

700. Marooned with my Music: Luke Thompson

Transcript

[00:00:00] **Luke Thompson:** [00:00:00] You're listening to Luke's English Podcast. For more information, visit teacheruke.co.uk.

[00:00:16] Hello, this is episode 700, which is a fairly big milestone for this podcast. I was wondering what to do for this episode, but then my cousin Oliver suggested that he interview me for an episode of Marooned With My Music. Now you might not be familiar with this podcast series marooned with my music.

[00:00:39] Long-term listeners might remember that I have done three previous episodes using this theme one with my dad, one with my mum and one with my brother, James, and they are episodes 248, 250 and 252, if you'd like to find them in the archive and listen. So the concept [00:01:00] of marooned with my music is very similar to the concept of an extremely successful and long running BBC radio four program called Desert Island Discs.

[00:01:12] Many of you will be familiar with it. I'm sure you can find the Desert Island Discs podcast and stuff and find all of the interviews that they've done on it. So the concept of marooned with my music is very similar. In fact, to be honest, the concept is basically exactly the same, but I thought that I should rename it at least.

[00:01:30] And I've renamed it, marooned with my music, just so that it's not a totally blatant copy. So the concept is that the guest on the show is going to be marooned on a desert island. Okay. Marooned means, you know, left there on their own. A desert island is an island where there are no people, usually a small island somewhere they're going to live like Tom Hanks in the film cast away.

[00:01:59] It's [00:02:00] just an imaginary thing. Of course, nobody actually gets sent to a remote desert island. It's just an imaginary thing. But the guest imagines that it's happening and they are set a task. They can choose just eight records to rescue and take to the desert island. Eight you know, music records and I suppose a record player Plus they can choose one book and one luxury item of their choice to be left on the desert island with.

[00:02:28] Okay. So during the interview, the guest is asked to explain their musical choices while also assessing their life up to that point before waving farewell to everyone and living the rest of their days on a desert island. It's quite an odd concept, but the thing is it works. Desert Island Discs is pretty much a national British institution, and there are many, many episodes in the BBC archives. So being able to do your own Desert Island Discs is a great privilege, and so [00:03:00] it's very nice of Oliver to suggest it. So Oliver is the guest interviewer, and I am the interviewee in this case. I hope you enjoy listening to me, talk about my life and some of my favorite pieces of music and that you don't find this all too self-indulgent or anything.

[00:03:16] So we're going to start in just a second. During this call, Oliver was in California where he lives and I was in Paris . For him, it was the end of the day and he was about to go

to bed. But for me, it was the beginning of the day and I just got up and I was talking to Oliver before everyone else had got up.

[00:03:33] So it was like six 30 in the morning for me. But anyway, let's just imagine now that I'm going to be plucked from my normal life and put on a desert island. But before that happens, I'm going to have one last interview to talk about my life as a whole. I hope you consider it worthy of your attention.

[00:03:51] So let's begin Marooned With My Music.

[00:04:28] [00:04:00] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:04:28] Welcome to Marooned with my Music. I'm very honored to be a guest host on this week's podcast. I mean, even though I'm a Thompson, I'm obviously a poor stand-in for Luke, but it's for a good reason because Luke today is the guest on his own podcast for his seven hundredth episode, I believe.

[00:04:46] So, Luke Thompson. He's a man of many talents, many interests, many cultures, a musician, a teacher, a podcaster, a comedian, a very good impressionist, a husband and a father, and of course, a cousin [00:05:00] importantly to me, and I'm very honored to find out more about Luke's life through the music that is most precious to him today. So welcome Luke, to your

[00:05:09] **Luke Thompson:** [00:05:09] own podcast.

[00:05:10] Thank you. This is very odd. First of all, being interviewed on my own podcast, but also having to choose eight songs in this episode of marooned with my music. I mean it's kind of a cultural milestone, isn't it? Is that the right phrase this, this radio show format and having to choose eight songs is extremely difficult, frustratingly so. Where you realise that you're, you're narrowing things down to only eight songs, somehow it feels like I've lost most of the good stuff. And I've had to hack it all down to only eight things, but still, it's always impossible to choose only eight songs, isn't it? Especially if you love music.

[00:05:51] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:05:51] How did you approach the task?

[00:05:54] **Luke Thompson:** [00:05:54] So I decided that I would try to pick songs that represent periods of [00:06:00] my life, but I haven't really done that very successfully because while also doing that, I wanted to pick songs that I just love and that are meaningful to me in some way. So some things relate to different periods of my life, but then other other things are just bits of music I love.

[00:06:17] And I'm going to have to try and shoe horn them into my life story in some way. I don't know if I can do that, but anyway.

[00:06:24] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:06:24] The great, sort of characters on, Desert Island Discs that series have have more than one appearance. So maybe you can get another chance to follow up.

[00:06:34] **Luke Thompson:** [00:06:34] I suppose so. It's my podcast. I can do what I want.

[00:06:36] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:06:36] Yeah, exactly. Okay. Well, listen, let's, let's talk about where you are now in your life. So you're living in Paris, with your wife and daughter. That's right. You're up recording a very popular award-winning podcast and you're spending your time. You're still doing comedy when, when global pandemics allow, but tell me, are you in a, are you in a good place in your [00:07:00] life? Are you arrived at somewhere that you're content?

[00:07:02] **Luke Thompson:** [00:07:02] Yeah. Absolutely. I mean, there's, there are times in your life and you, maybe you will share this, this feeling, especially when you are in your twenties or something like that, where you are trying to imagine what your life is going to be. You're trying to picture what you're going to do with yourself.

[00:07:20] You're trying to work out what kind of person you'll be when you're in your, you know, you're approaching your mid forties. Adulthood, proper adulthood is sort of a thing that you don't really know how to do. You don't know what it's going to be like, you don't know what shape it will be or how you're going to get there.

[00:07:35] But if I was, if I was 20 something again, and I looked at myself now, I think I'd actually be pretty chuffed. It's obviously living in Paris is, is kind of extraordinary. I never really expected this to go out to get my lunch or to go to the post office and wow. I'm in Paris and look, there's the Eiffel tower.

[00:07:52] There's the opera house. And there's like, this is bizarre on a daily basis. I've been here for gosh, is it nine years now? [00:08:00] Something like that nearly nine years. And it's still every day. It feels weird. What am I doing? Living in Paris, but that's cool. That's a really good feeling. Also, yeah, so I'm married and I've got a child, which is also, how did that happen?

[00:08:14] How did, who, who, who agrees to be with me and to let that happen? So I feel sort of very lucky that in a sense, I've made it to this position and it, and it everything's kind of going okay. I don't know how I did it. I don't know what happened maybe over the last 10 or 15 years. But things seem to sort of slot into place, also doing, doing a podcast, which is kind of the main thing I do now is a total dream come true.

[00:08:40] I mean, it's extraordinary. Thank God for the internet because I'm, so when I was a teenager, when I was leaving school or doing my A levels or going to university, I had no idea that this could have been a possibility and yet it is a dream come true because I always imagined or hoped or dreamed about having my own radio show.

[00:09:00] [00:09:00] It's always been a, kind of a, a little fantasy of mine ever since James, my brother and, and I used to play around with cassette recorders. You know, those old cassette recorders from the eighties. You'd have a radio and there was a tape player with a record button. You could record songs off the radio, but often they'd have a little in-built microphone in them.

[00:09:22] You could select the microphone and then you could record yourself. So we used to record our own little radio shows and adverts and things like that. And it was always lots of fun, but yeah, somehow I managed to get into broadcasting sort of through the back door

in some way where I just kind of did it myself. So thank God for podcasting. I'm very happy with that development in the world. That podcasts are a thing because it totally gave me an option in my life, which is perfect.

[00:09:53] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:09:53] I do think all the things that you did kind of led to this place of stand up [00:10:00] comedy, teaching, playing in bands, you know, the things you did when you were a kid and it is like the perfect medium for all the things that you like to do, and...

[00:10:08] **Luke Thompson:** [00:10:08] studying media, studying culture at university. I did actually, I said that I didn't do a lot of work experience. I did do quite a few work experience placements in production companies.

[00:10:18] I spent a week at a weather, a little company that produced weather reports for regional TV stations. So they had just like the way that they do weather reports on TV, they had like a little studio and the presenters would describe the, what was going on on the map. And they had a monitor, so they would just basically, they would make weather reports. They'd design the graphics to show the weather, you know, giving summaries of the weather reports and there'd be a person in the studio, you know, giving directions and stuff. And so I spent a week there and they even like got me to do a weather report. Offline. I mean, I wasn't on TV, but they kind of [00:11:00] did it and they filmed it and stuff.

[00:11:01] And so I did a few of those things. So it was, I was, was always kind of somehow thinking I'm going to get into broadcasting, but the kind of, what was it that stopped me? I don't, I'm not sure, really. I felt like the world was a bit intimidating, the kind of job market. And at the time, I wasn't sure of myself at all.

[00:11:17] I didn't know what I wanted to do or who I was. I wasn't confident. And so I wasn't able to capitalize on those work experience placements, plus the fact that my dad made his career in broadcasting and working for the BBC. Yeah. I felt a bit like I was in his shadow. And like, you know, he helped me get work experience placements.

[00:11:38] So every time I walked into some company, they're like, Oh yeah, we know your dad. So I always wanted to do my own thing and yet I still wanted to do broadcasting. So I sort of ended up doing it like this.

[00:11:51] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:11:51] It was water flows in one direction. It was just, it was destiny.

[00:11:55] **Luke Thompson:** [00:11:55] It was meant to happen.

[00:11:57] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:11:57] It was so listen. We were going to come to your first [00:12:00] disc now.

[00:12:01] What's your first musical selection for us?

[00:12:04] **Luke Thompson:** [00:12:04] My first musical choice. So I wanted something to sort of summarise my early childhood, you know, my, my childhood days, which were spent playing, messing around, making homemade radio shows with my brother, watching lots of

classic films that we had on VHS, like Star Wars, playing with toys, playing with Star Wars figures, and generally having a pretty wonderful time. I mean, we grew up in the eighties and I was thinking that maybe the best time in all of human history, certainly if you live in, if you lived in England, it was one of the best times in all of human history to grow up because we had some technology. It was pretty basic stuff, but we had things like videos and some basic computer games and things, but the technology wasn't overwhelming.

[00:12:56] It wasn't like the internet where it dominates everything in your life. So we lived a very [00:13:00] simple, innocent sort of existence, but with lots of cool stuff, like good toys, games, films, and things, and in a relatively safe, stable situation. It's not like the environment was all going wrong, or at least we didn't know about it.

[00:13:14] No issues with, with, you know, all the trouble that comes with the internet and kids these days. And I just feel like it was pretty amazing. So the song that I've chosen is, is by Madness, which is, I think the band that. It's like my family's band. We all love the Beatles, but somehow Madness seems to sum up or represent the spirit of, of being in my family, certainly in the eighties.

[00:13:40] And the song is called The Return of the Los Palmas Seven, which is an instrumental track, but I just love the song. It's just got us timelessness to it and it's fun, and it's funny as well. It's kind of comedic, especially if you watch the video. So it makes me think of the video, which is a, sort of like [00:14:00] a montage of so many clips of different things.

[00:14:03] There's like little clips from star Wars in the video. I don't know how they got away with that and various other little images and generally. It's just a great tune and it just represents the sort of innocence and fun of my childhood days. And this will always remind me of that feeling, listening to this.

[00:14:23] Plus I love the bassline. I know my dad loves this. So that's the first song Madness - The Return of the Los Palmas Seven.

[00:14:31] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:14:31] Let's have a [00:15:00] listen. That was Return of the Los Palmas Seven by Madness. Your first choice. So let's go back now. You, you talked about your childhood in the eighties, the sort of the the best period to be a kid in recent history, as you say, but what was it, how would you describe your home life then?

[00:15:38] What was it? What was it like? There was you your you're the youngest of two. So it was you, your brother. Was it loud, was it raucous? Was it calm?

[00:15:49] **Luke Thompson:** [00:15:49] I mean, I, I remember it being fairly calm. I don't, it didn't seem that chaotic having three kids in the family, like for you, you know, you had two sisters, I expect that was a lot more [00:16:00] chaotic and loud and people trying to get their voice heard and stuff like that. In my family yeah. There was probably loudness when the two of us played together, but generally everything was pretty calm. My mum likes to keep a calm house. My dad too. I mean, he, he, he was working quite a lot. He would, he was the foreign news editor at the BBC for a while during that period. So he would kind of sometimes disappear to to different countries and come back bearing ah, interesting gifts. You went to Hong Kong and he came back with these two little computer game things. My

brother got like a big plastic, yellow space, invaders type game, and I got one of those Nintendo game and watch things. Do you remember those game and watch? It was like a little, it was supposed to be sort of an alarm clock.

[00:16:48] You could put it next to the bed, but you could pick it up and play a game on it. It was the very, very, very early version of a Game Boy, but it was only one, there was only one game in it. [00:17:00] And so I had the game, a game and watch that my dad got but yeah, home life was, it was sort of like, you know, looking back on it, it was kind of idyllic.

[00:17:08] I don't remember much drama or trouble no more than normal in you know, for children. It was just great. It was just a really good, comfortable loving environment. I couldn't really ask for more. I think it was a wonderful time to be alive.

[00:17:27] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:17:27] What kind of influence did your, did your parents have on you?

[00:17:29] Obviously they, your parents fundamentally, they kind of shape you, but are there particular things you feel like you learn from them or that... I see a lot of similarities between you and your dad obviously. You think so? Yeah, I think so. Not necessarily character-wise but in your interests and you've been drawn to similar professions.

[00:17:51] **Luke Thompson:** [00:17:51] I think when I was, when I was growing up, so before I got to about 15 or 16 years old, I was mainly into sport. That was like [00:18:00] the main thing I was into. I think probably my dad had a lot to do with that because he was also very sporty when he was younger and he's very talented. He can kind of play all the different types of sport.

[00:18:11] And so I think he was quite enthusiastic about playing sports and stuff with us. So me maybe more than my brother who got into things like skateboarding, which you know, is not something my dad knew about, but I would play football like 24 hours a day if I, if I had the chance at that period. And my dad would be always up for playing with me and we used to watch football together.

[00:18:34] I don't know, it's very hard to tell. It's very hard to tell kind of, I think there's just their interests probably influenced me so much like the, the, you know, things like football with my dad, but maybe with my mum. I don't know. I don't know. Really. It's hard to explain.

[00:18:53] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:18:53] Yeah. You don't know. I just guess you're, it's a kind of creative, it's a creative family. And you know, I could see that [00:19:00] your, your mum's a very creative person as well, and your brother. So I can see born out of that environment that you grew up in. I guess it was a lot of sort of creative play and rather than competitive type activity.

[00:19:14] **Luke Thompson:** [00:19:14] Yeah. My brother was always very creative and I remember lots of times spent basically just sort of hovering over his shoulder.

[00:19:23] So he would be sitting at his desk and I'd just be watching what he was doing. This is normally how it went and he would be doing something like making a model airplane. Making a model airplane at his desk. So, you know, there's old Airfix models, plastic models of a Spitfire or whatever. So he would have

[00:19:43] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:19:43] ...on the ceiling, as I remember.

[00:19:45] **Luke Thompson:** [00:19:45] That's right. Yeah. He used to make them and it was quite fun just watching him make them. But I would literally just be there standing next to him, watching him, whatever he was doing and it was always some creative thing and yeah, he'd make all these airplanes and then he pinned them to the ceiling. So they were [00:20:00] like these airplanes hanging down from his ceiling and stuff.

[00:20:03] I used to watch you know, I spent a lot of time, I think, watching and listening as the, as the youngest of essentially three boys in the house, my dad, my brother and me I was certainly kind of like, and, and my dad and my brother have very talkative. They're quite sort of, they can kind of, they tend to dominate a conversation.

[00:20:23] And so I would spend a lot of time listening to everyone else and not doing that much talking in fact, I was never a confident speaker until many years later I think famously not that famous, but they say in my family that for a number of years, when anyone asks me something, I would just say, "James say it".

[00:20:47] I just expect, you know, I got shy and I'd let James do all the talking. So I don't know, lots of listening. My mum, it's hard to explain how she influenced me. I don't know, specifically, maybe a sort of, sort of, sort of [00:21:00] thoughtfulness of some kind. She's a very thoughtful person and observant, maybe that. I don't know really.

[00:21:07] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:21:07] No, I think that's a good, that's a good, good description. I remember you as being definitely being sort of an observer and, you know, you were obviously absorbing and taking all this stuff in that later in life has sort of flowed out.

[00:21:21] **Luke Thompson:** [00:21:21] Yeah. Maybe, maybe that's what happened. I wasn't very confident. I was never very confident as a kid. And so I was more interested in doing things like playing sport and playing music rather than, I don't know. Didn't really know who I was. It takes ages to work out who you are, doesn't it?

[00:21:40] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:21:40] Yeah, it does. Yeah. I don't think anyone does really until kind of quite late in life often.

[00:21:45] **Luke Thompson:** [00:21:45] Maybe not even then sometimes,

[00:21:48] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:21:48] But tell me, look we're ready for another tune. So what's next up?

[00:21:52] **Luke Thompson:** [00:21:52] Okay. So the next track I wanted something, so again, this is, this is a song from my childhood, but it's also a song that I [00:22:00] still listen to and enjoy to this day. In fact, it's probably one of my favorite all-time songs of all time.

[00:22:07] And so this is Cheese and Onions by the Rutles written by Neil Innes, of course. And so the reason I've chosen Cheese and Onions, well, I'm a huge fan of the Beatles, but I may be even a bigger fan of the Rutles if that's possible, but I love them so much. So the Rutles yes, was a film that was made by some of the members of Monty Python's Flying Circus.

[00:22:32] It's basically like the Beatles meets Monty Python, and it's a parody film of the Beatles. But the thing is it's a parody done in the most affectionate way and in a very respectful way in terms of its accuracy, even down to the fact that Neil Innes was asked, in about a two week period to write 10 or 20 songs for the film.

[00:22:55] And he was asked to write 10 or 20 sort of Beatle type songs. And he went [00:23:00] away. He consciously decided not to listen to any of the Beatles music so that it wouldn't influence him too directly, but he wrote an album's worth of material that is just. It's it's in the Beatles mode in the sense that it's kind of like meant to sound like the Beatles, but because Neil Innes is so clever, the songs stand up on their own and I find them not only are they not only are they kind of part of the Beatles world and George Harrison said that himself, he said that the Rutles is all part of the soup. That they're all part of that kind of world of the Beatles. So for me that it's like the Beatles in an alternate universe, but yes, I find the music funny and there's a lot of like levity in the, in, in that.

[00:23:42] And when I listen to Rutle music, it makes me smile. But also I find the songs quite profound, not profound poignant. I find the songs very poignant as well. And this one in particular is very poignant. It's written in a kind of John Lennon style. So [00:24:00] with the sort of piano and vocals, nasal sounding vocals and stuff, and it's essentially, he's basically singing about cheese and onion crisps, and yet somehow it has a poignancy to it that it's hard to explain in the midst of the kind of tongue-in-cheek parody and the comedy and the poignancy of the feeling.

[00:24:25] There's just like the perfect mix of, of, of that sort of thing. I, I, I like comedy. I like comedy music as well. And I like the fact that sometimes comedy music can be actually very meaningful, not serious, isn't the word, but poignant. So anyway, this is a song that again reminds me of my childhood, but it's one that I enjoy personally, on, on many different levels. I like that, I like things that work on a number of different levels.

[00:24:54] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:24:54] Like a lift.

[00:24:56] **Luke Thompson:** [00:24:56] Like a [00:25:00] lift.

[00:26:12] [00:26:00] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:26:12] So that was Cheese and Onions by the Rutles as your second disc. Let's move on now to the sort of next phase in your life, when you were, tell me how old were you? You grew up in Ealing in London and but you moved to Solihull, Warwickshire when you were 10.

[00:26:30] **Luke Thompson:** [00:26:30] I was nine years old when we moved.

[00:26:32] So we moved from a pretty urban place. I mean, Ealing is sort of a suburb of London, but it's kind of just London as well. Really. So definitely an urban place just on the

edge of London. And we moved to essentially that it was pretty much the middle of nowhere. So a kind of little village between two towns in the Warwickshire or Solihull countryside. The little village that we moved to had virtually nothing [00:27:00] in it.

[00:27:00] There was a park with a football pitch and some swings. There was a pub and there was a post office with a little shop attached to it. And that was it. And lots of fields, lots of fields, lots of nothing. It, it, you have to walk for 30 minutes to an hour to get to the nearest train station. The buses would stop at half past three in the afternoon.

[00:27:22] So the last bus would be the one bringing the kids home from school, and then the buses would stop so very, it would be very easy to be stranded out there. And it was a very, very much a countryside sort of existence and quite remote, quite a contrast to living just outside London

[00:27:43] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:27:43] In that phase of your life. I remember a lot of, I mean, as, as with all kids, that's like the crucial phase when you shape your interests and you start to get into the things that probably stay with you for life. But in that period of you kind of took up the drums and got into music.

[00:27:59] **Luke Thompson:** [00:27:59] So, [00:28:00] so yeah, yeah, yeah. Like about 11 years old.

[00:28:03] I decided I wanted to start playing the piano because I had a little keyboard and I'd learned to play some tunes on it. And I decided that I want to play the, wanted to play the piano. So my parents were delighted with that. And they paid for me to take piano lessons with a local teacher, which was great.

[00:28:19] And so I had five really good years of being like a great piano player, making progress, doing my exams, I got to grade five. And so I did, you know, I was able to concentrate and practice and stuff, and I got quite good. I don't think in terms of music, I don't, I don't, it's hard to say what, how I'm good at music. I don't know if it's that I've got particular talent in terms of being able to technically be good, but instead I think I've just got a certain feel that I can put into the music that I play. And so that was nice. That came out. But anyway, yeah, when I got to 15 or 16 years old, you [00:29:00] know, I started to grow up a bit and I suddenly discovered that it was I had lots of other better things to do than to practice playing the piano for an hour every day and play classical music and stuff. And I started discovering other types of music and suddenly was fascinated and interested by lots of other things. I mean, I remember when I was about 16, I felt like sort of my brain switched on in a way.

[00:29:27] And I wasn't just like, Oh, I'm going to go and play football. You know, it wasn't, as basic as that, I suddenly started thinking for the first time and became aware that I was actually thinking about things and I became kind of deep man and things like that. And so I started becoming less interested in playing the piano, but luckily for us.

[00:29:47] Our parents, my brother and I, our parents had bought us a drum kit. I think they bought it partially for James because I had the piano. And so they wanted to encourage James to do something. So they bought the drum kit. Officially it was for both of [00:30:00]

us, but I think largely it was to encourage James to do something, but I started playing it and I got really into that.

[00:30:06] Plus at the same time, I got a cheap bass guitar and started playing with those things. So it became about playing the drums and playing the bass and a bit of guitar. But Yeah. I just suddenly started getting into music. The other thing was that I guess, living in this house, which felt a bit like the middle of nowhere, you ended up sort of becoming quite inward.

[00:30:25] So there was quite a lot of time spent in my bedroom. Just working with like playing with my CDs, my CD collection, and making a lot of mix tapes for people. So again, this is why like choosing only eight songs is almost impossible because if you're making a mix tape on a 90 minute cassette, you've got about 16 songs to, to play with at least so only eight.

[00:30:51] I mean, it's almost impossible. Also I started exploring my parents' record collection and discovered lots of classic stuff in there. [00:31:00] And that was really good. So I don't know, I don't know.

[00:31:03] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:31:03] I think during during that period as well, because you, for me, from the outside, I saw you getting into, just all it just all sorts of different types of media, whether it was, you were really into music, it was up comedy.

[00:31:18] You were deeply into film and you obviously have a Star Wars obsession, which I'm sure all your listeners are aware of all sorts of different films, but it was just sort of pop culture in general, you were just sort of absorbing all of this became quite encyclopedic about your knowledge and I just feel that that was that period of your life. It feels like that will start to sort of bubble up and...

[00:31:39] **Luke Thompson:** [00:31:39] Yeah, I just sort of became really fascinated and really interested in everything, especially pop culture. As you say, music and films, it just became endlessly interesting and fascinating. Interesting. I guess just growing up, you get to a point where some sort of intelligence kicks in and you start to be inspired.

[00:32:01] [00:32:00] You know, and so I just got really into music and films. My parents' record collection helped, but it was just like this sense that music could be really exciting. And I discovered some new forms of music that I hadn't really discovered before, like things like jazz, stuff that had been around for ages anyway, but just that when I listened to it, it just felt like, wow, this is, this is amazing.

[00:32:24] This is the music for me. I remember being introduced to different kinds of music beyond just the pop music that my parents had sort of played in the car and the classical musical I'd played on the piano, especially jazz and jazz funk and those other more obscure forms of music. But I remember my introduction to that was like listening to Dudley Moore The Dudley Moore Trio, which was a record my dad had. Dudley Moore was, listeners was a comedian from the sixties. He was like a satirical comedian and then he became more of a sort of ridiculous comedian with Peter Cook. But He also [00:33:00] played piano. So that

was amazing listening to him. But then I got into the proper stuff, you know, like Art Blakey and, and Miles Davis and things like that.

[00:33:09] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:33:09] Is that a moment to pause for your next track?

[00:33:12] **Luke Thompson:** [00:33:12] Yeah. This, this does lead us to the next, my next song choice. This is just as a piece of music that again comes from my dad's music collection. And I remember him playing it to James and me once, playing the whole album and just, it just sounded like the coolest thing ever.

[00:33:30] And it still does. I don't know how it's possible, but even want to listen to this music now it's still as exciting and brilliant as ever. And this is just a piece of music I can just switch on. It's only about two and a half minutes long, but I can just get completely lost in it. I love the musicianship.

[00:33:47] It sounds like they just recorded it live in one take. So this is Booker T and the MGs and the song is called We've Got Johnny Wells, which is from the soundtrack to a film called UpTight. [00:34:00] And it's another instrumental one. But it's kind of, I don't know how to describe the music. It's kind of like funk music, but the guys were session players.

[00:34:10] They played on all of the Stax, soul music stuff, but on their own, they just, I don't know, just brilliant. And also the fact that you can clearly hear the instruments. There's a bass, there's a guitar as drums and there's a Hammond organ just four instruments and they're incredibly tight and it's just a joy to, to just listen to it.

[00:34:30] So this just represents the excitement of discovering other forms of music, even stuff that been around for decades, but was exciting and new to me.

[00:34:45] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:34:45] Okay, let's put [00:35:00] it on.

[00:35:53] That was, We've Got Johnny Wells by Booker T and the [00:36:00] MGs. So we're just talking about your time in, in Solly hole and your sort of teenage years when you when you had a bit of an awakening to all the different things and sort of art and music, and you're interested in...

[00:36:14] **Luke Thompson:** [00:36:14] And girls as well of course.

[00:36:17] Girls.

[00:36:17] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:36:17] Of course well

[00:36:20] **Luke Thompson:** [00:36:20] became an important factor. That, that included things like clothes and the way you behaved and the way you try to kind of, you know, present yourself to the world.

[00:36:32] Suddenly I was, it was important what girls thought of me and I liked showing off.

[00:36:39] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:36:39] Is that right? Is that, is that something that sort of...

[00:36:41] **Luke Thompson:** [00:36:41] A bit yeah, there was, there were a couple of years where I decided, Oh, I, I think I'm, I'm, I think I must be attractive to women now because you know, you started to get interest from girls and that in turn affects your confidence and your outgoingness.

[00:36:56] So when I was at school, I was generally quite sort of, [00:37:00] a dull figure, I think in, in, on the scene, you know, I would generally try and sort of blend in with the furniture. I just didn't want any trouble, you know, because at school, school can be, it's not a tough, not like for some people, but to an extent it can be a bit tough when you get kids.

[00:37:18] There's a lot of competitiveness, a lot of bullying and people picking on each other. And for me, school was just an ex... it was just a case of trying to just sort of blend in and get through.

[00:37:28] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:37:28] Keep your head down.

[00:37:30] **Luke Thompson:** [00:37:30] Yeah. Keep your head down. Exactly. And just get through it. And then when I left school, I went to sixth form college.

[00:37:36] A lot of kids just stay on at the school that they're they're at and they do their A levels at school, which is essentially still like being at school, but you don't wear a uniform. But I went to a sixth form college, which was a totally different place. And it was full of people who were 16, 17, 18 years old, so no little kids or anything, and no one wore uniforms.

[00:37:55] So in a way, when I started college, it was kind of like a new [00:38:00] beginning, a new beginning, a new start and no, no one knew me. And so I started dressing differently and I suddenly kind of gained all this confidence from like leaving the annoying twats that I used to go to school with, like kind of leaving all those people behind and going to sixth form was just brilliant.

[00:38:18] Because then, you know, I got into bands with friends of mine. I started experimented with wearing different clothes. I used to go to the, to the second hand clothing markets, the vintage clothing markets and buy things like old seventies clothes and things like that. So, that was cool. It was a cool period.

[00:38:39] Yeah. And it was cool to kind of flirt with girls and that sort of thing. Maybe that's one of the reasons why I wasn't able to focus on playing piano for an hour every day. My priorities had shifted.

[00:38:55] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:38:55] Yeah, it gives you even more respect for these concert pianists. You've got through that difficult phase

[00:39:00] [00:39:00] **Luke Thompson:** [00:39:00] Exactly, you need a lot of discipline.

[00:39:03] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:39:03] You went to John, John Moore's University in Liverpool. Is that right?

[00:39:07] **Luke Thompson:** [00:39:07] That's right.

[00:39:08] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:39:08] Beause you kind of, the big, the big shift was going to college. And I remember, I remember I remember from the outside of the, I didn't see you that often at that time of my life, but there was a, that was a really big change. As you say, you gain lots more confidence and you started dressing differently and getting into lots of different things.

[00:39:25] And what was the transition to university like then for you? What did you take from that experience?

[00:39:30] **Luke Thompson:** [00:39:30] Actually going to university was like a total shock. So actually, first of all, so I spent maybe a couple of, of years of just kind of living, I don't know how to describe it really, but just having the wonderful time of my life at sixth form college.

[00:39:46] And I spent quite a lot of time in the park next to the college, rather than actually in the college, in the classroom, focusing on my studies. So I did reasonably well at GCSE level. That's when you're 16 or 15 [00:40:00] and then college. I was just, was just having such a great time living that I didn't focus on my studies.

[00:40:07] And after two years in college, I got my exam results. And I remember going into college to pick them up and I came back to the car park where my mum was and I opened the envelope with her there. And I don't know what I was thinking. I was just sort of assuming that I was going to be all right and I'd get the results I wanted, even though my head was in the clouds pretty much.

[00:40:30] So I opened the envelope and the results were well, the worst results of anyone I've ever known. No. I challenge anyone to get worse A level of results than I did first time round. I still haven't met anyone who got worse results than me. It's a bit of a mystery in a way. Maybe it's not mystery.

[00:40:48] Maybe it's just that I wrote such terrible essays that I got the results, but I still think there's some mysterious element to it. So I got [00:41:00] a D do you know, do you know what my results were? Everyone's seems...

[00:41:03] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:41:03] I know that it affected you quite profoundly that experience.

[00:41:06] **Luke Thompson:** [00:41:06] Yeah. So, I got a D and then I got to Us.

[00:41:10] So a D is, is not that bad in comparison to the others.

[00:41:13] I mean, it's still a pass A, B, C, D, and then the other two subjects I got U and a U. Now a U is extraordinary because you've got ABC D they're all passes E is also a pass as well, actually. And then F is a fail and then there's no G H I J and whatever it just goes to N which is nothing, zero, N means zero.

[00:41:36] But then even below zero, you've got U, which means unclassified. And that is essentially like, there's no number or letter. That's just a line. Just a little horizontal liner, a hyphen for your exam result. That's what I got twice. I got two.

[00:41:53] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:41:53] Can I ask, what were they? I didn't know this story. What were those subjects? What were the subjects?

[00:41:58] **Luke Thompson:** [00:41:58] I chose some bizarre [00:42:00] subjects. So I took, I took physical education was one of them, which is not just sport. It also involves, you know, things like physio-therapy and a lot of, you know, sports psychology and stuff like that. I got a D for that. And then the other subject. So one of them was social biology.

[00:42:20] Now what I wanted to do was sociology, but they didn't offer sociology. So the next best thing was social biology.

[00:42:27] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:42:27] I have no idea what that is.

[00:42:30] **Luke Thompson:** [00:42:30] It's basically biology, but they focused on certain social things. So, so they focused on things like maternity and there was like a bit of sociology. It was basically about 90% biology, which, you know, involved understanding how plants drink water.

[00:42:51] How does water move from one cell of a plant to another cell of a plant?

[00:42:55] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:42:55] Very sort of it's quite Well, it's a science, isn't it? But there were right and wrong answers in that, which

[00:42:59] **Luke Thompson:** [00:42:59] Yeah it's [00:43:00] just science.

[00:43:01] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:43:01] and learn the facts. And...

[00:43:03] **Luke Thompson:** [00:43:03] It's great. Science is great, but I mean, I was just, my 17 year old head that was into jazz funk music and, and Martin Scorsese films just wasn't in the right place to really kind of, it didn't have the discipline to study science properly. So I got a U for that, which actually I sort of understand even a U though, cause I did hand work in, I think that what happened is that in the exam, I, you know, If you remember for my exams, you had to actually do certain things, right for the examiner to actually mark the exam. So you had to write a little code in a little box, do you remember? You had to write the number of the question that you were answering, you had to do certain little administrative things in order for the exam to be accepted. So I wonder if maybe I wrote the wrong number in the wrong box.

[00:43:59] And so the [00:44:00] examiner was like, well, I can't mark this because administratively it's been done wrong. And this is what I've told myself that how else could I get a U? Beause I remember in one of the exams, I thought I'd written a fairly reasonable essay. So anyway, the third subject I did was religious studies and philosophy.

[00:44:20] So for that one, I wanted to do philosophy, but they didn't do just philosophy. So they did religious studies and philosophy and religious studies involved, you know, the study studying religions in some way. So one of the religions I studied was Islam. So I was studying things like, you know, the development of Islam.

[00:44:40] And stuff like that. And also essays about the existence of God. So there was, there were the philosophical arguments around the existence of God. And so I wrote one of the essays I wrote in my exam was about evaluating the arguments for and against the existence of God. I thought I'd done a reasonable essay on that one, but apparently not, U not even a number, [00:45:00] not even a letter just to just a line.

[00:45:02] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:45:02] Maybe it was someone religious who really took issue with your

[00:45:07] **Luke Thompson:** [00:45:07] I didn't write anything controversial.

[00:45:08] I don't know. But anyway, it was a huge shock. It was a huge shock when I opened that envelope. My mum says that I, my face went gray. Because you know, two Us and a D you know, you're looking at your future and especially when you just assume that you're going to be all right, but no, I, I got, it was such a huge failure.

[00:45:25] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:45:25] Yeah. I think probably compounded by the fact that you are a very intelligent guy who's from a very well educated family who must've been like, "What?" and it does kind of like an error of some sort.

[00:45:37] **Luke Thompson:** [00:45:37] I am a very intelligent guy from a very intelligent family, but but, but yeah, that part of it was that my dad had done very well at school and had done very well at university.

[00:45:49] He got good A-level results. He went to Oxford university and got at least a 2:1, which is a good degree. And so there was a lot of, sort of a lot of [00:46:00] expectation, I think for us to, to follow in his footsteps. But not only did I fail to follow in his footsteps, I kind of essentially like chopped my own legs off so I wouldn't be able to make footsteps for instance. But yeah, that that's like shocking, like, and everyone always forgets, like I'll never forget, but everyone else seems to forget, like, I'll say to my brother, do you remember my exam results? And he doesn't really remember my dad

[00:46:27] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:46:27] Moments at that particular age as well, where you have a very sort of profound moment to you.

[00:46:34] That actually effects your whole sort of sense of your identity.

[00:46:38] **Luke Thompson:** [00:46:38] And it was a huge thing because, because they, so like all my friends who are in the, my year all disappeared to university and I was left. I just remember just spending a lot of time on my own, the year after and a lot of time of, of like sort of soul searching [00:47:00] and knowing that I'm a failure, you know, like carrying like a, quite a huge heavy failure on my shoulders and what, so I think almost what it did to me was that because I had such a good time those two years and I'd been quite carefree and I'd been thinking about.

[00:47:19] Music and other things. And that directly led to a huge failure that then I became very cautious and it not some confidence out of me. And I wasn't quite as strident in terms of like going out and having fun and just doing the things that pleased me, that I suddenly

was given this sense of like, I don't know, guilt or worry or concern that I was going to lead to it, you know, that just enjoying myself would lead ultimately to failure in my life.

[00:47:52] And so it was a very weird thing where I don't know. Yeah. There's always that [00:48:00] lingering sense that I could just screw everything up at any time. Yeah, I probably was.

[00:48:06] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:48:06] It was a precarious existence.

[00:48:08] **Luke Thompson:** [00:48:08] Yeah, that's right. I mean, you know, we're very privileged really. And I have, have nothing to complain about.

[00:48:15] I've had a very, very privileged life and some people struggle with all sorts of problems. So failing your A levels is not really a major deal, but for me at the time it felt like it was. Everyone else had disappeared. I spent a lot of time on my own in my bedroom. And probably became a little bit too. I don't know, withdrawn or reclusive or something.

[00:48:38] Yeah. Maybe, or just in my own head, spent too much time in my own head, probably, but then went to the university and actually it was a shock because I went to Liverpool and I kind of got a place at university through clearing or something. It was quite a late process, and so the accommodation was [00:49:00] quite hard to find in, in Liverpool.

[00:49:02] I ended up staying in the cheapest accommodation that, that my university offered and it was several. 1960s style tower blocks in one of the roughest parts of Liverpool and Liverpool outside the centre can be a very rough, tough place. And so here's this soft kid from the Warwickshire countryside, like Frodo Baggins transported to this tower block in the heart of Scotland, the Scotland Road area of Liverpool. And it was, yeah, it was a real shock. It was quite scary. I remember like two weeks two weeks after I moved there, my parents came to visit me, maybe brought me some stuff. And while they were visiting, we went out onto the balcony. So we were on the 11th floor.

[00:49:50] I was, my apartment was on the 11th floor. So 13 floors in this building, every single floor, identical. So, and it was all student apartments. So [00:50:00] you'd be in your apartment. If you visited the same apartment, seven floors down, it's identical. It's just the same apartment. Seven, 13 times. Anyway my parents came to visit.

[00:50:10] We were on the balcony having a look at the view, and then down below, this was a Saturday afternoon on the street below on the, the dual carriageway, a very busy highway, suddenly all these football fans poured across the road. And it was Everton fans chasing some Middlesbrough fans and they caught the Middlesbrough fans in the middle of this big road.

[00:50:33] And all the cars had stopped and stuff, and they proceeded to have a huge fight in the street below us. And my mum and dad were watching and there were guys like getting their heads kicked. People were throwing bricks at each other, they'd pulled wood out of a fence and they were smacking each other with this, with these bits of wood and then the police arrived and everyone dispersed everyone disappeared except for one guy who was lying in the gutter of [00:51:00] this highway after having had his head stamped on, he was

just lying unconscious in the gutter and the police and ambulance arrived. He was all right in the end, but that was a bit of a wake up call of like "Bloody hell you live in a rough place."

[00:51:13] And it was rough. It was really, really rough and grim. And so that was, and also, I wasn't really very well equipped to look after myself. I don't think I ate or cooked properly.

[00:51:26] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:51:26] It sounds familiar.

[00:51:27] **Luke Thompson:** [00:51:27] It was like Withnail and I ultimately, university life. It was, it was like yeah. Quite a lot of mess, no one doing the washing up, not eating and looking after yourself, properly, drinking too much beer.

[00:51:42] And in the midst of it all trying to, trying to make sure I didn't screw it all up like I screwed up, I screwed up my levels. So I managed to do that. Ultimately I came out of it with a 2 :1 and so thank God for that

[00:51:57] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:51:57] So tell us, give us your next [00:52:00] tune. What's...

[00:52:01] **Luke Thompson:** [00:52:01] The next one. Well, I had to pick one Beatles song because I'm such a big fan.

[00:52:06] And you know, I went to Liverpool and I think part of the reason I went to Liverpool was because I was such a big Beatles fan and it was very attractive to, to go and be there. But so which one though? I mean, it's almost impossible to pick just one Beatles song. There are so many I could have picked.

[00:52:23] I could have picked some from, from Rubber Soul, because that is the soundtrack of, I feel like when I was two years old, just kind of crawling around on the carpet or something. But anyway, the one I've picked is called And Your Bird Can Sing and it's from Revolver, but this is not really a typical Beatle sounding song I think, compared to a lot of their stuff. It's got a slightly different sound. It's got that kind of jangly 1966 sound. So it's not exactly the typical Beatles song, but why, why am I choosing this one? Musically I just love the guitar part. It's got a great [00:53:00] melody in it. Normally it's the bass line that I find interesting and Beatles songs, but this one is a guitar part and it's George and Paul playing the same thing in harmony.

[00:53:10] So that's just really great. It's almost like kind of classical music level enjoyment of music where there's harmony and there's melody and it's just really, really good, but also, I mean, this is a John song and it's just got that kind of conviction to it. The song is, is just it's got so much conviction and righteousness, but the good kind of righteousness, there's a sort of righteousness, which is like where people, you imagine, people being self-righteous and being arrogant with it or, or something like this, but this is like John he's convinced he's right.

[00:53:49] And he's, it's just flowing out of him. I think the song is about. It's, it's not clear what the song is about. But one thing I heard is that it's about Frank Sinatra [00:54:00] and

Frank Sinatra kind of arrogantly saying I've heard all the different sounds and you know, and kind of criticizing. The Beatles generation and their music, because at that time there was a lot of innovation and the Beatles in particular were discovering new sounds and new boundaries and things.

[00:54:18] And I think that John had heard or read an interview with Frank Sinatra and Frank was kind of arrogantly maintaining his, his sort of dominance or something in the world of pop music and kind of dismissively describing John Lennon's generation as nothing special and saying, you know, Hey, you know, cat, I've heard all the sounds and you, Hey, you say your bird can sing.

[00:54:41] Well, I can sing. Because bird was a slang word that, that Frank Sinatra and his mates would use. And so naturally John found this, John who had at the time, you know, taken LSD and it had kind of given him this burning sense that he was right, and that he [00:55:00] saw the truth in the world. And you imagine that like, John would have come up with this song or the lyrics fairly quickly before they honed it in the studio, but it just has that sense of just conviction, which is just really great to to get, to get a flavor of it, you know, every now and then you can listen to this and it just fills you up with this sort of great sense of conviction. And then there's the music too. So that's what, that's the track that I've chosen by the Beatles And Your Bird Can Sing. Great Choice.

[00:55:39] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:55:39] So that [00:56:00] was And Your Bird Can Sing by the Beatles. One of my favorite tunes too. I want to move on now. We've you you've graduated from university with a 2:1, which was quite an achievement under the circumstances of such a poor diet, I should imagine in general, self-care during that period

[00:56:43] **Luke Thompson:** [00:56:43] I ate a lot of baked beans on toast, lots of cereal, cereal for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Oh terrible times.

[00:56:49] **Oliver Thompson:** [00:56:49] The next major milestone, which I remember, which was a very bold move actually, was you, you took a job as an English teacher in Japan. So [00:57:00] from, from rural countryside to urban gritty Liverpool to then to Japan. What was your, what was your experience like arriving in Japan? because I thought it was quite a very distinct chapter in your life probably.

[00:57:15] **Luke Thompson:** [00:57:15] After university, I was honestly, I was like quite lost. It was a bad time. I didn't know what I was doing with myself. I didn't know what I, you know, I couldn't imagine that I would now be living the life I'm living in that. I've kind of, you know, that I'm all right. But in those days I had no clue what to do.

[00:57:33] No vision at all for my future. And I just felt a little bit Un... like I wasn't really capable of living in the world, you know, I just didn't feel capable of really doing a great deal. I felt like my university life had not really socialised me. In fact, quite the opposite. I felt like I was a bit out of place and out of sorts and sort of [00:58:00] mentally wasn't in great shape, I think at the time after university. And I just didn't know what to do and I desperately needed to find something. And I remember speaking to someone who, again, I was doing work experience at the BBC arranged by my dad and it was a horrible week.

[00:58:15] I just hated it. I just. It's too complicated to go into, but I wasn't very happy. And I remember at the end, the woman who was responsible for me, she sat me down and she said, so what do you know, what did you get out of this week? And I ended up going to, we got into the fact that I didn't know what to do with myself.

[00:58:30] And she said, why don't you just travel? Just go out and just have experiences, just go and travel, have experiences. You're young, you know, it'll take you a while to work out what you want to do. So she told me to do it and I thought, okay, I will. And another friend of mine had told me that a friend of his was an English teacher and he painted this picture of his life and I thought, this sounds amazing. So it was like, yeah, he teaches English in the morning. He lives in Barcelona and he teaches English in the morning. And then in the afternoon he goes to the beach and I was thinking, this sounds [00:59:00] fantastic.

[00:59:00] So it does, doesn't it initially, I thought I'm going to move to Barcelona and I'm going to do that. So I had to take a teaching qualification. I did a teaching course called a Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults, which is the entry level qualification. Really hard, really, really hard.

[00:59:19] You've got to study linguistics, you've got to study English. And you've also got to do lots of teaching practice. So there was lots of standing up in front of groups full of people and trying to teach them English. And that was a huge learning curve because at the beginning of that, I felt so awkward and so self-conscious, I didn't know how to stand up in front of a room full of people and talk to them, let alone teach them. I didn't know what to do with my hands. I didn't know if I should perch on the edge of the desk or if I just stand up or sit on a chair, I didn't, I did not have control over my body or myself.

[00:59:53] And so it was very healthy to break out of that by being forced to break out of it, by being, [01:00:00] being made to teach people and stand up in front of people. And it kind of broke me out of my funk sort of thing. But yes, I, I chose to go to Japan because I just thought, well, if I'm going to go abroad and do this, I might as well go somewhere totally different and far away.

[01:00:18] And there were lots of jobs available in Japan. So off I went and on the flight there, I immediately regretted it. On the way over there, I had a huge crisis of confidence and thought, this is a huge mistake. What am I doing? I should be back home in England, focusing on my career, trying to get some job in the media.

[01:00:35] What on earth am I doing? This is a huge mistake. But when I arrived, I settled down because it's the same thing. I mean, it's like, they've got the same stuff there. They've got gravity, you know, they've got Starbucks. Everything's pretty much the same, but it's not the same at all. It's like so different. Being in Japan, you swing between, this is normal, everything's just the same as it is back home. And then you swing to, no, this is totally different. They think in a completely different way, it's like [01:01:00] a I'm living in an alien planet. So, but that was, it was a wonderful experience going to Japan because first of all, I was teaching, working solidly eight or nine hours a day and teaching teaching teaching.

[01:01:12] So that was kind of, it took me out of myself, forced me to be more outgoing, but also it was just so different. And I was away from my family, which was quite nice. I mean, I love my family, but it was important to kind of break out, and do my own thing and be my own self, have my own experience that no one else was having.

[01:01:33] And it was a huge thing for me. It was a great experience. I had many wonderful experiences there and it started me as an English teacher and it made me confident and happy. So, yeah. There you go. So I came, you know, I came back to London, came back to England and continued teaching. Wasn't completely sure about the teaching until I joined the London School of English, which is a decent school.

[01:01:59] And I kind [01:02:00] of, really, and I did the Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults, which is like the higher level qualification. Very tough again, but it just totally sort of fixed me as a teacher. And suddenly I was like, right. I am teacher man.

[01:02:15] All right. Let's have another tune.

[01:02:17] Give me a sort of sense of purpose and professional confidence.

[01:02:21] So the, the, the next song, the next piece of music I'm going to choose is something that makes me think of Japan. Again, almost impossible to choose just one song from a period in your life. But I think I'll choose this one. So it's Cornelius and the song is Tone Twilight Zone, and this represents a certain kind of peacefulness and tranquility that you can get in Japan that although it's a very busy, hectic place in one way, it's also a very tranquil, peaceful place, a sort of level of peace and tranquility and calm that I'd never, [01:03:00] I never previously knew existed even in my days of listening to ambient music on headphones in my bedroom.

[01:03:09] The sort of, I don't know, there's just a certain vibe in Japan. I don't know if it's because of their religion, which kind of makes them Zen, but there is, there's Zen in, you can find it in Japan. It's just hanging around the place. You might just be in some cafe restaurant on an afternoon in a Backstreet.

[01:03:31] And suddenly you realise that you're tuned into a level of calm and Zen peace and tranquility that you'd never thought existed before. So this piece of music is a kind of ambient tone piece by Cornelius, and it's, it just represents that sense of calm, which was a wonderful thing to discover and then learn to tune into again, later.

[01:03:58] I like ambient [01:04:00] music. I like Brian Eno and stuff. I like standing in the kitchen, drinking cup, a cup of tea and just listening to something very calm and relaxing. It's very healthy. I think. So that's, that's what this is. And that, that represents the fact that I've found some sense of peace in, in Japan.

[01:05:36] [01:05:00] **Oliver Thompson:** [01:05:36] So that was Tone Twilight Zone by Cornelius. So we've come back from Japan. You're in London, London, you were saying the London school of English, and this is a period when you're you already started to get into your career as well, and start to, I think, did you begin the podcast during this phase of your life?

[01:05:53] **Luke Thompson:** [01:05:53] Yeah. So after teaching for eight or nine years, I started doing the podcast and yeah, that [01:06:00] was like also because I was working at the London school of English, which is a good school and they gave me a special responsibility to look into using technology in English teaching. And I did actually do a quick online course in podcasting, which was paid for by the school.

[01:06:18] And it was the basics, like file types and different platforms and this was a very early days, really for podcasting. There wasn't a lot of infrastructure for it, but anyway, so I learned the basics of that. And I did produce a couple of episodes of a podcast for the London School of English, but they decided they didn't want it because the style I wanted to use for it was a lot more relaxed and personal and just authentic and natural, but they wanted something a bit more professional sounding, scripted.

[01:06:50] And I was like, nah, no thanks. So I just did my, I just did my own thing. Just did it myself, using my Apple Mac laptop and [01:07:00] just didn't stop doing it.

[01:07:02] **Oliver Thompson:** [01:07:02] Look where it ended. And there was another I mean, I know in that period you started doing standup comedy and it was you really started to I think that the confidence you brought back from Japan, maybe you start to actually enjoy the things.

[01:07:14] **Luke Thompson:** [01:07:14] English teaching totally gave me confidence because all day, every day I was just in front of people. Not performing, although sometimes you kind of have to do things to keep things light, but just spending all my time, essentially presenting all the time that gave me confidence. And that's what allowed me to start doing stand up.

[01:07:38] If, if I'd never, if I'd never done teaching, I wouldn't have been able to do it. I mean, a lot, I saw a lot of the other people on the standup course that weren't really even capable of standing, doing the standing up part. Like seriously. Like they, they didn't know how to stand in front of an audience of people.

[01:07:55] They didn't know how to use their voice. Body language was not coming naturally to [01:08:00] them. And you see some people when they are put in front of a room full of people, their body starts to do weird things like people sort of physically close themselves off from the room, just instinctively other people weird, weird uncontrolled body language comes through. I remember one guy he would stand there and his head would wobble. While he was talking, he couldn't stop doing it, but his head would wobble and he couldn't make eye contact with the audience. So what was I saying that it was teaching that kind of like, just like when I went up, I grabbed the microphone, just felt comfortable, even if I wasn't comfortable or if I didn't know what I was going to say, you know, I didn't really have anything to say so much, but I just felt like the, the, the, the, the vehicle for it was

[01:08:48] quite well-made. So I was able to stand and feel quite comfortable standing up in front of everyone. And I was like, yeah, this is great. I can do this. But then finding the comedy was the, was the difficult thing [01:09:00] I managed to do it. But anyway, teaching is what gave me confidence to do those things.

[01:09:04] So yes, it was, there was a time of like Doing things, projects and, and trying to, trying to do something weirdly, like again, although I was a teacher and I'd been one for 10 years or whatever, I guess I was still trying to break into media or broadcasting in some way. And I ended up doing it as we've said on my own terms using this podcast.

[01:09:28] **Oliver Thompson:** [01:09:28] Will give us a, let's have another tune.

[01:09:31] **Luke Thompson:** [01:09:31] Okay. So actually. It was a really difficult one to, whether I'd keep this one or choose something else. There are so many different candidates for, for this list of eight, but I've gone with this one. So this one is hold on. I have, just to make sure that I'm saying this name.

[01:09:48] Yeah. So this is Patrice Rushen and it's called To Each His Own. And for, for ages, I've been struggling to work out how to describe why this [01:10:00] song is so meaningful to me, but it is I'll put it on. And, and like, first of all, it's just a really good groove. I like the drum beat. And the bass line and the keyboards, I just, it's just a really nice groove to listen to and get into.

[01:10:16] But for some reason, the lyrics always get to me. I don't know why they sort of start to make me emotional. They're not like particularly brilliantly written lyrics, but it's just all about how we shouldn't judge each other or we shouldn't all judge each other too much and we should let each other live our lives.

[01:10:39] And I don't know why whenever I try and put it into words, what it means to me, it just ends up sounding quite banal. But essentially it's all about just, I just wish that we would respect each other all a lot more in this world and, and just let each other do the things that we want to do [01:11:00] without imposing expectations or judgments or other things on it, then putting it into words that doesn't do it justice for some, but it's just, I just love this tune.

[01:11:10] I love the bass on it. And so this is yes To Each His Own by Patrice Rushen who is not Russian. I think she's English. No, she's American.

[01:11:24] **Oliver Thompson:** [01:11:24] Let's listen to, let's listen to patrice Rushen

[01:11:28] **Luke Thompson:** [01:11:28] Rushen is spelled

[01:11:29] R U S H E N.

[01:11:31] Listeners

[01:11:41] **Oliver Thompson:** [01:11:41] That was [01:12:00] To Each His Own by [01:13:00] Patrice Rushen. So I want to talk a little bit about your move to Paris then. So this started on Valentine's day. I don't know what the year is you probably do

[01:13:15] **Luke Thompson:** [01:13:15] The day before. Day before Valentine's Day. 13th of February, 2010.

[01:13:21] **Oliver Thompson:** [01:13:21] 2010. So this is when you met your now wife, is that right?

[01:13:25] **Luke Thompson:** [01:13:25] That's right.

[01:13:27] **Oliver Thompson:** [01:13:27] A major, major change ensued.

[01:13:29] So tell us a bit about that, that period where quite quickly, I think you I don't know, did you, you, you were in a long distance relationship for a while there? Yeah. So she was in London, you know, because you were there at the restaurant when we met, in fact that particular evening, as we know, was the, the evening before Valentine's day.

[01:13:48] So Valentine's day was going to be the Sunday, the 14th, and it was Saturday the 13th. I was at home potentially playing Red Dead Redemption on my PlayStation. I think, and probably [01:14:00] just like had decided now I'll be staying in tonight to do this. You called me at about five o'clock. I think somebody like that and said, Hey, what are you doing this evening?

[01:14:10] And you told me that basically our, your friend, our friend Steve Borg, otherwise known as Borgy also known as Korgy that he was going to be having dinner in Knightsbridge, which is not far from where I used to live. And that his, his girlfriend would be there and that she was bringing a friend of hers and that the, the friend of hers was also bringing two of her housemates.

[01:14:35] So it was basically come out tonight. There will be girls. And I was like, Oh, all right then.

[01:14:41] Yeah, I think there was a bit of persuading needed.

[01:14:43] **Luke Thompson:** [01:14:43] You did have to persuade me because I was quite committed to spending a nice, comfortable evening in, in front of my PlayStation three shooting people in in the Wild West.

[01:14:54] **Oliver Thompson:** [01:14:54] And then as I remember, I, I went home early and you stayed out all night pretty much.

[01:14:59] **Luke Thompson:** [01:14:59] Right. [01:15:00] So, so yeah, but I mean, you, you hadn't been too well. But yeah, so we went for the dinner. I ended up sitting next to my wife, which was a coincidence. She wasn't my wife at the time, obviously. But yeah, so I ended up sitting next to her and we kind of got on with each other. There was chemistry.

[01:15:19] And we went from there to another place. I mean, it's testament to how keen I was on her, that I was willing to go to the places, you know, to the other places we went to. Going out in Knightsbridge is not normal. I mean, I'd never, ever go out in Knightsbridge. It's one of the poshest, most expensive parts of London.

[01:15:40] And that's where you find Harrods. The famous shop where you can do things like buy a mouse covered in diamonds for about 200,000 pounds. That's the sort of thing. That's the sort of marketplace that we're talking about. So we went out in Knightsbridge and then,

so after the meal they were going to go to a bar or a club [01:16:00] and you, you bailed, you, you went home and I was like, I'm going to, I think I'm going to stay out actually. And so I did, and we went to this horrendous club in, I guess, South Kensington or something, just a horrible place, just my, the sort of place I would, I would never normally go. Full of sort of millionaire 20 somethings. Yeah. Trustafarians or people who've just got way more money than sense.

[01:16:33] And like, to give you an example, a flavor of the place we walked in, they were playing loud music of course because it was a club, but I don't know why, but there was no bass and the treble was turned all the way up to the max. So it's just like no bass, you know, normally you'd like nice deep bass sounds at a nightclub.

[01:16:52] There was no bass at all. And the treble was so loud. It was almost like really painful on your ears. And I was thinking, what's the matter don't rich [01:17:00] people like bass what's going on. I don't know. But anyway, so I endured this place and you know, because I was keen on, on my wife and basically, she, she was in London after having done her university, like postgraduate university stuff.

[01:17:19] She was spending a little while in London and I met her like just two weeks before she was due to go back to Paris. So we saw each other for those two weeks, but then she went back to Paris and we continued our relationship, but sort of long distance, not that it's that far because there's the Eurostar, but still,

[01:17:37] **Oliver Thompson:** [01:17:37] Well, let's have another disc.

[01:17:39] **Luke Thompson:** [01:17:39] Okay. So this, this track, the, the last two songs on my list are sort of for my wife or reminds me of, of her. So I guess I'm going to play, this is a piece of music from the Bach Sello Suite, number one in G major. By Yo-Yo Ma performed by Yo-Yo Ma, but it's the [01:18:00] Bach Cello Suite and so this is one of the pieces of music that I listened to when I was with my wife, she wasn't my wife at the time. When I was with my wife during those two weeks, in fact, I remember lying on her bed. She was downstairs talking to her flatmates, but I was lying on her bed and she put this on the stereo and it's wonderful. I mean, Bach is pretty, pretty classic stuff, isn't it literally, but it was amazing.

[01:18:29] And I, I liked classical music, but I hadn't really spent time listening to classical music since I had played piano all those years before. And so I remember lying on the bed, just taking in this music and it's just amazing. It's so rich and it's so just wonderful. Amazing musicianship by Yo-Yo Ma, but just the composition is amazing.

[01:18:52] And this particular passage from that suite is one that will always make me [01:19:00] think of my wife. And I won't say anymore, but it's beautiful music.

[01:19:05] **Oliver Thompson:** [01:19:05] Let's listen to it.

[01:21:09] [01:21:00] [01:20:00] That was the Bach Cello Suite number one, one in G major track five. We finally, so we're in Paris. We're back to the present day now. And you are living the life, as you said at the beginning.

[01:21:22] **Luke Thompson:** [01:21:22] That's right. Yeah.

[01:21:23] **Oliver Thompson:** [01:21:23] You are living with your now wife with your daughter. Tell us just a little bit, before we come to your final song, this is a, this is a different period in your life.

[01:21:31] What has fatherhood, how has that affected your, your sort of worldview and how has that experience?

[01:21:38] **Luke Thompson:** [01:21:38] Not as much as I had expected, I thought it would just totally explode my life, but I'm still the same person. It's just that I've got this little child now who, who I'm responsible for, along with my wife.

[01:21:50] So just to try and be brief I think it's George Harrison, who said that having a kid is, is, is amazing because first of all, [01:22:00] you live the life of the child in a, in a way you kind of relive your childhood because you see things through, through your child's eyes, but also you, it gives you perspective on what it was like for your parents.

[01:22:10] So it allows you to see the world through your father's eyes as well, because you're now the father. So it's weird. It gives you so much perspective because yeah. You see things from the child's position, but you also see things from your father's position. So you also sort of in the middle and you've got the younger generation below you and the older generation above you, and you seem to get insights of the experience of both of those people as well.

[01:22:35] So it's a very odd and wonderful thing that you suddenly get the perspectives of three people rather than one.

[01:22:45] **Oliver Thompson:** [01:22:45] So true. Exactly, well it is a magical period and she's she's still very young. And you have to savour this, savour this time and doing what you do is such a great way of balancing I think.

[01:23:00] [01:23:00] **Luke Thompson:** [01:23:00] Yeah, I get to spend a lot of time at home. I get to spend lots of time with my daughter. It's fantastic.

[01:23:05] **Oliver Thompson:** [01:23:05] You're very lucky. Okay. So let's have your final choice. What have you gone with?

[01:23:09] **Luke Thompson:** [01:23:09] So the final choice is another one for my wife and it's it's just a song that we've listened to together many times and a song that is just a touchstone for the two of us.

[01:23:18] And it's just, I can't say much more. The lyrics are meaningful, but in slightly different ways for the two of us. But in any case, it's just a song that just makes me think of her. And it's something that we used to listen to. And it's, it's called Rule My World by Kings of Convenience and Kings of Convenience were a group I was, I got into around the time I met my wife and I introduced them to her and she really liked them too. And beautiful harmonies. They're extraordinary, actually. I love the way they play guitars and harmonize together. So this is Rule My World by Kings of

[01:24:00] [01:23:56] **Music:** [01:23:56] Convenience.

[01:25:03] [01:25:00] Well, that

[01:25:15] **Oliver Thompson:** [01:25:15] was Rule My World, by Kings of Convenience. So I'm going to cast you away on this, I'm going to maroon you on this desert island. And what are you like in your own company? Do you think? You'll

[01:25:26] **Luke Thompson:** [01:25:26] I'm all right. Yeah. I'm okay. I think I'll be okay on my own. I've spent lots of time on my own.

[01:25:30] I'm all right. In my own company. I think I'll be all right, even though I'll miss everyone and I won't be able to see it and I might starve to death.

[01:25:38] **Oliver Thompson:** [01:25:38] Save just one of these discs

[01:25:41] **Luke Thompson:** [01:25:41] Impossible to save just one, I'm going to save the Bach Cello Suite just because I feel it's unexplored. I haven't fully explored it and there's a lot of depth in there.

[01:25:52] I think it's like all types of music and there's just so much complexity and depth to discover. So I think it's something that I can listen to again and again, and of course,
[01:26:00] it's going to make me think of my wife.

[01:26:02] **Oliver Thompson:** [01:26:02] Perfect. Good choice. It's certainly lasted longer than any of your other choices. It's stood a longer test of time.

[01:26:08] **Luke Thompson:** [01:26:08] Yes, that's true. It is the oldest piece of music in the, in the list.

[01:26:12] **Oliver Thompson:** [01:26:12] So you've got two other things you need to decide upon. One is you've got the, the English Oxford dictionary, is that right? Rather than the bible.

[01:26:19] **Luke Thompson:** [01:26:19] Yeah, I've given people the dictionary rather than the Bible. But I, I mean, I, I gave people that choice, but actually a lot of people would rather choose the Bible than, than the dictionary, because the dictionary is not exactly an entertaining read.

[01:26:30] Is it page one, A aardvark, you know, I can, at least the Bible is full of stories. So. Yeah, maybe I'll go for the Bible. And I would choose the Lord of the Rings as my book. I mean, that's not the most exciting or interesting or original choice. But nevertheless, it's a book that brings me joy whenever I read it.

[01:26:49] And I like to read it a lot by every couple of years I'll re read it. I'll just start, I start reading it and they get glued and hooked into it. It's just very entertaining. It's long. So there's plenty [01:27:00] to enjoy. And I just like getting lost in the world of, of Middle Earth. And it's, it's brought it, you know, I, I feel that there's a lot of stuff to learn from it too.

[01:27:08] A lot of character based stuff about the challenges that the characters go through. I found it particularly inspiring. So that's the book that I would choose. Very beautiful. Plus it would remind me of the countryside in Warwickshire where Tolkin grew up or spent time as a, as a child. Yes. And I've got a luxury item, don't I?

[01:27:28] **Oliver Thompson:** [01:27:28] And your luxury item

[01:27:30] **Luke Thompson:** [01:27:30] So my luxury item, I've thought I've thought about this, and this is easy. It's a, it's a drum kit. So the, it, I would want, you know, like a, at least a one, two, three, four or five piece drum kit, please. Something like a Stuart Copeland, Tama kit, maybe like a signature kit by Stuart Copeland or something.

[01:27:50] And I would put up the I'd set up the drums on a clifftop or on the, on the sea front, on my desert island. And I would just play, I'd just [01:28:00] beat the rhythm of the universe. Just be able to just play and play drums to the sea, to the whales, to the, to the stars at night, as the sun goes down, as the sun comes up, I could just be beating out my rhythms.

[01:28:13] And I think, I can't think of much else I'd rather be doing than that.

[01:28:19] **Oliver Thompson:** [01:28:19] It does sound like a lot of fun. Well, thank you. That's your list. We're going to cast you away now. And you should have asked for a podcast kit so your listeners could continue to...

[01:28:29] **Luke Thompson:** [01:28:29] is that allowed. Nah I'll go with a drum kit. I just want to just, just play the universal language of music.

[01:28:36] **Oliver Thompson:** [01:28:36] Well, it's been a pleasure hosting and hearing about your life and next time you'll be back in the driving seat.

[01:28:44] **Luke Thompson:** [01:28:44] That's right. Thank you for guest hosting this episode, it's been all right. I was, I thought that doing Marooned with my Music as we're calling it. I just thought that was going to be self-indulgent and uninteresting.

[01:28:59] But it's helpful to [01:29:00] have someone guiding you through.

[01:29:02] I just think people will be fascinated. I'm sure.

[01:29:44] Thanks for listening to Luke's English podcast. For more information, visit teacherluke.co.uk. [01:30:00]