

Industrial Society and Its Musical Future: The Tuneabomber

The Poor Prole's Almanac

Feb. 19, 2026

This episode features an engaging conversation with Michael Weissong and John Lampy, the creators behind the provocative musical **The Tuneabomber**. The discussion explores how a project that began as a late-night pun evolved over several years into a fully realized “silly” cabaret-style show centered on the life of Ted Kaczynski. Rather than focusing strictly on the technical details of his crimes or the dry facts of his manifesto—which the creators initially felt played too much like a “book report”—the show focuses on the “messy” and “sad” humanity of the man himself. By framing a notorious historical figure as an aspiring cabaret star, the creators aim to strip away his social magnetism and present him as a clownish, deeply troubled individual.

The dialogue also highlights the unique cultural moment in which the show exists, particularly the “memeification” of Kaczynski among younger audiences who lack firsthand memory of his actions. The guests reflect on the desensitization of modern viewers and how dark humor serves as a tool for processing historical atrocities. From performing at anarchist communes to prestigious university settings, the creators share insights into the varying reactions their work provokes, ranging from uncomfortable laughter to deep philosophical debates about technology and radicalization. Ultimately, the episode provides a fascinating look at the challenges of using comedy to critique political violence while navigating the fine line between “edgy” satire and historical tragedy.

To check out the show, visit <https://www.thetuneabomber.com/> or find them on social media!

For sources, transcripts, and to read more about this subject, visit: www.agroecologies.org

To support this podcast, join our patreon for early, commercial-free episode access at <https://www.patreon.com/poorprolesalmanac>

For PPA Restoration Content, visit: www.restorationagroecology.com

For PPA Merch, visit: <https://breadandrosespress.com/>

Key Words:

The Tuna Bomber musical, Michael Weissong, John Lampy, Ted Kaczynski musical, Unabomber cabaret, dark humor, political satire, Uncle Ted memes, industrial society and its future, environmentalism theater, Harvard University experiments, cringe comedy, Edinburgh Fringe Festival, New York cabaret scene, anarchist commune performance, political violence satire, modern radicalization, technological critique, Poor Proles Almanac podcast, two-man show, the memeification of Ted Kaczynski, satire on domestic terrorism, musical theatre New York, comedy about radicalization, Uncle Ted online culture

Audio file

Andy: Welcome back to the Poor Pearl’s Almanac. My name is Andy and today we’re joined by the writers of the musical The Tuna Bummer. So this show is written over the course of several years. John Lamp and Mike Wysong worked together to

create a show talking about Ted. For many of our audience members, as well as theirs, the work of Ted or his activities happened before most folks had any memory or have any context of his actions in real time. So we discuss how to engage with his work and his ideas with an audience that has a different relationship with the man often referred to as Uncle Ted at a time when political violence is so high. So this is an interesting conversation and they have a great show. I highly recommend you go check it out. We talked about some of the dates coming up for the musical and if you guys are in Boston, hopefully I'll see you there. Guys, thanks so much for joining us. I stumbled across your project when doing some research. I'm real excited to hear about it. So Michael, John, please introduce yourselves.

Michael: I'm Michael Weissong. I'm A composer, lyricist, playwright, and occasional performer for the Tuna Bomber.

John: And I'm John Lampe. I'm an actor, director, and writer, and the other half of the idiots that bring you the Tuna Bomber.

Andy: Awesome. First off, is this the first time you guys worked together, or was this just like a explosion of ideas or have you guys worked together in the past?

Michael: We've worked together at like day jobs. That's how we met.

Andy: Okay.

Michael: Yeah, it was we worked in a rehearsal studio together and found out that we're both, as John's mom would put it, two halves of a whole idiot and that we have the like, you know, very similar senses of humor. And we wanted to write something together, but we couldn't quite figure out what it was.

John: We were not anticipating that it was going to be about the Unabomber. We had been friends for a long time at that point. And the genesis of the show is that I was drunk one night and I texted Mike, what if the Unabomber really just wanted to be a cabaret star named the Toon a Bomber, which I probably forgot about because I was drunk. And Michael responded and we kind of laughed about it. And then we wrote a song for it for a concert. Is that right, Mike? Am I getting the timeline right?

Michael: Yeah, so I was doing a concert of some of my material at Don't Tell Mama, which is a cabaret club in Manhattan. And we were like, OK, what songs are we going to do? And I said, you know what? Let's write one song for this supposed fake Unabomber musical, and we'll do it there, just as an exercise. And the audience really didn't know what to do with it. There were laughs, but it was sort of this uncomfortable laughter. And both of us were like, oh, this is a really golden moment like this. We've created this sort of cringe comedy song thing where we're telling people we're writing a musical about the Unabomber and they don't know how to. react to that. And we're like, let's maybe keep going. Let's follow this thread.

Andy: I think the really interesting thing about doing it now in 2025, 26, however you want to categorize it, is that I think a large portion of the audience is now kind of like with 911, where they're young enough that they probably don't really remember any of this. And it's all just like this historical context, right? Which has been kind of absorbed in like fringe cultures to have like all this other depth and like perspective

on it that I guess allows you to have that uncomfortableness with an audience about the subject matter that you might not have been able to do 15 years ago or 20 years ago.

John: 100%. Well, and I will say when I texted Michael the joke about the name of the show. I didn't know that much about the Unabomber to start with, right? I kind of had, I think, the most essential tertiary knowledge that everyone around our age grew up with, which was that one police get the aviators in the hoodie and that he was like a hermit and he looked funny and he was all, you know, dirty and bearded when they arrested him. And that was kind of it. which led us down a really interesting path of maybe doing more research than we had to and then having to dial that back to make the show more of what we wanted it to be. But to bring it back to your point, it's really interesting that I think we all kind of grew up with this sort of knowledge of him, but I certainly wasn't following the case in 1996 when I was five years old and kind of came to the whole thing retroactively, which for audiences even younger than us, I think we're, I'm in my mid-30s, Michael's 30, and for audiences even younger than us, what they know about Ted is, you know, it's so interesting because it's all so online as opposed to, you know, knowing him from the news or the trial or any of the actual terrorism.

Michael: I wish that we're still around so that I could ask him how he feels to be a meme. There's like the meme-ification of Ted Kaczynski has to be the ultimate punishment for him.

Andy: He doesn't have hell, he has memes. Yeah, It's an interesting time because it does allow us, I guess, first off to that point of like, you can talk to younger people about this subject without like the horror. The same way I feel like 9-11 comedy is something you could not do really until maybe the last five or 10 years.

Michael: Yeah.

Andy: Like people did it and it was really fringe and like edgy and now it's not even really edgy anymore. It's like, the new reel that I've been seeing is like people like showing my dogs new things and it's like them holding them up to like the Twin Towers getting hit by planes. And it's like, it's not even like edgy content anymore. It's just like normal people trying to go viral.

Michael: I saw a tweet earlier that it was a screen grab of, there was another country that they were trying to liken some jokes about a terrible event to jokes about 9-11. And the tweet was like, oh, what they're completely missing is that Americans love jokes about 9-11. I mean, especially younger Americans, which is there seems to be this. Not A fascination with dark humor, but the younger audiences that we've had seem to, their senses of humor seem to skew a little more towards dark humor. I think that's because just as the last few generations we've been witnessing the atrocities of the world on television or on phones or on computer screens. And I think the only way to sort of respond to that desensitization, is that right? Desensitization is I think through humor, at least for me anyway. It's like, if I can laugh about something, then it's not scary anymore. Not that, you know, anybody's scared about the Unabomber

anymore. That was, you know, decades ago. But it has been really interesting that the audiences that we've had have been so young, that most of them have been born in the 2000s.

Andy: Yeah, I would imagine, I'm not surprised at all by that fact. A little anecdote, like I remember when 9-11 happened, like I was in high school. Social media was like just barely becoming a thing, right? And I remember like even a few years later, posting something about like, what happened to America on 9-11 happens every day in the Middle East. And someone's like, that is so insensitive. I can't believe you would say something like that. And it just like, and it was something that was pretty progressive on the left at the time. And it just like shows you how much things have skewed in the sense of like, what is sanctimonious, right? And what can can be critiqued or made into comedy, right?

Michael: Yeah.

Andy: And that same person today would probably very actively and excitedly go see your show. You know what I mean? Like things have shifted so much. And it does bring up this really interesting like idea and question that I have for you about like, you came up with this bit, right, of this musical or this musical and then creating the song. But then to go into actually be like, you know, we're going to spend I don't know, a couple months of our lives putting together this show is more than just being like, this is a bit, like there has to be a little bit more to it than that. So like, what was that impetus to be like, this is the thing that like, I'm going to hang my hat on and maybe get on a watch list for.

Michael: Well, first of all, if only it had been just a couple of months of our lives.

John: We started writing this in 2019. And we would come back to it and go away and come back to it. But we really started the piece in 2019 as a bit, like you said, it was just kind of for the joke. And then the more that we wrote, first off, we kept finding that we were making each other laugh with what we were writing. which I think was really the impetus for us to keep going was, oh, we think this is funny. But it also meant we had to learn about TED. So we both did just a ton of research and read a bunch of books and watched a bunch of documentaries and found the TEDK archives, which shout out to TEDK archives. I have read everything on your website and I really appreciate you all. We did a ton of research. and kind of learned that Ted's message, so to speak, in the manifesto and in everything he wrote afterwards was kind of only part and parcel to what we thought was interesting, which was the guy himself. So for us, it's always been really important in the creation of this show that the joke is always Ted and the joke is not his victims and the joke is not anybody else, but that it's Ted because he himself was such an odd and interesting character.

Michael: Our biggest goal was always to be funny, number one, and to tell a good story. And so anything that we kept, the research, everything was always had to be in service of being funny and telling a good story. But then, When we started posting things online and we started seeing how online communities reacted with TED and talked about TED, we realized that there were large communities of online people

that celebrate this guy. And we were like, oh, it seems like they're celebrating this guy because of this one salient thing he said in the manifesto. And a lot of them then ignore the other less, what word am I looking here? Seemly.

Andy: Savory.

John: Salient.

Michael: Yeah, less salient. Savory is really good actually. Yeah, things that he said. I mean, like there's a lot of really bad stuff in that manifesto, really concerning things that if my teenager, if I had a teenage son came home and started saying I'd be very, very concerned. But there seems to be this elevation or this pedestal that online communities have placed Ted on. And so that sort of became a secondary goal of the show is, okay, let's highlight some of the, less fun things, fun, the less fun things about him. People tend to ignore the bad things that he said, not even the bad things he did. Like people are like, oh yeah, he said bombs, but he said this really great thing. I was like, well, yeah, but he did this really terrible thing. So that kind of, it's a net neutral there.

Andy: At best.

Michael: Right, at best. At best.

Andy: For all the FBI agents listening.

Michael: Just to be clear. We do not condone murder of any kind. We had to put that in our TikTok bio for a while because we kept getting comments that were like, I can't believe you'd celebrate this man. We're like, we're not celebrating this guy. We're making fun of him. You know, those who get it.

Andy: Yeah, it's interesting though, like you kind of did the inverse of what everyone else does where most people focus on his beliefs and not the man. And you said, let's focus on the man and not the beliefs, which is a really interesting way to go after this character that manifested in a single name, right? Like the Unabomber, like he's like Prince, basically, you know what I mean? Like he's got the one name that everyone's like, oh, I know who that is. It's not Jeff, it's the Unabomber. And trying to leverage his social magnetism, I guess you could call it, to get people to see like this really messy and I guess you could say really sad story about who he was as a person into something meaningful and comedic, I think is a really interesting way to do it.

John: Well, if I can just piggyback on that for a second. You said sad and that's an operative term for me here. It was interesting. I was Like I said, we wrote the show a very long time ago and we were gearing up for a run of doing the show in the summer of 2023. And that's when Ted died, which for us was like, oh God, an unexpected boon for publicity. So thank you, Ted. But it also helped us like kind of figure out how the show needed to be framed.

Michael: I think it was interesting what you said about it being sad because I mean, Ted story only kept getting sadder up until the summer he died. His brother, David, who like that guy, I don't, there's not much to know about David. There's a little book he wrote about his relationship with his brother. And, you know, there's some documentaries, but like, that guy must be a St. That man must be I feel so bad

for that guy. And he sent letters to Ted in prison up until the time Ted died, just trying to understand and trying to have this connection with his brother. And Ted was an absolute ***** to David right up until he died. And it just breaks your heart reading. I think that story just came out this last summer in the New York Times.

John: Yeah.

Michael: A ton of people sent that story to us.

John: Of course, the other part of this is now anytime anything happens relative to the Unabomber, we get a million texts and emails and calls and things. But I think back to this kind of sadness of Ted's story was something that recently I went back and thank you, Ted K Archives. I went back and reread, he wrote 4 autobiographies at different points of his life. I think one was like preparing to go to Harvard. One was another thing a couple years ago or a couple of years after that. And then there were two other times when he would just like write out his life story. And reading those, it's like, it's a little heartbreaking because there are so many times where you read what he says and how he describes himself and describes his upbringing and things and think, you know, like 2 degrees to the left or to the right, or a few different things happening in a different order. And Ted could have been a totally fine person who may have still been involved in environmental activities, but gotten more done than he did in the method that he went about. So to me, that's like the saddest part the story is that he is kind of this tragic, in a way, figure and a lot of the tragedy is of his own making.

Michael: Which is that it's a uniquely American sort of story that like you have this guy who could have been anything and because of his own actions and because of things that happened to him became a monster.

Andy: There's so many points I think to your point that if this thing didn't happen to him he probably would have had a very, very different life. Like his experiences at Harvard being like the obvious one that would have shifted things pretty significantly. It's to the idea of like teasing out his actions with who he is as a person, we can also then tease out like how much of who he is as a person is at his own fault and what isn't. And we may not be able to fully articulate it because there's so many variables, but it does point to the fact that like this is a sad person who found an outlet to take that vengeance out on. Whether or not there was merit in the idea of like industrial society is destroying the world is kind of beside the point because in a lot of ways was just a vehicle for him to manifest all that anger.

John: 100%. And I think we see this a lot in a lot of the journals that he wrote, where he talks about being infuriated by the loggers down the road or the airplanes overhead and how he just wanted to kill the therapist or he wanted to kill this person or that person, that he genuinely wanted to murder people. And I think wrapping that in the ideology that he did probably buys him some credence that he wouldn't have had otherwise. But at the end of the day, there's also this deep hurt, this deep whatever it is in the person that makes him want to act out so violently.

Michael: Yeah. In childhood, there was something he had, I don't remember where I found this quote. Maybe, John, you remember where we did end up putting it in the show that he could not wait till he could spit on his parents' corpses. And I remember we pulled that from something that he had said, and I don't remember where it was, but it's like this was a man who was deeply angry and troubled from childhood. A lot of people say, if he had never been part of those experiments at Harvard, he would have been totally fine. I don't think it's that simple. There was, I don't think there was one moment that you could go back in time and change and he would have been a normal person. I mean, you know, a- Well-adjusted. Well-adjusted person. I think that there was something broken inside of him, maybe from the get-go or maybe something in childhood that we don't we have not unearthed yet. But I don't think it's as simple as one moment changing would have made him an award-winning scholar or something.

Andy: Yeah, I mean, it's accumulation of life, right? Now, since you focused on Ted the man and you've tried not to glorify any of his work, I don't use no term work very loosely here. I'm curious what, given how we've described the typical audience member, what that feedback has been in terms of like, obviously it's probably not what they expected in terms of like what the content was for the show. What's that look like?

John: Well, it's been really interesting. And I think part of it is that we've done the show now a whole bunch of different times and a whole bunch of different places. And I'll use just two examples. One of them was a time that we were doing the show in New York and Somebody who, I think he saw the show two or three times, Mike, had a copy of the manifesto and asked me to sign it after the show, which is a whole other like, I don't know if I want to sign that, but yeah, okay.

Andy: You're about to see a badge.

John: Yeah, exactly. I was like, who am I talking to?

Michael: Spoiler alert, there is a moment with some fake blood that I have and I still had some on me at the end of the show. And so when it was my turn to sign it, I made sure to also smear some of the fake blood on the cover page of the manifesto. It'd be like, when you open this, now you can remember that. Yeah, anyway.

John: It's nice symbolism. Yes, yeah. But the other, so the other example though is that we did this show one time at an anarchist commune in Carbondale, Illinois. Shout out to the commune in Carbondale. Carbondale, they're great. Who were lovely folks, but we had a much different conversation with them about Ted's politics than we had with the PhD students who came to see our show in New York. And a lot of that revolved around, okay, so if you're a little closer to Ted's ideology in terms of environmentalism, how do you see his legacy? And for some of the people at this company that we talked to, it was he grasped onto good ideas. And I think now, especially 25, 30 years later, we can look at it and go, there was a lot of stuff in that, in the manifesto and a whole bunch of other things that he wrote that's really salient about technology in the 21st century and about the ways that we communicate with each other and how we're losing connection. And also, you know, we're recording this

in 2026 when data centers are getting built and heating up water left, right and center, et cetera, et cetera. So part of that for them was look how little progress we've made in 30 years. And the three people that Ted killed, did it make a difference? was this actually the right way to go about trying to get done what he was trying to get done? Interesting different conversations with different people who've seen the show.

Michael: We were concerned when we first started doing it more often. Once we started The video sort of took off online and we had people that people coming to our shows that we didn't know them. They weren't friends of friends. They weren't theater people. And we were concerned. We were like, well, are we going to get people who are like big Uncle Ted fans that are upset that we're making fun of him? And as of yet, that has not happened, that even people who come in with a more positive view of Ted still have enjoyed the show and talked to us after. And they're like, I mean, yeah, of course he shouldn't have killed people. good ideas, wrong execution sort of thing. And they find there's a lot of inside jokes that they really enjoy. And they weren't put off by the fact that we're making fun of him. And that was something that we were curious about. I wouldn't say concerned, but we were curious about. when we started drawing in larger audiences.

Andy: Yeah, I think everyone is edgy until it's their content that's being critiques, right? So it's always curious to see, again, more sympathetic folks, how they're going to react to, oh, it's edgy to talk about being like Uncle Ted, but what if I make fun of Uncle Ted? Am I out edging the edgy person?

Michael: And we've not... The style of humor of the show is that Ted is not, it's not like we're throwing fruit at him and ridiculing him, but he's very silly. And that's the sort of style of comedy of the show is that it's like capital S silly. And we've made him into a sort of, into a, you know, a clown. And so I think that that sort of allows, I don't think it's offensive to people who do have some appreciation of Ted's ideologies. So it's not like we're laughing at them, because usually that's where, if you're offended by somebody making fun of your thing, it's because there's a close identity there. And I don't think anyone, there are people out there, trust me, there are people, but I don't think there's anybody that's come to our show that their identity is so wrapped up in Ted Kaczynski that they can't laugh with us at him.

Andy: Has the show changed at all since when you guys originally wrote it? Was it like, hey, we've put it together. Actually, this doesn't get the point across. This is too edgy. Maybe this is too political. Or even like the fact that a lot has changed in this country in six years. Has any of that shifted how the show is presented?

John: Yeah, I mean, I don't know how many songs we've written and cut from this show over the last six years. We tried out a new joke and cut it a couple of months ago, six years in. So we're, not that we're adjusting big things often, but we're always paying attention to the show and refining little things here and there, but it's basically been frozen since that summer of 2023. And the big change I think for us that happened that summer was that Ted died. And we had to figure out a way to not ignore that in the show.

Michael: But also we didn't want to then make the show about that.

John: Yeah.

Michael: How to acknowledge it without putting it front and center.

John: Well, and I think a lot of it, particularly that 2023 summer, we did the show in Kansas City and then we went to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland. And we knew that if anybody was wandering in off the streets in Edinburgh to see our pretty American musical about the Unabomber, it's going to be because they recognize that name probably from the headlines from a month and a half ago when he died, right? So that certainly adjusted the end of the show and I think really helped us figure out how we wanted to frame the whole thing. But what else is interesting about it, again, having done this show now for the better part of six years is that the show hasn't changed I don't think that much but like you mentioned Andy like a lot has changed in this country in six years and I think people are more attentive but also a generation of people that you know 19 year old people buying tickets to our show now 13 years ago you know at 13 when they started paying attention to stuff on the internet have a whole different experience of this country than we have had so I think it's a different response than maybe for some people our age. Sure.

Michael: Yeah. I remember the first draft of the show we did a reading of in early 2022. And it was, a lot of the jokes were still there, but it was not as funny. And it was a lot of facts. It was like we had done all of this research and we're like, well, and we have to get all these facts in here. And the biggest note we got coming out of that reading was that people were like, you know, there's a lot of great information in here, but we don't need it. We don't need it to have a good time. So we had to sort of refocus on, okay, how do we make an entertaining evening rather than here's a list of, here's, a culmination of all the books and articles and movies that we've ingested. So the Tuna Bomber 2.0, after that, we had to punch it up a little bit. How do we make it funnier? And it became more of a two-man show at that point. The first draft was really a one-man show, and then there was a joke about his attorney/accompanist at the piano. And that character said maybe two or three lines. but it was mostly just Ted sort of monologuing and singing. And that's not very interesting to watch. It's very hard to make a one-man show interesting because how do you keep the audience engaged? So we beefed up the second part and now it's more of a, it's still mostly Ted's show. I mean, Ted runs that whole, the whole thing. But we created tension there with another character that's like, oh, what if Ted is running this whole thing, but there's this other character that either is trying to keep Ted on the right track or is sometime pushing back against Ted as he's performing his one-man show. So that creates a tension there that then makes the show interesting to watch instead of just, here's everything we learned about Ted Kaczynski and a couple of songs.

Andy: Yeah, book report. Right.

John: That's exactly it.

Andy: So You guys are still performing this, right?

John: Yep. We've got a residency right now in New York where we play the show once a month at a place called the Reverie Room on 72nd. So if anybody listening is in the area, come see us. But we also continue to do the show around the country. We were in LA a couple of months, two months ago, and Ohio before that, Illinois, Texas, Kansas, Missouri, checking the boxes.

Andy: Yeah, that's awesome.

John: So yeah, we have kind of guaranteed once a month and then some other stuff outside of the city.

Andy: Cool. Yeah, that's awesome. For folks that want to follow you guys on social media, I know you got it, the Tunabomber handle, right?

Michael: Yeah.

Andy: That's spelled T-U-N-E, a bomber, right?

Michael: Yes, yeah, T-U-N-E as in the tune of a song, the Tuneabomber on Instagram. And then I think it's Tunabomber underscore musical on TikTok, because we set this up when we didn't understand how social media works. So I think I can change that to match the hand, but I haven't yet.

Andy: I'm not going to lie. The first time I saw Tuna Bomber, I thought it was about the fish tuna.

Michael: Yeah, a lot of people do.

Andy: I was like, all right, I'm interested because I like fishing. And then I was like, no, I still like it, but not as much.

Michael: But it can help bring in audiences. We had some advice from people that were like, hey, you need to change the name. And one person pitched Unabomber superstar, which I didn't hate, but it's like the drunk text that started the whole thing was the pun toon a bomber. I was like, well, you can't. That's the whole in a word. That's the whole show. And if some people hear and think tuna fish, then that's fine.

John: And if some deep sea fishermen wander in to our show and have a nice time, we're cool with that too.

Andy: I'm sure they would love it. They'd be confused, but they'd like it.

Michael: Yeah.

Andy: Michael, John, this was fantastic. You guys coming to Boston anytime soon?

Michael: Hey, that is such a great question because short answer is yes, long answer is not yet.

Andy: Best kind of answers.

Michael: We're talking with a venue right now. So we're hoping to get that on the calendar super soon. It's a venue that's not too far from like the Cambridge area, from the Harvard campus. So in one of the emails we got back, they were like, well, we're concerned about, you know, if we can get, you know, an audience for this and do you have connections with Boston? I was like, oh, we get requests to come to Boston all the time. So

Andy: It's a real dark area. People are really miserable. Like Ted. You know, it's very fitting. Right.

Michael: Yeah, that's what that's what happened to him. It wasn't the torture at Harvard. It was just that he had to spend time in Cambridge.

Andy: It was January in Cambridge. I get it. I've been there.

John: In the 50s as well. Like I'm assuming it was quite a bit colder then. So.

Andy: Yeah.

John: Or even colder.

Michael: Hopefully sometime in the not too distant future, we'll be in Boston, in the Boston area.

Andy: Awesome. Guys, this was fantastic. Thanks so much.

Michael: Yeah, thank you so much. Yeah, of course. Thanks for having us.

The Ted K Archive

The Poor Prole's Almanac
Industrial Society and Its Musical Future: The Tuneabomber
Feb. 19, 2026

<www.listennotes.com>

www.thetedkarchive.com