

**Song Exploder**  
**Remi Wolf - Soup**  
**Episode 277**

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. I'm Hrishikesh Hirway.

*("Soup" by REMI WOLF)*

Remi Wolf is a singer and songwriter originally from Palo Alto, California. She's been releasing music since 2019. She performed at Coachella in 2023, and toured with Olivia Rodrigo, Lorde, and Paramore. Her second album, *Big Ideas*, came out in July 2024. I talked to Remi about how she and her collaborators wrote and produced the song "Soup." How they used 80s gear to make 80s sounds, and how the idea of making a fun anthem quickly turned into something pretty vulnerable.

*(Vocals: "I can't help but make it 'bout me / Oh, when you and I are together / Now I'm cleaning off the dirt on my feet / And I'm hoping that I'm getting better")*

*(music fades down)*

Remi: My name is Remi Wolf.

*(music fades out)*

So, I was on tour at the end of 2022, in Australia. I was holding koalas, I was chilling with kangaroos, and I was also in a lot of airports and in a lot of cafes. And in said airports and cafes, they play the song "Walking On a Dream" by Empire of the Sun. I was hearing it everywhere. 'Cause they're an Australian band. And it was a song I already knew, but I regained an appreciation for it when I was hearing it in its natural habitat.

The song is this huge, four-on-the-floor banger. And when I would hear it, I was like, this is such a smash, and like, I would only want to hear this in a stadium, or an arena, or somewhere where like, you're completely enveloped in like, reverb.

That, I think, was the first thought of "Soup." Because I wanted to make something that felt huge, like it was created for a big space.

*(drums)*

Two weeks later, I went to New York.

I went to Electric Lady Studios with my friend Jared Solomon, "Solomonophonic," Knox Fortune, and Carter Lang. And it was our first session together, ever.

Jared created a drum loop on the Drumtraks, which was this drum machine that we were using from the 80s.

*(add Drumtraks)*

Knox is playing chords on the Prophet.

*(add chords)*

And Jared was playing bass.

*(add bass)*

And the first thing that came out was:

*(Add vocals: "Doing business on the top of the roof")*

"Doing business on the top of the roof."

Those words literally came from us being in Studio D in Electric Lady, which is on the roof. And we were doing business. (chuckles)

But it kind of ended up, like, very quickly morphing into, like, this scene of me on a rooftop, partying a little too hard. Like, way too high, way too drunk. And, in that, abandoning the needs of my partner.

I was in a relationship at the time, and it was relatively new. And I think we had just kind of pushed beyond the honeymoon phase of it all. So it was starting to get really real.

I was scared that I was going to be, like, too much for this person. That feeling of, am I enough? Am I able to control myself? And like, am I going to be able to, like, do this?

*(Vocals: Doing business on the top of the roof / They told me to leave / But I don't wanna leave without you")*

*(groove continues)*

It is so at the top of my vocal register. Like, I am *belting*.

I think I recognized immediately that it was the chorus, because this can't be the verse, 'cause I don't know where the hell else we're gonna go.

I knew that from the chorus we had to go down at least an octave, in terms of just, like, where I was singing.

So essentially what I did was, I was like, okay guys, we're gonna go into the studio room and we're gonna sit in a circle, on the floor, and we're just gonna pass the mic around.

And I'll get my voice notes out. and I'll make sure I record everything.

*(Voice memo vocals: "(humming to start) Stay, stick around / Please don't get in your car / If a plane's on the ground / It can never really get that far / (trails off, laughs) (chatter in the room)")*

The verse is: your partner is kind of like, I'm gonna go. And it's kind of me begging them to stay, and telling them that I really wanna change. And I'm like, ready to do things differently for them.

*(Voice memo vocals: "Now I'm cleaning off the dirt on my feet / And I'm hoping that I'm getting better, better, better")*

I mean, I've had, unfortunately, plenty of situations where I've been in relationships with people and um, just sometimes go into this like pure self-destruction mode, throwing my hands up to the sky and letting my demons fly. And it's unpleasant.

*(Vocals: "I can't help but make it 'bout me / Oh, when you and I are together / Now I'm cleaning off the dirt on my feet / And I'm hoping that I'm getting better / Until I'm...")*

*(groove continues)*

We laid down some guitar.

*(add guitar)*

And we laid down a couple more synths. Like some Korg M1.

*(add Korg)*

It sounds almost like a weird piano that's been, like, welded with keys inside of it, and it just sounds strange.

*(Korg cont'd)*

We were layering synths.

*(synths cont'd)*

And it was a lot of 80s stuff, which is, I think, why people have this feeling from my music that it's very nostalgic and, like, throwback-y. And it's because we are using gear from those times.

*(Vocals: "Doing business on the top of the roof / They told me to leave, but I don't wanna leave without you / You're so patient with the animals too / If you give me your keys, I'll go and pick up the soup")*

"You're so patient with the animals, too / If you gave me your keys, I'll go and pick up the soup." Making food for other people is one of my love languages. My mom is a chef, and taught me how to cook really, really early in my life.

I mean, the idea of it is like, I'm gonna go get you soup when you're sick. Reiterating that idea of like, I wanna be able to be there for you.

And like, Knox is honestly the reason why I gave myself the permission to open up lyrically in this song.

Because I would say a lyric, or he would like, kind of shout out like a lyrical idea. And I'd be like, whoa, that's really direct. And then he'd be like, yeah, I think we should be direct. And I was like, okay. I think you're correct. (chuckles)

So, my big line in this song is:

*(Vocals: "I don't wanna live without you")*

"I don't wanna live without you." Which seems so direct and so simple, which is normally kind of a scary place for me to go.

I think typically in my writing, I'm able to express myself in like metaphors or in drastic imagery, or even just like shock value lyricism. And I think it allows me to like, hide behind something.

Like, I'm the only one that knows the truth behind this song. And I think, in some ways, that excites me. But I think, in some ways, I use it as a crutch.

But there are times when we need to kind of let that go, and just lay it out on the table. So yeah, I think "Soup" was like a big step. Letting myself be seen a little bit more. Even people that are like really close to me, unless you're like, really tightly in my heart, will I share like, these like nightmarish feelings, I guess, that I have at times.

But I've literally said that phrase, like, I don't wanna live without you. Or I've felt that feeling before of being so deeply attached. Feeling like your entire self-worth is being derived from another person. And I think that I've been in long periods of, like, deep codependency, where I definitely feel that feeling and don't like expressing it. Cuz it's, like, embarrassing.

Hrishikesh: But then you've gone and put it in a song that millions of people are gonna hear.

Remi: Yeah. (chuckles)

*(Vocals: "I can never do what you wanted, baby / Now our love just wants to divide us lately / Na-na, na-na, na-na-na, na-na, na-na / Na-na, na-na, na-na-na, na-na, na-na")*

Everybody can say "Nana nana nana." And, in my original intention in the song, to make it like this big arena song that everybody can kind of relate to in a way, a trope of those songs is that there always is a "laalaa" or a "naanaa" or a "daadaa" or something in there that is like a baby sound.

And essentially my plan for this song live is that this bridge is going to be a huge moment. And I'm gonna get everybody clapping. And everybody's gonna be screaming their "nana" all together.

No matter, like, what language you speak, no matter, like, if you are two years old or 95, you can do it.

*(palm-muted guitar)*

The arrangement of this "naa nanana" section really took a journey as well. It used to be full of synths.

And then we've uncovered that picking line.

*(palm-muted guitar cont'd)*

I think it adds, like, a little element of funk, which is kind of always something I'm attracted to.

*(Vocals: "Na-na, na-na, na-na-na, na-na, na-na")*

And I just am obsessed with harmonies.

*(Vocals with harmonies: "Na-na, na-na, na-na-na, na-na, na-na / Na-na, na-na, na-na-na, na-na, na-na")*

I love creating an instrument out of my voice to feel almost like another synth.

And I was *belting*, and they're the highest I've ever belted. And it's honestly a challenge that I really like, pushing my voice to its limits and seeing where I can go.

I didn't have to go that hard. But I did. (chuckles)

*(Vocals with harmonies: "If you give me your keys / I'll go and pick up the soup")*

At the end of the night, it was like 2 in the morning. We kind of had wrapped up, and we were drunk. Everybody. And, I was like, can I play the oB8? And that's where we got the line, it's a very simple line, but it goes "dun, dun dun."

*(OB8 line)*

And you kind of hear it all throughout the song, this one recurring OB8 line.

And, drunkenly, I wanted to play drums.

And I can play drums, like, relatively well, but not drunk, and at 2 AM...  
(chuckles)

*(other drums)*

*Horrible* drums, but nicely mic'd. (laughs)

*(drums and synths out)*

But the final chorus doesn't have any drums. It's really letting that vocal speak for itself for the first time. I really wanted this euphoric release at the end of this tune that's so, like, tense. We're really building so much tension.

And then finally you're kind of able to like, sit back and enjoy the vocals and the message and like the tones of these synths.

*(Final chorus vocals: "Doing business on the top of the roof / They told me to leave, but I don't wanna leave without you / You're so patient with the animals too / If you give me your keys, I'll go and pick up the soup / Oh, oh, I don't wanna live without you / Oh, oh, I don't wanna live without")*

Unfortunately, the relationship that I was in at that time did not work out. But getting to learn more about myself, through that relationship, and through not being in that relationship, has been really important for me.

(scoring)

I was a girl wanting to be on a journey of self-improvement, but not yet on it. And I think the song was almost like a cry for help to myself, in that way.

But I am trying to be a better person, and trust the process. If I have the intention of improving, then it'll happen.

Hrishikesh: Coming up, you'll hear how all of these ideas and elements came together in the final song.

-

And now, here's "Soup" by Remi Wolf, in its entirety.

("Soup" by REMI WOLF)

To learn more, visit [songexploder.net](http://songexploder.net). You'll find links to buy or stream "Soup," and you can watch the music video.

This episode was produced by Craig Eley, Theo Balcomb, Kathleen Smith, Mary Dolan, and myself. Our production assistant is Tiger Biskup. The episode artwork is by Carlos Lerma, and I made the show's theme music and logo.

Song Exploder is a proud member of Radiotopia, from PRX, a network of independent, listener-supported, artist-owned podcasts. You can learn more about our shows at [radiotopia.fm](http://radiotopia.fm).

If you'd like to hear more from me, you can sign up for my newsletter, which you can find a link to on the Song Exploder website. You can also follow me and Song Exploder on instagram, and you can get a Song Exploder t-shirt at [songexploder.net/shirt](http://songexploder.net/shirt).

I'm Hrishikesh Hirway. Thanks for listening.