

## Zayn

What is Up Daddy Gang It is your founding father Alex Cooper with Hey Zain welcome to Call her Daddy I'm so happy that you're here We have to preface this with my fans are watching this like where the fuck are you guys We are in my childhood home Daddy Yang OK Zain and I are in my living room that I grew up in Zain got here and has had to look at all the embarrassing childhood photos of me Thank you so much for coming I've never done what did you say I didn't see any embarrassing photos I think you hit them all I actually there's a couple you'll see them on your way out and then you'll never look at me the same I have never done a podcast in my childhood home So this feels like a little sentimental also You never really do interviews When is the last time you did something like this I think I did an interview like six years ago was the last time I did one So we're kind of like popping the cherry back off I think so Yeah something like that So you're living in Pennsylvania and I obviously grew up here I loved it growing up It's very family oriented very suburban but I'm curious to know like of all the trendy spots that you could have picked Why Pennsylvania Um Yeah it's just a lot of people ask me that like they always think it's super random that I live out of here Um I ended up coming out here um with with my ex a bit like and I fell in love with it like it was just super like calm and chill like you said suburban um and I just wanted to like take a break from like the busy city because like I was living in New York for three years at the time and um it just got a bit overwhelming you know like going out of your door to like just craziness all the time So I just wanted a bit more like um I a surrounding that like I'm used to like where I grew up um in Bradford like in in the UK It's it's a lot more of this kind of person and vibe So um I feel like I just fit in better around here than I do in the trendy spots as it as it as it were you know Yeah you give trendy vibes but I think I totally relate to that of like sometimes when you get to you give trendy vibes like look at your outfit it's like pretty swaggy but then you're also like hanging with the Amish folk So it's like a good little juxtaposition Zain OK But what I find interesting is I love that you like you would be in New York City and I'm assuming you would be going out and there's paparazzi everywhere Taking photos of you Pennsylvania There ain't no paparazzi Are they finding you or No No no there's no I think there's like laws and stuff They're not allowed to even take photos in certain places Oh that's amazing OK The most important question Have you gone to yet I have uh is a night time life server out here I was like

how am I going to get along with saying if he hasn't like had a love for Wawa yet Yeah like late night studio sessions There's nothing else open You have to go to get the Meatball sub It is so fucking superior I remember growing up and my excuse whenever I would want to go like meet up with boys would be like mom like I just want to go get a Wawa Sub and she'd be like you're not using as your cover up Yeah OK So I feel like again you're kind of this mysterious guy Zain we don't really know too much about you You're kind of under the radar So can you take me through a typical day in the life of Zain in Pennsylvania Like what are we doing Make us feel like we're a part of your life Um a typical day for me is uh it kind of varies It depends you know like what what kind of mood I woke up in But I take it pretty easy Like I just um I don't now because obviously I've got my daughter like 50% of the time It's it's it's a balance between the two things But when I buy myself a typical day is um I'll probably wake up around like midday have a shower eat some food Um And then like figure out if I'm going to go to the studio and do some writing because I've been in like writing mode for a long time just like working on my records and stuff So just yeah just getting into the studio pretty much and then I'll be there like all day until I go to sleep go to stop off for a are you are you someone that likes to be alone Um I like my own space Um I like to um collect my thoughts in like a more quiet environment Um I feel like when there's a lot of people around it kind of like just gets a bit hectic for me Yeah I just I like to chill by myself from time to time but I don't mind hanging out with people now like on occasion you know what I'm saying Like it has to be the right kind of environment and I have to like wanna be there you know No I get that I feel like that's also growing up like I was recently talking to some of my audience I was meeting them in person and we're like it's kind of weird when you just start to grow up you just get more specific with who you want to spend your time with I think that's a healthy thing Obviously you're on a even bigger stage because you were around millions of people in stadiums and tours and everything But I also think that's kind of relatable of like you know what Sometimes I want to be alone and then I'll hang with people but like you got to be good company Yeah I I've always thought like um it would be you know a pretty normal reaction to feel that way around so many people I think anybody who was like overwhelmed in that manner would feel you know a certain type of way about it But um I'm definitely learning to manage it a lot better Like um as I'm getting older like it's it's more of a choice you know rather than a than a hindrance It's not like I can't do that It's like I'd rather prefer not to Yeah

that makes sense I own it a bit more Yeah you obviously love music But can you share with us like what are some of your other hobbies What are your passion about What's other than music Um like my main passion I think outside of music is is art I love to parent and I love to draw Um I do a bit of cooking Kate Tell me one of your dishes Come on I can't cook I cook a lot of different things Um but I like to cook meat like specifically like um I I have a smoker outside and I like to smoke like lamb and I cook like my like I'll do like grilled vegetables with it and stuff But is this like new or were you always good at cooking I wasn't always good at cooking unfortunately for me No my mom kind of spoiled me as a kid So when I was living by myself like at 17 there were some botch jobs done for some meals Yeah it wasn't wasn't great Some some disgusting uh stuff was going on for sure And yeah horrible Yeah just sandwiches you know out of like crisps That's kind of nice to be able to know Like you can cook you're over there painting you can sing Ok No big deal Don't keep bragging over there making us all look bad Do you have animals I do Yeah I've got a lot of animals I have three cats three dogs they get along Uh they're kind of like in different places I have some dogs that one part of my house and the cats in the other Um the we have three turtles Six chickens You name them all No I haven't Not this time I got too attached last time and it made me really sad Did the chicken die Yeah I took I took my chicken to to the vet um to get a scan because something was wrong with her and the vet laughed at me and said people don't bring chickens here Um and and then they still charged me for an x-ray and then I I took my chicken all the way home and cried and she died in my arms I'm like not laughing because it is kind of funny but not because the chicken died But it's just funny seeing me take a chicken when you hold your chicken like are you holding your chicken like this fully on my lap She died a lot So you weren't crazy for going to be No Yeah She had something wrong with it We tried to rescue them They were going to be slaughtered I think Um and uh they had all kinds of things wrong with them Yeah But I've got new chickens now and they're all healthy and stuff but I didn't name them for that reason Ok And what are the names of the cats Salem Bobby and Vito Dobby Is that from Harry Potter Harry Potter He's a sphinx He's a pink sphinx So he looks a little bit like Dobby Harry That's so good You're a Harry Potter fan A big Harry Potter fan I didn't know that about you I wouldn't have pegged you as like a Harry Potter guy This is like really good vibe It was my favorite as a kid Yeah that's really good Ok And what are the dogs names Um Zion Zeus and Thumper Thumper with an f yeah like Thumper But with an f how did

you come up with that Bambi Thumper The rabbit But you wanted an sounded better Yeah it's better in my accent Yeah it does sound pretty good Um something I love to do and call her daddy is like the reason we all are the way that we are is because of our childhood where we came from who we were raised by our environment growing up Obviously you living in Pennsylvania right now is so different from where you grew up in the UK in Bradford like you described can you explain to people that may not be familiar with Bradford Like what was your upbringing like And what was that environment like Um where do you want me to start Uh Yeah Bradford's not obviously like Pennsylvania in terms of you know like the wealth and the word that it's like you know looked after and taken care of It's uh it's uh impoverished community you know there's people below working class that that um that have you know a hard environment that they're growing up in you know everyone's kind of got some issues going on at home or something's happening you know even if it's on the street or whatever wherever you go there's there's a lot of um confliction you know Um So it was very different to um to hear in that sense for sure But um I'm very grateful for where I grew up because it it definitely like you said shaped and molded a lot of um identity for me Um early on I was questioned you know and like interrogated about my identity because of my environment Like it's just a it's like you have to have a good understanding of who you are Um And uh I'm really grateful for that you know it helped cement um my own identity myself I think when you talk about like people would question your identity I know your family is not from the UK your family is Pakistani And I'm curious is that my father is my mum's English OK So are you saying like is that how that was influenced No not necessarily just in in every sense of the word like even like your fashion the clothes you want to wear the way you want to cut your hair It was always something was questioned You know if you weren't doing the no that was like that everybody would do was doing or everyone was following you know everyone would wear a certain type of pant or a certain type of shoe and you weren't dressed that way You would get questioned about it you know like people would be very like in your face and be like give you shit So you had to like have a bit about you so that you could you know know who you are and have a conversation back Have a better wits about you is you know street smarts you gotta be able to like hold your own And when you say people are coming at you is it more like peer dynamics of or is it more like authoritative figures there Yeah there's AAA mix of everything It's um it depends you know there's there's the peer

pressure in schools and stuff but then it's on the street if you go out there and stuff if you're just trying to have a good time you know like it's not um as friend friendly fun you know it it's a bit more like um I there's there's there's a bit of bit of aggression going on you know what I mean Talk to me about where you grew up Like are you in an apartment Are you in a condo or No I grew up in a in a terraced house um uh in a rented property and we never owned our our own house Um So yeah it was it was a small house There was like three bedrooms kitchen living room but the streets like are all like every house is like stuck next to the one next to it you know what I'm saying There's no space You have a garden that's like like enough for maybe a dog to sit in Um so yeah it's it's a bit different for sure Yeah So you have three sisters Ok And so you are the one boy and three sisters What was it like growing up with all mostly women around you Like how do you think that shaped you Um I feel like I learned a lot of things like early on Um my sisters are very opinionated you know they're very strong characters Um And uh yeah I love them They're great They were a lot of fun Yeah it was always entertaining in our house for sure I love I really love when I meet a guy and you can just tell that he has sisters because you can just tell the way they move around women You guys learn what a fucking tampon is earlier I had to go to the store and buy them Wow So you were like really supporting that time of the month Terrified but supportive Ok Were you reluctant to go to the store and buy Definitely not It was just kind of weird Like when the shop people would ask me like why I was buying them And I'm like obviously I'm not buying them for myself you know like do you have to ask me that Like just let me buy this you wouldn't stick like a couple of extra like snacks around it You're just like yeah we didn't have money for extra snacks It was just needs to remain Yeah like I'll take the supers These bitches are sorry the other way around But yeah exactly It was always an awkward conversation but yeah I didn't mind it I respect that Ok to people obviously that weren't there in your childhood How would you describe your personality as a kid Um my personality as a kid I think I was uh a bit of a cheeky cheeky chappy Yeah I used to mischievous used to get into all kinds of just childish stuff you know like climbing in places I shouldn't have been and falling out trees and smashing windows and stupid things Yeah With with a football accidentally of course you know Right Right Right For sure for sure So you were getting in trouble a little bit just like childish stuff Nothing too serious Yeah exactly Yeah Exciting shit Ok So you were kind of just like doing your thing as a kid But I also think the way that you're describing the environment

that you grew up was there a way that you could have gone down the wrong path easily because of that environment It was easy to get wrapped up in the wrong crowd Oh definitely Yeah I think it was always an opportunity to go and do something that you know uh would have got you in like serious trouble Um I was really lucky in the sense that like my mother and father like was super protective of that environment My dad was always aware of you know the things that were out there and he always explain stuff to me from a young age Um And uh kind of kept me away from that if I'm being honest And that's where like I developed into being a person that likes to be by myself and like in my room like singing recording writing I got into you know poetry and things like that because I was in my room a lot Like um and I didn't like to be in them kind of environments It was just uh a bit too much you know I was always a bit more of a reserved kind of guy a bit you know artistic wanted to do my own thing I didn't really want to be in that So my parents did a good job of keeping me away from it I think Yeah Did you get along with kids in school Were you like the cool kid Were you bullied Like what was the vibe Yeah I think I got on with with pretty much everyone but I wasn't like I was the type of person who only had like 23 close friends I didn't have like a big group Like I knew people people knew of me I don't think I was the cool kid but I wasn't bullied either Yeah Like if if people knew me they were friendly with me Yeah I feel like a lot of kids we always have that like memory maybe it's financial maybe it's something with the parents or the siblings or extended family Like of like a childhood memory that you remember your family kind of just being like stressed or going through something difficult Kind of like if you could remember kind of a childhood memory that you remember just being like stressed about something in your life Like looking back at like childhood stresses like I feel like a lot of them were so like finicky that it's just probably just some teenage shit you know what I mean It wasn't anything important Um So I don't really look back at things like that in my personality that the way I am like I I've never really like look back and been like oh yeah this is one thing that like kind of was you know a stressful thing I think life is interesting like that I think you know it depends on what you're going through at that time and how you feel and then you can reflect on it at a different point and feel completely differently about it It's so interesting I have a lot of respect even for you answering it like that because I know that you've been open about like at one point your family being on food stamps and I feel like a lot of people would sit here and that may have been the answer right That would

have been like well fuck Like I couldn't even I didn't know where my next meal was and you're like oh you know maybe it was childish shit like no big deal And it's like that's interesting if you Yeah No And obviously there was some serious things like that for sure too But I don't look back at it in terms of a negative light you know it all helped to like shape a mold who I am and make me grateful for the things that I have now you know Yeah So we are here because you can sing When did you first realize you were passionate about singing and you could sing Um I think I was about 11 12 Um I sung a little bit before like I've done a bit in in like school choir and stuff Um Funny story I actually fancied like these three girls that were in choir Um and they were triplets and that's why I just was like I'm gonna be in quiet just so I can hang around these girls Um And then it developed from there when I went into high school I went to a performing arts college like uh specifically like majored in in sports and performing arts And um they were doing the school production that year for greets and I auditioned Um and nobody could sing like at all like in my whole school and I went and did this like singing audition Everyone was like whoa you can sing And then my um music teacher like recommended that I get like a couple of singing lessons and stuff Um And then she said I think you should go on X Factor I think you've got a good chance Like and it just kind of went from there Like I love that The story started with you know there were these three triplets and it just felt right to join choir as well By the rest you're like I got to get in that class just spend this time right So like your natural just like boy interest ended up You realized it's something that you had a true talent from the triplets to X Factor you made So it's so funny too because you say you wouldn't be where you are without your mom because you didn't want to get out of bed the morning that you had the X Factor audition and your mom made you go Why did you also not want to go initially Um I think it was just nerves Um I I built it up in my head and I was like yo this is a massive thing and yeah I was like I don't think I'm gonna go today and my mom's like you are going you're going right now you're gonna go see what happens So yeah I definitely owe it to her for that for sure And so did you like practice You were practicing for it Yeah Um But I had no idea no clue Like they they told us like we had to have like um a backing track like a karaoke version and like I was so like inexperience at that time that I didn't even know what that was So like I was just planning on singing a cappella so I was just gonna do it like without anything Um And it was so weird for me to adjust to singing on a backing track I was like this is such a weird experience I think even Simon

looked at me a little bit weird like when I did the a cappella because everybody had backing tracks and stuff But yeah so that probably means you stand out though I don't know he could have worked either way Maybe it made me sound really bad too It will obviously not look where you're fucking sitting Yeah Do you remember what you saying Yeah I do Mario let me love you And the reason I said that is because I've seen that forms back a few times and cringed every time So yeah it's not my best vocal performance So there's a lot of nerves involved there for sure But clearly there was something in there a capella and he just nails it when you look back at that moment obviously Is it like surreal Like if you even had to like watch it back Like is it does it even feel like a lifetime ago Yeah it does It feels like so much longer than it actually was Um because so much stuff happened in that time Um yes it's it's very interesting very surreal Um and I I feel all them nerves get like when I watch it like I I feel like I could like give myself a hug you know and be like it's OK bro because I literally I'm like holding on to the mic for dear life please Nobody hurt me Um So good It's so good So obviously then X factor everyone Simon everyone came to you guys and they had this idea to invent one direction And then I I think people don't I don't even know like did you even meet anyone before they put you guys together Yeah We knew each other like just from around because we were like a similar age and stuff So naturally you speak to people who like a similar age to you around there and stuff and we were at boot camp together and we I met Harry on my audition there because um we both auditioned in Manchester and we were literally sat next to each other in the audition So it was like fucking meant to be He was sat right next to me We spoke and I went in and did like a producing audition Round and then he went in straight after me and we spoke a little bit there Yeah So you weren't complete strangers That's good to know because I didn't know if they just threw you all together and then you were like you said it very well obviously you know you don't see all the behind the scenes and stuff But yeah you spent a lot of time with the contestants Ok Got it once you started obviously one direction and you joined one direction Like how quickly did your actual life change Was it overnight immediate or was it a little bit gradual Um It was kind of strange like visual evidence of life changing like people being outside of the studio and stuff was like um when we were on the live shows um we started to get like a a fan base and an audience and you could see that people were paying interest in us Um So yeah from that point on like it was kind of a bit crazy Like what were you even able to comprehend it Uh Not really I don't



think I comprehended it at all Like I think it's just a rush you know it was like just fun Um And then the repetitive fun over and over again eventually is going to take its toll you know what I mean So then you look at a certain way when you're in that and like it feels overbearing now I look back at it like it was a rush you know it was it was fun It was and it was something that was amazing Like so of course I wasn't going to understand it It's not something I expected in my life but um it was definitely fun for sure Yeah because it is so interesting I think people forget like you were 17 at the time Like my brother lived in this house 17 and was like picking his nose and going to wa wa and like trying to fucking get girls to pay attention to him And you are like all of a sudden overnight become one of the biggest stars in the world Can you help us commoners over here Zain commoners Can you help us understand like what skyrocketing to that level of fame can do to you as an individual when you're like by yourself at night laying in bed trying to understand like what is happening to you in your life Um Yeah you could you can definitely get into you know um deep places of thought if you really reflect on it in that kind of manner Um To be honest with you I don't think I was even like intellectually capable to to do that at that age You know like I think it's took time for me to process them things I think I've had to like process it with an with an older um mind and and look at it backwards and be like yo this was why this happened and this is what happened and you know we took off at this point and this interview made this happen and then this song made this happen and just decide for it you know as like facts rather than like in an emotional manner because um emotion like just seems to just blur things you know so I I try not to think about them things on that kind of level Like oh I'm super famous like I just make music you know I love singing and people seem to have an interest in it Yeah a little bit Just a little bit No I almost get what you're saying like you kind of have to block it out and just be present because if you stop to think about all of it then it's all gonna come That's how I deal with I don't block it out so much but I just don't overthink you know Um It works for me that way I think you almost have to stay present because it's like what in the moment you just enjoy it and then like in you know 10 years time you can look back and be like this is what happened Like now you can look at it in hindsight and be like if you have 10 years time Yeah but you've had time probably now to be like whoa in your quiet moments now in life where you can actually sit and dissect things that at 17 18 years old again like you said I was just having fun I was just going with it And also it's not like you were just on this solo tour like

you were a part of something so that also probably affected of like be a good team player Like go with the flow like do what you gotta do Um Obviously you guys fans are insane They're obsessed they're still obsessed They're everywhere they love you guys Can you share any like memorable fan moments that you remember to this day that have stuck with you of just like anything that happened that you're like damn Um I've I've probably said this a lot of times but honestly it was one of the craziest and and most bizarre moments ever Um I remember coming out of the uh the studio once in Sweden when we were recording What makes you beautiful And this is before even we dropped our first single and there was like a row of like maybe 56 bins like trash cans like outside of the studio and I came out and like every single one of the trash cans opens and there's like three people inside of each and they tried to like grab me and it was it was a very memorable moment that was for sure Yeah I think I had a mini heart attack Humans popped out from garbage cans and tried to grab you It's like a fucking video game They swallow you into the fucking truck Oh wow Do you think that in any way though Right They were willing to get in the trash bucket for you Ok Motherfucker they are loyal Do you think that those kind of moments though Not that we don't love the fans We're obsessed but like people being so obsessed with you like is there any lingering paranoia from people constantly staring at you and following you No no not really I have paranoia in that sense I I sleep in I can hear the cricket It's amazing There's no crazy people out there No one crazy in pen that you're performing in front of massive crowds And I I know you're kind of saying like you were in the moment but like were you able to just easily get in front of all these people Was there no fear or anxiety that came with like standing in front of thousands and hundreds of thousands of people when you're on stage Um I think there was but I don't think we have time for it Like there was no like you have time to have anxiety or be nervous You're just kind of gonna go do it you know like get on with it Um So yeah we just we can I think we just got thrown into the deep end and we kind of just have to swim you know like um and I feel like we did a good job like in terms of like you know the the keeping it together and and making the music that we were meant to make I think I got out at the right time I think if I had done it any longer it might have affected me a bit more But um I think uh we did the right amount you know I think it's interesting too because when you look at bands or even just like any brand that has like multiple people attached to it like everyone loves to put archetypes with people like the Spice Girls for example perfect

example you have to label everyone And so for a boy band it would be like the boy next door like the bad boy like the like the brooding one or the funny one Like what persona do you think you played there The makeup that I was like the brooding series Yeah but that wasn't necessarily my personality type just I think it's just a marketing scheme you know you got the you've got Spice Girls you've got whatever like it's just a marketing scheme you know like oh this is this one So I get it Um but I I don't I don't think you can define an entire person to one personality trait you know we're a little bit more complex than that Um Yeah I don't know what my trip would have been if I'd have given myself one It took a long time to come up with one if I was going to do that so I could see why they just said Oh yeah you can be the mysterious one Yeah It's interesting I love the telly tubby reference You're like the Teletubbies the Spice Girls one direction I like the fucking Teletubbies Yeah I think Simon was beyond the Teletubbies too Yeah And the power ranges Yeah it's so fucking crazy It's all come full circle Fuck No But it's interesting because I was gonna ask like I agree you kind of had this like brooding mysterious personality and that's why I'm excited to sit down with you today because again those stereotypes that were put on to people I'm curious if first of all who comes up with that marketing people I guess Yeah it's not like the fans it's kind of just happens and maybe some some of the fans kind of like naturally say this to you know what I mean From black pictures and things like that Like so you did you agree So you didn't agree with it But do you think you leaned into it more or do you think I just had one face to pull you know in in my I was doing the zoolander like that was it You know what I mean I was only a young kid I didn't know what else to do I get it If anything maybe it made it easier because you're like this is just my lane This is me Just stick with this They will ask me too many questions Do you think you're mysterious Um not really I just uh I just like to just like chill you know I like to be in the back a little bit Um yeah I'm a bit more relaxed I'm not like trying to like be in my face you know you're not trying to jump in Yeah exactly OK Well now you're so low so you got to jump in front OK we're gonna get there Um I love how you kind of mentioned you know you got out at the right time and I think that you leaving the band obviously shook the fucking world and everyone was like Zane like no like keep it together But I think what again we forget is you're a human being and you clearly had to take care of your mental health and do what was best for you Can you I know you've lightly talked about this but just so we get a full circle moment Can you just take us back to that moment of like actually

sitting with yourself and knowing it was time to leave Uh Yeah I think I'd known for a minute There was a lot of look I don't want to go into too much detail but there was a lot of politics going on Um Certain people were doing certain things certain people didn't want to sign contracts So I knew something was happening Um So I just got ahead of the curve if I'm being honest with you I was like I'm just gonna get out of here I think this is done and I just seen it Um And I completely selfishly wanted to be the first person to go and make my own record If I'm being completely honest with you I was like I'm gonna jump the gun here for the first time I'm passive dude But when it comes to my music and and my business I'm serious about it and I'm competitive So I wanted to be the first to go and do my own thing That's that was the reason And then there was obviously underlying issues like within our friendships too We've been together every day for five years and we got sick of each other for being completely honest So we were we were close you know we done crazy things with each other and that nobody else in the world will ever understand or have them experiences that we've shared with each other and and I look back on it now in a much fonder life then I would have you know as I just left um There were great experiences I had great times with them But yeah we just run a car I love that You're saying that too because I think people can relate to that of like if you're with the same people 24 7 No shit And I think I can imagine as you guys were younger everyone was so idealizing this band that you couldn't say that back in the day of like yeah we got fucking sick of each other It was time to like do our own things And I think that's so OK But because there was this obsession obviously I get it There's this Oh yes It's an idea isn't it So when you watch Friends you don't want Joey cussing off Chandler you know what I mean You want these people to be best friends Like it's an idea Yeah you want them to stay together forever But I also think it's so healthy because imagine if you hadn't ended it then you really would have fucking hate each other and being able to go on your own way Also someone always has to be the first one to leave and maybe it's the best thing for it But in the time I can imagine there's hurt feelings Um Were you afraid of what the world was going to think of you when you made that decision Um I don't think I was afraid No Um I just um the first thing I wanted to do was uh call my mom as cheesy as that sounds I just wanted to call her and be like is it OK if I come home Like is this this is this good like and she was like yeah so as soon as she said that I was like yeah I'm good Like I'm I'm done like I'm over this I don't I didn't really care about what anybody else thought That's that's the type of person I

am like we were talking about earlier I tried to close them opinions off I'm not really the type of person who defines myself on other people's opinions of myself If people know me and know me well they know who I am Um and I spend that time on them people and make sure that they're you know looked after and they get that time with me rather than the people that I'm never necessarily even going to see or you know have a conversation with especially if it's a negative remark you know positive remarks are always nice I I don't really pay attention to either of them if I'm being completely honest with you just don't let it get in my head I think that's so smart because I think social media even if you're not famous like everyone is feeding themselves and their worth by what other people are saying about them And it's like you good with your family and like I don't mean family by blood Like you may not people that you have around you your circle and as long as they're good then that's all that matters to me But did you not tell your mom you were doing it Uh Did I not tell my mom I was leaving No it was that kind of spur of the moment like I not told her beforehand like oh I'm thinking of leaving Um I just called her on that day and that I was leaving and said I'm coming home Is it ok Have you still got a bed for me She was like yeah man So yeah my dad wasn't so cool but he was like no no you got to stay with Simon Simon's gonna stay you right Like don't come home stay there Um but my mom was like yeah you can come home please son come home you know Oh my God that's actually really cute that the first person like mom do you have a bed for me She's like let's go because didn't you also buy your mom One of the first things you did with your success is you bought her a home when you how cool is that to be able to buy your mom something she's done Um ok so you leave the band and take me to when you're laying in your mom's home you're in bed What were those next couple of weeks Like for you Like mentally and emotionally It was interesting I was just trying to get stuff together like uh I wanted to get like a plan of action you know what I mean So I was like on a bit of a mission I wasn't there too long I went home for a little bit and then I went back to London and started working and stuff that must have been so stressful too because I feel like I guess we see it in various different forms but like if you make a jump even if someone quits their job right They're like I need to prove to myself and other people that like I now can do it And so did you put pressure on yourself when obviously you came out being solo Like were you fucking nervous Yeah for sure It's a very different experience sitting on stage by yourself too Like it's a whole different workload as well singing 3.5 minutes of a song

completely by yourself Like when you've got a song divvied between five people you're singing a little bit of a verse maybe some mad lips you know I preferred the workload to be honest Um Like taking a nap in the Yeah Yeah Nice one Um But yeah it it it it I just kind of had to like make an adjustment I started practicing a lot more singing a lot more and just like making sure I could sing for three minutes right You had to be like I need to get back to my let me love you days where I'm like back factor It's just me I'm curious this and I don't know because I know you were saying and I I totally respect it of like you were kind of just in this phase of going going going and you didn't have time to stop But when you did go solo and you left did you have to take any moment to be like who the fuck am I independent of now Not being a part of something that I was identified as in media Um Yeah definitely I think that's why um I've took the time I have to like not even necessarily do interviews and do too much like press exposure because I feel like we were so over exposed in the band that like it takes a bit of time for you naturally to progress as a human and give something else that is interesting that you have to say it You don't want to be sat there just saying the same shit on repeat and you know what I mean Day in day out like I think there should be a good healthy break in between and that was my approach to it for sure So um I feel like uh in terms of you know figuring out what your identity is as as an artist the only way you're going to do that is by living you know you can't just be on the conveyor belt and expect to have any sort of experience that's new that you're gonna give people I love that too because I feel like people especially creators They're such a stress about taking a break and it doesn't mean you're actually taking a break You could be working but like popping out of it Yeah And you were you able to just not have the anxiety about it because you're like I know I'm coming back but it's like I got to just be good on my own shit and not be fulfilling the tabloids and everyone else Like how am I on my own right now Just saying wow So you start doing your own solo music And I remember when you came out pillow talk all the good stuff you popped off and it's like really dope to see you coming out with your own sound and creative and it's you and that's exciting to know like you are producing this and it's not obviously a no shade to one direction but like you're one of five like you can't really have a full say and shit Now this is you when you started on your solo career like was there anything that you really wanted to make sure that you could bring to life that maybe you weren't able to when you were in a band Like creatively creatively I just wanted to talk about things you know that were a bit more real like an

authentic um to situations that I was going through in my life Like obviously certain things that we would talk about in the band was always very you know clean cut like just closing over the top not really any depth or any stories to what's going on Um And that was always a big thing for me Obviously I understand again from a marketing scheme that like the the audience and the fan base we were appealing to at that point was that kind of art So it was never going to work um for that kind of audience But yeah I just wanted to show people that had a bit more depth Yeah Yeah I get that because like even earlier you said like you like to write poetry and I'm like I can only imagine how much the writing process is therapeutic and you get to infuse parts of yourself and your identity Whereas that just like wasn't in the past which it shouldn't have been like it was a band it was great whatever But now you can actually artistically exercise that part of yourself which must be I think it's difficult for people to write songs even from 11 perspective you know like there was five of us in the room when we used to write sometimes and it was so hard to get us all to like have the same viewpoint and want to talk about the same thing Um So in that sense from a creative point it is uh a lot more freeing for me Like I can fully get to grips with every part of it You know the melody the the story the production the the emotion the feeling that I'm trying to convey in each song So in in that sense it's super liberating It's cool because I I think you're getting now we're getting to know you a little bit better now that you are doing solo music But do you think do you think that the world even like slightly knows Zain yet Um I don't know Um I I try to uh like move in a certain way that you know hopefully I will still have some juice you know I don't want I don't want to give everything all in one go So um if they don't know everything yet that's ok But hopefully they get to know me a bit about this interview you know they get to see my thought patterns still I'm trying I'm trying I'm trying to be an off Ok How about this Describe yourself in three words describe myself in three words Um well I'm definitely not gonna use mysterious as one of them Um I would say um I'm a chill funny Hm Loving guy All the girls watching this You're like ah so nice That's so nice What's your favorite thing about yourself Um I don't know I think I I think I I like the fact that um I'm pretty witty Like I'm I'm pretty smart like and I enjoyed that about myself I think you're a good company with yourself Yeah Yeah II I enjoy that I'm pretty smart and I have a little laugh to myself you know about that Um what's your least favorite thing about yourself Um I'm a bit sensitive sometimes Yeah Not in a bad way Like I could like take things the wrong way Sometimes I can I'm definitely

working on that Give me an example Like I just like tend to like if somebody says something to me like I'll take it the wrong way if I can really care about their opinion what they're saying to me Yeah then you'll get upset Yeah I think that's good though That means you care Right Yeah Like I said with the people that are close to me right Do you think you at times can be too caring in moments that you need to learn to like I'm I'm learning to to be to be a bit more term with it Yeah Boundaries Yeah No not not boundaries Just like I'm just learning not to like getting in my head about certain things you know um across the board Like I I exercise that well in terms of like dealing with the media and things like that but I don't necessarily do that too well in my personal life sometimes I don't think Yeah that's good though Again it does mean you care But I get then you're like yeah but then I'm over here like dying inside I got like muster up the courage to Yeah Yeah Put that into a song OK give us one that's like really sad So we can see this is what we need we need some criers What do you think is the biggest misunderstanding about you Um that I'm like super serious like that I like just I'm like super stern and serious Yeah All the time when I'm not like um I'm just chill I I know that like a lot of people have like um high energy personalities and it's just not the way I am You know what I'm saying I'm just a bit more relaxed about things It's actually nice to be in person with you because I could see in media it could come off I get it like serious You're literally just chilling you're relaxed you're cozy and your sweater there's thunder there's rain we didn't even drive too far came to your mum's house Let's talk about anxiety I know that you have lightly talked about it in times and I just want to talk to you about like how anxiety affects your life What has it done in terms of playing a part in your personal life and your career Like just talk to me about what you're comfortable with Uh Yeah So I think we kind of touched on it a bit earlier like um when we're talking about you know like the the the the nature of our job you know like what we were doing in the band and the situation being on stage in front of thousands of people Um I think it's a really normal place to experience anxiety you know like you're gonna go and perform in front of you know a lot of different people you don't know who they are Um And it's not a natural thing to do you know in in terms of um everyday life you don't just talk to thousands of people you know Um So it was something that I had to you know learn to adjust um anxiety for me I've learned is is a feeling that now has a word you know Um And I feel like for generations human beings have felt it and not really even been able to put you know the finger on what it is Um But we overcome it you know um and



certain things in in life can change your perspective on the things And I think for me like since I've had my daughter and since she was born like the main thing in in my mind is like trying to be a good example to her like in terms of you know I can do things and I can achieve things and I can overcome things and you can do this too Um And to let things like you know a feeling stop you from doing that after having a child feels like a really small thing Like I feel like I've like had to step up you know as as as a man or just you know as a person Um and be this example to her that doesn't succumb to these feelings That's why I'm even doing this interview you know like I I used to get a lot of anxiety around like having a conversation like this just in this kind of environment and I want her to be able to look at me and be like yo my dad's doing this you know he's he's the man he's cool he's a cool guy Yeah So um that's helped me a lot for sure So fucking cool to obviously my mom's a psychologist So I grew up in I think mental health was not a conversation for most families and hopefully it will be But like I've watched so my mom talk to so many people and talk them through how to get over a panic attack how to get over anxiety how to not get over it but like manage it and live with it Be OK to go about your everyday life I think sometimes if you don't have anxiety people look at people with anxiety like just get the fuck over it And I think it shows up in everyone's lives in such different ways and I don't think that's the way you can look at it You know I think everybody's situation is is individual I think it takes an individual experience then to happen for somebody to overcome that too You know if you think about the first time you can recall in your life experiencing anxiety Did you experience anxiety prior to fame For sure Like take me to like a moment in your life where you remember being like wow I didn't know that was anxiety but now I did I enjoyed it That was the thing Yeah like I enjoyed being in that feeling and they got to a certain point I think where it just became too much Like I just was was weighing on me that feeling of um like anticipation and then getting the adrenaline and then the the after feeling of that you know um as a young kid I loved it Like I loved being on stage and I loved performing It was like a free space for me to go and be a character because it was you know I was playing a role in some little school performance It was nothing serious Um when it became a thing that had a lot of weight behind it in terms of you know people watching and stuff then you're gonna have you're gonna have natural feelings of anxiety Yeah People staring at you judging you writing about you following you taking pictures of you That's a lot Can you share with us like in the heyday of paparazzi and

insanity Like what would be something that would really trigger your anxiety in those days Um Just the idea of like um like not being able to just do normal things like to just go outside and like walk out onto the street you know like because where we lived it was kind of a bit crazy and there was just people always there like waiting to take a photo and stuff and obviously thinking about having a child and like raising her in that environment It was just very claustrophobic for me I didn't want her to have to be like exposed to that because she didn't choose it you know like it was a choice that I made So I was like we need to get out of here so that she can have some chance of like a a normal childhood You know where there's not cameras flashing in affairs constantly Let's talk about you being a father because it's really cool to see you talk about anxiety which again I have so much respect for even you being able to talk about it because I know it's like you're not that public about your life and that's something that you live with every day And to say like having a child has helped you overcome something that is like in your day to day that's like pretty debilitating in moments Um Yeah but you being famous and having a child like deciding to move here I can imagine you're trying to shield her from this life that you also are still trying to figure out like is it a lot Um I feel like um there's there's a there's a healthy way to do it you know Um I'm not necessarily trying to shield her from it because she's she's gonna know you know if she's gonna get to a certain point she's gonna have a certain level of awareness she gonna know what's going on Um I'm just trying to give her an option you know so it's like a choice for her Like if she she wants to be away from it she can be out here like because I am a famous person and I get sanctuary here you know what I'm saying So I feel like she um is going to have a lot of options and whatever she wants to do in her life obviously I'll support her for sure Yeah Ok How has becoming a dad shifted your priorities in life Um The the crazy thing is obviously I have a 50% of the time So um that time I have with her is so important because I feel like she's grown up so fast Like um so when I'm with her I don't work like at all I just spend a full day with her doing things that she wants to do like painting play do this that go to the park go to the theme park go to the zoo like we just have fun Like and I feel like I've like been uh kindled my own childhood like through her you know what I'm saying Like I feel like we get to a certain point in in adult life where everything is kind of vague and gray and boring and she's brought that color back for me for sure Yeah Um what is a dad quality that you've proudly taken on That makes you laugh a little when you think about it of like oh my gosh I can't believe I'm doing this

I keep being told I'm telling dad jokes and I'm leaning into it I'm just like it's ok It's cool Like I'm using like Christmas cracker jokes and stuff and it's really funny like people just look me like I'm a weirdo and I'm like yeah I'm a dad and I'm allowed to tell these jokes You have to give me a pause I didn't expect that I'm not going to lie I love you're like full dad vibe that I love it You're like I'm fully leaning in there is no stopping me Ok Well you haven't cracked one here So if you want to you can always get your best But you know when we say we say that for another time what is your favorite thing to do with your daughter My favorite thing to do with that is um she shows a lot of signs of like um musical intelligence already So I just love like playing instruments with her and singing with her Um like I'll sing and she sings along and she can do like good harmonies and stuff already and she's only 2.5 Like and she harmonizes with me well and like finishes notes and she can hold them for a long time I'm like you might have a bit of a to you Um I'm picturing the two of you playing with play doh and you start singing and then your daughter starts singing hit high notes like yeah it's crazy I'm like yo like who You're good I could do this I didn't speak till I was three Do you remember like full lyrics to songs as well Like every word Wow we got a superstar on our hands Ok Ok It's interesting to hear you say like you're singing to her which like I would have loved if my dad could have sang he can't um what are you singing to her And like what are her favorite songs that you sing She loves Disney movies So we sing a lot of Disney songs together and sing like you've got a friend in me and stuff She sings it really cute Honestly That's really cute Thinking about you guys singing that Um What qualities of yourself aside from like having that musical aspect more like personality like what qualities do you see from yourself and your daughter I think she's she's she's funny like she she's a bit of a cheeky one Yeah She likes to have a bit of a joke and stuff and like laugh a lot Um she's she's chilled though but she loves reading as well Um which is something I think she definitely took from me Like she just has a affinity for words Like she remembers everything has becoming a parent changed your relationship with your parents Definitely Yeah In in a in a like respect where you know like you you just have so much respect for the things that they've put aside for you You know like when you realize all the sacrifices that you make as a parent like just to be there and be present with your child like you can't have nothing but respect for that for sure I know you said like obviously you have for 50% of the time you want to make the most of these moments Like what's something that you guys have done together recently that made you so

happy And you had like such a great time We went to Nickelodeon in in New Jersey which I enjoyed it I know it's like super childish but like I had a lot of fun I think I had more fun than that is so good How is co going is is good Yeah Um We to have a really good relationship for she's the the you know the main important Um So yeah it's going well Yeah Ok I think like for me yeah OK So I want to ask you if I can ask one question just about like as delicately as I can go about it I feel like I wouldn't be doing my my job if I didn't ask about the 2021 incident I know you can't really speak on it I think obviously as a man you like there was a lot out there said about you and you basically took the high road and didn't say anything and you kind of put out that like blanket statement of just like I want to respect my daughter and not say anything And I can imagine how difficult it is kind of like almost a culmination of everything we're talking about today of like how do you balance when something is out there about you about your character that people are reading and speculating and saying things about you and how do you decide when you when to speak up and when to like be silent and like chill on it and not really go there Yeah So for me like we were talking about earlier I don't tend to get involved when people um say things online whether it's got something to do with me or whether it doesn't Um Because for me my most valuable thing that I have in life is time and that takes so much time in in in a toxic environment to like explain yourself to people and justify this And so I just kind of keep to myself I knew what the situation was I knew what happened Um and the people involved knew what happened too Um And that's all I really cared about Um if anybody um you know of of the same mind would look at the situation I believe that you could respect that Like I just didn't want to bring attention to anything You know I just wasn't trying to get into a negative back and forth with her any sort of narrative online where my daughter was going to look back and read that and be able to read into it and it would just be something that was there was no point Um I I believe I dealt with it in in the best way like um in an amicable respectful word and that's all that needs to be said you know Um Yeah I just I feel like it's a lot of negativity you know I can only imagine like first of all no fucking family is perfect And so to be on the stage that you guys are on I and like you said your family issues you know like if something happens in the family like I'd rather keep that between the family you know you don't need a whole audience of people and opinions because it's hard enough to manage between two I more So just also wanted to give you the chance because I think you obviously handled it so amicably I also think in doing my job like

this is a podcast where I'm trying to support women right And like reading headlines like I wanted to hear from you obviously because hearing you even today I don't know if like I'm just gonna say what it is Like you have said you have 50% custody And so anything that has we've all read online like well if that was true then that would have affected that So I think it's important to just say like me doing my job I just wanted to clarify like it's not like unless you can correct me like you don't have to have people with you while you're with your daughter and like visitation rights you have custody of your child So I think it's just important to say because people are reading this shit being like oh for sure Yeah I'm super full on like hands on with my child Every chance I can be If I could get 60% I would have it Ok let's talk about your music You're coming back We're getting a song Tell me what inspired the song what can we expect Um Yeah so I'm working uh well I've been working on um my record for a minute Um And uh I have a single for the summer coming out called Love like this That's like a standalone song Um Just a summer jam It's a good vibe like yeah it just feels like summer That's what I think we need We do need a good we just need a bop Like someone asked me recently like oh like what's the song of summer And I actually said you know what like I'm interviewing someone and I know they have a single coming out I have a feeling that could be the song of summer Are you nervous to go on stage Like alone Um I was yeah like when I first started like performing by myself I was I was nervous and I'm still nervous now because it's been a few years that I've been on stage but I have this like energy too Like I I feel like I have something to give and I want to get on stage and and be there again I feel that that's one thing I can say you know like my my fan base has always been supportive in that manner They're always just like we're here we've got you like when you're ready we've got you you know like come we're gonna we're gonna come and listen to your tune So yeah now I got to be um super super thankful for that and I'm super grateful Um And I feel that love for sure So I'm ready to to prove these people right You know can we expect any music inspired by your daughter on your records Uh Yeah definitely Yeah I'm um I'm doing a I'm doing a record I don't think people are really gonna expect like um it's a different sound for me and it's got some like more narrative going on like real life experiences and stuff So yeah my daughter's mentioned in there a couple of times I think that's gonna be so fucking dope to actually hear from you in long form essentially because an album is in long form like we're going to get to know you more which is exciting again because Mr Mysterious over

there we're still trying to understand things Um OK what is something that you want your fans to take away from this interview I'd like my fans to feel like they got to know me a bit because you keep saying I miss the mysterious Uh Yeah No I I am hoping they got to know me a little bit and they they feel like they've seen me and caught with me a bit and you know they're gonna see me a lot more like and I want them to know that like across the board like I've kind of had a full like mental reha and in the best way thanks to my my child and you know being able to see things in a different light and um I'm going to be a lot more present and hopefully people are going to see me a lot more I love it Thank you so much for coming and call her daddy This was truly a pleasure Thank you for having me