Recommends:

Get a rescue dog. I promise you.

Remember the child you were.

Go into nature as often as possible.

Look at a mushroom in the woods.

Rest so much more.

Name

Lane Moore

Vocation


writer, actor, comedian, musician

Fact

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