

## THE RESISTANCE – EPISODE 17

### Alex Ebert interview – Episode Transcript

**Matt:** Hello, and welcome to The Resistance. My name is Matt Conner. I'm your founder and host. With me today is an artist that I've been a fan of for a very, very long time. Mindy Smith.

I'd love to start with the quote that we start each episode with. It's from our source material, from Steven Pressfield's *The War of Art*. And Pressfield just writes this: "Most of us have two lives: the life we live, and the unlive life within us. And between the two stands the resistance." Mindy, I'm curious, from your perspective these days, whether professionally or personally speaking, what does that mean for you? What is the unlive life for you and the resistance that you feel from taking part in that?

**Mindy:** I totally agree with that. I think that's such an intriguing quote and thought process, because I feel like all of us are going through the daily grind of trying to make do, trying to make things work, and then there's the dreams we have that we want to sort of follow through on and find success in. So to have success in your daily life of just the daily grind, and then to also achieve the dreams. To me, that's what I'm hearing from that quote.

**Matt:** Specifically, what does that look like for you these days? What is your own resistance that you feel like you're facing?

**Mindy:** I think it's just powering through self doubt and moving through just realizing that this is what I do. I do this because it's the only thing I – I'm referencing music, by the way – the only thing I can see myself doing is music. Everything else I do in my daily grind, which sometimes is just taking it easy, and sometimes it's getting the guitar out and playing it, is sort of to get me to where I can tell whatever story that's inside me I want to tell at that time.

**Matt:** Mindy, you recently, this last year has been partially spent in celebration of One Moment More, the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary, right?

**Mindy:** Yes.

**Matt:** When you're celebrating the release of something like that, from awhile back, and each album is this snapshot of who you were in the moment. Like you just mentioned earlier, you have these stories that want to be told. So when you're going back over stories that are from a different life stage, if you will, for you, does that remind you of maybe resistance that you had back then? Like the artist that you were back then, writing those stories, how much do you still have in common with her? And how much do you feel like you've grown from maybe those pressures or fears that you felt in those days?

**Mindy:** Revisiting those songs is sort of taking me down memory lane. I do remember where I was when I wrote the songs and different times in my life. Some of these songs are over 20 years old, prior to the record. They weren't written that year. And I find myself being able to take those songs now and still have connection to them, but with the story of my life where it's at. There's some songs, I have a song called "Raggedy Ann", which was about getting over childhood bullying and all that stuff.

I feel like when you start, the world can sort of bog you down, and especially this industry can make you feel a little beat up now and then. So that application of that to now has been really interesting to find that truth in that song. I'm a person who won't want to perform a song unless I mean it.

So if I'm not coming from a place of truth-telling on a stage, I mean I just feel, I get a little lost in the mix, and I can't focus on what's being said. So being able to do that with these songs has been pretty

awesome. There's a couple songs on that album that have done that for me. That have a whole new meaning and a whole new purpose. Even though I know why I wrote them then.

**Matt:** By the way, that truth-telling. Does that ever feel too vulnerable for you, or does that category not exist in your world?

**Mindy:** Oh no, yeah. Sometimes it's too vulnerable. If I'm in a tough place, or struggling. But you know, again. That's just how I've always played music and heard music and connected to music. And so one of the first things I learned early on is even though when I was young, and my mom was a choir director and I was trying to learn. I just wanted to sing. That's all I ever wanted to do. And one of the most important things that I learned was to be honest with music. Because what's the point if you're not really feeling it?

To me, that's how I feel about it. I mean, it's great to have fun songs and everything. And there's some songs that I just don't connect to anymore and don't want to revisit. Where my life is now. But yeah. I think if more artists could just set aside the façade, we all put up a façade, let's be honest, but if we could just let that kind of give a little bit and just be willing to be vulnerable to a degree, it goes a long way for everybody. I think the listener wants that from you. I'm lucky that I have listeners that feel what I'm saying. I don't take that for granted. And I feel like if I can keep on that path, it's worked out for me.

**Matt:** I love that. I want to go back to what you said. You said early on, your mom was a choir director and sort of even early on, you were learning about the importance of honesty in music. Was that something that was discussed? Was that just something that was inherent in the music, like your childhood soundtrack?

**Mindy:** You know, that's a good question. Nobody's ever asked me that before. I think it's just, because my mom, that's how she shared music, from her heart and her soul, so I learned it from just the experience of watching her and being among people that shared the same qualities when they were doing whatever it is they were doing. My dad's a minister, so he would always come from really valid places that he experienced. That's how he ministered to people. So I think that there was a lot of all of that in there. From both parents. And sometimes when that's all you have, and it's the only thing you look forward to, when I was young, that's all I ever wanted to do was sing. Kind of got on people's nerves, I'm sure. Because I would walk around the house, singing. I'm sure that was so annoying. Can you imagine? It's like gah, put a lid on it, girl.

But you know I had rough experiences. Like I didn't have the experiences in my schooling, with teachers. I just didn't have the encouragement that I needed with music. So I got that from my church family and my mom and my dad and other people who were involved in that world. I didn't have that in my schooling. It was almost soul-crushing.

So I started to do art, and I was getting to where I was like, okay maybe I'll just do this instead. So I was trying to find a way to be able to express myself without my soul completely being crushed. But that's part of, I think it prepared me, though. I think having those limitations from other people, and that kind of criticism to a degree that was not healthy criticisms. But I think it prepared me for the world that I'm in, because you have to be able to take some heat. You have to be willing, if you're going to express yourself creatively, unfortunately, that's part of the gig. Have a little tough skin. I'm not saying I have the toughest skin. I do get my feelings hurt or whatnot. I'm not asking for people to try and troll me or whatnot, but I think it helped me to be prepared for the big, no we don't know what to do with what you're doing. We have no place for you here. So to keep on, keep on, keep on going.

**Matt:** I love the picture that you're painting of your family and church family being a part of allowing you to honestly express things, yourself, and encouraging honesty through the arts. Because it seems like

for a lot of people, that category of church or faith, whatever spirituality, can become the opposite of that. Maybe a place to be dishonest or not fully talking about all of life or sort of like, it feels like that can be a touchy subject for people and maybe not fully going there. But for you, that was that place, which feels like maybe a rare, I don't even know if I'm asking a question here. Just more of an observation. But have you thought about that as a rarity of those things being congruent, both honest and then from the church?

**Mindy:** I think, I have a unique position on religion and all that stuff. I think, for me, all my songs that speak to that are more soul-searching. Feeling like a little distant or not on the right path, and trying to hear what I'm supposed to be doing, figure that out. And so when I'm writing about faith or lack thereof, when I'm struggling with it, or whatever, I'm trying to find answers. So that's where those songs come from for me. Sometimes it winds up being sort of a situation where people expect me to have a certain content to my music.

But I'm all over the place. I'm all over the place every single day of my life, so why wouldn't I be all over the place in my music? If I'm having a challenge during the day, and I'm really frustrated and going, "What is going on? What am I supposed to do?" That's what I'm going to write about, whether it's faith, whether it's relationships, whether it's loss, love, whatever it is. Happy times, those occasional happy moments. I'm being sarcastic. I think sometimes when I don't have a creative flow, because it comes in waves for me, it's because I'm not really paying attention to what's going on around me. I'm trying to sort of bubble myself and prevent myself from feeling things, or whatnot.

And so because I write from that place, it becomes a challenge. Because I write from that figuring-out-life place, if I'm not trying to figure out life, I'm not having anything to write about. Does that make sense?

**Matt:** Writing requires a wrestling for you.

**Mindy:** Unfortunately it typically does. I find myself, like when I'm stuck on a song, and I know there's potential there, sometimes I just put it away and never look at it again. But then sometimes I find myself, a door opens and I have the opportunity to write with somebody. I'll often take a song that I've started, and I'm just not able to get over that next place. And for whatever reason, the person I get to sit in the room with knows exactly how to help me navigate those waters.

So sometimes we have to trust each other. When you're writing creatively, or whether you're going out and performing, and other artists are performing. Used to be writer's rounds every single night when I first moved to town. I've been in Nashville 21 years. And I used to go to these writer's nights every single night. And I learned a lot from that. I learned a lot about how to be present as an artist. And I also learned a lot, because there were times, you have to be open to hearing people out when they say, "Hey, that's a really good song." Or "Hey, you know you have some really strong material." And I'm the worst at compliments. I'm the worst at talking about my achievements and all of that stuff. I'm terrible at it. But I have to remind myself that it's okay to hear people out.

At that time, too, they had a lot more experience than I did in this business. Certainly, it's changed tremendously. There's a huge change in how things are done now. But back then, that's how you had any shot at anything. You just had to dive in and be available to go. And be available to sit for 4 hours at a writer's night and still not get your chance to play. Do you know what I'm saying? That was part of the deal. It was part of the magic, too, of being here.

**Matt:** I want to look at, it's been awhile since you've put out a studio, full-length, I know you've had a couple of collaborations. I know that you just had some tour dates celebrating One Moment More, like we discussed. But has resistance in any way played a part in the time sort of away, or at least from an

outsider perspective you may be taking a break or something. Has there been some resistance, even a part of that?

**Mindy:** I think it's just navigating, again, it's about figuring out how things work. Because every single time you go to do something, something's new that you're having to sort of be challenged by. Back when I first started making records, there was a formula. But now you sort of have to be able to make your own concoctions work. And look at what other people are doing and figure that out. It's just become a totally different career, if you will, in the sense that I can make a record, but how do I get it heard? How do I get it out there, when there are so many things that don't work the way they used to. You put out a record, you make CDs, you hit the road, you go see people, meet people, and interact, and that's anymore, that's one of my favorite things to do when I'm out on the road is just getting to meet people. I think now that the formula's changed, and even when I put out my last record, which was an independent release, it's even changed since then. Just trying to find a way to do it where I don't go under. And while I'm very fortunate to have in the meantime been able to write songs for sync, write with other writers, and have those experiences, and some successes with that.

Really, my thing is, I just want to make an album that I get excited about, and go out and play, and to be able to just, either do it with a band or just me and the guitar. Because that's part of what I do. I'm not the kind of gal, even though I have been doing this lately, who likes to just sit in the studio and work. While I enjoy it, it's not all I want to be doing. But there's a lot of that going on. And there's a lot of opportunities there, and I'm fortunate to have had some cool moments with that.

But now I'm ready to get back out there. Making a record, putting a record out, it's more about okay, I've got this now, what am I going to do with it? Type thing. How do I get it to the masses? Because people don't really buy music anymore. So there's got to be a way to do that and still be okay to do it. I mean, I've never been in this business to get rich. I can tell you that much. I've been in this business because I love to make music.

**Matt:** Is that frustrating for you, or do you enjoy the challenge of trying to figure it out?

**Mindy:** I think I'm blessed, because I have people around me that can help me do that. I'm not the figure-that-stuff-out kind of gal. I'm more the "I just want to make music, and then...I don't know..." And that's really frustrating for other people, but for me it's always been music first, and then I don't know what's going to happen with it. But I do want something to happen with it. My brain doesn't function in those – I wish I were one of those people that can just figure it out. I always tell my friends that can produce, and they can do the pro tools, and they can do all of it. And I'm just like, "Wow, that's so great. That's so awesome." That's not where I put my focus. I wish I had, but that's not where my focus is. I'm still kind of old school. When I'm sitting at home, it's just me and a guitar, trying to figure out how to write a song.

I don't know how to write a song. I'll be honest with you. Every time I write a song, I'm like, "What am I doing?" I think that's part of, kind of keeps the rules open about it. But yeah, I think with making records and stuff, it's just a different world, and it's exciting. There's a lot of really cool things about it. It's a lot more accessible. So to me, that's cool. You could just walk out your door and carry your phone, and you've got any number of millions of songs you can have a listen to. But then again, I just want my little handful of songs to be heard, too. So it's different. And I think we can figure it out. But I think there's people that are working on it. And that's what gives me comfort. There's people working on figuring it out.

**Matt:** You just said you still feel like every time you write a song, you don't know what you're doing, which can feel a little weird, maybe, to someone who doesn't write a song. From the outside looking in could go, how do you feel that way, when you've written so many?

**Mindy:** I think it's just, because a lot of times, I can't remember how I wrote the songs that I wrote. I remember why I wrote the songs that I wrote. I remember picking up the chords and finding the melody. But sometimes words just fall out of the sky for me. But then most of the time, that's not the case.

I've got a trove of melodies. But I find myself with lyrics and things just trying to figure out what to say. I'll listen back to some songs that I've written, and I'm like, "Oh my gosh. That doesn't even sound right. That doesn't rhyme. How did I get away with that?" sort of thing. But I think if I were to get to where I were to say, "I know everything, I know exactly how I'm doing the formula, la la la," which is a great, there's a lot of folks who do know how to do that and can compartmentalize it.

I just have never been to that place. I can figure it out. I know a little bit more about it than I did then, back in the day, when I first started playing guitar and writing songs. I guess to me it's just always a place of, okay. Where am I going to get this? Where is this going to come from? I've been asked to do panels and teach writing classes, and I really wouldn't know how to steer somebody in that. I just don't know that I'd be a good teacher. Because I'm not sure how I'm doing it. It's like people who cook. I can't cook to save my life. But there's people who know, "Okay, let's put saffron in that. Let's put thyme in that. That's going to work together." They don't have a recipe. They just know it's going to, it just happens. And I think there's people who cook like that, and there's people who follow a recipe.

I think it's a similar situation. And that's not to discredit. I have friends that I go, "Oh my gosh. I wish I would have thought that line up." Or like, "That's awesome. That song's amazing. I wish I would have thought of that." I think we all have a little bit of that.

**Matt:** Where are you at in terms of a new collection?

**Mindy:** Oh, I have the songs. I have the songs. Wouldn't hurt to have a couple more. I think it's just about committing to direction and finding, my thought process on it is, I kind of want to go back to, I've gone a lot of different places with my records, just to keep it interesting. But I kind of want to dial it back and go back to the old school way of doing things. Just a live band type situation. For me that's, the energy is awesome when you get to be in a studio, and players are just feeling each other out and having a great time. So I'm thinking, I don't know. I just have to pick a direction. I just have to go with it and just go with my gut.

**Matt:** Is that hard for you to do, normally?

**Mindy:** Yeah? Maybe? I'm a Gemini.

**Matt:** What does that mean, for us who are not Zodiac?

**Mindy:** Yeah I'm not Zodiac either. I just know mine, so if you were to ask me about anybody else's, I wouldn't know a thing about it. But I know that, the twin sign, I think it's the twin sign. You have a hard time making decisions, but when you do it, you kind of carry it through. But I don't know what I'm talking about. That's the last thing I need to be talking about is zodiac signs.

**Matt:** I know. We'll couch it in that way. Mindy's the zodiac consultant. And let it ride.

**VISIT:** [Mindy Smith](#)