

**Song Exploder**  
**Valley Lodge - Go**  
**Episode 20**

Hrishikesh: You're listening to Song Exploder, where musicians take apart their songs and piece by piece tell the story of how they were made. My name is Hrishikesh Hirway.

*("Go" by VALLEY LODGE)*

Hrishikesh: Dave Hill is a comedian and frontman of the band Valley Lodge. In this episode, Dave will deconstruct the Valley Lodge song "Go," which you might recognize as the opening credits of the HBO show *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*.

*("Go" by VALLEY LODGE)*

Dave: I'm Dave Hill, and I have a rock band called Valley Lodge.

*(Music fades)*

Dave: We're a power pop band, which is like, you know, it's a misnomer because power pop is neither powerful nor popular. It's all like guys who, you know, when they were in their 20s done like, sort of, more like touring, and had albums, and videos, and things like that. So this was sort of the band that I sort of liken it to like, "Oh, this is like our softball team."

*(Guitar with drums)*

Dave: We're not going to stop rocking, but like we're playing to like 15 friends at, wherever. But the one thing I was like, "I hope, it would be cool if we could tour Japan." That was my one thought in my head, but I made zero effort to make that happen. But one day I got an email saying like, "Hey, we have this, the Japanese label, you know, we love your record. You know, we want to put it out over here, and see if you guys want a tour over here."

*(Vocals: "Odori ga sugoku umai des ne baby / Oh koko o sa wa te, oh come on pretty lady")*

*(Guitar, bass, and drums)*

Dave: The Lonely Planet Guide to Japan has all these phrase, Japanese phrases, stuff for every situation. When we did the tour, you know, we'd drive from city to city

in this van. And I would sit in the back, and try to learn phrases. And if the tour manager and these two Japanese guys that were taking us around, if they whipped their heads around, looked at me, I knew I pronounced it right, because I would be saying, like, some inappropriate thing or whatever. And I would memorize all these phrases, and say them on stage at night. My pronunciation is totally wrong, I'm sure. But "Odori ga sugoku umai des ne," it's like, "You're a fantastic dancer." "Koko o sa wa te," touch me here.

*(Vocals: "Odori ga sugoku umai des ne baby / Do you got a little love in your heart heart heart heart / Go")*

Dave: What happened was Gibson guitars gave us guitars for the tour.

*(Guitar)*

Dave: And so, we go back to drop them off at the end of the tour. And like I remember just being like, "Come on, let's drop the guitars off, and get out of here." And we go [laughter] in the office, and there's this woman who's like the most beautiful girl I've ever seen in my life. And then, all of a sudden I was like, "We're hanging out at Gibson Tokyo all day." So the song is kind of like my fantasy staying in Japan, and falling in love with this girl that probably would be really creeped out to hear this story. There's a little lyric phrase I can tell you, a tiny insight.

*(Vocals join: "We'll meet outside of Ginza")*

Dave: Ginza is a neighborhood in Tokyo, and that's where, this is all so sad and pathetic. I'm a grown man. That's where [laughter], that's where the Gibson office is in Tokyo. So I was, like, fitting that in as a reference. But really the lyrics are all from the perspective of, like, a Lothario with a head injury or 15 year old. That's basically my mental capacity. So I think that melody like that [mimics guitar]

*(Guitar)*

Dave: is a good example of me using way too many tracks to do one thing. I really like to record, like, seven guitar parts. But they're really just one guitar part. Like I like mushy stuff, a lot of guitars, and reverbs, and things together for a tiny little part, that no one [laughter] can even hear unless they have headphones on.

*(Guitar ends)*

Dave: Rob wanted to add

*(Drums)*

Dave: some dimension to the drums where, you know, building up, so he's playing, instead of the hi-hat, he's playing, you know, where you hit the stand.

*(Drums)*

Dave: I don't know what drum, like I don't know what he's doing back there, but, you know, and it's cool. And it works out, you know, I just get really nervous when drummers do stuff like that, because we were worried that the rock party might end, but he manages to keep it going.

*(Drums)*

*(Drums end)*

Dave: You know, I always think of the band as, I mean, different from other stuff I do, certainly different from comedy where I feel like it's really me. I think of Valley Lodge as, like, a fantasy band, like a fictitious band that would be in my record collection. Like, so it's really just me as a fan of music going like, "What would be cool? Like if there was some band that sounded like this."

*(Claps with tambourine)*

Dave: The clapping is really, odes to this fantasy world that I have, where everyone loves this song, and wants to be a part of it, and clap along.

*(Music ends)*

Dave: People just being pumped when this song comes on, they would just start clapping along. And then, there's the like

*(Claps)*

*(Claps end)*

Dave: That's my tribute to *Friends'* theme song with The Rembrandts. I think that's really great. So I wanted to do something like that.

*(Organ)*

Dave: Oh, wow. I don't think I heard that before. And it is awful, but I don't even know the name of the guy who played it, because it was at Paul Green's Studio House. This house is so cool. It's like basically kids, college age, are just like living in this house, like sleeping. Like we would be recording [laughter], and there'd be like a kid over there, like, asleep on the couch. Am I really going to crank up this half stack? The kid's head is over there. They were awesome kids, and like normally, you would think like kids hanging out while you're trying to record is a horrible idea, but they were so, you know, into it, and attentive, and talented. But one of these guys was an organ player, and so, he played that part. And I don't know how to track him down. You know, by the time we finished this song was like two years later, from the point where he had recorded that, so it's credited on the record as like, you know, "Thanks to Studio House folks," but I don't know the guy's name, and I feel awful.

*(Organ)*

Dave: My friend Alessi Laurent-Marke

*(Organ fades)*

Dave: just has this haunting, weird, British voice. I just sent her stuff, and she recorded it in her bedroom in London.

*(Vocals)*

Dave: I was just like, "Do whatever you want on this." I didn't tell her what to do. And so, she just picks out these weird things that she's going to do.

*(Vocals)*

Dave: I don't know how she manages to do oohs, and sound British even then, but she does.

*(Guitar)*

Dave: That's my favorite part of the song that riff really, but initially, the song kind of all starts together. I'm glad we did start it that way, because now when you see the opening credits to John Oliver show, I'm like, "Well, man, if we didn't start it with that riff, maybe they wouldn't have chosen [laughter] it."

(Guitar)

Dave: There was a show on HBO called *Reverb*. I ended up writing the theme song for that show, and doing all the bumpers for that. That's how I met Liz Stanton, who is, I believe, the showrunner.

Liz: My name is Liz Stanton, and I'm the Co-EP for *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*. You know, at the start of the show, we were going to create some opening titles. You know, the idea was to have like a lot of different moving images and, you know, a lot of times you'll hire a composer to make an opening title package, you know, music. And I wanted something a little cooler, I thought [laughter].

Dave: And then, she just emailed me, and was like, "Hey, you know, we want to use one of your songs, maybe." So I reluctantly agreed. [laughter] No, no, I love it. I'm thrilled!

(Guitar)

(Music ends)

Hrishikesh: And now, here's "Go," by Valley Lodge, in its entirety.

("Go" by VALLEY LODGE)

Hrishikesh: I put up a video of the opening credits to *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* on the Song Exploder website [songexploder.net](http://songexploder.net), where you can also find links to this song, and Dave Hill's podcast.

You can find all the past and future episodes of Song Exploder at [songexploder.net](http://songexploder.net) or on iTunes, Stitcher, or wherever you download podcasts. Find this show on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram @SongExploder. Song Exploder is a proud member of Radiotopia, from PRX, a curated network of extraordinary story-driven shows. Learn more at [radiotopia.fm](http://radiotopia.fm). My name is Hrishikesh Hirway, thanks for listening.