

Fraser Ayres

In Conversation with Jonny Wright

Jonny Wright (JW): Hi, it's Jonny Wright here with *WritersMosaic*. I'm interviewing the wonderful Mr Fraser Ayres today. How are you doing, Fraser?

Fraser Ayres (FA): I'm good, brother. How's it going?

JW: Yeah, not bad. Not bad at all. I'm very excited to be—I mean, we've—it's been a while since we've connected. So, it's great to reconnect. I remember the first time, I think the first time I ever met you; you were playing me. I think, was it, was it *Up North*? Yeah, no?

FA: Yep. It was *Up North*, mate. I think that was the first time I got called in—Soho theatre, if I'm not mistaken.

JW: Suzanne Gorman was directing it. And when we say '*Up North*', we don't just mean 'up north' as in, like, the north of England. The play that I wrote, or the hip-hop musical, was called *Up North*. And the character of

XYM, who I've written for myself, then Suzanne said, 'No, you can't. You can't.' The director said that I couldn't play it because I needed to sit on the side and—

FA: —watch it as a writer.

JW: Exactly. Which was good advice.

FA: It's an interesting one, though. Yeah. It's an interesting one, that one. I remember baulking against that one when that happened to me.

JW: Yeah.

FA: And, actually, it was a really invaluable experience.

JW: Yeah, exactly. So, I got to see you play me, which is very, very exciting, and, and we've just kind of crossed paths ever since, I think.

FA: Yeah, man through TriForce. You've been involved in different ways with your writing and coming through and yeah, man, it's, it's interesting our industry, isn't it? Because, you know, there's a lot of us in it; but there's —you've got like your soul brothers.

JW: Yeah.

FA: And you keep revisiting as the decades pass.

JW: And you're kind of my doppelganger. Every time you come on TV, my wife says, 'That's you! That's you!'

FA: Laughs.

JW: So, I see why you got cast as me in this, in this hip-hop musical. And then—

FA: —Yeah, man.

JW: And then, so yeah, you just mentioned TriForce Centre. Tell the listeners what TriForce is exactly.

FA: Okay. So TriForce is an organisation I set up in 2003. You know, I was a young, mixed-race actor, and there wasn't an awful lot of people who looked like me. And there wasn't an awful lot of women. And there wasn't an awful lot of disabled people. And there wasn't a lot of, etc, etc, etc. So, I set up an organisation called the TriForce Creative Network, as a way to facilitate the talent that I knew existed in its thousands across the UK that simply wasn't being seen, whether it, you know, it started off with on-screen talent, so kind of actors, and then into writers. And now we do through Dandi, we recruit [the] production side of things. But it was a way of re-addressing the imbalance I saw in our industry of privilege and a lack

of access for people. And yeah, that was—oh, my god, that was almost 20 years ago now, Jonny.

JW: Yeah. Wow. Well, I mean, it's going very strong. And I think, when you mentioned Dandi being on the production side of things there, I think that's really important as well; because I think what's happening now is I've seen, and my mum will always say, 'Oh, yeah, there's a lot of black actors in adverts and stuff now.' Um, and it's almost—we've got this, it's almost a fake diversity, I think, where it looks really diverse, but when you look at crews and stuff, and the people behind the scenes, it's very, very white. So, I think actually, this focus on the behind the scenes and the production of Dandi, I think it's really, really great to add to the work that TriForce is already doing.

FA: It was the, it was the logical, you know, we'd done fifteen years of *MonologueSlam* with actors. You know, we fundamentally shifted how our industry, you know, just found talent.

JW: So yeah, just describe what *MonologueSlam* is for the listeners, as well.

FA: So, *MonologueSlam* was one of the pathways that I created that basically, I thought to myself, *What do I need, as an actor?* I need to be seen in front of like, you know, casting directors and agents. It needs to be free. I don't want to be paying for that. And even if I'm not getting through

it, it needs to be like a gym where I'm learning and doing stuff. So, we came up with *MonologueSlam*, and did that all around the country and actually in LA, as well. And it was completely open and free to actors to come audition; and then we would put them in front of five industry heavyweights: casting directors, agents, boom, boom, boom, and an audience of wherever the theatres were, where we were, where we were placed. And it came from my own—again, my own frustrations of the industry, and what did the solution look like?

And we did that for fifteen years and, yeah, we fundamentally shifted how casting directors looked for talent, how they accessed it. And, you know, we had a big impact on what we now see is the on-screen representation and we're like, *Great!* But, literally, I got on set as one of those people like, *Great, great, great. We're in, we're in.* And you go, and you look over the other side of the camera, and you're like, *Oh, okay.*

JW: Yeah.

FA: And like you say that kind of false representation. So, the interesting thing—so with Dandi, we were recruiting production talent to the industry, getting them proper jobs, not more training and more bloody schemes. 'Actually, give me a job! You gave your nephew one, who's never even been part of the industry. Like, come on, give me a job.' So, we set that up to do that and the—I mean, you know, the volume that we're operating at and we're able to make that change is incredible.

So, now what we're doing, you know, we've got this mad volume; we've put out 900 roles in the last 12 months; over 300 productions, working with 72 production companies. I mean, it's volume, but now what we're doing is we're also supporting those production companies, and a big conversation is safe workspaces. You know what I mean? There is that aspect of, you know, *I shouldn't be, I shouldn't be grateful for you to give me a job that I'm going to work for.* So, that feeling that *I'm lucky to be here, or things aren't as bad as they used to be,* all those kinds of rhetorics; that's not the thing; I mean, *I'm here to work. So, actually, I shouldn't have to put up with any circumstances that don't treat me in the same way as you're treating everybody else.*

JW: Yeah.

FA: So, we're looking at that, and some great production companies doing some great work from that. And, you know, there's a lot of people being educated about perhaps the way they saw things that isn't necessarily the best way to get the most inclusive work.

JW: So, do you see there being a step? So, you kind of, TriForce to Dandi —do you see there being a next kind of natural step to make after that?

FA: Well, we've also got the production company, you know, TriForce Productions. And we made *Sorry, I Didn't Know*, which is the comedy

panel show about black history, which is a whole conversation itself. ‘A comedy panel show about black history?’ ‘Yes!’ So, those three things, you know, we're nurturing talent; we're finding talent; we're developing it; we're supporting it; we're getting it work. Plus, we're creating content. You know, to be honest, brother, I'm kind of feeling like that's enough for now.
[Laughs]

JW: You are doing, you're doing, yeah, your fair share, more than your fair share of work.

FA: I'm good for a bit. Do you know what I mean? [Laughs]

JW: Yeah, take, take a breather, take a breather. So, how did you get into the industry in the first place? And how did you—well, what order did it come? Did you—was it acting and then writing? Writing and then acting? How did your journey start?

FA: My story has always been, you know, it's—I told my mum that I wanted to be an actor at seven. I was like, *So, what made me want to become an actor?* Someone asked me and I realised, I didn't start off as an actor; I started off as a writer. So, in primary school, we had to write stories, and I wrote a story about an apple. And an apple fell from the tree and went on this big journey and it ended very, very sadly, because the apple got ate by a dog.

JW: Oh, no!

FA: But then it got pooped out as seeds, and a new tree grew. Yay, right?

JW: The circle of life.

FA: Right? So, I'd done basically a *Lion King* when I was six, right?

JW: [Laughs]

FA: I'd actually written something. The teachers had gone, 'We want to make a play. We want to do this play.' And they made me the apple, right? So, I did this play as the apple. But what I remember was that feeling of obviously being, you know, seven years old, in front of like, you know, the school and all the parents, acting my socks off and everyone loving it. So, I remembered I wanted to be an actor, at seven, but the truth was, that was my first writing commission. [Laughs]

JW: There we go!

FA: That's how that—I actually wrote my first role for myself. That's actually what happened.

JW: But it's a good moral of like self-determination to write those parts for yourself, really. Even as a seven year old, you look at things like, you

know, *Insecure*, *Atlanta*, *Fleabag*, it's, it's very much I think, the age of like, *Chewing Gum*, as well, the writer-performer now.

FA: Yeah, it really is. And I think people from particularly certain demographics, that's been the route that we've, we've taken, and we've had to take, because let's say those doors aren't open for us.

JW: Yeah.

FA: So, it is kind of like, *Well, unless I write me, I'm not going to see me.*

JW: What do you see your career is looking like, if you weren't able to write? What would your career look like now do you think?

FA: It would be much emptier.

JW: Yeah.

FA: It's really interesting; again, so from that seven to older, I was so driven, like, even at school, like 'he's going to be an actor'; *I am going to be an actor*. Like, there was nothing on the cards, that was anything, and any other suggestion about being anything else felt like a cop-out; and I pushed and pushed and pushed. As I got older and started to look back, I realised that, actually, the term 'actor' is really, really reductive; and what I am is a storyteller. And sometimes I tell other people's stories in a way that

I do like acting, and sometimes I write stories. But, fundamentally, my career is as a storyteller. And now that now I'm, you know, whether it's my acting, or whether it's my writing, or even, like creating the pathways for like, TriForce, they're all part I now realise of the same creative path; they are not indistinguishable.

And, funnily enough, the article that I've written for you about my appreciation for Clive Barker is something that I highlight in that about—he was a playwright, he was an author, he—I say was, he still is—playwright, author, like, prolific visual artist in paint, and, you know, like, and they're all telling the same story that he wants to tell. And it's something that I've been working with.

Over the last two years, circumstances have changed so much that actually, that there's an awful lot of actors who feel like they failed, because it didn't 'happen'. And they can get stuck in that place. And that's because, you know, those outside external things aren't coming in and what—and they're stuck there. And I've been working with some actors and talking about, 'You're not an actor, you're a storyteller. And you don't need permission from anybody to tell stories. You don't need a commission for that. Tell your stories!'

JW: Yes, I think that's excellent advice. And then going back to your being brought up in Leicester, in a working-class environment; a council estate you've mentioned before—

FA: —Once or twice—

JW: Once or twice!

FA: [Laughs]

JW: How did you make the acting happen from there? Because it's not a background that many actors are from.

FA: No, no. So, it was really hard. Like, my mum had no connections. We didn't know anybody, like at all. And also, something to point out to your listeners, like, this is pre-internet, mate. Like, you couldn't type into Google, 'how do I become an actor?' You know, 'does the National—?' Like you couldn't—you had to send off letters.

JW: This is even pre-MySpace.

FA: No, it's pre-everything, bredrin! So, you had to like, 'Hi, National Theatre.' Send it off and maybe you'll get a letter back. You know, that kind of thing. My mum worked very hard to, you know, the big—one of the big obstacles was the financial circumstances, you know, just going, like, from Leicester to London to go and do an audition, even if you got an agent is just insane. So, that was a big obstacle. And what happened was the Leicester Haymarket had a youth theatre at the time; and I applied. And I

was eleven, twelve, and I applied for that. And they took me on. And next thing, they cast me in—they would do a show with their young people actually in the Leicester Haymarket every year, and they cast me as the lead. It was my first lead, oh, my God, in a play! And then that play got taken to the Olivier. So, I was on the Olivier at the age of twelve, as a lead.

JW: It's downhill from there, bro.

FA: It was like, *Oh, my God! What?* But then you come home, and you're still on the estate. That was kind of like the first, the first—

JW: —And it doesn't mean anything to them, either. [Laughs]

FA: No, absolutely. I told 'em. I told 'em. Like, you go back home and it's like, 'The Olivier, darling, it's the Olivier!'

JW: [Laughs]

FA: 'I don't give a damn about that.' And so you kind of go back home and keep grinding it out. And the same director—again, this is the reason I'm telling this is, this is about relationships, and you never know who—so, the person that is now commissioning me to write for a broadcaster is a person who I was a friend with, who was an assistant producer on a job 20 years' ago. He's now the head of this channel. Like, relationships—

JW: —Yeah.

FA: They're important. And that director directed then a professional play and wanted me again to be a lead, and that—she took me to London. And so that was when I was twelve, after that. So, I was acting on a London stage at twelve.

JW: Wow! So, you've been in this game a long time.

FA: Bredrin, 30 years! Literally, 30 years! I've been acting, I've been in the game longer than I've breathed. Like, literally it's, like that's, that's well heavy on the side. And so, you know, that was a play. And then an agent came; she was like, 'I want to represent you.' It was a series of very, very fortunate events. The greatest obstacle was my mum: one, trying to get the information for me; and two, being able to financially put me in those situations so I could meet an agent at a play. Do you know what I mean? That kind of thing. If I wanted to do something.

So, we had this thing called Devil's Advocate, okay? And Devil's Advocate was a thing that we did all the way through our lives. And if I was like, 'Black is black,' she'd go, 'No, black is white.' And we would argue it, in a safe environment, batter it out, and at the end of it, one of you's going, 'You're right,' and then you have the truth. And it's how we dealt with everything. Any big things like when I was like, 'I'm going to leave college to become an actor'. Devil's Advocate: 'No, you're not!' 'Let's do this!'

Boom, boom, boom; even then, at the end of that conversation, she was like, 'No, absolutely, you need to leave. There's no point in you being there.'

JW: Yeah.

FA: And so we would batter through things. And at the end of that, obviously, not just whims and fancies, and that's what kind of the point I'm making. But for serious things where I was like, 'Oh,' she would be like, 'Okay, I'm going to do everything in my power to make that happen.' And I was so blessed to have that. And that's not about money, that's not about, you know, environment, that's about that individual creating, with very limited resources, an incredibly safe environment for me to grow and try some stuff out.

JW: That's—I mean, she sounds like a wonderful woman. And on that subject, how did you find—I lost a parent quite recently; I lost my dad a few years ago.

FA: Yeah, man.

JW: And how do you find, or how did you cope with losing your mum whilst being self-employed? Because I think it's—I feel, I feel it's a bit different. You know, my dad passed, but I still need, you know, I—there's not those two, three, four weeks or a month where you take time off and it's like,

you're on sick leave. Like if I don't work, I don't get money. So I was kind of

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FA: —And emotionally, that's really, it's really f*cking hard, mate, because emotionally you're like, *Why is the world still turning? Now hang on, why is everyone going about their day? Christina's gone? Don't you know? What the— ?* It's really, it's an interesting one that one, mate, and here's a little story:

So, when my mum passed, you know, people around you, as you know, deal with it in different ways: some people lean in, some people lean out, you know. And I got a letter from the wonderful Philip Hedley, who I know you know. For your listeners, Philip Headley ran Theatre Royal Stratford East, working-class sentiments, socialism in theatre, you know, all that good stuff. And Philip Hedley sent me a letter. So, in this letter, he said, the first thing was, 'My dear boy, I'm so sorry for your loss. I know how close you were to your mum. People are going to tell you that the pain goes away, but I'm telling you now that it doesn't. So, don't reach for that. What you can reach for is that it doesn't hurt so much.'

And it was such a profound—and it wasn't a negative thing. He was actually telling me the truth of the thing that I needed to latch on to, which is not, 'Oh, it'll be okay.' No, it f*cking won't. I've lost my mum. It's never going to be okay. It's never going be okay. It's not meant to be okay. And

then he put, 'It's not a lot, but I do hope this helps a little during the given time.' And he put £200 in cash in the envelope, mate.

JW: Aye, that's—

FA: Yeah, man. Philip Hedley tings. And like, he understood all the bits of the issue. Do you know what I mean? [Laughs] Like, every time, he's been through it. He knew this is an issue and this is an issue. 'It's not a lot but let me try and help you through those. At that time, that, that 200 went a long, long, long way, you know, and it really, really helped. And it is when you lose somebody that close whether it's a parent or somebody really, really close when you're self-employed, like the world does not stop. And, you know, I don't know if this is useful, or not in the way that Philip was with me, but I can easily say, mate, hand on heart, it took me four years to not be angry. Four years, like, that's when I, when I could, I could think for myself again. I wasn't thinking in the shadow of the loss, if that makes sense.

JW: And what were you angry at? Her passing?

FA: Oh, no, no, no. I wasn't angry at her passing. You know, that was—my mum had emphysema and cancer from when I was quite a young age. I was my mum's caregiver as well. So, it was always on the cards. You know, obviously, it's a surprise, but it was on the cards for a long time.

JW: Yeah.

FA: No, I was angry at everything else. I was angry at my loss. I was angry at how nobody cared. Like she, she was amazing. *Dude, like, come on, man!* Again, *why is the world still turning?*

JW: Yeah.

FA: And then there was knock-on things; like, she was my harshest critic, but my bestest friend, like, like a good mind. And so, when I was f*cking up, it was her going, 'Mate, come on. You're better than this, this isn't—' And when I was nailing it, there was no one putting up more ticker tape banners and sh*t. Do you know what I mean? So, when that person goes from your life as well, you're like, *Oh*. And so, there was definitely that kind of feeling afterwards, of being adrift.

JW: Yeah.

FA: And that taking—you know, that, that in itself took, you know, at least a year or two to kind of really get back on. But when I look back, it was like, yeah, I wasn't right for at least four years.

JW: And this is kind of four years what you would describe it as the angry stage, Fraser's angry stage? How did you find that creatively? Because I found when my dad passed, I mean it's, it's not, it's been less than two

years for me, but in one way it helped me creatively because I'm—*Okay let's just get on with the work, let's get on with the work.* But then, for other things, I found there's a little bit of a block and a little bit of a like, *You know what, let me actually just take some time and like, 'process this,'* as the Americans would say. So, how did you—I mean, but it's different for every individual, so, how did you find it when you you said were angry? How was, how was the work?

FA: The fundamentals of that time, it wasn't really writing or acting, it was TriForce; you know, doing that. And the ethos behind TriForce is the one that my mum gave to me. Do you know what I mean? I saw my mum under great difficulties look after me. Do you know what I mean? She could have checked out at any goddamn point. And it's kind of same with TriForce with me, like, I can't—there's 50,000 people who need jobs.

JW: Yeah.

FA: Like that—you can't, you can't really look at your navel too long, bredrin.

JW: [Laughs]

FA: So, so, and funnily—so, this is the mad one. So, the night she passed, two hours before it, I was on the phone to our web team, because our site had gone down. The things don't stop. And afterwards, it was like, *Well.*

And also, you know, I've got my mum who's got me to this place in my life, you know what I mean? We've got there together, I've done a lot of hard work and all that but, you know, without her, none of it would have occurred. And you're kind of there, and you're kind of sat there, and then you've got her ghost looming over you. And she's like, 'Why are you being a waste, man?' [Laughs] 'You're not honouring me, like, take your time, take a minute, but you're not honouring me by doing like, weird sh*t.' Do you know what I mean?

And so, there's always that part of your brain that's like, *Okay, well, there are other responsibilities*. When I look back, I would have loved a bit of time to regroup and maybe that four years wouldn't have been so long if I'd taken more time; if I was able to have taken more time to kind of 'process', as we're saying. For me, it became about honouring her. It's like, *okay, if the world's going to keep spinning, and no one's going to give a sh*t, then cool*. It became about honouring her in what I did, and the work that I do; creatively, going back to that kind of original question, yeah man, it's made my work richer.

I went back and rewrote *Maynard*. So, for your listeners, I wrote a thing fifteen years' ago, called *Maynard*. So, *Maynard* was written fifteen years' ago. It kind of came back around; it ended up on Radio BBC 4, fifteen years later with a rewrite. And then I got the Imison Award for it, fifteen years after I'd originally written it!

JW: Congratulations!

FA: Cheers, brother. But do you know what happened between those two things? [Laughs] My mum died! So, in the script, she died, but my mum hadn't died in real life.

JW: So, you kind of then—

FA: So then, you—and again, just to go back for your listeners. So yes, the script is about a young man whose mother dies, and she passes on the restaurant, which he has to take on and serve the community of Brixton. So, that's what the story was about. But my mum hadn't died at that point. But that story became much richer when she had passed because I was like, *Oh, my goodness*. And it did. And, in terms of the ideas that I actually came up with, that I put out to pitch, well, they're very different now as well, than they were previously. Do you know what I mean? Actually, one of the things I was talking to a script editor friend of mine about my work, and I don't—my work doesn't have any apology in it anymore.

JW: Interesting.

FA: Yeah. Yeah, we were kind of breaking that down looking at it. It was like, 'Yeah, that's very much Fraser's trait, is to please, to make you feel happy, to give compliments to, you know, countless things mum taught

me; kindness and all that stuff.’ And it can actually put you in a very interesting space when you do that all the time. And, in terms of the script, we had this conversation with the script editor, like now I say what I’ve got to say in the way that I want to say it that I know personally feel needs to be said in that way.

JW: Yeah.

FA: Rather than a script going, ‘Well, it’s the BBC and I think they’re only going to—I better take out these words, or I might change...’ My writing does not do that stuff anymore.

JW: So, in a strange way, some aspect of it has been liberating.

FA: Oh, absolutely, mate. Absolutely. And in life’s journeys, you have to take those positives. Do you know what I mean? Buddhists have this beautiful thing about death and it’s like, you know, it’s like a candle and all the wick’s gone; but then you just use that last little bit to light another candle.

JW: Yeah.

FA: And you’ve got that in terms of reincarnation and that belief, but you’ve also got that in terms of legacy and your children. And that’s kind of mum’s tings, like, ‘Okay, there’s the flame. Don’t snuff it out.’ All things must pass,

brother. Do you know what I mean? And so there are positives and there are things that you can only do once they're gone.

JW: Hey, do you know what? This is back to you're seven years old; this is a circle of life.

FA: There you go, Baby Cakes! [Laughs]

JW: And it's interesting, with *Maynard* which has been fifteen years since I've visited the project. It's weird. I can't, you know—I remember bits about the project: yourself and Goldie and stuff, and I remember liking it. But all I know from reading it now is, yeah, this is, this is better. But I can't put my —because I can't remember so much fifteen years ago. So, it's, I don't know exactly what it is; but it's like, yeah, it leaps off the page and, like you said, again, maybe it means the bits with the mum are really strong and when actually there's a few conversations in there. And is that something that you've done in real life?

FA: Yeah, yeah, without a doubt. My mum always had this thing. So, my mum was really, really close to her dad—really, really was. And he taught her this thing, and she had this thing with me. And she was like, 'I'm always with you.' And it's like, 'Oh, yeah, the sentiment; I carry you with me.' And she's like, 'No, no. I'm always with you. I'm always with you.' Whether you believe in ghosts or not is irrelevant.

JW: Yeah, yeah.

FA: She's like, 'Sit, take three deep breaths, close your eyes, and ask me a question out loud. I promise you I will answer.' And my God, she does every single time, bruv because, like *Matrix* sh*t like that, there is a, there is a digital imprint of that person in you. Whether it's in the soul, whether it's in your mind, where, you know, we can spend another three hours getting into that kind of stuff; but there is a digital imprint in your mind of that person. And you know what they look like, you know what they would say, you know the advice they would give. And actually, if you ask out loud, they always f*cking answer back.

JW: I just want to close with, if you had any—well, two things I want to close with: First thing is if you have any advice for up-and-coming writers or actors, what would it be?

FA: Yeah, yeah. Get in touch with TriForce, you know, www.thetcn.com. Come and get in touch. That's what I would advise. You know, there's lots of opportunity out there, and we're in a position where we're able to cut out some of the nepotistic nonsense that exists in our industry and allowing talent to shine and putting real talent in front of people. Secondly, it's a marathon, not a sprint. I'm going back to this thing about being a storyteller, not necessarily a writer or an actor, or those things. Understand that the thing that you write today shouldn't be the best thing that you write. And if in the next twenty years, that was the best thing, then you

should have quit then! The idea is you get better, so there is a lot of frustrations at the 'no's,' and there's a lot of frustration at the 'they don't get my project.' I—believe me, every day I'm there.

JW: Yeah.

FA: But the truth of the matter is it is a journey. So, understand that maybe where you are at the moment is just learning. And then you kind of realise that it's all just learning; all the way from the beginning to the end. That's all it is, you know.

JW: More circle of life stuff.

FA: Yeah, man.

JW: And, finally, if you're on a desert island, you can take five, it can be books, or plays, or even I'll give you TV shows as well. Like, what would it be? You can combine.

FA: Okay, then. Okay. I like a little mix of that. That's nice. Thank you. Thank you. Okay, so, TV-wise, I'm going to go with *The OA* series on Netflix.

JW: Okay. I've not watched it yet; I've heard good things.

FA: It's my jam. And I will also have, I'll have a *Rick and Morty* on that, too there. One film. I'm going to have one film. Okay.

JW: Alright.

FA: And that's going to be the original *Matrix*.

JW: Okay. I've not seen the newest one yet, but the original is dope.

FA: It's got a good vibe, mate. It's got a good vibe. It's not the original, but, you know, it's yeah – that's another three-hour podcast. And then two books? Well, I think definitely one would have to be *Metamorphosis*, absolutely, by Franz Kafka. It's a remarkable story about identity, and if you're stuck on a desert island with yourself, then—

JW: [Laughs]

FA: —working out who you are isn't going to hurt. I would also have, I'm going to have—I'm having six, because I've got to have a Clive Barker. I have to have a Clive Barker there, man. That can't not be there. And if I was going to have a Clive Barker, it would be *Imajica*, because you can read, read and read and read and re-read that over and over and over again.

And then, finally, the book that I will finish on is *Bhagavad Gita*, which is a holy text of Hindus. And it's a story about a guy and he's a soldier on the battlefield, this huge battlefield. And it's a battle that needs to be fought. The people on the other side are definitely baddies.

JW: Okay.

FA: Unfortunately, these baddies are also the people that taught our warrior how to fight. They are his uncles, they are his brothers, they are his nephews. And he on this battlefield, looking at all of his family that he needs to fight, loses all of his will and courage. But, thankfully, his best mate, who is his charioteer, is God.

JW: Good best mate to have.

FA: Not a bad best mate to have. And they have a chat, that is literally the *Bhagavad Gita* God song. And they have a chat about the universe, about life, about the weight of the soul, about how to meditate, about how to find peace in adversity, about reincarnation. They talk about it all. And that would be the final book I take on a desert island with me.

JW: I think that's—it's a great collection. It's a great collection. You come from that to *Rick and Morty*. So, it's eclectic.

FA: Yeah, mate—la balance.

JW: Great. Well, you, thank you so much for your time.

FA: Man, absolute pleasure speaking to you again, Jonny, mate. All the best and all the best to your listeners, man.

Fraser Ayres was in conversation with Jonny Wright

A recording of this interview can be found at writersmosaic.org.uk

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