

## IN PROXIMITY

### Episode 5: Roman Mars and Ryan Coogler Final Transcript

[Music/Old Radio Sounds by Ken Nana]

[VOICEOVER]

**Paola Mardo:** You're listening to P-R-O-X.

[VOICEOVER ENDS]

**Roman Mars:** There's a million ways to make something good. Like, I've reached this point where I was like, I think there's the beginning of your career, you feel like you don't know how to make something good, and in the middle of your career you're like, I'm the only one who knows how to make something good, and you know the perfect way.

[LAUGHTER]

[In Proximity Theme Music by Ludwig Göransson]

**Roman Mars:** There's, like, one way to tell a story. And then, later on in your career, you're like, there's a million ways to make this good.

[VOICEOVER]

**Paola Mardo:** You're listening to In Proximity.

Roman Mars is the host and creator of 99% Invisible, a sound-rich narrative podcast about architecture and design. He's also the co-founder of the independent podcast collective Radiotopia. In 2021, his team worked with Proximity Media to produce the Judas and the Black Messiah podcast which helped tell the true story behind the events portrayed in the film. Judas and the Black Messiah is directed by Shaka King and produced by Proximity Media, Macro, Warned Brothers, and our partners. The story follows FBI informant William O'Neal – played by Lakeith Stanfield – as he infiltrates the Illinois Black Panther Party and is tasked with keeping tabs on their charismatic leader, Chairman Fred Hampton — played by Daniel Kaluuya in an Oscar-winning performance.

On this episode, Roman sits with our founder Ryan Coogler to talk about what they've learned in leading creative teams, their love of audio storytelling, and their collaboration on the Judas and the Black Messiah Podcast.

[END VOICEOVER]

[MUSIC STOPS]

**Roman Mars:** I'm Roman Mars. I'm the host and creator of the show, 99% Invisible.

**Ryan Coogler:** I'm Ryan Coogler. I'm a writer, director, and producer. Founder of Proximity Media. Super excited to talk with you, bro. I went back through my email to figure out, like, what the day was that we met. Do you remember what day it was, bro? Because I just went back and looked.

**Roman Mars:** I don't remember what day it was. No, I mean, I remember where it was.

**Ryan Coogler:** So it was June 9th, 2019.

**Roman Mars:** Okay.

**Ryan Coogler:** It was at the—is it the Association of Architects?

**Roman Mars:** Yeah, the American Institute of Architects. Yeah.

**Ryan Coogler:** American Institute of Architects, AIA. Yeah, it was an architecture conference, right?

**Roman Mars:** Yep, in Las Vegas. I was hosting it, and you were the keynote.

[LAUGHTER]

**Ryan Coogler:** I was the keynote.

**Roman Mars:** You were. You were the keynote interview. Like, sometimes it's a speaker, but mostly it's --

**Ryan Coogler:** No way.

[LAUGHTER]

**Roman Mars:** Yeah, yeah. You were the final—you were the final act, yeah. Yeah, it was so cool.

**Ryan Coogler:** What's crazy is, like, it makes all the sense in the world why you would be there, you know what I mean?

[LAUGHTER]

**Roman Mars:** I thought it would be fun because, you know, I figure you're asked about a million things when it comes to Black Panther and Marvel and comic books and stuff. But I didn't think that you'd probably ever spent, like, a dedicated half hour talking about the built world in some way. But I know you'd thought about it. And so that's where I thought it would be actually a ton of fun. And I think it turned out to be pretty fun.

**Ryan Coogler:** No, it was great. I had a blast. We were in Vegas, and I remember just being, like, really excited to meet you because I—I've been obsessed with podcasts for a long time. And you were there with, like—it was a few other podcasters there with you. I remember, like, right before I went on, I was a little starstruck while I was there.

**Roman Mars:** Oh, that's so kind of you to say.

**Ryan Coogler:** No, yeah.

**Roman Mars:** But what I loved about it was when we got to Vegas, we talked for like, I don't know, 10 or 15 minutes before you went on. And all we did was talk about podcasting. You were just like, "I like this one. I like this one. We're thinking about doing this podcast," all these ideas that you had. And I knew we were just, like, peas in a pod. We hit it off in terms of podcasting, yeah.

**Ryan Coogler:** And then, like, shit got weird with the pandemic and everything. But I remember somehow I convinced you to do, like, a meeting per week with me just to, like, kind of explain how the podcast business works. And it was great. Like, we booked it, and we had the time protected. And it got to the point when I was, like, really looking forward to it --

**Roman Mars:** I know.

**Ryan Coogler:**—because it was during the pandemic when everything was nuts.

**Roman Mars:** It was really fun for me, too. I mean, like, we started with you just—you know, we were talking about Proximity moving into podcasting, and I had sort of started my own independent show, and I ran an independent label. And that was really fun, but what I remember, we just had this weekly meeting. You know, like, it's like 5:00 or something like that, and --

**Ryan Coogler:** Yeah. It was, like, on a Wednesday or something.

**Roman Mars:** Exactly. It was like Wednesday at 5:00. We talked, you know, one or two hours a week, which is more than I talk to almost anybody. If you ask anybody, there's, like --

[LAUGHTER]

That's pretty unusual for me. But it was totally fun. And what I think I loved most about it was it was fun to talk about podcasting. It was fun to hear about movie-making from you. But we would have whole two-hour conversations about just, like, politics and life and our families, and, you know, our upbringing --

**Ryan Coogler:** Everything.

**Roman Mars:**—and stuff like that. It was a real salve for me at a time period where I was suffering from a lack of connection to a lot of people. Yeah.

**Ryan Coogler:** It was great, man. You know, one of the things that I admired the most about it was how—how you kind of like demystified a lot of things that I'd heard about the podcast business. Like, one of the most favorite things you said was, like, "Yo, podcasting is radio," you know, and I've been doing radio a long time. You know, that unlocked something for me. Could you talk a little bit about how you got started in doing this?

**Roman Mars:** Yeah, yeah. I was just someone who loved radio. I was in school to do something else. I was trying to be a scientist for a long time, and I listened to NPR in the lab. I loved the way the people talked. I just felt comfortable there. And then there was a certain point where I knew science wasn't for me. My sort of genesis moment was listening to the show called Talk of the Nation. And at the time, Ray Suarez was the host of Talk of the Nation. And there was this—there was this episode. It was right around the time of the Clinton scandal with Monica Lewinsky. And the subject of the hour was, if we don't have these type of heroes anymore, who are our modern-day heroes? If the president is fallible and is held accountable for something, who is our modern-day heroes?

And about midway through the hour, someone calls in and says, "You know what, Ray Suarez? You are my hero." And I was, like, sitting there, and I was like, you know what? Ray Suarez is my hero, too. I feel like I need to work for Ray Suarez. Like, I can't do what he does because he just seemed unfathomably good at this to me. But I know that there's a person who reads books

and helps him write the questions. And I would be very, very good at that job. That's called a producer.

**Ryan Coogler:** Right, right.

**Roman Mars:** But I didn't know it at the time. So then I began to just sort of like, work my life into someone who could be in a position to get a job like that. So I left grad school and moved out here. And then that was when I kind of fell in love with radio back then because I couldn't afford a television and listened to the radio all the time. And I drove out to San Francisco in the late '90s, and that's when I sort of began to sort of figure out how to do stories and got a Marantz, like a cassette recorder, like these big Marantz recorders, and began recording people and trying to figure out what I was going to do.

I began volunteering at KALW in San Francisco. And I just worked at every type of job that they would let me work. And I basically did it for free. And that's how I started in radio. And about this time, that storytelling of Ira Glass was sort of entering into this ascendancy. Like, younger people were becoming more interested in radio as a medium. And I just kind of fell into it and never looked back.

**Ryan Coogler:** That's amazing, man. So were you in college at the time when you had this kind of eureka moment while you were listening to Ray Suarez?

**Roman Mars:** I was in grad school. I studied population genetics and plant genetics.

**Ryan Coogler:** What?

**Roman Mars:** And I loved that stuff. Like, I loved just finding out what made the world. It was really interesting to me. But in the end, I just liked knowing it.

**Ryan Coogler:** And so that process, like, of transitioning, like realizing that you had an idea for your own show and deciding to start it, what was that like?

**Roman Mars:** Well, so I'd worked on every type of public radio show that you can imagine, you know, sort of like hosting some music shows, storytelling shows. I did my own storytelling show that was local for a while, and that got me the attention of a group called the Third Coast International Audio Festival. I moved to Chicago to work at WBEZ for a while, and then I was working on a show called Snap Judgment as a senior producer there for a little bit.

And then 99% Invisible was presented to me as an idea of, like, the AIA chapter in San Francisco was sort of partnering with KALW to figure out would there be a format for a little two-minute insert of a local building to tell a story about? And because of my science education and stuff, I've always liked sort of technical subjects. Like, explaining technical subjects was always really fascinating to me. And I thought about this as an idea. I knew I wanted to expand it kind of more broadly to not be just buildings but just, like, anything in the built world.

Like, my first concept was curb cuts. Like, when did curb cuts come into being, those, like, little ramps that make it so people with different mobilities can get from—cross the street, essentially? And I was like, I could tell a little story about an everyday thing, and I know that there would be a big story behind what seemed like little decisions. And that was what became 99% Invisible. And it was really like an exercise in could I kind of seduce the audience through tone of voice and story into caring about things that they pass by every day that they don't think

is interesting? And the challenge of that and the challenge of doing an audio story about a largely visual thing that we experience, like built world design, that was really fun for me.

**Ryan Coogler:** Amazing. What was it like when you transitioned to being a business owner and multiple people's bosses, like while still being an artist? Like, how did you find that? How do you find it today?

**Roman Mars:** I like that my job always changes. So, inside of radio, there's this thing called a producer. And a producer is, I think, the highest form of worker and human that there is. A producer is a person who just will solve any problem to get the thing on the air or, like, available for someone to download.

And that could be just like you do interviews, you write, you edit things. You do whatever it takes to get a thing done. And that's what a producer is, and that's why they're, like, the highest form of worker because they will really do anything to make something happen. And to me, as the job changed, and my job was as much about making sure the people under me were paid --

**Ryan Coogler:** Right.

**Roman Mars:**—I liked solving that problem. As much as I love to be in Pro Tools, and I love to interview people and stuff like this, I got a real thrill out of, like, building something from scratch and making sure payroll was made. The flip side of, like, enjoying to do everything is you end up doing everything. And it's harder to let some of that stuff go. I'm way better at that now because I have people on my team. You know—you know this. It's like they're better at me than things, you know? Like, it's like they're just better, and you just like—your job is just to get out of the way.

**Ryan Coogler:** Totally.

**Roman Mars:** And so, like, that part took me more time because, you know, it takes a while to bring someone in and show them a thing, and they take twice as long as you do, and you just want to, "Oh, just give it to me," you know, like, and that sort of thing.

**Ryan Coogler:** I actually thought to myself the other day, because, you know, when you first get started as a filmmaker, you go to film school and everything, you're the editor, you're the cinematographer.

**Roman Mars:** Right.

**Ryan Coogler:** You know, you're holding the boom, you're doing your mix in Pro Tools. I used to know all of these things, and I used to be, like, fairly good at all of them. And I was thinking about it now. Like, I'm like, if I got dropped off somewhere, and it was like, "Hey, yo, make a movie," I don't think I could do it, you know?

[LAUGHTER]

Because, like, all of those muscles, I think have, like, kind of atrophied, you know what I'm saying? To the point where I'm like, am I just useless now? You know, like --

**Roman Mars:** I feel that way all the time.

**Ryan Coogler:** It's interesting, too, because, like, you talk about, like, a producer being like the highest form of functioning human on a project.

**Roman Mars:** Yeah.

**Ryan Coogler:** In a way, directing's almost the opposite. Sometimes it feels like --

[LAUGHTER]

Like, if you got a real well-functioning set, you got, like, good actors, you could kind of like not do anything, and the movie will still happen, in a way, you know what I'm saying?

**Roman Mars:** Yeah.

**Ryan Coogler:** Like, I've had days on set where I feel like really, like, insignificant, you know what I'm saying? Just because so much is being delegated at this point.

**Roman Mars:** Totally.

**Ryan Coogler:** I relate to that, what you talking about.

**Roman Mars:** I know that feeling. Like, I used to mix and be the final mixer on every episode of the show. In the beginning, it really was just me. And then it quickly became more and more and more people. Now I don't think Martín Gonzalez, who's our, you know, sound engineer—I don't think I could even understand the bussing and processing he does to the sound anymore. Like, I don't think I could even it up and really get it, you know?

[LAUGHTER]

And you just have to just let it—like, I used to think that this would be, like, a spiritual death on my part, you know, to not know how the show worked. And now it's just like, you just sort of ease into it like freezing to death or --

**Ryan Coogler:** Totally.

**Roman Mars:** You just sort of let it go. You let it go.

**Ryan Coogler:** Yeah, yeah. You just work your way to obsolescence, you know what I'm saying?

[LAUGHTER]

I think that's—that's really interesting. So, look, like, what's great about our relationship was, like, we didn't just talk about things. Like, we actually got to make something together, you know?

**Roman Mars:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Ryan Coogler:** That was really, like, profoundly exciting for me. It was honestly, like, what I liked a lot about you was that we would talk, but it was very clear to me that I was talking to another person who was a doer, you know? It wasn't just, like, pipe dreams, like if we had the opportunity to work on something and do something together. Like, I had this feeling like it would actually happen.

And we got the opportunity with the Judas and the Black Messiah Podcast. It was our first time as a company making something in the audio—this was before we hired the great Paola Mardo,

who runs that division for us. We were, like, outsourcing it to you guys to make it plain, and I just found the process, like, exhilarating.

[KN 9 to 5 by Ludwig Göransson]

**Ryan Coogler:** So one of Proximity Media's first films was Judas and the Black Messiah, which was co written and directed by Shaka King, and I was fortunate enough to be a producer on it along with my partners, Sev Ohanian and Zinzi Coogler. It was—it was an incredible process. But we also had a companion podcast to the film, which was narrated by Elvis Mitchell and produced by Roman Mars, Christopher Johnson, and the team at 99% Invisible. And it was a companion piece to the film that really went into the making of it, but through the eyes of Chairman Fred Hampton's son, Chairman Fred Hampton, Jr. And it was a really moving experience getting to make the podcast.

Specifically, I remember when we were talking about the show and trying to figure out, like, if there was a show there and what made sense, we spoke for a long time—I blabbed a lot about the process and what was going on and how it was clear to us that the show would be helpful in terms of Chairman Fred Hampton, Jr. talking about the film. And, really, like, we looked at it as, like, a companion piece that could help him and his mother, mother Akua, process what it's like to have this person's story told through a major motion picture that affected their lives, you know?

**Roman Mars:** Yeah, yeah.

**Ryan Coogler:** His father, that political leader—and you said something that was really incredible. You kind of boiled it down to a sentence, and you said, "This show should be about a guy who's trying to protect his father's legacy." And it was like, boom, like I understood it. In filmmaking terms, I got my protagonist, you know what I'm saying? I got the action that they're trying to do, and now I'm on the hook because will they, won't they, you know what I mean? I thought that was just fantastic.

**Roman Mars:** Well, I just wanted to be involved because there was a real reason for the Judas and the Black Messiah Podcast to exist because there was a person there in Chairman Junior who had something to say, who, because of the necessity of two-hour film, you know, dramatic entertainment, can't have everything in it. Like, it just can't. People have to be streamlined. People have to be combined. You know, like, it's just the way it is. And --

**Ryan Coogler:** Yeah. Very real limitations of the medium.

**Roman Mars:** I mean, it's incredible. I mean, you can tell so much more in a single image. It tells so much. But also just, like, there's a way that people watch things that you just can't cram in all those details the way you can in a conversation that people follow. And, you know, so I loved the challenge of it, and I loved that it just had—you know, like I'm a design guy. Like, to me, like, things have to have a reason to exist. They can't just exist to be filigree or extra or promotion. Like, this was a companion that I thought moved the story forward in a way.

And Chairman, like, needed production. He had so much to say that it was like, okay, so how do we order this? Like, how do we think about this? How do we think about Mama Akua? And how we think about the fact that he meets this person playing his dad, who he never really met, you know, all that sort of stuff was so intense and interesting. And, like, he had these insights about filmmaking that were so interesting to me to kind of listen in on. I should stress here that

Christopher Johnson produced this thing. I, like, helped, you know what I mean, like a little bit. But I brought in Christopher Johnson to make the thing.

**Ryan Coogler:** Shout out to Christopher.

**Roman Mars:** Yeah, but, like, Chairman Junior would have these insights, like, on set about just the sort of blocking of, like, having this white supremacist standing over his father. And it's like his father would never do that. And it's, like, these things that were like, yep, that's right.

**Ryan Coogler:** Yeah.

**Roman Mars:** It took someone like that, and having that conversation was just really, really interesting. And your partners at Warner Brothers were really good about letting him be critical and have it be genuine. I was impressed by that. There was just, like—it was a cool problem to solve, of, like, how do you make a companion where this person, like, really has things to say, and not all of them are like, "This is great," you know?

**Ryan Coogler:** Yeah.

**Roman Mars:** And it just felt real.

**Ryan Coogler:** No, it was interesting because we were—we were the obstacle, you know what I mean, in that log line? It's like—it's like, hey, this is about a guy trying to protect his father's legacy. Like, what's implied there is he's trying to protect it from any kind of missteps we would make in the film, you know what I'm saying? He's trying to protect it from this system that has to flatten things --

**Roman Mars:** Totally.

**Ryan Coogler:**—in order to do its job. It came together. It was a remarkable piece of journalism. But what I remember, one of my fondest memories, was—I can't remember what exactly the term is that you call it, but it was like a—when you guys had the script up on a Google Doc and just kind of, like, were listening to it. You had all your folks kind of like chiming in in the notes.

**Roman Mars:** Yeah, yeah. We call that a read-to-tape. It's like a table read. We call it read-to-tape because we have all the clips out. We have your parts. Christopher read Elvis's parts. You know, I would read some of them, and then we had the tape. And then there's all these sort of notes in the margins. So, if there's a mess-up, we just keep going, you know, and everyone makes little notes in the margin.

And I remember we invited you to it, and I remember this very acutely because I said, "You know, we do this for like three hours. It's long, it's tedious. We go over every little word and phrase, and it might be really boring." And you said to me, "I look at a guy picking up a coffee cup 30 times to figure out which one I'm going to use. There is nothing too boring for me."

**Ryan Coogler:** Yeah.

**Roman Mars:** It's like six hours of a coffee cup.

**Ryan Coogler:** It's a true story, bro. Oh, yeah. It's a true story.

**Roman Mars:** And so—so, yeah, and that was really delightful. And it's the moment you know it's coming to life. Like, there's a—you know, I recommend when anyone makes a thing, it's very



important to have these, like—to experience it with other people because you feel the slow parts, the parts that just embarrass, the parts that, like, you feel them when people are next to you that you don't feel it by yourself. Like, you have to have these moments of sharing little bits of it because to me, like, my ears get hot, you know? Like, I get embarrassed about it, and I want that feeling to go away so badly, you know? So I go in and fix it.

**Ryan Coogler:** Oh, yeah. No, 100 percent, man. I really enjoyed that process. I got this theory. I'm getting more evidence of it the older I get, is that nobody really knows what anybody's job is like, you know what I'm saying? Like, and—and you got no idea. You open up your mailbox, and your mail is there. You got no idea how it got there, what it took, you know?

**Roman Mars:** That's right.

**Ryan Coogler:** And that you can't really appreciate something until you understand what went into it, and most things, you'll never know. I remember being on that call with you all and seeing everybody, like, thinking so deeply, considering every word, questioning things. And I thought, like, yes, this makes sense. I love that this much care is going into this thing. And I love that this is how these things are made, you know what I mean? Like, these podcasts I listen to, these radio stories I listen to, whether it's 15 minutes or 20 minutes. Seeing that process and knowing that it's something that's been developed over time, I got to imagine that that the system, that read-to-tape system—how long would you say that system's been around?

**Roman Mars:** Oh, for—I mean, for me, the thing was, is I did so much of it by myself for a long time that there was no one to kind of work with. But, like, as soon as we had more than three people, we began doing it. And I know other shows do it, or maybe they—you know, it's not uncommon to instead, like, record it or record scratch tracks of it and just send it around for notes and stuff like this. But I find something, like, really good comes out in the moment, doing it live. You learn things, and you learn—you know, especially because, like, someone's writing for me in those situations. I mean, not on Judas, but on 99, they're writing a thing that needs to be said for me to say. And then I would go, "Well, I think I'd say it a little differently here." Or that's really—you know, like, sometimes I really capture my voice or make a joke, or sometimes a joke comes out through that process.

And I've always sort of felt like what I liked about the format of 99% Invisible, because I kind of—I'm there as a host, like, interjecting kind of all the time, was that I wanted the opportunity to—you know, to react, and someone says a thing, and rather than just let it sort of sit there, everyone's thinking the same thing. So it would be fun just to say it, you know, like—

**Ryan Coogler:** Yeah.

**Roman Mars:** And so we figured that out for our show. And it's—it's just a—I mean, it's, like, the best part of my day. We do probably one of those a week. And sometimes it's hard, but, like, you know you've cracked it. But it's just, like, that's the—you know, I sit—and now it's like sit in a Zoom with like six or seven other people. I'm, like, hearing their work for the first time and seeing it come together and seeing them take big swings and seeing some of them connect, and some of them don't. It's just—I just recommend that you, like, get a group together and get a good group of people and help them be your editors because no one has that good of taste or that good of instincts.

Like, there's a million ways to make something good. Like, I've reached this point where I was like, I think there's the beginning of your career, you feel like you don't know how to make something good, and in the middle of your career you're like, I'm the only one who knows how to make something good, and you know the perfect way. There's, like, one way to tell a story.

**Ryan Coogler:** Yeah.

**Roman Mars:** And then, later on in your career, you're like, there's a million ways to make this good. Like, I've heard and seen people do it so good. And you could do it differently, or you could choose this one, or you could say it this way. You just have to write your way out of it to make it make sense for the audience. And you're serving an audience. But there's, like, a million ways to make a good radio story. There's a million ways to make a good movie.

**Ryan Coogler:** Absolutely.

**Roman Mars:** And so, once you sort of get into that zone, you allow people to, like—to try lots of different things that you would never try. I mean, that is like heaven as a creator, is to have a team around you who brings you things that just blow you away.

**Ryan Coogler:** I feel like that when I produce for other directors, you know what I mean?

**Roman Mars:** Yeah.

**Ryan Coogler:** You're talking about Judas. I felt like that with Shaka, like, every day. It was like, yo, I would never make this choice, but it's a perfect choice, you know what I mean? And I get to be around him.

**Roman Mars:** Totally.

**Ryan Coogler:** Like, it was—it was fantastic.

**Roman Mars:** What I liked about working with you on Judas and all that sort of stuff and those conversations we had was, like, you had other things to do. I mean, you were writing Wakanda Forever at the time. You had a lot going on, but, like, no part of the podcast process was uninteresting to you. It was --

**Ryan Coogler:** No, I love it, man. I feel fortunate to be involved, man. And it was, like, a dream of mine, you know, like, to make a podcast in general because I think the medium is so fascinating. It still is fascinating to me. Man, like, I'll see stuff. We had a meeting this morning, looked at some stuff Paola was doing, and I was just like, man, you know, it's so cool. And it's—and it has similarities to what we do as filmmakers, but at the same time, it is very—it is very different. It requires, like, another form of thinking. Dude, I love it, man. Like, there's few things I love as much as that specific medium.

[Prox Recs Theme with Caution to the Wind - Music by Ludwig Göransson]

**Ryan Coogler:** So for my Prox Rec, I'm going to take the easy way out, and I'm going to recommend Roman's book, The 99% Invisible City.

**Roman Mars:** I like that.

**Ryan Coogler:** I think that it's a great book, a great piece of art. And it's really cool for me because, you know, obviously Roman makes audio. It was great for me to have a physical thing

that I kind of see it as almost like a companion if you're a fan of the show. But it's a lot of great work in there, a lot of great work in journalism and art. Makes a great coffee table edition. You know what I mean? It looks great on the bookshelf, you know, impress your friends when they come over, and they see it. That's my Prox Rec for today.

**Roman Mars:** Yeah. And I should add that I wrote that, but my co-author Kirk Kohlstedt, who honestly, if he didn't work on that book, that book would've never gotten done. So he's a real driving force behind the book. But I thank you so much. That means the world to me.

I guess if you were interested in the craft of radio making, audio making, I think few places are more thoughtful than the website Transom.org. You could learn a ton, and how people make things, understand what they're doing. Like, what does it imply when you have music, and the music goes out? And then the next thing you say, like, all of a sudden, it becomes very important, like learning tricks like this that you pick up on, but you just don't—you probably never really saw them articulated or heard them in such a way that you got what the emotion was. And that's the same things that I'm sure you learn in, like, film school and stuff like this. This is what this does, this is what this cut does, you know, speeding up the—I don't know—the edits, you know, like, you do this type of rhythm, stuff like that.

**Ryan Coogler:** Yeah. It's a language. We call it the language of cinema. Every art form has its language.

**Roman Mars:** Totally. And so the audio—like, the best people for breaking that down and understanding how to do a type of audio storytelling is Transom.org, and I'd really recommend it. And the other thing I recommend is just, like, listening to things, everything.

[In Proximity Theme Music by Ludwig Göransson]

**Ryan Coogler:** Roman, I want to thank you for being on our show, In Proximity. It means the world that you made time, and I think folks really enjoy what you have to say. So thank you, bro.

**Roman Mars:** Oh, it was my pleasure. It was a real honor.

[VOICEOVER]

**Paola Mardo:** In Proximity is a production of Proximity Media. If you like the show, be sure to follow, rate, and review it on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or your favorite podcast app and tell your friends and loved ones to do the same. If you have someone in your life who you think would like the show, send them a link.

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The show is produced by me, Paola Mardo. Executive Producers are Ryan Coogler, Zinzi Coogler, Sev Ohanian, and me. Our theme song and additional music is composed by Ludwig Göransson. Ken Nana is our Sound Designer and Mix Engineer. Polina Cherezova is our Production Assistant. Audio editing for this episode is by Cedric Wilson.

Special thanks to the whole Proximity Media team and to you for listening to In Proximity. Meet you back here next week.

[END VOICEOVER]

[MUSIC STOPS]

**Ryan Coogler:** It was great, man. I remember that day I came by and got the book, and I was kind of like, man, this—so this is where you live? You know, like—

**Roman Mars:** Yeah, that's right.

[LAUGHTER]

**Ryan Coogler:** It was so close. It was, like, down the street, you know what I'm—you know? Like—

**Roman Mars:** Exactly.

**Ryan Coogler:** We had done all these—all these Zooms. It was like you get this feeling that somebody's, like, halfway across the world, you know what I'm saying?

**Roman Mars:** Yeah.