[Theme song in background]

**Molly:** Welcome to Gender Reveal, a podcast where we ask intrusive personal questions and try to get a little bit closer to figuring out what the hell gender is. I'm your host and resident Gender Detective, Molly Woodstock.

[Theme song ends]

**Molly:** I'm really excited to introduce you to our first guest, but before I do that, I need to tell you a little bit about the folks who are making this show possible. First up is our wonderful Patreon donors. Thank you so much to everyone who's able to donate $1 or more to us! If you would like to become a Patreon supporter and help us keep this show going, you can do that at patreon.com/gender. If you donate $5 or more, I'll personally mail you a bunch of stickers, so it's a win-win.

Next up is TomboyX. TomboyX makes underwear that is so comfortable. It doesn't ride up, it doesn't dig into your skin, it comes in sizes extra small to 4X, and it's all ethically produced and sweatshop free! Best of all, it comes in all patterns and sizes, from bikini to boxer briefs, from plain black to covered in octopi. No matter what you're looking for, TomboyX has it! So use code "TOMBOYS" at checkout for 15% off your order at https://tomboyx.com/.

Finally, thank you so much to our friends at GladRags for sponsoring the show! If you've been using disposable pads your whole life, you probably don't even realize how uncomfortable they are at this point but trust me, you could have it so much better. GladRags' reusable cloth menstrual pads are so comfy, fleecy, zero-waste, and they're honestly really cute. Like I got one with elephants all over it, and it makes me happy when I use it, which is not something I ever thought I could feel while on my period. Use promo code "GENDER" to get $5 off any GladRags cloth pad or an XO Flo menstrual cup.

Hey. Before we get to our interview, we're gonna try out a segment called "This Week in Gender" because who doesn't love a good segment?

So, “This Week in Gender”:

[trumpeting news music]

As of January 2, folks born in Oregon can change the name and sex listed on their birth certificate just by filling out a form and turning it in. Oregon is the second state in the nation to adopt these new laws; the first was California. In the past, Oregonians had to post a public notice and file for a court order, which could end up costing hundreds or even thousands of dollars. This new process is all private, it's way faster and more convenient, and it only costs $65.

And here's why all of this is a big deal: according to a recent survey, only 10% of transgender folks have proper ID that matches their gender, which can make it really difficult to get work or housing. In fact, in much of America, including previously in Oregon, folks needed to have reassignment surgery before they were allowed to change their legal gender. That's not only super invasive and bio-essentialist but really alienates all the transgender folks who aren't interested in surgeries. Yeah, so side note folks, not all transgender folks want surgeries or even hormones. Some would like to express their gender differently outwardly but are totally fine with their actual body, and that's totally valid; not every transgender person has to experience body dysphoria. Regardless, just remember that if you're a cis person asking if a trans person has had "the surgery," you sound pretty ignorant. It's rude, and it's none of your business, so don't do that.

Anyway, my question is: is Oregon gonna let trans folks change their birth certificate to non-binary? In Oregon, you can go to the DMV and get your driver license changed to non-binary just by filling out a form. You don't need a doctor's order, court order, anything like that. I'm wondering if birth certificates are gonna be the same way. I actually couldn't really find any information on this, most of the articles I read acted as if non-binary folks don't exist, which let's face it, is how most people act most of the time, so if you know anything about this, feel free to contact us!

I promise you, by the way, that not all of the gender updates will be about Portland or Oregon. This just happened to be in the news right now.

This has been "This Week in Gender."

[trumpeting news music]

This week on Gender Reveal, I am thrilled to speak with Nicholas Cummins! Nicholas has spent years playing bass in multiple bands across the Brooklyn music scene and recently released "All Belief is Paradise," the debut full-length record from their band "Fits," which is their first song-writing effort. They're also a great follow on social media, to be honest. You can find them on Twitter @nicholasfukc and on Instragam @nicolerichieofficial, which is an amazing handle!

[theme music]

Thank you so much for coming on my podcast! I'm so excited that you're here!

**Nicholas:** Hell yeah! Thank you.

**Molly:** The way we like to start the show is by asking, in regard to gender, how do you identify?

**Nicholas:** Um, I identify as non-binary, so anyone can use they/them pronouns for me.

**Molly:** I have seen, via Instagram, you rock a dress and makeup, and I've seen you wear like, traditional masc clothes. Is there a presentation that's the most comfy to you?

**Nicholas:** I think how comfortable I am presenting any kind of way really depends more on the circumstance and my environment because I really do love, like, turning looks in lots of different ways. You know, I love wearing dresses, I love makeup, and I love just the entire femme-scape of clothes: furs, heels, the entire thing. But, I also just like throwing really basic clothes on my body, and that kind of like looks masc because I'm 6 foot 1, and like, [laughs] you know? And I don't mind that at all because it's all just kind of part of who I am and how I feel about myself. So, I mean, I live in Brooklyn, I live work and have a band in Brooklyn, and so sometimes I'm like, sometimes I'll have a day job where I'm just like 'Dude Nicholas,' you know? Just to make money, just to live my life. I've been really blessed to have like all sorts of great friends and opportunities and spaces where I can wear whatever I want.

**Molly:** Yeah. When you are 'Dude Nicholas,' the folks that you're working with there, do you feel like there's a part of that, like, isn't being seen or acknowledged?

**Nicholas:** Yeah.

**Molly:** How is that?

**Nicholas:** But there's always like some *down* people [laughs] you know? There's always like some folks, usually younger folks that kind of get it, and like you can kind of signal just by the way like I don't-- so my partner's also non-binary, so I say 'partner,' and like I think for the people that I work with, that comes off as "Oh my god. Straight person using the term partner, so annoying. Eye-rolling." You know? Which is like a feeling that I get, like I totally understand. Like if Ezra Klein of like the editor of Vox was like "me and my partner," I'd be like, come on, Ezra, stop trying to be cool, but--

**Molly:** Well it's so funny because in Portland like everyone has picked that up, and now it's impossible to know anything. Like literally today, I was at an eye doctor appointment, and someone was like "me and my partner," I'm like [intrigued noise] wait, what's happening? [laughs]

**Nicholas:** Your queer radar is getting scrambled! Yeah, you don't know what's going on. And so, it's kind of funny because I can see that happening, but I also, like, if it's my boss or something, or just someone who's like 37, I don't really feel like talking through the entire gender binary spectrum conversation, just to make a simple point about the person I'm dating? But yeah, so there's like awkward things like that. But it doesn't bug me too much. It used to bug me a lot, feeling like very not seen, and like begrudgingly scrubbing my nails on a Sunday night, just like "Goddammit, like society, making me fit in"

**Molly:** [laughs]

**Nicholas:** And I still feel that way sometimes, but I've also just chilled out a lot. It doesn't bug me too much, honestly. Like if people are like "oh yeah, he's gonna do that today," part of my brain is like "weird, who are they talking about?" and a part of it's just like "I don't care"

**Molly:** [laughs] Yeah, totally. So your partner's also non-binary, how often do you get read as a cishet couple, and to what extent is that a [indistinguishable]

**Nicholas:** [overlapping] These days more probably. When we started dating, my partner, Flint, Flint Kirschenbaum, great artist, they design a lot of Fits' merchandise

**Molly:** Cool! Shout out to Flint!

**Nicholas:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. But at the time, they were presenting as and living as a trans man, so there was sort of, we just looked like gay dudes. You know? And then, you know, since then Flint has identified as non-binary and also is kinda growing their hair out, and just like you know wears femme stuff more often, isn't like binding and like wearing bowties and stuff [laughs]. So we probably get read as straight like a lot more now.

**Molly:** Yeah. How does that feel?

**Nicholas:** It's whatever.

**Molly:** [laughs] 'Cause you know.

**Nicholas:** [laughs] I don't care, yeah. It's 'cause we know. And again, I go back to the point about just like, you know, if I'm just wearing like a black t-shirt and black shorts, that could look masc, but it's really not. Like you can put those items of clothing on all sorts of different bodies, and they would get read as all sorts of different ways, so I don't see my body as inherently like a masculine vehicle, so--

**Molly:** Yeah, totally.

**Nicholas:** --it doesn't bother me.

**Molly:** Well kind of to that point, I think it's so much more transgressive and sort of potentially scary or dangerous to be a person assigned male who's experimenting with more feminine presentation than the other way around because like you said, anyone can wear traditionally masc clothes and be like "eh, that's fine."

So when was the first time you started experimenting with more feminine presentation and was that scary?

**Nicholas:** Like five years ago. [sighs] Yeah, totally scary. It's such a, it's so scary, like walking into a store and buying a dress. Just the process of doing it the first couple of times is like, yeah, you're nervous as hell and you're gonna get a cashier that's like "Oh, actually, the men's clothes are over there," and you're gonna be like [high-pitched squeal]

**Molly:** [laughs]

**Nicholas:** [laughs] --and just like Tweet about it. But yeah, I remember the first impulse was just like really, really, really wanting to ride a bike wearing a dress, you know? Just having that fantasy for a while. And then I was like "I'm just, I'm just gonna do that." And I did that, and I went to the New York Art Book Fair at MoMA PS1, which is a huge, amazing event with a ton of tables, and a ton of zines and books and stuff you can-- and a bunch of my friends were working there, so I was just kind of like making the rounds at this giant art book festival in this gorgeous, floral dress, and everyone was just super normal and like didn't say anything, and was like "Hey, what's up, Nicholas?" and like "Hey," and it felt amazing, and I was just like I'm-- It confirmed to me that, like, people like me for who I am, and like aren't gonna be weirded out by just me like living the way that I want to.

**Molly:** Totally. That's great! I love that story. Cool.

So, you said in an interview once that you referenced a pressure to "describe, defend, and explain your identity in really personal ways to complete strangers all the time," which is what I just did to you, so I'm sorry, but at least you--

**Nicholas:** Oh, it's okay.

**Molly:** --volunteered yourself. [laughs] Like you signed up for this.

**Nicholas:** Yeah, I was prepared for it this time. [laughs]

**Molly:** But can you talk about, like, in general, what you're referring to with that?

**Nicholas:** Yeah, I guess I'm just talking about our culture right now, and like, it probably has more to do with Twitter and giving interviews in the first place, and just being a visible human being. Making art and that generating media and the media feeding your art and getting more attention to your art, so it's a necessary vehicle that you have to go to and go through, and I think that probably one of the dumbest things I did for my own, like, worldview and self-confidence was like become more active on twitter.com [laughs] because, you know, I've been a fairly political person for a very long time. To the point where I roll my eyes at how much of like an insufferable activist I used to be in a lot of ways, like about everything, about like recycling, and like being a vegan, and like just I was like a political campaign director for a while, so I was devoting like 60 hours a week to just door-knocking and stuff, and just would talk my friends' ears off about stuff. But, so I definitely have a firm grasp of what I believe and where I'm coming from, and I feel like once you start diving into the absurdist just imbroglio of takes and counter-takes, and like sassing and like dunking on people with like superior takes on every issue as they evolve, as our culture moves along, it's like-- I don't know. I used to think that the way that, like, culture develops like you know, from the '90s to the 2000s to the late 2000s or whatever, is like people having taste in stuff, and that changing the way we look at the world. And I feel like now it's just like dunking other takes out of existence, and then taking the spot of like the coolest, newest, hottest take. And so, you just see so many ugly sides of things that, like-- Like gender and how we talk about gender, you know, it's always been a very messy conversation with a lot of, there's a lot of, there's too much dunking. So, I think that that is more what I was referencing, like wanting to, like understanding that the personal is political, and that everything that you do is coded with who you are and why you're able to do it and what else you could be doing, etc., etc. But also, the need to like take a step back every once in a while, and breathe, and be like "I can be a person eating breakfast."

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Nicholas:** Right now, and that's okay. [laughs]

**Molly:** Yeah, yeah. I think Twitter can make folks feel really scared, also, to say anything because gender is really personal, and everyone has their own preferences and their own experiences, and yet, like on the Internet, it's very easy for someone to make a declarative statement like "If you ever use this word in front of me, you are dead to me, and I will block you immediately, and also, you deserve to be kicked off twitter.com," and it's just like, well, yeah, but maybe that person, like has never had the opportunity to educate themselves. Or maybe they were told specifically by another person that that was okay because all the rules are changing all of the time, and they're different in different places and different situations, and like, there's no way to like, bat 1000 on correctly interacting with every person in the world, and so like, we have to like create space for folks to mess up with good intentions, and Twitter does not allow that in any way.

**Nicholas:** Yeah, it really bugs me, I think, that the influence that just like 'coolness' has on art and on political discussions is so corrosive because, I mean think of how much more you, think of how much more interesting a conversation is one-on-one with your friends about a topic because people are like saying things and maybe someone says something messy, and they'll get like corrected, but you're like kind of hashing it out, and like all coming to a better, like, understanding of stuff, and you just would not feel safe doing that publicly because you're, you're not like someone who's up-to-date on the coolest, like newest, hottest way to think about or describe something. And it shouldn't be like that, you know? And I feel like it's a sad by-product of like nerd culture having gone so, in such a, like, Reddit-y, misogynist direction, that people who are like unironically interested in nerdy things or whatever, or just like aren't necessarily very socially suave just sort of defacto don't fit into this future that we're building around being cool, and I feel the same way about music and artists and the way that we're creating art, the way that we're consuming art, I think it is a very distracting force.

**Molly:** It's interesting to me that you've observed that we're building, you know, music and community around coolness because I also think there's sort of an impulse to be cool by being incredibly uncool. Right? [laughs] Like, just being like the worst, but in like a sort of gripping way, so you also have to perfect "Am I gonna be cool? Am I gonna be so incredibly uncool that people think I'm like very, very cool?" [laughs]

**Nicholas:** That's just anti-cool! That's the same thing.

**Molly:** Yeah, yeah. No, it is, but it's just like--

**Nicholas:** Yeah, you're like "Oh, I go out," and then the other person's like "I haven't left--

**Molly:** Yeah, exactly! [laughs]

**Nicholas:** --my house in 4 million days. All I do is eat Doritos and watch the worst--

**Molly:** Right.

**Nicholas:** --television show in the world," like 8 million likes.

**Molly:** Right, exactly. [sighs]

**Nicholas:** It's the same thing. [laughs]

**Molly:** Oh, it absolutely is. So, speaking of the media and using the media to raise up your art, my friend really wanted me to ask you if there was some sort of magic spell you used to make Pitchfork gender you correctly without an explainer, but in general, I am curious because I'm a journalist, and it is, it can be hard to convince outlets to use they/them pronouns without a big extra paragraph explaining what that means.

**Nicholas:** I think I got lucky in that it was written by Sasha Geffen, who is an incredible author and writer and is queer themselves and is just a really knowledgeable music-writer who's down with gender and just effortlessly did it right. That's a good question because I didn't ask them to do that, they just did it.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Nicholas:** I could not have asked for a more, like, just fully-focused on my album and reading into the lyrics and getting deep about like the connection between the sound and the lyrics and the form and the function of the album, so wonderful to have that because it could have just been, as your friend says, a really, really trite repackaging of like, queer person makes guitar music. Which you know, it happens, it happens because people kind have wanted that to happen for a long time, we've wanted like acknowledgement of people's identities and representation and stuff, and I think we like just hit the wall where people now bouncing back from that, and sort of feel skeezed out by the idea of being sold by their identity and their music being inherently good because of their identity. I definitely feel grossed out by that whole-- not like discussing it, just when you feel like you're just being sold as that.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Nicholas:** It can feel really weird. So I don't know how I got Pitchfork to do that, they just did it. Really, really thankful for that, but there've been plenty of other [laughs] plenty of other interviews and press mentions that have been more, more heavy-handed on that aspect of the album. And so, like I said, I get why they do it because it was kind of asked for for a long time, but it's not always the best look.

**Molly:** Yeah. Do you ever get misgendered by media?

**Nicholas:** No, actually!

**Molly:** Great! That's awesome I love that.

**Nicholas:** It's awesome, yeah, it's great.

**Molly:** That's a good sign [laughs].

**Nicholas:** Yes [laughs].

**Molly:** Cool! There was that New York Times feature a couple months back about how rock is now being taken over by women and non-binary folks.

**Nicholas:** Yes.

**Molly:** You're in that scene a lot. Do you feel like there's, like, a big swell of women and non-binary folks in the DIY music scene right now?

**Nicholas:** Totally. Yeah, I mean, that article was awesome to see, though. I get, you know, I get the criticism, you know, that I just leveled against, like using identity to sell stuff, but I thought that was just a really good showcasing of a very true fact, which is that this movement is happening, that people who aren't men are getting a lot more attention and platforms to do the things that men have always gotten to do. And there's a lot of cool stuff going on because of it, so I was happy when that came out.

**Molly:** Definitely. So, you toured with PWR BTTM when they existed, and I'm not gonna ask about PWR BTTM unless there's something you want to say.

**Nicholas:** I mean, whatever. I was one of like four bass players in that band, but I did tour with them for a full US tour. It was a lot.

[both laughing]

**Molly:** I guess I should clarify because people listen to this podcast and not know. PWR BTTM was a queer, genderqueer duo that got very mainstream and was very hyped, and then was outed as abusers and disappeared off the face of the earth.

**Nicholas:** Yeah.

**Molly:** So there's that.

**Nicholas:** Yeah they didn't handle that well.

**Molly:** [laughs]

**Nicholas:** I'll say that.

**Molly:** I mean this was all on the way to another question, but I do wanna say that you were the first person involved with them that I saw that came out when those allegations came out that were like "Oh, this isn't cool," stood up and acknowledged them because I was online refreshing, waiting for someone to acknowledge them--

**Nicholas:** Oh my god, I know.

**Molly:** --and so I appreciate you just acknowledging that that was out there.

**Nicholas:** I had to, you know?

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Nicholas:** You can't see something like that, and--

**Molly:** Right.

**Nicholas:** I mean, I like, I remember that day very well, it was like the day before the album came out--

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Nicholas:** And, which I, you know, I didn't have anything to do with the album, I wasn't on it, I wasn't, like, even touring with them for the album tour because I had a job at the time that I didn't want to leave [laughs] and honestly, like one tour was enough.

[both laughing]

Like it was-- it's a very intense band to be in, obviously.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Nicholas:** Just, you know, hidden abuse aside, it was a lot.

**Molly:** Wait, what was a lot?

**Nicholas:** Just, just the personalities and the trajectory of the band being very, very focused on like rock stardom, and constantly talking about selling stuff out, and whatever, whatever, and that being like this very driving force, that was-- it's not my scene, you know? It's fun to play rock music in a stadium, I'll say that. But not my scene. [laughs]

**Molly:** Yeah, totally. So, the question that I was, sort of, slowly guiding us to: at the time, PWR BTTM was seen as like, the newly-mainstream queer, genderqueer band, right?

**Nicholas:** Mmhmm.

**Molly:** And it meant a lot to a lot of folks, where that was really the only queer band they were listening to, and when PWR BTTM sort of combusted, there was a big discussion, I think, on Twitter and other places about who would replace them, or whether they should be replaced, and so I'm wondering how, from your perspective, that sort of shook out and whether you feel like there are other bands that are filling that vacuum or if we've sort of moved away from that model?

**Nicholas:** Well, I think that people were-- press interests were doing everything they could to make the identity of that band and the politics of that band's existence into like the next big thing in music. Obviously, those two people were not the best choice for who to lionize as the next queer icon of American rock music, single-handedly saving guitars, music generally, gender, all this stuff, you know, less disappointing folks could have been chosen. But, the point that I kind of walked away with after the dust settled was that we shouldn't just do that. It's dangerous to do that. And I had a really personal firsthand experience with it because, you know, I was there while there were 50-person lines of under-18-year-old queer people dressed to the nines, covered in glitter, having the time of their life, waiting in line for autographs, coming up one-by-one, talking about how, you know, their music had changed their life or this one person came up and talked about how their sister who's a trans girl and who's homeless, like used this music to, like, move on from a very difficult and scary part in their life, and like, they've saved her life. People with tattoos of the band, you know, "queer is invincible" became this rallying cry. And I was on tour with them during the election. We were on tour from October 15-November 20, which meant halfway through, Donald Trump got elected president. Which is-- became-- you know, obviously it was a fucking horrifying time for all of us, but you know, and for queer kids, too. You know, and so, it became this big, political thing of just having everyone in the same room rocking out and singing along to all of these anthems and stuff. And then to have Ben be steamrolling people's consent behind closed doors at the same time, and having all of these gross, old, edgy Nazi jokes, and like, this old Twitter account that's just a mess come out, and you know, they knew that this is who they were the whole time. But they were fine going along with the whole narrative that they were Jesus Christ incarnate come to save queer people, and they gobbled it up and went with it, and when that all went down, I wasn't thinking about like "Oh this album's not coming out anymore." I was thinking like "How many queer kids are out there right now that are so heartbroken to their core?" Like, what did you just take from that trans girl that that friend came up and told us about? You know, had so much of their life impacted and saved by this music. And you just like gave it to them just to let it fall away, and it's so disappointing. So in terms of filling the vacuum, I was glad that there was like sort of an upswell in interest in like, oh, there are other queer bands because there certainly are [laughs].

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Nicholas:** It's really important to go listen to them and not just focus on one, like let's make a Led Zeppelin of queer music and only care about that. But at the same time, I don't want this vacuum of like, personal saviors to be filled, like I don't think any artist, any artist, can live up to that kind of expectation. And we shouldn't, as artists, go along and let the media whip us up into these otherworldly figures.

**Molly:** I wasn't planning on asking about this at all, but it's something that I thought about a lot when this all was happening, so I'd love to hear your thoughts on it. When Ben was outed as an abuser, all the backlash was like really, really fast. And, from my perspective not being involved in it, it seemed like part of it was because the queer DIY community is very good at accountability compared to other communities, and part of it was because the straight, mainstream media like was having a field day reporting on it because it seems like they were, they were all too eager to take down like a queer person? As, you know?

**Nicholas:** Of course.

**Molly:** So, to what extent do you think it was the straight media being so ready to-- [laughs]

**Nicholas:** Oh! It was both! It was totally both.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Nicholas:** I mean, think about it. If you're like, so, okay. You're a straight magazine producer, right?

**Molly:** Right.

**Nicholas:** Like you run "Fader" or something, and it's like "what's the juiciest story that could drop right now?" [laughs] Would it be the safer spaces band not being a safe space? Yes. Is the band also the most, like clique-generating, literally glitter-soaked

[both laughing]

--like band that you can think of? That has had an album being teased for months into the lead-up? Like you can't forget, this happened on album day.

**Molly:** Yes.

**Nicholas:** So when people talk about how quickly they were dropped, it's because they had 12 hours to either drop or not drop. It's either drop or "let's make money off of the abuser band and sell a billion copies of this album." Like there were, there were cellophaned stacks of this album in, around the world record stores, waiting to sell on that day with like party packs, and things with stickers, and all of this crazy stuff. So much merch. So much money behind it. So they had to. They had to clip it at that moment, or risk being complicit to this ugly, terrible thing.

**Molly:** Yeah. That's still wild, though. Because no one's holding back the records from like all of the straight, white, male abusers, right, like those are still out there, people are still supporting them all the time, and so it's both, but it's really, it's just wild to be like "oh, we could've been doing this the whole time." Like we could use this model that was rightly used in the PWR BTTM case, and then like, use it any time people are called out. And like, also it's different talking about it now in the middle of like the wave of sexual assault allegations that have been going through, but like at this time, it was never, nothing was taken seriously. And then all of the sudden, it was like handled in this one case, and you're like wow, what if you just did that all the time?

**Nicholas:** Yeah, and it's crazy having like, the whole culture is talking about this 'Weinstein Effect,' and it's like, oh this isn't a Weinstein Effect, this has been going on, and you know, it's been going on for years--

**Molly:** Right.

**Nicholas:** --across, especially, though, in queer communities. Any kind of community that feels marginalized from the mainstream population to the point where they're like not involving cops or normal justice systems is going to create ad hoc means of protection like safer spaces and accountability processes and stuff. So queer people being illegal for centuries [laughs], to exist, you know, have always, have always kinda come up with these things. So yeah, it was a perfect storm of the album dropping the next day, the fact that they were queer, the straight press laughing it up at the queer perverts, and also just the community that they were from.

**Molly:** Yeah. Yeah, and like you said, like the people that got hurt the most were like--

**Nicholas:** Fans.

**Molly:** The fans who--

**Nicholas:** Teens.

**Molly:** Yeah, teens who were like "This is the band that I love, I love it with my whole heart."

**Nicholas:** Yep.

**Molly:** And then one day, someone would have been like "Hey, what happened to that band you liked?" And you're just like "Nope. Never. I never wanna talk about them again. Nevermind. Nevermind. Don't mention it to me ever again" [laughs].

**Nicholas:** Yeah.

**Molly:** It sucks!

**Nicholas:** It, it sucks. And it sucks, you know, having been a part of the projects, even just as a support musician, like it was a lot of work, and it was a lot of like-- I mean it was amazing, but it's also like, those things you want as a musician like getting, like getting on KEXP and like, going on The Chris Gethard Show, and stuff, like amazing experiences that now are just like [disappointed sound].

**Molly:** Yep.

**Nicholas:** Yeah. Not to center the narrative around me,

**Molly:** [laughs].

**Nicholas:** --but it was, it was a weird time, let's just say.

**Molly:** Oh, totally, no, it seems very weird. Well, what else is coming up for you?

**Nicholas:** Well, so, my band, Fits, just put an album out and that's very exciting for us.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Nicholas:** It was, it was a bunch of work, and we, we put it out on Father/Daughter in November and did a tour with our friends Yucky Duster. And so, what's coming up is probably just making more songs and playing around the New York area mostly. If we can pack another tour in this year, that would be sick, but I'm not planning one yet.

**Molly:** Yeah. Should we mention that your album is somehow 12 songs but 20 minutes long? And so if you wanna listen like you can just listen 100 times--

**Nicholas:** Yeah.

**Molly:** --it'll be great! [laughs].

**Nicholas:** If you have one minute--

**Molly:** [Laughing] Yeah. You can listen to a song.

**Nicholas:** --you can listen to Fits.

**Molly:** [Laughing] I love that.

**Nicholas:** You got a minute.

[both laughing]

**Molly:** Great! Well then, the last question, nice, easy soft one for ya, what do you think is the future of gender? Or what would you like it to be?

**Nicholas:** The future of gender. That's a great question. I would love for the future of gender to progress as a conversation in a healthy and interesting way. I think that where we're at right now is really exciting, but it's also, I think, a time where there are more questions than answers out here, and I think that the mechanism of our dialogue is making it difficult to move the conversation beyond educating cis people on what gender is. I think that's a lot of the focus right now for obvious reasons because the whole concept of being non-binary is going more mainstream, there is now a US state that recognizes a third gender--

**Molly:** It's this one!

**Nicholas:** Yeah! Hell, is it Oregon?

**Molly:** It's Oregon and California, there's two now, yeah.

**Nicholas:** Nice, awesome, amazing. I didn't know that. Yeah, so a lot of the dialogue right now is, I feel like we're stuck in, like, the 2013-2015 Tumblr whirlpool vortex of, like, going over the basics, like Gender 101. That's good-- it's practically good and I understand it, but I would love, like even just personally, I identify as non-binary. That's more of like a thing that I'm not than a thing that I am, you know?

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Nicholas:** I think for me, probably there are people with similar experiences, it began as like thinking maybe I was trans and maybe a girl, and sort of settling that no, there's something more like, just different than that, something that's not binary [laughs].

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Nicholas:** That's been really fun to explore, like presentation-wise, but maybe I'm just not reading enough. I just feel a little bit like lost in the woods as a culture in terms of where we're heading with this conversation. And so, I want it to be, I'm ready for us to start talking and continue talking about the possibilities of what's out there and who we can be.

**Molly:** Yeah, I also wonder to what extent, like trying to verbally define different people's gender experiences is helpful because sometimes labels can be helpful, and to what extent it is just making things more confused and convoluted--

**Nicholas:** Right.

**Molly:** --because like you said, non-binary isn't really a gender identity, it's just like you don't fit these two, so let's throw you in this big pot, and do we want to go through and try to articulate like "oh you're a shmu-shmu-shmu-shma, and I'm a shmi-shmi-shmi-shma," or do we just wanna sort of let everyone have their own experience and not worry so much about it? And I don't know the answer to that. I think it's different.

**Nicholas:** I don't know. There's a lot of people, sort of I think, in linguistically tap dancing around stuff, like who is a femme--

**Molly:** Yes! I was about to say that! Mm-hmm.

**Nicholas:** --is a big question right now that people are asking right now because I think for a while, I mean let's start with this: women-only spaces have always been a historic, important part of gender movements, queerness, lesbianism. The rift with not allowing women who are trans, trans women, into that space, I think has torn, like, a schism through all of queerness, where we can't just have women-only spaces. We should! There should be women-only spaces. And trans women should be in them; they're women. Like that's fine. But we're at this point where people are afraid to say women-only because it, there's like a red light that's like "Is this a TERF comment? Like are you including trans women?" Which is understandable, but so we've gone to just non-men instead; I don't think non-binary people always need to be grouped in with women just because they're not men. You know, like I'm not a woman [laughs].

**Molly:** Right.

**Nicholas:** Like, I'm not a man, but I'm not a woman--

**Molly:** Right.

**Nicholas:** --so, I don't necessarily feel like non-men is good enough.

**Molly:** And it's--

**Nicholas:** Because I don't think it tells me who you're trying to reach.

**Molly:** Right. That's the thing, is when, folks will often ask me like how they should phrase--

**Nicholas:** Yeah.

**Molly:** --their poster or whatever--

**Nicholas:** Yeah.

**Molly:** --and it's like, it really depends what your space is for.

**Nicholas:** [laughs] Yeah.

**Molly:** There's a lot of times when folks will say like "no cis men," and I'm worried because I--

**Nicholas:** Right! What is that?!

**Molly:** --I, like, fuck a cis man, but also like, yeah, it also is dividing like oh, well trans men are okay, but cis men aren't okay--

**Nicholas:** [overlapping] Right! Why? Because of their biology?

**Molly:** --which is sort of invalidating the male experience. Right, exactly. And so, then it becomes "women and femmes," and they're like, what's a femme? Okay, "women and non-binary folks and femmes and and trans men..." --

**Nicholas:** Yeah!

**Molly:** --and you're just listing every possible gender--

**Nicholas:** [overlapping] Except for a cis dude!

**Molly:** --except for a cis dude.

**Nicholas:** And it's like, I get it, you don't want a dude with a dick--

**Molly:** Yeah! [laughs]

**Nicholas:** --in the space. Okay, I get that, but you can't define people by their genitalia--

**Molly:** Right.

**Nicholas:** --You can't say that trans men aren't men.

**Molly:** Right, exactly. That's what I'm worried about. Is that--

**Nicholas:** They're men. They're just trans! [laughs]

**Molly:** Yes, exactly. And also, something that I've experienced a lot recently is other people saying "This space is for women and non-binary folks," I'm like great. That's me, I'll be there. And I get there, and they're like "Ladies, ladies, women, women, women--

**Nicholas:** Right.

**Molly:** --ladies, ladies, ladies." And it's like, no, if this space is for women and non-binary folks, you need to accommodate the non-binary folks. You need to, you know, have gender-neutral bathrooms, you need to include them in your language, you can't just include them on the sign and be like "non-binary folks are welcome to come," and then not acknowledge that you invited them--

**Nicholas:** Yeah.

**Molly:** --and so like, if you're making a women-only space, just make it a fucking women-only space.

**Nicholas:** Yeah. I think what these people are really after is they're saying "We want women and people who I think are women. Who are 'female-bodied' in my mind."

**Molly:** [laughs] Yeah.

**Nicholas:** Right? So I don't care what their gender is--

**Molly:** [laughing] Yeah.

**Nicholas:** --I just want these bodies.

**Molly:** I love that. It's like really like a cheat to go back to like just gender binary--

**Nicholas:** Yeah.

**Molly:** --just like "women and the people that I wanna think are women," and I love that.

**Nicholas:** I know. I made a joke the other day, it was like, like if one of these people goes up to a non-binary couple and is like, "So which is the masc and which is the femme?"

**Molly:** Right, exactly!

**Nicholas:** You know--

**Molly:** That's what we're doing.

**Nicholas:** --you're just doing a binary again. [laughs]

**Molly:** That's, that's what really frustrates me with women and femmes, is it's like, now you're making me I personally need to figure out whether I'm a femme or not. The whole reason I'm non-binary is because I don't fucking know if I'm a femme or not! So why are you doing this to me?!

**Nicholas:** Yeah, yeah.

**Molly:** So, oh my gosh, that's so real.

**Nicholas:** Yeah.

**Molly:** And then--

**Nicholas:** Then--

I think people are afraid to get specific, and they're afraid to say things wrong, and it's putting us in this really awkward linguistic space.

**Molly:** Right!

**Nicholas:** I don't think we have to be here, but this is where we are.

**Molly:** [laughs] And I think the problem is that a lot of these spaces, they are for the people who feel like they should be there if that makes sense.

Like, it should be like, here is the event description. Do you feel like this is an event for you? Go to this event. Do you feel like this probably isn't for you? Don't go to this event. And like, no one feels comfortable doing that, and so they just try to outline it instead of, instead of just trusting that people can feel when a space is right for them or not.

**Nicholas:** Yeah.

**Molly:** And especially queer and trans people, we know when spaces are for us and when they're not. Like we can feel when people are welcoming us and when it's just not something for us.

**Nicholas:** Totally.

**Molly:** That's-- great point that we just tagged on to the end!

**Nicholas:** I agree with us.

**Molly:** Yeah, great, perfect! Well, thank you so much for coming on the show! I really enjoyed talking to you.

**Nicholas:** Thank you, Molly. It was a blast!

[theme music]

**Molly:** Alright, that's gonna do it for this week's show. Thanks so much for joining us! If you had a good time, please, please, please subscribe and tell all your gender-pondering pals to subscribe because we absolutely cannot do this without your help. Speaking of which, if you're in the Apple Podcast app, can you scroll down a bit and click on that five-star rating? And if you're really digging what you hear, consider donating a dollar more on patreon.com/gender? Whatever you choose to do, I truly, truly appreciate you helping us get the word out about our new show. We're so excited to share it with folks.

This show was produced and edited by me, Molly Woodstock, with help from Liza Yeager.

Find Nicholas' band Fits at hahafits.bandcamp.com or on Twitter @hahafits.

Our logo is by the talented Michelle Leigh, and our music is by the legendary Breakmaster Cylinder.

If you have feedback or suggestions or gender questions, hit us up on Twitter @gendereveal or by email at gendereveal@gmail.com, that is Gender Reveal with one 'r'. I'll see you next week, bye!

[theme music ends]