

Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Meghan Trainor

JVN [00:00:00] Welcome to Getting Curious. I'm Jonathan Van Ness and every week I sit down for a 40 minute conversation with a brilliant expert to learn all about something that makes me curious. On today's episode, I'm joined by the Grammy Award-winning singer and songwriter Meghan Trainor, where I ask her: Can I Sing My Way Through The Holidays? Welcome to "Getting Curious." It's Jonathan Van Ness, I'm so excited for our guest this week. She is a literal icon. She's a musical sensation. She has a stunning new Christmas album out. Welcome to this show for the first time ever, Meghan Trainor.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:00:33] Hi.

JVN [00:00:36] How are you?

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:00:37] I just broke everyone's ears. I'm so good. I'm really good. How are you?

JVN [00:00:42] I'm, you know, I feel good. I feel excited about certain things. I also feel, I do feel like I'm trying to switch my autopilot response when people ask how I am to, like, "fine." Like Samantha Bee says, because I feel like it's, it's so, like I personally am, am good. My cats are healthy. My family is OK. I feel like the state of the world, I worry sometimes and not take such a hard left. But people can't see this because this is a podcast. But I would just, and I'm also trying to go through this phase like I don't always have to talk about people's looks. But I would just be remiss. Your eyebrow. So symmetrical, so stunning.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:01:25] Wait, literally...

JVN [00:01:25] You are so beautiful. Your eyebrows are just like, and your ponytail. All of it. We will put something on social about just the quality of the attention to detail, these lashes, the brow symmetry, all of it. Just so, you're just stunning.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:01:40] Wait, I'm literally tearing up because I worked so hard on my brows.

JVN [00:01:45] No, they're, like, so beautiful. Did you have a brow comeback story?

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:01:50] I just like, I'm hairless. And I was, I was born with every hair color, like, I was born with black hair, then it went bright red and then it went crazy blond

at 6. So, and my brows just like grabbed each one from memories or something. And my friends would be like, "Do you dye your brows?" And I'd be like, "Would I choose these colors?" Like, no, I don't dye them. So now I dye them brown and I, like, fill them and ever so lightly.

JVN [00:02:16] Can I tell you something really interesting about that?

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:02:20] Yes.

JVN [00:02:20] So I have a ton of different colors in my beard. I always have also in my, like, hair. But there's two types of pigment that our bodies make. There's pheomelanin and eumelanin. One of them is black and brown pigments. The other is yellow and red pigments. And everyone has all of them, but in like different distillations. And some people's are more, like, but yeah, basically. But yeah. So that's totes norms. And I'm sorry that people called your eyebrows out because you were just living your literal human life like that's just how they are. But yeah, really stunning. Did you go through, were you, did you go through that era in time when the thing was to have like two rows of eyebrows and to just like pluck them all out?

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:03:01] Luckily, I never did makeup. I was, I grew up with two boys and my dad and my mom who literally slapped on foundation like this, in the car. And then eyelashes, good to go. She just looked young, fresh all the time.

JVN [00:03:15] Love.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:03:16] And I was like, so I never got into, I did the high school, like, cover up your pimples and then dark eyeliner. But only eyeliner.

JVN [00:03:27] Well I feel like, I was born in '87 and I feel like I just came in on like the, like there was this phase where I feel like if, I don't know what generation it is, but you know, you know, you've heard it before. Like we know the people and I feel like there's still people that were our age that were afflicted by that generation. I feel like we just missed it. Like we missed it.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:03:45] Yeah.

JVN [00:03:45] 'Cause in the mid to early 90s, honey. There was that thing when it was just like, it was the look to have.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:03:51] Yeah. No eyebrows.

JVN [00:03:51] One row of eyebrows. Yes.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:03:54] Yeah.

JVN [00:03:55] And so some young people thought that was still the thing. And I'm glad that, that, so you were just dealing with, like, a multi-dimensional issue?

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:04:02] Yeah. I also didn't grow up, which, like, I kind of am jealous about but like also thank God because I would've plucked them all out. But I didn't grow up with all the Instagram videos of, like, here's how you do your eyebrows and here's how you do makeup. And my friends, we didn't really, I don't know, I guess they plucked their brows. And I was like, that's crazy. Like, don't touch these. And I remember with "All About That Bass" music video, that was the first time anyone put makeup on my eyebrows. And I remember going, "Ah! What are you doing?" Like, I was like, "Those my eyebrows. What are you doing?" And they're like, "We're doing your makeup." And then it changed my life forever. And now I don't leave the house unless I have brows on.

JVN [00:04:40] I mean, well, brows are such a frame. I love that story. I can't believe that was your first time. That's so cute.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:04:44] I was 19, like what?

JVN [00:04:47] OK, so, oh, so you're definitely way in the age box below me, honey. I'm obsessed with that story. You know, we said we talk about, like, this whole gendered idea, like don't ask people their ages and like, I just wasn't going to assume and I wasn't going to, like, ask anything here, but yeah.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:04:59] Oh, I'll tell you mine. Do you want mine?

JVN [00:05:02] Well, sure, if you want to share it. But also, no wonder you have such thick, gorgeous brows? It's because you're, like, you were definitely missed that era of like a brow pluck.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:05:09] Yeah. I'm so glad that I wasn't there. I'm 26 now. So yeah when I was 19 that's when I started all my love for makeup.

JVN [00:05:19] Yeah. You sailed past that era. I do think that now because you know how, like, you see that meme about how, like, 13 year olds don't have like an awkward phase anymore? It's like 13 year olds when, like, they were my age, like we were like, I had teeth

that's wide apart. I had like ketchup and mustard colored hair 'cause I was going through a phase.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:05:35] Yes.

JVN [00:05:36] And I was wearing like Doc Martens with, like, tights and like really weird, like, track suits, like because I was a cheerleader. So, like, I was like QHS Cheer.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:05:44] Love.

JVN [00:05:45] But it was awkward, like, we didn't, and but now I feel like kids just have Instagram and YouTube and stuff. So they are looking, like, real, they just polish, like everyone's looking polished.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:05:55] Yeah. Like even my 8 year old cousin, she's about to turn 8 and I'm, like, "gifts for a 15-year-old" because she's, like, "No, I'm an adult. I have a phone." So I'm like, "Oh my God, you all are just skipping the awkward phase. Like, how are you grow as a person?"

JVN [00:06:12] Ah. Can I tell you my foolproof plan for giving, like, nieces and nephews gifts?

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:06:17] Yes. Help me.

JVN [00:06:19] Can I tell you? OK. I just discovered it because, look, I don't have the time to research what you need and want. So but what I do have the time for is helping you with your college education. So I'm just giving all my nieces and nephews, like, now because mommy made a little bit more money, everyone's getting 500 dollars a year.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:06:38] Love.

JVN [00:06:38] In the day, it was more like a 100, but I open like that five something something fund. It's like a fund when you want to help someone with college, when they're like kids and then it like earns interest or whatever, and then it can be like, you're just gonna throw that stuff away anyway. Then you don't have to feel guilty about like not really fully being interested in what they want. And then their parents can't really be mad at you because you're saving them money on college and you're really being thoughtful. So for me, it ticks off every box. Like we're not being wasteful, your siblings can't get mad at you for not getting them stuff because I'm helping them with their education.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:07:12] How old are your cousins? Or how old are your nieces, nephews? Is what I mean.

JVN [00:07:16] Oh, I got ones ranging from 2 to 16. So it's a one size fits all.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:07:20] Wow. Yeah. So it's hard.

JVN [00:07:21] I'm literally, I'm not worrying about it.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:07:24] You're so smart though. That's so smart. And my little cousin, because she grew up, she grew up in this YouTube, she's growing up in the YouTube phase. So she's like, "I want to be like this rich YouTube guy that just gives cars to his friends." And I'm like, "Honey." I was like, "We're going to aim for something else." Like, no. So it's so crazy. And then, but you're so smart because all she wants is money. And I can just be like, but it's for your future. Like right now, I have my husband-.

JVN [00:07:53] Yeah, she can't touch it.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:07:53] I have my husband driving to, and now, I'm mad about this gift, she won't even like it. You know those, like, little arcade games, like Pacman?

JVN [00:08:01] Yes.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:08:01] She'll be like, "What is this?" It's like a little table sized one. And I'm having him drive to go pick one up. So-.

JVN [00:08:01] That's adorable.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:08:09] Wish I just put-. I know. I'll be like, "There you go?" And she'll be, like, "Where's the YouTube camera?"

JVN [00:08:14] Kids still understand like the thought that counts. But wait, I'm, I accidentally just like small talked for so long because I just was excited to see you. But I have questions. Really the question for that episode was like, how can we have like a merry Christmas? Because we have all been through so much this year. And even if folks aren't celebrating Christmas, if they're like celebrating Han-, celebrating Hanukkah, if they're celebrating like nothing, honey, whatever. If you're celebrating being alive, whatever your reason is.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:08:40] Yes.

JVN [00:08:42] But in order to talk about that joy, because you do have a holiday album coming out. Your music is full of joy and you're full of joy. You're, you are an icon. You have been so loving and open about this idea of celebrating who we are. Body positivity, which really I like what Lizzo said the other day about, like, it's not even body positive, like, let's just, like, normalize bodies of all different everything.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:09:04] Yes.

JVN [00:09:07] Because we are all stunning and we're gorgeous, and I think that we have had such a narrow idea shoved down our lexicons of, like, what beautiful is meant to be. But I would just love to hear about how you got into music, how you got into realizing that you were a powerhouse singer-songwriter because you're just amazing. And, and some of the ways in which when you realized that you were going to have this platform that you have, that you were excited to use it in the ways that you have.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:09:39] Yes. Love this. My story is like the most adorable movie ever. I grew up assuming all my favorite pop stars wrote their, all, all, wrote all their songs in their bedroom, crying. You know, like Britney Spears and everyone. So I was like, well, I better get to it because I want to be a superstar. It's not like I was 4 years old with the greatest voice ever. I didn't get my voice that I like until I was like 16, honestly, I really had to work on that because I didn't grow up with the craziest singers in my family and raised in a gospel church. I was raised in a spooky white old church that was, like, spooky songs. So I started writing my music, like, at a very young age and I got the formula down of like, OK, verse, pre-chorus, chorus, second verse and, and that scared people of like, oh, God. And then I started learning every instrument and writing a new song on each instrument, like, as if I was a gymnast and I'm going to practice every single day. It was like that, but after school. And then I was like, "Dad, I need to record my voice at a very young age." I was like, "I need, like, equipment." And he was like-

JVN [00:10:47] When is this? How old are you?

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:10:49] I was in my first house, so I was like fifth grade. Yeah, I was, like, young. I was very young.

JVN [00:10:58] And you knew what a chorus and a pre-chorus was and all that?

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:11:01] Yeah. My dad is musical. He never wrote songs, but he was in the cover bands. He toured and was, like, with his first wife in his early lives. They would tour and do covers. So we would sing songs together and I would sing at church with him.

So I knew, like, structure of a song. And I understood that. And I understood, like, how, like, OK, this has to rhyme and this will sound good. And it was really just my love for other songs. And I remember my mom saying when she would sing lullabies to me, I started singing harmony back and she was like, Jesus. Like.

JVN [00:11:34] I still can't do harmonies and I'm obsessed with people who know how to do a harmony. I always accidentally sing the note that I hear and and I think my brain's broken.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:11:42] No.

JVN [00:11:42] I can't do a harmony. And I'm obsessed with people who know how to. I went through a phase literally three weeks ago, Meghan, where my best friend who's been trying to get me to be able to do it for years, like something clicked. But it was this, like, short phase that only lasted for like six days. And now I feel like I lost it. It's like not an archipelago-, archipeggio. Something where she was like, you got to go like, bah, bah.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:12:03] Arpeggio.

JVN [00:12:06] Yeah. Like I was able to do it.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:12:06] Yeah, that's it.

JVN [00:12:08] No. It wasn't, don't lie to me! But anyway, back to your story. So you under-, I'm fascinated by that.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:12:13] You know what, taught me was, like, N'Sync and the background vocals of "Like a Prayer" by Madonna. And I was like, I was like, I wanna sing their parts. And so I would sing their stuff. And then my brothers would be like, "You're singing it wrong." And I was like, "I'm actually on the harmony. So you don't even know where I am right now, so back off." Like I would make that a goal. I was just like, I don't know, that was like my weird thing. I just thought that.

JVN [00:12:38] I'm obsessed with that. Where are you in your sibling order?

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:12:40] Middle child. We're all like a year apart. So we were very close in age. Two boys. So I just, I played, like, football and baseball so that I could be their best friends. And they were like, get away. And now we all still live together and now we're best friends. Finally.

JVN [00:12:57] Oh my God. I'm also one of three, three boys. But I also have two brothers. So I feel your growing up pain.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:13:04] Yes.

JVN [00:13:06] And, that's so cute. I love that you're, like, get away from me. I know what I'm doing. This is harmony. Do not hear the ringing in your chest? Do you feel the harmony.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:13:13] Yeah.

JVN [00:13:14] Yeah, that harmonic vibration's amazing.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:13:16] It's awesome.

JVN [00:13:17] And you are, like, the queen of harmonizing. So by fifth grade you knew you kind of, like you felt that you had, like, you were focused on, like, creating music.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:13:26] Yeah. I didn't know at that young age of like I don't know, I didn't, I was just like only doing that for fun. That was so fun for me. It wasn't like a task. It wasn't like, oh no, I have to go to rehearsal. It was like, "Oh my God, I'm going to hide from everyone and just play music in my room and learn this song" and blah, blah, blah. Like, that was my jam. And then I just, like, progressed every year. Like, my Christmas gift was, like, here's a program that you can produce with. And I be like, oh my God. And that was like, my parents were so good to me because I really wasn't shining until I was, like, 16, 17, 18. But they just like never second guessed it. And they always were like, "You were always our little superstar." I was like, "What?" So they just like fed into that for me.

JVN [00:14:11] And they realized your potential. I love that. So what of your hits was like, did any, did you write any of them when you were like 15 or 16? Like, what was, like, your earliest song that you wrote when you were, like, younger that ended up making on to one of your albums?

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:14:25] My first album, I had this song called "3AM" and it was like my booty call song, which is hilarious because I was, like, so young. But that was like a big fan favorite. And I wrote that, like, way before I ever wrote, "All About That Bass." And it was one of those, like I brought it back. And I was like, because when you write, I wrote "All About That Bass" with one person and everyone just assumed looking at me, like he was like a 40 year old man, and I'm like this young girl, like new, and they just looked at me, and they're like, "OK, so you have to finish everything with that guy because you, you made 'All About That Bass' with him. So it's probably good." And I was like, pul-, like, "I'm

Gonna Lose You" with John Legend, that was a song I had before. And like, I pulled them in all these old songs and they were like, and he would tell me or people would tell me, like, "You're gonna ruin this album unless you write everything new with him." And I was like, "No." So it's really nice to see, like, the fans react to those other songs and, like, "I'm Gonna Lose You" wasn't even considered a single until I played it for my manager, my uncle, played it for my manager and she started crying and she managed John Legend at the time. She's like, "Can I send this to him?" And I was like, "I guess." So yeah, it was, it was a crazy learning process of learning how to stand up for myself.

JVN [00:15:39] That is a process I feel like I bump up again, or I have bumped up against in different ways in my career in these last couple years, that is, I think, also for someone that's like constantly struggled with setting boundaries, which me, like I have sometimes dealt with, like maybe coming on too strong when I set a boundary or like letting things go for too long. And then it's like, and I think that's sometimes is like why I, so I think it's kind of been a measure for me of like learning when and how to go about that. And I'd love to talk more about that right after our break. So we're going to take a really quick break, and we'll be right back with more Meghan Trainor.

Welcome back to "Getting Curious." So we were just talking about standing up for yourselves and what that's like bumping up against that behind-the-scenes and how we struggle with that. I think it's amazing that you were able to, because it's, like, when you get these opportunities as an artist, I'm sure as a musical artist, it's, like, you are an artist. So you want to do what your heart says. But then there's other people and, like, upper echelons of like the label or whoever, like I don't know any of the people, players. I'm, like, not trying to put words in your mouth. I'm just trying to imagine. But would have their own opinions. And it's like you want to take that into account because you don't want to mess up your shot. But then you're like, I don't know, I'm pretty like-.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:16:54] Dude. My biggest problem was I was just so insecure. Like, the lyrics of "All About The Bass" are so opposite of what I was feeling at the time. And I, because people will look at me and they would say, "Oh, you're gonna be a great songwriter." Like, they kind of gave me that label. They kind of were like, "You're a great songwriter." And I'd be like, "So you don't see me onstage? Like, you don't see me as a performer?" And I would make jokes, like shame jokes of myself of like, "I know I'll get my body right by 26 and then I'll, then I'll go be a pop star." Like I would say stuff like that. And that's horrific, especially when you're a teenager to, like, admit that and say that out loud and tell it to adults who you just wish were more guiding, instead of just like, yeah, yeah, you sit down. And "All About That Bass" dragged me out of that because they blindly said, well, whoever's singing the song, go get her. And then they started comin' for me and I was like, me? Little ol' me? And I remember when I saw L.A. Reid at Epic Records,

at the label who eventually signed me was, like, "That face." Like, I liked I love the compliment at the time of like, "You like this face?" But it was like directed, I don't know. It was like, it wasn't like you're adorable. It was like your face can work. You know? I don't know. It was all weird and I just was so insecure-.

JVN [00:18:16] Wait. Because they were obsessed with your face? Because I'm obsessed with all of you.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:18:19] He was, I think he was trying to. Yeah. I think he was trying to compliment me saying, like, "You're pretty." And I was like, "Oh, my goodness. Thank you, Lord." Like. But now when I say it, I'm like, oh, my God, Why? I'm just waiting for anyone to say, you look fine enough to be an artist, you know? And like, I was so scared to lose any shot, I was just like, I will do whatever you tell me to do. Put it on me. Like they were putting me in corsets at 18 years old to be the "All About That Bass" thick girl, like in my music video. And I would say, "Isn't this not the point of the song" as they're like put, tying me in it. And one girl said, "Beyoncé sleeps in hers," as, like, motivation. And I was like, OK, sure. Rock on. Put it on. Like, so scary.

JVN [00:19:10] And so I wrote down, as you were saying that, it's, like, you're coming into an industry that had so much toxic culture. And I guess, I guess I said "had," but I guess I meant to say "has." Like it's still like a thing.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:19:25] Yeah.

JVN [00:19:26] So I think you've been able to create this, like, really beautiful place.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:19:32] Yes.

JVN [00:19:32] But I also think, like, but I also feel like I know that I like, like when I see like in my comments sometimes, I'm gonna give you some tea. When I see in my comments sometimes things like, "Oh my God, like, I struggled with, like, loving my body. And then I saw you rocking crop tops and like now I want to rock crop tops." And I'm like, "What are you talking? Like, I'm stunning. Like, I bet you are, too." Like but basically like I just feel like, 'cause sometimes there's these like, they mean to be positive, but it's actually like-.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:19:59] Yes.

JVN [00:20:01] How do you think that makes me feel? Like it's not going to change what I wear, and it doesn't change the fact that I know I look amazing, but I just, it's this whole, like, backhanded compliment thing.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:20:09] That's the funniest ever. Yeah. No, that's like, I guess if someone's going out there with, like, "I'm really confident and I am who I am," the only, like, backlash you can get is like people trying to be nice, but they actually slap you in the face very harshly and they don't even realize they're doing it. Like, I would always get, "Oh my God, you're not even that big. Like, in person." Or they're like, "Wow, you're, like, skinnier in person." And I'm like, "Oh, my God." And then, and, and then they, yeah. They would say stuff like, "Oh God, I just love this girl on Fallon performing with her thighs out" and her, and I was just, like, "I'm also fully covered. So like, what?" And they, but they would try to be like, go her. And I'd be like, I sang too. I sang a song that I wrote with my heart and like, that's why I'm on Fallon. But sure, like go, good for her. Showing her belly like that. And I was like what?

JVN [00:21:11] Yes.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:21:13] It's crazy.

JVN [00:21:13] So how, do you feel like, do you feel like it's changed? Has it become more accepting? Do you feel like there's more space in the industry now?

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:21:24] Well, I just noticed for me when "All About That Bass," like, changed everyone's life, I guess, in the best way. I would have parents come up to me in my meet and greets and be like, my daughter, you're about to meet her, she was suicidal and now she wants to live because your song changed her whole perspective. And other parents would say, my kids stop going to school until your song came out. And now they're finally confident to love themselves. And it would just make me bawl my eyes out and I would hug each person and say, "You are so significant. Please stay with me forever." And like all this. I realize there was like a, a superpower I had with this three minute song, and that took me 40 minutes to write. So I was like, oh, I have a duty. I have, like, a mission in life now. Here is my meaning. Here's my purpose of living. I'm going to help as many people I can not have those thoughts or get out of those nightmare thoughts because we all have them at some point. And so after that, all my anthems, I was like, "I'm gonna do anthems of like 'if I was you, I'd wanna be me, too.'" And like all my friends who are having boy troubles are like, nah, nah, no, no, no. Like, any chance I get to have a single I'm going to do an I love me song, like a classic, feel better about yourself. And I want to be the girl with the happy positive music because I need that. And that's what I want on the radio.

JVN [00:22:43] OK, so I'm obsessed with you. I'm obsessed with that. I have a question.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:22:47] Yes.

JVN [00:22:48] So back to that one thing about like chorus and pre-chorus and all that stuff.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:22:54] Yeah.

JVN [00:22:54] Like all those stunning jargon, musical terms, because I'm obsessed with it, I want to understand more. So like maybe how we're gonna have a merrier Christmas is, like, are people going to get into like singing and songwriting at home? So if you're trying to understand that because, like, what, what are, what does all that mean again? So like there's a chorus, there's like an opening, an introduction, an introduction paragraph, a persuasive essay. And then, what does it, what happens? How do you write one?

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:23:18] The easiest. The easiest way I can say it is, like, you know, your favorite part of that song, like, you know, your favorite part of "Me Too." "If I was you, I wanna be me too." That's your chorus. Your favorite part of every song is the chorus. That's it.

JVN [00:23:35] Yes.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:23:36] So when they say, like, songwriters, they'll tell songwriters like, songs great but your chorus is weak. Try to write a bigger chorus. That's, like, the goal in L.A. It's like, "Oh my God, we've gotta write the biggest, baddest chorus ever." And then all your other parts are just your stories leading up to your big chorus. So your verses. Oh, my God. And then if you're, like, a pre-chorus, that's this part in between the verse and the chorus, it's the lead up. Sometimes that's my favorite part of the song. Like, "I thank God every day. Uh huh. I woke up-," you know what I mean like? We about to hype you up.

JVN [00:24:15] Yes.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:24:16] We're gonna hype you up. And then the rollercoaster drops on the chorus. "If I was you," you know?

JVN [00:24:23] And then what was that other word you said?

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:24:25] Second verse?

JVN [00:24:26] Verse. Yes, second verse. Yeah, yeah. OK, so I get it. OK, that's, I'm obsessed. OK, now I have another question.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:24:32] OK. Yeah.

JVN [00:24:33] Based off of your stunning catalog of music, who would people think, like, who would people be the most surprised that you were, like, obsessed with growing up? Like was there like some like out of left field, like for instance, like I'm obsessed with Sade. I'm also obsessed with, like, I don't know, like, I, there was, like, a lot of like, but I also love N'Sync and I also am obsessed with the Dixie Chicks.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:27:57] Yeah.

JVN [00:27:57] Well, the Chicks, I mean. The Chicks now. Yes.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:25:00] I swear, it makes you, like, a better person when your catalog is bigger. I don't know. I just, like, I, like, I got so lucky. My dad's really old and soulful. He thinks he's James Brown. So I grew up with funk and soul and Earth, Wind and Fire, and, and then my mom was, like, 20 years younger, little girl from New Hampshire, loved Wilson Phillips and loved Billy Joel. So I got the songwriters and then I grew up with N'Sync and Britney Spears and all of them. And I had the greatest blend of old school, what are you? You're, like, rock, I don't know what you are, Mom. She's, like, 80s. Madonna. And then I gave myself the 90s pop. And I also, like, there's one artist that I, no one even knows that I worship, there's two of them. Brandy. Like.

JVN [00:25:53] Love.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:25:53] Oh, like one album, yeah, Brandy got me through high school and it's, I studied her backgrounds. I think she's most genius person with background. She's so smart. And then T-Pain. I love T-Pain.

JVN [00:26:06] He's a classic.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:26:08] He's a classic.

JVN [00:26:10] OK, I love Brady. Did you love Cinderella? 'Cause like that main song from Cinderella. It's, like, we literally, like, there, like I went through a phase like as recently as September of last year where there were three weeks when that's basically all I listened to on YouTube because you can't get it like anywhere else.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:26:23] Yeah.

JVN [00:26:24] Like you can't get it on Spotify. It's like hard, like the-.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:26:27] Which is crazy.

JVN [00:26:28] "Four white horse will never be four white-," or wait. "Four white mice will never be four white horses. Such fol-de-rol and fiddle-dee-dee of courses. Impossible. Na na na na. For the world is full of zanies and fools-," do you remember that song? It's-.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:26:44] Not word for word like you, honey, but I love it.

JVN [00:26:47] Well, because we're all obsessed with it, my group of, of, my group of my people, we're, just, I don't know, we really went through like a late or early in thirties re-obsession with this Cinderella, with Brandy and Whitney, because it's just such a classic.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:27:00] I mean, yeah.

JVN [00:27:00] But I love that you're obsessed with Brandy. You know what other song you co-wrote on that I'm fucking obsessed with? Obsessed with. "Sledgehammer."

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:27:09] "Sledgehammer." I knew it.

JVN [00:27:10] I work out to it.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:27:11] I knew it.

JVN [00:27:11] All the time. I do coffee dances to it, like, multiple times. Like, I love "Sledgehammer." I'm obsessed. And I also, like, miss "Fifth Harmony."

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:27:23] Like I, I miss-.

JVN [00:27:24] Love. I was not ready. Like I need.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:27:26] I do too. I wasn't ready. It was too soon.

JVN [00:27:29] Can we have a reunion? Like is it too soon?

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:27:31] We should. We will.

JVN [00:27:34] Or even if you just, can you just take ownership of "Sledgehammer" and, like, bring it back and release? Can you basically pull, like, a Beyoncé?

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:27:40] I should put it-.

JVN [00:27:41] Because remember when? Remember when she redid "Emotions" as a solo after it was on that second album?

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:27:48] You're a genius. I'm putting in my tour, one day when we're allowed to tour again. Yes.

JVN [00:27:53] Because "You break my heart." No. "Because if you take my pulse right now, it would-."

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:27:59] "Feel just like a sledgehammer." Bah bah bah bah bah. Yeah, that was the best, dude. And it's so funny because my husband, that was like his favorite song ever. And he didn't know. And he was like, you wrote "Sledgehammer?" I was like, you know what this song is? It was big. It was nice.

JVN [00:28:18] That song was a jam.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:28:19] And it was cool because I went to Epic Records and they had them. And so I was like, "Yo, just so you know, I have all these extra songs. I know it's not doo-wop," because they try to make me just doo-wop, I was like, "but I write pop." And then I sent those in and they're like, "Fifth Harmony is going to cut five of your songs." And I, like, "Ah! That's my dream."

JVN [00:28:36] OK, now I have another question. And it's basically like in the other direction.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:28:39] OK.

JVN [00:28:40] So is there any, like up and coming little babes that you're, like, obsessed with that you, like, just heard of that you're, like, just living for?

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:28:46] Well I would just say like my true addiction is Tik Tok and all those singers on Tik Tok, like, I'm constantly sending my ANRs on my label and my management company, I'm like, "You should manage this artist. They're gonna be huge." Like, I just think they're so talented. Like when you hear the Tik Tok singers, you're like, why are they better than most singers at the Grammys? You know what I mean? Like, how are they just in their bedrooms crushing this song, making me bawl my eyes out? And they're not at the Grammys next year? Like it's crazy. So I love Tik Tok artists.

JVN [00:29:21] So then, OK. And then if you're someone like me who is, like, "harmonized challenged," like, it just never comes easy to me, like I struggled with it forever. But like, I really do just want to be in the car and do what you did. Like I want to, I want to sing backup for Brandy in my car. I want to sing backup for you in my car and actually harmonize. But like, is there like, maybe there's something that you know that like the other, really only two people that have tried to teach me actually in my life. Is there something I can do? Like, is it just you listen to the background tunes. What is it?

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:29:50] Yeah. I would study, like, even how to learn how to sing. I would study. I grew up with JoJo. Her albums. And she was like 13. So I, if I love something, or Brandy, I would practice singing just like them. I'd practice singing harmonies just like them. So if I hear a background part, like a lot of my songs have great examples for you, you can practice, like "Bass" has, like, "Shoo op op, shoo op op," you just pick the backgrounds.

JVN [00:30:16] But I only can sing the song that your main voice sings.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:30:20] Oh, my goodness.

JVN [00:30:21] When I hear a normal, like, when I hear the, like, when I hear that melody, my voice only can sing the main note. And like all the backgrounds, like, I'll be, like, "Oh, I'm doing it." And then my friend Patty's like, "No, you're not. Like that's the melody." And I'm like, Oh, are you sure? 'Cause it sounds just, like, the harmony to me. She's like-.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:30:41] Sounds absolutely correct.

JVN [00:30:42] Have you run into that before? Have you ever met, have you met, have you heard of that before? Is there people that just don't get?

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:30:49] Yeah. Well my manager, he's pretty tone deaf, but he loves to sing. He loves Whitney. He's Cher most of the days. So he's not afraid.

JVN [00:30:58] Love Cher.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:30:59] Yeah. None of my team is afraid to sing in front of me, which is awesome. And they just go off and sometimes I'll let them, I'll let them know. I'll be like, oh, that was so off that you actually hit the best harmony. And they're like, really? So I was like, I mean, I would ask your friends to like let you know when you're doing it right. And praise them.

JVN [00:31:17] They do. They do. They do.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:31:18] Good, great.

JVN [00:31:18] No, they really do. But it's never about a harmony, 'cause like it's, like sometimes they're just like, "Oh, like, you know, your clarity" or "It's really powerful," like, very, you know?

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:31:29] Wow, "You're loud today."

JVN [00:31:31] Yes! But I still love it, you know? It's like I would be like the perfect redheaded nun from "Sister Act." Like I project to the back of the church and someone's gotta do it.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:31:42] Yes. Someone has to.

JVN [00:31:22] We're gonna take a really quick break.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:31:44] OK.

JVN [00:31:44] We'll be right back with more Meghan Trainor after this. Welcome back to "Getting Curious." This is Jonathan Van Ness. We have Meghan Trainor right here. So, OK, so obviously this has been an amazing year for you. You have had several exciting things happen. You also have a new holiday album out and you have your gorge husband. You have your fam bam. Like, what has, you know, for so many of us, what's been kind of like a nightmare hellscape, we'd all just, like, love to live vicariously through some of your, like, familial joy.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:32:19] Yes. Yeah.

JVN [00:32:20] Like, have you done any fun stuff? Like what's your truth? Like how is this quarantine been?

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:32:28] My truth.

JVN [00:32:28] Like has you and your husi like you guys did do something really cutesy 'cause you got a little babers.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:32:35] Oh, we made life. Yeah. That was like as soon as quarantine, 'cause I was shooting the UK, I was on "The Voice," the UK, and we like weren't done yet. So in my head I'm like, hey, when are we flying back? And then we all watched the news together. And they were like, lockdown. And we were like, "OK." And I was like, "Is this a sign? Like, we're not touring. So we should give birth. We should make a child." So then I immediately started peeing on every stick. I started looking up how, like what vitamins should I be on? And like, got really healthy for my body and was like, I was like I want to be successful. I know this is so hard to get pregnant. Like, when you want to get pregnant, it's so hard. And luckily, it took me, it took us three months of cranking it, you know? Just like trying really hard. And I, it was something I announced to the house of like, just so you know, if I am getting pregnant, it's right now, like it's, it's happening. And it was like a fun science project that I've been trying to do, my whole life, I've been so excited to be a mom.

So that was our time. And finally, like the month, I really was like, "I didn't get pregnant this time. Like, there's no way." I went on a hike and I was extra winded. I was like, "Woof, like, this is really hard." And then I came back and I peed on a stick and I did it wrong. No one knows this story. I peed on the stick, I did it wrong. And then we only had a little pee and my husband helped me and we put it down and I was like, Darryl, just give up. Like, it's not going to stay positive. Let's just, I'm going to shower. I'm disgusting. And he, he saw it first and he looked up and was like, and I was like, "No way." He's like, "It says pregnant." And I was like, what? And we like fell to the floor crying, laughing and like screaming and being like, no way! And it was the best day ever. And then I immediately put a robot and ran to my brother's filming them and was like, "Look it."

JVN [00:34:30] Aw, that's so cute. So you kind of, you like, I loved that you felt like you wanted to have a little baber's foreves. And now you did. You know how, like, in movies, and I'm sure your parents and like, I feel like everyone who I've ever heard talk about child, like, you know, having a baby. It's like you squeeze that little thing out or like you see it for the first time and like everything changes, like that quintessential moment.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:34:3 Yeah.

JVN [00:34:53] Now, disclaimer, I have also heard people say, like, "Oh, my God, I didn't feel that." And then I thought there was something wrong with me for not feeling that. But then they totally ending up loving their kids. So if you don't have that, Meghan, don't freak out.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:35:03] I know, I know it. I've heard everything.

JVN [00:35:06] But are you like, are you, like are you just excited? What do you feel like is going to happen? Like are you just like, what's like, what do you anticipate? Like for like, I can't even imagine it. First of all, like I feel like you're so wise and mature, like you literally are going to have a fucking baby, that's major.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:35:22] Dude. Well, I was like the girl that, I had to go to therapy once because I was like, or I asked my therapist because I was the bitch that was crying when I walked by diapers and was like, I'm supposed to be buying these. I don't understand. Like, I always wanted a baby and I knew I'd have, like, a village of kids. I was, like, I want five to seven. And when I met Daryl, he's like, honestly I didn't, didn't grow up like, wow, can't wait to make babies. But as soon as I met you, something switched and I was like, I want to reproduce with you. I want to make children with you. And that's how he, one of his examples of how I knew you were the one, he's so cute. And then, yeah, so I asked my therapist and she's like, you're already mothering your kids, it's very sweet. And I was like, really? She's like, yeah. You're already being their mom and you're just so excited. So I can't wait to push him out. I'm very impatient. And so this wait is so long and every day I'm just like, "You OK?" But I finally felt kicks like two days ago. And now every day he kickin', and I love it. I'm like, you're in there!

JVN [00:36:26] Aw, the only thing I can com-, can compare that to is this time when I had a guinea pig in fifth grade and her name was Nillie and she got pregnant, and when I would hold her on my stomach and my chest, I could feel the baby guinea pigs literally kicking through her tum tum, like, onto my chest. It was so cute. And I remember thinking, like, this is the closest I'm ever gonna feel to, like, what pregnancy is, because-.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:36:49] Oh, my God.

JVN [00:36:50] I'm not going to grow babies. That's so exciting. I love that, OK, but wait. So I also worry about sometimes, like, this, like, when I talk to my therapist about how come I don't want kids and I just wanna spend all my money on myself and vacations and helping other people and like I just don't wanna.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:37:03] That's. You're mothering everyone, that's totally fine.

JVN [00:37:07] And there's space for everyone. So now I kind of want to talk a little bit more about music because I can't help it. But we'll come back to a Yogini recess to talk about whatever you want to talk about. So you had, like, such an incredible career, you're still in the midst of having an incredible career, like you're going to continue having one, which is so exciting. So, like, so far, if it was like Miss USA top three, like, we've done like swimsuit, fuckin' evening gown, talent, like, but you had to narrow down, like, your top

three favorite performances. And I know it's hard because, like, I have like iconic moments in my little baby tour that, like, I was, like, really proud of, or like that stood out to me, but like for whatever reason.

But you know what? I'll tell you this much. Like sometimes when I think about trying to do this with my own performances, not that it's about, 'cause like I know the comparison is the thief of joy. And they all have like their own experience and like, amazingness to them. So whatever. But like then sometimes I think, like, oh, it should have been, like, Radio City, for instance, because that's so iconic. And that was really important to me. And like, I can't believe I got to play. And like, it's, it was literally like an out of body experience for like 90 minutes because I couldn't believe that it was happening. And like all of the training that went into it, but it was like a single show.

And then, like, literally the next night I was in Cleveland and I feel like, and like the venue is like a quarter of the size. And I feel like it was like one of the best shows I've ever had, or at least like to date, it was like the day after, like Radio City. And I think I was just kind of, like, quivering in my boots at, like, at the, like at this prospect of Radio City. And it's almost like all my adrenaline kicked in, like, the next day. But that performance, like sticks out of Cleveland, because it was just like I felt like I was like electric. And I feel like it was like, like that was just a really special performance for me, for whatever reason. Like, it just sticks out. So I don't know if there's any other ones for you that-?

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:38:51] You're the only human being that will relate with me on that. Yeah. My Radio City one, everyone was like this is so big iconic. I mean, I grew up on an island, I didn't know any places to go. I didn't know what the famous venues were. So I was just like, OK, I guess I'll do really good today or I'll try and put pressure on myself and I was like, this is just another awesome show. But yeah, my top three favorites. I mean, I have, I got to sing on the Grammys, at the Grammys, like, on the stage. It was a tribute for Lionel Richie. So that was insane. I was shaking in my boots. I've never been like, wow, this is the best feeling, like performing.

Except for actually this one was nuts. I performed for Quincy Jones on his birthday, at, like, where they do the AMAs. And I remember I did, "You don't own me," I did that song. So it was very powerful. I was very emotional. And I remember for the first time in my entire career, I've never told anyone this either, I closed my eyes at the end and just sang with my whole body and soul, and I opened my eyes and forgot where I was. And I was so nervous for this thing that I just, like, threw away all my fear. And just, like, "You don't own me," and was screaming. And then I open my eyes and saw Oprah and Quincy Jones and I was, like, "Oh, this is that high everyone talks about," of like, "this is the greatest feeling ever."

And I finally got it. I think, 'cause I like, nailed it. And I was proud of myself too, but what a moment that was. And then my third one would be, there's so many.

But my whole first tour, we did something really special that I wish we could do every single day. We always had a queen on our show. We would crown someone with like my little merch that said Meghan Trainor, and I'd sing this Caribbean song I wrote called "Queen." And it's like, "You are the Queen, girl." And like, it was like Trinidadian, it was great. And we would always pick, like, anyone who is like, if they did Make A Wish to come see a show or something, and it'd be like the most special moment. And I would always cry after words of like, you just feel so helpless. But it was like my first experience of, like, getting to meet amazing kids like that and hear their stories. And I would weep after, but, but it was like the most beautiful moment, seeing how happy they were on that stage. And that was like my first tour. So these were like tiny venues. And it was just so magical that I haven't had that feeling in a long time too.

JVN [00:41:22] Aw, it's got to be this, it's weird. I was in Australia when the shutdown happened. You were in the UK when it happened. And I just played, like, my biggest place ever, like at the end of my first international tour for, like, stand comedy. And, like, I was in the middle of, like, writing another show for this year and like, learning how to do, like, stand up comedy on the job. And I'm sure for you, like, you know, getting to play these venues and have your tours, like increase and grow in your venues and your options and the things, and you're like, I could do this and I have this, like, vision to do that. Like, it occurred to me in the middle I was going to start doing like a random gymnastics routine, like in the middle of my show.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:42:00] Yes.

JVN [00:42:01] And then I started doing like a quick change, like, while I would bring my cat on this, like, prerecorded video to do like a weather segment because he's a fictitious weather man. And I would do this fierce costume change to just give people, like, a whole different, like, gag of a look.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:42:14] Yeah.

JVN [00:42:15] But I literally would do a quick change in a tent, like in the pitch black on stage, like-.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:42:19] Oh yeah.

JVN [00:42:20] I would meet people, like, quick changing, it was like a nightmare. But to think like, oh my God, I just was not prepared to say goodbye. Like, I didn't know that we weren't gonna or like what it would be like and what's that been like for you? Like thinking just what's that been like?

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:42:37] Yeah. I was, I was supposed to do a whole arena tour with Maroon 5, which I was so excited about because I've never done, I've never headlined. I got so close to big venues but never arenas. And that's like my last bucket list I think I have, besides make a hundred kids. So I was so excited for that. And we were going to do like four stadiums. So it was weird being like, shut it down and I can't do it. And now I'm gonna be giving birth whenever they try to go again. So I was just like, I don't know if I'm ever gonna tour with them now. And it's, it is like touring is the hardest part of my job, I think, like physically, every night, like the changes you're talking about. Yeah, they're in a tent and it's my mom ripping off my sweaty dress on my sweaty body, just pulling on a new one. It's not like the most glamorous thing, but it's awesome when you get to connect with crowds and fans like that.

So touring for me, though, the travel, I always got sick. I was bad at touring. It's like I'm bad at the beach. I have a terrible time at the beach. I'm a pool girl. So I knew with this chance of like, not chance, but with this, the decision of having all of us stay home for safety, I was like, this is probably my only time that I can be like, I'm getting pregnant and I'm staying safe. And I wouldn't feel, everyone is like, "Don't you want to get back out there?" I'm like, I'd feel horrible if I'm like, "Hey, young kids gather closely in this dangerous place to watch me sing for an hour." Like, I wouldn't feel good about it. I feel so dangerous and I won't feel good until they're like they prove that this system works and we've done it 100 times and everyone stays safe and had a great time.

JVN [00:44:20] Same.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:44:21] So touring is like a big question mark for me.

JVN [00:44:23] Yes. It's just like I so, and fingers crossed, I mean, you will get, I mean, like supply and demand. The demand is going to be there for you to do that arena tour some day, honey. So we know that. We need to get it like-.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:44:37] Oh yeah, now everyone wants a personal tour. They want, they're like, we need, like, a holiday tour. I'm like, oh yes, we got to do that.

JVN [00:44:41] Ah! We will get our life, like, gorgeous headlining arena Meghan Trainor tour. We will.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:44:45] Yes. We'll do it.

JVN [00:44:46] It's gonna happen eventually. OK, so wait, I have another question. So you know how you were saying that you didn't really get the voice that you liked until you're like 16?

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:44:54] Yes. There's hope for you.

JVN [00:44:56] So you're saying there is a chance?

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:45:01] There's a chance. I would tell you, because you keep wanting, I think you keep wanting me to say, like some people have it and some people don't. I think everyone has it, you just have to never give up and keep singing as loud as you possibly can because then you'll get better. 10,000 hours.

JVN [00:45:16] Am I going to turn into a harmonizer accidentally in my 30s?

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:45:21] You are. And then Fifth Harmony will be like, "We have to get back together with him."

JVN [00:45:28] Or maybe like I could just become, I don't know, I'm really not in Camilla's range. I can't do that, like, gorgeous like, pitch-.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:45:35] You're the bass. You're the, ba ba ba. You're the low.

JVN [00:45:39] Yeah. Yeah, I can't. I can't make her noises. So OK. So we're at the part of the, of the class where if there is anything that we have not touched upon that you want to touch upon, that you would like to chat about. If the original question was, question was is how are we going to have a merry Christmas? Well, we're obviously going to get your album. That's going to help. That's going to turn our frowns upside down a little bit.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:46:00] 'Cause I made sure that it was, like, what's my favorite album that I would want to hear? Christmas pop, like, you know? Just like a fun time. And you get a little, you get the classics that you need. And I'm, I was a jazz singer in the jazz band. So you can hear a whole new side of me, you're going to make a whole new friend. It's going to be excellent. And I have a song with, my dad's playing piano. My brothers are singing and wrote all the originals with me. It's very family. So my key to Christmas this year, to every holiday this year, Thanksgiving, all of them, is family. Like I know, and even if they're on a Zoom call, call them up, make sure they're OK. My nana turned 98 today. I got

to call her and see what she's doing to stay alive that long. 'Cause she's my hero. But yeah. Family first, always.

JVN [00:46:46] She's so cute. Family first.

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:46:47] She's so cute. She's my great grandma. We're livin' long.

JVN [00:46:50] Oh my God. Meghan Trainor. I love that story. I love your great grandma. I can't wait to listen to your album. Congratulations so much on your year and your album. And we love you so much. And thank you so much for coming on "Getting Curious."

MEGHAN TRAINOR [00:47:05] Thank you for letting me be on here. You're an icon. And this is so legendary.

JVN [00:47:13] You've been listening to Getting Curious with me, Jonathan Van Ness. My guest this week was the Grammy Award-winning singer and songwriter Meghan Trainor. Her holiday album "A Very Trainor Christmas" is out now.

You'll find links to her work in the episode description of whatever you're listening to the show on.

Our theme music is "Freak" by Quiñ - thanks to her for letting us use it. If you enjoyed our show, introduce a friend - show them how to subscribe.

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