*This episode is a feed drop of the following episode of Sounds Gay:*

Sarah Esocoff:

When you're making stuff, do you normally, is it normally like this where you're not sure what you're going for and then you're just seeing where it goes?

Sandy Stone:

Well, almost everything I do emerges in the process. It's about process for me.

Sandy:

So mine sounds like this:

*A mish-mosh of sounds coming from Sandy’s board.*

I’m in the studio with Sandy Stone. Sandy’s a pioneering recording engineer, who worked with legends like Van Morrison and Jimi Hendrix. But I’d argue that’s far from the most interesting thing about her. We’re at Sandy’s home in Santa Cruz, California. In her bedroom closet, actually, which she’s converted into a recording studio.

 Sandy:

 The control room is back here, it’s not turned on right now, but—

Sarah:

Oh my God. Whoa. Okay. So we just went through a door that I assumed was your closet, but actually it has a black curtain and now we're in like a full studio with a massive soundboard.

Sandy:

Yeah, and it will take a while to actually fire it up. And I don't think you're interested in doing that right now, but this is where, um, I do one particular kind of work—recording.

Sarah:

Oh, I'm very interested. We're gonna do this later. This is, this is like a full, like rock star, there's like bright blue lights, bright red lights, a leather couch, a velvet curtain.

Sandy:

It's a genuine producer's couch. [laughs]

Sarah:

This is so sick. I feel like I'm in a spaceship.

How did I end up in Sandy Stone’s bedroom closet? It started with a record called Lesbian Concentrate, which a friend of mine gave me when he was cleaning out his vinyl collection.

Once I brought the album home and dug out my record player, I discovered that Lesbian Concentrate is a compilation of songs and spoken word poetry. It has songs like this one, called Ode to a Gym Teacher.

 Excerpt from “Ode to a Gym Teacher” by Meg Christian:

 *I wrote her name on my notepad and I inked it on my dress*

 *And I etched it on my locker…*

And this one, called Leaping Lesbians.

 Excerpt from “Leaping Lesbians” by Sue Fink and Joelyn Grippo

 *We’re gonna please you, tease you*

 *Hypnotize you, try to squeeze you*

*We’re gonna get you if we can*

*Here come the lesbians!*

Lesbian Concentrate was released in 1977 on the women’s music label Olivia Records. And when I started reading about Olivia, I quickly discovered an engineer they’d worked with. Enter: Sandy Stone.

Sandy’s not only an engineer; she’s  an artist and an academic, too. She’s also trans, and many consider her to be one of the founders of the field of transgender studies.

But it wasn’t until I found Sandy’s personal website that I decided I absolutely needed to talk to her.

I love the way Sandy describes herself here. The first sentence of the “careers” section is: “Because I hold a tenured academic job, people keep trying to assign me a label. By nature I resist this. If you have to call me something, call me coyote.”

And, as if that weren’t enough to convince me, every time you navigate to a new page of Sandy’s website, there’s a sound effect of an evil laugh.

*Evil laugh sound*

Throughout this season, we’ve explored the interplay of music and identity. But I was curious to go even deeper. The more I learned about Sandy, the more it seemed like she was someone for whom working with sound was more than a career or even a calling. It was a spiritual practice.

*Theme*

I’m Sarah Esocoff, and this is Sounds Gay.

Sandy does so much that it’s hard to describe her in just a few sentences. Yes, she’s a recording engineer and sound artist. She’s also a professor, and taught at UT Austin for several years. Currently, she’s the head engineer of her local community radio station. In the nearly 20 hours I spent interviewing Sandy, she veered between sharp humor, abstract reflections, and highly nerdy tech speak, with a speed that thrilled me.

For this episode, I’ve woven together and condensed those conversations, which took place both via zoom and over four memorable days in Santa Cruz in June, 2022.

Sarah:

 Hi Sandy!

Sandy:

Hi Sarah.

Sarah:

How are you?

Sandy:

I'm great. How are you doing?

Sarah:

It's so good to meet you in person.

Sandy:

Finally. Come on in.

Sarah:

Thank you. Are you a shoes-off household?

Sandy:

We’re a shoes off…[fade]

When Sandy opens the door to her home, she's wearing leggings, a tank top, and her signature black eyeliner. Her hair is black too, straight, parted down the middle.

Sandy is in her late 80s. She lives in a big house surrounded by redwoods on the side of a mountain outside Santa Cruz. She moved here after her husband, Cynbe, passed away. Her daughter and grandson live with her, but right now they’re out of town for a wedding. So for the next few days, I have Sandy mostly to myself.

 Sandy:

Nothing to see here. It's a bathroom.

Sandy shows me around.

Sarah:

Disagree. There's like a 180-degree view of beautiful treetops.

Sandy:

That's a feature, not a bug.

Eventually we make it to the spaceship-like studio. I drag a chair in from the bedroom and sit next to Sandy, so I can watch what she’s doing over her shoulder.

 *Buzzing tones*

 Sandy:

They have interesting overtones. Oh, I don't want that one.

Sandy has been fascinated by sound since childhood.

 Sandy:

I built a carrier current radio station in the basement of my family's home when I was in my pre-teens and I got my friends to come over and we were broadcasting from there.

And now as an adult, she *collects* sounds. Sounds like her cat, Max, purring.

 *Recording of cat purring*

 Sarah:

So you're sliding these knobs up so we can hear all the different drones.

Sandy:

Yeah. We're—we're using the board. We're using the board in a very traditional way here. I'm just pushing up the faders.

*High buzzing sound*

Sandy:

This is a, um, this is a Dremel tool.

*Lower buzzing sound*

Sandy:

Um, that's a Dremel tool at a different speed.

All of these sounds are programmed into Sandy’s board, and she uses them to make music.

 Sandy:

Alright, let's try something.

*Sandy plays with the sounds*

Watching Sandy manipulate the machinery is like watching a highly trained wizard. She says, when she talks to machines, they talk back to her.

 Sandy:

It's how I got my first job as a recording engineer, actually. When I, when I walked in and they said, can you fix this? And I've never seen one before in my life. And I said, oh, of course. I mean, I speed-read the manual, but it made no difference at all. I walked over to the machine and laid my hands on it and the machine and I had a moment. And it started to run. And they hired me on the spot.

Since I found Sandy through her work with Olivia Records, I want to hear the story of how she’d gotten involved with the label.

 Sandy:

They hunted me down.

Sarah:

Oh, really?

Sandy:

I, I didn't, yeah, I didn't go looking for Olivia records. I was running a small business in Santa Cruz.

The business was an electronics store called The Wizard of Aud. Aud like, A-U-D.

Sandy:

And Olivia sent a delegation of three women up to talk to me.

The folks at Olivia had heard about Sandy through the grapevine.

Sandy:

There's this other person down in Santa Cruz. You should go talk to them. But they're trans just keep that in mind. And the Olivia folks said, oh, okay. So they came down and pitched me on doing an album with them. And I said, “Sure, what's lesbian separatism?” And [laughs] um, so we did the album, it was an album called Be Be K’Roche, and I loved their attitude and what they were trying to do. I mean, who wouldn't? You walk into this house full of women who are trying to change the world by selling music! And, oh! Yeah! By God, I don't have to just run a store in Santa Cruz, you could be making a difference.

Sandy took them up on their offer and joined Olivia Records as an engineer. This being the 70s, the label functioned as a collective and many of the members lived together in communal housing. Sandy lived with them for a few years in the late 70s.

 Sandy:

We had three houses right next to, one next to one and then one across the street. And then we'd all have communal dinner. It was very organic, um, which meant it was usually very strange and consistent mainly of lentils, but we managed to stay alive.

Sarah:

Sounds like the lesbian communities have not changed all that much.

Sandy:

[laughs] Somehow we've managed to pass that from generation to generation.

Sarah:

A beautiful queer tradition of eating lentils.

Eventually, word got out that this lesbian separatist music label had a trans engineer. Olivia Records—and Sandy specifically—started to get hate mail from people we’d now call TERFs. Trans-exclusionary radical feminists. People who don’t see trans women as women. They were furious that a trans woman was part of a lesbian music label.

 Sandy:

One of the major things they pounded on about in their hate mail was that I mixed the drums up. We were, we were recording drums for like the first time in women's music properly. And there were TERFs who were getting hot under the collar about this. They called it throbbing male energy. Like women can't have throbbing energy, right? Only men get this. What women get is very gentle voice and and a nice acoustic guitar. Well compressed, so none of the plucky sounds stand out. If anything, real women's music is going to sound at least as, and probably more than powerful than so-called men's music. Because women are inherently powerful. We just have to have the chance to do it.

Despite the hate mail, Sandy still considers her work with Olivia to be the most meaningful of her entire life.

 Sandy:

It really was a crusade. I was totally demented in that way. I thought of sound and music and particularly the way in which I was practically able to do it was music, but originally sound, as a way of changing consciousness, specifically. With the goal of trying to put people more in touch with who they were. And you can pursue that stupid crusade all your life, which I'm perfectly willing to do. And I'll probably never get there. I'll never get anywhere near it, but if I don't keep getting up and trying, then why am I here?

In the years that followed, Sandy would go on to engineer for major artists like Van Morrison, Jimi Hendrix, and Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young.

But that younger Sandy, the Sandy who loved to tinker with sound, never left. Even though she was engineering for other artists, she still had her own practice. One that looked at sound beyond music.

In her book, *The War of Desire and Technology at the Close of the Mechanical Age*, Sandy talks about the idea of sound as prosthesis. How a sound or a voice can become an extension of someone. She writes about this in relation to phone sex workers, whose voices reach out through the phone, beyond their bodies, to the person on the other end of the line. It got her wondering about how sound can transform our whole experienceof our bodies.

In one experiment, back in the 80s, she explored this idea by attaching a miniature microphone to a cat’s collar.

 Sandy:

There was a moment of rupture where I suddenly realized that simultaneously I was a cat enjoying catching a mouse and thinking, “Oh good, dinner,” or whatever it is you think when you actually have it in front of me and then going, wait, oh my God,  I'm, I'm a person. Part of me has just killed this very small animal and is ripping its guts out. This is horrible!

Sandy was thinking about the possibilities of sound beyond traditional engineering. She was exploring it as an artist.

 *Mechanical sounds*

Now we’re in another room in Sandy’s house, her workshop. It’s in the basement, so no windows, but it’s bright and spacious. She’s showing me one of her sculptures.

And if it sounds like a whirring mechanism, that’s because it is. The piece is called Trapped, and at first glance, it kind of looks like a baby.

 Sandy:

It's a, um, a vaguely human-like figure wrapped in a filthy sheet and tied with rope, in this case, twine because it's, um, 16 inches long. It's, uh, lying on a bed of ash and it struggles to escape by rigging and thrashing.

We stand over it, watching, as it struggles harder and harder, then finally gives up.

Works like Trapped are part of Sandy’s academic practice. She founded a department at UT Austin called the ACT Lab, where she and her students explored ideas through various creative mediums. To be clear, Sandy does more traditional academic writing too—she’s actually most known in the scholarly world for a journal article responding to a transphobic book called *The Transsexual Empire.* Sandy’s response is titled—naturally—*The Empire Strikes Back.*

But her approach to academia isn’t limited to writing papers. It involves artmaking, building things, tinkering, coding—just the kind of stuff she does here in her workshop. The impression I got was of someone whose natural curiosity pulls her in many different directions, and whose ideas can’t be contained to any one discipline.

Sandy strongly identifies as a geek. Her friends call her house Geekhaven. And the workshop is just that. There are shelves and shelves of books.

 Sandy:

hopefully every conceivable topic of something you would want to make.

Rows of tiny drawers full of materials.

 Sandy:

Then we have screws. Then we have some electronic stuff. Then we have chemical stuff, more chemical stuff.

Each of the hundreds of drawers is carefully labeled.

Sarah:

I'm just gonna read a few more of these.

Sandy:
Sure!

Sarah:

We got souped-up servo electronics.

Sandy:

Everybody needs ‘em!

Sarah:

[laughs] RCA female.

Sandy: ([26:12](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/OClv7RBV9i50K9KCTwovnIiRE1vVpIWVEriXymM9K21YEMyw7shvJMRqp6OCWyQMwIqfaNQuYh7VeUVaTF1N0OOthBM?loadFrom=PastedDeeplink&ts=1572.08))

Not gender in the sense in which we think about it, no.

But some of the labels are out of date.

Sandy:

The labels on these are frozen in time from when Cynbe died. Cynbe is my late husband. He died in, um, 2009, uh, 2019, no, 2009. Sorry. It was a shock. And I sometimes forget.

Cynbe actually passed away in 2016, but, during our time together, Sandy often referred to him in the present tense.

 Sandy:

So what we actually have going on here is a crazy old woman living in the past with her dead husband in a room full of weird equipment.

Sandy’s joking, and it didn’t seem like she was actually in denial about her husband’s death. It was more that I could feel how alive he still was to her.

 Sandy:

 And then more electronic stuff. Hard drives and more stuff!

When I entered the workshop, one of the first things I noticed were the model airplanes. There were maybe 10 or 15 of them, some on shelves in the back, a few hanging from the ceiling. The smallest were the size of sparrows, the largest, seagulls. Sandy said they hadn’t been flown for some time.

Sandy: ([31:02](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/VPKuFp-1bhra4HtTy3D3uffzPSEOtyzobY4FaIl5gBVikQnuXWa0jyPxY_Y_alGr87J52et9qK8LIB7MORcR4WyW3hM?loadFrom=PastedDeeplink&ts=1862.42))

Cynbe and I are both radio-control model airplane freaks. I haven't flown since we moved, actually I haven't flown since Cimbe died, but I fully intend to go back to it any day now.

Sandy and Cynbe met through the technology that connected them. On top of all the other things she does, Sandy is an accomplished computer programmer. Through her job at UT Austin, she ran experiments on how online communities form and prosper.

During one of these experiments, she met a group of like-minded people on a mailing list. Others who were interested in coding and building community. And one person on that mailing list was Cynbe. He sent an introduction to the group, and it caught Sandy’s eye.

 Sandy:

He sent this blast of a letter that just was one of the most gorgeous things I've ever read. He said, “Hi, I'm Cynbe. And I'm interested in…” And then he talked about particle physics, and then he talked about the anthropology of particle physics, and then a particular anthropologist of particle physics and just went on and on and on and on.

Sarah:

And you're like, this is so hot.

Sandy:

[laughs] This is so hot. You're the first person who's ever said that, yes, this is so hot. [laughs]

Cynbe and Sandy’s online courtship lasted a full year before they met in person. Cynbe, who was also a programmer, created a virtual world for them to live in. The world was entirely text-based, with descriptions of Sandy, Cynbe, and a house where they could spend time together.

 Sandy:

The code had two work rooms, a kitchen, some kind of living area and one bedroom. And we actually slept, we decided we wanted to sleep together. We didn't wanna have sex, nothing to do with anything erotic, but, but at least we could share the bed. So we did that. And then we would get up in the morning and, and have virtual breakfast and he would go to his workroom and I'd go to mine. And then every once in a while, he would tip toe into my room to see what I was doing. And he'd look over my shoulder—this is all virtually—for a while, and then he'd kiss me on the neck and he'd go back to his room. And then after a while I thought, I wonder what he's doing. So I went into his work room. The code would let you do that. And I looked over his shoulder and then I kissed him on the neck and went back in my room. And, um, we fell in love. We fell in love with each other that way.

After a full year of digital cohabitation, Sandy and Cynbe met in real life. They were together for 20 years until Cynbe’s death.

 Sarah:

Is that a way that you're able, and I ask, because this is something like I had a friend, um, an ex actually who died a couple of years ago. And when I try to sort of like communicate with him, I always write in like a Google doc, because he was like a computer person, like a Google doc person. So I don't like hand write. So I'm wondering if there's like a way that you maybe communicate with Cynbe now online, if you do.

Sandy:

I have had thoughts about creating a generative, uh, adversarial network and, and feeding it Cynbe's Corpus and then I've thought I'm not really ready to go there. Um, I have thought about having online conversations with him. Abstractly, I think that would be poignant. I think it's obvious to everyone I know that I'm still very much in love with him. And it would be difficult for me because, because of that, because, um, for me, at least it isn't possible to think about talking with him either online or in my mind without simultaneously realizing that he is dead. And that's, uh, very hard. Um, that's all I think I can, I can say about that.

 Stability was never something that Sandy saw being part of her life. Until Cymbe came along.

Sandy:

Well, it started when Cynbe and I met actually, I actually settled down in, in a funny way. And then after Cindy died, I thought, I don't know what the next adventure is, but, and then, um, I seem to have settled down even further. I mean, here I am in this ridiculous house. You know, it's beautiful when I were, when I was like 12 years old, this was something I would dream of living in. And now that I'm in it, I'm going, yes. That's beautiful. Yeah. I'm really happy being here. Yeah. I'm super comfortable in my room. The coz factor is like 11, but what the hell am I doing here?

Sarah:

It seems like to me, the only time you seem like you did have that feeling of like stillness was with Cymbe.

Sandy:

Yeah, yeah. That I really thought that was going to be and they lived happily ever after for the rest of their lives, which was true, for the rest of one of our lives which is the way every relationship ends eventually.

As we leave the workshop, something across the hallway catches my eye. It’s a door completely covered in bumper stickers, and one in particular stands out to me.

Sandy:

It says, “Art is making a thing and then trying to make a better one. And you keep doing that until you die. And that's a pretty good life.”

We’re in my rental car. Sandy’s giving directions.

 Sandy:

Go down to, um, go down to the road at the bottom of the hill and turn left.

Since she moved to the mountains, Sandy spends a lot of time shuttling between her house and the downtown area—the radio station, restaurants she goes to with her friends. I was happy to play chauffeur while I was in town, taking her wherever she needed to go.

In the car, Sandy tells me more about her husband, Cynbe. I ask, if Cynbe were a sound, what sound would he be?

Sandy:

Cynbe would sound like a mountain to me.

Sarah:

What does a mountain sound like?

Sandy:

It's a very, very deep, solid sound. Not much, you know, it doesn't, it doesn't have a long tail. It's very solid. Uh, and it's, it happens at a moment in time, not, not spread out so more like a “whew.” Which is not really fair to him, but, but, uh, one of the things he was, was an absolute anchor for me. And it was the only time in my life I've been in a relationship in which the other person was an anchor and all of a sudden it made my life possible. I can't explain that any better than that, but because I had a place from which to move that I could always come back to everything else became possible in a whole new way.

*Phone rings*

Sandy:

Hi, it's Sandy.

Twice during our drives together, Sandy got calls from KSQD, also known as The Mighty Squid, the local radio station where she’s the head engineer.

Sandy:

Hi. Hi, Manira.Um, no. This is the first I, I know of it. Um, if you can't get it off standby, um, restart it. What you'll have to do is get under the table. The, the, you, you want me to, you wanna do it while I'm on the phone?

Another place Sandy spends a lot of time is at her favorite restaurant, Chocolate. Of the four dinners we had together, three of those dinners were at Chocolate.

Chocolate has great food; I came to love it too. But one thing I didn’t love was that it doesn’t have a parking lot. Which left me having to park on the street.

Sarah:

Ugh. Not me having to parallel park in front of my interview subject.

Sandy:

[laughs] Okay. That's alright.

Sarah:

My worst nightmare.

Sandy:

One of my lovers drives a Tesla, which can auto-park. And if you want a zoo of an experience, just sit through that.

Sarah:

Oh my god.

Yes, Sandy has lovers, plural. More on them shortly.

I take a first stab at a parking job and look at Sandy like, that’s fine, right?

 Sarah:

No?

Sandy:

Maybe not. You might wanna, you might wanna take another pass at it.

Sarah:

You're right.

Sandy:

Unless you want me to park it?

Sarah:

I got it.

“I got it,” I say, immediately before backing into the parked car behind me.

Person whose car Sarah hit:

You happened to hit my car.

Sarah:

Oh, I'm so sorry. I didn't realize it, it nudged it.

Person:

Yeah.

Sarah:

Um, did it mark it?

Person:

No, but I don't see why you can't park. There's no car in front of you.

Sarah:

Yeah. I'm sorry. I-I'm really sorry.

Person:

Okay.

Sandy:

Well, there is an exciting moment.

Sarah:

Sorry. Got nervous there!

Remember when I said parking in front of my interview subject was my worst nightmare? Actually my worst nightmare is including tape of it in the episode. But going through this humiliating moment with Sandy made me appreciate her even more—her sense of humor, her unflappable nature—so, I’m keeping it.

Luckily Chocolate on the inside was way less chaotic than the outside. Red stucco walls, checkerboard floor—you could say the coz factor was 11. Every time we went to Chocolate, Sandy ordered the gorgonzola dip for us to share, chose a syrup flavor for her soda, always different, and ended the meal with an elaborate chocolate dessert.

Tonight, our last meal before I fly back to New York, we’re dining with one of Sandy’s lovers, Ctein.

What I’ll say about Ctein is that Ctein is his college nickname, but now it’s the name on his driver’s license, which he pulled out to show me.

 Ctein:

The only people who don't know me is Ctein is, is, is Kaiser Medical. Cuz their system refuses to recognize single names, which is really weird living in a state—

Sarah:

Oh, you go by like, *just* Ctein?

Ctein:

It's one name. Just Ctein.

Sarah:

Not like, you don’t have a last name?

Ctein:

No.

Sarah:

Oh, like Cher.

Ctein:

Or Madonna, but not so rich and famous.

What I’ll also say about Ctein is that his peace sign necklace was peeking out from beneath a huge gray Gandalf beard and that he talked a lot about his parrots.

 Sarah:

What are their names?

Ctein:

Elmo, Corrigan, and Rigel.

Ctein:

Elmo's an African gray. We've had him about 15 years now.

Sandy:

And he'll outlive you all.

Ctein:

Well, we've arranged for that. It’s in the trust.

And fine, one last thing I’ll say about Ctein is that he showed me pictures of Sandy and him naked in a pool.

I was surprised to learn Sandy has lovers, because she’d said she was still in love with Cynbe, but she actually has a few. Sandy and Ctein have a mutual lover who lives in New Mexico. The three of them had just gotten back from a road trip together.

Sitting there with Sandy and Ctein I thought about the last few days I’d spent with Sandy. Here in Santa Cruz, she’s surrounded by friends and family. The radio station relies on her. She’s in a throuple, for God’s sake. And at the same time, she very much still lives with Cynbe. The way she speaks about him in the present tense and relies on his organizational systems in the workshop. It’s not that she’s stuck in the past, it’s that, in her grief, the past and present merge somehow. I thought about time, consciousness, the way Sandy uses sound to reach beyond the body…and then the gorgonzola dip arrived, breaking me out of my reverie. So I started things off easy with some chill small talk.

 Sarah:

Do you, um, have a conception of the afterlife?

Sandy:

Are we serious or playful?

Sarah:

Serious.

Sandy:

Okay. I don't believe in the afterlife, but I'm taking a change of underwear just to be sure.

Ctein:

Which is Sandy's idea of a serious answer.

Sarah:

Yeah. I was gonna say.

Ctein:

You should hear the frivolous ones.

Sandy:

No, I, I don't think Cynbe or I believe in a, in any kind of afterlife. Or before-life, for that matter.

Sandy identifies as a Neopagan, a tradition that borrows rituals from ancient cultures with a focus on a deep connection to nature.

 Sandy:

That's still a very important part of my life. I don't talk about it very much. My coven is still here in Santa Cruz. When I came back from Austin, everybody said, we want you to put the group back together. And I said, I don't want to HP it. I want, I want one of you to high priestess, take on that responsibility. Nobody ever quite wanted to do that, so we still haven’t put it back together. But every once in a while, someone on Facebook will say, “When are we doing this?” And I’ll go, “When you initiate it.”

Sarah:

So, so what are the, um, like what does it look like in your daily life? Like, if you have your, what would you be doing?

Sandy:

Everything. Everything's sacred, it just depends on how you treat it. Uh, at any moment you can stop and go, “This is a sacred moment.”

I thought back to the bumper sticker in Sandy’s house: “Art is making a thing and then trying to make a better one. And you keep doing that until you die. And that's a pretty good life.”

Ever since I saw the radio control model airplanes in Sandy’s workshop, the ones she hadn’t flown since Cynbe died, I wondered if she’d be up for taking one out for a spin.

When I asked, she said she might not be good at it anymore, but she was down to give it a try.

 Sandy:

Danger. Powerful waves, slippery rocks, unstable cliffs. What's not to like?

We walk along the beach, stopping briefly to watch the surfers, then cross the street and peel off onto a narrow path that leads away from the ocean. This is near where Sandy used to live with Cynbe, before she moved to the big house in the mountains.

 Sandy:

I miss this area. I miss being here. There's something about it for me, the quality of the light, the quality of the air, the fact that you can hear seals bark at night, um, you can hear the wind in the grass.

Finally, we reach a meadow. This is where we’ll fly.

 Sandy:

Alright. So this is all very rough and ready. I'm going to lock it down with a piece of tape.

The plane is made of styrofoam, and looks a little worse for wear. The battery is attached with a piece of masking tape.

 Sandy:

The trick is to launch this—oh, I shut the transmitter off. [laughs] Let's see if I can turn it back on and have it work. Otherwise we're gonna have to rebind it. Come on! Come back! No! Yes. Okay. Um, this isn't really gonna work. [sighs]

Sarah: ([09:21:12](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/VPKuFp-1bhra4HtTy3D3uffzPSEOtyzobY4FaIl5gBVikQnuXWa0jyPxY_Y_alGr87J52et9qK8LIB7MORcR4WyW3hM?loadFrom=PastedDeeplink&ts=33672.62))

You want me to hold something?

*We hear the plane take off*

Sarah

Oh! There it goes!

The plane climbs, maybe three stories, but it looks unsteady, wobbling and swooping.

Sandy:

It’s nose-heavy. This will not bode well,

Sarah:

Oh, it's doing loop-de-loops.

Sandy:

Yep.

Sarah:

Wooo!

Sandy:

All right. Too much. I'm gonna bring it down.

Sandy gracefully lands the plane on the tips of the tall grass, and makes some adjustments before trying again.

 Sandy:

Alright, now we know that it will dive toward the ground. Um, so we need to move the battery a little bit backwards. Alright.

*The plane takes off again*

Sandy:

That’s better. This is actually not bad for someone who hasn't flown in a while. Alright. Let's let it coast. I'm trying to get us to float up there.

Finally, just for a moment, the plane floats, perfectly still.

 Sarah:

How do you feel?

Sandy:

Exhilarated. Happy. Peaceful.

Sounds Gay is created and produced by me, Sarah Esocoff.

Our story editor is JT Green of Molten Heart.

Cass Adair is our consulting producer.

Additional editing by Gianna Palmer.

Original music is by Kris McCormick. Kris was a brilliant composer. He was also my high school boyfriend and first love. He died on February 17th, 2020. In adulthood, we worked on podcasts together, and he always said he wanted to score my next project. I’m so grateful to his parents, Lisa and Bob McCormick, for giving me permission to work with their son’s beautiful music. This series felt like a collaboration with Kris, not only because we used his music, but because his *approach* to music has so totally informed my own. I was thinking of Kris during every interview and while writing every script. This season of Sounds Gay is dedicated to him.

Mixing and sound design by Casey Holford.

Fact-checking by Serena Solin.

Our program manager is Sam Termine.

Sounds Gay is a Stitcher production, and is executive produced by Sarah Bentley, Bill Crandall, Jen Derwin, Mike Spinella, Kameel Stanley, and myself.

Since this is the last episode, I want to thank my loved ones who listened to me talk about these stories for two years: Emily Rose Cannon, Ian McCarthy, Ali Newell, Emilie Pass, and Chloe Holden.

And finally, to every single person who talked to me for the show, I’m so grateful for your time, expertise, and vulnerability. Thank you.

You can find Sounds Gay on the SiriusXM App, Pandora, Stitcher, Apple Podcasts, or wherever you like to listen. If you like the show, please rate, review and share so other people can find us.