**This is a guy called Adam Met. You might recognise him as the bass guitarist and one-third of the American indie-pop band AJR, a group he founded with his younger brothers Jack and Ryan back in two-thousand and five.**

**You might also be one of the two-hundred and thirty-seven MILLION people who have watched the video of their track called World’s Smallest Violin on YouTube, or perhaps you’ve contributed to the BILLIONS of downloads the band’s music has enjoyed via streaming services like Spotify.**

**Why am I telling you all this on a channel about the Climate Emergency and Sustainable Technology, I hear you cry?**

**Well, because Adam Met also just happens to hold a Ph.D. in International Human Rights Law, has become a relentless campaigner for sustainability and climate action, and has just written an inspirational book that seeks to guide others through the processes of engendering collective action, building movements and managing effective change.**

**And in his spare time, among other things, it turns out he watches the Just Have a Think channel. So, we thought we should have a chat.**

**Adam Met, thanks for joining us.**

**Thank you so much. Excited to be here.**

**It’s very kind of you to spare a bit of your time, I'm sure you've got a very hectic schedule from your work with the band, but I'm interested in the genesis of the group because it's you and your brothers, Jack and Ryan, isn't it? So can you give us a little sort of potted history? It's a fascinating history, I think, as well.**

**Of course. Yeah. It was, a really kind of strange situation. Our parents weren't musicians, they weren't in the music industry, but our dad was so passionate about music that he would play us music from his vinyl record collection.**

**So, we listened to a lot of the stuff that he grew up on from the 1960s. So, we would listen to Simon and Garfunkel and the Beach Boys and the Beatles, things like that. And when we got old enough,**

**we started taking a few lessons, but it was more we were trying to learn this thing on our own. And so we went out into the parks in New York City and onto the street and started street performing.**

**And that street performing was the thing that gave us our chops. It was the thing that allowed us to learn how to perform. Because when you're performing on the street, no one's there to see you.**

**Your job is to try and get people to stop. And all they want is to get to their destination, to get to work, to get to school, to get to wherever they're going. And you have to do double the amount of work because you need to get them to stop and pay attention.**

**Now, when we're doing a concert, it's great because people actually buy a ticket. They actively want to be there. But when you're doing it on the street, that's where you have to learn how to perform, how to get people's attention.**

**So, I think that was the best education we could have gotten. We did that for a while, we kept going for as long as we could and then we made enough money to buy a ukulele, to buy a computer, to buy Pro Tools, and then we started making music on our own computer. We started writing music in our parents living room. My brothers Ryan and Jack, they’re the ones that write the music. And then we started producing and everything from that, the first bunch of albums, was written and produced in our parents living room.**

**And it was a story of longevity and it was a story of perseverance, right, because we had a song that ended up doing really well, and then we had a couple of years where none of our music was doing well.**

**So up to date then, you are now a fully fledged, highly successful touring band, globally touring band as well, not just in the States, with, I think, multiple platinum records to your name as well. So, I mean, absolutely phenomenal.**

**All the more amazing is the fact that you've got such an amazing academic career as well. I mean, you've got a BA in business and philosophy, you've got a master's in constitutional religious law, and you've got a PhD, I think, in international human rights law. For anybody just doing that, that would be in a monumental ah workload to get through in in your academic career. And you did it while you were the bass guitarist of a you know highly successful, very busy touring band. So how did you do that?**

**So it's funny. I don't think of all of these things that I've done as separate things. I think of them all as necessary in order for my mind to function. I don't know if it's because, you know, it's my undiagnosed ADD or the fact that I need all of these things in order to survive. But, I would be doing music and if I would get angry with the industry or are frustrated with what's going on, then I would move my attention over to my academic work. And then when I would get bored or disinterested with that, then I would move to another thing.**

**It gave me the outlet to exercise my creative abilities in all of these different spaces. And when people talk about academia, rarely they think about the creativity of it.**

**Was it sustainability and climate that brought you towards the international human rights PhD or was it was it vice versa?**

**Were you looking at international human rights and as you were learning about that, suddenly it started sparking off and thinking, crikey, there's so many links here to the climate and sustainability and all those other issues.**

**I looked at large scale energy projects around the world, specifically focused on the green transition.**

**So solar, hydroelectric, wind, et cetera. And I also looked at traditional energy projects like coal and oil and gas.**

**And looking at this transition, my PhD is developing a model to ensure that human rights are protected at the very base level as we're making this green transition.**

**Because everything from labour rights to education rights to education, the right to life, the right to safety, any of these kind of rights are not necessarily protected, especially in places where they're building new energy projects.**

**So, I created this model for a partnership between the government and the private sector in order to ensure human rights are protected from the base level. And what this means is that local communities and indigenous communities end up participating in the development of the project, whether that means owners partial ownership over the project or extreme consultation on the project, because there are so many of these, even wind farms around the world, that infringe on indigenous and local land.**

**And we found through the research that if there is at least partial ownership by the local community, there are huge benefits. It boosts the economy, it creates new jobs, and also it brings clean electricity.**

**In terms of your activism, you've set up an organization called Planet Reimagined. Is that a completely separate thing or is that a kind of a morph of the PhD? Did it naturally evolve into that organically?**

**That is a separate thing. So, after I worked on my PhD, the UN reached out and said, look, we see you have this platform as a band and you have this expertise.**

**We would love to work with you, right? So, I started working with them, thinking about how to take their sustainability initiatives and making them more accessible for young people, because certainly their sustainability work is not accessible for young people.**

**So, I started working with them and then I met somebody there as, she was the head of advocacy and head of comms at the UN development program. And she and I…her name is Mila Rosenthal…she and I were so aligned on everything that she ended up leaving the UN and we started this organization together.**

**And this organization takes the approach, you know how a tech company would have an incubator? You know Tech companies would incubate new creative ideas and then put a bunch of money into them and then grow them up. We're doing the same thing, but in the nonprofit space for climate. We're a creative climate incubator. So, we'll take ideas, spend a few months on them, see if there's a there there. If there is, we'll expand it to a year. And then if there's still a there there, we'll grow it up, raise a whole bunch of money, and then expand the project into what we call an impact project.**

**So, then you obviously, you've worked with the UN, you've done all this activism work and you've got this massive history of your own personal development and your brothers as well, learning through doing, through life. And that clearly has brought a lot of… you're obviously a person that thinks a lot about these sorts of things and you've written, you've…sort of… it feels like you've sort of condensed that down into a new book that you've written called Amplify, which I read a few weeks ago and I thoroughly enjoyed. And it's, well, I'll let you describe it, I mean it feels to me like almost a guidebook to predominantly young people, but not necessarily, anybody of any generation could read your book and get inspiration from it as I did. Can you just give us an idea of what the book's about and what the main goal of the book, of writing the book was for you?**

**Yeah, so I was doing a lot of thinking about all of these different worlds that I live in. And in my mind, it makes sense, right? The connection between music and activism and academia and all of these spaces. But every time I would talk to somebody, they wouldn't be able to understand the connection between them.**

**And so I said, OK, let me start writing it down. And then I started writing down these ideas. And then I realized, OK, this actually could be useful to people because every time I would be at a show or at a rally or an event, people would come up to me and say, i want to participate in a movement.**

**What do I do? What role should I play? What is the thing I should be advocating for? What are some fun ways I can participate? And so I said, okay, let me write the book on that.**

**So, I looked to see if anyone has done this work before and no one has written anything like this, taking strategies from the entertainment industry from the music industry and applying them to how we build better social movements, taking those fan building tactics.**

**And so I said, okay, let's turn this into a book. And so I have a writing partner on the book. Her name is Heather Landy. She's a journalist. She's incredible. And she and I partnered on this in order to kind of create many different paths in for people.**

**It's very easy to pigeonhole people and it's very easy to think you need one type of person.**

**And we're seeing a lot of that in the world today, of course. And actually, the world works by ah precisely the differences in and human beings.**

**And that's what makes us um strong as a species. And I noticed that you sort of reflected that in the book. I think you talk about messengers and researchers and pathfinders. And very interestingly, Cassandras, which I've not come across before, which is a people who are sort of deliberately there to kind of stick a grenade in the situation and find some faults.**

**So, can you talk me through how you got to those, that nomenclature and what your sort of philosophy on that kind of teamwork is?**

**It's about what kind of person are you What are your skills that you can bring to the table that aren't the facts you know about political science, not the talent you know by being an artist, but a Cassandra - and I love this framing of a Cassandra - is somebody who tends to be disagreeable in a giving way, right?**

**Somebody that you can name as having the role to poke holes in things. It's an extremely valuable role in so many different industries and in particular in movement building.**

**How do you figure out what your detractors are going to say? How do you fight back against the people that are going to be pushing back against you? And in movement building that happens all the time.**

**So if you have that as a designated role, it's wildly important. Researchers, obviously incredibly important, but in movement building, research with an eye towards how can it be useful?**

**We don't have the time in movement building to do research and let it sit on a shelf for decades. It has to be used really quickly. There are people who can lead a movement. There are people who can design a movement. There are people who can kind of stay in the in the background and help a movement to pivot effectively. Pivoting is so incredibly important.**

**There are all of these different roles that it doesn't matter what you studied. you can take your skills and apply them. And I think that's really important because young people especially set are saying, oh, no, I studied, I was pre-med in college. What am I going to do with that if I'm not going to go to medical school?**

**How can I use that to make a difference? It's not about the thing you studied. It's about the way that you were taught to think.**

**Another thing I gleaned from the book, or I sensed from the book, is that you're hearing from youngsters that they're, A) very pissed off with the way things are in the world at the moment, and B) very anxious about, you know, those are the people that are going to you know grow up into what looks like quite an intimidating world in the in the future.**

**Am I right? I mean, you know, my nephews give me that sense as well. They're sort of in their late teens, early 20s as well. And is that a reasonable perception? Are you feeling that?**

**Yeah, a lot of people are um feeling disengaged because they feel like the work that they're doing is not having an impact. It's a real problem. And one of the things that I found that really helps is actually people engaging, especially in their communities and at the local level.**

**So we've done a lot of research on how to engage people when they're at big group events like concerts and sports events. But when you give people something to take action on, that they can see what the results are going to be in their community and their friends and family are doing it, they're so much more likely to take action, whether it's something simple like signing a petition or volunteering for a local nonprofit or even just showing up in a community board meeting.**

**In the US, people don't realize how powerful these community boards are. They have the ability to decide what zoning laws are in effect, where the next petrochemical plant is being built, where solar and wind is being built.**

**They have the power to decide what that community is going to look like moving forward. And those locally elected officials, they could win or lose by 10 votes.**

**That could literally be the difference.**

**And your voting power as a young person is so powerful at that local level, even if you don't feel like it's as powerful at the federal level.**

**But at that local level, you if you get your friends to go out and vote, that is the difference between it going one way or another or building a new oil refinery in your town versus not. so that's the thing that I try and instil in people - that action taken at the local level is key that's where you can have a real difference**

**Climate is how we get from place to place. It's the food that's on our plate. It's when we flip a light switch. It's when we throw trash away. It's the clothing that's on our backs, right? It's all of these different things.**

**And to think about how we can innovate and change, not in our individual lives. I'm not asking people to make changes in their individual lives. I'm talking about policy and structural change.**

**Something that already exists that we know works that can be scaled, that's where the winds are.**

**Congestion pricing in New York City. Excellent, excellent policy. It was instituted at the beginning of this year. Accidents where people are harmed are already down 15% this year over the previous year.**

**Bus routes are up to 20% faster than they were this year over last year.**

**There are 80,000 fewer cars a day coming into New York City. It's huge. It's a really amazing policy. Also, it raises a huge amount of money for public transportation.**

**Public transportation is something that we know works when it's properly funded. It is a really, really great solution.**

**So we've talked a little bit about sort of communities of citizens, if you like, but then that has to go out to policymakers and, and you know, make things happen at a policy level.**

**And then, especially in your country, but a little bit in ours as well, you've got polarization, you've got people working in silos and you've got this, you know, we shall never meet in the middle type thing. How do you how do you break that down?**

**So, when I spent my first year kind of running through Congress working on energy strategy, I spent pretty much that entire year listening, listening for clues and words and strategies. And that helped me build this policy that we now have in both the House and the Senate. it That's about expanding renewable energy on top of oil and gas land to reuse that disturbed land for new energy. There's 18 million acres.**

**For those of you who want to get nerdy, there's a potential for 2000 new gigawatts of renewable energy just on top of oil and gas land in the United States that has never been considered before.**

**This is wind and solar and geothermal. We have a bill that was just introduced in the Senate. It has Republican support and Democrat support. And we have a bill that was just introduced in the House as well, again, Republican and Democrat support to open up that pre-disturbed land to put new renewable energy projects on top of.**

**These kinds of common sense solutions are things that everyone can agree on. And Republicans, I talked to the amount of jobs that it would create, what the economic development would look like, how we can support communities.**

**And then with Democrats, I talked about carbon and I talked about solar and I talked about wind. It's just the language that they're using. it was one bill.**

**But when I sold it to each group, it was a different set of language.**

**M hope is that there'll be so many more on-ramps to this kind of activism for young people around the world that I won't get the question anymore, what can I do to help?**

**There'll be so many ways for people to take these steps to go on their own journey to be really impactful people around the world.**

**And for young people, your advice presumably would be along the lines of, you know, look around, see what's around you, see what's available, just get involved with something in your community or a wider level.**

**That's the first step, but step zero, even before that, if you're of age, number one thing is vote locally. Look up right now when your local elections are. It's not just happening every two years, not just happening every four years. They happen all the time. Look at the policies that are on the ballot and vote for community board members, for local legislators, for all of these kinds of people.**

**That's where so much of the real work is being done.**

**Yeah, fantastic advice. Good place to leave it, I think.**

**So, the book's called Amplify. It really was…I thoroughly enjoyed it. I like read it from cover to cover in like pretty much one or two sittings. It was a really, really enjoyable read.**

**Thank you so much.**

**And it's out. When is it out?**

**June 3rd.**

**June 3rd. Okay. So very soon indeed. So, we look forward to that.**

**And it's been fascinating to talk to you You're a really inspirational guy to have to spend a bit of time with Adam. So, I I really wish you every success with all your endeavours.**

**Thank you so much. This was fantastic. Loved the conversation.**

**You can watch the full unedited conversation with Adam by jumping over to my Patreon page where we take a deeper dive into the book’s contents and discuss concepts like using gaming theory to promote collective action, how to break the right rules in the right ways in order to actually get things done, and how everyday folks in American society are quietly ignoring President Trump’s theatrical rhetoric and actually getting on with the energy transition regardless.**

**In the meantime, as always, thanks very much for watching, have a great week, and remember to Just have a think.**

**See you next week.**