

Love What You Love Podcast

Episode 23: Swearing with Aaron Reynolds

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Hey, I'm Julie Rose. Welcome to *Love What You Love*. I'm an author, creator, and enthusiast, and I've always been intrigued by the things people are super into, so every week I'll introduce you to another fascinating human who's into really interesting stuff.

Welcome back! Or, Welcome! First of all, our lovely guests want to answer your questions, so if you have a burning question from one of the first 23 episodes of the podcast, @ me on social media or send me an email at LoveWhatYouLovePod@gmail.com. I'll compile the answers and then I'll share them on social media and in a future episode. Send me those questions!

Also, I would greatly appreciate it if you would support the podcast by leaving a rating or review on [Apple Podcasts](#), even if that's not where you listen. I also really appreciate it when you spread the love and share about the podcast on social media. Thank you very much to everyone who has rated, reviewed, and socialized already. Also, a humungous thank you all of my patrons as well, especially Alie. You make this podcast possible, honestly, so thank you very much.

If it's not clear from the title of this episode, this is not one to share with the kids or play on your Bluetooth speaker where folks who may be sensitive to swearing can hear. So, people who know me in real life, or maybe on social media, will not find this a surprise, but folks who only know me through the podcast or at work might be a little surprised that I curse like a sailor; a lot. Like, a *lot* a lot. Which is just one reason why I'm so delighted to talk with this week's guest.

Aaron Reynolds is the man behind the internet's most popular profane aviary, *Effin' Birds*. With hundreds of thousands of followers on social media and an incredibly popular book, Aaron is the patron saint of swearing as catharsis. In this conversation we talk about the surprising story behind the genesis of *Effin' Birds*, what's behind the words on every post, how he really feels about birds, and so much more.

Just a quick production note here: Aaron had to do our chat outside since his kids were doing remote learning inside, and of course there were garbage trucks going back and forth on his street the whole time. Aaron and I agree that garbage trucks invading his interview is completely on-brand. So anyway, find out why Aaron loves swearing, and why you might learn to love it (even more), too.

Julie: Hello, Aaron! Thank you so much for joining me today!

Aaron: Thanks for having me.

Julie: So you are the creator and curator of *Effin' Birds*, and also *Swear Trek*, with hundreds of thousands of followers on Twitter and Instagram. You've got merch, you've got a book that came out last year, which is *Effin' Birds: A Field Guide to Identification*, a Webby honoree. You have this whole creative endeavor that is built around swearing. So, I'd like to understand, where did this come from? Why did you start it?

Aaron: I think what's funny is that it's... *Effin' Birds* is, sort of, the refined, like, fifth or sixth version of what I was trying to do, but it all can be traced back to me not liking emoji.

Julie: Okay!

Aaron: Yeah, I guess this was five-ish years ago, and I... No, maybe a little longer, because I'd changed where I was working. I'd moved from one city to another, and I found that my

new team were a lot younger than I was, so everything was texting and emoji, whereas before it was, you know, other means of communication at work. And I was so annoyed by emoji, and I started thinking about what I could use in place of emoji to just, kind of, be... not a jerk, but to sort of make fun of the idea of emoji in the first place.

I was watching a lot of '60s *Star Trek* at the time, and every once in a while I would pause it, and I would get this, like, amazing, huge emotion expression on somebody's face, because, you know, TV was physically smaller then so everybody's emotions were really big for the small television set. So I started screenshotting those, and I would use those instead of emoji. I would send, you know, Captain Kirk with tears in his eyes, or I would send Dr. McCoy looking upset and angry, or Mr. Spock looking quizzical. I would start sending those, and I had this big collection of them.

And one day I was looking at the one that I had... Have you ever seen the episode "Wolf in the Fold"? It's the original series episode where Jack the Ripper is, like, taking over people. It's very strange. The finale of the episode is they knock out the guy whose body is being taken over by Jack the Ripper, and they lay him out on the transporter pad, and they beam him off into space. Yeah, and I had this screenshot of him lying unconscious on the transporter pad, which is my favorite thing because it just looks like, "Uuugh! What a day." And I thought, this would be really funny if I just captioned it with the F-word.

Then I started look at all the other ones, and I thought, "You know what? These are all really funny if I caption them with the F-word." And I was like, "What would I call this? I would call it Swear Trek!" So, the actual first iteration of Swear Trek was stills from the original series of *Star Trek* all captioned simply with the F-word. That was a joke that was good for about two weeks, and then it was really tiresome.

Then I started thinking about, you know, "What would be a way to take this, or extend it, or make it funnier?" And I hit on the idea of rewriting dialogue and still making it about the emotions, those really big emotions on the screen. I hate the GIF format, but it's the only one that really works for this idea, and so I used it.

Julie: So Swear Trek is the first. It came before Effin' Birds.

Aaron: It came before Effin' Birds. I ended up being approached by a big media organization because they had really enjoyed what I was doing with Swear Trek. They were asking me for some pitches. One of the things that they were clearly looking for and that I pitched to them was doing Swear Trek but with their library of stuff, which would've been hilarious and wonderful, and unfortunately that fell apart due to lawyer stuff, which is too bad. I would've really liked to have done that.

But they also asked for other pitches, if I had any other ideas for social media for them. And I did pitch them something that was essentially Effin' Birds, and they really didn't like it. Like, they thought it was... You know, it was on this conference call, and it was just this long pause after I pitched it, and then they were like, "Uh, let's move on." So I was like, "Wow."

Julie: [laughs] Well, you showed *them*!

Aaron: Yeah. So, that was it. I was like, "You know what, I want to show them that all these other things I pitched them are also good ideas, that maybe they should pick one of those up." So I was like, "This one's easy for me to just do on my own. I'll do it for two weeks and show them that it easily gains audience, and then I'll pitch it back to them again."

Instead of pitching it back to them again, within two weeks it was considerably more popular than their brand, so I'm like, "I'm just keeping this. This one's mine." That rejection was really, you know, a great formative moment, and I think that it's very on-brand that Effin' Birds was built out of spite.

Julie: Right! [laughs] Exactly. So, maybe talk a little bit about... For folks who don't know about Effin' Birds and what the aesthetic is, maybe talk about what is, where you get the illustrations, why did you choose that style?

Aaron: Effin' Birds is, at its core, beautiful, vintage woodcuts of birds paired with how I'm feeling, usually in a swearsy manner. The one that has done really well this week is this puffin with its plumage in disarray that says, "Can We Have A Break Between Clusterfucks?"

Julie: [laughs] Please!

Aaron: Yeah. Exactly, right? So, I pair all of my emotions... I literally... I have a note on my phone. Whenever I feel a strong emotion about something, instead of having that emotion in the moment I take my phone out and I write it down. It's been this wonderful, kind of like, therapy that I don't get angry at things in the moment. I'm like, "Oh, here's a thing I can use later and will make me some money. Do-do-do..." So, somebody cuts you off in traffic and it's like, "Hey! That's worth money! De-de-de..." It's kind of great in that way.

So, the woodcuts... When I was pitching it to that media organization, I needed a way to get it done really quick, and I coincidentally got a spam email about, you know, six gigabytes of bird stock art for \$20. I was like, "That \$20 is a small amount to pay to try this out." After having done that... In that package, there were about a dozen birds that I really liked, so I started trying to source them, figuring out where they came from, because they're obviously 100-ish-year-old illustrations, and I just had to figure out where they came from.

Turns out they're mostly by an engraver named Thomas Bewick. So, somehow in the last couple of years I have joined the Bewick Society and become a collector of Thomas Bewick engravings. Now, for Effin' Birds we've worked through the entirety of Bewick's *History of British Birds*, which is his two-volume opus on, like, every bird in the United Kingdom. So yeah, that's a major source.

While I was doing it, I got a very funny... A guy called from the Audubon Society and wanted to do, like, a short interview for the Audubon Society newsletter. It was really funny because we were supposed to talk for 15 minutes and we talked for, like, two hours. Then, like a month later, he said, "You remember that thing that was going to be, like, a short interview? It's a feature interview now." And after that I got contacted by somebody in their, like, publicity and marketing who asked, had I ever considered using John James Audubon's paintings?

Julie: No!

Aaron: And I was like, "Well, I mean... Would you not sue me if I did that?" And they said, "First of all, they're in the public domain, so, no. And second of all, one of our mandates is to keep Audubon's work in the public eye. So, no." So, yeah, every once in a while there's a beautiful color one.

Julie: Now, do you actually like birds in real life?

Aaron: I didn't. I try a lot harder now to like birds. People will ask me... They'll tweet, "What bird is this?" and I'll say, "I don't know shit about birds." [laughs] But I've actually started being able to identify birds, which is very strange.

Julie: Now, is this a full-time thing for you?

Aaron: It is. When I launched the store, the store was a success very quickly, and the first thing it did was help me not have any debt anymore, which was wonderful. But then, when the book came along... The book was really interesting because first it was a crowdfunded book on a platform called Unbound, which is just a tremendous platform. The idea is it's Kickstarter but explicitly for books, and it comes with bookstore distribution in the United Kingdom, because that's where Unbound is based.

So, if your book is successful, the print run is funded, the print run gets distributed to bookstores. Whether it's a success beyond that is up to you. So, I looked at it and they'd said, you know, the deal is any unsold copies after the initial print run, after the first however-many months, if they don't sell and they get returned to Unbound, you can buy them for this exceptionally low price.

I was like, "You know, let's go total worst-case scenario. We fund the run and they don't sell after that. At this price, I can afford to buy out the run and sell it on my own website for the next couple of years and it'll go great. So why don't I do that?" So, I went into it with that as my thought process, and instead what happened was we also picked up an American publisher. We're on our third printing in the United States now, and I think we're on the second printing in the United Kingdom.

When the American deal came along, we had a plan at Unbound of when I would deliver the book. And you know, I had worked into it... I worked a full-time job, so obviously I only had this much time to write, so let's just be realistic about it, and this is how long it's going to take me to deliver the book. And then the American deal came along, and they only had one string attached, and it was that I had to deliver it about four months earlier than I wanted to, to make it for Christmas 2019 sales.

I went to my workplace and I said, "Hey gang, I have this large offer on the table, and I would really like to take it. It would require me taking some time off." It came out at that point that work had been becoming uncomfortable with *Effin' Birds* altogether, and they told me really that this was a point where I would have to choose between my job of 12 years and doing this book. That was a Wednesday, and I quit my job on Friday.

I had done a lot of math to, like, figure out if just the store could support me, and I was at a place where it probably could have but, I mean, I have three kids, you know? I had a mortgage. There were a lot of stress points that I didn't want to, like, trust the inconsistent income of a comic strip about swearing birds, you know?

Julie: Imagine that!

Aaron: Right. And so I started looking around for other gigs that would be flexible, or low hours, or stuff like that. It was really funny, I put it out there on the Wednesday that I needed a job and I got an offer on the Friday, and that's why I was able to quit my old job on the Friday. I ended up working for Canada 2020, and I still do some work for them. They needed somebody to help them launch a podcast network. So I went in there, we built a studio, and we created a slate of shows, and we produced, like, two seasons worth of stuff.

It was really fun because I kept, sort of like, finishing the one task that we had decided I was there to do, and then we would find another one that was even more awesome, and I would go do to. So it was like, "Okay, let's build a studio and get these guys self-sufficient for recording. Okay, let's hire a producer and another editor. Okay, let's..." So I ended up working on a program called *No Second Chances*, which is a lot more serious than any of this other stuff we've been talking about. But it's about... there have only been 12 women in the history of Canada that have been either the Prime Minister or premier of a province, a first minister, and they were all alive. So, we did a project where we talked to all 12 of them about their experiences.

And instead of doing, like, phone calls and stuff like that, we decided what we're going to do is we're going to go talk to them in their homes. So we did this... Really, it was about three months of recording, but the majority of it was a two-week, coast-to-coast-to-coast trip where I ended up... I was in British Columbia right before I was in Tuktoyaktuk, right before I was in Newfoundland. We did not do things in the right order. [laughs] We did them in the order of when people were available, but we were at the Atlantic, the Pacific, and the Arctic ocean in the span of two weeks. It was really a wonderful, life-changing experience. I love that I can thank Effin' Birds for that. You know what I mean?

Julie: Yeah. Now, was your background in audio production, or was this something new that you did?

Aaron: Yeah, I had... It was a skill that I had developed at my other job, that job that I had had for 12 years. That job was a lot of fun. It was kind of a teaching role for creative projects, and I got it because I had a photography background, and interest in videography, and stuff like that. While I was there, they were wonderful about letting me flex to their other needs because they had a hard time getting people who had audio engineering chops in the role. I was like, "I'm good at learning things. Let's learn this!" So, over the course of 12 years, that was something that I learned while I was there.

Then I had done a couple of podcasts on my own that were just, like, me goofing around. And yeah, it was really great. It was wonderful to flex that on a much bigger stage.

Julie: Yeah, for sure. So, have there been other doors that have been opened by Effin' Birds that, kind of, have blown your mind?

Aaron: Right now, I have two different projects halfway on the go, one of which is a lot less likely to happen than the other because it's truly absurd. But the one of them, I've been thinking about for at least a couple of years. I had thought up a very silly tagline for, like, a silly horror project, and I was like, "You know what, I could make this work." So, over the summer I broke down the outline for it, and I structured it into something that would work as a comic book, that had a bunch of good cliffhangers for issue ends, and it's in a place now where I'm happy with it. So, it's making the pitch rounds now, which is very exciting.

Anyway, if we're really lucky, there's going to be a comic book called *Space Werewolf*, which is... The tagline was: It's Always a Full Moon on the Moon. It was, like, a dumb Twitter joke I made, right? And then once I thought about that, I was like, "What are the implications of that?" So, the outline I put together was that it's a covered-up, failed, '60s Russian moon mission where one of the guys is a werewolf, but he thinks it's going

to be okay because it's not full moon time. But as they start approaching the moon, he realizes... [laughs]

What's really blown my mind is, I approached a couple of comic book artists who I greatly admire and respect, and they're so on board with this project. So, sometime soon I'm going to have a front cover for the pitch document. It's just, like, everything I have ever wanted in my life. That kind of door is, like... I have this opportunity right now, and who knows if I'll have this opportunity six months from now, so like, "Let's take this *right now*."

Julie: I'm really curious, because you seem like... from just talking about your comic book and talking about the podcast project that you worked on, you don't seem like you're a cynical individual.

Aaron: [laughs]

Julie: But... So, are you cynical? Or is *Effin' Birds* just, like, therapy, like catharsis for you?

Aaron: Well, I think that it's... I have been a cynical individual, and I think that I got to a place, maybe, in the last ten years where I really was not as cynical anymore. I think I've found my inner, like, satisfaction with life. But that undercurrent is still there, and I have to remind myself to not be that person. But *Effin' Birds* makes it so much easier because when that person comes out, instead of being frustrated that, "Oh, I'm feeling these bad emotions again," I'm just thankful for that negative emotion. I write it down, and then it just dissipates. So, I don't know that this is a repeatable thing that anybody else can do, but like, being thankful for feeling a negative emotion is, like... It's something else.

So, I don't like to think that I'm cynical person, although I have always been the person who is good at seeing what the next problem is going to be. Like, I'm the... There's a bird in the *Effin' Birds* book that's called the Forethoughts Heron. It's like, a Cassandra-like bird. I do feel like I've always been that, like, "I don't want to focus on the negative. Here are some things we want to take into account if we're taking the path forward. I don't know that they will all come to pass, but we should probably plan for them."

Julie: Could *Effin' Birds* have happened at any other time, culturally?

Aaron: I hesitate to say yes. I don't think so. I think we're in a moment where people really need some kind of outlet for their angst, and it seems like... both because of the world's situations - and there are so many situations that are frustrating around the world right now - but also because of the way that... I don't want to say 'news' because I feel like that's, sort of, targeting the people who aren't at fault here, but the way that engagement is driven online, where everything has to be dialed up to a specific emotional peak so that people will click. I think that that has really made *Effin' Birds* necessary and a good outlet, because things that would, I think, in the past, have been at the back page of the newspaper at best, in small type, become an outrage cycle of the day.

I think that it's just, like... There are, certainly, very large problems right now that need to be addressed, but there's so much minutiae that gets treated like it's every bit as big as the big problem, and I really think that's about how we consume news right now. It's because we don't consume at the source. We consume news at the free site that has rewritten the source to get clicks. I think that's killing us.

Julie: It's rough right now. Really rough. So what *is* it about swearing?

Aaron: The swearing part I think is anybody not as essential. I think it's the hook that gets people in in the first place, but I don't think it's actually the hook to the humor as much. Like, it's there because it's incongruous with a vintage woodcut; a beautiful thing that somebody spent days carving, plus the F-word. That is funny on its own, but I think that what keeps people there is the, sort of, stripped back and laid-open emotion part of it and the ability to recognize that emotion in themselves.

One of the many things that I learned at my old workplace was how to get people on the same side as you when you're talking to them. One of the keys is, you know, you want to talk about things that are the same in your experiences, and you want to talk about those things with as little detail as possible. Because the more details you add, the more opportunities you give someone to say, "I don't recognize that as what I'm feeling."

When I applied that to Effin' Birds it meant that if I was frustrated that someone had cut me off in traffic, I would write something about it, but I would start peeling away the specificity because... If I say I was cut off in traffic, the person who doesn't drive a car doesn't resonate with it. If I say I was cut off, maybe the person who's on a bicycle can start to feel it, or the person who was butted in front of in line can start to feel it. You know what I mean? There's a way to take away the parts that aren't universal to make it more universal without leaving it as nothing. It still has to be some kind of soup. It has to have enough ingredients that it's still soup and not a bowl of broth.

So, it's this thing where I feel something very specific, and I write down a very specific scenario, and then by the time it becomes an Effin' Bird it is... It's not totally universal, but it's as universal as that feeling is going to be. I think that's what makes it so easily resonant. It's what makes people think that, for instance, I'm a big follower of American politics, which I am not. I am Canadian, and I avoid most American politics stuff if I can, because I can.

Julie: Lucky you.

Aaron: I feel a little bit bad saying it. I can, sort of, treat it like it's a thing on TV that I can turn off, and I know that that's not true for people who are living through it. You can't turn that off. Also, I have to be cautious not to be, like, the Canadian who's like, "Haha! We've got it so much better up here!" In some respects we do, and in some respects we don't. If I'm going to dunk on my neighbors to the south, I'm missing out on what is wrong with where I am. So, personally I need to focus on what needs to happen up here.

But when I write, I try to write in a way that someone who's frustrated by what's happening in the United States is going to be able to resonate with it. So, I get a lot of replies that are about really specific things, and I have to say, "I don't know what this is about." Like, yesterday was the thing where... eventually I figured it out this morning, why everybody was tweeting at me about going for a ride in a car. "What is this about??" And I just started replying to some people, like, "I think this is an American political thing because I don't get it."

Julie: Well, it's funny because they're always, like, bizarrely, freakishly on point for the things that are going on.

Aaron: To a certain extent, I know the broad strokes of what's happening around the world, and I certainly do the thing in the morning where... One of the things with Effin' Birds is I don't write it in the moment. I definitely have a queue of stuff written. Right now - and this is a ghoulish way to think of it - if I were to die today, Effin' Birds would post for 200 more days.

Julie: Holy cow! Okay.

Aaron: Yeah, so there's a fairly deep queue there. What I do is, one of my morning rounds, like, literally the first thing I do after I get up and make some coffee is I do a temperature check on Twitter, and on Facebook, and on Instagram, and I see if there's any kind of mood that I need to line up with. And if there's a pretty consistent mood amongst those places, I shuffle what's in the queue and I bump up something appropriate. I do like the "Can We Have A Break Between Clusterfucks?" was written, I'm going to say, three months ago. But yesterday was the day that it was necessary.

Julie: I'm curious too... How do I phrase this? It feels like there's a line to walk between catharsis and adding to negativity.

Aaron: Yeah! Oh yeah. I'm constantly in terror that I'm making things worse and not better. I had a conversation with... Actually, we had pitched it around a little - again, before all the things stopped happening in the world - with a couple of other people who have popular... who owe their business success to social media. We had pitched a panel around called *Feeling Good About Contributing to the Downfall of Society*. We can both hate what social media is doing to everyone, and also recognize that, yes, we're only successful because it's there. And how do we say that we're the good guys? How do we feel good about what we're doing?

And I think that I *do* mostly tread on the catharsis and not wallowing side of it. Every once in a while... I posted one that said, "I'm Losing My Fucking Will To Live," but I did very carefully target that as being right in the middle of the American presidential debate, because that was also was everybody was saying who was watching it. And I watched some of that, and I can understand, like...

Julie: You're brave.

Aaron: Yeah, I was like, "Why did I do this to myself? I don't even live in that country!"

Julie: So it's like, you do think through, like... You've got this huge queue, but you think through, like, what's going to land right.

Aaron: Exactly. What will people feel today? What will people resonate with today? Because I think that's the biggest thing. Some of it is that it's a joke, but a lot of it is that I'm just trying to line up with what everybody else is feeling. Trying to be emotionally relevant.

Julie: Is there an art or science behind which images you choose for those phrases?

Aaron: Yeah, yeah. What'll happen is, I'll have a pile of things that I felt, and a pile of birds, and I'll just start opening the birds, and it's sort of... I'm not going to say I go into, like, a trance or anything like that, but I do sort of...

Julie: [laughs] ... but I go into a trance.

Aaron: Yeah. No, I put the bird on the page and I just, sort of, look at it. So, I'm drawing inspiration from my list of prompts of horrible things that've happened. And I'm looking at this bird, like, "What is this bird feeling?" And I really just have a close look at their eyes, because that's really where all that expression comes from. Actually, that's part of

why I love Bewick's woodcuts of birds, because they have very expressive eyes and it makes this joke work.

Yeah, I sort of stare into their eyes and I let them tell me what they're thinking, [laughs] which sounds so weird. But like, I understand how that works with writing. I love when Stephen King writes about writing and his writing process, where he feels like sometimes he's just at the controls of a bulldozer trying to unearth something, and sometimes he feels like he just puts some people there, and follows them around, and sees what they do, and then writes it down. I'm sort of that way with the birds. I just follow them around and see what they do. I give myself my prompts so I know what my ideas are this week, but a lot of times it's just staring at them and thinking about them.

Julie: It was pure happenstance that you ended up with birds. If you had to choose, would you have chosen a different animal, or anything else? Is there anything that you would've chosen differently?

Aaron: I think that one of the reasons why Effin' Birds is better than the original pitch to that media organization is birds, because they have - at least the Bewick version of birds - very expressive eyes. When I've tried it with other animals, like as a joke... Every once in a while Effin' Birds will post something that's not a bird just to mess with people. My favorite is I posted this crab that has the caption, "Look, Asshole. I Don't Have Time To Explain." And whenever anyone complains about it, I just reply, "Look, Asshole. I don't have time to explain." [laughs]

Anyway, but they don't have the expressions. They're a different kind of joke. I think if I had stuck with the original version of it, the rejected version of it... I think the rejected version of it wasn't as good. I think that it probably would not have had the same impact because it was less focused, and it didn't have that magic of birds. So, I'm super thankful for that spam email.

Julie: Yeah! Now, have you seen any, like, Twitter handles, or books, or anything that look like they have been 'inspired' by Effin' Birds? And how do you feel about that?

Aaron: [laughs] I see a lot of Twitter copycats, and you know, I just... I take pleasure in the fact that they don't tend to survive very long. That's not me being catty. Part of it is that Effin' Birds survives because it has a business plan, and because it has an income. And because it has an income, I can devote the amount of time that it needs to make it successful. If it didn't have an income, I couldn't. It's why some of my projects have gone away, even ones that were beloved.

Julie: Do you have a swear word that you just will not use, that you won't go there with?

Aaron: Oh yeah. There's a few. I have a hard time particularly with gendered curse words because they tend to be so... I recognize that in usage they have become less what their origin is, but I still... I find them... I don't want to say distasteful because the entire project is distasteful. But I find them... I just don't want to use them. I think that's the way to put it.

I think it's like, there are some words that are used to express that someone is of low intelligence, that are socially acceptable to use, and there are some that were socially acceptable to use when I was a kid that are not socially acceptable to use now. Like, I recognize the difference between those words, and I do also understand the feeling that all of them are socially unacceptable.

I have a particular fondness for the word 'idiot'. I do understand where people are coming from when they talk about that being, like, a tricky word to use without acknowledging the history of the word or the origins of the word. So, I feel maybe I'm a little bit of a hypocrite, that there are some words I won't use because of their origins, that have really transcended those origins and usage, and there are others that I will. Maybe some of that is just what I grew up with. I just try to keep that all in my head at the same time, and to draw lines for myself. I do have a bucket of words I won't use, and people will say, "Why don't you ever use *this* word?" Because I don't like that word.

Julie: It's your thing, man.

Aaron: It's my thing. I get to do it how I want. Exactly. Somebody the other day was giving me a hard time about how he didn't like the way I did a thing and I said, "Why don't you go make a beloved internet property and run it *your* way?"

Julie: And they were very quiet after that. [laughs]

Aaron: Yeah. Usually they block me when I say things like that. Like, "If you want to criticize but not accept the criticism back, uh... you're not going to have a good time here."

Julie: My last question for you is, for your American fans, what are your recommended curses or Effin' Birds to get us through the next three weeks?

Aaron: You know what, your election cycles are so goddamned long. We have a law about how long elections can last here, and they're much, much shorter than what you guys do.

Julie: Jealous!

Aaron: I think that I have an overuse of the word 'clusterfuck' in the queue for the next little while because... I don't want to be the Cassandra, but I feel like that's what things are heading towards. It just feels like it's a big, looming disaster. So, I have a lot of stuff scheduled about clusterfucks and exhaustion, because I really realize that people are at the limit of their emotional bandwidth, and they're at risk of checking out at the one time when they probably shouldn't check out.

Julie: Yeah, people are probably feeling numb more than anything else.

Aaron: Exactly. So, that's sort of my plan for the next little bit, is clusterfucks, exhaustion... Actually, I should just look in the queue and see what I have here. Let me just open this up.

I'm a big fan of automated tools so you don't have to sit there on Twitter all day long, because if you do... Oh yeah, I've got one that says, "Motherfuckers Inbound!"

Julie: [laughs]

Aaron: You know what, there's a lot about not caring, and I think I might have to be careful with those because those are... Yeah, here's one. This is scheduled for Tuesday the 13th of October but I might move it up. It says, "Stop Fucking Up Your Own Shit." There's a lot about not talking anymore. There's an, "Oh My God Shut Up." [laughs] I probably could've deployed that back during the debate, but oh well. Those are my American election themes.

But you know, take care of yourself; self-care. Logging off is an option. And if you don't react angrily to something on Twitter today, that's actually not going to have an impact on the election, you know?

Julie: And I think also, you know, finding your own version of Effin' Birds. Like, you use it for catharsis, so figure out... I mean, obviously, buy Aaron's book. Follow Effin' Birds.

Aaron: And there's a weekly planner and a 2021 calendar thanks to the fine people at Andrews McMeel. I'm so pleased that the people who make the Garfield calendar also make an Effin' Birds calendar right now, because I think everything that I do at this point is a competition with Garfield. So, I'll be happy once I get the restaurant, but you know, for now, let's outsell Garfield calendars this year.

Julie: You know what, I can't think of a more important or better goal to have in 2020. [laughs]

Aaron: [laughs]

Julie: Aaron, thank you so much for taking the time to talk and walk through your process and the thinking behind it. I know you are doing an important service for a lot of people. Thank you for joining me.

Aaron: Thanks for having me. This was actually a really fun conversation to start a week. I was like, "Okay, I'm going to drink a lot of coffee. Let's do this! This is the first thing I'm doing this week, how are we going to do?" And this was a really solid start to the week, so thank you so much.

Julie: Awesome. Thank you.

You can find Aaron everywhere @Effin' Birds and EffinBirds.com, or @AaronReynolds. I'll put links in the show notes along with links to Aaron's favorite nonprofits.

Just a reminder that you can find the podcast on Instagram @LoveWhatYouLovePod, on Twitter @WhatYouLovePod, and the website is LoveWhatYouLovePod.com.

Zeke Rodrigues Thomas at Mindjam Media provided that heroic editing assistance. You can find Zeke at MindjamMedia.com. Also, a reminder that all of the transcripts for *Love What You Love* are available for everyone on the website. Thanks to the hilarious and always thoughtful Emily White, as always, for the fantastic transcripts. If you need transcripts, reach out to her at HireEmilyWhite@gmail.com. The music for *Love What You Love* is called "Inspiring Hope" by Pink-Sounds. A link to that artist is included in the show notes.

Okay y'all, go out there and love the hell out of whatever it is that you love, including swearing. You need it, and we need it. Thanks for listening. Let's hang out again soon.

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Aaron's favorite nonprofits:

EJL.org

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TheTrevorProject.org

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