

Justin Connor

Justin Connor: What's funny about this whole ownership of art, even that in of itself is like a mirage and mystery, because really like the publishing for this album, I should give to like my top 10 musical heroes, you know, they inspired it as much as it looks like, Oh, look what I've created.

[00:00:16] **Bryan Smith:** Bryan Smith here and welcome to the Dream Path podcast, where I try to get inside the heads of talented creatives from all over the world.

[00:00:25] My goal is to demystify and humanize the creative process and make it accessible to everyone. Now let's jump in Justin Conner's on the show. Justin is a Los Angeles based musician, actor, screenwriter, producer, and director. He's had roles on television series like monk and six feet under and made his directorial debut with this feature film, "The Golden Age, which is now streaming on Amazon prime.

[00:00:52] In "The Golden Age", Justin plays pop star Maya O'Malley who gets dropped by his label after making some controversial remarks and then embarks on a spiritual pilgrimage throughout India in an attempt to resolve his troubled past. This film has a mockumentary Rockumentary vibe, but it doesn't fit neatly into either category.

[00:01:11] I would describe it more as a musical drama with comic elements, exploring themes of ego, fame, trauma, and spirituality. One of the many impressive things about Justin is that he wrote and performed every song on "The Golden Age" soundtrack. Including my favorite song from this album "Gospel Song".

[00:01:41] If you liked the soundtrack, check out Justin's debut album Kaliyuga.

[00:01:56] Both albums are available on Apple music, Spotify, Amazon music, and can also be purchased on his website, Justinconnor.com as a CD or digital download. If you haven't picked up on my interview style yet, I don't go into these with an outline or preset questions. I just let the conversation flow and this chat went to some pretty cool places, including the spiritual and biographical elements of the film.

[00:02:20] We also did a deep dive on some of our favorite music, documentaries, and Justin talks about the musicians he credits for influencing him as an artist. After we spoke, we ended up emailing back and forth impressed by the connection we felt during the interview. As you listen, I hope you get a sense of that connection as well.

[00:02:39] So let's jump into my chat with Justin Connor. I've put together this, I call it the guitar wall.

[00:02:45] **Justin Connor:** Jesus.

[00:02:46] **Bryan Smith:** This is my little, my little sanctuary.

[00:02:48] **Justin Connor:** I love it. The hollow body you got. Oh man. Get some toys back there.

[00:02:53] **Bryan Smith:** Yeah. That's an F hole Gibson that I bought from a friend of mine recently. It was sitting in his closet case was beat to shit and covered in dust.

[00:03:03] And I was like, what are you doing with that thing.

[00:03:06] **Justin Connor:** Give it to me then, right?

[00:03:10] **Bryan Smith:** So, it's a fun little guitar. It doesn't stay in tune very well.

[00:03:15] **Justin Connor:** Yeah, it does need to be tuned up.

[00:03:17] **Bryan Smith:** I took it to a guitar guru in Bellevue, Washington, which is in Seattle or near Seattle named Mike Lowell. And he just worked wonders with it.

[00:03:27] So it stays in tune a lot better now than it did before, but it's still kind of fragile that way.

[00:03:34] **Justin Connor:** Yeah, those are nice. I want to get one of those down the road.

[00:03:36] Awesome.

[00:03:37] **Bryan Smith:** Yeah. So. You are quite the musician. What kind of guitars are you into these days? And have you played over the last 20 years?

[00:03:46] **Justin Connor:** To be honest with you, I'm more of a piano guy.

[00:03:48] **Bryan Smith:** Yeah.

[00:03:49] **Justin Connor:** Mostly piano and, Worley and things of that sort. I don't play too much guitar, mostly just acoustic and I had a good Gibson SG, but I sold my Worley. And Gibson just to like to finish the film, which I have, I'll probably buy back later, but, mostly piano is what I write all the songs for most of the songs in the film, all done in piano.

[00:04:08] **Bryan Smith:** I noticed that they're very piano based or sometimes almost harpsichord sort of based where you got this nice. Very minimalistic approach to songwriting and vocally centered lyric centered piano based songwriting, which is lovely. And I liked the fact that you wrote all this music yourself. And incorporated it into the narrative.

[00:04:35] It's really something I watched it this week and it was very immersive.

[00:04:39] **Justin Connor:** Oh, thanks man. Yeah. I was trying to help, you know, get the story told through song in a different way than it's traditionally done as well as have it all be live versus lip-sync and you know, just kind of blur that line between what's real and fake, I guess.

[00:04:53] **Bryan Smith:** When I read the description of the movie, I think it says that it was filmed over 10 years. And I wasn't sure if that was part of the log line of the movie and that wasn't actually true. Or if it was filmed over 10 years ago.

[00:05:09] **Justin Connor:** Yeah, it was, it was filmed. It was filmed over 10 years. I can't believe I'm still standing at the tell the tale.

[00:05:16] I basically like wrote the script and the second album was kind of like moving in, conjunction with it and I shot it in pieces and wanted it chronologically to sound as if, and look as if I was aging and the character was aging throughout the process. So. That was kind of the in seeing how much songs could play a role in telling the story as if like a pivotal scene does with actors, but you know, do it through song and melody, see if that would work out.

[00:05:44] So that was kind of the gist of it, but yeah, I shot it over like 10 years. Jesus, no, it's probably less than that. It, the whole project took about 10 years. Most probably shot we're about five, five and a half around there.

[00:05:58] **Bryan Smith:** That's really impressive. I've never seen a film like this before, so kudos to you for creating.

[00:06:04] I mean, I've seen like a mighty wind or, you know, mockumentary, lots of mockumentary stuff out there, and I've seen lots of Rocky mentorees too, or, you know, documentaries about bands or kind of mythical figures like "Searching for Sugarman or,

[00:06:21] **Justin Connor:** Oh, I love that one.

[00:06:22] **Bryan Smith:** Yeah, that was a great one.

[00:06:23] **Justin Connor:** That was a big inspiration.

[00:06:25] **Bryan Smith:** But this one for me was pretty singular because it was kind of in between you really weren't sure if you were, you know, you, you certainly weren't mocking this character at all. And it was a real dramatic character with this arc that was emotional, especially with the home video footage that you put in there, but I appreciated how unique it was because there just isn't something like this in the, uh, the film verse, if that's the word.

[00:06:55] **Justin Connor:** Yeah, yeah, exactly. The mockumentary genre. I think it was tough to pull off and I think we're so used to seeing it through the Christopher guests of the world who. People have just seen the film or like, are you a fan of fit Christopher Guest? I'm like, yes, I am very much so. And although his, his, his films are normally played for Hahas and laughs very well adeptly done.

[00:07:16] I still think that "the Golden Age" is a comedy on some level. It is a satire on material life and the pains of musicians and the traditional arc that almost happened like a blueprint, but it's played straight. So, there was an element. Of wanting to blur that line between what's real and what's fake. Cause a lot of this was kind of a semi-autobiographical project, but I wanted to blur that line and kind of take the piss out of fame or, you know, the satire and the way that Christopher Guest does, but play it in more of a straight, a narrative way that you're not sure what's real and what's fakes up the audience. Can be a little bit nebulous in terms of knowing where they're being led. Cause people who don't know me who see it at the end, they're like Wikipedia-ing and like, "who's Maya O'Malley. How come I never heard of this guy?" And it's kind of a, a satire on it. I think the false ego and fame, as in conjunction with making room for how one can absolve these traumas from their past in terms of, making room for the devotional, path, I guess.

[00:08:20] **Bryan Smith:** Well, mission accomplished for blurring that line. And I, I think that's, what's so great about cinema is when you make an audience question, what they're looking at and really wonder what they're experiencing. I think that's the sign of a great artist. Like when you walk into an art gallery and you see a painting and you're maybe you're revolted, or maybe you're confused or whatever that strong emotion is, is a win for the artist because you're trying to provoke a little bit, right.

[00:08:54] **Justin Connor:** Yeah, and I think that there's room for that in this day and age, I think we're so used to seeing films and this pound for pound way of, you know, so many films now are, are made for this like this largest common denominator so that so many people can absorb the themes of it and justify the budget in which they spent it, but usually that caters into a watering down of the project itself. So I think there's room within cinema and with art to find this sort of niche between. And I think this is why I'm drawn to so many of those iconic artists, like the Dylan's and the Beatles and Christopher Guest, uh, Terrence Malick, Paul Thomas Anderson, these guys who like they, you know, they're not trying to conform to what it is, but they're marching to the beat of their own drum.

[00:09:39] So when you said like going into like an art studio or going to an art show and being kind of revolted and you know, there's something about artistry or the creation of something that. And I've been noticing this. I've been following a lot of different artists now, you know, Instagram and social media is such a funny world, but lately I've just been like handpicking, some artists that, you know, like drew my eye to them and there's people that are really articulately well at their craft and original in their own. Right. But then these other, other people that do like this simplistic form of creation, but it's so. Ingrained in their point of view that they're not trying to conform on any level and in hybrids of both back and forth, vice versa, but I think what I'm really drawn to and what I'm starting to gain more clarity on for myself in terms of just promoting this film, as well as moving onto the next project thereafter.

[00:10:27] Is really trusting that uniqueness, that it's more important to really define and own your own style theories, impetus, and what creates it then trying to conform to something else. And I think those are the artists that I'm drawn to the most. And that's what I'm starting to. It, it's funny how it took me such a long time to make this huge project to now come to this base of like it's okay to be, to live a terribly unique life on my own terms and own that.

[00:10:57] Even if not many people love it or millions do, it's like, it's irrelevant. I think the reveling of like, just owning what it is you want to do, even if it's totally abstract to everyone else. And I, and I champion every musician, artist, poet, filmmaker that does that.

[00:11:13] **Bryan Smith:** Yeah. Yeah. I've talked to other guests about this concept of the podcasters call it niching down.

[00:11:20] But, and I guess the concept in the podcast world is you can't be everything to everyone, but if you're something very specific to a small group of people, you're going to be much more successful in holding on to that fan base or that listenership and actually making an impact in the world. So, it's, it's ironically.

[00:11:43] Kind of counterintuitive that the broader you are, the less you're going to be seen because you're part of the background noise.

[00:11:50] **Justin Connor:** And, and partially the broader you are potentially the less happy you will be at being broad. You know, I mean, you know, it's funny, we're living in a day and age now. And I have sort of this resistance to social media, which is paramount for promoting my film or my music or my brand or whatever any of this is these days.

[00:12:10] But we're at an age where so many people are promoting themselves to death and not really promoting anything at which they've created. And I think that that is a dangerous omen for the times, because now we're looking to people with large followings that don't really create anything. Versus my credo lately is just not only falling that unique thread, but kind of playing the long game with fame and some of my teachers from the East and the gurus, you know, they talk about this concept is called, which is like the hankering for name and worldly prestige.

[00:12:44] And how they, one of my favorite gurus was talks about it as, uh, the stool of hogs that it's actually lower than the stool of hogs. That that is not the aim at which we're here for. And there's an element of, of now stepping back and just really reveling that unique expulsion of what needs to be released because on some level what "The Golden Age" we were talking about, how long it took to make this thing is it almost took me this long to realize, to really settle into like the comfortability of following that uniqueness hell or high water. And I'm finding that people are really drawn to it. It's starting to move and spread with people, but it's, it's not because of me wanting to promote it to death. It's like, I trust there's a, there's an element now where I trust the potency of the project, regardless of anything I had to do with it because even though on paper, it looks like I had so much to do with it. I really look at it as I was a conduit to these teachings from the East that are so much grander and more magnanimous than anything I could do. I just operate as like a grand conductor to it all. So, I'm kind of seeing this long game of fame in some respects, like, you know, these John Prine guys who nobody really knew of until the last 10 or 20 years, but it's like, I just want to create a body of work that I can stand behind.

[00:13:54] And that matches that litmus test. And one last thought on that, that point is I remember reading about different directors prior to making this. It was while I was working as an actor for years. And I started to say, "I don't know if this is fulfilling me. I want to do my own project" and reading about directors and how they trusted their final cut in the end.

[00:14:10] And it was interesting because they all pretty much said at the end of the day, regardless of the person who's, you know, at the studio who is saying, you know, "yes, do this", or, you know, they have final cut or input on it. They said, all you really have at the end of the day. Your final cut is your own barometer of what you think is great.

[00:14:27] And, and when you first hear that, it's like, well, dude, are you just making this film for yourself? You know, like that's where my mind went, but it's like, no, that's all you really have. So, I think if you trust your own barometer or of what you think is compelling as an audience member and as a creator of whatever it is itself, that's all you really have to go on.

[00:14:47] And that took, uh, an, I think that takes. A bravery and an intestinal fortitude that I wouldn't have ever been able to make "The Golden Age" if it weren't for all those people inspiring me because you know, it was such a force of nature, how this came about and how it was made. If you paid me all the money in the world to make "The Golden Age" today, there's no way I could have, but when there's this expulsion of creativity that needs to come out like a boil that needs to be lanced almost, it's just, you're at the behest of it.

[00:15:16] And that's how I kind of see it all now and see creative projects as well as the future ones that I'm planning thereafter, you know?

[00:15:23] **Bryan Smith:** Yeah. I think audiences really respect an artist who's decisive, who knows what they like, and they're putting it out for their own reasons. And they're also not focused on the fake famous part of social media promotion and becoming famous for being famous, kind of a Kardashian like famous.

[00:15:43] They're really trying to create something that needs to be created. There's just a drive to put this out into the world. And they respect that. At least I do. I mean, maybe I'm projecting.

[00:15:52] **Justin Connor:** I'm in the same boat.

[00:15:53] **Bryan Smith:** I really appreciate that. If it doesn't exactly land the way that maybe I would have done it as a producer or something, you just have to have mad respect for people that are making those decisions for those reasons that are genuine, they're authentic, or really used words, genuine and authentic. But when it comes to artists, I believe it applies. Just as much today as it did 20 years ago, you got people like John Lennon and the reason I'm bringing up John Lennon is that I think your Golden Age album really made me think of John Lennon, solo work and the lyrics and the delivery.

[00:16:29] But when I think about John Lennon and I think about his journey after the Beatles. And I'm not, I'm no historian at all when it comes to the Beatles or John Lennon. But what I think about is a guy who paved his own way and especially with Yoko Ono, helping him creatively. And I saw that documentary, I think it's called, is it called "Above Us Only Sky", the most recent John Lennon documentary where it really shows how much Yoko Ono contributed to his work.

[00:16:58] **Justin Connor:** Absolutely.

[00:16:59] **Bryan Smith:** And how he disregarded the critics who were saying, what are you doing? You know? Totally. And if you listen to,

[00:17:08] **Justin Connor:** Play Love me Do, where's Love Me Do part two or where's Sergeant Pepper's part two.

[00:17:13] **Bryan Smith:** And I remember I watched, and this is just me rambling here. I'm sorry, but

[00:17:17] **Justin Connor:** no, I love this. You were on the same page. I'm right with

[00:17:19] you.

[00:17:20] **Bryan Smith:** I, I saw the Zappa documentary that just came out

[00:17:24] **Justin Connor:** we're on the same page.

[00:17:25] **Bryan Smith:** So, the Zappa documentary has this scene where John Lennon gets on stage with Zappa, with Yoko Ono, and they are. Doing something that I had no concept of. I was like, what am I hearing?

[00:17:39] I don't understand this. I would never buy this album, but I'm like all the power to your brother and sister.

[00:17:46] **Justin Connor:** I know braver.

[00:17:49] **Bryan Smith:** Yeah.

[00:17:49] **Justin Connor:** Well, it's funny. But as you started to talk about this thought, we're also on the same page. Cause I was thinking of a quote by Lennon. And first of all, I think Yoko Ono really empowered him to speak his voice, and sometimes, you know, that's the power of having that divine, strong woman supporting your moves, because while you started to talk about this, I immediately thought of a quote by John Lennon. And then he started talking about him so funny, but there was one quote and I maybe miss handling that. But if something to the effect of there's some days where I wake up and I'm.

[00:18:23] I know I'm in sync and I'm writing some of the best stuff I've ever written. And there's some days where I wake up and I cannot get out of bed because I feel like a fraud. And this was John Lennon, you know, like, you know, he, obviously he was a big inspiration to me, and guys like him and Dylan, Harry Nelson, and all of them and such.

[00:18:39] But I think when you reach that type of fame or have any percolation, it was worth it. I think the tendency is to really have it a gut check, a real recalibration sort of like we're all having during this COVID time of being locked up. It's like, what is important to me? And you mentioned the documentary and just really quick, Frank Zappa, I write in this book accompanying the film that I'm going to release this screen called "The Day in the Lives", which follows Maya O'Malley's like a memoir, which is again, a semiautomatic graphical as well. And one of the first albums that really hit me was Frank Zappa's Joe's garage. We had motor oil all over his face, which was like that, that was a crazy album at the time, but I was like, Oh, the power and potency of like, this guy was marching to the beat of his own drum as a young kid, I was like, "Whoa", But when I watched like the documentary is like, you mentioned the Lennon one and the Zappa one recently I watched, um, geez, what was it?

[00:19:31] I watched the Go-Go's one and then I watched the David Crosby on which blew me away and just see you mentioned earlier, um, The, uh, "Searching for Sugarman" and like a poster on my wall. "Scott Walker, 30th Century Man" is another one. If you haven't seen, or your viewers,

[00:19:49] **Bryan Smith:** I have not seen that one.

[00:19:50] **Justin Connor:** That one's incredibly potent and his music is off the charts. You know, while I was writing "The Golden Age", I was trying to figure out how songs can tell the story. So just the writing process of making the script and the songs. And making sure they had this arc that felt present in the songs could stand on their own yet. Tell the story was like a two-year process in itself.

[00:20:09] You get alone recording parts to make sure it worked and then recording it while filming and then editing it in that, you know, all that was like a, a monstrous thing. But all these music documentaries really fed "The Golden Age" hugely. And the reason they did. And why had my little satire take the piss out of fame type of thing with "The Golden Age" is the trajectory and arc, especially the Go-Go's one.

[00:20:31] And the Dave the Dave Crossman really hit me. It's like, they all go through the same machinations of terror and excess and tumultuous demise with this fame. So on a certain context, it's like, what is it that we're chasing after? It's like this, this carrot dangling at the end of the stick that never feeds us in the way and actually kind of makes us sick.

[00:20:55] **Bryan Smith:** Yeah.

[00:20:56] **Justin Connor:** You know, like why, why is that the end goal of artistry and why should we be craving for this? Fame that tends to ruin people versus really reveling and finding that unique inner voice that supersedes and transcends any of what that could or couldn't create good, bad or indifferent. So, you know, Lennon's one of those guys that I look up to.

[00:21:18] Where it was nice to see him because break from that traditional mold of even being like the psychedelic rock they did later on, I think he wanted to be so truthful to himself and had for years been playing these pop machine-like songs, which were amazing. And I love that rubber soul before that. And then after that and so on and so forth.

[00:21:36] But I think he's gone through the highest heights of all that, and he was probably fed up and felt hungry to really nurture what he needed to say. And what, you know, just real quick in closing with this thought. And I tell this to everybody. Could you imagine at the peak of your fame writing a song called.

[00:21:56] "A Working-class Hero is Something to be" like, who's doing that. I mean, up in the Hills of millions of dollars, it's like denouncing material fame, which made him so famous and saying that it's all bullshit really at the end of the day. You know, I

[00:22:11] just love that.

[00:22:12] **Bryan Smith:** I do too, and I think you're touching on something that is a universal theme that we see running through these Rockumentaries is an exploration by the filmmakers on the court concept of fame and what it means to the artist. And then you have this typical response of the artists like "Oh, fame ain't all it's cracked up to be". And that's not why I'm in the business. And to a lay person that makes no sense. Like, what are you talking about? That's not-

[00:22:41] **Justin Connor:** Dude you made it man! All the women, the drugs, the money. Yeah.

[00:22:46] **Bryan Smith:** So, uh, and I interviewed, um, I actually interviewed two of the filmmakers for "Remember My Name", the David Crosby documentary. So if you want to go back and check those out, it's Greg Mariotti was the producer with, uh, Oh,

[00:22:58] **Justin Connor:** I've gotta listen to that,

[00:22:59] **Bryan Smith:** he's a partner with Cameron Crowe with vinyl records and they produce that film.

[00:23:04] And then AJ Eaton was the director and I interviewed him, but David Crosby is a great example of a guy that probably got caught up in the fame and the drugs and the women. And, and then there's a reckoning that happens. And it's a perfect example of a documentary that. So excellently captures the tragedy of what happens when you lose sight of what's important friendships relationships and just the whole creative process and look where he is now.

[00:23:37] I mean, it's a tragedy that,

[00:23:40] **Justin Connor:** Oh, it was tough to watch, man. I was broken up and I was crying in bed and I'm like, Oh my God.

[00:23:46] **Bryan Smith:** There's a lot of redeeming qualities about David Crosby. And that's, what's so fun about these documentaries is you see the good, the bad and the ugly. You see the warts, you see all of the things that made them a star all in this one hour and a half, two-hour film.

[00:24:02] And so I love the genre and I love what you have done with this genre because I, again, I go back to the uniqueness of it. Now this was put out in 2017.

[00:24:14] **Justin Connor:** It was actually put out in 2020, 2017 is when I did my film festival around there. I was finishing the book. So, it's actually just been released.

[00:24:21] **Bryan Smith:** Okay. So, when you finish in 2017, it's been on Amazon prime now in 2020.

[00:24:28] Tell us about that journey. And we'll talk more about the filmmaking process as well, but. You have it in the can you're running the film festival circuit. How did you get to Amazon? What was that process like?

[00:24:41] **Justin Connor:** God, Jesus, it was a, it was a lot, you know, no one prepared because the funny thing is like, things are changing like every six months to a year and the distribution of a feature film.

[00:24:55] So when I had it in the can and went to film festivals, I thought I was going to promote it next would change and morph every six months or so. And there's no rules to this. And it really comes down to you start realizing why studios are, you know, whatever

they spend on a film. They're going to spend two or three times that in marketing, because so much about this as marketing.

[00:25:13] So it was a lot of preparation, you know, like, uh, the key art and the, you know, the teaser stuff for social media and so many different things, you know, uh, connecting with people in podcasts like yourself. So, it's a lot to take on for independent producers. And I think it's overwhelming to producers not knowing what they're getting into.

[00:25:33] So it's been a learning process, but I'm very good at multitasking. So, I, I took it on, but it would have been nice to have, like, I think there's a genre or a niche for, like digital marketing companies to step in and be like, okay, I get your project and we want to help your screw up time on this. But I, but I really enjoyed the whole thing too.

[00:25:51] So getting to Amazon prime, it was like finding a distributor. Now everything like MP3s with music is streaming. And now everything's streaming with MP4, which is I think, which I understand, but it's going to be, I think it's a daunting time for independent film. And while you're going to see independent films create because of the passion behind it, then it's, maybe even never recouping their money or, you know, it's just a different age now. So, what you're really trying to do is just set up all your assets and deliver it to them and then do your best at marketing and hoping it catches on with the zeitgeists at which I'm grateful that it did very well at some film festivals, and one audience awards and best performances and all that kind of stuff.

[00:26:29] But then you're still in a big pool of so many other films being known or trying to find their light of day as well. So the response thus far on Amazon prime has been off the charts because, you know, one of the things you mentioned with the Dave Crosby thing, just in terms of, you know, promoting as this as well is you could tell with all these different documentaries, like you mentioned, When you mentioned that tragedy, that, that documentary was with him, it's like you realize these old karmic wounds from their past are what impede their ability to deal with the massive fame or accolades, even if they were completely situated and had a perfect life, it would still be challenging, so. You know, I think there's an element of that, that people are responding to the film because we've all gone through these like traumatic karmic horrors of our past. And if we don't address them head on and learn the new ways to approach them in terms of releasing it, which I was trying to do with Maya, with the devotional path in the film, it's like, they'll destroy you.

[00:27:26] So you know that same conundrum came up with marketing it like, how much is enough? Am I doing enough and not knowing that? And you know, so I. I think that whether we talk about Lennon or, you know, Dave Crosby is it's like within artistry, I think artists are always second guessing themselves because we're fragile.

[00:27:43] You know, it's like, we're trying to put out our best foot forward. And even when we marched to the beat of that, our own geometry, it's still hard to come up with it. So. The marketing of this and the delivery of it, it's just been nonstop. It was funny. I started releasing it just about a few months after COVID went down, which on some people was like, Oh, this is a crazy time to release your film with that.

[00:28:01] And I'm like, well, everyone's at home. I got way more time to do it. And had I been working, or life was back in a regular mode. I wouldn't have been able to do this. So, there was so much work to be done that I, that came on my plate in a way that I couldn't expect that it was so great that I had this time to do it.

[00:28:16] So. I'm just so pleased that people are responding to it and it's starting to spread in different countries, and I feel like it's just beginning, I think, I think independent films that people love, it's going to take them one to three to five years to really find it just because of the overabundance of saturation of what's going on out there in the market.

[00:28:32] And I'm totally cool with that. I know it's going to find the light of day when it's supposed to and already has. So, I think there's an element of trust in that I think with those elements of Lennon and Dave Crosby, In regards of like, you know, I think artists are so fragile that it's hard to just trust yourself, even when you are doing the thing that is most ingrained in your soul, it needs to come out.

[00:28:51] So it's kind of the same process with the distribution mode. Like how much is enough, but it was like doing all the assets for all that social media stuff. I mean, it was, it was, it was so much to do it. I was unprepared for it, but it was also fun because you have to find the play and joy in doing that as if you do write a song or making a film or else it will destroy you.

[00:29:11] **Bryan Smith:** Yeah. Well, you did a nice job with your press kit. I saw your press kit and you; you look like, you know what you're doing, but how do you know that you're making the right moves, that you're being treated fairly when it's your first feature film and you're brand new to this world. I mean, you've been acting for quite a while, but you just haven't been, you know, in the filmmaking aspect of it as a writer, director, producer, you know until now, right?

[00:29:35] **Justin Connor:** Yeah. Yeah. I think, well, I, when I worked in a lot of films and TV shows, I just watched, I watched how they made a film, a wah, wah, you know, there's 20 people on set as everybody really needed. You know, when I read stories about Kubrick working with less people than most big productions do, and, you know, I just kind of wanted to do.

[00:29:51] I wanted to keep it very slim and sparse and it, and that was the way economically to make something look professional, you know, at a, at a limited budget. But, you know, I just watched every time I was on a film, you know, or on TV show, instead of sit in the trailer, I would just get out there and just watch the set and see what was going.

[00:30:07] And being an actor helped me for so many years because directing these actors who are very talented, uh, I'm so grateful to have them in my film, you know, actors want to perform. And, and this was so much about not performing and just being, and it was good to speak that language. So, I didn't know per se what I was doing, but I knew that having worked on so many films and seeing why things did go wrong.

[00:30:30] That, that was enough of what I needed to, to know how to procure or not have that happening on mine. That really at the end of the day, no matter what happens, all that

matters is what footage you have in that hard drive. That's it? So, once you sign off, you've got to make sure you covered all bases and all angles.

[00:30:47] And, and I learned to trust that and I, you know, and I think that's, that was kind of the beauty and joy of it, even though it was new and not really sure what I was getting into, if I was doing it the right way, it was like, as I was going, just trust in him.

[00:30:59] **Bryan Smith:** So, when you got to the distribution side of things in early 2020, how did you know that you were making the right moves? Did you have a lawyer? Did you have an agent to manager? All three?

[00:31:11] **Justin Connor:** Uh, no I didn't. I mean, I got it to a lot of like the independent distribution arms and I think it was kind of too heavy for some of them or they didn't totally get it in the way I had hoped. But had really great reviews for it. And I think that worked out to my benefit because my friends who are with those companies that I otherwise wished, if I waved a magic wand, were there having a fair share of nightmare stories, but I don't know what's going on with my fellow.

[00:31:36] I'm not hearing back not to mention. I think it's more of the same credo at which I created this. And what we talked about earlier is like marching to the beat of your own drum. In addition to that, I think on the same line or same thought process is I am a big fan, I'm probably going to self-produce the book too, even though I have maybe some publishing leads with it just because I think it's important for artists to claim their work and build their audience with their super fans and grow that way. Versus. I dunno, just subvert your control or power into it so that you're making less pennies on the dollar for someone who you're not sure if they are as passionate about your project as you are.

[00:32:14] So I'm a big fan of pushing artists to just be like, retain as much control as you can. Don't go away your masters. Don't do you know, like, what are we, what are we doing that for? Other than that whole idea of fame, which has its own cycles. Hmm.

[00:32:27] **Bryan Smith:** As you may have noticed there are great resources and advice mentioned in all our episodes.

[00:32:32] And for many of them, we actually collect all of these resources for you in one easy place. Our newsletter, you can go to dreampathpod.com/newsletter to join. It's not fancy, just an email about each week's episode, featured artists and resources to help you on your journey. Now back to the interview.

[00:32:52] Yeah. I've, I've heard a lot of interviews with folks who've self-published books and they don't regret it at all. You just go straight to the website, buy the book.

[00:33:00] **Justin Connor:** Absolutely.

[00:33:01] **Bryan Smith:** And the royalties are, it's not, not even a royalty. It's just profit. I mean, it's a much higher. Return on investments and profit for the artist that way.

[00:33:11] And I think customers appreciate that too. They don't want all the money going to corporations and not the artist.

[00:33:16] **Justin Connor:** I feel that, I mean, my plan with the book is like, I'll do the print orders and do the audio books for all the Amazon and stuff like that. But I'm also going to do like signed hardbound co-, and I love hardbound books.

[00:33:26] I love reading hardbound books and do that through my website. And I will do that accordingly. And I just feel like that's like a better way to just work. One-on-one. With your audience versus you know, some of my friends, so I've had publishing deals or whatever, they tell me the numbers, they sold and what they've recouped from it I'm like, well, this doesn't really mean makes sense. And there's a certain kind of sweetness, I think, working one-on-one like that. And building up your base accordingly.

[00:33:48] **Bryan Smith:** So, going back to the filmmaking process itself, did you actually go to Thailand in India?

[00:33:54] **Justin Connor:** Yeah. Many times, to India. Yeah. I probably shot the first test footage for the film there just to see what it was like, and it was partly, you know, in the film going on the devotional path, I wanted to see if this was something I was sincere about whether this was something that was going to resonate and want it to feel it firsthand, and it was, it was almost as if I wrote "The Golden Age" to corner myself into being a devotee, so that I didn't wiggle out of it because I knew that this was my direction, but you know, artists and people in general can be tricky about. What they know is right for them or part of their fate and wanting to wiggle out of it and do something more comfortable of sorts.

[00:34:30] So I was really moved by the teachings of this guru, AC Bhakti Vedanta Swami Prabhupada, who was the guru from the sixties and seventies and the guru to actually Lennon and George Harrison, Alan Ginsburg, and a lot of thinkers. At that time, we started the Hari Christian movement in the West, and I read one of his books, "Science of Self-Realization".

[00:34:47] Which unfolds in like a series of interviews with him talking about spiritualism. And that was a big impetus for "The Golden Age". Because I'm like, "Oh, I can do it like a documentary", some of the parts from the film for those, who've read that book. You can see a lot of parallels with it, but, you know, I wanted to make sure I was sincere about this.

[00:35:01] So I did shoot a lot of footage in India and I find it just a beautiful tapestry for. Just the colors and the, you know, I'm, I'm a big fan of that culture and that, and the magnanimous teachings from the East. So, I just wanted to give people an opportunity. The people who've seen the film that hit it, that hit the deepest, not only are devoted, but people from the West who have had like an alcoholic father or an abusive mother or have gone through their own traumas and they hit me up and said, "you know, your story is just like mine and you allowed me to heal through my story by me witnessing yours" I'm like, "great". Yeah. And I think where my eye goes in the film by taking the devotional path, I think that's another way to heal from these things, because you can do therapy and you can do the things that feed you. And, but eventually, you know, how do I, how do I heal from this in a way to see that, how are these things that appear to have been setbacks or knocked me down?

[00:35:54] How did they help. Ingratiate a deeper sense of understanding of how much I benefited from them. You know, these are just, this is like part of my own karma, the stuff with my dad and mom was so deep. I feel like at the time I was feeling hurt by it. And by the time I finished this film, I was like, "God bless them" for their punishing methods because who would I begin to be without them? You know?

[00:36:14] **Bryan Smith:** Yeah. That answers a lot of questions actually, because you mentioned that it was kind of autobiographical or quasi- autobiographical, and I was wondering how biographical or autobiographical. It wasn't, it sounds like there's a lot of influences just directly from your own connection to East Indian spirituality experiences growing up.

[00:36:35] And obviously the home movies were, uh, I assumed that those were real home movies?

[00:36:39] **Justin Connor:** They were, that's exact, that's actually how the impetus for the film even started watching those. My mom passed me so long as I'm like, and I was percolating on what. To do for the next project. And I was like, well, I want to do a film.

[00:36:49] And I saw that I'm like, "Ooh, yeah, this looks like it could be the basis for something". So, it was semi-autobiographical and you know, it was for me to announce my wounds, but between you and me and whoever's listening to this, the last thing that I feel comfortable doing is time talking to people about how wounded I have been through, you know, a pretty abusive childhood with an alcoholic father and all that.

[00:37:12] And a sweet caveat to the story is I became really close to them after this project. And before he passed away, we became really close. So it all kind of worked out in a sweet way, but you know, it's good to look at these things and not get swooped by their potency and how, how much they can drown us out of our path and realize that this is just stuff we need to absolve to really go deeper.

[00:37:33] So it was. It was scary and it still is scary to have my film out there. Yeah. That was based on a lot of this old stuff. But I realized once you've gone through these different modes of trying to heal from it with a therapy, yoga, whatever you wanna do, do they still are there and announcing all this.

[00:37:49] It's just frightening to me and still is. But I felt like that was the only way to be completely transparent about like, this is very close to home. And, um, I'm, I'm feeling some in trepidation in terms of sharing it, but by sharing it so transparently, it doesn't have that power on me anymore, nor should it.

[00:38:07] **Bryan Smith:** Right. And I would imagine that the, the fact that it is a comedy, at least that's the way you've described it, or at least there's some comedic elements to it. So that, that is actually a safer way to get this out of biographical story out there because. You have some cover there, you know, it's like, it's like, well, that's true, but now it's not completely a hundred percent.

[00:38:28] **Justin Connor:** And named me and mother character of Maya, O'Malley, Maya being all that is not, or the illusion of the material world. There's a lot of double entendres in it, but even naming it and alter ego and, you know, he's like, he's kinda my Ziggy Stardust type of character with less makeup. But, you know, I think even naming another character created enough distance because the themes and what I was exploring, and sharing was so palpably intense for me and frightening to reveal that I had to like name it as someone else.

[00:38:59] Just to like, create a little safe distance, hence the book as well. So

[00:39:04] **Bryan Smith:** I forget who said this, but there was a writer who said, if you want to write fiction, write an autobiography. If you want to tell the truth, write fiction or something like that, where. The memoir perhaps is the least true and honest, form of literature out there.

[00:39:25] But, yeah, you find it in fiction, and you find it in dramatizations more than you do in other forms.

[00:39:30] **Justin Connor:** Yeah. Art imitates life, like, you know, Eugene O'Neil's "Long Journey" and "Tonight" that, uh, you know, I remember seeing that on stage and being like, wow, this guy had a tough childhood, or this Neil Simon suffered so many different filmmakers or artists or poets, it's like, you can't help, but draw from that, which affected you, good, bad or indifferent. And I think there's like a power and potency of. You know, art is sort of a function of disfunction, you know, we're like really braving our wounds that helped create us as expressive people. But, you know, there's some things that we're trying to work out through it, and I think that's beautiful.

[00:40:05] **Bryan Smith:** So, how do you deal with the fact that you have this music from "The Golden Age"? And of course, your 2004 album is that Kaliyuga, is that how you pronounced it? Kaliyuga, and you have this "Golden age" album, there's a soundtrack that is standalone on its own. A very solid album, great music, great songwriting and lyrics are impressive.

[00:40:28] That is something that I would almost want to hold on to and not give over to a movie. Because in a way I would think that as an artist, if you throw it in there, the soundtrack arena, soundtracks, maybe aren't as sought after or thought about as something that you want to add to your playlist. Even though I have it in my playlist right now.

[00:40:51] That's great. By the way. So how did you think about that? Because you're creating this great music and then you're handing it over to cinema. And did you think about that? Did you agonize over it at all?

[00:41:03] **Justin Connor:** I love that. I didn't really know. I guess. Not really, not really. I think in this day and age, and maybe that's why I kind of wrote the book too, but I think I wrote the book because you can only tell so much in 90 or a hundred minutes in a film and the book can go so much deeper as most books do in relation to the films that are based off of them.

[00:41:22] But with the music it's like, ah, man, it just, it seemed like. I needed to tell a story with the album that not only coincided with the film, but in this day and age, I think it's hard to just release an album and find people to listen to it in a way, you know what I mean? It's like it all cross pollinates.

[00:41:43] I feel like this new wave where we're walking into is you can't just do an album or a film and have any, like, do all of it. Like, you know, I think that's partially why I did the book too. They're all related. And I'm not saying, you know, and it's funny because while we've been locked up in quarantine, I've been demoing the third album sitting here over my piano and figuring out the songs which I really dig in.

[00:42:06] And I'm really digging it a lot in terms of like the direction it's headed. But it's also really freeing to know that these songs will just be songs. Although I may have one in a future film or something that just to make a pound for pound album. But yeah, when you say that about soundtracks, I'm with you, but I felt like it was part and parcel of this very same thing as if there were no film attached to it in the sense that I approached the album, even though it was in conjunction with the film, the way I approach an album or anything, it's like, I wanted this and I'm not saying I achieved it. But, you know, I wanted to make this like a classic, you know, sixties, seventies kind of album. And I'm not saying I pulled it off, but it's like, I put so much time into making sure every nuance and arrangement and such was with it.

[00:42:52] And what's funny about like this whole ownership of art, which is good to like, control your, what you're creating and all that. But it's that, even that in of itself is like a Mirage and mystery, because really like the publishing for this album, I should give to like my top 10 musical heroes, you know, like they inspired it as much as it looks like, "Oh, look what I've created".

[00:43:11] But, so I dunno, I, I approached it pound for pound, just like, I want to rival my greatest heroes with this album. And I want to do that on the next one too. Not in any kind of competitive way, but as a way to like, homage, how deeply resonantly they've they've affected my and just shaped my life, you know?

[00:43:30] Like I should, I should get my publishing to like, you know, Harry Nelson and Dylan, all those guys, like, because you can tell when you listen to their albums, these guys were tired of this and the women like Joni Mitchell, I mean, go on and on like they worked tirelessly on these albums and you don't know to what extent and how quickly it came out.

[00:43:48] But you can tell, you know, with the lyric's nuances, the performance, the arrangements, the subtlety. They put their guts and blood into this. So, I owe them, you know, "The Golden Age" is theirs.

[00:43:59] **Bryan Smith:** Now was the, songwriting in the performance of "The Golden Age" songs. Was it influenced or shaped in any way by the character that you were going to portray in the film?

[00:44:11] Or was it just completely organically you at that moment? And the difference between the out the 2004 album, "The Golden Age" was just a natural progression of who you are as a musician and as a human.

[00:44:25] **Justin Connor:** Great question, man, that was probably the hardest part in filming. Because the first album, I didn't really know what I was doing.

[00:44:31] I was just putting together songs and like, "Hey, this is what I think sounds good. And this is where I'm at" and musical influence wise, but I don't really know how to play music, that one. And here it is, but I'm very pleased at that album. I think it came out. Okay. Given that I too was kind of like winging it, but it was, it's funny you say that because that was the hardest part of the film, because the songs are told within the film, according to the narrative arc of where Maya is, And I created this character because in the first album it's a little bit more whisper and soulful.

[00:44:57] And on this one, there's a little bit more screaming and a little bit more truth in it. It's coming out of like that throat and heart shocker. Like I need to cleanse this and I need speak the truth. So, I think that whole idea of addressing it through an alter ego allowed me to go a deeper in a way that wouldn't, if this was just a pound for pound album, but even more so while filming it, I had to be very conscious of where did I just come from in the scene prior and where am I going to right after?

[00:45:23] So it all had to be delineated as if it wasn't a narrative arc within the story, which it was. But it was also like the look of it. He starts growing a beard. He starts getting a little older, he's going through his drug phase. Like, where am I with this? And where am I at? So it was almost like the acting was the most potent and pertinent with the songs, but it was told through singing versus doing a scene where I was breaking down or something.

[00:45:48] **Bryan Smith:** That makes a lot of sense and some of my notes that I took down when I was watching it was Jeff Tweedy, Randy Newman. The reason I wrote down those names of those musicians is that there's definitely for me anyway, an influence of Jeff Tweedy in the 2004 album. Yes. And Randy Newman more in "The Golden Age" album because of how matter of fact he just states things.

[00:46:14] And sometimes he doesn't even sing the lyrics. He just says them. Within the musical notes and they become lyrics, but he's telling a story and he doesn't let singing get in the way of telling that story in it. And that's what I mean, I'm not saying that you were channeling Randy Newman or anything, but it just made me think of that.

[00:46:38] **Justin Connor:** That's good. That's great. You know, I usually get from the first album, I think I was really into Wilco at the time and, yeah, I love Tweedy. I mean, he's, he's fantastic. But with the second album, I get more from people like Elton John Dylan Lennon type of thing or "Hurting us". And I like that Newman reference.

[00:46:53] And there is something really cool about what he does in terms of like and with what Dylan does too, in the sense of what they need to say, they're going to say it and they don't really care how it sounds. You know, they're more invested in the moment of how it's

being delivered and trying to portray to you how you should feel, because right, and I love that, you know?

[00:47:13] **Bryan Smith:** Right. Because at their core and maybe at your core too, you're a storyteller and this is a mechanism to tell a story, but you're not going to be confined to having this be sing songs all the time.

[00:47:26] **Justin Connor:** Nor do I think it should. And I think those people have those beautiful voices where you really get off in their way in which they can sing. God bless them. And I love listening to that equally as well, but there's something interesting about, and lately I've been played around with it for the next album, in terms of just like singing without any instruments, just to hear like. Not to be like some weird spoken word thing, but just like playing around with just singing it very simply on a guitar or just singing it without any instrument and the power and potency of that storytelling device, without it being like a pound for pound performance, which I think is why I made "The Golden Age", because when you see someone on a recording studio, they're really trying to go for the goods. And I kind of have this standoff thing about performing live, which I'm sure I'll do more of, but it's like, it's always this funny performance thing where it has the tendency to take you out of that storytelling device, just out of sheer volition of people are there and you can hear the potency of people sitting there.

[00:48:19] And I think putting Maya in these different places where he's recording it organically allowed a certain sort of truth to emanate that wasn't pound for pound performance sake. It was more like pound for pound. Am I speaking the truth of what this message of this storytelling song me sticking Bay, you know?

[00:48:39] **Bryan Smith:** Yeah. So, have you found that "The Golden Age" being on Amazon prime has opened up opportunities for you made connections for you in the industry that are going to allow you to create more work more easily than you would have otherwise?

[00:48:53] **Justin Connor:** Somewhat, it's hard to even know where it lands yet in that regard there's been some, but I think what I'm act- it's actually like, I feel like I'm almost moving in the opposite way in the sense that I know what I'm doing next and that's becoming more of my impetus and drive and direction then trying to turn this into like another career step, because I'm not sure I want to go do, I don't know. I mean, I'm, I'd love being an actor and I'd love to do that. And I will probably go on tour eventually and do that, but it's almost like more paved the way to say let's go even deeper and really follow the truth of what you want to explore next, like "The Golden Age" part two. Like this was the appetizer, let's get to the main course and. I know that that is going to be so more off-kilter than even people perceive the golden nature within the confines of that Hollywood machine. That I'm just learning to trust that now and more focusing on the audience that really resonates with this and wants to go along for the ride.

[00:49:54] Because I think why I even created "The Golden Age", because I felt stifled and kind of hamstrung with like, Oh, I booked this job and I did my job and, and it was fun, but it wasn't like, I wasn't like fed by it, you know, I was eating, but I wasn't really fed. And I think I'm trusting. The food I put in front of me a little bit more, and I like fixing my own food.

[00:50:15] Now, you know.

[00:50:17] **Bryan Smith:** That's a great analogy, great metaphor

[00:50:19] **Justin Connor:** I don't have to eat as much.

[00:50:21] **Bryan Smith:** Yeah. I mean, that's literally, what's happening to us now in this pandemic is when we're having to feed ourselves more in our own houses. But that's an interesting word that you use steppingstone because. As an outsider looking in, I look at things like that and it's obvious from my question to you about what's next and what opportunities has this opened up for you? I do look at things like this as a steppingstone, but for you, it sounds like this, instead of being a steppingstone, it is a reaffirmation of what you're capable of doing and how it's going to be perceived and how it's going to land with an audience.

[00:50:59] It empowers you; I would imagine to keep creating in that same way without regard to what other people think. I mean, this goes back to what we were talking about at the beginning of the podcast, which is coming full circle, just creating for creation sake.

[00:51:12] **Justin Connor:** Yeah. Yeah. I know. And it's not like I'm averse to.

[00:51:16] Not joining the throws of putting myself out there in a different context, whether it be as an actor or whatever, you know, I I'm open to it all. And I think there's balance and room for it all, but it can't be at the sacrifice of following that internal compass. You know, so I'm, I'm more focused on trusting that now and I think I'm starting to find like a deep resonance, whereas like we talked about earlier, there's some of the greatest artists, we look up to have that second guessing of themselves. And I think I'm just, I'm kind of retiring that from my life, which is powerfully like a shifting for me. And maybe I needed this recalibration of being quartered off for a while to really see at as well as taking on the throws of distributing all this.

[00:51:57] So I think I'm focusing less on that because that's going to. Come and go the way it's supposed to. I'm not really putting my impetus there. I'm more trying to create and craft songs and the ideas for the next project and next album to be really on point and in a way that I feel like can help serve others in the way I hope "The Golden Age" has thus far.

[00:52:18] **Bryan Smith:** So, how do you define yourself if you do at all in terms of musician, actor, screenwriter, filmmaker, director producer, because you're this mix of artists and you have this acting pedigree, that's impressive just for my listeners. Look them up on IMDB and you'll see that he's been acting in a lot of great stuff for, for years.

[00:52:41] But Justin, you have a

[00:52:43] solid album from 2004, a solid soundtrack album with "The Golden Age" and as an outsider looking in, I think, what are you focusing on most and why?

[00:52:54] **Justin Connor:** I think it just varies, you know, like right now I'm just promoting the film and I want to , continue to reach a broader base and audience with it as well as the book is coming up next.

[00:53:03] So I think that's in the most immediate future. In that regard. And then, as soon as probably sometime mid this year, I'll be doing the drums for the next album and working upwards in that regard. But I think it just varies. I kind of see it all as the same in some contexts, you know, one of my childhood joys was, painting and drawing and I've been doing that every Sunday.

[00:53:24] And like that feeds me because it's like, it's totally autonomous. I'm enjoying it so much, and it's like, I see myself doing more of that, you know? So I don't know. I don't really, I'm not trying, it's only like I box in, I think it all kind of emanates from the same, the same thread, you know, I, I approach cooking that food at home the same way as I do approaching the next song.

[00:53:46] It's kind of like, It's a sinuous lie and that kind of into threads my whole life. But, you know, there's a quote from some of my gurus from the East. We talk about this, but this whole identity of even being an artist like I'm trying to abandon, you know, or it's like you trying to think of myself as like a servant of the servant of the servant, you know, like that, the cyclic succession of trying to serve those that inspired you, that were inspired by the person that proceeded them, so it's kind of beyond. Me wanting to get attached to any of these identities or ego stuff. I just, I enjoy creating so much and I want to look at it as like a Seva or as a service. And my service in this lifetime is being as authentically genuine as I can, as a creator or as an artist and all the other stuff, I feel like kind of falls in to place the way it, the way it should.

[00:54:38] **Bryan Smith:** Yeah. I interviewed an artist out of Seattle last year, his name is Hugo Murrell, and he had a professor an art professor. And I think there was a question from one of the students. The question was, " how do I become an artist? And these are young students and the professor said, "you are an artist".

[00:54:56] So don't even think about that. Like you are already an artist and the takeaway for me from that very profound, short, succinct, pithy comment or answer was that I think we're all preoccupied with becoming something.

[00:55:15] **Justin Connor:** Oh, God.

[00:55:16] **Bryan Smith:** You know, it's, it's the end goal of how do I get to this point? And you know, you've got, and so here, here you are.

[00:55:24] You're very focused on East Indian spirituality, which I think is more focused on just where you are now, who you are now. And the journey as opposed to the destination.

[00:55:36] **Justin Connor:** There is no destination, because we know from all these documentaries, we talked about the destination is rife with its own sense of madness. Now there's people that balance it well, but we know that there's no destination, there's no enjoyment in the material world.

[00:55:51] The only enjoyment comes through serving. So, if you look at yourself as a process of serving as a conduit, to the teachings that you respond to in serving others, by whatever talents we have, that we're all artists that if we do that with him putting, you

know, that little devil on our shoulder of expectations and the end result thinking that when we, that magically appears, then we're going to be happy.

[00:56:15] We know that that is the recipe for disaster, right? So, I think it's like, and it's impossible for us not to do this. We're completely programmed throughout our whole lives, through media, through news, through parenting, through schools, through, you know, just these tropes in society that once you've achieved this, then you've made it whether that's money or a house or fame.

[00:56:36] And I think that, you know, there's a lot of both artists, as well as older devotions that I met within the community that there's this deep sense of humility and really being kind of living beyond that whole trope of. Do you know who I am or look what I've done, or it's a sad game that we all know is rife with its own madness and has its own problems in terms of payoffs, if at all, and yet we are so deeply programmed by that. It's, it's a, it's a tough nut to crack in terms of being able to reflectively see. Is that what we really are like, and when we're talking about social media and all these people like pitching these things or these life coaching things, I mean, it's like beautiful if they're shifting people, God bless them. But I would be really interested to see like all these people, as well as all of us, like we're, we're, I think we're more attuned and inclined to be amongst communities and just creating. Do you know whether it's plants and vegetables or songs or homes or furniture or thoughts or ideas or philosophies then where what's going to happen.

[00:57:37] Once we get to the end of what are these philosophies going to lead to? It's like, well, I think it's really just embracing them and living them then. You know, putting it in this box outside of once that gets achieved, then I'll be enlightened. It's like, I don't know. I think it's a strange conundrum. And I think that's why we find so many people in these music, documentaries, like we talked about who, you know, I remember the Go-Go's one and they were at the peak of their fame and they surpassed the, The Police who they were opening up for and they were like at the worst, like state of their evolution as a band, going to Japan, touring and merchandise and drugs. And. You know, it's like, what you think is going to be your savior can sometimes be your worst demise. So I kind of have that higher. I'm trying to have that higher lens to see beyond all that.

[00:58:22] And it's, it's, it's hard because the program is so deep.

[00:58:25] **Bryan Smith:** Yeah. And I, I would imagine too, the pressures of social media and the folks that are around you, they're trying to get your work seen whether it's a manager or an agent or a distribution company, they're expecting you to be in that world to live in that world, to promote on social media. But it is a very empty demoralizing space to be in. And there's a new documentary coming out. I saw YouTube trailer for it the other day called fake famous.

[00:58:54] **Justin Connor:** It's a bit like the mantra for this generation.

[00:58:56] **Bryan Smith:** Oh gosh. And you can just imagine what the subject matter is. It's taking-

[00:59:01] **Justin Connor:** I shudder to think.

[00:59:02] **Bryan Smith:** -taking regular people and making them famous, deliberate, deliberately making them famous on camera.

[00:59:10] So you see all of the things they do. To make them fake famous, and they succeed apparently and getting millions of followers and then they get merch and all kinds of free stuff, and they get paid from retailers and clothes manufacturers. But it's a very strange universe that you can be sucked into thinking is where you need to be.

[00:59:32] **Justin Connor:** Yeah. And I think artists struggle enough just trusting their own intuition, then putting that, uh, on, on the cards as well. And you know, that's how I think, like Christopher guest, you know, his satire at all, I thought, you know, he was kind of ahead of his time laughing at what our culture has since become through the guise of this film.

[00:59:50] "Waiting for Guffman", where you see people that are like wanting to do this, this stage play. And then once they're cast and they're in it, then they're getting very uppity about their position, you know? And it's like, it's like, it's funny how that all transpires and. You know, those people that are really big, God bless them.

[01:00:08] I hope and have millions of followers if I say right onto them. But if the power and potency of what they're expressing, isn't really moving like an individual or collective cultural slash devotional, transformational shift then what is it all worth? You know, what is it? What's it all for? I don't, I don't know.

[01:00:26] I think there's, there's enough of a barrage of subpar work out there that I think it's good to really make creativity pound for pound about that, which can shift yourself and the zeitgeists in a transformational way then than resorting to the idea of being famous because. That's got its own, you know, wall of shame as well.

[01:00:49] **Bryan Smith:** Yeah. Well, it's kind of remarkable too, about how the last 10 minutes of this conversation very much followed the arc of Maya O'Malley and "The Golden Age", you know, he just wasn't willing to go there with the people that were trying to get them to be more commercial, just, just to survive basically financially, which was not an unreasonable ask.

[01:01:11] **Justin Connor:** I was just about to say is just like, God bless him. And I went, you know, I got to give a big shout out to Christopher Mae who plays the label boss in the film, John Crispin. He was so, so good. And I really pushed him to like, You know, somewhat his whole arc is interviews and it's like that history with him and Maya and the frustration yet him caring about him had to be so pertinent, but it all went to even more so had to be so pertinent is his angle and point of view from the business side of it.

[01:01:40] You want it to be like, well, he's got a point there too. I mean, Maya, like, you know, "you have this opportunity and you're kind of blowing it". So, so I agree with that. And I think both sides are right. I just don't think everyone's cut out to play this role that, you know, with kind of a higher understanding of what it means to just exist, given how impermanent we all are.

[01:02:00] It's like, you got to stay. You got to stay truthful to what it is. You're trying to espouse. Whether anyone believes it or anyone buys it because if everyone buys it and you're not, which one do you choose? You know, which pill you swallow? No, I don't know. I'm just kind of like marching to the beat of my own drum and I trust my guru and just the teachings and that's enough for me.

[01:02:23] **Bryan Smith:** Good for you, Justin. So, the book that's coming out, when can we expect to see that? Cause I'm going to announce it on my show, and also put a link on my website.

[01:02:32] **Justin Connor:** I'm thinking it's going to be around April or May. It's just it's you know, what's funny is like, when you talked about promoting the film, what are all the issues with that?

[01:02:39] Um, or all the different tasks, like the, the manuscript has been done and my editor and I are going over it, but it's like, you know, the repeated words, you know, so you're really like really, and then the doing the layout for it. So there's a lot of intangibles than the audio book for it. So, I think it'd probably be around May, June, I think is the target date.

[01:02:57] But, I think fans of the film will really enjoy it in terms of , in the meantime, you know, watch the film on Amazon, read the reviews. People are going pretty wild over it, listen to the soundtrack. And then if you. You know, I feel like the super fans from that well will, will gravitate to the book because there's something really intimate too, about writing a book that has a personal journey to it outside of a film. You can fill in the blanks a little bit more. And I don't know about you, but sometimes when I get into a really good book, I feel like, I think when people like books more than films on some level. Is, there's an intimacy that you can have to conjure up some of your own reflective use of what the protagonist is going through.

[01:03:37] And I think people are getting that from "The Golden Age" because of the medium of it being kind of a doc Rockumentary type of thing, but I'm really proud of it. And I think that's the reason I delayed releasing the film was because I wanted to make sure the book was on point enough to then release it so that by the time it's gaining some traction, I could release the book.

[01:03:54] So. It's all coming to fruition, right? Sarah mayor, Jim. But, uh, in the meantime, I say, just go check out "The Golden Age", listen to the album, see if it's your cup of tea.

[01:04:01] **Bryan Smith:** And this third album. When can we expect to see that?

[01:04:04] **Justin Connor:** Probably be I'm thinking like early 2022. I think so. I mean, if I'm being honest, you know, I'm hearing a lot of arrangements with it and it's kind of like "The Golden Age", but it was taking the step up in the devotional context. But I, at the same time, I think equally, if not more palatable, you know.

[01:04:21] **Bryan Smith:** Yeah.

[01:04:22] **Justin Connor:** I think that it's kind of like a, I think if there's like an inspiration for this album, like all things must pass George Harrison type of thing, where it's trying to find that clarity behind this, existential confrontation of what it means to exist and be truthful about these devotional topics while not being proselytizing, you know, by being very adaptable to the masses.

[01:04:42] So that's kind of where I'm going.

[01:04:44] **Bryan Smith:** Nice. Well, be adding that to my playlist as well, as soon as it comes out. Yeah. Justin Connor. It's been a real pleasure. Thanks for talking to me.

[01:04:51] **Justin Connor:** Absolutely. This has been so sweet, so sweet.

[01:04:55] **Bryan Smith:** Hey, thank you for listening and I hope you enjoy today's episode. If so I have a favor to ask.

[01:05:01] Can you go to wherever you listen to podcasts and leave me a review? Your feedback is what keeps this podcast going. You can also check us out on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook with the handle @dreampathpod, and as always go find your dream path.