

## **In Proximity**

### **Episode 17: Ryan Coogler, Pete Nicks, Stephen Curry, and Erick Peyton Final Transcript [Audio Podcast]**

[Music/Old Radio Sounds by Ken Nana]

[VOICEOVER]

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

[VOICEOVER ENDS]

**Ryan Coogler:** Just as a Warriors fan, man, like it's tough—it's tough to me to look at the screen, you know, when you roll your ankle. How do you deal with those, with those unexpected lows or defeats or losses. How do you, how do you pick yourself back up?

**Stephen Curry:** Whatever the context of the situation, whatever the loss is whatever the season of life you find yourself in, like you have to find what that moment is trying to teach you I think, it's a hard, hard hard thing to do but it's so important to allow yourself the space to, you know, let those emotions flood through and see, you know, what that lesson is that needs to be learned, what patience might come through it.

[In Proximity Theme Music by Ludwig Göransson]

[VOICEOVER]

**Paola Mardo:** You're listening to In Proximity. This is our last episode of the season before we take a short break and return with more great conversation. And we're so excited to share it with you in both audio and video formats. You can listen to this episode on your favorite podcast app like apple podcasts or Spotify, or, watch it, on our Proximity Media youtube channel. Yes, we filmed this episode, so check it out, and don't forget to subscribe.

Today, we go all in on Stephen Curry: Underrated. The latest film from Proximity Media and our partners at Unanimous, A24, and Apple TV+. It's an inspiring coming-of-age story documenting the rise of Stephen Curry. On this episode, we have the four creative minds behind the film. Stephen Curry himself, director Pete Nicks, and producers Erick Peyton and Ryan Coogler. They talk about how the film came together, and how they each tackle some of the biggest themes in Stephen's basketball career as illustrated in the doc. Dealing with loss, believing in yourself, and wearing the idea of being "underrated" as a badge of honor.

[VOICEOVER ENDS]

**Ryan Coogler:** Hey, what's going on, everybody? This is Ryan Coogler, writer, director, producer, and founder of Proximity Media.

**Pete Nicks:** Hi. I'm Pete Nicks. I'm a producer and director of documentary films, director of Underrated, and the cofounder of Proximity Media.

**Erick Peyton:** What's up I'm Erick Peyton, EP, co-founder and CCO of Unanimous Media.

**Stephen Curry:** I'm Stephen Curry, cofounder of Unanimous Media, producer, and a little bit of talent.

**Erick Peyton:** I like that.

[LAUGHTER]

**Ryan Coogler:** EP, Steph, man, thanks for—a little bit of talent.

[LAUGHTER]

**Ryan Coogler:** EP, Steph, thanks for making the time for this, man. We really appreciate it. I guess we can start with just how everybody met. You know, folks familiar with how—how me and Pete met, but I remember the first time that, that we met formally, Steph, it was me, Zinzi. It was you—Ayesha was there. And—and little Canon, and we were in—we were in Ayesha's restaurant in the city, right?

**Stephen Curry:** And came through, had a nice little meal situation, but, yeah, it was the first time. It's crazy. I don't—I'm trying to remember what year that actually was. That's probably 2019.

**Ryan Coogler:** It was '18. I think it was '18.

**Stephen Curry:** '18? Right after—yeah, he was a young pup. And he just turned five, so it would be five-year anniversary of the first run-in. But, yeah, EP, way back to 2017.

**Erick Peyton:** 2017.

**Stephen Curry:** That is correct, and thinking about—well, first time we met was at the same restaurant.

**Erick Peyton:** Yeah.

**Stephen Curry:** Actually, which is crazy.

**Ryan Coogler:** At International Smoke.

**Erick Peyton:** Before the booths. Nothing was in there.

**Stephen Curry:** Nothing was in there. It was before we actually opened up, or she opened up, officially. And I had a meeting about what opportunities could be in the media space and the original brainchild conversation of what Unanimous Media is now.

**Erick Peyton:** Absolutely.

**Ryan Coogler:** Bringing us up to now with this incredible film that we all getting ready to release out to the world on Apple TV+, you know, I'd love to just talk about how you guys came to us with this—with this film because that's where Pete comes into the equation, right?

**Erick Peyton:** Absolutely. So, I mean, you know, me and Stephen, we meet quite a bit about the Unanimous slate, and it's always—it's always us getting together, and usually I'll put together

some type of binder for him or—or some type of outline for him, and we'll just go through it and make sure he's updated, make sure he has—he gets a chance to have feedback. And also, he'll have ideas.

But this particular meeting, we—I think we had went through the slate, and then I—I mentioned the Davidson run. And then, and I think that, you know, with him, he—I hate speaking about him when he's right next to me.

**Stephen Curry:** No. Yeah, go ahead. Tell me. Tell me about me.

**Erick Peyton:** But he has this superpower to, like—his insights are like no other, right? And so, you—you do get—he's very specific about how he wants to tell the story. And, and with this one, you know, he sat back. He thought about it. I think you had said—like, and, you know, he kind of begins to talk to himself a little bit. He's like, "I haven't seen the guys in it. I haven't seen the guys in a little while," you know? And then he—he drops it on me that he plans on—to—he plans to graduate, you know, this year, as well. And I was like, "Oh, that's a story story. Like, if we can, if we can definitely, you know, document that, as well, it feels like the right time." So he gave me the—he gave me the thumbs-up on exploring it.

**Stephen Curry:** I'm slow to give those, too. We always joke about the red, yellow, green light of me, you know, making decisions, and sometimes it takes me a little while to get there because I got a lot of, ideas and just stuff rummaging through my head. So to give a—what'd you call that, like a neon yellow light?

**Erick Peyton:** It was a pretty bright yellow light, you know, which is basically a green for Stephen, you know what I mean? It was a pretty bright one. So then I'm like, okay, okay, okay, I got to get the, I got to get the neon green. And that's why—that's why I called you, Ryan, because, you know, sometimes you—you're so excited about the opportunity, you're like, "Oh, this is dope. This is going to be so great." And I had—I don't know why I wasn't thinking about you were about to go shoot Black Panther. But, like, I called you, and luckily, you know, you picked up, and you were really excited about it. And I 100 percent appreciate that.

And then you mentioned Pete Nicks, and then I was like, "Okay, okay." And you mentioned the docs he had done, and I think I had seen The Force at that time, and I was like, "Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah." I don't know if Homeroom was out, but I think I went to—I watched Homeroom, and I sent it to him, and then it was like, an, "Absolutely." And then, and then Pete kind of came in, and I don't know if, Pete, you remember that meeting.

**Pete Nicks:** Well, I remember Ryan first coming to me with the idea. And, I mean, on the one hand, it's like, you know, documentary, Stephen, I'm trying to imagine myself, like, as a kid, like, my dad getting an opportunity to make a film about, like, you know, Cedric Maxwell or Byrd. And I grew up—I grew up in a very sports-oriented environment in Boston. You know, I played college—high school basketball. Chris Havlicek was on our team. I played a very important role sitting on the bench. You know, I had some natural skills. I was 6'2". I was also born in Akron, so, you know—

[LAUGHTER]

**Stephen Curry:** How crazy is that?

**Pete Nicks:** So, you know, sometimes the universe just speaks to you and says, "You know, you might want to consider this." I did—you know, I did take a pause on it because I have—my background is in very serious social issue documentaries that dig into, you know, very urgent issues that America is facing that are unfolding on the stage of the Bay Area. And so that sort of—that was sort of my backdrop, but the learned about sort of Steph's story and the more I learned about sort of the themes that were, that were possible in this film and the potential uncertainty of, oh, can he achieve this goal that he had set and fulfill this promise that he'd made to his mom and to his coach? The more I started seeing the potential of the project and getting excited about it.

And then, you know, meeting Steph—I remember, distinctly, meeting you for the first time, Steph, and I think you dropped your lunch. Like, you were eating something. You fumbled it, and I was thinking, you know, "He'll bounce back." But, you know, you looked me right in the eye, and, I mean, I—you know, I had heard how sort of present you were with people, and that got me. And then, I think you—it didn't take long for you to get your phone out and start showing me photos and videos from Davidson, and I think that the spark in your eye made me realize that this was something that, that you really wanted to do and that you were passionate about, you were, the nostalgia for your, for this part, this time in your life, and that was the beginning, you know.

[KN 9 to 5 by Ludwig Göransson]

**Stephen Curry:** To have a meeting like that that sparked this project and your belief that you could tell an amazing story based on all the cool experiences, the impactful experiences, the formative years of, you know, Davidson and even the entire—I guess the—we call it the origin story, but, like, the buildup to why Davidson was the perfect place for me, and Coach McKillop and his influence and just the community that we had built around that team in that '08 run. But it's weird for me, as, like, the focal point of the story, I guess, in the sense to kind of take yourself out of it, but the beauty in it is, you know, everybody on this podcast has understood the ability to tell the story of how underrated is a badge of honor. And, you know, me and Ryan, we talked about it specifically, like, the fact that, you know, I had people in my life that saw, you know, my potential even when I didn't and to be able to recognize that. So it's a weird, you know, experience being able to put all that together and the fact that, you know, we have such a beautiful documentary to show for it, is special.

**Ryan Coogler:** I want to—I want to get into that because, like, for—for you, Steph, and for you, EP, and I guess for you, Pete, too, have you guys had moments where, like, you didn't believe in yourself but somebody else did, and that was able to get you through? Because I think the film is like—you know, it's interesting because we watching the—the journey of somebody who we know eventually made it, you know what I mean? Who we know eventually, you know, exceeded all possible expectations, you know? But for—for all of us, all of us are on quote/unquote "unlikely paths" in what we, in what we do, you know?

Like, Steph, can you think of a time? I mean, like, was it Coach McKillop? Was it your mom? Was it your pops, you know what I'm saying? Like, was it somebody else, where, like, maybe you had—maybe you had doubts internally, and somebody was like, "No, you got this"?

**Stephen Curry:** Yeah, I mean, the—the most impactful one in that respect is Coach McKillop, for sure. And, I mean, you have all met him, talked to him, seen the way he—how intense and passionate he is about not just the ability to coach and lead but just the influence that he has on people that—you know, anybody he comes into contact with but especially people that have—all

the players that have been through his program. And so, like, even when I was making that decision to go to Davidson, there's still a little bit of a doubt about what does it mean to, you know, play Division I basketball at whatever level? And you've been hearing so many naysayers and critics about, you know, my size and, you know, the eye test that I didn't pass and all that, and the way that he just explained, like, "Not only do I think, you know, you're capable of being successful at this level, but I don't need you to be anything other than yourself in that process."

You know, that's such a bold, you know, powerful statement for somebody who's still trying to figure out who they really are and what they have to offer the world and—and not even the world, what they have to offer to just that next level that they're about to—and the next journey that they're about to embark on. So he's—and he's even still dropping me lines. I get a text message from him like every other week of something, like, truly it helps continue to form our perspective on even leadership now, knowing the platform that I have, and he's kept me grounded in all of that. So he's definitely the—the figure for me in that. I don't know about you, EP.

**Erick Peyton:** Yeah. I think I've had a couple—couple people definitely believe in me when, when I was sort of—but I think the best, the biggest and brightest one was, was Snoop, right? So, when I was—I used to—I always, I always give the caveat as don't YouTube these, but I used to direct music videos in a former life. And—

**Pete Nicks:** I'm googling that immediately.

**Erick Peyton:** But I was doing them, and I was doing them, and, you know, music videos are a tough grind. They were—they were the thing that I always wanted to do. Like, coming up, I was—I was just—like, Hype Williams and Spike Jonze and like music videos were like my thing. And so I'm sitting in bed, and I had been doing them, and then I had this break, and I was pitching for bigger ones, right? I was literally pitching against my idols. And I would write these treatments, and they would be like—there was a lot of "no, thank yous."

And I'm sitting in my room, and I'll never forget it. It's like 11:00 at night, and I get this phone call from this unknown number, and it's, and it's Snoop. No, it's actually not Snoop. It's his manager. His manager's like, "Snoop wants to meet with you." And I'm like, "What?" He's like, "Snoop wants to meet with you." I was like, "When?" I was like, "When? Okay, cool. When?" He's like, "Right now. Can you come to the studio?"

And so I was like—so I got dressed. It was probably like—when I got to the studio, it was probably like midnight. And I walk in, and it was like—it was like how you meet Snoop. His hair was picked out. He was getting—somebody was giving him the cornrows. You know, he might've been puffing on something and—not even might've been, he was definitely puffing on something.

[LAUGHTER]

And it wasn't even a long conversation. He just told me, "I want you to do every music video on my next album." And then he—he gave me the songs. He was like, "But you can't leave the studio with these songs." He's like, "You can listen to them here." And so I spent the next like—until like 5:00 in the morning just listening to the songs, thinking of ideas, listening to the songs, thinking of ideas. And that was probably the one, and then I did most of the videos on that album. But that was probably the one person, and I mean, still—I mean, I know Dogg to this day, and we're—we have some things with him now, but he gave me that opportunity and that,

that like—he just believed in me when nobody else was, was. But, yeah, definitely Snoop Dogg was, was the guy.

**Ryan Coogler:** That's amazing. What album was this, bro?

**Erick Peyton:** This was Malice n Wonderland.

**Ryan Coogler:** Malice n Wonderland.

**Erick Peyton:** Yeah, so the I Wanna Rock song. Pete, come on, man. You can't. You can't. Listen.

**Ryan Coogler:** So this—so this 2009.

**Erick Peyton:** Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah.

**Ryan Coogler:** Wow.

**Erick Peyton:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's 2009.

**Ryan Coogler:** EP, that's amazing, man.

**Erick Peyton:** Yeah.

**Ryan Coogler:** What went through your, what went through your head when you, when he—when he said, "Hey, I want you to do the whole album?" Like, did you—did you panic? Did you say, "Man, does he have the wrong guy?" Or were you like, "Man, let's go. This is my shot"?

**Erick Peyton:** You know, funny story is on that music video run, you know, I also realized, "I don't want to do music videos no more."

[LAUGHTER]

I remember where I was. I'm walking, and Dogg's in here, and Jamie Foxx came and, like, to do this cameo, and, like, the breakdancing, mad cameras everywhere, and I'm like—I'm like—I look at my, I check my bank account, and I'm like, "Ooh, this is not the business." When we wrapped that, I was like, "All right, what am—what am I doing next?" for sure.

**Ryan Coogler:** That's amazing. Who was it for you, Pete?

**Pete Nicks:** Oh, man. Well, my mom, she was sitting right there. But I think—she's retired. She's gone back to rest. But to try to condense it—it's a lot, but to try to condense it into a little bit, you know, I had a real rough time in college kind of coming-of-age as a young man, you know, and as a young Black man. What did it mean to be Black? I was trying to figure that out, I went to Howard. A lot of my—a lot of my—I come from a big family. Mom is one of 10, Dad's one of eight. A lot of my cousins went to HBCUs, a lot of my uncles, aunts, my dad.

And I fell apart. You know, I collapsed under the weight of, of a lot of searching, identity issues, got into some trouble, cycled through drug rehabs, got incarcerated, always wanted to—kind of like you, EP, I was the kid at our family reunions that I took—I stole my Uncle Ray's video camera, and I would interview everybody as the Pete Nicks Show. So it was in the blood for me,

too. I just didn't know it until later. And, and that sort of, that sort of—that deep doubt that, for me, metastasized into some really destructive stuff. And, you know, my first documentary was about this experience and looking back and sort of interviewing all my family and friends about what they—you know, about my story through their eyes. And my mom has a line in that documentary because I think I went through, I don't know, six rehabs. And there's a line in there where she said, "You know, we were going to try, you know, one more time. We just kept telling ourselves one more time." And they didn't give up on me, and I remember the—I eventually graduated from Howard. It took me 11 years. I was on the 11-year plan, and we had a—

**Stephen Curry:** Me, too. I was close to that.

**Pete Nicks:** That's how we do it at HU.

[LAUGHTER]

And I was at the—we just had a little family dinner, and it wasn't just my mom. It was my cousin Brian, it was my sister Yanna, it was my dad, it was my friends, it was various counselors who, you know, had to deal with me along the way. And there was something about the clarity of that support that allowed me to have a vision for my future. And I remember, at that party, telling people through so many tears, like, "I've got a lot of ideas," you know? And I think that, that was one of the turning points.

And I remember my mom was sitting in that, in the car. She said she was alone in a parking lot outside a mall outside of Boston, and she said it was quiet. She said, "God told me that everything is going to be okay." And she told me that, I think, when I was 15. So a lot of that was before I had my issues, but that seed was planted. And a lot of these things, you can't fully understand, you know, how we're able to transcend, you know, our—either our limitations or those rough patches that we hit in our lives, but, in my case, there's no question it was—my family and my friends played a massive role.

[Trappin' by Ken Nana]

**Ryan Coogler:** But, like, I did want to talk just about, like—just about those low moments, you know what I mean, that we all go through as human beings, especially as artists. You know, I'm thinking about—I'm thinking about you, EP, when you just sharing how you always wanted to be a music video director, and you had your dreams come true only to check your bank account, look around and realize, "Oh, man, I don't know that I want to do this." You know, and, like—

**Erick Peyton:** Absolutely.

**Ryan Coogler:** That's, like, a interesting type of—that's, like, a interesting type of—of quote/unquote "low point." How do we deal with loss? I think, Steph, one of the more cinematic and affecting moments of the film comes at the end when we seeing, like, you know, your professional career juxtaposed with what happened with you at Davidson. You know, it's tough to me to look at the screen, you know, like when you roll on your ankle, you know what I'm saying? I'm like, oh, man, I don't know if I want to me reminded of this, you know what I mean? And, but my question is, is like, or even, you know, I was there, man. I was literally—I don't know if you remember this, bro. I was—me and Zinzi were right next to you when Clayton went down in game six 2019. We was right next to you on the sideline, bro.

**Stephen Curry:** And I was sitting on the floor, yeah.

**Ryan Coogler:** We were sitting, we were sitting next to Kawhi, Kawhi's mom and uncle, bro. How do you deal with those, how do you deal with those unexpected lows or defeats or losses? How do you pick yourself back up?

**Stephen Curry:** Whatever the context of the situation, whatever the loss is, whatever the season of life you find yourself in, I think acknowledging it first and embracing whatever the emotions that come with it—we're all human beings. We all have, you know, a relationship with, with life in the sense of people, you know, around you, whatever the circumstances. Like, you have to find what that moment is trying to teach you. I think it's a hard, hard, hard thing to do, but it's so important to allow yourself the space to, you know, let those emotions flood through and see, you know, what that lesson is that needs to be learned, what patience might come through it. I think the biggest thing for me is it's always pushed me back to the process of whatever I'm doing and reminding myself of, you know—there's fun and joy in that. There's growth. There's evolution in it.

The unpredictability of life is something that you have to kind of accept, but as long as it pushes you back toward that process, I feel like, for me, it's reminding me I can't be results-based, you know? I can't be looking at the end result of something, and whether it shines and you feel like you have something to do with that, whether it's a failure and you feel like you could've done something better, but the process can always center you, I guess, in the sense of, like, this is—I know I'm supposed to be doing X, Y, Z, and I know I've put everything I have into, you know, X, Y, Z, and I'm going to keep doing that. I might, you know, have to make some adjustments or surround myself with some different people or, you know, push myself out of a certain comfort zone, or, you know, find a different way of looking at certain things.

But I think the process for me has always been the—the secret sauce of just being able to make sure I enjoy whatever I'm doing or whoever I'm around, and that will help me kind of, you know, accept, you know, the results or the realities that you find yourself in because some of that stuff's so uncontrollable. If you obsess over that, then you're going to continue to be chasing shadows. That's never—that's never a good place to be.

**Ryan Coogler:** Hey, and Steph, man, just to dig in a little more, what is your process, bro? When you say "the process," like if you were to distill it?

**Stephen Curry:** Yeah. I mean, first, I've identified, like, the things that I want to put my energy towards, and that has evolved over time, right, as you always have to continue to take stock of what your passionate in and, like, what projects you want to work on, the ways that you're developing your skillset and all that. For me, like, I know everybody talks about, like, just find a way to get 1 percent better every day. There's not really, like, a formula of how to do that, but, for me, it's just, like, okay, when I'm somewhere, I want to be all the way present in that moment as much as I can.

It's not always—I don't execute that, you know, well always, but that's the intention whether I'm in the gym working out like I was this morning, and then you—I was like, oh, the schedule's kind of crazy, but I want to make sure that everywhere I go that I'm fully there, fully in the moment, fully committed to it, finding something to learn, like trying to be aware and observant, like I said, just around how I—like, what thoughts pop into my head, you know, throughout the day or whatever, or what things I feel like are pulling attention or are distracting me from, you know, being in the moment, those type of things. Like, I have to continue to be aware of those. But



just being present, and then the other process is like—again, it is the joy of doing everything that I do or that I get to do, I should say. Like—

**Ryan Coogler:** I mean, I saw—I saw that today, man, when we were at the music video. Like, you were really enjoying yourself, bro. Like—like, you even, like, said it. Like, you took—nobody was watching. I think I might've been the only person looking at you at the time, and you was like, "I'm having the time of my life."

**Stephen Curry:** That's how I'm living my—a year ago, you told me, "You're going to be in a music video that's done by an artist that you love that is the theme song for a documentary that is coming out about a very formative point"—like, you told me that a year ago or two years ago. What are you talking about? But in the sense of, again, like, going through this process with y'all and understanding, like, what type of film we were trying to make and then understanding, like, I got some amazing, talented people around me who have a perspective of helping me tell a story, like, bringing Tobe in, like him bringing his—like, all these—his expertise in terms of the song. And, like, I got to—the end result was I was on a set filming my legit first music video. And, like, to your point, I had to make sure I came in with the gratitude and appreciation of, like, "This is amazing. This isn't something that's just filling two hours. This is absolutely amazing. I'm going to have fun while I'm doing it."

**Ryan Coogler:** It really—like, it taught me something in the moment, you know what I mean? Like, I was like, "Yo, this dude is not only present, but he's like—he's, like, actually enjoying himself," and it made the performance better.

["Lil Fish, Big Pond" by Tobe Nwigwe ft. Stephen Curry]

**Ryan Coogler:** EP, what's your method of getting through rough patches?

**Erick Peyton:** So I have this—I have this process, and it usually happens, like, you know, when I'm feeling, like, lost, you know. I have this thing that I say to myself. It's like, "Mind, body, and soul," which kind of sounds cheesy. But what I mean by "mind, body, and soul" is, like, for my mind, I always have to be feeding my mind some type of creative opportunity or ingesting some type of creative, right? And that's just my oxygen, you know, whether it be, like, me and my kids are trying to—this is, my wife hates this, but me and my kids trying to build something, you know what I mean? Like, or whatever or, like, try to plant seeds or try to—you know, whatever that is, I always have to be doing something, or it's, you know, focusing on Unanimous things and reading projects and things like that.

Body, it means, like—you know, I'm, you know, I'm not a small dude now, but I used to be a little bit bigger, like when I looked at my wedding pictures. Even when I met him, I was probably a little bigger. So it's important for me to constantly stay moving. That's the thing that I really have to work at, but constantly stay moving, you know, walking and running and exercising and just whatever it is.

And then soul, it's really about being thankful, praying, you know, going to church. My pops is a preacher, so sometimes I'll listen to him in Mississippi. When one of those things are off, like, no matter what, my life will turn—turn to a wrong direction. And I'll either get a little bit down or I'll snap or I'll get really grumpy. That's what my wife says. But I will get really—and that's the thing that always connects it, is just remembering those three things and feeding yourself those three things every single day. So that's what—that's what I do when I get lost.

**Ryan Coogler:** Pete, how about you, bro?

**Pete Nicks:** My go-to is actually—and this is something I learned in recovery—is the Serenity Prayer, "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things that I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." And I think, you know,

**Stephen Curry:** Know the difference.

**Pete Nicks:** It's intention. It's, you know, digging for that strength. But the wisdom part is—that's kind of the thing for me, whereas I'm trying to find that wisdom in different ways. And what I have found from loss, from loss different ways, is that when you go through a difficult time—you know, I was honestly struck, like, when we first started looking at all the footage of Steph from like—Steph, from when you were in high school. I saw it less in high school, but that stuff of—the footage of the Eastern Michigan game. Like, it was actually—I was like, "Damn." Like, you looked like you were a complete mess out there. You didn't seem coordinated.

**Stephen Curry:** It was 100 times worse than I thought it was, than I remembered. Absolutely.

**Pete Nicks:** I was just curious. Like, what—because you looked uncoordinated, and one of the things I've learned is, like, when you're going through doubt or when you're going through a trauma or self-doubt or something like that, you can—there's, like, a mind-body, a very important mind, sort of body connection. And I think that's why—it can definitely explain how athletes can go from going through a rut or being a mess to suddenly finding their voice or getting back into that flow.

But I—for me, it's the same thing emotionally. Like, when I—I say that prayer because when I get in—it's usually deep doubt is the beginning of an unraveling of some kind and trying to, like, basically, stem that unraveling so it doesn't, you know, completely unravel. And, you know, I just think you get wisdom from difficult situations if you're open, if you have the right mindset. So that's sort of, you know, for me.

But I am just curious, like, how do you—because you also saw it in—you saw it in the Davidson footage, but I think it was that one scene during the season where you had that rough stretch. I think it was that Utah game where it almost looked the exact same. Like, you were falling down. You weren't hitting any shots. Do you have, like, a process that you—something that you tell yourself or somebody that you think of?

**Stephen Curry:** No. I mean, it's all built like, kind of what I was just—was talking about. It's just built on the—like, the opposite of doubt, obviously, is confidence in the sense—like, I always say confidence is the ultimate superpower. It's like the ultimate unlock, and it has been for me and just kind of, like, the pattern of seeing guys go through it in the league where just that know-how. It doesn't mean it's always going to work out your way. It doesn't mean you're always going to make every shot, or every game's going to be perfect. But over time, the volume of work that you put in, you know, the trend is always up.

So there's a confidence, and there's a faith that the work that you're putting in, like, will reap—you'll reap benefits of it eventually. You just can't force that process or that time frame, and you don't know when it's going to happen. And then when it does, gratitude and appreciation has to follow because then you double down on what it is. It can't be, like, the, you know, "Oh, I've made it. Look at me," or the, "Now I can take my foot off the gas pedal," in terms

of, you know, everything that you put into what you're doing. It's just more motivation to—to do the work, right?

And there's no shortcuts to anything. None of us are sitting in front of these microphones without an intense work ethic and, you know, a faith that you're building toward something great, you know, like, whatever that expectation is. But it's fascinating, when you hit those lows, it feels—you feel lost, and you feel like a fish out of water for sure, but you have a decision to make at that point. And what you do at that inflection point will make it a very temporary thing, or it will define kind of who you are.

**Ryan Coogler:** That's incredible, man.

**Erick Peyton:** What about you, Ryan?

**Ryan Coogler:** No. I'm sitting here thinking about the last couple questions, man. Yeah, no, you know, I was thinking about the last couple questions. I didn't—I didn't engage, man, but they kind have a lot to do with each other for me because, I mean, a lot of people believe—I mean, I very rarely believe in myself, you know what I'm saying? Like, I—it's a—it's something that I kind of have, like, learned to accept, you know what I'm saying? Like, that I do deal with imposter syndrome almost constantly, you know, and the comfortability of the oscillate, you know, where I'm, like, yeah, I'm a filmmaker in theory, but then when I'm on set, it's like, "Oh, shit," you know what I'm saying? Like, "Am I in the right place? Am I doing the right thing?" you know, and learning to say, "Oh, yeah, that's just how my brain works," you know what I'm saying? Like, I just got to—I just got to do the work, you know?

But I had a lot of people who believed in me and expressed confidence in me at a place when I didn't understand it or didn't see the vision. You know, I had a professor, Rosemary Graham, in college, recommended me getting into writing screenplays, numerous professors in school who would pull me to the side once I got to graduate school and say, "Hey, man, I can see you having a future." One of the big ones was Jed Dannenbaum, rest in peace—passed from COVID a few years back—but he lined me up with Forest Whitaker, who eventually, you know, greenlit my first movie.

But a big one I like to talk about that works into the theme of loss is Chadwick. You know, he—when we were on the set for the first Black Panther, you know, I was assured it was a disaster, you know what I mean? And like, if somebody gave me a—a genie with one wish left, I would've wished just that we finished and that the film was just okay. That's how—that's how bad I thought it was going, you know? And he would—and he would come up to me and say, "Hey, man, this thing is going to be—this thing is going to be amazing. The world's never seen nothing like this. It's going to change everything."

You know, he would kind of speak, you know, like, a absurd amount of positivity, like, to me, you know, out loud. And I would think it was a tactic, you know what I'm saying, just because he saw me struggling, you know what I mean? But what I came to find out was he was the person who, like, saw what the movie was going to do the clearest, you know what I mean? And—and when—when we, you know, when we all lost him, it made me a put a lot of those interactions back into perspective, you know, and his—his superpower is not dissimilar to yours, Steph, when EP talks about it, but he was able to be very present, you know, and he almost had, like—he almost had, like, command over it.

You know, I was seeing him do things that were almost—almost kind of odd, you know what I'm saying? Like, you know, when I would go up to him and give him a note, he would kind of do this thing where he would take a deep breath in and then a deep breath out, and then he would nod to me. And then he would go—he'll go knock it out, you know what I mean?

And I remember, shortly after he passed, I was watching a lot of videos of, you know, speeches that he had given and all of these things. So I found out he knew he was—he knew he was—he could potentially die the whole time that I knew him, you know what I'm—you know what I'm saying? And I—and I was like, okay, maybe this was, you know, the knowledge he was moving with at all times, you know what I'm saying, which is why he was capable of being so present. But I would see him do that same thing, you know, like in, you know, before he would give a speech or before he'd receive some type of honor or whatever, you know what I'm saying?

And for me, since—since losing him, you know, that's been the—that's been the process for me, you know what I'm saying, is making sure that I'm—like, I'm making sure that I'm totally here at this time and taking it in and taking everything that's capable for me to take from this, whether it's a lesson or whether it's joy or—or making a memory that I'll call back on, you know. That's where I'm at, and it's interesting that all four of us would be on the same—you know, kind of talking about the same thing, you know, in this day and age where so many things competing for your attention, potentially, you know what I'm saying? Like, that idea to—to be able to make yourself be present being something that can turn out to be so powerful for you, man, especially in a film like—you know, with us making this film that's basically about the power of being seen, you know, and I think that it translates both ways, right?

Like, the person who's seen can unlock a power in themselves, but then the person who actually does the seeing, right? Like, the person who's looking at somebody for what they have as opposed to what they don't, you know? What they have in the moment as opposed to what they could have with some type of investment, you know what I'm saying? It seems like the payoff for all of those characters in the film—Coach McKillop, you know, your family, the Warriors faithful, the Davidson faithful—the payoff was just tremendous, you know what I mean, just for that act, which is a present act, right, to see somebody, you know what I mean? You can't see what's in front of you if you're not being present, right?

**Pete Nicks:** And that's a really powerful idea that has a lot to do with, I think, you know, in authenticity on some level. And authenticity reaches back to lived experience. I mean, we learn, like, Coach saw Steph and his potential because he saw himself. You know, he saw himself as a young man. He had gone through this experience that allowed him to see Steph for who he is, and when you shift that perspective and you can truly see, it does unlock, you know, that potential in everyone, so I think that's the power.

[Prox Recs Theme song by Ken Nana with Caution to the Wind by Ludwig Göransson]

**Ryan Coogler:** Yeah, so Prox Recs, like I said, think about the folks that might be—that might be listening as trying to find their way. And a lot of them are—you know, a lot of them are at different points in their careers, you know, but the vast majority of the folks who write in who I bump into who are affected, they kind of like where you were, EP, in 2008, 2009, you know what I'm saying? Pete, maybe where you were when you went to journalism school, Steph, maybe where you were when you first came into the league and trying to find their way. We're trying to recommend something that might be helpful, something that helped us. You know, it could be a book. It could be a film or a piece of art. So, Pete, you want to kick it off?

**Pete Nicks:** Yeah, Prox Recs, okay. This is Prox Recs. I'm going to kick it off with a film and a documentary film, and we're going to keep it in the sports—in the sports genre. And it's called Murderball. You guys seen Murderball? It follows the American quad rugby team at the 2004 Athens Paralympics, and it's a film about athletes pushing beyond their limitations. It's visceral, it's unexpected, it's thrilling. It's a really surprising film, and I highly recommend it.

**Ryan Coogler:** For my Prox Rec, I'm going to go with a film, as well, nonfiction film. It's called Stand, about Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf.

**Erick Peyton:** Great one, great one.

**Ryan Coogler:** It's phenomenal, phenomenal movie.

**Erick Peyton:** Sorry, Pete, yours is great, too. This is one I've seen. I didn't want to hop in with a-

[LAUGHTER]

**Pete Nicks:** Great, yeah.

**Ryan Coogler:** Yeah, Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf out of Mississippi kind of like EP there, but just a beautiful film about somebody who—who's been—you know, he's kind of been compared to Steph retroactively quite a bit by his playing style. And, you know, he was the best player on Shaquille O'Neal's college basketball team, crazy enough, played on the starting five with two seven-footers. And somehow he was the best player. But it's just a beautiful—beautiful movie about—I mean, it's about this country, man, you know what I mean, and all of its pluses and minuses. But the movie moved me tremendously, and I think it's kind of in conversation with our film, as well.

**Erick Peyton:** So I guess the recs are kind of two things. I think one thing that I did is, you know, sort of create a habit, right? And I think one of the habits is this note—I think it's still on our refrigerator today, but I wrote it when I was—right when I moved to L.A. But it says, "There's 24 hours in a day. Make sure you're thinking about your goals and dreams of being a filmmaker eight of those hours," right? Because you work eight hours, you sleep eight hours, and there's eight hours sort of left. So that's one thing, is sort of create the habit to know that there is enough time in the day to go after your dreams because I think that's one of the things that kind of holds young creatives up.

I think the other thing is I read this book, which is not a film book but it's a money book. It's called Rich Dad, Poor Dad, and that—that book made me realize what—how to deal—not to say that I'm a money expert, but it made me realize how to deal with money, how to think about money and not, and understand the difference between assets and liabilities because when I was young, I was spending, you know what I mean? And I think that that was holding me back from buying a camera and being able to get Final Cut updates and all these things. And so, once I understood what an asset was, it allowed me to invest in myself and ultimately, you know, invest in my career. So I think those would be the two things.

**Stephen Curry:** I would say one of my good friends, Mardy Fish, has a story out on Untold about—he's a top-tier tennis prospect coming through. Him and Andy Roddick were kind of neck-in-neck as the one and two in the U.S. from tennis, the representation perspective. And it speaks to a lot of different themes, one, just handling expectations that you put on yourself and

others put on you, mental health and mental strategies to cope with stress and anxiety at whatever level you might experience it. And just—I think a bigger piece is just finding out who you really are and just staying true to that—that—what you talked about, Pete, that level of authenticity, like you don't have to live anybody else's story or whatnot. And it's a pretty—I didn't know. It's crazy. I've known him for about 10 years and did not know the ins and outs of his career and the things that he went through. It's a really, really good film based on his career and his life and how he explains the ups and downs that he went through, the losses and the successes. So it's on Untold, the Mardy Fish story.

**Ryan Coogler:** Hey, man, thank y'all for taking time out of the crazy press schedules and y'all lives to join us on In Proximity. It means the world. And everybody, go stream or go see—it might be in a theater near you, depending on where you live—but please check out our beautiful film. We're all very proud of it, Stephen Curry: Underrated. On Apple TV+.

**Erick Peyton:** Absolutely.

**Stephen Curry:** Appreciate ya'll having us on here, this was awesome.

**Erick Peyton:** Appreciate ya'!!!

[In Proximity Theme Music by Ludwig Göransson]

[VOICEOVER]

**Paola Mardo:** In Proximity is a production of Proximity Media. Learn more and read transcripts of this episode and others at [proximitymedia.com](https://proximitymedia.com).

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. He's also created some additional music on the show including our incredible Prox Recs theme.

Courtney Archerd is our production assistant.

Artwork and social media is by Alexandria Santana.

Audio/Video production and post production on this episode is by Amante.

Special thanks to the whole Proximity Media team, and to you, for listening to In Proximity.

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[VOICEOVER ENDS]