

[Transcript] The Tim Ferriss Show / #700: Guy Laliberté, Founder of Cirque du Soleil – The Power of Belief, Street Gangs, Wild Tales from Las Vegas, The Dangers of Nurturing Fear, and Dancing on the Cliff

This episode is brought to you by Shopify, one of my absolute favorite companies, and they make some of my favorite products. Shopify is the commerce platform revolutionizing millions of businesses worldwide, and I've known the team since 2008 or 2009.

But prior to that, I wish I had personally had Shopify in the early 2000s when I was running my own e-commerce business.

I tell that story in the four-hour work week, but the tools then were absolutely atrocious, and I could only dream of a platform like Shopify.

In fact, it was you guys, my dear readers, who introduced me to Shopify when I polled all of you about best e-commerce platforms around 2009, and they've only become better and better since.

Whether you're a garage entrepreneur or getting ready for your IPO, Shopify is the only tool you need to start, run, and grow your business without the struggle.

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It doesn't matter if you're selling satin sheets from Shopify's in-person POS system or offering organic olive oil on Shopify's all-in-one e-commerce platform.

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Shopify powers 10% of all e-commerce in the United States, and Shopify is truly a global force as the e-commerce solution behind Allbirds, Rothes, Brooklyn, and millions of other entrepreneurs

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Go to Shopify.com slash Tim to take your business to the next level today.

One more time, all lowercase Shopify.com slash Tim.

This episode is brought to you by 8Sleep.

Temperature is one of the main causes of poor sleep, and heat is my personal nemesis.

I've suffered for decades, tossing and turning, throwing blankets off, pulling the back on, putting one leg on top, and repeating all of that ad nauseam.

But now I am falling asleep in record time.

Why?

Because I'm using a device that was recommended to me by friends called the Podcover by 8Sleep.

The Podcover fits on any mattress, and allows you to adjust the temperature of your sleeping environment, providing the optimal temperature that gets you the best night's sleep.

With the Podcover's dual zone temperature control, you and your partner can set your sides of the bed to as cool as 55 degrees, or as hot as 110 degrees.

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I think generally in my experience, my partners prefer the high side, and I like to sleep very, very cool.

So stop fighting, this helps.

Based on your biometrics, environment, and sleep stages, the Podcover makes temperature adjustments throughout the night that limit wake-ups and increase your percentage of deep sleep.

In addition to its best-in-class temperature regulation, the Podcover sensors also track your health and sleep metrics without the need to use a wearable.

Conquer this winter season with the best in sleep tech and sleep at your perfect temperature. Many of my listeners in colder areas, sometimes that's me, enjoy warming up their bed after a freezing day.

If you have a partner, great, you can split the zones and you can sleep at your own ideal temperatures.

It's easy.

So go to 8sleep.com slash Tim spelled out 8sleep.com slash Tim and save \$250 on the Podcover by 8sleep this winter.

8sleep currently ships within the US, Canada, the UK, select countries in the EU, and Australia.

Hello, boys and girls, ladies and germs.

This is Tim Ferriss.

Welcome to another episode of the Tim Ferriss Show, where it is my job each and every episode to deconstruct world-class performers to tease out the backstories, the frameworks, the tactics, and so on that you can apply to your own lives.

And my guest today has been in the works for a long time.

I'm thrilled to have him.

And if I'm not mistaken, this is his first long form podcast ever, Guy La Liberté, who is the founder of Cirque du Soleil, One Drop Foundation, and L'Un Rouge, if I'm pronouncing that correctly, my apologies for the French, which I do not speak.

He was named by Time Magazine as one of the most influential personalities in the world and has been recognized as one of the most creative and innovative minds by Condé Nast.

An artist, entrepreneur, and philanthropist, Guy is a three-time winner of the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award, which included World Entrepreneur of the Year.

He is a Knight of the National Order of Quebec and an Inductee of the Canadian Business Hall of Fame.

Guy has been granted the insignia of the Order of Canada, the highest distinction in the country, and in 2010 received his star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Guy now dedicates his time to his company.

L'Un Rouge and his international nonprofit, One Drop Foundation, which aims to ensure sustainable access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene for communities everywhere through innovative partnerships, creativity, and the power of art.

This is a wild conversation full of a lot of unbelievable stories, and we take a few minutes to warm up, but definitely stick around.

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There's a lot to learn.

There are many, many negotiation tactics, philosophical tenets, and more that you can pick up from this conversation.

You can find him on Instagram at Guy La Liberté, DJ, and you can find his new projects, which are brand new projects, and they will contain descriptions of some different projects that we allude to at the end of the conversation, and that is fruggsfroogs.com, and you can get to the English with slash en.

So fruggs.com slash en.

And without further ado, please enjoy a very wide-ranging, very tactical, very hilarious conversation with Guy La Liberté.

Guy, nice to see you.

Thank you for making the time.

I know you are a man on the road.

You are a man on the move, which I suppose would be on brand as I did research for this conversation.

You seem like a very hyperkinetic man, and I thought we might start in 1977.

I might be getting the date right.

I might be getting the date wrong.

A trip to Europe.

What prompted this trip to Europe, and what was your experience?

To understand this desire hitting the road and engaging that journey, which was a very important moment or year of my life, we have to go back a little bit in my childhood.

There's always that famous question that adult asks your kids, what do you want to do when you're an adult?

And my answer back then was, well, I want to discover the world and I want to travel.

And that came from three very important key moments in my life.

The first one was that was the day of when my father brought the first color TV in the house.

And the first program we watched was a National Geographic program that showcased basically something I've never seen in my life, which was animals that doesn't exist in my own town or my country, collars of skin or dressing of people.

So I was just like, so amazed by this colorful impact that it had on me that I was like, trigger my curiosity.

And it stays at that moment that grows slowly.

And obviously I was a big fan of those National Geographic.

Every time it was coming, it was like, yes, I want to see what's more on this planet.

Actually, at that time, it made me realize and my mom explained to me and said, listen, you're not only living in a city or a province or in a country or on a continent, you're living on the planet.

And that made me realize that the world was bigger than my backyard.

Second thing, 1967, which was the World Expo in Montreal, my mom, another very curious person that bought for the family passport and almost every day of the summer, she was

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bringing us to this international expo and we visit pretty much probably minimum of three times each pavilion that was there, which again, was putting me closer to being in touch with the culture that I was seeing and the National Geographic.

So kind of not where they were, but close to me in a way that, again, it reinforced his desire of discovering what was out there somewhere.

I didn't know the notion of distance, but I knew it was far away.

And the third thing was, I think, put the cherry on the Sunday was when Neil Armstrong walked the moon.

I was in the summer camp, black and white TV that time, bunch of boys because it was a boys' camp, and we spent the entire night and it was a long program because they showed up all the time, and it was a process.

The expectation was there and suddenly this guy put a foot on the moon and it was very interesting because you could see the reaction of the other kids and even telling, wow, I want to be an astronaut.

I want to do, I want to go on the moon.

I want to do what he's doing.

And for me, my look at that moment was totally different.

It was like, whoa, the little prince story could be real.

And now it's very interesting.

And then it triggered my belief that if I have a dream or anything that was dreamy could be achievable.

So from that moment, it was really, OK, how could I shape my rest of my life to be able to travel and discover that world?

So obviously, I was about 10, 11 at that time, and I was still too young to hit the robot myself.

Soon, my parents were bringing us more in North America.

And around the age of 14, 15, we did our first international trip to Cuba.

And then this is where I discover green tomato, beautiful, long legs, woman, dancing, dance that doesn't exist in my place, colorful music, happy dancing.

So it's just like, wow, and blue color, the ocean of the sea and the ocean and fish that doesn't exist in the lake.

And I was just like, yes, I knew it.

Here it is, the beginning of a great adventure.

But at that time, you know, obviously, I was a minor.

So I really start to engage in discovering my province, HIK, and going in the theater festival, music festival.

And at the same time, I pick up the accordion of the family of my father, because I come from a family of musician, but traditional music.

And I start to realize that maybe I could activate a little bit this adventure, the adventure using music.

So I took the time to prepare a little show myself, sing songs, storytelling, music, and then short after connecting with a couple of other musicians, creating

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a band, and that for three years permitted us to travel around Canada and a little bit of the States to encounter other musicians, to play on the street, play in the music festival.

So I realized that, hey, listen, I could have fun playing music.

I discovered through this journey, the beginning of the pleasure of entertaining people.

But mostly I was able to always go further and further geographically.

And then obviously, after a couple of years, 18 years old was coming soon.

And it was just like, I'm going to Europe.

And I had enough money to pay myself open tickets for a year and about \$50 in my pocket.

But an amazing number of contact that either I had met over the previous three years or people that had been in Europe said, you should go in this bar to play.

You should meet that person.

He's an interesting musician.

And went out, hit the road, and basically spent almost a year in Europe discovering and the pleasure of playing in the street, realizing the impact of making people smile.

But mostly I was achieving my dream.

And I came back with more money in my pocket than I left with.

You came back with more money than you traveled there with.

So I assume, and please correct me if I'm wrong, that means you were busking and entertaining and earning money in that way.

What were the keys to good busking?

What did you learn about effective busking?

First of all, where do you busk?

Because it's not every corner of the street that you can get your bread and breakfast money.

So one of them is really to rapidly identify in a city where is the hotspot for people to busk.

And obviously, there's already a busker when he arrives, so you don't invent the wheel.

You're just observing.

But then you have to deal with territorial situations.

So you have two ways of dealing with that.

Either you provoke and you confront, which normally is not the right way to do.

Or you engage.

You engage in the street neighborhood, which is not always busker, but it's also a lot of different people of all kind, very colorful, very misfit people, very disrupting people, but also amazing personality because a lot of artists are their musicians.

So you engage in a community that belong to this city.

But what I realize is basically there's two things, the busking business in Europe.

It was the permanent people, the people who live in that city that didn't move, and they were the one that was there every day.

But there was a traveling people that is rapidly recognized that if you play the game well, if you're socially engaged and respectful of certain rules that exist and you have to

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learn about them, then you engage in a community that is really supporting of each other. And then you make friends and then you decide with the traveler when to do, no, no, two weeks with the violin player or a week with the belly dancer or the firebreeder person. So through this experience, it's not only encountering a community that was much bigger in Europe that it was in Quebec, because obviously Quebec, we have the climate factor, which is a little difficult to busk at minus 30 on the corner of the street in Montreal. So the timeline is pretty limited and also the population is much smaller. Paris was my base at the beginning because this is where I speak French, right there. And from Paris, then I met a lot of people and then you start to engage, okay, do I go to Ireland or do I go to that festival? And I kind of like organically, the rhythm or the speed of the wind, I was waking up in the morning, I was like, okay, let's go there, chiking, again, depending the success of a chite, you could arrive on time or not. So it was this journey of going from one place to the other one with people who are alone and making friends and engage in jamming, making money, learning. This is where I learned all my firebreeding things, a little bit of the performance size of a busker because there's a music side and there's a performing side. So this is where that I start to also engage in learning. I had never been a specialist of things, but I always been a very good generalist time after time. I was practicing things and basically my offer to the street was a little wider at the end after a year. So let's talk a little bit about your mom and dad. How did your values differ from perhaps your parents when you got back? Maybe a different way of looking at that would be asking what their hopes for you were and then what your hopes for yourself were. Most of all, my parents were amazing characters to start. They were entertaining, not knowing they were entertaining. My father probably a little bit more. My father had this way of triggering reaction of my mom and it was create an amazing, funny, dramatic moment that was triggered their own story to be shared with us, with the children and my friends. They were entertaining us all the time. My mom come from a very specific type of family. Both of them were very poor. My mom work her ass out to be a nurse, hit the road at the age of 18, she had her stud baker at 18, hit the road to California as an adventure with two other nurse, work all it, musician, piano player. My father come from the other side who is coming from a neighborhood in Quebec which is like bunch of kids hustling, playing tricks, having fun and getting away with it by just being what some people would think about little boys, but they were having fun and actually he was another wheeler, he always made his way, got broke so many times because he was

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a gambler, but he was the most amazing entertainer, he ended up his career as vice president of an Alcantara company, not because he was former, went to school on that, but because he was the best person in the company, when client, international client was coming to Montreal, he was organizing all the party and all the client was going back signing the contract. Whatever it need he was organizing it, so I learned these things and by the way, and this is pretty special because I not met many people who qualify in that, in all my life and many years after I grew up or still now, I never heard a bad word about my father, it was always Gaston, clean, amazing guy.

My father was always smiling, it was always like humor, smiling, not reacting to things where my mom was that little scorpion, it was like she was picking pickings, it was mama controls and the dynamic was interesting, but I grew up in this type of family, one brother, we were fire and water together, but now we're best friends because we're both parents who passed out last year, and then the grand family, my father was coming from a family of eight, seven sister and him, and the grandmother had a twin, so together, you know, on the father side family, there was about over 120 people, uncle, aunts and things, and every weekend in one of the house, and nobody had money, nobody was the rich one, the richest one was uncle that had a printer company, he was printing pamphlet and stuff like that, tell you a little bit how rich we were, but every weekend, somewhere in one of the house, there was always from Friday night to Sunday night, 48 hour party, with a kid, I remember we were sleeping on the floor, 10 kids, five or not, they were doing music, playing cards, having fun, drinking, getting drunk, singing, arguing, and all my life, I've seen that family supporting each other in terms of when one of them was screwing up, there was never judgment, and you know, this is what I grew up on, so my roots is love, support is community spirit, it's like understanding that nobody's perfect, so I learned a lot out of that, I didn't understand it at the beginning, you know, because obviously, when you grow, especially at the teenager moment, then it's starting to be a little confrontation, and there's many story I could tell, but I don't think it's relevant, more than saying, in their heart, they try to educate you, the parents, in terms of what they believe is a good thing for you based on their value, so at that time, my childhood, being a doctor, being a judge, or whatever, was the consecration, you know, you're an engineer, you get a good salary, you have security, and I was trying all my life to my teenager moment to try to explain, well listen, I have a call, I don't like that, and every time I do that, I learn more, I have fun doing that, I do more money than that, and now that I'm done, yeah, it built up, you know, I want to have long hair, no, you have to go to church, it was like all this type of things, so I was very confrontational, and actually, they helped me, because when they punished me, they were putting me in my room, and this is where I learned music, this is where I practiced my music by rage, I was transferring my rage and not being dark, that being said, I was in a dark moment from 11 to 14 for other reason, but when my parents was all of that, then I left home at 14 years old, it was enough is enough, one amazing moment in my life, one teacher, moral science, because you could have the option of a Catholic, you know, or moral science, obviously, I was rejecting the religion, but I was interesting again in a moral sense, and then one day, it threw a text to all the students in there,

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the text was about Kail Gibran, the prophet, the page about the children, it says, the children are not your children, I was just like, it blew my mind, that text was everything I want to say to my parents, so I think within a week or two weeks after, I got in conflict with my parents, and left home, hit the road, because they want me to cut their hair, and there was another thing, and I took the page, and I wrote on the piece of paper, when you will understand that, meaning of that text, will be able to communicate, that's pretty brutal at 14 years old, and threw a text like that in the face of your father, and mother, and actually, it was a very important moment in my relation, the first, like, this is where the first time I stand by my thing, before I was arguing, I was screaming, I was like, bitching, but this is really what I said, enough is enough, we have to make a point in our relationship, because I'm not happy, at the point I'm questioning, if you love me, you know, all the teenager turmoil, you know, this is a very, being a teenager, this is the most fragile time in your life, if you're not being aggressive actually, before the age of 10s, or beat up, but if you have a normal life, this is a very fragile moment, so obviously, it came back, my mom was crying, and stuff like that, came back like 10 days after, and then I sat down and said, let's make a deal, we don't agree a lot of things, but I will continue my school, you pay for my lunch, my clothes, but I want to be having the right of keeping my hair long, and second work to earn my own money, to pay myself what I want, because I'm tired dad, of every time I ask you something, you ask me to do something for it, and enough, you know, because sometimes things could go there, because I'm trying to ask you things to be able to achieve things, but it's always a negotiation, and you try to bring back in your way of saying, so I clear that, and it actually, that deal worked pretty good, because without supporting everything I was doing, it was at least a dialogue that took place, and there was some up and down, but I realized, and this is where the first thing I realized is actually, at the end, all this courage that I have, going and hitting the road, taking risks in my adventure, I always knew somewhere, and I realized that after, and it's maybe that sub-conscience or this third eye or sixth sense or whatever, but I realized that, hey, wait a minute, I knew, and I know exactly what they were about, they never told me if you cross that door, don't come back, first of all, you know, and you know how many parents screwed up when they said that to their kids, and second, I realized that if I screwed up, I would always be able to come back, I would have a bed, food, and love, and comfort, and this triggered this enormous wave of courage and desire to even engage more. They didn't know that at the moment, they think I was crazy because I was doing more, I was doing previously, and then obviously there was this confrontation about starting to do business and entertainment, because it was one thing for them to understand that I was using art and music to live an experience, and our conversation always made them believe that I will come back to schools, but I was always every year extending the return to school, but when they realized, when they realized that I was shifting and I consciously made the decisions not go to school, but give myself the chance to live out of entertainment, whoa, that was difficult. With my mom, it took the first year of Sigma Soleil to realize it, and she collapsed in line, and so I now understand. My father, it took three more years because it was still some issue related to a reach

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him a couple of times for financial help to help to go through some tough moment, and it was coming back with his old moral or condition, and it pissed me off, but we had a great conversation

in a steakhouse, Moshe's in Montreal, a good bowl of wine, and with a big deal pickle, and Koschler Salad, and we made peace there, and from that moment, I brought them everywhere in the world with me, we became good friends. We had our up and down, but it was an amazing connection. In the life of our children, or any relationship with parents, obviously it's not instant, but you always wish that the complete connection of the circle of this relationship is done before one of us die, and I did accomplish that with my parents, and this is another beautiful gift of life that I had.

I may want to come back to that. I mean, I know a lot of people who have not been able to do that, that may be for a bottle of wine another time, but I want to connect the dots to Cirque du Soleil, but before we get there, if you're open to talking about it, and we can always cut this afterwards if you want to cut it, but you mentioned that you had a dark period from 11 to 14, and my main question is how you got out of that dark period, but would you be willing to say a bit more about that?

I could share, I've been sharing, it's part of my life, my close friends know, and I have no problem talking about that, and that's actually related to a very big problem in the world that we're living, and it's coming out and keep coming out year after year, which is all about this Catholic Church controlling schools, abusing children, and being excused because they were the voice of God.

So at the age of 10, my parents sent me to the A school in a college in Montreal, which I was boarding school, and obviously soon I realized with my friends that there's a bunch of priests that want to abuse you sexually. So I resist that, I beat that up, but I had a friend who's suicide itself, and so I start to be very, very reactive, and it brought me a lot of anger, because you know, what is the feeling first you resist? I've not been raped, but I've been, they've tried it, and I got their trick, I resist, I filed it back, but there's some other kids there that didn't have this courage of reacting, and they were my friends, and they got beat up in the sense of it killed their soul, and then one suicide itself. So obviously, and I was incapable of sending to my parents at that time, remember, I was 10 years old, 11, and knowing my parents were religious, so obviously, would I be punished or would I, I didn't know, I was confused about the information, and I guess there was a taboo thing because I see my parents were very religious. It was confused, so I kept that for myself and among my friends, so I built up this desire to destroy, to the point at a certain moment, even because of another event later, I left two events a little bit like that, and the last one was just kind of like the add-on of that, I arrived to a point where I wanted to kill the person, and actually I was not feeling that. So that dark moment really was present. I was doing things that was not necessarily creative, that was more destroying. I was doing things that is not how I was educated. It's not what I was feeling, but I was doing it by rage, and this is where it's super important to understand that what saved me out of that darkness is music and this desire of traveling and actually activating the action of getting out of my city and getting out of my environment,

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because that was toxic. It was contaminated by what I had to live as children, and I was not able to see the beauty, and I was just seeing the darkness, and going out of this circle, geographical circle, had permitted me to slowly heal these things to a point where at a certain moment, I remember, there was a very precise moment where I have the address, I knew where this person that tried to rape me was living, and I kept in my pocket always the address because I said, if I pass by there, I want revenge, and at a certain moment, I physically took the paper, ripped it off, put it in garbage, and that was it. I was living my future, and I boomed it. But again, this is how lucky I am. Do you know how many kids? Their life will be destroyed for things like that. So again, what that comes from is that the love of my parents, this understanding of what your dad is, feeling that the way you think is not the way you want to be and overcome that. Do you know how many friends have not survived that? How many people have been, their life have been destroyed by living something like that. So obviously, once I overcome that, I become so engaged in those type of value and defending that, that I become very, very strong about not allowing those type of things in my surrounding. Compact that, fight that, not with my fist, but with my creativity. For me, making people live an emotion because they live a moment of joy. And when you're capable of putting down the walls that people put in general around them to protect because they got hurt before, and you bring in the point that they put down those walls and open their heart for you to plant a seed, and make me realize that part of my job is not only to be a merchant of happiness, but a soft medicine, the healer of the soul. I don't know how you could do that. And then it reversed totally. At the moment I start to feel this power, to understand that, feed the circle of life, it feed you back, and it was very, very powerful. And I was trying to explain it in a colorful way, but the dynamic is what I just explained to you. So it's very interesting because sometimes people tell a story, but they don't tell the source of why you are there. And there's many other things that I've learned my lesson out. But this is a typical example that you could reverse negative and build it to even be better. So what do you believe in that? Of course, that person, those person was wrong because this is not right. But on the other side, if I didn't live that moment, maybe I would be a different person and not realize very young in my life that, wait a minute, no, I would not be, and I would not use that type of power over other people. So it's very interesting. We could dog and dog. This is my philosophical part of the brain, but those are typical way that I learn out of everything I engage in.

G, thank you for sharing that. And I'm sorry that you and your friends experienced that. And as a spectator, as a, I guess, participant, but from the stands, someone who's gone to many Cirque du Soleil performances, it's beautiful for me to hear how you referred metaphorically to the lowering of those walls, those protective mechanisms, because we don't have to spend much time on this. But I was very badly abused when I was very young, two to four. And I have very well established walls. But when I've gone to Cirque du Soleil performances, and there are a few places in life where this is true, but it's where I can forget those stories and become engaged with awe and wonder in a way that allows me to exhale and experience these things very fully in a very tangible way. So I just wanted to reflect back my personal

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experience.

And you'll be surprised because I always said, you know, to hit the big seven, which is having the privilege on this planet to be born on the right side of the planet, having the love of your parents, water, food, not being beat physically before the age of 10s or sexually abused. Well, it has a question around. I will tell you, it's like there's not many that qualify for the big seven. So this is very important to understand. I believe in the society we're living. It's a lot of creepy and twisted things that happen to human being and that human being to each other. So again, Cirque du Soleil, I am so happy to hear your story because two things. My show were about, of course, the spectacular of it, the things like that. This is like, this was the big pleasure, but the fundamental satisfaction was coming from two things, really having the impression that each of my show was helping to build a better world in two ways. First, in exposing, because all my show was all about inspired by the culture of the world, either through the music, the costume, the team and things like that. My artist was a mosaic of all these beautiful people around the world that was performing. So for me, I believe that I was a promoter of one world. And by then, open the mind of people that there's other people than you and they could be beautiful too, and they don't have to think like you. That one. The second one is really what I just explained about this wall because I believe strongly that the power of love overcome the power of eight because it's a feeling. So when people feel something that extremely profound and deep in the emotion of joys, well, they will try and they will look into living that again and again and again. And the same effect when somebody suffers something. And this is why sometime one event of aggressivity could provoke a monster. Why? Because the emotion is there and you want to give revenge. So he's building even more what he had in there. So it's like it goes both ways. And like I said, I'm so happy to make that choice of my life that I could have this tools of this healing tools that I believe is my job at Sigma Soleil. I did a lot of things. But one of the most important function I has when we create a show, my job would assure that every my show, it could be a fraction a second that any spectator in the place would say, wow, they did that for me. You know, whatever it is. And if I was able in my show to make people feel that I did that for them, that was the most wall was falling down at that moment. So again, understanding the psychology, the world, different way, radical acceptance, a recognition that nothing's perfect. It's just like this is all came through my journey. And sick was the sandbox in which I was able to build that castle.

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Let's track your path to the sandbox because there are many people who busk. I actually did a very small amount of busking in Paris, actually. Well, but it pissed everybody off because I wasn't asking for money. I just did acro yoga with another woman who is there.

I think we were actually near, I'm not going to pronounce it properly, but near the gardens.

What is it? Tuileries?

Well, the garden, the Tuileries, the garden, the Tuileries.

I was close. I was close. We were in front of the Louvre.

In front of the Louvre.

Yeah, very exactly. And there are many buskers, many people who busk, but very few people who create something like Cirque du Soleil. So you come back from Europe. Could you describe some of the key decisions or moments leading up to Cirque du Soleil after you return?

Actually, when I came back, I was not yet decided if I was going back to school on it. Again, I find another way to extend my a year not going to school to tell my father while I need to make money. Now, could you help me to have a job? He had a friend who had a factory to do a window for the RVs and trailers. So I worked there for months. Obviously, this was a factory job, but it was bringing a little money while I was playing in bars with music and still willing, dealing anything that could sell on the site.

What kind of stuff would you be selling on the side?

Facebook cards? Anything?

Anything. I will find anything. I was able to see a portfolio to make a buck on anything.

So you just buy a bicycle at a yard sale and then sell it to somebody else?

Something like that. Or buy a whole sale, a bunch of jeans and going things and making a five box over the jeans at school. Whatever. I was a wheeler dealer. I was a hustler also. I was good at baggam and I was like a pool and stuff. A little bit of everything. I always like to put to challenge. I love competition. I'd say same competition amongst people. I think this permits you to, it's like playing poker. You discover personality of people by being a good chess player. That's nice. And actually it's something I apply in business later on. But at that moment, we're talking about when I come back to Europe, so 1978, 79, got that job. And then there's another friend my father had because at that time, the biggest job you could have was to go work on the dam in the North, the electrical dam. The wages there was like, hey, you were sent there. You had the highest wages, extra hours, you were working seven hours. It's like you were doing so much money. So my father got me that job. So I go there. Then three days after I arrived there, my syndicate go and strike.

Your syndicate is like the union of the workers?

The union, the union. Got in strike three days after. I got out. Here we go. My summer is screwed. My money is out. Bad timing. Then I come back. They want me to go picking. I have nothing to do with their things. To be honest, I was, it's a community that I didn't even engage

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with. And I was like, I didn't know. I didn't feel emotionally engaged to good picking because they were giving you a check, a small check, but they were giving you a check. So what I decided to do, I said, where did I didn't go in my province? And there was one place, Bays Saint Paul, which is a little village in North Quebec, which had the reputation of one of the coolest youth hostel there. And I said, wait a minute. I have a little check. I'll go there. I'll offer my service to help against a bed and food. That was it. And I'll wait. I didn't know when the strike would stop and not, but it ended up to be all summer. So when I arrived there, climbed the hill. And finally enough, I see Gilles Sainte-Croix, that is one of the most important person in my life with Signes de Soleil. And another guy, Daniel Gauthier, that was my school friend, which was, we left a relationship, not a good note. And there I go. I said, okay, why do I end up with this guy that I don't want to see? But it's part of this, it was a nonprofit organization. And I arrived at the time where they were shaping the use of sales. So we prepared the things. I got the job of animating. So I was in charge of the party.

You were in charge of parties at the hostel?

Exactly.

Okay.

Parties, organizing things. That's what I was good to. I always been good at doing those things, organizing trips and stuff like to Louisiana at 15 years old, running the Mardi round. I have many of those mini stories there that we could talk for a long time. But this one was an important one because first, the deal was, they were telling me, we cannot pay you, but we could offer you a roof and a bell. I said, that's okay with me. But could I have maybe the opportunity of making a little more money? I said, I'll organize your party, but I want to be able to pick up every beer bottle on the site and earn the money of the beer bottle.

Oh, like the redemption, like you get the few cents.

Exactly. The two cents or the five cents. But I'm telling you, after every day, there was a truck or an anti-bottle. I made so much money going back and selling every day those bottles that I ended up having a very little contract of music and the bar and the cafe. I ended up having a pretty decent thing. And this is where Gilles Saint-Cois, which was coming out of, was also a very interesting misfit creator. He was just coming back from an experience at bread and puppet in Vermont. I don't know if you remember. I just heard about bread and puppet or bread and puppets for the first time from some of my family who live in Vermont. Literally last week, they just told me about it. Because you're probably too young to remember that. They're still there. But at that time, there was this leader and the bread and puppet movement was anti-war. I came during the Vietnam War and they had that farm in Vermont that they shape and they had a magic wood.

And

every year, they were doing this festival and they were the master of still walking. And Gilles came back of that and said, I have an idea. Let's do it. I'm doing music. We're doing a little theater. He said, let's start a theater troupe on stilts. That's the end of 79. Then in the falls, I got called for the strike sale and I go back to work on the dam. And Gilles, in the meantime, choose another partner. I said, okay, well, you're not doing a collective. You want to do business. Fine. I said, but I won't hire you. I said, well, listen, I'm going in Mexico, came back, went to the dam. A month after, Gilles said, I have the grant of the thing that you

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want to be an artist and my true. I said, I don't know. So a grant, this is from the government? The government, yeah. Basically, they had those grants that you could have enough money to pay salary for the summer. In that region of Quebec, it was very simple. 80% of population was working on grant salary during the summer and get the unemployment check during the winter. This is what that region is about. So basically, you need 20 weeks to work to get your check the rest of the year. And that's what's alive. And most of people was living on that pattern. But I didn't know. So what I said, I said to my employer, I said, listen, I didn't have a house. I said, my house just went on fire. Could I have a couple of weeks to just organize a thing? I didn't want to lose my job. You know, because if I say quit, that's it. I'm done. So I didn't know if I'm going to work. So I milled that story. I got the permission and went there. Never went back, but at least I had that back off. You're playing chess in life. You make a move, but you want to know what's your back move. That was one of them. So eventually, I accept to be one of the artists in this theater, Trudeau and Stilts, which was in partnership with this guy, Sylvain Errand. We end up to be so bad for the business. So at the end of the season, actually, we had an amazing experience. There was a summer of my first big love in my life and an amazing theatrical, original experience. But that relationship with the management, especially that guy. So everybody was like, eh, we don't like the guy. They end up bankrupt. At the end of the season, Gilles said, well, you know, it's like, I'm making mistakes. And we all decided to create a nonprofit organization, buy back the assets and started under a new company, which was the original, the foundation company that we built Signes de Soleil with in the future. So step two of that was to manage. And then I was tour manager. I was like, assuming marketing business function, I was able to give my skill. And we had an amazing 1980 summer. This is the year also of the federal election. I was a candidate at the Rhino Service party. You know, there was this like crazy party that was promising anything. I was a political candidate. We have a lot of fun. Quick question. So was the performance at that time still mostly theater on Stilts or had it changed? Theater on Stilts, music, fire breeding. But that moment I really had mastered. I would send in all the skill I had. Probably fire was the highest level I was mastering. So I had my pyro license. I was one of the best firebreeder in the world. I was developing device to manipulate fire. I was organizing show at fire. And this was my personal, I would say, feature. And I was very proud about it. And I was recognized for being one of the best Quebec fire player or fire master. That being said, then we did one season. And the winter I was always again, 20 weeks of work. And people were going and getting their paycheck for the rest of the winter. It was not my style. For me, it was about, okay, the job's finished. I was hitting the road all the time. So one time on a motorcycle, we were going to Montreal, Key West, then San Diego, and then jumping there. But in 1979, 1988 and 1979, at the end of the first year, which was my love affair, I discovered Hawaii. Summer was a love of my life back then, first big love. And at the end of the year, it was like the broken art of my life. Within six months, seven months, it was like I went from, wow, this is love and saying, oh, heartbreaking is very hard. It's very painful. So I had to take care of somewhere. So I was a friend that was in Hawaii on the big island in Kona, that's that I passed by, and arrived there. And wow, I was discovering a part of the world that I didn't see. And I always want to go Hawaii

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because my parents told me so many good things about it. And then I was there and it was very interesting. There was an interesting EP community performer there. There was like the EP side. There

was, you know, nice nightlife, simple live and mellow things. But I was still in pain. And it was a very interesting moment in my life. So for the two first week, it was fun, get to know people. But I was, I had this sadness inside me. And I was heartbroken. And I was getting this little coffee or juice. I was not drinking coffee, but like this milkshake type of things, you know, in the morning at the same cafe. And there was always this old EP there. I remember he was a magician. I learned that after that was always the same thing with me. And as soon as he approached

me and he said, Hey, what's wrong with you? He said, what's wrong with you? He asked me the question, what's wrong with me? And I said, Well, there's nothing wrong. He said, you're not on the vibe. So what do you mean? And I'm like, you're fighting the rate. And you know, the guy was throwing me like that was like, sitting down, didn't even invite himself. He invited himself. He said, wait a minute, I'm in my bubble of pain. And then he just keeps throwing me those things. You're not feeling the vibe of the island. And he said, you know what?

I know I'm disturbing you there, but I will tell you one last thing. I said, try to feel the rhythm of the island and the island will bring you on the right side of your soul. Boom. Okay. What is that? And at that moment, and you know, I could be very thing, but I listened. You have to understand. Remember, Kail G. Brand of Buffett things is like my first philosophy called reading and I've ramm on it. Everything that make poetic sense or whatever I was, it got my attention after that, because when you're capable of reading behind the word, and the meaning of it, I start to discover, and this is where I start to like words before that I was pain. But now I start to understand and I really reflect on that. And watching Sunset. And then I start to just, and this island changed my life. This is where I start to get inspired. I connect with a Lua troops. I was doing my fire ants. I was playing accordion and the Italian restaurant, going and hustling a baggammon and a bar after and, you know, meaning and realizing that actually so many things at that moment. I'll try to mention all of that. First of all, at that time, there was 101 type of religion or spiritual faction that was on there.

On the island?

On the island. Let me realize, wait a minute, because at the same time, you hear about all those fights about religion and you say, wait a minute, this is lying. What is it? And then you suddenly see a piece of land on earth that people live in peace with each other in respect. Wait a minute, something. Then you meet all those either with potions, with growing herbs and stuff like that. And there's this healing spirit on the island. Do you see people at a rhythm that doesn't exist on the North American continent? There's a pace that is more toward the pace of the rhythm of the wave of the island or the wind instead of the subway rhythm. And then you meet a bunch of performer that we hang out on the beach every day and perform on the naked beach, on the non-linking beach. There's party there, full moon party. And then I start to, for the first time in my life, got to what I believe still today, the closest to meditation on my side. I'm not a meddling guy. I've never stopped the Amsterdam I had. But when I watch sunset, this is a very peaceful thing. And this Hawaiian sunset, this is where I start to think about project. Remember,

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every winter I was coming out of that. That was the second year of the first year and then second. And I went there three years before we did the Fête Foren, which I'll talk about. But the sun was my inspiration moment. So I start to think about project, creating this. So my creative mind explode there. The reason why the name Saleh, I think the Saleh is for two reasons. The inspiration to the sun of the big island, sunset, which are amazing. And at that time in the symbolic book of Sembal, sun was the symbol of the energy of youth. So that was, this is the name of my company. You see, it came later. But before that, while I was there, everyone there was going that, finding my old friends and just having, it became my healing island that for the rest of my life, every time I have a business decision and emotional distress, a question about my decision to be made, this is where I find my answers. Every time I was coming there, I was planting the seeds of my question. And then I knew that when I come out of there, the answer will be there, whatever decision I made, and it were pretty much all good. So this is where the evolution of the theater troupe on stilts, you know, we were trying to grow and then Jill say, okay, we'll do a winter version on Skype and now on the arenas. And not for me, Dar. I'm not spending a winter here. I'm a beach bomber. I'm not a ski bomber. And this is where I start to talk about the project of a street performing festival in Bay St. Paul. And with Jill, what we did in 1982, we went into this village, which is very traditional painting, you know, this place is recognized by all this is a peaceful place for artists that paint landscape and things like that. So we were already black sheep there, the youth social people in this village of wolf mentality, you know, you have to understand this is all the old traditional families that are directly lying from the founders of Quebec, you know, the people who got trolled in the boat by the French has abandoned things and built this country. And actually, it's very, it's not this wolf mentality, because it's all very strong, established families. So when you're a stranger coming there, oh, I see, there's this aggressive when you say wolf mentality. Well, yes, yes. And clan, they're very protective. And you arrive a bunch of people who are on a util sale, maybe dancing naked around the fire, taking substance. And actually, the first business that's been opened by our community there is called the Mouton Noir, the cafe. The restaurant was called the black sheep. We made a statement that we will assume the perception that we have. So you could imagine, and they had that festival at that time, which is an art festival painting, very touchy, white glove, white glove festival, you know, it's like an institution. And we arrive wanting to close the street and do a street performing festival. So we have to go through all the political level, convinces that, and then sponsors, we're selling, you know, in our programs, any \$5, a little business card size in our program to the merchant. But we have to convince the people to give us a chance. And it become a success. You know, it's like, financially, we lost a little bunny. But we had the attention of the big city in terms of culture. We brought, the merchant was super happy. So the black sheep go pitching this crazy idea in this, let's just call it maybe conservative town, protective town. What was the key to the pitch? I don't know. You know, it's like, I guess, again, it's so conviction. Like I said, me and Gilles is a charming human being. Always pause, never raise your mind. I was the jester, the jester, the jester, the speedy Gonzalez guy, I'm always like, hands up, talking like that, but with a lot of passion. But we arrived with something I believe was safe enough, colorful enough, business wise, maybe, maybe it will have a good economy came back for us. So we got a

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shot.

We got a shot. And actually, pretty well on, obviously, and again, the last day, the last day of the last show in the arena, because all those street performers were there, there was workshop, people were learning how to do clowning in the wood in the mountain, whatever, we organize a very nice program. You know, it was not a big budget, but people showed up.

And mostly a lot of my international friends decide to come and visit us because we were booking, co-booking. The big paycheck was from the main festival in Quebec City, but I got the good deal if I was getting a deal for them in Quebec. So that justified them to come. And I got them for a good price. But we had that closing show in the arena, which was everybody on the scene together.

And where the last moment is, the fanfare is there and I'm blowing fire. And that moment is a thunderstorm. And we're playing that track that's called the Phenabil, which means the person that walked on the wire. It became more anthem tracks. And we're in the grand finale and suddenly the storm shut down all the electricity and we're just with the flame, the cannon. Super dramatic. And I still have goosebumps. And this, there was a big, big quantity of the Quebec street performer. And this is where we look at each other. It was so emotional. And I said, okay, let's think about, maybe it would be time to think about creating our own circus.

Okay. And this is what inspired me. The first flame of inspiration came out. Wow. Look at all us together on stage. Imagine under a victim. Start to share that. But obviously, starting at circus far more difficult than doing a street performing festival. So we did a second year in that was 1982. In 1983, we do the second version of it. And that's greater success.

And then we got the attention of the government because 1984 was a celebration of the 450th anniversary of Discovery of Canada, both celebrating by the federal side and the provincial side. And you have to understand the provincial, we're French, Canadian, we're frogs or French fries, and then the English accent on the other side. And obviously, the government want to celebrate and both take a position at very political. So there's a lot of money that is thrown for cultural shows, activities or things. So special money. So I've been invited, based on the success of referent to depose or propose a project. And this is where at that moment I said, well, this is our window. So we build relationship with the director of programming. But we're still, I remember, I'm dealing now with the government, a cultural minister that is so in the high end class. I'm hanging out with the stars. So you're thinking about a government that we're this minister of culture is totally star-systemed. In all the different department of culture, you have dance, opera, singing, whatever, music, street performing circus was not there. Basically, you have to understand the social reality there is in the mentality of whatever festival government was about, pay them a sandwich, they'll entertain you for 50 minutes. Okay, so this is what we started. Their assumption was it was very low.

The low-brain, you were down this food chain, okay? We're way down the food chain. Everybody get the money, everybody get the contract and things. And here I am with one other friend that was Rabel Laguerre, which actually is the real co-founder is not the other one. The other one came later. But there's one real co-founder that left after the first year. So we engage yourself of going pitching to the government. And then there's different level of contract

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you could get. But there was this artistic director that was in charter programming, Jacques Renaud, that really we had to connect. But I was pushing him to the, he was coming red sometimes. That's not what I'm asking you. We had to fit in the formula. And I'm trying to pitch the first Quebec circus. And I'm trying to explain to him, you believe in them? He said, you will not be able to sell that to the government. I said, no, this is the time. And then slowly, they will buy us to hire or put in our team, somebody that was recognized by government, a friend of mine, we play with it, but she was absolutely not the same level. But slowly, and I will always remember the deal thing, because there was a famous cap of a million dollar contract. And it's not grant. And those were contract negotiating. And my project, that what I want to do with some compromise was costing 1.7 million. But to have over a million dollar, you have to the minister console. So they didn't want to bring a freak like me as a proposed content provider, especially not that minister that doesn't like a street performer. So basically, I will always remember you pitch in front of the commissary, the minister, and so I have two documents on table, one big cover collars. And I put a corner there and I have a black and white one. Okay. And then because they asked me to stay at \$900,999,999, okay, \$1 under the million dollar project. And I did work. So I presented black and white, everything of my project represent black and white. I said, this is a project. And there's one, of course, I've seen the document. I said, what is this other document we call it? Well, it's not important. It's like, this is the 1.7, you don't want it. And I reason I'm playing the game full on the game. No, no, no, you're just like, this is what you get for a million. And eventually, somebody asked me, convinced me, and it was part of the game, actually, this is all negotiation, colorful negotiation, I call that strategic thinking, understanding human nature. Okay. And it's very interesting. And I learned all that in the street, you know, because in the streets is basically, you have a fraction of seconds to decide if you hit and run, if you hit, or run fast, or talk. But you don't have one minute to converse this situation there. So one of the biggest kill in Business Island was in the street because of this dangerous environment, or you make friends, or you run, or you're ready to face a more physical reality. So obviously, there was a compromise there, where it was, we cannot give you \$1.7 million. Now, but let's start with \$1 million. And we promise you that over the summer, we'll be able, by exception, by exception, by exception, to get to your budget. So basically, I have my \$1.7 million contract. And with all the hard start, we were the star of the summer. You know, everybody was failing, huge failure. We fell too in the first month. But the beauty of it is we were the product that was going in the country. So, you know, in the countryside. So the first month was a disaster. We lost our big top. It was raining. And it was like, it was like conflicts. The artist was fighting. And like, there was a strike, whatever happened at the beginning, we were in the mud up to the throat. But a month after, our show was so tight. You were able to prototype it in the countryside. So you were able to be a mess. But it didn't matter because you could refine it. Yeah, because they asked us, the minister want to keep the big city and the stars of the big city. They put us on the third row, you know, go, go in the, in the cheap country. Where were the piece of bread that was thrown in the country to satisfy, to touch everybody with a celebration thing. But at the end, it became the best thing

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that arrived for us. Because when we arrived in the big city, because we did play in big city, we arrived so ready, we became the success of the summer, press wise, public wise, and government wise, and prime minister was there. And he said, why don't those are the type of, because you have to understand, we're right in the middle of the independent movement. And the prime minister at that time was trying to always say, we're not done for a little bread coming out from the religious things by and then. And we lost everything to the English rest of Canada in terms of the economy. So this minister was like, believe in the French, Canadian, creativity, business skill, and so on. So we became the symbol.

Totally. And I developed that relationship with that prime minister and he fell in love with us. We were his case, or the product, and the example of what he meant. So basically the second year, he like, twist the arm of the minister of culture, he said, no, if you want that amount, you have to give them. So it was a very important thing. And so obviously, year second was more being by yourself and the business. But this is a big enough thing. This is how it came. And that's how it takes place.

So let me pause for one second. So in that meeting, you have the black and white copy, you have the color copy. So you're playing on human nature, and you're doing it really well because of, in part, your experience, learning lessons on the street. Still, when you walked in, I assume that their perspective was that street performing, again, lowest on the food chain, right? So what else was there in the presentation that made them change their minds?

Over time, because that was a year in preparation for meetings, we slowly got ally.

Ah, right. You developed some relationships.

She's financial officer, which is a big man, he became a defender. Then the first person was in love with you. There was so many, the Jacques Renaud director of creation that was like pushing, he won our project. So suddenly, the administration, the people at the administration level, not at the decision level, well, middle level, decision level, start to recommend us. I said, no, you have to have that type of programming and all this. This is the risk. They became our defender. And actually, and we had certain ally, but slowly, we convinced them by, I believe what they believe was a great creative project, but also were enthusiasts. We were a bunch of kids. You have to understand, we were coming from the streets and this was a window and as a wheeler dealer, this is an opportunity I'm not giving. And they're like, unless the fish is cutting the line, I'm taking that fish out of the pile.

So I was really always in this war. I was on a mission and I achieved it.

Because what I was carrying on my shoulder is the dream of all the community in Montreal or Quebec that for years was talking about the dream of doing a circus, but never nobody organized it. And I had the credibility of that tribes because I did the street performing festival.

So I was able to ally behind me the entire community. And I was giving kind of like the carte blanche to make it happen. And without having to go through this collective process of thing, because I believe in consultation, I believe in collectivity, but at a certain moment, I believe also that everybody in our organization have specific responsibility and mine was to make final decision. And I got the respect of that. I had to gain it in the first month because there was a lot of challenge related to that. But at the end, I got the support of the community and the press favorable critics and the love of the public. So once you have those three things in

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front of whoever, you have an army. Yeah, you have an army. And let's talk about maybe influences, philosophies I read, and maybe this came later. So we could also pause this for later, but that your marketing inspirations were PT Barnum and Walt Disney. PT Barnum, obviously, people who know and read well, very complex character, but basically invent modern marketing. Talk good, talk bad, but talk about it was his line. And, you know, this is a guy that was bringing a circus in New York and will make sure that the biggest truck that carry the biggest LFN will have a breakthrough and middle time square. Oh, break down. And we'll have the front page of the New York Times the day after that worth \$100,000. Okay. He was a master of that. And for people, and I understand even if people things that he was abusing freaks and stuff like that, he had decided yes, do business with all the misfit, but he gave them a roof and in a community. So that and the other one is Walt Disney Walt Disney. Oh, my God. And I was like this. I don't know. We don't we're not on the visually here. But over in napkin, he designed the entire vision of Walt Disney with that things. And this is a famous napkin drawing that he did. Yeah, the like the parks, the merchandising. Exactly. Exactly. Exactly. So this guy was so creative and so business. It was a perfect balance of the two sides of the brain or person. So obviously, this was my other inflation. At the time that you get the million dollars with additional, like maybe it adds up over time to whatever it was 1.5 million from the government, then you do another year. At that point, what was your aspiration? Well, the other year was almost killing the other year where we're technically bankruptcy. Okay. What you don't know in between say once you have those contract, well, then you have to go and find a bank. It's one thing to converse the government, but I'm telling you, it's much more difficult to convince bank to help you with your finance. Yeah, because the government was signing your letter contract, but the payment process of government is a little longer than just signing a check every month. So we have to go and finance and find the bridge, which was bankered. And my God, this was like hilarious. I don't know. I think we did the Avery bankered in 100 miles around the city we were in. And basically, we're entertainers. They all have a smile, but they all told us no with a smile saying, well, I like your project, but us bank, we need collateral. And actually, we don't know what we'll do with the trapeze or a tent or a crane truck or a counter of odd dog if you fail. And you're there and listen, this is a contract. Yeah, but so, but we end up and it's very, very funny. We end up in the last financial institution we ever thought we could know not. That was a little bank that was mainly known to finance strikes. So basically, you know, you're union that have a lot of money and things when people go on sites, they need a bank that will manage the strike budget. How does the bank get repaid if they're funding a strike? They take some portion of the settlement? No, no, no. Basically, the union have a lot of money, but they use those banks. This is where they put their money in. So this is the number one bank in Quebec where the union put their money. Deposits their money. Deposits. So most of their members are union workers. Right. There's not a business person in business with them. They're all union. This is a union bank that have no clue of financing a business or whatever. And this is where we, and this is the one bank that gave us our first bank account with a first credit line or advance the money that the government, they try because that's what they get. They're used to that. They use that union and say, okay, give money to those people. We found it. We guarantee the money. So it's in their DNA to advance money to people who have no money because they have people, big bank account

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that

say we'll pay. Government is the same thing as a union. They have big bank account. Anyway, so in this moment, we established the first Israel that was not risky because it was all pretty much guaranteed. And we ended up with 50,000 profit out of the 1.7 million, couple of equipment, but a lot of experience. But obviously it also tells me that we cannot work under the model.

We did that because it was a compromise. So we had to go to the market and then we were by ourselves. There was no more grant or no more contract from the government. But we had the prime minister out there that really loved that. And 1985 was the international year of the youth for young people, youth. So that just made me, the one thing like that for me to build all the next second year of Signes de Soleil under the youth banners. And here we go. We build Signes de Soleil. And actually, even there, I recognize that we cannot survive with the ambition we had with when I build only in our province. We were condemned to export on time.

I see. Just for financial reasons, you would have to export.

Yeah. Yeah. There was not enough market. Not enough market, you know. We analyzed what we had and the things was okay. We could do three months, four months. But to run a circus, you have to do nine months, 10 months over you. And because of the climate and the population ratio, we have to export. So our first line of exportation was Ontario, Toronto, and Niagara Falls. Two million visitors, whatever, by month or things like that. That's what the government told us. You should be there. There's like the biggest tourist destination in Niagara Falls.

So the way we had no money from marketing. I understand that we were tied. We had a little subsidies. We had things, but money was always coming at the end. And at the end, what made the success of entertainment is your marketing campaign. But we were always short on money for promotion. So we were betting always on the first night or creating a PD Barnum event in the downtown city or whatever to get the little press. And that year was going well. You know, Toronto was going well, but we were so fragile in terms of a general budget that one city, you know, we could afford a little hiccup, but a drastic failure would create a drastic financial situation. So we arrived. That's almost the last city on the tour.

We're in Niagara Falls. We all prepped, you know, for the opening night, there's fully people there, all the politicians, the local people. And then normally, the history tells us that the day after the sales tickets increase and we get our end result. Second day, 10 tickets.

Uh-oh. Uh-oh. Second show, 65 people in the room when I have 75 workers.

Okay. Second day, 20 tickets. So it went on and I was like, what's wrong? What happened? And then I have a revolt of the artist. We're not going to play in front of 15 people. This is where the rule that we will never perform. We made a deal with the artist that we will never perform if the number of public is under the number of artists. That was the moment we made a deal like that. But it was catastrophic. So then I was like, what's going on? And we did all kind of things, by page of things. We tried to react, but nothing was working. And this is where a certain moment was like, what's wrong? Why are we that bad? It doesn't work. To then realize that, yes, there's two million people passing in Niagara Falls, but the average of stay of people is 45 minutes. And the other one would stay long. They're on a moon or in their room having their honeymoon or mom. And so we understand that the notion of market study, really. But the result of that is we're technically in bankruptcy. And we saw that. So this specific bang, and this is

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a true story. You know, obviously we were about three quarter million dollars in deficit at that time. But to arrive there, we had to survive the hand of the tour, pay the salary. And if we don't do that, that's it. So we have a list of supplier under \$5,000 and over \$5,000. We have a payroll to deliver every two weeks. And we have our minimum apex costs, and we cannot build back. You know, so you have to pay cash. And then we have no more cash. We're coming back in Montreal. We know we'll get a little more money and we could reduce that and not overcome everything. But we have to survive that because if we cannot bring a little more money to balance a little bit, we're done. And then who's else? We have no money to not sell tickets. So the banker, this union bank that we have like, I don't know, \$100,000 that year or \$200,000 credit line, start to allow without approval of this committee. First it was every check we're doing, we went over maybe another

\$100,000. Then he said, wait a minute, you know, you're over your line. Yeah. And you know, instead of telling, yeah, you can't do anymore, he said, please, could you don't do check over \$10,000? I said, like, wait a minute, this is the banker telling you. So we do check under \$10,000. Then the second call is, please, could you not do check over \$5,000? It went down to \$500. So he was in. And the last thing we got out of him, it was, I think, a \$25,000 or \$30,000 payroll, the last payroll of the season, we went to this. I said, listen, I know we way over, it was like, and the guy said, look at me and said, I'll lose my head. I have no authorization. I did things that I was not a rise to do as a director of the bank. I said, if this goes wrong, I'm dead. So, but I said, yeah, but please, you're definitely dead if you don't help me to pay the payroll. And the guy released another \$25,000, \$30,000 to pay the payroll. And then we're end of season. And not my partner at that time. Danielle, look at each other. If one, and we have maybe \$20,000 cash that we put outside, and we said to each other, if one supplier come and post an action of like a lawsuit or yeah, a claim. Well, just, just claim, just going to court, then it will trigger all the thing. Then very soon, when we did this, I took all the supplier over 10. I said to the bank, first of all, I said to the bank, did I have five, six months, you know, we're doing another tour, we have a contract, they explode in 1986 in Vancouver, we have good traction, you know, it's like we're popular, but we don't, we're totally technically we're broke. So I went on with my director of administration and me, we went to every supplier and made a deal. Didn't pay none of them except three. And then we'd use a cash, we made a deal, postpone, check, eight months in 12 checks. All of them, they all accept. Why did they accept?

They loved us. Okay.

They trust us. I think they believe in us. We were upfront, but we had a deal. But, you know, we had a braid of eight, six months minimum, eight months of each of them was postpone and check with the promise that if the cash was coming first, we will pay them faster. My God, this is an angel flying and not only one, this is like 50 angeles on that. And actually, it was about 250 supplier, whatever for 500 to 10,000, the biggest one, I think it was 100,000 and the bank and the bank and the guy you have to go back.

Sorry. So the bank, I have to ask, so this guy is clearly just breaking all the rules, it seems like, to give you guys this money. Was he, I want to know a little bit more about that. I mean, was he just pissed off at his boss and he was going to quit in six months anyway?

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No. No.

I'm being a bit of a joker, but why would he, I mean, he's risking his job, I would think, doing this.

Totally, totally. But I guess you have to be there at the origin. We came like, we were a storm of color of happiness and what we're doing were what people never saw in the circus thing. So we were clearly, we were inspired and we were working hard and we were working on

a business plan and we, everybody understand if we break that things, it could be a huge success. But we were just young entrepreneurs that was leaving everything a young generation have to face when you do business. And suddenly, every wall of those people that normally would put a wall in front of kids at this side. And I didn't interview everybody of it, but I would send it for the banker point because he became a great, great friend. It was just like, I just believed. And I was ready. I was ready to go battle with my bank committee and say we should, and actually this philosophy was bank should sometimes take risks, business risks, and not only protect themselves. It's principle, we do so much money that a portion of our things should be when we feel it to take greater risk over and above what the rules of bank rules is.

And that's what he was defending. Actually, he was using my case and actually this bank that we stayed until I sold Sid De Soleil. We were super faithful to him. And for him, it became the bank that every young cultural enterprise or young things were to go because they made a model, all of that. And they had been able to service there. And it was just like, again, this was a type of thing. And then 86, we went to Vancouver in one year, we pay everybody the bank and stuff like that. It was all done. And then 87, we hit LA. It was a live or die in LA.

Opening night, again, it worked. Most died that night.

Wait, did you say you almost died that night?

Well, listen, that day, okay. I understand we're going to Los Angeles festival, art festival, super again, institutional things. Director of programming, comedy came late. He said, well, we're interested, but we have no money to book you. I said, well, I'm going from Quebec to Canada to put everything on things. And one of my partner was saying, well, let's go to Vermont. What the hell? Vermont would tell you if we will be successful or not. We have to hit the big city, New York or Los Angeles. And we had an opportunity there. So I made a deal with the Los Angeles festival. I said, okay, I'll go. I'll take my own risk. But please, could I have the opening night of the festival? And please, could you just at least make sure that in your promotion, your generic promotion, you put us. And I said, third, could you make sure we have good press, the big name of Hollywood on the opening date? But here we are, we're in a little Tokyo, you know, where they put out in a little Tokyo. Yeah, it's everybody else is in the forum of that, all the big institution, they threw us in the middle of the worst neighborhood there is little Tokyo, okay, downtown LA in a site that is the middle of side, which basically is the middle on one side, you have one street gang and the other one, you have the other street gang is one of the biggest crime place things that is like murder or whatever they, it's just like, wait a minute. So we ended up having to deal with the neighborhood there. And we have to, you know, we have two choices, either way, our security things. So we decide, I've been able to negotiate kind of a truce

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between the two gangs saying, listen, I'm coming, I come from the streets, I put all my street history behind, I made them laugh. You know, I did the clown of myself, I got their approval. Why? Because I said, your wife, your kids, I'll give them job, okay, other than selling drugs or killing people, whatever stealing. My God, two memorable moments. And it was a very interesting because people tell us put 20 foot Nana, I got another four 20 foot things will give job. So everybody had job, the security parking cars, cleaning hushers, was selling up dog, whatever, everybody that was hired from the two gang there. And actually, I think for a very long time, that was the first time they were not killing each other in the same roof. Anyway, so there's two events that happened that made me laugh. One is about that opening day, which you see people arrive, the big limo, the big Mercedes, the big Rolls Royce, and they give the key to the hood. This little kid that usually will break in the winter and the guy was like, going park the place in the worst place you could park that type of car. So just that thing was like, wow, wow, wow, just that for me was an interesting mission accomplished somewhere to be able to make that coming. But the most freaky moment was the opening was in the afternoon, and it was so hot. So hot.

And people arrive in, you know, Hollywood, they don't arrive on the dot.

It takes 45 minutes. Oh my God. And as we were dying, just that's like, they had people that was like 100 degrees, people were sweating, you know, and then, okay, it's not complete. And organizers were like, wait a minute, this star is coming, he's on his way. So we decided to send the clowns to animate the place. And you have the mayor, you have like the governor is like, all the big shabang is there. And they're on time. So they're just sitting down waiting until you're there. And then my clown go because we have to give a little animation, pre show. So I said to my, my bunch of clowns, okay, just go, don't do the things of the pre show. But you have enough tricks to make them laugh. My one Benny clown, one of us cloud. First thing he's coming, he's coming with a hose, a water hose. Oh, water hose. Yeah. Water hose, open the hose and start to spray it. Everybody in thing. I said, I'm dying. I'm dying. I said, I will really die in LA. And then suddenly it fraction a second because you could see people reacting in salt. And then you see the first body talk, but there's suddenly a bunch of people all together, give it more. They stand up and it was like, give me more water. Magic moment. That could have gone a lot of ways. That's what I'm saying. I thought it was going the other side. So finally do the show standing ovation. And the day after is like sales. So it was sold out. And this is, there was a beginning of never looking back again. Wow. We did have bumpy road and stuff like it. But from that moment, there's only one year, the year of a growth crisis in our, our growth that we lost a little money. But since then, except the bankruptcy year, we've been doing money, money, never, never been on the deficit year. That's interesting. Super interesting. So if you look at LA, so you told a bunch of stories about LA, you're headed to Vancouver. You do really well in Vancouver. You don't want to repeat Niagara Falls, obviously. Now, Vancouver is very different from Niagara Falls, but was there any planning or changes that you made to the preparation before going to Vancouver that made a big difference? No, you have to understand that we start to build wealth, you know, on reputation, and we're able to do media. So we're starting to be much more strategic in our communication. Remember, the first year was very difficult because we have all the money for the operation,

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but we're very tight. Suddenly we start to generate cash in profit. So again, it's supported good campaigns. So we're able to buy a full page in the New York Times and, you know, hit and create upset attention. We were very famous to every opening night at that time. It was an amazing party that everybody wanted to be there. And then after that sale was going on. And the model was click, click, click, click. And then we expand to show. And then the breakthrough of Vegas was seen when it was just like live or the universe. And it was presenting us opportunity. And we were, or highs was enough open to see them and seize them, because it goes both ways. And I believe this is something that's very important for people to understand how we were thinking instead of somewhere in this space or this dimension, there's something for us and we have to find it. But not only we had find it, but it was coming to us. And this is all the notion of the blue ocean concept versus the red ocean environment. We basically like create a blue ocean by and so if we were ahead of our time, we pack it, we didn't reinvent nothing that a hard form of circus was there. We just put color on something that was very dusty and apply a theatrical approach versus a circus show approach. And we are in the end, we once we start to have money, we reinvest for supplying or organic growth. And the same time that we're building relationship and having access to bank money, so we became great business people. And that always related to when at the beginning of Cirque, when I tried to convince bank, put a place on the board where nobody want to be a boarder. So well, now I'm condemned to play business. And I still not play business and not a fun playing business, because it was all always about the game. You know, it's like we come from nothing. So what was the worst situation go back to nothing? I couldn't live that. And that's where I come from. And while I was seeing successful people failing, because they were starting to nurture to not having tomorrow they have today, and start to nurture fear. And that was like, no. Could you explain that a bit more? I've seen a lot of successful enterprise. There's many things that kill success. The first one I've seen is about once you have success, you get a lot of reward financially, economically, and then you're starting to nurture the fear of not having tomorrow, what you have today. And then change your entire way of addressing things. So suddenly, you're not the same person. You don't address your business the same way. You don't address your vision and things because you're not your fear. So my CEO, that is like, danger there is. But please, evaluate danger, don't nurture fear. Because at the moment you nurture fear, there's a good chance that you call your fear and the result of the fear. So that's one thing. And I've seen a lot of entrepreneur shifting the way of being, shifting or transforming what they are and deny where they come from. So at the end, not being themselves and having a business of success, changing their soul, their way of doing things and become other people, which again, could affect the result company. And the other one is more recognizing or realizing that at a certain moment, you're not the person to bring your business or your baby to another level, to be able to step out when you realize that you maximize, for different reasons, your contribution to the success of your enterprise. So let's talk about the first part of that just a little bit longer, because I lived in Silicon Valley for 17 years and I have a lot of friends from that period of my life. Many of them have shifted, I would say, into trying to defend what they have or have experienced more fear, because they don't know who to trust, et cetera. I mean, there are many stories.

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Yeah, trust is a big factor also.

So what else would you say to those people? They're people you care about, you see them maybe changing or feeding the fear. What else would you say to them?

You mentioned something about trust. There's a thin line between wasting time and doubting versus trying to see the best side of a person and work toward making a merge of a person in this best side. And this is a conversation I still have, whatever, with my kids, with my ex and the actual business, is this notion of to which level you trust without compromising the fundamental. And this is very difficult to conclude because I've lived the two-spectrum of that in life. I got some of the best reward by trusting people and focusing on their beautiful soul versus their dark side, and that has been very rewarding. That had provoked the observation that people of some time when you give them trust, they will fall in the trap of falling in the greed they go and power side of life versus the love, respect, and trust side of life, which is what we had built our things with. And that brought me a lot of deception to people I really trust that I believe that we had enough experience together and they fell in that part. And again, it happened in my own little ethos, but look what's going on in the world. We're driven by this tension between the two sides of it. And obviously, the people are driven by greed, ego, and power. Every morning they wake up and they're thinking about how they could be better. Us, on the side of the love, peace, and love, and stuff like that, we get it on the face, we look at the sun, we meditate, and we're a little more slow to react to that. So I guess we have to be a little more organized. If I'm understanding you correctly, I mean, it sounds like you're suggesting maybe defaulting to trusting people and expecting sometimes you're going to get punched in the face, but that's just the tax you pay for being optimistic.

Or are there other ways that you protect the fundamentals?

No, I would say at the end, there's more success and failure. But the failure are more touching than the win of trust, because it's usually attached to deception. So I'm talking more about the deception. You're in business, you win, you lose, you make good decision, you do bad decision, that's part of it. Nobody's perfect. And nobody's perfect in the choice of who you work with, who you trust or not. It's part of doing business. It's more deep than that when I'm saying it's just like, so this is why I guess as much honest conversation at the beginning to establish, not the contract. This is why in my contract, I always not put just the legal part. I always start the first page by the assumption, the spirit of how a deal is done, because my wish that if there's conflict before going on the legal battle, you look at what the spirit of the deal was. And if you have sensitive people, intelligent people, they will relate to this foundation, version, the word of the legal things. And that's actually a page in the document that has the contract? It's a page in the contract. It's a page in the contract, where the first page is not about legal stuff, it's about the philosophy, the spirit of why we do in the dream. Why that brought us to that deal? Why the spirit of the deal? I made a mistake to forget that sometime. And this was the most chaotic things, because I'm telling you, it's like, if you're not attached to the spirit and it's just legal, we're living in a country, you know, not America, especially in the States, hit and meet or make me happy, make a mistake and not clear. It's much more difficult for a person to deny the spirit if it's been written down. It will deny it and say, it's not what I say, because when you try to bring the

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spirit in our whole conversation, they will always find a way to justify that it's not what they say. Write the thing. It's very difficult for them. Then it's betrayal. Understand? Then you know it's a betrayal. It's not a misunderstanding. Is that first page, I'm very interested in this, is it almost just like regular text, like it's paragraphs or is it bullets? It's understanding that we desire to conquer planet March. We will do everything to, you know, it's like very poetic sometime, very philosophic. It's very mission oriented. You know, we all do document in business a mission and vision. So why are we not putting those principles right in the contract when two parties do things? Because this become a new mission. This is built on new value. And I think this is, I believe, an antidote against persecution or legal process. Yeah, that's very smart. Well, I've not been that smart all the time because I made some case that I forgot to put it or my family office, I forgot to put it. But now, I'm telling you, this will be for no on. Even with experience, I did forget to put it because I guess I even trusted more that I believe that it should not put in on it. And that became the biggest betrayal in business I ever did. So now it's there forever. So you mentioned a name earlier that I'd love to hear you say more about. So I think you mentioned Steve Wynn. So how does Steve Wynn fit into this story? Game changer. Steve Wynn, game changer for me. When I was starting to just lay, I always found myself by going to see as much show as possible. So right up in New York, I would go visit the artist, and I would always make a stop in Vegas to see the entertainment. And then suddenly, Mirage arrived there, and the Siegfried and Roy show was there. And it's not the entire show. The first 20 minutes, it was like mind blowing. I said, wow, I was so inspiring and impactful for me because I realized and make me realize that, wait a minute, Vegas is as his baby foot of modern entertainment. You know, you have New York on one side, London on the other side, but Vegas is still cheesy. And they have big production, but still not deep in the, what we call the theatrical, the artistry is very flamboyant. It's a big thing. And they put a lot of money. You have a volcano, you have like showers or whatever, 100 dancers, you have the spectacular. But when you analyze it in the artistic quality things, it's level one. And then with this 20 minutes, I say, wait a minute, I look around, six, one, two, three, four, five, six, casino, they don't have big show, or this big show has been there. So I suddenly realized, I said, wait a minute, this city have the potential of becoming the third biggest entertainment city in the world after New York or with New York and London. And this is where I started to put a lot of focus. Then we have, Caesars was the first one to approach us from a vice president, entertainment part, Caesars location. So we engage in the development of the film, which I had that time to put \$300,000, they put \$300,000. And we develop a concept of shows called Timeless Kiss. But Timeless Kiss is the first show, which is a, a mystery, okay? A mystery at Georgia Island. But we went through a level, presented the board, Henry Glock, Terry Lanny, and Century City in Los Angeles. All those very aged persons with a couple of young executives. And we pitched and we believe at that moment that we did a great pitch. We were confident in the show. And actually the deal with them was far away from the deal I made in the future with Steven. So I'm back in Montreal waiting the answer. I received a phone call. I was on my treadmill. And this vice president said, well, sorry, I have a bad news. I said, what? Said, well, the board think that your show is too esoteric for Las Vegas. Esoteric was the word. To explain me why they're not go ahead with the deal.

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I rage. I don't think ever in my life I had done so many hours of stepmaster in my life in a row. Raging, streaming for three hours. And then I was like, wait a minute. And that was \$300,000 investment at the moment. We're talking 1991 beginning of a success. And that was into the concept development. Yeah. Well, yes, yes. We were trying to make a deal when one of the casino to put our product there. Then that fell. So we went around. Next one. Next one is the Elton where Elvis Presley was there at that time. It was like a Broadway show was there. Same story. Pitch, pitch, pitch. Oh, it's too complex. And then that one, I didn't rage because I having received that answer once, I was expecting. And then like a week after I received a message called Steve Wind called you, call back. So I call back. Monsieur la liberté. It's like exactly this very more radio voice than me said, I heard you were flirting with my competitors. Have you made any deal with my competition? I said, no, why? I said, why didn't you come see me? I said, well, you have the best show in town. I didn't even think you'd be interested in my product. You have the best show in town. Well, I said, I would like to have conversation with you. I think I have some things that we could bring to do so late. I said, have you seen to do so? Yeah, I've seen it in Santa Monica in 1987. Oh, I said, we have a new show. It's called over the experience. I've just seen, no, I want you to see it. So where are you? I said, well, I'm Toronto now. But I said, before we converge, I want you to see what I am about now. Okay, I don't know at that moment that you have his eye problem and vision problem. So you said, I'll be there Friday with my CEO and one or two board member. So you flow in, receive in, look at things. And then I see the guy, we go into a mission, he said, I like it. So I would like to bring this show behind the mirage. And we could set up there. He turned around, he said, deal. All right, look at that deal. And he presented them. I said, well, we have to negotiate. He said, this guy will make sure that you will have a good deal and I will have a good deal and we'll make it happen. I need to be activated very fast. Shake and they have to make a deal. They bought all the new equipment, build the things behind the mirage. And I didn't know at that time that for him, you have something else, you have the treasure Island, what is mine. And actually you want to lock me down. He did that contract just to lock me down so I could not talk to others. Because in two years after he was building this thing, and it costs his money. And on the top of that, opening night, my God, again, all the big shabang of Vegas and Steve wouldn't have very powerful and influential friends in the political things. The business side, he had his bankers there. And opening night, one artist, animation again. But this one could have been turned very bad. He did that 2000 times. He's sliding on the road from the tower over the head of people on the stage. We're about to start the show. I'm seeing from the side of my life, the artist fell on the people. Oh, God. I think I experienced what it means and what is the temperature in the feeling to be in the tomb. The sound, the sound of the big top, the CEO, Bobby Ball, and see the same thing. And Steve wouldn't don't say what's going on, what's going on. And CEO said, well, there's an artist who fell on the end and he knew that we fell over. I think it was a banker, one of the major bankers. So he just fell on that thing. Oh, no. And Steve said, what? And dead silence. So thank God, it was just kind of like hurt on the shoulder. He could not break his neck. Basically, one inch is on the top to break the neck. And that was it for me. It was done. Terrifying. Okay. So we go to show and, you know, it was a hard show to start the show

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and build up success. So the reaction at the end was good, but it was not the terrific. You know, it was not overwhelming. It was like, everybody was like, is he okay? And so we overcome that moment that it could have been crucial. And then two, three months after I said, the real reason what I want to lock you down is because I'm doing Treasure Island. I want you to do the main show of this thing. So the show gave us and became the timeless kids that we met there. We tried to explain in our creative process, which we need, you know, you give us a theater, we'll design it for a show, but we need dust free and we need time to rehearsal. And with clowns, we need the audience to test things and stuff like so, theoretically get everything. First dress rehearsal, another magic moment with Steve Wynn. My clown, the same Benny, by the way, I'm the same Benny. That is my clown. He want to do a satiric clown number. The fire hose, right? The water hose. Yeah. The same one who's done that, still believe he's one of the best in the world, but you want to do an original clown act, which is about a satiric number of boxing in Las Vegas. And his game is to set up kind of boxing things, theatrical one, invite an audience member to have a boxing fight that end up to throw each other tarts, cream tarts. Okay. But the test people are only the worker of the casino plus all the executive because Steve Wynn asked all this top executive, go check it out. First, we don't even call that a dress rehearsal. We call that a lion den, meaning it's the cage for lion. So it's not the risk we're taking there. And we just want a little bit normally we invite friends and families, small crowd. The room is like probably 50% of the executive or the attire right there. And the number go wrong. Benny panic, the clown panic, and he started to throw all the tart on the audience. So of course, I received a call from Steve Wynn that's doing skiing, and I asked him, he said, we're there. I will not use the word happened. Like, what are you doing? What is it to throw tarts to people in the room in the new theater? And I said, Steve is like, this was the lion dance. And we're testing it get wrong and stuff like that, the clown panic will correct that. Don't worry, that's part of the process. And I said, and he said, there's no F way. You can you can say it on my show. That's okay. Because with all those things, there's no fucking way. Exactly. Well, I didn't say it. You say that. I just tried to play with the situation. So I said, listen, I'm flying tomorrow. I want a private view of the show. Okay. And there's no way you will open the show. And I will tell you what's work. It doesn't work. I have the experience of that in Las Vegas. And we're there. Everybody's freaking out. So I'm cranking because we took months to explain him this process. And now he's like treading me to not open the show, whatever, you know, in a Steve way. So we arrive, I'm not sitting with him, I'm sitting with Bobby Baldwin, a CEO, because he's my friend. And that's the one I made the deal. Franco Dragun and Jill St. Croix, the director and the director of creation with Steve. And you could see Steve. And you know, those show that have so much mechanic on it, you cannot put the artist on risk. So you don't run the show at real speed. You run the show in a safe way. So you mark the step and then, you know, it's a process. So I'm obliged to run a show that's supposed to give him the information when the show is about. But instead of being a hundred miles an hour, it's running at 75. So obviously, you don't see the beauty of the race car, you know, it's like, it's like, it is just safety, safety, safety, you mark, you take a client lining,

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there's a light could affect an acrobat, you know, there's all this hundreds of detail. So obviously, everything is slowed down. So at the end of the show, stand up, we have a meeting with him, and he's around the table. He looked at the, he talked to him saying, what the fuck is this show? I said, look and feel like a fucking German opera. Franco Dragun, the director, turn around and say, thank you, Steve. This is the biggest compliment you can ever tell me about the Shark React. It's very good. This is true. Sorry. I see this is like, what? But then it's just here. I just tell you, the show is a piece of crap. And you tell me, thank you by telling me that. And yeah, and Franco explained, he's like, you know, German opera is very important in the word of opera rise for the institution. And Steve is totally disabled. And then he started to say, I like that. I don't like that. And I want you to change that. And then I intervened, no, Steve. I said, I explain you, explain with the things. We're not done yet with the show. This will be a great show. Trust me. And by the way, I have the last word contractually about what will be the show or not. And his reaction, yeah, but I control the room. And if I decide nobody goes in, firm from you, then you'll be in penalty. Because if I deliver a show and I have the right, if you don't want to let people in, it's your problem. I would have done my job. And then he turned race because he said, you have to understand, Steve, when how is that controlled on 3% of his narrative? Everybody's at his foot. Here's a little kid from Quebec, like you're standing in front of him saying, no. When people tell him, yes, three times in a row to make sure you don't understand, no, yes. And then he turned and belby Baldwin CEO said, what the fuck is that contract? I don't have the last word. And I said, well, Steve, you asked you to make a deal with them. And that was a break. Then you'd ask me to make sure that it will be with us. I did it. That was a condition. It was a break deal. I sign it to the credit of sale, to the credit of sale. At the moment, a CEO said, this is contractually binding. Steve said, okay, then I will have to trust you. I hope you're right. And you will prove me wrong. But here it is. I will trust you. See you at opening night. Just like that? It's just like that. Opening night, day after sold out, sold out, sold out. We were the hit, new show, Rock Vegas. Then after that, there was an old show and you know the story. It's like, bang, bang, bang. To a certain point that after you sold to MGM, there's a moment of the pentacle of things. We were responsible of 6% of about 40 million visitors of primary reason why people were coming Vegas. And we were controlling almost 39% of every entertainment tickets in Las Vegas. Wow. So we did contribute a little bit. Now Vegas is a total red ocean, but we arrived, created a blue ocean and just like squeeze it with beautiful show. And they were giving us all the money we want to create the most amazing show and always an example of it. This is like masterpiece. It's like, that's the perfect match with somebody who believe in you, have a lot of money and a team that arrive at creative maturity to do his masterpiece. So I'll just mention for people, Blue Ocean. The Blue Ocean strategy also a great book worth reading that gets more into this concept. Which was a test case. Story is part of a case study on it. And it's very interesting and the people who will read it,

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it'll really make you understand how addressing a red ocean by creating a blue ocean could totally be a game changer for an enterprise and the way of thinking about your envisioning strategy. Yeah, total game changer. And I would love to ask you more about Steve Wynn. We might come back to it, but I know we're coming up on two hours. So I want to be respectful of your time. But let me ask you this question, which is, I would love to get your perspective on maybe what people miss about Cirque du Soleil and why it became successful. Because I imagine there are many people listening to this who will wonder, and I've wondered this too, why didn't someone else do

this? Well, we were a pioneer. But after the success, like any good success, you have impact, creative mind or production company. Some will have the easy reaction, a lazy reaction of trying to copy you. Very bad for them, very bad for the business, very bad for my brand. Why? Because they will play inspired by, they will call that a Cirque de Lune, sick of that, to try to grab the flavor and attract them by trying to sell that they're at the same level, right? Disaster. And this, for me, is lazy people to do that and non-creative people. There's some of that, and you have to deal with that. So I'm trying, but usually they don't last long, but it does affect your credibility for a period of time, but people are not stupid. They will understand what is the real recipe versus the fake one, right? We're the original. Then there's the other one that you inspire, okay? Young artists. And I was responsible with a lot of new emerging entertainment companies that inspired themselves about what we did and became the second generation.

You know, it's like an art. You have the first generation, you have the second generation, and you have the other one that we call the derivative, the derivative of the bad one, you know? That sometimes make money out of things, but they just copy and they have no contribution to the evolution of the art. But today we have nurtured, Sigma Soleil had nurtured dozen of second generation of artists and things, and it's not necessarily always about circus. Mia Wolf, for example, I don't know if you know Mia Wolf. So, for example, Mia Wolf, without saying they're second generation, but they are because I know the founder or some of them, and you know, obviously we had a huge impact in inspiring cultural or artistic entrepreneur to use us as inspiration. And Mia Wolf, some of them, I said, well, listen, you've been very important in inspiring us and many others like that. And when you see this, or even in circus, there's been little troupes, circuit lois, all like babies of Sigma Soleil, that have defined their own style, that have inspired and contribute to the elevation of the art of circus. And that's beautiful. And there's more of that, there's failure. And actually, it's very rewarding to see that type of impact you could have on the next generation. So, yes, it's people who try, but the clever one or the one who don't try to copy, but try to make their own signature. So, Guy, I want to be respectful of time. Do you want to keep going for like 10, 15 minutes or? Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Okay. I would like to talk about the community, you know, which is, again, the beautiful 40 years that I live with amazing, colorful people that come from the same environment of work, which is funny. Then, obviously, I sold Sigma Soleil 2015. Many things happen, another story to tell. And I'm jumping to the conclusion where when from family office, different portfolio, explore a lot of things, I don't want to go into details, rough moment, COVID having to,

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you know, I was about to activate new content, new project, and COVID kill it all, lost my investors and stuff like, you know, like starting to lose not every year, now it's like at least a couple of months, friends that are dying, you know, make me realize that, wait a minute, I'm not saying clock is ticking, but let's say time pass fast, and it does have impact. And I realized that what became important for me, lost my parents, and then suddenly it was about, wait a minute, one of my dream, because I had some dream in my life, but the recent dream was about,

hey, I would love to go back with all my group of people or friends, invite them on the island, oh, you're my, whatever, and spend a couple of days or a night just with a good bottle of wine, and just listen what their life was about. Just to see the people you love, what they evolved, because a lot of them, I always keep contact with them, but to some I've not seen for 20 years, and we're still in contact, we just would love to hug ourselves and have a good conversation again. So it changed the last couple of years, really, and especially from last year, about 14 months ago, I really went through that period of, whoa, what are my priorities? First, family office, type of money management, not my type of, I'm an entrepreneur, okay, I need action. I don't have the patience of most of the things. One of my investment was the biggest betrayal in my life, I said, wait a minute, I want to be with my friend, I want to be the one I love, when I want to be with my tribe, I want to be with my family. So it shifted, made me the decision that I said, I want to do shows again. So the last year about, and I was in the last September, yeah, about a year, I've been gearing up and with developing concept and with some of it with my old friends that we told ourselves, let's do something again. And a bunch of young, new kids, young people that have the fire, the drive, and that I invite to play with us and make sure with all my elders that we use this opportunity of creating things and transfer the knowledge of what we are, or wisdom, or form them and give them and work with them so they could carry on a nice entertainment environment. And at the end, what does it mean, what is the conclusion of that? It's like, you know, in life you could have all the success you want, you could have all that, but what is most important in your family, your friends, your tribe, the people you have lived a life with. And the comfort of that is so much important than anything else after.

Which at the end, if you realize that, and for me this exercise of starting up a new entertainment company with new show that I cannot disclose today, but I believe the pretty ass kicker also there. First of all, we have a lot of fun. We're laughing our ass out every morning that we're writing and creating that thing. So we'll live or die from the public reaction, but among the team here, we're like cranking up and we have a lot of joys. But at the end, what all this will permit me is somewhere, hopefully, to this new adventure, engage in, which I didn't have to, is maybe end up being achieved to one of my goals at the end, which is, I just mentioned it before, being a good ancestor. And this is all the desire of giving back as much as I could in the time left. And I hope there's another 30 years, whatever, my goal is at least until the 100 years. But I was fed by so much love, so much joy, so much opportunity that what I got was bigger than what one individual have. So I'm trying to find a way that how could I give back of all that through what I know best is creating shows and creating entertainment companies. So this is where I am. We talked about the tone one, there's a tone two, and I'm starting to engage tone three, basically. Very different and also very interconnected chapters, it would seem. And how much of the

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getting back to performing or shows is the performing in the shows, the content versus having a reason or an excuse to get together with your old friends and the performers? Well, there's different factor on that. One is, I realize I didn't do my epilogue. You know, I left at the end of the call, I visit things, I had a bad result, things for its reason, again, another conversation. But what is my epilogue in all this amazing creative production adventure? And what I'm working now is my epilogue. The second thing is a challenge. It's funny. As much I'm very active, something I have the impression that I could become very lazy when comfort is there. So I always perform the best when I'm on the cliff. And it's true. It's true. And knowing that if I decide to come back on that, and I'm risking a lot, I cannot do what I did at Cirque du Soleil. I have to find a different way. I have to address every angle of the artistic experience I'm about to do with a different look at it. And this is intellectually so, so challenging and interesting. So I'm having a very interesting brain activities with all those amsters as I keep rolling. The amsters are definitely awake in this brain. Alive and well, dancing on the cliff. Well, Guy, is there anything else you'd like to say, any request of my audience or anything else you'd like to add before we close this first round? Yeah, but if I open my mouth again, it will be \$5 by word that I say from now on. No problem. No problem. Well, this has been incredibly fun. I'm glad that this finally came together. And I really appreciate you taking the time and sharing everything that you've shared. And hopefully we'll get a chance to do a round. To have a good bottle of wine together. Have a good bottle of wine. Absolutely. Where are you based? I'm based in Austin, Texas. Oh, okay. But I travel a lot. So I'm on both coasts. I'm international frequently. So I'm sure there's an opportunity where we can make an opportunity. Okay, well, I spend a lot of time in Vegas, especially by activating certain things I would love. Let's make sure we don't lose contact. I would definitely either a good bottle of sake over a good Japanese meal or a good bottle of wine, the red wine burger knee over a good meal. Sounds perfect. And really appreciate you taking all the time. And to everybody listening, we will link to everything in the show notes and more at [tim.blog slash podcast](http://tim.blog/slash/podcast). And as always, be a little bit kinder than is necessary, both to others and to yourself. Until next time, thanks for tuning in. Hey, guys, this is Tim again, just one more thing before you take off. And that is five bullet Friday. Would you enjoy getting a short email from me every Friday that provides a little fun before the weekend between one and a half and two million people subscribe to my free newsletter, my super short newsletter called five bullet Friday, easy to sign up easy to cancel. It is basically a half page that I send out every Friday to share the coolest things I've found or discovered or have started exploring over that week. It's kind of like my diary of cool things. It often includes articles I'm reading, books I'm reading, albums, perhaps gadgets, gizmos, all sorts of tech tricks and so on that get sent to me by my friends, including a lot of podcast guests and these strange esoteric things end up in my field. And then I test them and then I share them with you. So if that sounds fun, again, it's very short, a little tiny bite of goodness before you head off for the weekend, something to think about. If you'd like to try it out, just go to Tim dot blog slash Friday, type that into your browser Tim dot blog slash Friday, drop in your email and you'll get the very next one. Thanks for listening. This episode is brought to you by eight sleep. Temperature is one of the main causes of poor sleep and seat is my personal nemesis. I've suffered for decades, tossing and turning,

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throwing blankets off, pulling the back down, putting one leg on top and repeating all of that ad nauseam. But now I am falling asleep in record time. Why? Because I'm using a device was recommended to me by friends called the pod cover by eight sleep, pod cover fits on any mattress

and allows you to adjust the temperature of your sleeping environment, providing the optimal temperature that gets you the best night's sleep. With the pod covers dual zone temperature control, you and your partner can set your sides of the bed to as cool as 55 degrees, or as hot as 110 degrees. I think generally in my experience, my partners prefer the high side and I like to sleep very, very cool. So stop fighting. This helps based on your biometrics environment and sleep stages, the pod cover makes temperature adjustments throughout the night that limit wake ups and increase your percentage of deep sleep. In addition to its best in class temperature regulation, the pod cover sensors also track your health and sleep metrics without the need to use a wearable conquer this winter season with the best in sleep tech and sleep at your perfect temperature. Many of my listeners in colder areas. Sometimes that's me enjoy warming up their bed after a freezing day. And if you have a partner, great, you can split the zones and you can sleep at your own ideal temperatures. It's easy. So go to [eight sleep.com slash Tim](https://www.eightsleep.com) spelled out [eight sleep.com slash Tim](https://www.eightsleep.com) and say \$250 on the pod cover by eight sleep this winter, eight sleep currently ships within the US, Canada, UK, select countries in the EU and Australia. This episode is brought to you by Shopify, one of my absolute favorite companies. And they make some of my favorite products. Shopify is the commerce platform revolutionizing millions of businesses worldwide. And I've known the team since 2008 or 2009. But prior to that, I wish I had personally had Shopify in the early 2000s when I was running my own e-commerce business. I tell that story in the four hour work week.

But the tools then were absolutely atrocious. And I could only dream of a platform like Shopify. In fact, it was you guys, my dear readers who introduced me to Shopify when I pulled all of you about best e-commerce platforms around 2009. And they've only become better and better since whether you're a garage entrepreneur or getting ready for your IPO, Shopify is the only tool you need to start run and grow your business without the struggle. Shopify puts you in control of every sales channel. Doesn't matter if you're selling satin sheets from Shopify's in person POS system, or offering organic olive oil on Shopify's all in one e-commerce platform. However, you interact with your customers, you're covered. And once you've reached your audience, Shopify has the internet's best converting checkout to help you turn browsers into buyers. Shopify powers 10% of all e-commerce in the United States. And Shopify is truly a global force as the e-commerce

solution behind all birds, Roths, Brooklyn and millions of other entrepreneurs of every size across more than 170 countries. Plus Shopify's award winning help is there to support your success every step of the way if you have questions. This is possibility powered by Shopify. So check it out. Sign up for a \$1 per month trial period at Shopify. That's S-H-O-P-I-F-Y [Shopify.com slash Tim](https://www.shopify.com), go to [Shopify.com slash Tim](https://www.shopify.com) to take your business to the next level today. One more time. All lowercase [shopify.com slash Tim](https://www.shopify.com)