

Episode Title: **Lady A's Hillary Scott**

Episode Subtitle (Optional):

Episode Summary: In this week's episode, Sid Evans, Editor-in-Chief of *Southern Living Magazine*, talks to vocalist and songwriter Hillary Scott, from the Grammy-winning country trio Lady A, about the band's induction into the Grand Ole Opry, the secret to the group's success over the last 15 years, and her favorite downhome meals, like chicken bog.

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(NEW *Biscuits & Jam* Theme begins - Fiddler's Barn on Epidemic Sound)

Sid NARRATION: Welcome to *Biscuits & Jam*, from Southern Living. I'm Sid Evans, editor-in-chief of *Southern Living Magazine*. My guest this week is a country music rarity, in that she actually was born and raised in Nashville. She grew up with musician parents who let her hang out backstage at the Grand Ole Opry as a kid, but little did she know that one day she'd be inducted into country music's most prestigious club.

HILLARY SCOTT: I posted this video on social media of calling my mom, face-timing her, to take her down to the wall where all of our names are engraved in all these plaques of all of the members of the Grand Ole Opry. And I got to show her the plaque and she had to pull over in the car. And I mean, it was just this really amazing thing to get to share with her.

Sid NARRATION: Hillary Scott performed both in her church and with her family growing up, and was attempting to get her solo career off the ground when she met her eventual bandmates in Lady A—Charles Kelly and Dave Haywood—in 2006. The trio has now been recording and touring the world for 15 years, earning five Grammys and multiple ACM, CMA, and Billboard Music Awards.

On today's show, Hillary talks about what's kept Lady A together so long, her relationship with her grandfather, and some of her favorite down-home meals, like chicken bog. All that and more this week on *Biscuits & Jam*.

[Theme Music Ends]

SID EVANS: Well, Hillary Scott, welcome to *Biscuits & Jam*.

HILLARY SCOTT: Thank you. I'm so happy to be here and looking forward to all of the things we get to talk about.

SID EVANS: Well, listen, I wanted to start out by saying congrats on being inducted into the Grand Ole Opry.

HILLARY SCOTT: Thank you.

SID EVANS: And, by Darius Rucker, no less.

HILLARY SCOTT: Yes. And we've done, gosh, I think, two headlining tours with Darius over the years. He's truly one of our closest friends, in country music and a huge influence for Charles, specifically, growing up. And it was an amazing surprise, to say the least. I'm born and raised here in Nashville. Both my parents moved to Nashville from their hometowns to pursue country music, specifically. And if you would ask my momma when she was 19, why are you moving to Nashville other than to pursue country music? And she would say, "to play on the Grand Ole Opry." So to have that moment, and to be able to call her—I posted this video on social media, of calling my mom, face-timing her, to take her down to the wall where all of our names are engraved in all these plaques of all of the members of the Grand Ole Opry. And I got to show her the plaque and she had to pull over in the car. And I mean, it was just this really amazing thing to get to share with her.

SID EVANS: Oh, that's so great. I mean, so your mom is a Grammy-winning artist, Linda Davis, and your dad, Lang Scott—

HILLARY SCOTT: Yes.

SID EVANS: Is a very successful songwriter and musician. And in a way, you kind of grew up at the Opry. I mean, do you have memories of being backstage there?

HILLARY SCOTT: Yes.

SID EVANS: Or, you know, just bumping into Dolly Parton?

HILLARY SCOTT: It's funny. It wasn't until a couple of years ago that I actually met Dolly. She was one of the last—just who I would say is just the, you know, full-blown legend that I had had a chance to meet. Especially, as Opry members go. But, yes. I have a ton of memories of being backstage at the Opry. It was such a part of my life growing up, not only because of my mom

and dad being in the industry but then there are friends. You know? And that's I think a lot of times the backstage Opry experience. A lot of people don't know. I mean, you'll just have friends show up, other artists show up in support of you just because they want to come see you play the Opry. It's a time to hang out. There's some downtime backstage. It's just a great hang. You know? And so, I have a lot of memories of Jeannie Seely and Connie Smith and meeting Marty Stuart and Ricky Skaggs. So it's been a huge part of my, of my life. And I would say, too, that that being backstage at the Opry and experiencing that, my parents have been fans of bluegrass and traditional country their whole life, that I got to see that, I think, a lot more firsthand when I was there, when I would experience those Opry nights.

SID EVANS: Which must have made such a huge impression on you. But for you it was just—you must have just thought, “well, this is what it's like to be seven years old.”

HILLARY SCOTT: It was—it was such a bizarre way to grow up. But it is, to your point, it's all that I really knew. It feels like such in the fiber of who I am from birth. So it is. It's definitely where I've always been, truly.

SID EVANS: So Hillary, uh, this show's called *Biscuits & Jam* and we always talk a little bit about food. And one question that I often ask is, you know, who was the cook in your family? But I have to guess that your mom and dad were on the road—

HILLARY SCOTT: Yes.

SID EVANS: Quite a bit. Did they ever have time to cook? Or does one of them love to cook?

HILLARY SCOTT: So both of them can cook and they have things that they do really, really well. My mom, I would say—it was kind of a joke in our house growing up, like there's, you know, about two hands worth of things that she feels super confident and being able to prepare for our family. And one of them being this like homemade chicken pot pie, that is—like, when I'm just really missing just that nostalgia of childhood, I'm like, “mom, can you make me chicken pot pie?” And it's one of the things that she would make a lot of the time over the course of me being in postpartum, after having my daughter Eiseley and having my twin girls. She would always, every few weeks make me a chicken pot pie. My dad is very, very gifted in the kitchen like he loves it. He loves to get on his green egg and grill and smoke ribs and do all those things. But all of that has taken place, later, once they really came off the road full-time. So to answer your question, my grandmother, my dad's mom, my daddy grew up real close to Charleston, South Carolina, and when I was five years old, my grandparents, his parents, Rose and W.M., moved to Nashville to help take care of me when they were gone. And so, I mean, we would

have the epitome of southern food on our table every night. And my grandfather would get home from work and it was about 90 minutes to the second he walked through the door that we would have dinner on the table and and it was butter beans and okra with some awesome, like, ham in there, too, over rice—

SID EVANS: Oh, of course.

HILLARY SCOTT: Everything's over rice. Everything's over rice. Um, and she would make just homemade chicken and dumplings. And the way that she prepared those, it was more—like, not such a thick broth. It was more of a thin broth. So, almost more like a soup, and homemade everything; steak and gravy, pot roast, collard greens. It really was—that's just the way like the generation she grew up in and what her momma made and her family, that was, that was it. So I was always full, that's for sure.

SID EVANS: So if they were from Charleston, did they like to make any of those lowcountry things, like shrimp and grits?

HILLARY SCOTT: So that's something that my dad does a lot. We didn't do a ton of seafood. Have you ever heard of something called Chicken Bog?

SID EVANS: Oh, yeah, sure.

HILLARY SCOTT: Okay. So, that was another one. Just really delicious, like, flavorful chicken, chicken broth, salt, and pepper in rice. And it would just cook, basically, into a casserole. But that's another one of my favorite things—stewed tomatoes. Oh, my gosh. It's—my mouth's watering and it, and it really—it's amazing how—and I know you all talk so much about this—how connected your feelings, not just memories, but your feelings and your emotions are to food. Especially, when it's around family and the family table. And so, yes. It was a, it was a lot of those types—those types of dishes, but not as much seafood. I feel like my parents, when we would travel somewhere they would always expose me to different things. I remember having sushi for the first time when I was like eight or nine, loving it and loving the experience of it. But that was, obviously, not the norm—

SID EVANS: Yeah.

HILLARY SCOTT: Of what I had at home growing up.

(Instrumental music break)

SID EVANS: So you did a gospel album called Love Remains in 2016. And you said at the time that it was a tribute to your grandfather who had passed away a few years earlier.

HILLARY SCOTT: Yes.

SID EVANS: It seems like you really had a special relationship with him. What are some things that he kind of taught you growing up?

HILLARY SCOTT: Yeah, ah thank you for asking. He will have been gone ten years this year. So it's definitely a milestone year and just grieving him not being on this earth anymore. So I've been thinking a whole lot about him and the things that I miss. And I will say there was such a sense of safety. He was a tall man. He was like 6'1. He's worked out a lot. So until he got into his seventies, I mean, he would be up every morning between three-thirty and four in the morning. He would go out, he would do his work out. He had a chin-up bar outside that he would go out there. I mean, he was so dedicated to taking care of his health, which was really amazing to have and be able to witness, as a young girl growing up, just his real dedication to the routine and how important I think that is for us as people to have kind of our rhythms and our routines that we do that I think helped ground us in what can feel like a world that's spinning out a lot. You know? And so that's one thing that he really instilled in me that I'm so appreciative of. And that brought safety. I felt like my grandfather is so strong. He could take anybody down. I think another thing that I love about him and miss about him was he was hilarious. He had the best sense of humor and he had this big booming voice that you walked into the room. And if he said something, and especially if he was like in a moment of wanting to make you laugh or excited about something, it would hit you in your chest. And my dad has always said, he kind of has that Foghorn Leghorn looney tune cartoon voice. Like "I said, boy, it's time to go. Du du du du—" you know, whatever he would say. And he always called all of the women in our family, my grandmother, me, my little sister, my aunt, his only daughter, um, sugar. So, "Hey, sugar. Have you had a good day, sugar babe?" You know, just so loving, I miss that. I miss his voice and not knowing what's going to come out of his mouth next. He was—to be so predictable in his daily routine, he was so unpredictable in what was going to come out of his mouth.

SID EVANS: Those nicknames are such a southern thing.

HILLARY SCOTT: Yes. Yes.

SID EVANS: So you're very open about your faith, Hillary. And you grew up in a very Christian family, and I'm wondering if the church was also important to you in terms of discovering music?

HILLARY SCOTT: Yes, absolutely. I grew up going to church. My parents had me in from the time I was in the nursery. And then I was so blessed to be given the opportunity to go to a Christian school from fifth grade through graduation. And that was, you know, the kind of years where my mom and dad were gone a good bit. They were on the road, and so having that place, that foundation of faith, in church and in school was really crucial to me. And I sang in both places. I would sing in school because we would have a Wednesday chapel every week. And once I got into high school, I helped lead worship there. And then when I started driving in youth group at church, I started leading worship there, as well. We were kind of a more traditional kind of Southern Baptist church that we would use a hymnal. But then over the years, as I got a little bit older, we started introducing a little bit more like praise and worship music, which I really gravitated towards a lot. There was just something that opened up in my heart—I love the old hymns, and they, they mean so much to me, and the older I get, the deeper they mean. But there was something about the worship music that, it just led me kind of in a different direction. And that was where I started to really find just the deeply personal relationship with God through music. And so it definitely made a huge, huge impact on me. It helped me learn harmony. I mean, I remember my parents were never in the choir when I was growing up, but—when we would be sitting in the pew, I would hear Mom always take the high third harmony with the rest of the choir. And so I was like, that sounds different. You know, and my dad would take the fifth below or, you know, and so I was kind of hearing a full choir like to my left and right, you know, with them singing along and just recognizing like, “oh, she's singing different notes, but it still blends.” And I think those are things that just kind of soaked in, as I was growing up.

SID EVANS: Was that also important to you in terms of getting comfortable on a stage?

HILLARY SCOTT: Absolutely. That coupled with—we did a family Christmas show out at Gaylord Opryland Hotel when I was a junior and senior in high school and my freshman year of college. And it was the Linda Davis Family Christmas Show and so between the day or two before Thanksgiving and Christmas Day, we would do one or two shows a day of a full-production. And so between school and church and that experience, those were where I really got my chops up, so to speak, on how to perform. Now performing Christmas music is a very specific thing. So it's not like all of that translates over into a regular album and music. And—but by that time I was writing, as well, a lot in Nashville, country songs, trying to kind of work on my, on my career

from about the age of 16. So all of those were definitely the building blocks of what led to what I'm doing now.

(Instrumental music break of NEW Biscuits & Jam theme "Fiddler's Barn" from Epidemic Sound)

SID NARRATION: We'll continue with Hillary Scott of Lady A after the break.

BREAK

(Instrumental music break of NEW Biscuits & Jam theme "Fiddler's Barn" from Epidemic Sound)

SID NARRATION: Welcome back to *Biscuits & Jam*, from *Southern Living*. I'm Sid Evans, and we're talking with Lady A's Hillary Scott.

SID EVANS: So even though you were born into this family and surrounded by all this music, your success as an artist was not automatic. I mean you've had a lot of rejection over the years. You auditioned for American Idol and—

HILLARY SCOTT: Twice.

SID EVANS: got rejected—oh, twice.

HILLARY SCOTT: Mm-hmm.

SID EVANS: You performed for industry people and got rejected. Was there ever a time when you kind of thought, I'm out? This was not meant to be?

HILLARY SCOTT: So I got a development deal, which is basically, if a recording contract is like the pinnacle, a development deal would be a step below that, if not a couple steps below that. It's when you go in and you connect with a label, specifically, someone in A&R, and they see something in you and they are willing to give you a year, sometimes a little bit more to develop and record, write, just get more experience, and so I was given that opportunity and it was going really well. I was working with a producer and also a songwriter who had come to one of the Christmas shows, actually, the first year. Her name is Victoria Shaw. And she approached me and she was like, "I'd love to work with you. We can take this slow. I want you to finish high school and, you know, make all of the memories that are so important, but you're really talented. I see something in you." So it took a couple of years of working with her and then we get this opportunity to have this development deal and the big kind of moment at the end of a development deal is you showcase. So you find a small club or venue and you invite as many people, friends, family, but mainly industry people as you possibly can. And you perform these songs that you've been either recording or working on over the year. And it was packed. It was

wall-to-wall people. It felt like it went great. I go backstage after the last song and the head of the label comes back there and is like, that was great. Where are you going to dinner to celebrate? And I was like, “well, that sounds promising.” You know? Like that's kind of a promising sentence to hear from out of the label.

SID EVANS: Yeah.

HILLARY SCOTT: And I said, “well, I've had family travel in, so we'll probably just go grab some dinner.” And, well, by 9:00 a.m., 9:30 the next morning, they had called my producer and said we've decided to go a different direction. And I was 19, almost 20. And I was devastated. I felt a little let on, to be honest. You know, I felt like that was kind of carrot-dangling language of like that this—that I may have had this, like in the bag and I was going to get good news the next day. And so I was so sad. That was definitely the lowest point of just—I'll never forget going into Victoria's office and just sitting there and being just so deflated. And I don't know what else we could have done to do this better or to have presented ourselves and myself as an artist in a more true, authentic way. And like they said that they loved it. So why, you know? All those questions and that was in March of 2006. And I met my bandmates in May. So it was really one of those moments of like, sometimes the Lord just slams the door shut and then the next, you know, very near future, one busts wide open. And I wasn't going to give up. I knew that I would be in this industry in some capacity and truly that God had it planned for me in my life within music. But I had no idea that two months later, literally, my world would change forever. And I'm just so, so grateful for that. You know, I don't think you can feel full joy and appreciation for something unless you've felt the opposite. If you felt, you know, what it feels like to really be heartbroken over something or feeling defeated or feeling like, gosh, I thought they saw something in me, and using that as fuel to just persevere. And also at the same time, like how someone else chooses to see or define you does not change how worthy and valuable you are to the world and that you belong just for being here. You know? And that you deserve to be loved for just existing. And I think that was a huge lesson that, that taught me to have like, you know what? I've still got a lot to offer. I'm only 20-years-old. There's so much more to be done. And I'm not going to let this one experience deter me from continuing to move forward.

SID EVANS: Well, it certainly didn't. And you met Charles Kelly and Dave Haywood after that.

HILLARY SCOTT: Yes.

SID EVANS: And I won't ask you to retell that story of, of how y'all came together. But now you've been together as a band for 15 years.

HILLARY SCOTT: 15 years. Yes.

SID EVANS: Which is—

HILLARY SCOTT: We just released our eighth studio album.

SID EVANS: It's remarkable. I mean, how have you all been able to stay together for so long? And what makes it work?

HILLARY SCOTT: You know, I think, first of all, I have to just—I have to acknowledge that I think it is by the grace of God that we are here and that we formed as a band and that we're also still together, stronger than ever, truly, in our relationship and our friendship. Um, but it's it's taken work. But, I think, ultimately, we just really like each other. We enjoy creating together and we make each other laugh and we have such a true foundation of friendship. And we're all very different people. We come from different backgrounds. Our starting from our different places, but when we come together, I think we all recognize that what we create, what we do is greater than the sum of its parts. We all share the same belief that we have been brought together for a reason. But we are individuals with our own individual families that are then having to come together as a band to make business decisions, creative decisions, that impact our families. So it's very complex, but it's been really incredible how we've all continued to learn to listen and to empathize with one another and really just continue to lean in and not lean out. I think that's been one of the things that I'm the most thankful for is just—as we've gone through everything we've gone through, one of the hardest years, arguably, this past one we leaned in. And without all of the other stuff that we'd worked through and overcome, I don't know if we would be on the other side of this last year in the same place as we are now, which is united and strong and excited for the future.

SID EVANS: Well, you guys just seem to be at the peak of your creative powers and collaboration right now. And, as you said, you've got your eighth studio album now and it's called, *What a Song Can Do (Chapter One)*, and it's a seven-song set. I assume this means that there's—might be a chapter two?

HILLARY SCOTT: Yes, yes. There's definitely a chapter two that will be out later this year and we'll be able to announce that in the coming months. But yeah, it's—we wanted to really release music differently this time. I mean, on all of our albums, we've really tried to never put filler, and make a song just like hold a place. There's always been a specific purpose for each song that we've put on a record, but it's also, we live in a time—and I, myself, have a hard time consuming that much music at once. And so for us, we were just excited to be able to kind of do

this in two chapters. So hopefully, there's more light and time given to each individual song on the project because these first seven, specifically, I mean we love them all. We've always said it's like these, these songs are our babies and we want, you know, we just want them to have a chance to go and live the life that they're meant to have. And so we felt like this was a way for there to be a little bit more emphasis on each individual song and hoping that the fans and, and anyone who listens can really hear that and experience it.

SID EVANS: Well, there is a wonderful song on there called "Worship What I Hate" and it really feels like kind of a response to this world that we're all living in. I mean, so many of us wake up in the morning and look at a screen right away and it doesn't necessarily make you feel good.

HILLARY SCOTT: Right.

SID EVANS: What were you all trying to get at with the song?

HILLARY SCOTT: Whoa. Um, that one was—oh, a real just honest, vulnerable, like here's the unhealthy ways that I'm coping with life. Dave Haywood and I wrote this song with Amy Wadge and Natalie Hemby, and it was in September of 2020. So we were just all, you know, in it. There's just no way to predict how much longer it's going to be until we can tour again. And we're in, this place of we've been our kids' parents and we've been their teachers and we've been all of the things that we're trying to juggle over this last year plus. But I'll be honest that a lot of what this song talks about aren't just things that I've struggled with through 2020. There are things that I've been struggling with for years. Whether it be having my phone in my hand and the phantom vibrate that happens, where do you think your phone vibrates and you have a message and you look down and you don't. And it's like another appendage. And, I just really felt like I was starting to see how negative it was impacting me. And then, if you listen to the first verse of that song, it's about comparison and it's about perfectionism and it's about really how much time we waste living in this spiral of shame, of the ways that we don't measure up, when really if we could change our thinking and just make a slight little turn in our perspective and focus on what we can do to be better versions of ourselves, that changes everything. It shifts our entire focus in how we see ourselves, how we see the world. You know, when I'm not consuming the twenty-four-hour news cycle, I'm a lot more positive. I feel a lot more hope when I get out and just have, you know, cookouts with my friends and see their kids love on my kids. And I'm not just so consumed by what we are inundated with every day. And it's not to say that we don't need to be educated on what's going on and that we don't need to learn and grow and, and be aware. But it was starting to just steal my joy. And that song, it's really kind of sad and vulnerable, but it's also redemptive. And that's what I want people to hear more than anything is like once you know something, you can't unknow it. And now it's what do you do

with it? And I think that, to me, would be my message around this song is if it hits you, if it strikes a chord in you and, and it makes you feel like, “oh, man, that is me. Like, oh”. Make sure that you take a second and realize, like you're acknowledging that. You know that. There's a self-awareness and that is huge. And now what can you do with it? That song to me is like, it's a mission almost as much as it's a message.

SID EVANS: Hillary, would you mind singing a verse or so of that song?

HILLARY SCOTT: Yeah, absolutely

HILLARY SCOTT: [sings] I keep looking at myself in the mirror, hoping it will change. And I keep wishing for a brand new body that I didn't have to blame. I'm seeing every flaw like a failure. I'm using every cure like a savior. Like trying to build a church out of all my hurt when it really needs grace.

Lady A's “Worship What I Hate” plays: “I gave all my time to nothin’ / I focused on who I was, not who I’m becoming / My fears, they took up space / My eyes couldn’t look away / I didn’t even realize I worshipped what I hate.”

SID EVANS: It's just a beautiful song, it's a beautiful message, and I love that y'all are getting that out in the world.

HILLARY SCOTT: Thank you so much. It really means so much that that's the song that you chose to highlight today. And, yeah. I hope it makes people think. I think there's songs that are just supposed to make you dance around your living room and forget. And I think there are songs that are supposed to just make you think, and I hope that this one does.

(Instrumental music break)

SID EVANS: Well, Hillary, so you have three young daughters. And as someone who was on the road non-stop, kind of like your own parents, what did this past year mean to you to have so much time with the family?

HILLARY SCOTT: This last year was in so many ways challenging. But I would also have to say like it was a huge, huge gift and I think the reason why is because my daughter's almost eight. She'll be at the end of July. My twins are three and a half and this is all time that only happens once. These are all things and seasons that only happen once, you know? And to have every day with them, to not have a half-packed suitcase in the corner of my closet. Like to really be able to soak

them up in all of the joy and all of the tears and all of the feeling overwhelmed and having my two little toddlers, like, ganging up on me. I mean, in all of the ups and downs of what it's been, it is an answer to prayer. And it did not look anything like I thought it would. But I will say, I have my husband to thank. He is just so wise in helping me just kind of get some perspective. And, he's like, "there might never be another time in their life growing up that this happens. And so let's be intentional with spending this time with them." And I think that these months that I've been able to have with my girls, how does that change the trajectory of their life? And I think that there's a lot of ways that we can look at this last year and a half for our kids and, and we're deep in grief and sadness. And there's so much that has been so challenging for children, and for young people over this time. And I also think that we've, as parents, been given more opportunity to sit with our kids and talk to them and help them navigate big feelings, and that has been something that I've been really grateful for with my girls and my husband.

SID EVANS: Absolutely. Well, Hillary, I just have one more question. What does it mean to you to be Southern?

HILLARY SCOTT: That's a great question. I would say, for me, it is—when I think about the women, specifically, in my life, who helped raise me, who helped nurture the person that I am now, what I hope it means for me and for others, and especially, as a woman is a kindness and a hospitality. That's the first word when I think about my grandmother, who I spent many, many of my most formative years with. She was so hospitable and she was so kind. And I just appreciate that and her so much. My mom, as well, the other women, Southern women, in my life. But for me, it's a posture of heart and just wanting to be kind and wanting to be hospitable and empathetic, and a lot of people would answer that question very differently, and that's what's beautiful about it. But for me, it's just wanting to continue to be kind, keep people's bellies full when they're in my house with comforting food with a lot of love poured into it, and just loving, empathetic conversation around our dinner table. I mean, that's it to me. Um, and the lightning bugs outside, you know? It really—like being able to just experience the beautiful green and, um—yeah. It's all about relationships for me, for sure.

SID EVANS: Well, that's a beautiful answer. And hopefully, we'll have those lightning bugs around for a long time.

HILLARY SCOTT: Yes, I hope so because my little girl sure love 'em.

SID EVANS: Well, Hillary Scott of Lady A, thank you so much for being on *Biscuits & Jam*.

HILLARY SCOTT: Thank you for having me.

(NEW Biscuits theme music “Fiddler’s Barn” from Epidemic Sound)

Sid NARRATION: Thanks for listening to my conversation with Hillary Scott. You can find Lady A’s new album, *What A Song Can Do* (Chapter One), wherever you get music.

Join me back here next week as I chat with the legendary Amy Grant.

AMY GRANT: To be Southern means to have spent a lot of your childhood barefoot. To be southern is a table with extra places set or ready. To be southern is talking slower and telling stories. Southern to me is gentle.

Southern Living is based in Birmingham, AL, and this podcast was produced and edited in Nashville, TN. If you like what you hear, please consider leaving us a review on Apple Podcasts or telling your friends about the program. You can find us online at southernliving.com and subscribe to our print publication by searching for *Southern Living* at www.magazine.store.

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We’ll see you here next week for more *Biscuits & Jam*!

(Music ends)