



Transcript

Episode 8.4: Bess Carnan of WZRD Radio and Geoff Hutton, AKA Dream Quaffle

Caroline: You're listening to Harry Potter After 2020, an HP chapter reread podcast wherein two friends who read the books way back in the day as adults revisit the series through a post-2020 lens. Your hosts are Lorrie Kim, author of *Snape: The Definitive Analysis*, and JC, an educator and long-time HP fan. I'm your editor, Caroline. This is Season Eight, our open-ended, irregularly published bonus content season, and this is Episode Four featuring two segments: one with Bess Carnan and one with Geoff Hutton (AKA Dream Quaffle) talking about the role of Wizard Rock in HP fandom after 2020.

**** Theme music from WZRD Radio Podcast ****

Lorrie: When JC and I first started up this reread podcast, you, Bess, told me to contact you if you need someone to uncritically enjoy the Yule Ball. JC and I just recorded our episode on the Yule Ball chapter, and I want to know what you have to say. All right, tell us: what things do you love about the Yule Ball?

Bess: It cracks me up that you kept my exact wording, because I am not a critical reader. The Yule Ball is sparkly and beautiful and the kind of... Obviously, these books came out as I was growing up, so I was like, 'That's what the prom is going to be like.'

JC: We talked a lot about that when we talked about this chapter, actually.

Bess: But most importantly (and folks who come from Wizard Rock world will know this), I am the world's biggest Viktor shipper.

Lorrie: Nice.

Bess: This is the chapter where Hermione gets her princess moment and gets noticed by the cool guy and does the 80s, 90s makeover, and is the belle of the ball.

Lorrie: Yes, she is.

Bess: And that's what I love about it.

Lorrie: Nice. I also love that. Tell me more about the Viktory ship and how you sail it.

Bess: This book came out in 2000 and I was the weird bookish kid, and I had dark brown bushy hair (because no one in the family had curls, so we didn't know that it was curly); obviously, I imprinted on Hermione immediately. It felt good to me that the weird kid (who even her own friends didn't seem to like her all that much at times) got noticed by the coolest guy in the world and had that amazing princess moment. When reading it, I was excited because in the movie, you see that Ron has just ruined her night and she's just sobbing upstairs, but in the book, she actually fights with Ron, puts herself back together, and goes back to dancing with Viktor.

Lorrie: Yeah, JC noticed that, too. No, he didn't ruin everything.

JC: Yeah. One of the things we talked about a lot with the character of Hermione is that there's a lot of wish fulfillment there -- how, looking back, we wish our teenage years had gone or just decisions we wish we had made or how we had handled things -- and in the book, she handles all of that so well. It's so clear to Hermione what's going on with Ron, even though Ron has no clue what's going on with himself, and she handles it in a really mature way, and what great wish fulfillment that is on so many levels.

Bess: And until you get to Snape/Karkaroff/Hagrid, it's just such a classic teen entertainment moment. They're at a dance; the protagonist is making himself miserable. Hermione is off having a sparkly, wonderful time under the fairy lights. There's the coolest band of the country performing.

Lorrie: Yes.

Bess: And that just all really appealed. I am a simple creature.

Lorrie: Did you have a good prom experience in your real life?

Bess: I did. Prom was held in my school gym, so it didn't look quite like the Yule Ball, but I did take my own tall, dark, and handsome Eastern European (definitely not a stand-in for Viktor Krum) who I later married.

JC: Ah, wow!

Lorrie: That's awesome. Was your 'definitely not a stand-in for Viktor Krum' also a Harry Potter fan at the time?

Bess: He's more supportive than a die-hard fan, but he has written and released his own Wizard Rock as recently as last month.

Lorrie: Woohoo! So yeah, we'll take that as a yes.

Bess: Was that not the same for y'all? Did y'all discuss your Yule Ball proms?

Lorrie: *groans*

JC: Yes. Yeah, there was definitely discussion of proms. Mine was more like I went my junior year and many things went wrong, and then the next year I was like, 'You know what? I'm not doing this,' so I did not go again. But interestingly enough, I did... I was doing a lot of community theater my senior year, so I was in a play that night.

Lorrie: Oh, nice.

JC: And I was in a play with the person that I did later end up marrying, in a quite interesting coincidence of your story.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah.

Bess: I would read that YA novel.

JC: There you go!

Lorrie: Have you, since your prom, participated in any prom-like, real-life, happy Yule Ball celebrations?

Bess: Well, I would probably say that my wedding was very sparkly. The pictures look amazing. I don't remember it, so I can't say for sure, but the pictures look like it was. But the thing that comes to mind immediately is where I think I met you, Lorrie, at MISTI.

Lorrie: Yes.

Bess: Those dances in the tent under the stars, DJ Dandy Decadence, DJ Swish...

Lorrie: Yeah. We did talk about how sometimes there are Harry Potter cons that try not to have a Yule Ball, and then the uproar is so unanimous and instant that, "Sorry, sorry, sorry, of course we'll have a Yule Ball."

Bess: Yeah. People like an excuse to get dressed up and party.

Lorrie: Yeah.

Bess: You don't get enough of those as an adult, I think.

JC: That's a great point, though. One of the things that is really interesting about fandom is that there's a lot of events where we do things that I think people outside of fandom would think, 'Wow, why are you doing things that kids do, like dress up in costumes and run around being crazy and play games?' There's a lot of... I don't know. It's not that we're reliving childhoods or anything. It's indulging in things that are fun and are just being unapologetic about it, right? No, I like wearing a costume. I'm going to wear a costume and go hang out with other people who are also wearing costumes.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And I think the Yule Ball idea really plays into that. Yeah, we're all going to get dressed up and we're going to have this big party, and we're going to decorate it like this and we're going to be reliving this moment from this book. I think that's something that I really love about fandom; now, we're just unapologetically enjoying these things.

Lorrie: Yes, Bess, I do remember meeting you when you were running events at MISTI-Con, and I've also seen you as you lead zine-making sessions at other cons, so you contribute to Harry Potter fandom on several fronts. Can you take us through some of the things that you do in HP fandom?

Bess: Zine-making is a fairly recent passion. And I think what I discovered through that and through Wizard Rock is that I really love creating, and I particularly love creating in spaces where there are no barriers to entry.

Lorrie: Yes!

Bess: Zines, you need a piece of paper, and at the zine-making workshops I will fold those so that you... I bring stickers for people who aren't artists and pencils and paper, and it doesn't have to be good. It's not like a book; it's not going to go through an agent, an editor, and polishing and publishing. You could just write swear words on every page and you've made a zine, and that is a thing you've created. Wizard Rock is the same way. There's a famous quote from the early days from a Swedish band that they gave on another podcast, actually: "We don't care if you just bang on a cookie jar, we just want you to make more music"; the spaces that I'm in in Harry Potter fandom are all like that. Fanfiction... There's drabbles and 221Bs and things that are really easy and people love them, so those are the things that I do in the fandom. I have a Viktory Discord where we write fics in all different styles. We're working on a Choose-Your-Own-Adventure where everyone writes a scene, so it is wild.

Lorrie: Fun. Fun.

Bess: And I host WZRD Radio, your Wizard Rock radio station, where I play Wizard Rock, talk about upcoming fandom events, and interview Wizard Rockers.

Lorrie: How often does that get released?

Bess: It's twice a month except in December, which I take off, and it's going to be five years old in March.

Lorrie: Wow!

Bess: Yeah. I did my prep days the last couple of days and I was working on episode 130, and I was like, 'How is that possible?'

Lorrie: Yeah. What made you start WZRD Radio?

Bess: No one else was.

Lorrie: Uh-huh.

Bess: Shortly before starting the podcast, I was formally diagnosed with ADHD and given Adderall, which gave me the capacity to take on a project and maybe even complete it.

Lorrie: Nice. Talk about exciting!

Bess: Right? It's life-changing. And the first thing I thought was I've always wanted a Wizard Rock radio station that you could just tune into in the car and just have some Wizard Rock playing, and maybe you find a new band or learn something about one of your favorite performers. I don't know how to build a radio tower. It probably involves welding, radio licenses... But you know what you can do basically for free? Podcast.

Lorrie: Nice.

Bess: So yeah, I just started a podcast. SlytherSpouse has actually made it a virtual radio station, so you can go to the website and tune in and hear stingers from bands, ads from other podcasts from the Wizarding World, and yeah. Basically, I just do things in Harry Potter that I think are neat and I want to exist.

Lorrie: So the timing of this podcast... it did not have to do with TERFpocalypse?

Bess: No. We were still just barely beginning to process. I released March 1, 2020, so we were still, I think, kind of in the "Oh, you know, she accidentally liked some tweets. Okay, I guess I'll buy that." "Oh, you know, she said something, but she didn't really mean it." "Okay, I guess that's what happened."

Lorrie: "If only someone could talk to her."

Bess: Yeah. Yeah.

Lorrie: So just to put the mental calendar out there, it was in December of 2019 (a few months before you launched) that Rowling put out her most bare-faced, first salvo into TERFpocalypse. That was the day that various Harry Potter fandom organizations were appalled and instantly disavowed her, and that was painful. And then March 1st, you released your first episode, and a couple weeks after that is when the U.S. went into coronavirus lockdown. In my opinion, I'm just guessing that pandemic lockdown is one of the things that contributed to TERFpocalypse compounding, because all of that pressure building up in people's heads... People kind of lost it, and she sure lost it. But anyway, it was in June, just a couple months after you launched your podcast, that TERFpocalypse went global. That's just a little timeline there.

Bess: Thank you. One of the ADHD side effects is a bad memory, so that's very helpful.

Lorrie: We are a very ADHD-friendly crew over here. I don't have it, but half my household does.

JC: Yeah, same.

Lorrie: Oof. It's not easy being human, but it's worth it.

Bess: That is a spectacular quote. I would buy that sticker.

JC: So Bess, you launch your podcast and then the pandemic hits, and then TERFpocalypse hits. Was there a point during that summer when you really questioned what you were doing putting a Harry Potter fanwork out there? What was your thought process?

Bess: I have an anxiety disorder, so panicking about my life choices is an ongoing, continual process, especially in something as complicated as being a part of the Harry Potter fandom. This is actually a conversation that comes up a lot in Wizard Rock. Yeah, in the early days, I did panic a lot and wonder if it was a good idea, and at the same time, we were losing so many amazing creators who felt that their only option was to leave. I made the decision to follow people who were smarter than me and take their advice, use their guidelines, particularly the Gayly Prophet, who put up an incredible guide. It's called *The Guide to Firing JKR While Keeping the Fandom (Harry Potter)*, something like that. I share it constantly, because I figure I am not directly impacted by her malicious choices, so I shouldn't really be the one saying, "Here is the definitive response so I can listen to creators of color and trans creators to get basically the best practice," which is continually evolving.

Lorrie: Yes, it is. That is true. How would you define your identity to whatever extent you feel comfortable defining it, especially within the context of being an HP fandom creator?

Bess: I am queer (which is a very helpful umbrella when you want to be proud, but also are shy) and as I've mentioned a couple times, I do have some invisible disabilities. But I am white, I am cis, so I am not her target. I've been trying to practice listening, especially over and through the panic of losing the greatest community I've ever known. The friends I made here, I made before I was medicated.

Lorrie: Uh-huh, and I imagine you're not the only person you know from that network who has benefited from medication. I imagine that some of you have supported each other through finding better ways to be yourselves.

Bess: Yeah, I am. The Harry Potter fandom is, by nature, extremely queer and extremely neurodivergent.

Lorrie: Yes.

Bess: You don't tend to get passionate fandoms that are strictly neurotypical. They don't have hyperfocus, they don't have special interests. That's how you get the deep, rich wells that write out education guides for Quenya, or draw up spellcasting guides, who

write quarter-million-word fanfictions. This is the first place that I was weird, and people were like, "Ah, that's Bess. We love her," not, "Oh, that's Bess. She has some weird quirks, but if we look past those, we love her."

Lorrie: Right.

JC: That's such a great thing, the way that you describe fandom as the place where people who are neurodivergent and have what would be considered 'weird quirks' outside of fandom become your strengths and become your contributions. If you're obsessively writing fanfic, then this becomes a space where people will go, "Oh, wow, yeah. That person, they pump out fanfic and it's so great." To be in a community where everyone looks at things that are weird about you in the outside world, and they're viewed as strengths, is just incredibly empowering. I think that's one of the things that we all appreciate about fandom. I love that.

Bess: And Harry Potter, in particular, is very queer. I have interviewed at least three original Wizard Rockers who later came out as trans. I know people who've come out within the last few years as trans or non-binary because of the book series. It is the perfect metaphor for being gay, for being trans, and that's the community that makes up the heart of, at least, the Wizard Rock portion of the fandom.

Lorrie: So you're talking about people who have come out in the last few years, and this is after Rowling started her campaign against trans rights.

Bess: Regardless of what she says, her books make a difference to little queer kids every day.

Lorrie: Can you take us into some of the conversations that people have when saying, "Yes, on the one hand, there is this very loud bigot, and then on the other hand, I'm drawing strength from something somewhere and claiming this"? How would a conversation like that possibly go in your experience?

Bess: Well, the phrase that I hear the most often is that Harry Potter proves that no one deserves to live in a closet. I don't necessarily know how people who are coming to it now get into the series, but that's generally the thing that they identify with: feeling out of place, feeling misunderstood or not belonging, and then reading the books and finding our community and seeing how magical and colorful and queer and diverse and spectacular it is, and finding the seed within themselves that sort of blooms in that space.

Lorrie: It's about finding other fans in addition to the story.

Bess: And seeing yourself in the Harry Potter story, but also in the stories that we as a community tell, I think.

Lorrie: How long have you been a fan of Wizard Rock?

Bess: Normally, I just say college, but that was so very long ago now. I had a friend who introduced me to ALL CAPS in maybe 2009, 2008, somewhere around there.

Lorrie: I don't even know what that is.

Bess: That was Kristina Horner of the Parselmouths and her then-boyfriend, whom we no longer talk about because he is persona non grata from the 2014 #MeToo fallout of YouTube and Wizard Rock. My friend convinced me to drive across state lines to go to a concert, and the Whomping Willows were performing, Justin Finch-Fletchley and the Sugar Quills was performing, and I was kind of hooked.

Lorrie: When you do publicity for your podcast or for any other Harry Potter fandom thing you do, do you ever make the decision to somehow signal right away that this is pro-trans, anti-TERF, not affiliated with the author?

Bess: So by and large, WZRD is just for people who like Wizard Rock. I don't make an effort to grow it at all; people who like it will listen. But I did just host a huge event here in Orlando last month.

Lorrie: Yes.

Bess: It was a craft show and a Wizard Rock show, and being so close to Universal, it's sort of a high tension point in fandom who are aware of the transphobia and people who are just taking their kids because they loved it when they were kids. I did make sure, in all of the commotion, that we had trans flags, that I made sure that my line-up was queer, that we partnered with a local trans youth organization.

Lorrie: Because also being in Orlando, of course Florida is highly present in the American consciousness as one of the states where we're just keeping an eye on the legislation all the time, thinking how hard it is to be trans in that state. Is that something that comes into your conversations when you hold events in Florida?

Bess: Yes, it's interesting. Again, I am not trans, so my perspective should be secondary if I say something wrong, but the longer I've lived here, the more I realize that it's almost the same as any other state where the cities and the high-density population areas are very liberal, tend to pretty reliably vote more positively toward social justice policies; it's the country areas where there are fewer people -- 'land don't vote, people do' -- that are red when you look at the voting maps. Where I live in Orlando, we have one of the biggest Pride celebrations every year. Disney has the biggest float and walking group in it; it's incredibly corporate, the whole thing. While the state policies are always a huge concern, especially for our organizers, the city itself is almost flamboyant in its queer pride. The fear of "Florida bad" is almost more of an online thing, because in Orlando, people (as far as I can tell) are mostly just living their lives. I have trans friends here who don't plan on fleeing the state or moving. They're like, "I live here, it's home,

things are fine where I am," while still advocating and fighting on the state level for people who don't have the same privileges that we do here.

Lorrie: When you say you've partnered with a local trans youth organization, what was involved in partnering with them?

Bess: They were supposed to have a table at the craft fair, but it was raining and they didn't feel comfortable, so instead they brought their materials and dropped them off at our info table, and we had a raffle that raised funds for their organization.

Lorrie: Would you say that pretty much any Wizard Rock event would include some sort of pro-trans component in this day and age? That's just what it looks like to me, from a very outside perspective.

Bess: Because it comes from a punk beginning -- that's what Harry and the Potters were -- there's sort of always an element of 'fight the man, fight for what's right, the weapon we have is love.' I can't possibly speak for every Wizard Rock event ever, because no group is a perfect homogeneity, but the ones that I'm involved with -- the ones that I go to or see -- often are. We have fundraisers for Camp Lilac. That's the first thing that comes to mind: the fundraiser for Camp Lilac, there was the trans rights comp, and most Wizard Rockers feel like they had to do a disclaimer these days.

Lorrie: So yeah, it certainly looks to me like it's a community that fundamentally identifies as being pro-trans from the foundation up.

Bess: Absolutely.

Lorrie: One of the responses to TERFpocalypse has been, "Stay in the fandom if that's something that nourishes you. Don't spend money on JKR's stuff, but spend money on the community and on fan creations." What kinds of things have you worked on that adhere to that perspective?

Bess: Yeah, that's the general guideline from the Gayly Prophet. Don't give money to the franchise, because any money she gets she donates directly to anti-trans legislature in the UK. That includes going to the parks -- I've never ridden Hagrid's ride there and probably never will -- because that's her number one income, which is mind-boggling. But I think fan merch is better. It's always bothered me when you get official licensed stuff and there's a big old '™' on it. We never get that in the book. I do have a handmade house scarf; I have a small Viktory pin collection from pin makers. I have WZRD merch that I sell, some of which donates directly to the Scottish Trans Alliance, because I do still feel a responsibility. If I'm in Harry Potter, then I also have a responsibility to make sure I'm doing it in a way that I feel good about.

Lorrie: Yeah. What else do you want to get out that you would love listeners to know?

Bess: I think everyone that comes into the Harry Potter fandom goes through that crisis of, "Am I a bad person for liking this? How do I do it in a way that aligns with my morals or values?" I guess I just need people to know that that's normal. It's okay. You're going to keep having this conversation because it's going to keep evolving. I've, for myself, developed a theory I call the 'hedgehog theory' of fandom.

Lorrie: Okay.

Bess: Right after (as you call it) TERFpocalypse, we lost a lot of big fandom creators because they felt they couldn't be part of it with joy anymore, or the ones that were fighting felt like they weren't getting enough support from the fandom. The hedgehog theory is that we need to have spines to protect our community (from Nazis, transphobes, the hatred, bigotry), and then the soft stomach is the joyous, fun part (the cosplay, the role play, the fanfic and music), but we sort of relied too heavily on those bigger names like the Gayly Prophet (who have long since retired their podcast because it wasn't fun anymore) to do the speaking up and protecting part. But if we each take on being a spine, and if we do our part being like, "Hey, that's not cool... I am running a fundraiser for whatever -- my local gay community center," then that creates more of that safe space where we can have the fun and play, and we won't bring out the most vulnerable people who are being targeted and having to do all the fighting by themselves.

Lorrie: Yeah. Hedgehogs.

JC: We started this, Bess, talking about the Yule Ball, so I just wanted to ask you to put yourself in the position of being a fourth, fifth year student at Hogwarts during the Yule Ball. Who are you there with? How are you spending the evening?

Bess: Probably largely the same way I spent every dance in high school with my friends. We would all bring our dates and go in a big group, and then just dance the night away. I love to dance. I like just moving, and definitely wearing something extravagantly sparkly. And you all are invited.

Lorrie: All right.

JC: Awesome. And I want to go hear the Weird Sisters. Okay, when we did the recording for that chapter, I actually went and looked it up, because I thought, 'Surely, there's a Wizard Rock band like the Weird Sisters' and I thought I could find them. I did not find a Wizard Rock band called the Weird Sisters, but what I did find was another band called the Weird Sisters that has nothing to do with Harry Potter. They're actually named after the MacBeth witches who do really incredible music that sounds like what I imagine the Weird Sisters would sound like, because it's very progressive metal, upbeat dance music. It's this weird sort of amalgam. I thought, 'Oddly enough, that's what I imagine the Weird Sisters sound like.'

Bess: Oh, JC, you just triggered my trap card!

Lorrie: *gasps* Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes!

JC: Awesome.

Bess: All right. The first Wizard Rock band was...

Lorrie: Generally, Harry and the Potters is considered --

Bess: WRONG!

Lorrie: No? Okay. Tell me!

JC: Wow!

Bess: The Switchblade Kittens, before Harry and the Potters, released an album called 'The Weird Sisters', but they did not spark off a revolution, so they tend to be sort of forgotten when you're discussing Wizard Rock history. We do have a 'The Weird Sisters': it was a pop-punk band from California, and it is amazing.

JC: That's cool.

Lorrie: Where can we find out more about them?

Bess: I will find a link and send it to you.

Lorrie: Okay.

JC: Can you find Wizard Rock on Spotify? That was a question I had for you.

Bess: You can.

JC: Okay.

Bess: You can. Not all of it.

JC: Because I'm so old. MySpace was where we found Wizard Rock back in the day, so I don't know where they've all kind of floated off to.

Bess: Your best resource is YourWizardRockResource.wordpress.com, which is run by Suzanna -- who is an actual physical, literal angel in Australian form -- where she keeps track of every wizard rock band, all of their music, where you can find it; she transcribes the lyrics... I could not make WZRD without her.

JC: Wow, cool.

Bess: But there are a couple of modified master lists people have made of Wizard Rock.

JC: Fantastic.

Lorrie: I very much look forward to getting all of these show notes from you so that people know where to find all these resources, because I know there's quite a lot. It's a community that knows how to document.

Bess: Thank goodness.

Lorrie: Where can people find the work that you're doing?

Bess: You can find WZRD Radio pretty much anywhere @wzdradiopod, so that's Bluesky, Instagram... There is a TikTok (I don't update it very often, I don't enjoy video), Facebook, and the website.

Lorrie: Thank you so much. Thanks for coming to talk to us. Thanks for giving us a tiny glimpse into this really far-reaching network of fandom creators.

Bess: I could probably talk for hours. Wizard Rock is amazing. Thank you for giving me this opportunity.

Lorrie: And yeah, I'm sure that people are going to start listening to your podcast and realize that it's going to be a good friend to them on many a long drive.

Bess: Absolutely. Until next time, magical friends.

****Musical break from “Fickle Fudge” by Dream Quaffle****

JC: Hi, Geoff. Welcome!

Geoff: Hi, JC! My name is Geoff Hutton. My pronouns are they/them/theirs; I am gender non-binary and pansexual. I am a Hufflepuff, I am a Pisces, I'm a vegetarian. By the time this comes out, I will have turned 36. I live in Louisville, Kentucky. I know, I'm not thrilled about it either. My son is newly fifteen months old, and he is a wonderfully adventurous and spirited little boy named Avery. For podcast fans, I am currently a host for *Alohomora*, the Harry Potter reread podcast. I am a former host for *SpeakBeasty*, the *Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them* podcast, which has since come to a peaceful conclusion. You can find me as a guest host on other shows like *Mugglecast*, *Puffcast* and *Care of Magical Shippers*. If you've ever been on *MuggleNet*, some of what you are looking at may have been edited by me. I was on the content team for them, and I also hosted a weekly news blast on social media for them called MuggleNet's Magical Mondays. And if you're a music fan, I go by Dream Quaffle in the Wizard Rock community. I've been able to put out plenty of my own stuff, as well as contribute to a lot of other Wizard Rock projects that I'm very excited about. For example, my friends and I a couple of years ago put together an a cappella Wizard Rock Collective called the House-Elf Tavern Choir (there's a story there), and my friend

Lan of Bisexual Harry and I have a queer themed wizard rap duo called Azkaban Is Burning (there's a story there, too). But if you are a fan of this show and you've never strayed anywhere else outside of the fandom space, you may also recognize some of my handiwork because I happen to be the social media manager for this podcast.

Lorrie: For which I am so grateful!

Geoff: I love doing it.

JC: Where did you start in Harry Potter fandom? How did you get into this in the first place?

Geoff: When I was a kid and the books started coming out, my older brother was reading the books, but I lacked the focus and the patience to read chapter books. I wanted to... I knew I would get into something special if I started to read it, but I just couldn't. Fast-forward a couple of years, the *Goblet of Fire* movie has been out for some time. I'd seen it about seven or eight times; then I realized how long it was going to be before the *Order of the Phoenix* movie was going to come out, and I said, "Okay, that's it. I cannot wait to find out what's going to happen next. I need to know now." I went to my brother; he gave me the *Order of the Phoenix* book, and it was actually kind of a bonding moment between me and my brother, because he said, "There's going to be stuff in here that's not going to make sense because they cut it out. If you have questions, let me know," and I did. My older brother was also my intro to being able to discuss a book I liked with someone else who was also reading it, because up to that point, every other book that I read came from a library or a classroom, and nobody wanted to talk to me about these books. But this was somebody who liked a book, sharing it with me, and not making me feel dumb that I hadn't read every book that led up to it. Around that time, I started working my first night shift job in a department store; I was stocking merchandise all night. That was when I discovered audiobooks. That was when I started getting into the Harry Potter books, and I listened to them over and over and over so many times. At this point, I get through the entire series (thanks to audiobooks) about three times a year, because it's what I listen to when I'm at work a lot of the time. Also, when I had that job and I could listen to things in my headphones all night, that's when I discovered podcasts. Mugglecast was a revelation for me, and I was lucky enough to be in on the ground floor when they started doing *Alohomora*. I was astounded that there were whole shows out there that I could listen to any time I wanted where people were just talking about the things that I wanted to talk about, because there were no Harry Potter book clubs or events like that in my local area... Not that I knew of, anyway. I found a community that way, and it took me a few more years before I started participating in certain capacities. There's stories of how a social media management job got me into my first hosting opportunity, which gave me the opportunity

to meet people who catapulted me into Wizard Rock. If you say yes to things, you have no idea what kind of things it can lead to.

JC: You've been involved in Harry Potter since you were pretty young. How has it had an impact on the course of your life? How did it shape who you are as a person?

Geoff: One of my mottos is that a fandom is what happens when a creation outgrows its creator, because we don't need the person who created this series in order to participate and engage and discuss with each other anymore. It would be great if we could have that, but I think that a lot of even most Harry Potter fans these days would, at the very least, agree that having the creator be a part of the discussion with us would be way too complicated, way too problematic. But realizing I was not just a fan of Harry Potter but that I was actually in a fandom made me feel so connected to other people, and a lot of those people are quite far away. My best friend, Julianna... She lives in Massachusetts. I've seen her in person three times. Participation in this fandom has helped me to realize that geography doesn't have to limit your closeness to other people.

JC: How old were you when you started to realize that you were part of the community?

Geoff: In my early 20s. When I took a social media job with *SpeakBeasty*, I had no idea it was going to lead to the chance to guest host on an episode, and yet I did. They had me on their hosting rotation, and then they mentioned they were doing a crossover with the Wizard Rock podcast WZRD Radio, which is how I met Bess. In that discussion for that crossover episode, she asked when I was going to start making Wizard Rock, and instead of saying, "Oh, I'm not a songwriter," -- which I'd said so many times -- for the first time in my life, I paused and I thought, 'What if I did do this?' Because I was in the middle of changing so many things in my life... this was in the middle of the pandemic. I was looking for every chance I could to do things that I hadn't done before, so I thought, 'You know what? What if I actually gave this a try?' I dove so deep into Wizard Rock and I found so many different people who do it so many different ways, and the lesson that I took from that was you don't have to do this any one way. You don't have to have a studio, you don't have to have a huge following online. You don't have to have professional-sounding equipment, because that's not what people care about here. They just care that you're willing to give this a try and add something, and I started putting out my own Wizard Rock. Next thing I know, people are contacting me and saying, "Hey, we have this event and we would love some entertainment. Would you be willing to come out and perform for us?" And by traveling and performing and sharing what I've created, I've met so many people that I never would have met if I hadn't started doing all of these things. Even if I never recorded another Wizard Rock song after today, what it has given me is something that I can hold on to for the rest of my life.

JC: Oh, that's really cool. Tell us a little bit about your Wizard Rock identity.

Geoff: Okay, here we go. The name that I put out most of my music under is Dream Quaffle. I got the name Dream Quaffle from Pottermore (I know we all remember Pottermore). When I would go in to write my songs or record my songs, I would tell people I'm going in the lab because I don't know what I'm mixing up. It's very experimental. I got this idea one night: what if you had a diss track in the Harry Potter world? Because even though I don't take sides in every music feud that's ever been, they're one of those cultural things that I can't help it. They fascinate me! I thought, 'If you had somebody in the wizarding world who was going to write a diss track -- somebody who's got beef and a lot of anger they need to get out -- who would do it?' I was thinking about Sirius Black and how angry he probably was at Peter Pettigrew, so I wrote a song called Sirius Rap; I performed it live at LeakyCon, and I had people sending me videos of that performance telling me how much they enjoyed it, and I just thought, 'If you told me, even a year or two ago, that I would be writing a rap song and performing it on stage in Denver, Colorado and people would like it, I'd never would have dreamed that that was possible.' But Wizard Rock has guided me to so many opportunities that I never knew I would have. There was a project that ran for about two years called The Wizrocklopedia Compilation Club, and it was a subscription-based service that was designed to help promote and foster the creation of new Wizard Rock. Each year, there were four albums that came out throughout the year and the people who subscribed got exclusive access to those albums, but the most meaningful album of that project for me was the first album of the second year, because I was asked to serve as producer and they specifically wanted an LGBTQIA+ themed album, which is why I called the album *Alphabet Soup*. I thought it was clever, but I reached out to artists that I knew either were LGBTQIA+ people or who, at the very least, would understand and respect what that meant in the fandom space that we're in. One of the songs that really stands out to me is a song called *Firework* by one of my favorite artists, Lara of The Weirdos Are Out, because they took that opportunity to write a song that expressed a lot of the emotions they were feeling and why they were stepping out of writing Wizard Rock specifically. They're still very much a talented musician, but they called the song *Firework* because they were likening it to the moment in *Order of the Phoenix*, I think, where Fred and George toss all those fireworks out on their way out of the school, and I thought that that was just so clever that that's how they were doing it. Bisexual Harry submitted a song called *The Bi Vortex*, and it was a parody of one of the Potter Puppet Pals songs. Bradley Mehlenbacher of Draco and the Malfoys submitted a song under the name Bradley and the Dadleys called *Of Course*, and the lyrics to that song are pretty much just some of Dumbledore's greatest and most inspiring quotes... including "nitwit, blubber, oddment, tweak". He put that in there.

JC: How did TERFpocalypse affect the Wizard Rock community?

Geoff: That actually came right ahead of my entry into Wizard Rock, so my perspective on that is especially interesting. When TERFpocalypse first happened, I thought it was a hoax. When I very first... not after so much discussion of it, no. I wasn't a TERFpocalypse denier.

Lorrie: I know what you mean.

Geoff: When the news first broke, and that was probably just wishful thinking on my part, thinking, 'No, not her. Surely, not her! Other people can be evil and I can deal with that, but her? No! It can't be!'

Lorrie: I remember feeling that.

Geoff: I felt like Professor Trelawney when she's getting fired by Umbridge, and I said, "No, it can't happen! I refuse to accept it!" But I saw what she wrote. I saw the essay, and I said, "I guess it is true," and I didn't know what to do. The one thing I was absolutely sure of is, "I can't abandon this ship. It's important to me, and so are the people that are in it. There are people who obviously have to leave this, and it is not my place to tell them to stay." One thing that I learned from being a queer person who still likes to go to church is that you cannot tell people they have to do or can't do anything. You have to just leave the door open and let them know if they need to walk out the door, you're not going to be angry with them. If they want to walk back in the door, then you will be there to embrace them, if and when they do. At the very least, you will never lose the memories that you've made together. There was a lot of response -- very, very, very vocal response -- from the Wizard Rock community when TERFpocalypse happened, and I walked into that. Bpy, did I pick a hell of a time to start doing this... Wizard Rock is actually a great thermometer of where the fandom is when you go back and you look at the history of it, because a lot of the stuff that was being written in the beginning was all bimbly-wimbly whimsical fun stuff. You had songs like *Save Ginny Weasley* from Harry and the Potters. It was fun, it was quirky, it was indie rock. Harry and the Potters are going all over the place; they're playing libraries and community spots eventually. When the conventions started to happen, they started bringing in the Wizard Rockers to perform. It was fun, but then when things felt like they might be kind of winding down -- the books had come out, the movies had come out -- it got kind of melancholy and kind of sad, and you had songs asking questions like, 'Well, what happens now? Where do we go from here? Hogwarts will always be there if you need it.' Then unfortunately (as die-hard Wizard Rock fans know), there are a lot of people -- every fandom community understands this especially (thanks to all the light that's been shed by the #MeToo movement), but a lot of fandoms have gone through that realization that there are people who created in the space (they exist) that they trusted - - that they loved -- who have turned out to be not only toxic but directly harmful to innocent people, and Wizard Rock went through that. There were a lot of very well-

known musicians in Wizard Rock who unfortunately turned out to be toxic abusers, so the #MeToo movement also came to the Wizard Rock community. They went through it, too. But something else that was wonderful: I walked into the Wizard Rock community in the midst of a sort of revival, as well. That's why there's a Facebook group called the Wizard Rock Revival. There's an album in that project I mentioned (the Wizrocklopedia Compilation Club) called Wizard Rock Revival, because there are a lot of people who are now emerging as new creators in the Wizard Rock space who are just getting here.

JC: So Wizard Rock is coming up on being twenty years old, I think. My first exposure to Wizard Rock was in 2006 at a con.

Geoff: Who was it?

JC: It was Harry and the Potters, Draco and the Malfoys, and I think the Whomping Willows. They played a show at Lumos in Las Vegas.

Geoff: Oh, yeah.

JC: Anyway, that's the first time I saw them, but I was aware of them before that because I think all of those groups were on Myspace at the time and there was a lot of chatter about it in the fandom.

Geoff: That's really where it came from.

JC: So we're talking about twenty years of a fandom movement, of a new kind of fanwork community.

Geoff: I think of those three, by the way -- Harry and the Potters, Draco and the Malfoys, and the Whomping Willows -- as the big three, and it's so funny that you mention Myspace, because that's how the whole thing really began as I understand it. These three bands were playing for each other, they were playing living room shows. Myspace happened, so they started putting their music up online; people started finding them that way and they were just downloading and trading songs, and it grew into this whole thing.

JC: You've been involved for about five years.

Geoff: Yeah, and talk about experimental. I started writing this song... My starting point for my first song was Ravenclaws don't get enough credit and they need songs (because there are tons of songs out there about Gryffindors and Slytherins), and then Hufflepuffs realized, 'Oh, we're the ones that get thought of last, so now we're the cool alternative, punky kind of house,' so there was a lot of Hufflepuff stuff coming out. We even have a play now.

JC: That's so true.

Geoff: Ravenclaws are the ones who don't get any credit anymore, so I came out with a song called 'It's an Eagle', because that's one of the things I think of when I think of Ravenclaw House. People think, 'Oh, it's Ravenclaw. It's a raven.' No, it's an eagle. Don't be absurd. I had no idea I was going to do this when I started working on that song. I wanted to try to record it as a completely a cappella thing and I did, and the overall quality is not what it might have been had I just gone back and tweaked and fine-tuned every small detail of it. But when I played it back, I said, "You know what? For all the Wizard Rock that I buried myself in, this feels like it's just fine the way it is."

JC: What's your musical background?

Geoff: I started with violin lessons, and along the way, I tried to do everything. I was a trier. I just wanted to be a part of everything. I wanted to be great at things that put me around other people who were also doing them, because I thought if I can be great at this thing and other people are as well, then I will have friends. I wanted to be a musician because it would connect me to other people, so it's so funny that that's how it has worked out in Wizard Rock unexpectedly. But to fast forward a little bit, I started to focus on singing. Unfortunately, the first college I went to was not the one for me.

JC: Music programs are notorious.

Geoff: Some of them definitely can be. To give you an example of what I mean: I chose the wrong professor, because what he said to me was, "You know, some people just are not meant to be performers, and that's the way that it is." I should have known better because I knew this guy's reputation, and I should've known that if I was a vulnerable young person who needed somebody to give me a reason to hope for this, he was not the person to do that.

JC: I have heard that. Many music programs are dominated by people who have that kind of attitude of, "We're going to be as hard on you as possible, and if you survive, then maybe you'll have a chance to be successful at this."

Geoff: Exactly.

JC: That's one philosophy of that. Could you talk a little bit more about how TERFpocalypse has affected the direction that the Wizard Rock community has taken its music? In what ways have you found that the community is supporting trans fans or trans creators? What are the kinds of things that are happening to counter JKR's perspectives?

Geoff: In some cases, it's the content of the Wizard Rock itself. It's people creating songs that are voicing how they're feeling so that they can process, or to directly try to act as a kind of protest to let people know we will not go quietly into the night. We're not going anywhere. To kind of put all of my feelings together, I put together a song called *I'm a Puff and I'm Staying*, which is one of my favorite lines from the off-Broadway play

Puffs. In that song, I kind of explained everything that I've been through up to this point, and now not only why I will not engage with anything official from the creator from this point forward, but also why this space and its people are still important enough to me that I'm not leaving. If other people feel like they have to leave, it's not my place to tell them not to go, and if they want to come back, then that's great. If they want to stay, then great; we'll stay here together. But I'm not going anywhere. Some people have created projects and put them out with the specific hope of raising money for causes that they believe in, which is a beautiful thing. Some people will donate the proceeds from certain performances or the sales of certain projects to things like the Transgender Law Center or the American Civil Liberties Union. One way that I did something wasn't to support the entire trans community as a whole necessarily, but as a way of supporting a person in the fandom community that has meant a lot to not only me but other Wizard Rockers: I put together a tribute album of music by the artist Totally Knuts because they had set up a GoFundMe campaign to try to cover the cost of their top surgery, and I said I am a big believer in these. In some cases, they may seem cosmetic to other people, but they're very much life-saving gender-affirming procedures. I can't do anything about the laws that are being passed on my own, but in this case, I see a person who has done so much for our community who needs us to give back to them right now, and I'm going to do what I can to make that happen. I got a bunch of Wizard Rockers together and I put together something called TK's TK, a Totally Knuts tribute album, and I made it clear when this album went out any and all proceeds from this album (even though it was available for download through my personal Bandcamp) every penny that came in from that went to the GoFundMe campaign that TK had set up for their top surgery. I hoped that when we did that it would, at the very least, let TK know that they were not alone in this, that the community they love so much loves them back. Then to just add a little bit more to that: I said earlier that the Wizard Rock community is a great thermometer of where the fandom is. You can see the shift as the TERFpocalypse has happened into people creating songs and even whole albums -- or even in the panels that they present -- exactly how people are feeling about this. The music has become much more political, and a lot of the stuff being put out now is expressing how they're feeling, trying to empower people to do what they feel like they need to. One of my favorite things to do is every LeakyCon that I participated in -- for the last three LeakyCons before they changed to EnchantiCon -- was Lara of the Weirdos Are Out, they and I put on a panel called Separating the Art from the Artist, where we address some of these things directly, and we went outside the Wizard Rock community even. We went outside of the Harry Potter community and we looked at examples of how other fandoms have experienced this and how they've dealt with it.

JC: When you think about your own relationship with the Harry Potter series, how has that changed for you? How do you look on the books differently or look at the events of the books differently now than you did prior to TERFpocalypse?

Geoff: Before TERFpocalypse... I feel like going back and dissecting these books over and over again. We maybe had a little bit more openness and a little bit less of a sharp edge to how we were evaluating certain things. When you're a kid and you read the books for the first time, you think, 'Oh, Uncle Vernon is bad because mean.' And then you get older and you've read these books a few times, and you find the podcasts and you listen to the music that people are putting out, and you realize, 'Oh, if we dig a little deeper, we find the author might actually have a little bit of an issue with people above a certain size; she seems to be equating that to badness a lot.' But especially since TERFpocalypse, it feels like people are looking even harder for reasons to analyze the text (and these characters especially) and find the things that were already there and try to not necessarily rationalize it in a bad way, but I think that people are looking even harder for things that are maybe not so okay than they were before. It could possibly be because they're just so mad at the author that some part of them wants to tarnish this creation. It may just be that they were willing to put on rose-colored glasses for this series that they loved so much, but now they've realized they need to maybe take them off and be a little bit more critical. The nice thing about all of the podcasts that have emerged in the last couple of years is some of them have a specific point to them; some of them don't. Some of them are people who are just reading the series for the first time and this is their take on it. It's amazing to me how many first-time readers there still are since TERFpocalypse that have started doing their shows, and their perspective is very, very different from... I've mentioned Mugglecast. They've been going strong on this series for about as long as it's been around. As far as my understanding of the series, what it has forced me to realize is that there is at least some small part of any creator that you like, no matter how good their intentions may be, that is very colored by their experiences and unfortunately, sometimes that's a bad thing.

JC: What keeps you here? What are the things that make you continue to love interacting with the Harry Potter series, despite the author and all of that? And where do you see yourself in another five years around this fandom?

Geoff: Last year, I traveled to Michigan for a street fair -- in Holly, Michigan -- in a very conservative township, and the person who found me found me on Bandcamp. I don't know if they just googled Wizard Rock and I happened to come up, but somehow they found me, they told me about the event that they were having; by the end of that day, when I got that first email, the deal was done. I drove to this place that was several hours away. I gave several performances across one day, and that entire weekend for me was filled with so many different meaningful conversations. The gentleman that I rented an Airbnb from: he was an interesting guy. He was very, very churchy; I don't know another word for it, but not in the way that he's going to try to convert people or judge them for not believing exactly what he does. He's the kind of guy who's like me: he believes what he believes, but he's also open to discussions about other things, so I

had a lot of meaningful conversations over coffee with that guy. When I saw what they had created -- they took this alley in Michigan, they turned it into Diagon Alley -- and the people who came to watch me play, who enjoyed what I did, the people that I saw putting their hearts and souls into this event because they just wanted to give people a good place to go... I love seeing that, because even now after all this time, it's still happening. Then in the evenings when I was in Michigan, there wasn't really much to do in the town that I was in, so both nights I ended up at a gay bar in Detroit, Michigan because it wasn't that far away. That second night that I was there, I made some friends who attend a local anime convention (because I work for one of those down here as well); they were upset about the fact that their anime convention community is not as supportive of queer and trans people as they ought to be. I started talking to them about the convention that I work for and how we go to a tremendous amount of trouble to make sure that they know that we are (because many of our staff are in that community), and by the end of that, they had bought tickets to a convention eight hours away from them that they've never been to before because I told them how much they would be welcome there. If I weren't still in this fandom space -- if I weren't still creating - - all of those moments that had as much of an effect on other people as they did on me would not have been possible. It's the fact that I don't feel alone in any of this, and that tells me that there is still a reason to be here. It's not just because the books are still fun to talk about, it's not just because the movies are still fun to watch, and it's not just because a few weeks ago, because of an episode of *Alohomora*, I finally got to have a conversation with Evanna Lynch -- which I did, and it was awesome!

JC: Oh, my God!

Geoff: But it's just -- I keep coming back to 'the fans know how to do it.' I did sign a pledge. I did make a pinky promise not to buy officially licensed merchandise, which I don't. But you know what? I'm very much at peace with that, because fans do it better anyway. Fans internalize this material and they love it, and they know what fans want because they are fans themselves. They're going to make stuff that people care about because they care about it. The officially licensed stuff might look more like the stuff from the movie, but so what? Do you think the people who manufacture and distribute this stuff for Warner Brothers care about why dirigible plums are such a fascinating magical artifact? No, of course not, because they're just mass-producing things to try to make a bottom line; they don't actually care about any of it, but the fans do. The fans care, and so do I.

JC: That's fantastic.

Caroline: You've been listening to Harry Potter After 2020 with hosts Lorrie Kim and JC. You can find show notes for this and all other episodes at HPAfter2020.com. There, you will also find ways to support the show, contact the hosts and more. If you like what you

heard, consider giving us a review on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts. Harry Potter After 2020 is produced and edited by Lorrie Kim and Caroline Rinaldy. Original music was composed by C.L. Smith. Thank you for listening.