

Practice for Itself: An Interview with Jason Gladue (Restaurant BALNEA)

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For a while, I mostly knew Jay Gladue, who is a friend and the partner of a very good friend, from attending epic Thanksgiving dinners at their house; and from the music he would play after dinner. For the crowd of drunk friends, eager to sing along, his repertoire consists of covers of old-timey country songs, interspersed with a mix of classics (The Rolling Stones' "Dead Flowers" is a personal favorite) and idiosyncratic choices (it's through Jay's rendition of "The Blarney Stone" that I first discovered the band Ween whom, incidentally, he views as an early influence on his culinary career¹). Then, last December, he invited me to photograph a recording session for his current musical project, The Taxidermy. For the occasion, the four members of The Taxidermy had rented the mythical Grand Lodge No. 24, a church-turned-recording-studio in Farnham, Quebec, that was, until recently, owned by the band Arcade Fire. For close to 12 hours, The Taxidermy's unique blend of dark and mysterious rock—traversed, as the term "taxidermy" suggests, by a multiplicity of influences, amongst which citations from 60s and 70s movie soundtracks—echoed throughout the old church nave. And so, for close to 12 hours, through the lens of my camera, I observed the band's members—on guitar, bass, drums, and musical saw—as, with each new take, they were sucked deeper and deeper into the music. By way of a kind of osmosis, I too

¹ Matthew Snope, "Ween Cuisine: Classic Food Moments in Ween Songs," *Paste Magazine* (January 29, 2015) <http://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2015/01/ween-cuisine-classic-food-moments-in-ween-songs.html> (accessed March 13, 2015).

PRACTICE FOR ITSELF

found myself as though hypnotized, compelled to try the same angles over and over again, forever in search of “the perfect shot.”

In the opening to *Difference and Repetition* (1968), Gilles Deleuze writes that, especially in art, repetition is that which is present from the very beginning—it is “Monet’s first water lily which repeats [in advance] all the others.”² As both a professional chef and a seasoned musician, Jay spends much time exploring the potentially infinite iterations of both dishes and pieces of music. This has made him something of an expert at the art of practice for its own sake, which could be another name for repetition. What follows, then, is the transcript of a conversation that occurred late one night when Jay had just come off a ten-plus hour shift at the restaurant. Aside from some necessary minor edits, I have decided to present this interview in as raw a state as possible since it seems to me that, in spite or perhaps precisely because of the somewhat haphazard nature of our dialog, we were led to organically touch upon several fundamental truths of practice. As in my other contribution to this fifth issue of *Seachange*, “The Work of Dancing: A Portrait of Kenji Matsuyama Ribeiro,”³ I am again attempting to get at the fundamental constituents of a particular practice by focusing on the singular as opposed to the general, on the individual as opposed to the institution. Particularly striking is the emphasis on perfection, which both Jay and Kenji view as inseparable from a certain degree of (controlled) indeterminacy.

At its most basic, says Deleuze, “repetition is attributed to elements which are really distinct but nevertheless share strictly the same concept. Repetition thus appears as a difference, but a difference absolutely without

² Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London and New York: Continuum, 2001 [1968]), 1.

³ Bem, “The Work of Dancing,” 89-107.

concept; in this sense, an indifferent difference.”⁴ There is a Zen-like beauty in repetition’s “indifferent difference,” and listening to Jay weave an intricate, yet apparently effortless, back-and-forth comparison between the two practices at hand (cooking and playing music), I am struck by the meditative nature of his work, made especially visible when the two worlds come together. As Jay reflects on the ways in which he listens to music in the kitchen, I am reminded of a passage from Robert Pirsig’s cult novel. Now I understand what it must be like to truly inhabit one’s practice and, simultaneously, Deleuze’s poetical formulation—“the heart is the amorous organ of repetition”⁵—takes on renewed meaning.

Zen Buddhists talk about “just sitting,” a meditative practice in which the idea of a duality of self and object does not dominate one’s consciousness. What I’m talking about here in motorcycle maintenance is “just fixing,” in which the idea of a duality of self and object doesn’t dominate one’s consciousness. When one isn’t dominated by feelings of separateness from what he’s working on, then one can be said to “care” about what he’s doing. That is what caring really is, a feeling of identification with what one’s doing. When one has this feeling then he also sees the inverse side of caring, Quality itself.

Robert Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (1974)⁶

Caroline Bem: This issue that we’re working on is about practice in a really broad sense. I think one of the main ideas is that practice necessarily implies

⁴ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 15.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶ Robert M. Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values* (New York: Bantam Books, 1974), 296-297.

PRACTICE FOR ITSELF

repetition, that you repeat something over and over again until you're good at it.

Jason Gladue: The famous 10, 000 hours of practice that make you perfect?

CB: Yes, exactly! And you were saying this really interesting thing where you were like “my first job...” and then I cut you off saying “do it again in two minutes, when we're recording”...

JG: Well how about my first blood pudding? It was a not-so-traditional method we devised over time that included a Vitamix and a *sous vide* machine. This thing just kept evolving, slowly and surely, until we couldn't really tweak it anymore. We had all the exact weights and volumes and found that 82 °C was the best temperature for the texture we wanted. And I found that Thursday was the best day for it. Never make it on a Friday: it could ruin your weekend if you fucked it up. The recipe I scribbled out for someone when I was going on vacation probably looked like I was just messing with them. I even had a particular pot to use. The size was perfect to pour the boiling water into from a kettle and have it hit 82 °C. In fact, I never really managed to pass on my exact method. May have been too crazy. Kind of makes me think about when I worked with this Jamaican chef and I asked for her goat curry recipe. She almost laughed me out of the kitchen! She showed me her hand as she tossed in ingredients and was like “you take this much of that, then this...” [laughs] Her palate was amazing and her food really consistent, but she'd probably been making that stuff since she was six years old or something. Just a very intuitive approach, like learning music by ear, sort of.

SEACHANGE | PRACTICE(S)

More generally, I think line cooking is a great example of practising repetition to the point of superstition in many cases. Setting up your *mise en place* in the most efficient order so you can almost do it with your eyes closed. Everything is so close and you know exactly where it is. [That's the] repetition: you have that spoon in the same spot every single time and if somebody takes that spoon and uses it for something else and doesn't put it back in that same spot, it can drive you almost mad. You go to grab it and it's not there. These movements are so engrained and natural, it's almost like losing a finger or something. It needs to be there, these things have to be there. To keep the stress levels down, you know where everything is at any given time.

CB: You wanna think as little as possible when you're actually doing it.

JG: Yeah, exactly! The goal, for me, was to have the perfect service. A service that is flawless, where the front of the house and the kitchen are working like a well-greased machine. Now, I think I've had perfect services before—maybe a handful of them in my career—and I don't even know if I realized they were perfect services at the time.

CB: You were so in the moment.

JG: Well not only that, but you're always pushing for even more perfection. So even when it happens you're like, "holy shit, that was actually a perfect service!" And then you're like, "yeah, actually there was that time that somebody didn't put my spoon back in the right place, and threw something off, when it should've only taken, you know, five minutes, and instead it took, like, seven minutes, because I had to go find the spoon" and "yada yada yada,"

PRACTICE FOR ITSELF

you know? So now, I'm just happy to get through a really busy service and not have any major problems.

CB: Do you see a strong connection between cooking and playing music?

JG: Yeah, totally, for me! I think repetition from cooking for so many years has bled into how I approach music and rehearsing songs. Playing it over and over and over again. For me, it's normal and it feels natural, but I think for band mates it seems kind of crazy. The drummer in The Whale Hunters, my band in Vancouver, would joke about that: "it's like jamming with Jay, there's a riff and two hours go by, and we're still playing the same thing!" [laughter] Yeah, but it's...

CB: It was getting there!

JG: With that band, there was a lot of epic stuff and I put the drummer through a lot. He had a great attitude. He'd be like, "ok, no problem, we'll do it again!" Or "but do we really need to play this for ten minutes?" "Yeah, you know... until it feels natural. ONE MORE TIME WITH MORE FEELING!"

I think now I'm at a really funny point in my career 'cause I'm looking at all of these aspects, and seriously, the repetition thing is becoming more and more important. This is my 18th year in the kitchen and I'm thinking, "what happens after, when I have 20 years in the kitchen?" Well, it's going to be the same, everything is the same. Like you move to different kitchens and I remember one of my mentors told me once: "every kitchen is the same. Anywhere you go in the world, the kitchen is going to be the same."

CB: The same set-up?

JG: No, the set-ups are different, menus, etc., but there was a lot of truth to that. One thing that started getting to me a few years ago was: the same personalities. So you'd almost meet the same people over and over again. After a while, you start to meet the same type of riffraff that come through a kitchen. It's kind of a misfit society of people that, I don't know... A lot of them are artists and, you know, art school dropouts and that kind of thing. So they have strong opinions on certain things and they question a lot and, you know... The other half are like convicts [laughter], jailbirds or whatever, that, you know, you want on your side. All of these faces and these personalities, I started realizing that I was meeting the same people.

CB: Is that comforting to you, that certain sameness in the repetition?

JG: It was shocking at first, when you start to realize it. You're like "holy shit, maybe there's something to it, like certain people are meant to do certain jobs, you know?" When I was really young, my mom would tell me: "you have a cook's temperament." And I don't know if she cursed me and that's why I became a cook.

CB: A cook's temperament—what would that be like? Very focused?

JG: She was funny 'cause she said I reminded her of a cook at the diner in town. She was a waitress there a lot of the time when I was growing up—this cook would just be calmly having a cigarette outside while a pile of tickets

PRACTICE FOR ITSELF

would be burying the squirrel. He'd say that he'd rather do them all at once. When I was about six my dad brought me to the restaurant, to pick her up after her shift. It was great for me, being a kid in there, and they would bring me some dessert. It kinda felt like being a VIP, but it was a diner, you know? [laughs] Not a fancy place at all.

CB: Were you like at the counter, just hanging out?

JG: Yeah, and the cook would send me stuff. Then I see this guy come out and at the time, there was like—you could smoke in restaurants—there was like the smoking side, and there was the staff booth. And the cook came out of the kitchen, had his dirty apron, and sat at the staff booth and lit up a smoke. And I'm watching this guy and I just knew that I was gonna be a cook. And it depressed me, in a way.

CB: [laughs] It's all laid out.

JG: Yeah, I can do that and that's what I'm going to do. (But I remember also wanting to be the guy who painted the lines on the highways).

CB: [laughs] More than music though? When did you know that you were gonna be a musician?

JG: It happened in tandem, for sure. The first thing that got me was I heard a slide guitar played on some, I don't know if it was like an after-school special or something like this, but I remember that. Hearing a slide guitar really, really shook me. I mean, my family there were a lot of musicians. Everyone

SEACHANGE | PRACTICE(S)

could pick a song or two on the guitar and I grew up around it and loved it. But it was hearing the slide guitar that, you know...

CB: That's what did it.

JG: It was funny. That got me really interested in music, hearing that sound. Then I wanted to play drums!

CB: Which you do.

JG: I got the drum set when I was 12 and that's a whole other repetition thing. Of like practising beats, you know.

CB: Yeah 'cause with the guitar, you're also practising for precision, and strength, and melody...

JG: And meter, yeah. But drums, it's ALL about meter. So when I was recording with Lapdance Tiger, I was obsessed with my meter. Now with digital postproduction, you can move things around, you can slow and speed up, and cut here and cut there, rather than do another take. But I really chose that I would just play them live, just do the takes for the most part. There was one song we were experimenting with when we were recording and I think I did—what was it, something like 43 takes?—back-to-back.

CB: Oh my god! You ARE obsessed.

PRACTICE FOR ITSELF

JG: Non-stop. And we didn't keep any of them. We kept the original drum track.

CB: Wow. [Laughter] That's insane!

JG: I went in for my session after my shift at the restaurant, so I had already worked like 10 or 11 hours. I went to the studio and... it wasn't me but [someone suggested], "why don't we switch up these drums?" I think the song was going in a different direction. I was kind of against it but I said "ok, let's try a few different things." Then, once we started getting into it, I was like... I had the headphones on and I would say, "ok, another one... let's try it again... let's try it again" I made it through the song, and I thought it was as good as I could play it. But the feeling, it was the difference between playing with brushes and playing with sticks. We toyed around with the idea: "maybe we should make it more of a heavier song and play with sticks?" I don't know... 43 takes later, I listened to one of the last takes that I did, it was really good, and I said, ok, this is it, I can't think of, you know, anything I would really change about this. I think it was the next day, I got an email from the singer that said, "well, we listened to both of the tracks and we decided not to keep [CB laughs] the session that you did last night and any of the stuff. Are you mad?" [Laughs] No, why would I be mad? It was an amazing practice, and discipline.

CB: Ok, so this is the sense that this is giving me: there's sort of a beauty in practice for its own sake—even if you don't keep, in the end, any of it, it's like it happened in a moment, and that had its use?

SEACHANGE | PRACTICE(S)

JG: Yeah. Those takes seem like small potatoes to the repetition of a busy kitchen though. Not long ago, at my last job, me and a colleague made an estimation (modest, to boot), that he had plated one of our more popular dishes around 5000 times in the 5-6 years he was there! Now that's creating an object and having it destroyed immediately after. Creating it *to be* destroyed. Like you lose it as soon as you make it.

CB: But you don't actually... You're still taking something away from the whole process?

JG: Yeah, definitely, I think so. For me, in that situation, it was looking at it, strictly like practising a meter. For my colleague, I guess he's just paying the bills.

CB: Right. It's kind of crazy though, this thing, because as you say, you did 43 takes, but you could do 90. You could do 200. I mean, it doesn't have an end.

JG: Or does it? There's a sound, you know. It's like, man! Some of this stuff that I've recorded, it's like, there's flaws. And I like flaws to be in there, but just enough flaws, you know? In a kitchen, it's about consistency; it's supply and demand.

CB: That's what you were saying at the Taxidermy recording, too.

JG: You might as well use the drum machine, if you don't want that. But to make it more natural, you're going to need these certain flaws.

PRACTICE FOR ITSELF

CB: Is that the same in cooking too, though?

JG: I guess, in a way... I like to make things look natural or accidental, but they never really are. Like, "oh, this leaf just happened to fall off this [gestures, CB chuckles], this piece of meat and land perfectly so it actually brings this plate... like it's balanced." That approach is what I practise.

CB: It's like a John Cage type of thing, where you practise doing something that can't be controlled in a controlled environment.

JG: Exactly, that's a funny way of putting it. Where I'm working now, [if] you put a plate that I come up with next to a plate the chef comes up with, it would be like Pollock and Escher. I really respect his balance. He went to Japan for a while, and worked around there, and that's really what the Japanese are into as well. This precision, this mechanical approach. It's beautiful and I really respect it and I'm happy to be able to practise that style as well. But really, what I feel comfortable with is my haphazard stuff, you know. Yet, is it really haphazard if I've actually figured out a way to make things look haphazard? You know, it's still balanced.

CB: I don't know but I'm assuming you learned cooking in, like, a formal way. You went to school for that, right?

JG: Yeah, I did a crash course, though. It's, I think, six months. The course that I took was basically just to get your foot in the door of a restaurant. The instructors were amazing there. They were really good.

CB: Where was that?

JG: That was in North Vancouver. It was really like a no-name [chuckles] kind of school compared to one of those “Culinary Institutes” where you spend a lot of money and learn how to, I don’t know, hold your knife? [Laughter] The approach of this school I went to was a lot more like: “alright, you have to learn this stuff and now you’re good enough to start. You’re gonna be scrubbing pots.” They were very realistic about the reality of the industry. It’s really funny ‘cause, you know, over the years, when I’ve had to hire people, you look through résumés, and you see like, “oh wow, I heard about this school, I heard it’s really good, I heard it’s a very expensive school.” A lot of times, you get these kids, they come in and they’re expecting something a lot more than me being like, “ok, I just need you to be organized and be able to repeat this dish over and over again.” A robot—I always say, I want robots. At my last job when I took over the day service, they asked, “what do you need to get everything on track?” And, I’m like, “right now, all I need is like two good robots.” [CB laughs] I don’t care if they’ve been to school or not. I’ll take a dishwasher, I’ll take anybody. It’s just attitude, you know, if they have it, they have it.

CB: Which, in a way, is also like the musicians in your bands. You like them when they’re ready to, like, keep going and keep trying. So is there a similarity, or is that different?

JG: For what? I don’t understand.

PRACTICE FOR ITSELF

CB: Well, when you say you did 43 takes, you need someone who can do that. You need someone who'll go along with you and, like, keep repeating.

JG: Oh definitely, yeah, for sure. I don't know, maybe I've been really lucky. Most of the people, I think, that I've played music with, we've kind of known each other first and I think they kind of get an idea of the type of person, the type of musician that I would be and they're ok with it. But, you know... I can't remember ever having any conflict with any of the musicians that I ever played with in the past, which is amazing. I used to jam at this place in Vancouver—it had holes punched in the walls... [CB chuckles] the drummer would say, "ah, see that?" Where the drum kit was, there's a hole punched in the wall. And I'd say, "yeah, I hate this shit." It's like, you know, you come to play to relax. There's a situation where you go to play music and it's intense, and people get angry: "why can't you do this?" And "aargh," you know, and punch a hole in the wall. It's very counterproductive. I'd rather just lull everybody with one note for ten minutes.... Maybe that's my approach.

CB: I've seen you at the Taxidermy recording, you were super patient. You were very hands off but that's what got people to... They wanted to do it over again and again! It wasn't you telling them, it was them being like, "no, I actually feel like I could do better." You know? That's what struck me.

JG: That's good, then, it's working [laughter]. Mastering the haphazard approach to perfection.

CB: That would be a good album title.

SEACHANGE | PRACTICE(S)

JG: You want it to be perfect, but you don't want people to know that you want them to be perfect. So you put them in this situation, like I put that leaf that I wanted to drop on that plate in this situation that "I want you to be there, but I want you to do it yourself" [more laughter]. Or, "I want it to seem like you did it yourself. I don't want anyone to know that I pushed you there. "So, come on leaf, you can do it—play it again!"

It's the same approach that I have at work. Some of the chefs I trained under when I left cooking school, they were all kinda madmen. At that point, it was still... there was not really a "Food Network" happening, it was still really the old school mentality. Now, you can't be that way so much. People will just say "fuck you" and go home. And there goes your robot...

CB: What was the old school mentality?

JG: Ah, it was mental abuse, pretty much. And for what, you know? But you didn't question that. When I was in cooking school, all of the guys that were instructing us were dudes that were like from the old school... One of them was saying he had broken his leg skiing and he was doing an apprenticeship under some chef. He thought, "oh shit, I'm gonna be off work for a while..." He called the chef and said, "I have a broken leg." The chef said, "ok, I'll see you tomorrow." [Laughter] And he's like, "I was there, with my cast, in the kitchen and I was not sitting down, I was working. So I didn't get any time off for my broken leg, that's the way it's going to be." There's still some of that to some degree.

CB: But I heard even now, if you're sick, you don't get time off work.

PRACTICE FOR ITSELF

JG: I don't know, I guess it's the repetition thing again: you don't want to cause a rift in the routine. You have a workload for the week. It's always: "ok, we're receiving this, that day." Really, it's a whole chain and if you miss one of those days then it's a break in the chain that's gonna set you back for something else. It's kind of a pain. I remember, at my previous job, when we were getting the pig [chuckling]. We'd get a pig every Tuesday, I think it was, and it was really crucial to work fast on this thing, to break it down, 'cause it takes up too much space in the cooler. And then we're gonna get a whole bunch of stuff delivered the next day and you need to store it properly. So we had a really small window to break it down.

You know, you have a really busy day and you're tired, yet it became one of my favourite shifts. Everyone would be out of the kitchen when it was time to bring the pig out onto the table. It was just me. I'd put on a jazz station, at the time it was Planet Jazz. So it was just me, Planet Jazz and this pig [laughter, JG makes cutting and pounding sounds on table], and breaking it down. I'd have a cup of coffee and be like, "ah, just clear my mind of the whole day." It became such a Zen thing: first I'd remove the neck, then feet, shoulder, hams, belly, then the chops. At first it was so intimidating, learning to do this quickly. And after a while, it became so second nature, my knife gliding through fat and meat to the music of Frank Sinatra or something. I'd have to get somebody to help me lift it out of the fridge. We'd put it on this table and it's almost like everyone would leave the kitchen, and then it would just be me, the pig, the bone saw, and my knife... and Planet Jazz. It just became such a beautiful thing. Like a choreographed dance.

SEACHANGE | PRACTICE(S)

CB: You know, it makes me think of movies, when you see surgeons in movies, and they're always listening to music. It's exactly that!

JG: Yeah, that's it. Eventually, Planet Jazz was taken off the air. I think that was a shock to me. "What do I listen to when I do the pig?" There's no more Planet Jazz. It's like, "what now? What am I gonna do?" [Laughter] It was the classical station, I guess, after that. For making the blood pudding too.

CB: Since you've been here, your thing's been that Vermont radio that you were talking about?

JG: Yeah, it's much different though. It's funny for me, I think it's called "The Buzz." Alternative or pop radio I would call it. I think about these songs that are playing, and they play sometimes twice in the same hour. I listen to the melodies, and I think, "what makes a pop song into something that this radio station dude can play two times?" Some radio stations will play a song three times in the same hour. It's crazy, to be able to put a melody into somebody's head... To come up with this song that's going to be pummelled into people's heads.

CB: Meanwhile you're trying to make dishes that appeal to people so they will come back...

JG: Yeah, I guess so. Our stuff is... I don't know, we're doing some really nice food there, but we're doing quite a lot of kinda unorthodox stuff. So that makes it more interesting, you know.

PRACTICE FOR ITSELF

CB: So maybe pop radio isn't the right comparison. Or maybe it is, because of the contrast. It's like you have this very predictable thing on the one side but you're creating this unpredictable stuff on the other side. That's the other thing: you talk about repetition but you also told me that you change the menu every week or so. So in a way, you guys aren't doing a lot of the same stuff at all.

JG: It changes a lot [but] there's some staples, some things that came together, through repetition, and became something solid to the point where we can't tweak it anymore. The balance and everything, the flavours, the way that it looks, there's nothing more that we can do. Anything more, it just would be too much. So it's kind of beautiful and at the same time a bit heartbreaking almost. When you start with these things and it's like, at first, "oh yeah, this is so good" and someone has another idea, like "why don't we move this piece over here, and why don't we add this instead and take this off?" And we work together—the chef, me and the other sous-chef—and it becomes this totally balanced thing and then you perfect the plating.

CB: So the style that you've perfected, it's like the three of you come together, but then no matter who's doing it, you're doing it? So, concretely, if I come to eat there tomorrow night and you're working, am I going to get a different version, slightly, on my plate than if I come on a night when one of the others is there?

JG: Flavour-wise no. Plating-wise, I guess, to *some* extent. We map out a lot of plates through sketching and that kind of thing. We come up with the concept and we all talk about it and say, "ok, this is gonna work, that's gonna work."

There's a lot of elements to put together and you have to realize, "is it feasible to do if you're really busy, like one person having to put this together, and all these components?" I think we have one dish that is about, I would say, 18 or 19 different moves, and sometimes when you're in the juice, you're like "why is everybody ordering this? Haha, "why is it so popular?" [Laughter] But it also feels good, of course. Yeah, so there's a couple of doozies like that where it's like, "oh my god!" The one that's maybe around 18 moves is pretty crazy but at least, the plate that it's on, and the way that it's built, everything is pretty natural when you put it together. There's another one that's really close to that many moves. But that one, everything has to be precise. So you have your palette knife, you drop your *purée*, you have to slide it a certain way, and you do your *quenelle*. And that has to fall in a certain way at a certain place. And then, from there, you start to build. But the end result is beautiful and it's rewarding to put on the pass, it feels great. It's almost like you climbed this mini-mountain, it's like, "ah, this thing looks so fucking good!" So it's kind of worth it to put yourself in the juice to have this thing on the menu.

CB: So a big part of the fun of being a chef is to challenge oneself with dishes like that, clearly.

JG: Yeah, but this is borderline insanity. [Laughs]. The concept is cool. That's the balance between efficiency and... the whole supply and demand thing. People come in, they want to eat [pounds fist on table] or are they relaxed, you know? It's all up to the front of the house.

CB: I have two questions that just came to me. One of them is: do you ever waste plates? Like, "it's just too fucked up, the *purée* just didn't go where it

PRACTICE FOR ITSELF

should've," so you just throw the whole thing out. Or that never happens to you, because you're just, like, so professional?

JG: It happens to everybody. It always happens.

CB: What's the rate? Like once a day, once a week, several times a day?

JG: That I throw out a plate? Ah, it happened today but it was because the table in the midst of me plating it decided they didn't want it, they wanted something else.

So, that, I saved it. I was like, "at this point, chances are, we're gonna get another one." Then it's a time thing, and you watch it, until it's like, 'eh, ok, I can't serve this."

CB: Ok, but that's them, that's not on you. My other question was: how many people do you think realize that, like, 18 moves went into it?

JG: Ah, very, very few. They like the end result, they like what they see. That's amazing.

CB: And do you mind that? Again, if you're playing music, there's so many people out there who know enough: they hear it, they know what you were doing. They understand it. With cooking, in a way, there's way more, there's so many customers but they don't really... They like it but, formally, they don't understand it.

SEACHANGE | PRACTICE(S)

JG: I think that's great. That's the magic. When you go somewhere like... I remember some years ago, I was smoking a lot of fruits and vegetables. I'd make like a *kombu dashi*. So I'd always have the *kombu* and spring water and I guess *bonito*, which is like smoked dried fish flakes. That's the base. One time, we didn't have *bonito* or something, and I had these smoked apples, sitting around, and I'm like, "ah, I'll throw that in there." It ended up being really good, and we'd just replaced the *bonito* with smoked apples. So I'm like, "ok, now it's vegan." [CB chuckles] But people don't need to know that, and most of the people that were eating this didn't know what the hell *dashi* was anyway. Or what *kombu* was for that matter. But, "what is this magical broth with this fish? This is amazing!" Right? They can't make it at home.

CB: So one of the reasons you like cooking is because of the magic. You know what's going into it but people don't.

JG: It's funny, yeah, it's like, you know, our grandmas, that had this thing, this dish, that was always the same and this amazing thing that you never really knew how they pulled it off. Or our moms. My mom had this thing, you know, and becoming a cook, you're like, "ok, I watched her cook growing up and I'd see her do this thing. I can do that too!" But I can't. I can't reproduce that thing. There's a magic there that's like, it's so simplistic, it's so easy that, I don't know, maybe that's not even it. Part of it is my mom making me this soup, maybe. Mine will never taste the same if I make it. It was just potato, carrots, celery, moose meat and, you know, water. You boil the shit out of the meat [laughter]. To make a soup, for me, it's like, "what?" You need to sear the meat [laughter]. You need to sauté your vegetables and you build your soup from that. But, yeah, that soup is incredible, and I think about it all the

PRACTICE FOR ITSELF

time. Only she could make this soup, that's the magic. Must have been something in the cupboard that she put in there, like she had this tub of MSG in the back [laughter], and I never saw it. "So, you add a couple spoonfuls of this thing that I got from my sister years ago." You know, there's like a gallon of MSG that I never noticed or something.

CB: And you'll never know.

JG: I'll never know and that's the beauty of it, I don't want to know. In a way, that's kinda cool. You don't really want to know. You don't want to see the wizard behind the curtain, in a way.

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