

The Tim Ferriss Show Transcripts

Episode 21: Mike Shinoda

Show notes and links at tim.blog/podcast

Tim Ferriss: Good morning, good afternoon, and good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen Around the World. Thank you for tuning in to the Tim Ferriss show. This episode is gonna touch a lot on creativity, productivity, creating an identity for yourself, becoming a category of one. And we will explain what that means, but it's related to art, and the art that is your life. So let's start with two quotes. The first is from Pablo Picasso, and it is, "Every child is an artist, the problem is staying an artist when you grow up."

And secondly, "If you hear a voice within you say you cannot paint, then by all means paint and that voice will be silenced." That is Vincent van Gogh. Because most of you listening, a lot of you listening, will not identify or view yourselves as artists. And perhaps after this podcast you will think differently. But before we get to the guest, an incredible guest, a tip; and this is a pro tip, if you feel anxious, if you have some type of low grade anxiety, start making your bed.

I know this is a crazy recommendation, it might sound ridiculous. There is a gentleman named Dandapani, and he is a Hindu priest. At one point I was having a tremendous amount of anxiety and he suggested start making your bed. At the very least, when you then come back at the end of the day, or even throughout the day, you will have that one piece of your life that you were able to control completely. And it will seem orderly. It will seem as it should be. So this sounds nuts, but believe me the cascading effect can be pretty profound.

If you have anxiety, at the very least, perhaps you should consider starting making your bed in the morning. It doesn't have to be fancy; it just has to look nice. Okay, moving on. Our guest, ladies and gentlemen, is Mike Shinoda. If you don't know that name, Mike is a musician, record producer, and an artist. He is perhaps best known as the rapper, principle songwriter, keyboardist, rhythm guitarist – it's a long list – and one of the two vocalists of the rock band Linkin Park, if you want to consider it a rock band.

If you don't know Linkin Park, they've sold more than 60 million albums worldwide and have won two Grammy Awards. Mike is

also a solo rapper, if you would call it that, in his side project *Fort Minor*, which I love to death. It's amazing and the lyrics are incredible. He's also provided artwork, production, and mixing for all of the projects that I just mentioned. And he has collaborated with everyone from Jay Z to Depeche Mode and everyone in between. It's a really incredible career. The story of how he got started. How they in some ways accidentally became the phenomenon that they are. It's fascinating.

And there are many different takeaways. We get into not just the broad philosophical underpinnings, but also advice for beginning musicians or artists of any type, the parallels between music and publishing, and really any type of creation along those lines, some of his daily rituals, as well as for instance, how he and his band rehearse, how he song writes, all of these things.

We really dig into it. So I hope you enjoy it. Certainly visit the sites in the show notes. And you can find all of those, including Musicforrelief.org, which is a nonprofit founded by Linkin Park. I've done work with them. They've raised millions of dollars for survivors of multiple natural disasters around the world. You'll find all these in the show notes. So if you want to see the transcript, the show notes, the links to all the resources that are mentioned, the books and so on, go to Fourhourworkweek.com/podcast, all spelled out: Fourhourworkweek.com/podcast.

And this podcast is supported as always by you guys. So please, if you enjoy this show, if you'd like me to do more of these shows they take time, they also take some money, please visit Fourhourworkweek.com/books. Fourhourworkweek.com/books, where you will find the Tim Ferriss Book Club. These are a handful of books that have had a huge impact on my life.

And if you click through it will take you to Amazon, and that kicks back a little penny here or there to keep this thing going. So without further ado, I hope you enjoy and thank you for listening.

Tim Ferriss: Mike Shinoda, thanks for coming on the show.

Mike Shinoda: Hey, thanks for having me, Tim.

Tim Ferriss: It's been quite a few years since we first met. And I was very amused to see on your Wikipedia page that your bio shot is actually from Blog World Expo, when we first met in 2008 or so. I

am very glad that I was able to somehow indirectly contribute to your Wikipedia page.

Mike Shinoda: That's funny I didn't know that's where it was from, that's amazing. I think that actually is a replacement of, I had said to the fans at one point that I hated the old picture that was there. I was like: you guys, seriously? This is like the worst picture of me. It was from like 2003, and I was in mid sentence with my eyes half closed. Like, somebody had put it up there to kind of mess with me, I think, and it was horrible. And so I asked for – If somebody could please find a great picture and replace it, and that's what they came up with.

Tim Ferriss: That's really funny. So actually I'm gonna put out a call to action to my fans right now, I hate my Wikipedia photo. It was taken of me at LeWeb, a speaking engagement in Paris, when I pulled an all-nighter to get there and just looked like Al Pacino after a bender. I mean, I look really really rough. But we were initially put in contact through Aaron Redd, The Red Baron.

Mike Shinoda: The Red Baron.

Tim Ferriss: I just want to give him a nod and a thank you for that. But I have been continually impressed as we've gotten to know each other about how eclectic your skill set is, and how you've come to contribute, not only to your own work, but to the work of so many other musicians, and also done art installations. When somebody asks you, assuming they don't recognize you, what you do, how do you answer that question?

Mike Shinoda: I usually lie, first of all, because if they don't know what I do then I tend to like to keep things pretty, you know, mellow. And especially, you know, I live in LA. And I live like on the boarder of – I live near Beverly Hills, but I think I'm technically in Beverly Hills, but I'm not also. So I tend to do, like spend most of my time in more low key in the valley and stuff like that. Where on the Beverly Hills side, you walk around and if you see paparazzi or you see somebody you recognize from *People Magazine* that's not that surprising, but if that happens on the valley side it's just a little bit more, I think people get a little more attention, so I tend to like stay away from that.

I did grow up however doing like the first – probably my first love was actually drawing and painting. And I had always thought I was

gonna grow up to do that. In fact, we started the band – I started the band as like a hobby after high school, and I wasn't even very serious about it until midway through college. And in college I was studying illustration at Art Center College of Design. It's a very serious school. It's a very rigorous curriculum, and a lot of the folks from there go on to be really great designers in auto and graphic design, ads, film, and of course illustration.

Tim Ferriss: And you've done your own art installations. I remember seeing a number of them. There was one particular piece that maybe you can remind me the name of. There were two women. There was a figure with a skull head and it seemed to be composed of dollar signs?

Mike Shinoda: Oh, man, I did a whole series. I'm not sure exactly which one that is, but I did a whole series, a two part show called "Glorious Excess."

I was mostly inspired by the fact that I felt like I had a weird, a unique perspective on the idea of being a celebrity. We started our – I mean, I started the band as a hobby on the weekends with a friend of mine from high school, and we never got into it with the intention of becoming a signed band, or a popular band, or anything like that. It was just like: we love to do this. This is the kind of music that we want to hear, and nobody's really making this specific combination of elements, and all of the things that followed, followed.

And I found myself like one day looking at it and realizing that, you know, that it never really occurred to me there would be people who would like fabricate a whole, I don't know music career, with the intention of becoming famous or becoming like rich.

Tim Ferriss: Right.

Mike Shinoda: Because that wasn't on my radar at all when we started. We started it because we love music. That's seems like, yeah, that's why you would start a band, right? And then eventually, you know, we're at the Grammys.

We're at the MTV Awards. And there are people there, who clearly are there because they love to be famous. They love to be celebrities and so on, even if they had gotten into it originally because they liked singing or whatever, but now they're clearly there for another reason. And this art show, going back to the art

show, I felt like I had – I'm sitting there in the middle of that, like literally just pulling out my phone and taking pictures and videos and stuff, and seeing this stuff in first person, just simply not relating to it.

Tim Ferriss:

It's been a fascinating experience for me to look at different success stories and try to deconstruct the motivations and also their focus on process over outcome, right? And like you said there are some people, who are so focused on becoming famous or becoming rich. And of course a very small percentage succeed at accomplishing that, and if that's the motivation it would seem to me at least that they wouldn't actually enjoy the process of creating the music, or the books, or the art, or whatever it is that they choose as a medium.

And I always found it sort of an adjusted position to your experience, it seems like, and I've heard the story, you might be able to confirm or deny this that U2, the band started out, and at least one of the members decided we are going to be the biggest rock band in the world, from the very outset, but it doesn't sound like that was, or is the Linkin Park story. What were the tipping points for you guys, I mean, as the band came together over time and you met people, not just in high school, but I guess you met Hun when you were studying art, is that right?

Mike Shinoda:

Yeah, that's right. Well, I mean, it's a really interesting time to be talking about this kind of thing because we just put out a new album called "The Hunting Party." And one of the inspirations behind "The Hunting Party" was rock right now is at a place where it's very Indie, Alt Indie driven. If you compare it to 10 years ago or 15 years ago, it's a lot softer, it's a lot dancier.

There's not a lot of edginess to it or aggression, I feel. And so there was a day when I was listening to the radio and I couldn't find anything to listen to. And I was listening to all my music services and just had a hard time finding something that kind of filled that void for me. So again, it's like whenever we have that feeling, whenever I get that feeling, that's usually the time when I go into the studio and I start making whatever it is that I feel like I'm missing. And that's what the new album was inspired by, but it's also what the first album and the original, you know, kind of idea of the band was inspired by.

Along the way, I think not a lot has changed as far as like the philosophy of what we're striving for. And to your point, it doesn't really include being the biggest. Because if we wanted to be the

biggest band in the universe, I think we wouldn't make an album like our new one. Our new one is very aggressive and very heavy. We knew going into it that we would be potentially hurting our chances at, for example getting on the radio.

Tim Ferriss: Right.

Mike Shinoda: And truth be told the radio is a great way to promote your band and to promote your album and so on. So if you know going into it you're making something that's not going to be effective in promotion, like you're making a decision that is a creative decision, not like for example a career oriented or – well, maybe it is a career oriented decision, but it's not a money decision, right?

Tim Ferriss: Right.

Mike Shinoda: So going back though, I think there were definitely points when we were getting started, we met – we were all kind of friends from high school for the most part. I knew Brad – I've known Brad our guitarist since we were about like 13. He was good friends with my best friend Mark, who was the original singer in our band. Brad's roommate became our base player Dave. My friend from college became our DJ, Joe. Rob, our drummer came from a neighboring high school. And eventually Mark our other singer, we parted ways because the singing thing was just – you know, getting onstage, like drove him crazy. He was getting like an ulcer.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, gosh.

Mike Shinoda: He was so nervous to get onstage. And it turned out he was actually much more talented at the behind the scene stuff. He ended up managing bands. He currently manages bands like Alice in Chains, and he managed Def Tones and Cypress Hill at one point. So yeah, so that was what he was kind of made for. Once we parted ways with Mark though, we found Chester through a mutual friend. And that was a moment where – I only say that to say this – so he came into the band, we did a whole bunch more, you know, showcases and shows, and tried to get signed, and eventually got a little bit of interest.

We got turned down by every label Indie and major there was, but eventually we worked our way into Warner Brothers. We kind of convinced them that we could like do almost, like a demo deal and make some stuff, and if they liked it they continue on, we continue on with them.

Tim Ferriss: Is a demo deal like a spec deal, where you –

Mike Shinoda: Basically, yeah, it's like a spec kind of situation.

Tim Ferriss: You create it first.

Mike Shinoda: I mean, they'll put you in the studio and depending on how it's going, it's a development thing. It's something that they don't do a lot of anymore because they don't have the budget, I think, like everything is so tight now because album sales are so much smaller than they used to be.

They tend not to develop artists in this way anymore. But with us, to be honest, there wasn't a lot of or a ton of developing to do. We kind of were developing on our own, and in the midst of it, because of a complicated relationship of the guy that had signed us with his boss, and that person with their boss, and they were all kind of new. Chester, our singer was kind of new, so there was a lot of turmoil. And they started to get nervous. They started imaging scenarios like: well, this band's popular and that band's popular.

And they tell us things like, "Well, you guys need a gimmick. We want to dress Joe in lab coat and a cowboy hat. And Chester, you should like kick a shoe off at every show." Like, it was stupid, stupid record company stuff that almost sounds like something out of a movie, like *Spinal Tap*. But it was absolutely true, and these were real suggestions. Like, I imagine that if you would say them to somebody these days and they'd be like, "Oh, no, I was totally joking." I assure you they were not joking.

We were sitting in the room and they were literally ready to buy Joe a lab coat and beakers to put in front of his turntables. So yeah, we got to that point and we were making the album. And we were doing what we wanted to do, and got about halfway there and they tried to like, you know, runaway with the whole thing and change everything. They wanted to, you know, basically kick me out of the band. They're talking to Chester and telling him, "You're the star. We need to do it this way." And he's saying, "But this is like Mike's band." He's like, "I've only been in the band for a few months. What do you want me to do, like, I think it's great."

And then we all talked as a band and basically stood up to these guys and said you can either shelf us, which effectively means they'd be putting us in record label limbo for the rest of our career;

we'd never put out a record. Or, they can just accept that this is who we are and let us make the album we wanted to make.

Tim Ferriss:

That's a ballsy move. I mean, it panned out but like you said, the worst case scenario in that particular case isn't that they say no, and then you're able to walk off freely with everything that you had. I'd imagine at that point, like you said, you ran the risk of being prevented from doing things elsewhere if you walked. I don't know if you had any sort of contractual obligations at that point. But it's been very challenging for me working with television over the last year, and producing episodes, having this division at Turner effectively get shutdown, and having the content stuck in this limbo space where you can't free it.

It's just kind of in a holding pen. It's been super challenging. When the record label realized that they had something that could be hot, or that was becoming very hot, what were the indications? Did they take the music and present it to a test audience? Did they hear it internally and simply decide as a group that they liked the sound and therefore wanted to put some muscle behind it? What were the indications that got them excited?

Mike Shinoda:

At that time especially, our first album came out at a time when, if we played a show, we would put out a mailing list at the merchandise table. We'd have a couple – we'd have a shirt, our EP, and some stickers, and we put out a mailing list. If you liked the band, you know, put your info down and we'll contact you; maybe we'll send you some stuff. Maybe next time we play we'll contact you. 50 percent of the people signed up with their snail mail address because they didn't have email yet.

So as you can imagine, like the MP3 wasn't a problem for record labels yet. We signed at a time when they were operating in a very old school manor. So when our first single, "One Step Closer" came out, you know, it's like a classic record label kind of attitude. Like, they throw it out there and see if it sticks. And if they catch some interest in it by the radio stations, then they go a little harder, and they go a little harder.

There's no testing, per se. The only testing is like we'll see if we can get the DJs and the programmers to put it on the air, and then see what the response is and call it whatever. The other thing is, though, meanwhile we were out touring really really hard, playing maybe five shows a week, sometimes six. We were in an Red Ventures. We would have been in a van, but we didn't fit in a van

because there's six of us with our gear. We have a drum set and a DJ rig that was the size of a refrigerator.

So we couldn't fit all of our stuff in a van. And I was driving probably more than half the time. You know, we may have played like 20 minutes. Get off stage, clean up all of our stuff in a hurry, put it all in the trailer and then I would be driving half the night to get to the next venue. It was pretty rough.

But I know that we were boots on the ground, like talking to fans in person and managing our own, the presentation of who we are, the introduction; like this is what our band is about. We were doing that face to face.

Tim Ferriss: Right. So you were able to sort of refine not only how you communicate that to fans, but I would imagine that helps you think through a lot of issues as well.

Mike Shinoda: Yeah, absolutely. There was a really funny story. When we first signed the label, we told the guy that was representing us, "Hey, you know, can you get as many people as possible, who might be working on our stuff – so mainly the rock department – but whoever, if the label wants to come, we'd like to have a meeting in their building and introduce ourselves." And he said, "Yeah, okay, I'll set that up." And keep in mind, we were about 19, and we requested this meeting with whoever, everybody from the label.

And they show up, and they're roughly between 25 and 45 years old, with probably an average of 15 years of experience in the music industry, okay? And we go in, you know, looking the way we did in our first album, me with probably red hair and Chester with the tattoos and like piercings in his lip and whatever. And we go in with an outline of what we are going to discuss with them. Like, they're going to come in and we're going to tell them how to work our band. You know, like we're 19: let me tell you about what we're about. Let me tell you how it goes with Linkin Park.

Tim Ferriss: The instruction manual.

Mike Shinoda: It was so absurd. I couldn't believe, like in retrospect, that they didn't just kick us out of the building. I think that it was like humorous to some of them that this band had the balls to just walk in and like tell them how to do their job. And clearly we were way out of line, but at the same time, you know, I think they admired the attitude of the group. And by the way, they knew that we were

very sincere about this deep connection that we were building with our fans from day one.

Tim Ferriss: How do you think about putting yourself in the shoes of say a new musician now? You mentioned the lab coat shenanigans, and people trying to get you to adopt this shtick. And I've dealt with a lot of large companies in a number of worlds. When large groups of those folks try to have creative meetings, they tend to sort of create a camel, which is a horse designed by committee, and it just ends up being ridiculous. And I would imagine a lot of people succumb to that and allow things to change to their band or their book or whatever that they really shouldn't.

To someone coming up now, sort of like the Axl Rose getting off the bus in "Welcome to the Jungle," someone who is very sincere about, let's say, their music, but who wants to have a commercially viable career, what would your advice to them be in this day and age?

Mike Shinoda: I would say for one thing, there are a lot of similarities in any creative medium. Whether you're an author, or a film maker, or a musician, there are going to be situations. Not the obvious one where somebody comes in and literally wants to just turn your thing into a commercial, obviously like a watered down commercial nightmare, but they're subtle. Those are easy to pinpoint and say: okay, that's absurd, like lab coats. Lab coat, you know, scientist gimmick is absurd, no way.

Tim Ferriss: Right.

Mike Shinoda: But I think it's more about the subtle ones, you know?

Tim Ferriss: Right.

Mike Shinoda: Because even if they're not trying to be manipulative, a lot of times your partners, their priorities and their goals are not completely aligned with yours, and that doesn't mean they're bad. It's taken us a long time to learn that as a band because record labels get such a bad reputation as it is just being sleazy, you know, corrupt organizations, and to some degree they deserve that and to some degree they don't.

You know, not everybody at a label is trying to scam all the artists. Sometimes they're doing what they genuinely think is best and it's not in line with what the artist thinks is best. So those are the things to look out for because it can be very convincing, and it can

be very very subtle, and it could not be a grade A mistake; it could be like a minor level mistake that over time, you know, ten of those adds up to something catastrophic.

So for example, in a situation like – have we talked before about that with books? Where you’ll be writing something and an editor might subtly change a few words, and then another pass, they subtly change a few more words.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah.

Mike Shinoda: And all of a sudden you're looking at it, and you might go back and compare it to the draft before they ever got their hands on it, and you go whoa, they completely changed the tone of my chapter, or my story, or what my point was and so on.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, yeah.

Mike Shinoda: And it happens over time. And at that point, you’ve kind of committed to a thing.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah. And not to digress too far, but yeah, it just brings to mind some of the lyrics from one of your Fort Minor songs, which is only doing print interviews via email. And that’s not of course verbatim, but I'm paraphrasing because dealing with journalists, it's amazing how just a single word replacement can change the entire tone. It can take you from saying something that could be interpreted as profound, to completely absurd and stupid with one replacement. So yeah, you really have to have a fine tuned radar for that stuff.

Mike Shinoda: Yeah, context is everything. I love to do print. I love to type my print interviews if it's possible. Luckily these days, I feel like with social media being as powerful as it is, for you and I, you know, if we're in a situation where somebody prints something that they've edited or changed substantially, we can go out there to the fans and say, “Hey, you guys, this was not correct, and this is how it actually went down. This is how I feel.” Which has to happen once in awhile. But, you know, again, it's like I don't feel like necessarily the people are being deceitful, it's just realizing that like everybody's got their own agenda.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, and different incentives.

Mike Shinoda: And even a music magazine is not interviewing you because they love music, right? Their day to day is we need ad dollars. We need click through. Like, whatever it is that's gonna get us that. And if you have a 40 word sentence that chops down to seven, it's really titillating and interesting and will definitely make people click, but it has nothing to do with anything you said in your interview, it's just click bait; they'll absolutely go for that because that's what their business is built on.

Tim Ferriss: It's important when I'm talking to people just getting ready, or they have something taking off – usually it's a book – coaching them on how to approach this stuff. But on the creative side of things, how is your song writing process changed over time, if it has, and was it different or is it different for, say, Linkin Park versus Fort Minor?

Mike Shinoda: Well, our process, at the end of the day it's pretty democratic but it's rooted in individual inspiration and craftsmanship. So when a song starts, I usually start most of the songs. Sometimes it will be a very flushed out bed of music, sometimes it will just be a chord progression on piano or guitar with some vocals on it. Those two things are very different from one another.

Tim Ferriss: Can you explain? Just as a non musician I'd love to hear why those are so different.

Mike Shinoda: Yeah, sure. So first of all, just from the outside, if you don't know anything about recording music it bears mentioning that there's lots of ways to make music, and a lot of different genres.

I'd say first of all, a lot of different genres have different approaches kind of built in that are not similar to one another. So for example, a producer for a rock band is a person that comes in, the rock band is writing all of the music and the lyrics. The producer is kind of helping them make decisions, and help sculpt the sound of the album, and they all work together, but the musicians in the band are really making the song, and the producer is kind of their coach.

In hip hop, a producer does the whole track, all of the music, probably makes the hook, the chorus, makes basically everything except for the rap verses. The rapper comes in and raps on it, and then the producer will make all the mixing and finishing choices as well, so they do a lot more in that genre than in rock. When we make an album, it generally takes about nine months from start to finish to make the album. In contrast, when we we're making “The

Hunting Party,” next door to us was a world renowned pop singer’s session.

Their producers were there for a few days before they showed up. And this person showed up on day one, and they were there for about 15 minutes. On day two, they showed up for less than 15 minutes, and on day three they neglected to show up at all and the song was actually done. And I was talking to their people going, how is this even possible? Oh, you know, it's like we do this, we do that. And I'm just like this is crazy. As a song writer and artist, I definitely relate more to the producers on that track than the person who sings it.

I don’t even know if I’d be able to call myself an artist personally, if I was the one just showing up for , say, 25 minutes and the song was done. But also because that’s my interest and my skills everything and whatever, that’s what I love to do. So with all that said, I want to master as many versions of making a song as I can. So everything we go into the studio; I try different approaches.

I've tried approaches that come from folk writing and rock and pop and hip hop and whatever. If it's something I haven’t tried before that sounds interesting, I might take that approach.

Tim Ferriss:

And with say hip hop specifically, and again I don't know any of these people personally, but you’ve collaborated with, say, Jay Z. I'm curious in your particular approach, but much like the U2 story, I've heard that Jay Z is very famous for improvising. And at one point, just to appease some record executive, pretended to be taking notes but was actually improvising lyrics in the studio. What is your approach with, say, hip hop specifically? How much of your time is spent writing beforehand, versus improvising in the studio, and what does your writing process look like?

Mike Shinoda:

So if it's on the shorter end, let’s say a song appears and it's just magically great. And in a matter of a couple of weeks it goes from the first notes played to something that just sounds awesome.

Usually in those cases it's because the melody of the music and the vocals have kind of arrived at the same time or a similar time. In a rap song, off of the Fort Minor album the song “Where did You Go?” came up that way. It was like I was playing the piano part. I sang the chorus. I said that’s what the song is. I put a drumbeat to it, I wrote the lyrics to it and it was done. It was really just a couple of weeks. Similarly on a Linkin Park song called “Breaking the Habit,” that one was I had like a beat looping, and then I was

playing keyboard over it, and there's like a string thing. And I was singing vocals over it.

And the whole chorus was there, the melody of the verse was there. And that was like within an hour; I knew there was something to that song. There are other songs that we've done where, they take a lot of work. I mean, over the course of nine months, they might come closer to sounding done and then start to get boring, or start to materialize and then fall apart once you add something.

Our newest, we're about to put out a single called "Final Masquerade." And "Final Masquerade" is a song that early on the chorus, the chords of the song, like the piano, the chords of the song and the vocal were there from an early point. And I knew listening to the chorus of the song and the progression and the verse, the song was gonna be really good. I really liked it. At the time, though, we were deciding the arrangement of the song, which means what do the other instrument splay? What other instruments are on it?

And one of the main things that was a make or break element was the drum pattern. At the time when I wrote it there were no drums. And so I kept putting different things over it. I put programmed loops. I'd write live loops. I kept trying all these things on it, faster and slower tempos and all this stuff, and it just every time I put something on it, I could just tell it was kind of ruining the song.

It just wasn't very good. It was like a B or a B plus. And I knew the song had potential to be really great. So it did take us a long time to just stumble upon the right thing. And it was the time when I was in the studio with our drummer, Rob. And I had already kind of picked the tempo and I said what if we do like a half time, almost like more of a hip hop, or classic rock, like groove drum loop type of thing?

And I don't remember what the reference points might have been or whatever, but the main thing was that I said Rob, just play, and as you play I'm gonna give you suggestions about where the hits might be or whatever. And it immediately started coming together. It was like within a few minutes you could tell, like this is the best groove for this song. It's totally making this song better.

Tim Ferriss:

What activities outside of music have had the greatest positive impact on your music that are not directly musically related? And I'll leave that broad, but just any activities, books, inspirations?

Mike Shinoda: Yeah. Well, you know from our conversations that I love experimenting with new toys, new technology. I love reading. I tend not to read a lot of fiction. I've read your books. I love books like *The Tipping Point* and *Blink* etc., as well. One book that I read that speaks to the answer to this question is a book called *Category of One* by Joe Calloway. And it's about finding ways to make what you do stand out.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, got it.

Mike Shinoda: It's a really nice book. There's a lot of great information in there. And one of the things that he stresses is to benchmark what you do, not against your immediate peers or your immediate competition even in your category, but compare it to things that have nothing to do with your thing. If you're a music maker, there's no reason you shouldn't say: well, can I get great ideas from people who make cars, people who make shoes, people who make apps, people who make cooking utensils, whatever it may be.

You could have a great idea based on something that's so foreign to your thing. So with that said, like I've been getting into things that really excite me, but I don't know how they might inform what I do? It may be musical, it may be kind of like the visual aspect of how we present our music, but I love 3D printing.

Tim Ferriss: You said free printing?

Mike Shinoda: 3D.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, 3D printing, got it.

Mike Shinoda: Yeah, 3D printing.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, fascinating stuff, yeah.

Mike Shinoda: Recently, for my anniversary my wife actually got me a camera drone quad copter. It's by DJI. It's called a Phantom Vision Plus. And I've been playing with that lately. And that one, the connection for me is just really easy. First of all, it's just really relaxing to do, but second, I'm filming stuff with this drone. And I'll film our rehearsals, or I'll film stuff as we travel and stuff. And that stuff is just really fun to do.

Tim Ferriss: You've constantly experimented with technology; that's part of the reason that we bonded and I thought that Blog World Expo would be fun when we initially met. One thing that is constantly on my

mind is related to routines and habits of people who are highly effective. And you are, I guess, right now as we speak getting ready to – is it to rehearse or record?

Mike Shinoda: We're rehearsing right now. We are going out on a U.S. tour with Thirty Seconds to Mars and AFI. It's called "The Carnivores' Tour" and we'll be out from August to September; about six weeks.

Tim Ferriss: So as we speak, it's about noon where you are. What have you found for yourself, what can you do to facilitate flow or peak performance for yourself, whether that's timing-wise, routines or rituals that you have; what have you discovered personally?

Mike Shinoda: One thing, and by the way kudos to you because one of the ideas – I think it was from the *Four Hour Work Week* – that occurred to me, and I don't know if it was because it was literally in the book, or just the book kind of inspired this thought, just in a broad sense looking at the things that you do every day that actually are making you better, whatever that might mean. And the things that you need versus the things you don't really need.

And that can be in the way you handle your emails. It could be the things that you choose to read up on on your computer or iPad or whatever, you know, when you're not working, your workflow while you're working, or even like the things you choose to do when you're not. Like the way you eat, is that affecting how you feel during the day to do your work or your creative stuff or have fun and all of that. I mean, I find that for myself personally, I barely watch any TV; I watch almost no TV.

I do love movies. I love going out to the movies. I find it a more inspiring and rewarding experience than television. For some reason a lot of TV, you know, barring the more series based stuff, like I love Netflix as well, and I love like *House of Cards*, for the reason I love going to films. I'm not getting anything out of cooking shows and singing competitions and crap like that, especially the reality shows; I feel like I've totally wasted my time at the end of watching one or two of those.

So that's like something for me that I just started removing from my schedule. Another thing that I always tell my wife that she's really working on; I think a lot of us have a tendency to want to respond to every email and expect responses from every email, and that's just unnecessary, I feel.

Everyone I work with, all my friends know that giving the opportunity to not respond to an email, I will take it. I will delete it. If the answer is yes, cool, I would sooner delete the email.

Tim Ferriss: If your answer is gonna be yes, cool.

Mike Shinoda: Yeah, if it's gonna be okay, or I hear you, or whatever, let's assume I got this email and we're good. Unless I have something to say, you know –

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, substantive response.

Mike Shinoda: If it's substantive I will respond. If it is substantive, I will usually spend, if I really feel like I have something to offer my emails will be, you know, they tend to be a little longer. They tend to have a lot of information in them. So you'll either get no email or you'll get something a little longer. I do that because I don't like to have 150 emails in my inbox. And we've all seen threads where you've got five people on the email and all of them are responding: okay, cool, yeah, great; see you then. It's like I don't want 15 emails saying okay, cool.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, it's stressful, it's very stressful. Now, the rehearsal itself that you're going to be going into, what have you arrived at as your format for rehearsing? What does that look like, what's the template?

Mike Shinoda: Every band, every artist is totally different when it comes to rehearsing. I've heard that some groups just get together and they just jam. They just play whatever.

Tim Ferriss: What do you guys do?

Mike Shinoda: Ours is the opposite. As you can probably imagine, because we have six guys in the band and everybody's pretty much got families and other stuff going on, we set up rehearsals in a way that we start with just the most basic people who are needed on certain tracks. So let's say right now we're practicing up two new songs for this upcoming tour that we haven't played in front of people before.

The first day of rehearsal would be with just maybe our guitarist and me, our bassist, and our drummer. It might just be the four of us. And then we'll add Joe, our DJ, and then we'll add Chester. There's no reason for Chester to come in and sing if the music's not tight. So Chester gets a day or even two days off from rehearsal

because of that. It's rougher especially with the instrumentalist, it's more time but in the big picture it's all a wash because while Chester isn't in here rehearsing on these days, he and I always are requested when it comes to interviews.

So there a balance, a nice balance of things. You know, whenever somebody's not totally needed for something, we kind of remove them from the situation. And also just for anybody, for the techy people listening, one of the things we do to make those rehearsals extra focused. We actually have everything tracked out, all of the instrumentals from the studio recordings in the computer, and we play; we'll un-mute anybody who is not there.

So if Chester is not here, his voice will actually still be coming through the speakers because it's coming out of the computer. So we use those strictly as practice tracks, and then of course we don't use them live, but we have those around, so that we can reference them, too. Like: oh, hey, Brad, I think that this note, this transition between the verse and the chorus is actually these notes. And we can listen to the album version and say: oh, yeah, that is what I played. And then, you know, Mike is wrong or Mike is right, or whatever it may be.

And yeah, so that's actually a part of not only the way we rehearse, but the way we operate on stage. As music performance technology has gotten more advanced, it's actually allowed us to be a better live band.

Tim Ferriss: That's cool. Yeah, exactly, where technology can augment and not necessarily replace performances. I think that's something that's often overlooked.

Just for my own personal curiosity, what software do you use for that type of tracking?

Mike Shinoda: We use of ton of different things on stage. The main thing that I was talking about with he performance stuff is an Ableton Live. Ableton's great because let's say, if you imagine, in your iTunes library or whatever you've got a track and you can play it, fast forward and rewind. In Ableton you actually can throw it in, you can slow it down, speed it up, pitch it, if you wanted to modulate the pitch. You can mash it up with other things and so on. So on some of the tracks, like we have a song called "Guilty All the Same." And when we first started playing it, we wanted to practice it slower so that we could get tight, and then move to get it faster and faster.

So we actually just turn the tempo down a little bit in the computer, play it back slowly. And, you know, ten years ago this would have been impossible or it would have at least taken hours for the computer to process that information, and then you could do it; now you do it like on the fly.

Tim Ferriss: Right, instantaneously.

Mike Shinoda: In fact, you can do it as you're playing. If you wanted to hit a certain spot and then slow down, you can do that. If you want to practice one spot over and over. We actually have a part during the set; we do run some stuff, some backing tracks when we play. We try to be careful about that because we always want to be a live band first. It's not a scenario, where I think everybody when they hear stuff like that, it's like they're wondering are there vocals in the track and whatever, we try to stay away from all that.

Generally, it's like percussive stuff and like beat, loops, and things like that. again, ten years ago, if we were doing that, if we were playing a song on stage and we had that running, if you got off beat, you'd be screwed. If you wanted to extend a part, you couldn't do it. If you want to slow down, you couldn't do it. Now we can do all of those things on the fly. If I decide, hey, let's get to this guitar solo, let's have Brad play twice as long. Let's have him play five times as long. Any night of the week, any show, we can do that.

Tim Ferriss: The Ableton rings a bell, and I could be mistaken – and I'll double check this for people on the show notes – but I think that is also the software that Ira Glass, host of *This American Life* uses when he'd doing live speeches because he wants to recreate the feeling of one of his shows. And so he'll have an iPad up, and he'll actually call up different types of quotes and so forth, very cool.

Mike Shinoda: Yeah, it's pretty amazing stuff. That's not the only thing we use. I mean, just so that it's clear, like when I have a keyboard rig, and mine is software based. I'm using a bunch of stuff by Native Instruments. I'm using stuff by other makers. Joe is actually running his completely off of a Windows tablet, believe it or not. His whole rig, with the turntables and within is actually, the brain of that is actually a Windows tables, it's a surface.

Tim Ferriss: That's so cool. I love it. tell you what, I want to be cognizant of your time and I know you have to practice, so I'd love to just do

perhaps a couple of rapid fire questions, if that works for you, and then I'll let you get to making your music.

Mike Shinoda: Sure.

Tim Ferriss: The first question is, you mentioned movies, what are some of your favorite movies of all time, and that can include documentaries, non documentaries, totally up to you?

Mike Shinoda: I love, I think growing up I was really into some darker stuff, but usually kind of plot driven. I always loved the Godfather movies. I loved the *Usual Suspects*. I loved *Fight Club* and *Seven*. I actually saw *Fight Club* the other day, and I hadn't seen it in a number of years and it's still such a great, like the story, the writing is just so great. Yeah, and then on the other side, like being an illustrator, I was into anime, like I loved *Akira*.

And I actually love a bunch of the Disney films. *Wall-E* is awesome. I mean, one thing that always struck me with that is it's like you've got a movie that's more than half basically just score and visuals with no dialogue.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, it's amazing.

Mike Shinoda: It's incredible, an incredible feat.

Tim Ferriss: I've been researching screenplays recently and working on one myself, and one of the recommendations I heard was you should be able to turn off the sound and follow the movie; of course *Wall-E* is a perfect example of that. So even in a foreign film, you should be able to follow the plot, or a lot of the major plot points turning off the sound. Pixar is amazing with stories. I'm actually hoping to have the president of Pixar on this podcast as well to dig into the stories because I think it's so systematic and amazing how they approach that. Have you seen *Ninja Scroll* before?

Mike Shinoda: I have.

Tim Ferriss: I used to be so into *Ninja Scroll*.

Mike Shinoda: *Ninja Scroll* is amazing, yeah. I think that our DJ, Joe, he has directed most of our videos, and he actually just directed a movie called *Mall*, which is coming out soon on, I think, Paragon was the company that picked it up. He just debuted it this last week, so it's coming hopefully pretty soon.

Tim Ferriss: M-A-U-L?

Mike Shinoda: No, it's M-A-L-L.

Tim Ferriss: M-A-L-L?

Mike Shinoda: Yeah, it's about a bunch of suburban kids; they're all kind of dysfunctional to some degree. It's an Indie film in every respect. These kids are very awkward, all for different reasons.

And basically they're at the mall doing their thing and there's another kid who comes in and opens fire in the mall and shooting people and stuff. It's a really interesting uncomfortable and interesting film. I had a lot of fun. We did some score to it. But actually going back to the *Ninja Scroll* thing and all that, Joe is *Princess Mononoke*.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, a fantastic film.

Mike Shinoda: A lot of the *Ninja Scroll*, like a lot of those types of movies, those movies in particular actually, have worked their way into some of his work in the past. In fact, like *Princess Mononoke* is one of the main inspirations behind our video for “In the End.”

Tim Ferriss: Oh, that’s amazing. I didn't know that. *Princess Mononoke*, for those people wondering, you should watch every movie made by Miyazaki Hayao – or I guess in English, Hayao Miyazaki. And if you ever go to Tokyo, go to the Ghibli Museum, which is the Ghibli Studios Museum in the middle of Inokashira Park, which is just amazing.

Mike Shinoda: Yes.

Tim Ferriss: What is your favorite book, or the book that you’ve given most as a gift to other people?

Mike Shinoda: Given most as a gift, wow. I think when *The Tipping Point* came out, I gave that book to a lot of people. I know that *Category of One* was another one that I did pass around a lot. I know most of the guys in the band read *Blink* as well.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, especially, you know, *The Tipping Point* really kind of put him on the map as an independent book writer.

Mike Shinoda: And I do talk about *Four Hour Work Week* quite a bit, Tim.

Tim Ferriss: Well, I appreciate that, so thank you for that.

Mike Shinoda: And I would also feel remiss if I didn't mention my wife's book, by the way.

Tim Ferriss: Of course.

Mike Shinoda: Although I'm not a big fiction reader, she wrote an amazing book called *Learning Not to Drown*, which is about a young girl whose brother is in and out of prison. It was inspired by my wife's actual family growing up, but it is fiction. It's not a memoir.

It's about this girl whose brother's actions effectively devour her entire social and family life. And she's forced to make decisions about who she is and what she's going to do, you know, as she finishes high school and leaves the nest.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, yeah.

Mike Shinoda: Did she get one to you?

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, she did. And I read fiction before bed as a way of turning off my problem machine in my head. It tends to keep me awake, so I'd recommend people check it out for sure. And I'll link to that in the show notes as well.

Mike Shinoda: Oh, great, thank you.

Tim Ferriss: So people can get a direct link. When you hear the word successful, who is the first person that comes to mind?

Mike Shinoda: Successful, gosh. I think of Rick Rubin for some reason. We've worked with Rick on a number of albums, and he taught me a lot about song writing and producing, but also just life lessons.

He grew up practicing transcendental meditation. I went to this woman, this teacher that he recommended and I tried it out a little bit. And it stuck and it didn't stick. Like, some people do it every day; I do not. But meditation and just like focusing inward and turning off all the noise is something I do believe in. Like, especially if you're finding that you're tightly wound at any moment or in general, it's a nice way to just get yourself focused. And I feel like I make better decisions and I'm more effective when I have a clear head and I'm fresher.

Tim Ferriss: I don't think I've ever mentioned this before, but Rick, for those people who don't know, is an incredible music producer. You can look up his discography on Wikipedia. I first came across his name actually on the notes inside a Slayer album when I was just a little youngster.

But he's also for those people who have seen the *99 Problems* video, he's the guy with the big beard in the car. Rick is actually one of two people responsible for getting me involved in meditation regularly in the last few years. Chase Jarvis a very world class photographer and Rick are both the people kind of responsible for introducing me to meditation and TM in particular, very cool. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

Mike Shinoda: I guess the first thing that comes to mind, something that I work on, is not expecting other people to do things the way I would do them. Like my opinion and my way of doing things, even for you and I, being people who try to spend a lot of time trying to be very effective, and by the way balancing that with things that we love to do as a part of being well rounded and whatever. And, you know, sometimes you hear things from other people and you go: why are they... that's so stupid. Why would they do it that way, it's like so backwards and whatever.

And you feel like you want to tell them. I mean, it would get to be very preachy. I feel like to do right by my friends and family, that it's good to just remember to give everybody room to do their own thing, their own way, and what I choose to do is my decision.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, for sure that's something that I'm –

Mike Shinoda: It's a hard one, right?

Tim Ferriss: It's a tough one.

Mike Shinoda: I still do that. I find like that one of things – this is actually a funny one that my friends and I talk about – like first of all just simple things like expecting people to work harder on stuff because like that's not very nice. The other thing that's funny is spelling in emails. It's like I said, if I'm going to write an email, unless it's like benign, I'm going to write it, and I'm going to edit it, and I'm going to look at it, and there's spell check and all of this stuff.

And when I get emails where people are just clearly punching letters on a phone and it's a mess, there's a part of my brain –

maybe it's because my mom was a stenographer –that's just like: what an idiot. And I go: no, that's not nice; don't do that.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, it's so true. It's a real pet peeve of mine as well. So to all those folks who are emailing people you want to get a response from, take the time because not everyone is sensitive to it, but I'm very sensitive to it. And I suppose that's just a byproduct of writing and editing all the time, but yeah, take the extra ten seconds to look at anything that's underlined as a misspelling. What is your most frequently played music right now on your phone or otherwise that you haven't recorded yourself?

Mike Shinoda: Yeah, I don't listen to my stuff a lot unless I'm like, you know, practicing something or trying to, you know, we some activity that requires getting into our stuff.

There's two playlists I have. I'm on Spotify and on Beats under my name. If you want to check out some of the stuff I'm listening to there's a lot more than this. One batch of music that I'm listening a lot to is some heavier rocks tuff, which Tim you're a fan of.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, yeah.

Mike Shinoda: feel like right now, part of the inspiration for our new album was there is not a lot of super exciting, brand new, cutting edge aggressive music out there. And I do have a playlist of some stuff which includes a band that Frank Turner, who is like a folk singer, did a hardcore band called Mongol Hoard, which is amazing; such a good album. It came out a few months ago. There's a band called Doom Riders. There's a band called Royal Blood.

Judging by the names you'd think these things are like really, really heavy metal stuff and they're not. There's a lot of melody in some of the songs, and it's just really great energetic music.

Tim Ferriss: Awesome. Alright, last question. If you could go back in time and give some advice to your 20-year-old self, what would it be?

Mike Shinoda: 20-year-old self? Buy Apple, I don't know. There's probably, aside from anything like cheat the system...

Tim Ferriss: Back to the future style.

Mike Shinoda: Right. I think it comes back to one of the things that we talked about earlier, which is just it's so important to stick with your gut. And if some voice inside you tells you that something is the right

thing to do, the right way to go about something, or the right thing to make, pay attention. I've gotten to know Todd Wagner a little bit. And he told me that when he goes to invest in a company or a group of people, two of the questions he always asks are: would you be willing to quit your job for this idea, and would you be willing to put all of your own money behind this idea?

And those are questions designed to say do you really believe in yourself? Do you believe in your thing enough? Is this an idea for you, or this an idea because you think someone else will like it? And if you believe in it to the point where you put yourself on the line, then that's a good measure of how important it is to you and how much you believe in it.

Tim Ferriss: Definitely, it's so true. I mean, just for those people listening, at least for me also, if you scratch your own itch and create something for yourself, the thing that you've been looking for, you'll always have an audience of one. And that's more than I can say for a lot of folks who kind of focus on the outcome and miss that because you'll have to live with whatever you put out, if you put something out. Mike, this has been a blast. Where can people find out more about you and what you're up to and so on?

Mike Shinoda: Linkin Park is obviously on Linkinpark.com. Any social media, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, whatever; we're available under the same name. I am Mickshinoda.com and you can find me under that name on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook as well.

Tim Ferriss: Beautiful. Mike, I'll let you get to your music, but keep putting out great stuff and I look forward to hanging again soon, hopefully next time I'm down south in LA.

Mike Shinoda: Yeah, thanks man.

Tim Ferriss: Cool. Awesome, thanks buddy. I'll let you get to it. I really appreciate it.