

00:00:00	Music	Transition	“Crown Ones” off the album <i>Stepfather</i> by People Under The Stairs
00:00:05	Oliver Wang	Host	Hello, I’m Oliver Wang.
00:00:06	Morgan Rhodes	Host	And I’m Morgan Rhodes. You’re listening to <i>Heat Rocks</i> .
00:00:09	Oliver	Host	Every episode we invite a guest to join us to talk about a heat rock. You know, an album that just burns eternally. And today we will be wading through the massive 1991 anthology, <i>The Complete Capitol Recordings of The Nat King Cole Trio</i> .
00:00:24	Music	Music	<p>“All For You” off the album <i>The Complete Capitol Recordings of The Nat King Cole Trio</i> by The Nat King Cole Trio. Slow, romantic music.</p> <p><i>... the song I sing You're the stars and moon and nearly everything Life would be a symphony Waiting all for you</i></p> <p><i>[Music fades out as Oliver speaks]</i></p>
00:00:46	Oliver	Host	<p>When Nat King Cole passed away in 1965 sat just the age of 45, he left behind a wife, five children, and a catalogue that would be the envy of any artist in the history of American pop music.</p> <p>Especially as we’re recording today’s episode a few weeks before Christmas, it is inevitable that you will be hearing his "Christmas Song" at some point. Probably at many points. But that indelible track is but a mere drop within the ocean of hits that he recorded in his 20+ year recording career, almost all of which was for Los Angeles’ Capitol Records.</p> <p>In 1991, Mosaic Records compiled 349 tracks he recorded as part of the Nat King Cole Trio and released it as a staggering 16 CD box set. That would have been 27 LPs for the wax addicts out there. The set provided Cole fans with nearly 17 hours worth of music, spanning the scratchy .78s from the mid-1940s, when Cole was primarily known as a pianist, through his imperial period of the 1950s, when even Sinatra couldn’t touch his string of hits, through the last recordings he made in the 1960s, before his cancer diagnosis.</p> <p>With so much music to swim through, <i>The Complete Capitol Recordings</i> offers an endless number of surprises for the amateur and hardcore Nat King Cole fan alike. I know, I certainly acquired a whole new appreciation for the once and eternal King Cole.</p>
00:02:08	Music	Music	<p><i>["All For You" fades back in]</i></p> <p><i>My heart is beating to the old refrain When I'm alone with you</i></p> <p><i>[Music fades out again]</i></p>

00:02:29	Morgan	Host	<p><i>Complete Capitol Recordings of The Nat King Cole Trio</i> was the album pick of our guests today, the creators and hosts behind the podcast <i>Switched On Pop</i>. Have you ever wondered how popular music works and why it matters? No? Then you should. Do some soul searching out there. Get your life together.</p> <p>If so, look no further than our guests today, Nate Sloan and Charlie Harding. This duo, a musicologist and songwriter respectively. They unpack the culture of pop, the meaning of pop, the elements of crafting a song, how it flows, rises, and remains relevant.</p> <p>Their podcast, <i>Switched On Pop</i>, is deeper than a deep dive. It's like 20,000 leagues under the sea excavation. Their book goes hard on sonic discourse, visiting Janelle and K.Dot, Three Stacks, Beyoncé—you have to pronounce it like that, 'cause she's regal—</p> <p><i>[Everyone laughs in the background.]</i></p> <p>—Skrillex and McCartney. Get into it and get into this episode. We are honored, because these dudes have joined us today for a session. Nate and Charlie, welcome to <i>Heat Rocks</i>.</p>
00:03:29	Nate Sloan	Guest	Thank you so much. We're thrilled to be here.
00:03:32	Charlie Harding	Guest	This is so much fun.
00:03:33	Morgan	Host	<p>So, Q-Tip said rap is not pop, if you call it that then stop. Uh, but what else isn't pop, or at least I didn't think so, was Nat King Cole. How did you guys come to choose this album? Why this one?</p>
00:03:46	Nate	Guest	<p>Yeah, this is all my fault. Apologies for—</p> <p><i>[Speaker 2 and Morgan laugh.]</i></p> <p>—for just dumping this massive collection on your heads. But um, I think Nat King Cole, for me, is just one of those foundational musicians, and Charlie has graciously sort of agreed to come on this ride with us. He's not as deep a Cole-head as I am.</p> <p>And I think I picked it maybe exactly to sort of prod at that question you asked, Morgan. Like, he's an artist for me that points to uh, probes the boundaries of what pop is, and sits in all these different genres in a really beautiful and sometimes provocative way. And so I thought, in addition to just my deep love of these recordings, he—talking about them could bring up some issues across time and space. That would be really fun to dig into.</p>
00:04:44	Oliver	Host	How did you come across this anthology in particular?
00:04:48	Nate	Guest	<p>I know exactly how I got here. It was from uh, listening to the radio and hearing the guitarist John Pizzarelli cover this song called "The Best Man" that I'd never heard before.</p> <p><i>[Oliver responds emphatically.]</i></p>
00:05:00	Music	Music	"The Best Man" off the album <i>My Blue Heaven</i> by John Pizzarelli.

Upbeat, midtempo music with piano backing.

*I guess I've got a heart meant
Foolin' around with chicks,
For in the love department
I know all the latest tricks*

*Now, I ran across a girl one day,
She was sharp as...*

[Music fades out as Nate speaks]

- 00:05:16 Nate Guest And uh, and it just—it cracked me up. I loved it. And then I realized that it was a cover of a Nat King Cole song, which sent me to the early King Cole Trio recordings.
- 00:05:27 Music Music “The Best Man” off the album *The Complete Capitol Recordings of The Nat King Cole Trio* by The Nat King Cole Trio. Again, upbeat singing with piano backing.
- She said I was the best man
Who ever knocked on her door.
She said I was the best man,
The fella she waited for*
- She said I was the best man...*
- [Music fades out as Nate speaks]*
- 00:05:42 Nate Guest And from there I just realized that there’s this other side of Nat King Cole, who, um, in your beautiful intro, you know, you described as just really a titan of popular music. But maybe someone who I, yeah, associated more with the Christmas carols and didn’t take really seriously. And then that tune was, uh, the door that opened me into this whole other world of Nat King Cole and this jazzy, swinging, elegant, impossibly cool and effervescent sound, so.
- 00:06:12 Oliver Host Just to go around the horn here, since we’re about to go on the deepest of dives into Cole and his catalogue—at least what he recorded as part of the Trio, and we can get into that distinction later—um, can we just all talk a little bit about what were our—what have been our associations with Nat King Cole? As someone who, I think in some ways was—is completely ubiquitous within just the listening landscape, if you will. But what did you come into this, before you really sat with this anthology, thinking about him? Um, Charlie, you want to start us?
- 00:06:41 Charlie Guest Um, I’m probably the converted amateur who came—when Nate suggested this record as something that’s really important to him, I actually probably had the reaction of what early Nate would have thought, which is like, “But he just had like, a bunch of like, silly pop hits—”

[Morgan and Oliver chuckle.]

“—that, I don’t know, were maybe like, G-rated commercial fluff.” I’m putting on like a snobbery hat right now. And listening to this, I’ll

admit I didn't get all of the way through the sixteen hours of the anthology, but—

00:07:08 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Charlie:** — I did listen—

Oliver: Confession, neither did I.

Nate: Unbelievable, get out of here.

[Oliver laughs.]

00:07:11 Charlie Guest But I've been playing it in the background for the last week and tuning in to certain songs, and what I really—the impression that I had actually was, “Wow, this is pop music.” Like, it actually—it has this—it feels like its reaching for people to sing along to.

It feels like its celebratory music. Even though there's no drumming, it feels like there's a—it's often fast-paced music that often has like, a dance kind of groove to it. And it's very vocal-forward for somebody who is such a—what I didn't know—brilliant instrumentalist.

So, this was a great discovery for me. It's something that I think is gonna be a further lifelong discovery.

00:07:46 Oliver Host How about you, Morgan?

00:07:47 Morgan Host I came to know Nat King Cole, as you mentioned, through "The Christmas Song". We talk a lot about what could be played in the house and what couldn't, and uh—

00:07:56 Oliver Host Cole got the pass?

00:07:57 Morgan Host Yeah, yeah.

[She laughs.]

But my—over the years, my attachment to him has grown much stronger because of music supervision, and going back into moments in sort of cinematic history, in television history where I've heard his songs. And in prep for the chat I started thinking about *As Good As It Gets*. And before I even wanted to be a music supervisor, knew what that was, I remember “Sentimental Reasons”. And I just remember thinking, “Oh my god. That was perfect.”

00:08:31 Music Music “(I Love You) For Sentimental Reasons” off the album *The Complete Capitol Recordings of The Nat King Cole Trio* by The Nat King Cole Trio. Slow, achingly tender piano and vocals.

*I'll give you my heart
I love you and you alone were meant for me*

[Music fades out as Oliver speaks]

00:08:50 Oliver Host Like Charlie, I didn't get through all of nearly 17 hours, but what I just did instead of listening to it as a linear experience was just hit

shuffle on it, and let myself be surprised. Which is not hard, because, you know, prior to this, if you had made me try to name even ten Nat King Cole songs, I would've come up probably seven short.

[Morgan laughs.]

Um, you know, outside of obviously “The Christmas Song” and, as a fan of Wong Kar-Wai, he uses his “Quizás, Quizás, Quizás”, which is not on this particular anthology because, as I learned in the distinction, that wasn't recorded with the Trio. But we'll get into that in a moment. But my point being, I didn't really know much about Cole, his—anywhere near the entirety of his musical output.

What did listening to this anthology teach you about Cole that you hadn't realized before?

00:09:35 Morgan Host Oh, that's good.

00:09:36 Nate Guest Oh, yeah. Um, to step back for a second, I think our show, *Switched On Pop* and now this book that we've written is all about taking really familiar figures, and sometimes maybe even sort of maligned figures of like, of popular music, and sort of leaving your tastes and your presuppositions about them at the door, and just going in with open ears and seeing what sort of musical and cultural and biographical discovery come about through that practice. And that's been an amazing experience, and I think Nat King Cole really fits in that for me because—you know, I appreciate your question, Oliver. It's like, what did you think about this artist at a certain point, and it was like, he's square. He's kinda—

[Morgan and Oliver respond affirmatively.]

—well seven, you know. He's like—I don't—I mean now, again, it's very different. Now I hear “The Christmas Song” and I'm like, ooh man. Take me away.

[Morgan laughs.]

You know, like—

00:10:34 Charlie Guest It's a beautiful vocal.

00:10:35 Nate Guest *[Singing]* “Merry Christmas.”

[Everyone responds emphatically and laughs.]

Like, that's the sound of Christmas. *[Singing]* “-mas.” The very end of that saying.

But, so I think what he taught me—and this is like, the story of the show, I think, for both Charlie and I, is like—is to embrace the sort of—the lightness and the accessibility and the joy of popular music. And these early recordings, to me, are like—just hit such a sweet spot, because it has all that. It has that elegance, that effervescence, but it also has this like—it shows that he could also

swing so hard.

And there's these incredible ways that he like, brings elements of African American culture into the pop mainstream. And he's also like, covering popular songs. So it's just like, I don't know, it just kind of represents like, a pop textbook or something for me. Just these recordings, and all their massive manifold. It's glory.

00:11:32 Charlie Guest Taking off the snob hat, putting on the curious hat. We hear a whole lot more.

00:11:35 Nate Guest There we go, yeah.

00:11:37 Music Music "An Old Piano Plays the Blues" off the album *The Complete Capitol Recordings of The Nat King Cole Trio* by The Nat King Cole Trio. Slow, sad piano music and vocals.

*The clock is striking, guess it's half past two
My baby left me...*

[Music fades out as Oliver speaks]

00:11:56 Oliver Host Charlie, I'm curious, especially as someone who is the resident singer-songwriter in the room. When you hear Cole, especially across the spectrum of sounds that he has on here, what are you hearing?

00:12:07 Charlie Guest I think the main thing that I first noted when I was listening with Nate was that he is a really crafty songwriter, and that I heard a lot of influence of sort of like, Tin Pan Alley sort of songwriting. That um, he would have these brilliant little tags at the end of his song that when you got there, you had a smile on your face, because you didn't know what you were gonna get.

It's something that we—when we were thinking about the—it doesn't—that sort of style of cleverness in songwriting doesn't really fit today's sort of cult of authenticity. It reads as manufactured. But there's something really pleasurable that the whole meaning of the song changes when you get that final tag.

That was the first thing I noticed. But the other, which I think was even more profound for me, was that he is somebody who is accompanying his own vocal. And actually the contemporary analogy we have was like, someone like Anderson Paak, where when you are the accompaniment and the rhythm—

'Cause he was kind of what—there's no drums in the Trio, right? So the guitar and the piano are sort of filling in. And what creates so much energy and momentum is that he is an unbelievably gifted pianist. Like, I was so tuned into his playing. It's secondary to his vocal, 'cause the vocal in most of these songs is—these are pop songs. These are meant to be sung. And those were two big insides for me when I dug into this music.

00:13:31 Oliver Host I'm glad you brought that up, because I think what really jumped out to me when I was listening to this on shuffle is a lot of those songs does begin with Cole on piano. And I never really paid attention, to

your point, about Cole as the pianist. I think I knew somewhere in the back of my head, yes, he played piano. But it just—we think of him so much as a vocalist. But I think what this—especially the Trio recordings—highlights is yeah, that dude’s on the keys, too.

One example of this that—and again, you can pluck out dozens and dozens of songs on here that do this, but for example, his version of “In The Mood For Love”, you really hear just the gift that he has on the keys.

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|----------|---------|-------|---|
| 00:14:09 | Music | Music | “I’m In The Mood For Love” off the album <i>The Complete Capitol Recordings of The Nat King Cole Trio</i> by The Nat King Cole Trio. Upbeat piano music with no vocals plays for several moments, then fades out as Oliver speaks. |
| 00:14:23 | Oliver | Host | I was reading somewhere that he was a big influence—I want to say, was it on Art Tatum? Yeah, because Art Blakey’s the drummer. So yeah, I think it would be Art Tatum would be the pianist. So I would’ve assumed it was the other way around, but I mean, he was so prolific. He was so popular that a lot of people who were coming up behind him were influenced by what he was doing. Again, not just as a vocalist, but as an instrumentalist. |
| 00:14:44 | Morgan | Host | And that’s one thing that uh, how this album affected me. Because it was a moment where I pulled myself away from him as a vocalist and got into him as a musician. It’s well known that he wanted to be a jazz musician, right? He said, “I’m a musician at heart.” He said something like, “I know I’m not really a singer. I couldn’t compete with real singers. But I sing because the public buys.” And I’m like, “Well, yo, if you’re not a real singer—”

<i>[Everyone laughs.]</i>

“—who is? You know what I’m saying? Who really is?”

But this album forced me to look at him differently. |
| 00:15:16 | Nate | Guest | This was also part of my Nat King Cole journey, was like, “Woah, what an incredibly talented pianist. What an influential pianist.” This Trio format we’ve been talking about with piano, bass, and guitar—no drums—becomes like, its own kind of standardized form almost. |
| 00:15:32 | Charlie | Guest | Can I interrupt you? |
| 00:15:33 | Nate | Guest | Yeah, please. |
| 00:15:34 | Charlie | Guest | My ear, when I’m hearing this Trio, is filling in the percussion. Right, like the guitar is like, often times when that chunky—

<i>[Nate affirms and starts imitating the sound of a heavy guitar riff.]</i>

Right, the Freddie Green. |
| 00:15:46 | Nate | Guest | The Freddie—Count Basie’s guitar player, yeah. |
| 00:15:49 | Charlie | Guest | Chunky. It’s like, that’s kind of doing the percussion for you, but like, the emptiness of it sort of pulls me in closer. It has that intimate quality, and yet, I think just because of my association with other |

music of this period, I'm hearing what would be in there, and it makes me feel like I'm the fourth player.

[Morgan responds affirmatively.]

00:16:08 Nate Guest And that's the sound you get when you're a group that's been playing together for ten years, probably. Like, some crazy—it's probably like every night sometimes, you know? Probably multiple shows a night and just honing that—I mean, it sounds like it's floating on air almost.

And that sound, Charlie, of like, you know, we're all just creating this groove together that like, grooves really hard and you're kind of like, "Ah," and you're like, nodding your head and grooving. But also just—it's just, again, like floating up somehow. Yeah, that's really hard to do.

00:16:41 Charlie Guest There's times when he's singing and then in between he'll do these little piano fills that actually read to me like drum fills. Like, that's where the—it's a percussionist sort of mindset filling in.

00:16:51 Nate Guest Yeah. When you think about where this music came from, it was like—I mean, Nat King Cole is a guy who, as Morgan said, you know, wanted to be a pianist. Toured the country as a jazz pianist, and ended up here in Los Angeles at a residency playing jazz piano, until one night, got a vocal request, and basically was like, "Okay, I'll try it."

[Oliver responds affirmatively.]

"You know, let me—here goes!"

00:17:15 Charlie Guest Please the people.

00:17:16 Nate Guest And that, you know, that was obviously a turn—everything changed after that, after he opened his mouth.

[Oliver and Morgan agree.]

Nothing would ever be the same, really.

00:17:22 Morgan Host Shout-out to whoever made that vocal request.

[Everyone laughs.]

Whoever was like, "I wonder if he can sing? Let's see if he can sing." Shout-out to that individual.

[Nate responds affirmatively.]

00:17:30 Oliver Host If I'm not mistaken, I think the song was "Sweet Lorraine".

[Nate responds affirmatively.]

Which was his first hit. Um, recorded for Decca. So the version that's on—there's actually multiple versions on this album, but they do—he recorded it throughout his life because it was such a

signature hit for him.

00:17:44 Music Music “Sweet Lorraine” off the album *The Complete Capitol Recordings of The Nat King Cole Trio* by The Nat King Cole Trio. Tenderly slow piano and ardent vocals.

*Each night I pray
That no one will steal her heart away
I can't wait until that lucky day
When I marry sweet Lorraine*

[Music fades out as Oliver speaks]

00:18:03 Oliver Host Just want to give a shout-out to Oscar Moore, who was the guitarist—

[Morgan responds affirmatively.]

—at least in the first decade of the Trio. And to be clear, the Trio changed personnel throughout the years. But when he first started, he had the same crew around him for those uh, really the first decade of his career.

00:18:16 Morgan Host This is just Oscar and Wesley Prince, isn't it?

00:18:18 Oliver Host I believe so. Yeah. But that's Oscar Moore on guitar, and a lot of the tracks, especially in the first, I don't know, like 8 discs—

00:18:26 Morgan Host 200. 200 tracks.

00:18:27 Oliver Host —of this anthology, the guitar you hear is Moore, and Moore's doing just sublime work on here.

Um, we've been talking a lot about the voice of Cole. Let's maybe try to dig deeper into this for a moment here. I was thinking back to when we had Karen Tongson on—Nate's USC colleague, as it were—talking about Karen Carpenter, and one of the things that Karen Tongson mentioned about what has been said about her—the other Karen—and this came from Dionne Warwick—was, Warwick once compared Carpenter's voice to, “the smell of smoking wood.”

[Everyone responds emphatically.]

Which is always really evocative. And what's funny is, when we were prepping for this, I, for whatever reason, I had that term, like the smell of smoking wood, but I thought I had read it applied to Nat King Cole. And of course it wasn't, it was talking about Karen Carpenter, but nonetheless, it seems like also an apt metaphor in terms of that element of it. So, what is it that we can say about Cole's voice?

00:19:24 Morgan Host I mean, at the risk of sounding super Fisher-Price, it sounds to me like Werther's Original hard candies.

[Charlie laughs.]

It is sort of butter and cream and uh, although it wasn't made in Europe. It was made in Montgomery, Alabama. But it sounds like, to me, something really sweet that you have to take your time with. If I was being elegant, I'd say cashmere, but uh.

[Everybody laughs.]

But in my mind, the first thing that came to mind was Werther's Original hard candies, where you're like, "What is this? Is this butterscotch? Is this caramel?" And that's how I feel every time.

Lynnée Denise was on here and she talked about Aretha Franklin's throat being a motherland. And the one thing that I thought about this whole album was how much wonder is in Nat King Cole's throat. Um, his discipline, his restraint, and sort of this quiet power. Like sometimes you think, "He held that note for a really long time."

Without some of the tricks that show up in R&B later, it's just sort of—it is elegance at every level. He's not overdressed, as we say. Everything's in the right place.

00:20:41 Nate Guest

I'm so glad we're talking about Nat's voice, because this is something we love to do, and also find really sort of vexing sometimes, is talking about tamber, the tone of a voice. Like, we write in our book, tamber is like, the final frontier of musical discussion.

We don't really have a lot of terminology to describe how something sounds, which is precisely why I love talking, trying to do so. Because you have to use these kind of metaphors and these other sensations, and it's really—Morgan, it's so interesting to hear you say, like, talk about sort of the—almost the taste of his voice, or the feel of his voice.

'Cause one thing we learned when we were researching tamber for the book was that if you look at brainwaves—so, if you're listening to a sound—a voice, say—that has like, a rough tamber, your brain will actually light up the parts of your brain that respond to feeling something rough, like with your hand.

So in other words, I guess if you're listening to a rough voice, your brain will also light up the—I'm obviously not a neurologist—let's say the part of the cortex that um, responds to when you like, feel a rough texture. Sandpaper or something. So the fact that you compared his voice to cashmere or to like, a Werther's hard candy seems so appropriate. Because when we hear a smooth tone like that, we might actually be literally like, feeling or tasting that kind of smoothness, too. Which is just insane to me, and kind of wonderful.

00:21:21 Charlie Guest

It gives me great joy to watch Nate struggle to find the words to talk about tamber, because that is the—it is so ineffable, and yet, despite being the least theorized portion, sort of a topic of music, it is probably in popular music the most important thing. It's the thing that, to your point, we actually have this deep sort of somatic relationship to. We don't know quite how to describe it. We can't say, "That's an A minor 7 flat 5." Right? But we know it in our skin.

00:22:58	Oliver	Host	<p>This is kind of macabre, but I did go to some of the early 60s stuff, which is on the last disc of this anthology, partly because I wanted to hear if the smoking had taken its toll or impacted his voice. And it, to your point, Morgan, if it did, you can't hear it.</p> <p>And what struck me was just comparing the two versions that bookend the anthology, which is his version of "Embraceable You", which he first recorded with the Trio in 1943, and then there's the 1961 version that is on the last disc of the anthology.</p> <p>Christian, can you play those two back to back?</p>
00:23:36	Music	Music	<p>"Embraceable You (1943 version)" off the album <i>The Complete Capitol Recordings of The Nat King Cole Trio</i> by The Nat King Cole Trio. Tender and slow piano and guitar music.</p> <p><i>Embrace me</i> <i>My sweet embraceable you</i></p>
00:23:47	Oliver	Host	Okay, and now the '61?
00:23:49	Music	Music	<p>"Embraceable You (1961 version)" off the album <i>The Complete Capitol Recordings of The Nat King Cole Trio</i> by The Nat King Cole Trio. The same as the first version, but maybe a little slower.</p> <p><i>Just one look at you</i> <i>My heart grows tipsy in me</i></p> <p><i>[Music fades out as Oliver speaks]</i></p>
00:24:01	Oliver	Host	The consistency between—
00:24:02	Nate	Guest	That is wild. <i>[He laughs.]</i>
00:24:04	Oliver	Host	Right, and if anything sounds different—maybe this is just me reading into it, because as a listener I have certain knowledge to know there's almost a 20 year gap—maybe he sounds a little older, right? And maybe that's—because he was in his 20s when he sang that first version. But effectively, they don't sound that much different. You can't place how old he is in the first song anymore than you can place it in the last one if you don't know the discographic history behind the two recordings. It's remarkable.
00:24:30	Music	Music	<p><i>["Embraceable You" fades back in]</i></p> <p><i>My sweet embraceable you</i></p> <p><i>[Music fades as Morgan speaks]</i></p>
00:24:46	Morgan	Host	Yo, before we get out of here, before we go to a break, I just have to say the other thing that struck me is his song, "I've Got A Way With Women". And I was like, "There's no shortage of confidence in the Nat King Cole camp."
00:24:58	Music	Music	"I've Got A Way With Women" off the album <i>The Complete Capitol Recordings of The Nat King Cole Trio</i> by The Nat King Cole Trio. Slow but upbeat piano music with confident vocals.

*Please don't think I'm conceited
When I say...*

*I've got a way with women
They like my dreamy eyes
I've got a way with women
A Casanova in disguise*

[Music fades as everyone laughs and speaks]

00:25:18 Crosstalk Crosstalk

[Everyone laughs as the song fades out.]

Morgan: Yo.

Oliver: Baller, for real.

Morgan: Swag.

00:25:19 Nate Guest

Oh my god, Morgan. I thought I knew every song here, and I've never heard this one before. Thank you for—

00:25:25 Crosstalk Crosstalk

Morgan: No, man, I saw that immediately. I was like, "Wait a minute."

Nate: That is so fun. Wow.

00:25:31 Morgan Host

And so as I was in prep for the chat, because it's undeniable Nat King Cole had swag. He's attractive, he's debonaire. But I didn't know the full impact, and who it impacted, until I found this clip from Della Reese.

00:25:46 Clip Clip

Della Reese: I was in love with Nat King Cole, and I didn't care who knew it. His wife, his momma. I didn't care. I was just in love with him. And I had my first tour, big tour, was with Nat Cole, because Erskine Hawkins Orchestra played for him, and I was the vocalist with Erskine Hawkins Orchestra. And I was so smitten with him that I would stand—I opened the show, and I would rush upstairs and change my clothes and come back and hide in the curtains, so that I could watch him. And I studied him.

00:26:26 Morgan Host

[Nate laughs.]

Della was sprung.

00:26:28 Oliver Host

Was there some history there, though? 'Cause—

00:26:31 Morgan Host

Listen, they didn't provide all that. That was enough. I was like, "What, Della?" Because at the beginning she's like, "His wife, his girlfriend, I didn't care. His wife, his mother." And I was like, "Yo."

00:26:39 Oliver Host

We will be back with more of our conversation with the hosts of *Switched On Pop*, Nate Sloan and Charlie Harding, after a brief word from some of our sibling MaxFun podcasts. Keep it locked.

00:26:50 Music Transition

"Crown Ones" off the album *Stepfather* by People Under The Stairs

00:26:53 Promo Promo

Music: Upbeat, cheerful music with clapping in the background.

Jesse Thorn: Hey, gang! Jesse here, the founder of Maximum Fun, and with me is Stacey Molski, who is—among other things—the lady who responds to all of your Tweets.

Stacey Molski: Hi everyone! I also send you newsletters.

Jesse: Uh, so anyway. Something really awesome. You! MaxFun listeners have given us the chance to do something really cool on behalf of our entire community, and we wanted to tell you about it.

Stacey: Last summer, following the MaxFun drive, we put all of the enamel pins on sale to \$10 and up members, with proceeds going to the National CASA/GAL Association for Children.

Jesse: Your generous support and enthusiasm raised over a hundred thousand dollars. Our bookkeeper, Steph, would be quick to tell me the exact total is \$109,025, to be exact.

Stacey: Your money will go toward pairing kids who've experienced abuse or neglect with court-appointed advocates or guardian ad litem volunteers.

Jesse: In other words, kids in tough spots will have somebody in their corner. Knowledgeable grown-ups who are on their team through court dates and life upheavals and confusing situations, whatever.

Stacey: The money we raised together is going to help a lot of kids.

Jesse: Whether you bought pins or not, you can help us build on that \$109,000 foundation. Make a donation to support National CASA/GAL, and help some of our nation's most vulnerable children, at MaximumFun.org/casa. That's MaximumFun.org/casa.

Stacey: And seriously, thank you. Our community rules.

[Music fades out.]

00:28:30 Promo

Promo

Music: Dramatic, movie trailer–esque music.

[The hosts use very "announcer" voices in this promo.]

Mark Gagliardi: We interrupt the podcast you're listening to to tell you about another podcast! That's right: [We Got This with Mark and Hal](#).

Hal Lublin: That's correct, Mark! This is Hal. We do the hard work for you! Settling all of the meaningless arguments you have with your friends.

Mark: So tune in every week on the Maximum Fun network for *We Got This with Mark and Hal*, and all your questions will be asked... and answered.

Hal: You're welcome!

[Music reaches an apex and quiets down.]

Mark: Alright. That's enough of that.

Chorus: *[Singing] We Got This!*

00:29:00 Music Transition “Crown Ones” off the album *Stepfather* by People Under The Stairs

00:29:02 Morgan Host Yo, and we are back on *Heat Rocks* talking The Nat King Cole Trio, *The Complete Capitol Recordings of The Nat King Cole Trio*, the two thousand songs on this album—

[Oliver laughs.]

—with our friends, Nate and Charlie.

00:29:14 Charlie Guest This is part one of the seventy-five part episode.

[Everyone laughs.]

00:29:18 Oliver Host Yes. I’m going to further take us down an off-tangent here for a moment.

00:29:21 Morgan Host Aw, damn.

00:29:22 Oliver Host But, like the two of you, I study and write about pop music, and as such, I have a lot of pet peeves about how people talk about pop music. Least of all, in this kind of current era, nonstop ubiquitous discourse. And I’m wondering, for the two of you, is there any conventional wisdom about pop music that you see circulate, that really gets your proverbial goat? And I’m assuming that maybe you touch on some of this stuff in the *Switched On Pop* book that you all just published.

00:29:47 Nate Guest I love that question, and it’s, um, a particularly sort of real question to me right now, because I wrote a piece recently. And I woke up yesterday morning to find my inbox full of hate mail from followers of a youtuber who made a video sort of disagreeing with some of the points I made in my written piece.

Um, so, all to say that I—this is all very far from the world of Nat King Cole, but—basically I wrote a little bit about the Jonas Brothers, and what I thought was a very funky drum fill in one of their recent hits, “Sucker.”

00:30:36 Music Music “Sucker” off the album *Happiness Begins* by The Jonas Brothers. Very modern-sounding upbeat music with funky drums.

Don't complicate it (yeah)
'Cause I know you and you know everything about me
I can't remember

[Music fades out as Nate speaks]

00:30:44 Nate Guest And apparently a lot of people out there really took umbrage with the idea that the Jonas Brothers and funk could exist together in the same sentence. And I guess I’m sympathetic to that idea in some way, but it also—I think Charlie and I have had a real journey from

being the kind of people who, frankly, dismissed pop out of hand, I think at one point in our lives, to the kind of people whose lives have been radically changed by eradicating hierarchies of taste and letting mainstream pop into our ears.

And so, this was a moment where I had all these people—and by people, I really mean older white males—expressing their rage at talking about a band like the Jonas Brothers in a way that took them seriously or gave them any artistic credence.

And, I was like, “Oh, wow, yeah, I’ve come far, but there’s a lot of people who still look at pop in this very ageist, and frankly kind of homophobic way.” Because a lot of people were like, saying things like, “Oh, you’re slobbering all over the Jonas Brothers,” and like, “You’re in love with the Jonas Brothers.” And it’s like, yeah, I think they are pretty cute and talented—

[Oliver and Morgan laugh.]

—for the record, but that’s not really the point here. It was—I guess to say, “Oh wow, there’s like, still a lot of really powerful biases that exist around people perceive pop music.” It becomes this repository for like, how you feel about getting older, how you feel about gender, how you feel about race. Pop so easily stands in for all those things because it is such a big, juicy target, and um.

00:32:35 Charlie Guest It’s one of the rare forms of art where it’s still socially permissible to say, “That kind of music is bad.” Right? You can’t do that about a lot of other topics of culture.

00:32:47 Oliver Host My favorite example of this is when NPR still did comments on their website—and bless you, whoever at NPR decided to turn that shit off, because it needed to be done. But whenever I reviewed—and this would be like clockwork—whenever I would do a review about a hip hop artist, inevitably there’d be someone in there—and almost always an older white man—being like, “Rap music? Don’t you mean crap music?” I’m like, “That joke was tired in 1983.” And it’s like 2012 or 2013, you’re still doing that?

[Morgan responds affirmatively.]

But this speaks to your point. I mean, it’s kind of astounding, but yeah.

00:33:20 Charlie Guest This work is so important. It is the work which surrounds us, you know? And I think that’s why in examining—my first reaction when you asked me earlier about what did I think about Nat King Cole. I was like, “Oh, this is pop music.” And I don’t think I would have said that five years ago before we embarked on this project, with *Switched On Pop*, which I think really has evolved our listening, I would have just said, “Oh, that’s like uh, early jazz.”

[Morgan responds affirmatively.]

But its social function was pop music. And pop music is this ever-evolving sound. It’s very—it’s a chameleon. Every few years, there’s

a new sound which is pop, right? Like, we were in an EDM phase, we were in sort of a trap phase. I don't know where we're going, it's actually kind of a wild west right now.

Um, but the music that Nat was playing, at that—I guess it was not one moment, because it was a whole catalogue—but he's writing music which is meant to be social music. And for me, that then requires putting on a set of ears that say, "Well, what is your intention? Who are you trying to serve? Why are we listening to it? What is it doing for us?"

And I think when you listen with that kind of more open curious mind, when you listen to the music itself, there is so much more that it has to tell you.

- 00:34:32 Nate Guest Yeah, right. Pop becomes—it's an amazing way to sort of like, take the temperature of the times, or something.
- [Charlie responds affirmatively.]*
- That's why I like listening to your show, because each album not only brings you into a musical world, but it brings you into, like a moment in time, too. You know? And it says—and every album says something about the moment it was created. And this, to me, is like—I think the reason I love this *Capitol Collection*, this sprawlingness of it, is it captures so much of the world at that point in time.
- I mean, we have songs here about bebop. We have a cover of Rachmaninoff's "Prelude in C-Sharp Minor". We have a lot of, like, folk music from Black culture getting into the mix. Tin pan alley, pop songs, it's just like this crazy blend of everything that's happening in the 1940s.
- 00:35:23 Music Music "Prelude in C Sharp Minor" by Rachmaninoff. Somewhat folksy, whimsical piano music. Plays for several moments, then fades out as Morgan speaks.
- 00:35:37 Morgan Host If you had to do an extension of your book—
- [Nate responds affirmatively multiple times.]*
- and you had to do a chapter on Nat King Cole, what would be your focus? Which song, which time, or what would you—
- [Oliver responds emphatically, muttering "that's good", and laughs.]*
- Sorry. There are 48,000 songs on here, so that's a tough crowd. But, you know, what would you want to focus on?
- 00:35:57 Charlie Guest So, I'm going to pick the song, and then he has to explain it.
- [Oliver and Morgan both respond emphatically.]*
- So, the way that we approached the book is we wanted to—you know, with writing about music, you have the challenge that you can't hear it. And so we find it very important when you want to

illustrate something musical, which is often our goal, is to sort of illustrate some larger musical point that is motivating a song. It's helpful to start with, perhaps, some of the most popular work. Because that is the access point for everybody else, and that gives you the excuse to reference all of the other work.

So what's your favorite Nat King Cole holiday song?

- 00:36:30 Nate Guest Oh, you wanna do a holiday one? Cool.
- 00:36:32 Charlie Guest I think that's a—I think that's what people would probably first associate.
- 00:36:36 Nate Guest Yeah, I mean, let's do um—let's do "The Christmas Song", right? AKA "Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire."
- 00:36:42 Charlie Guest But like, so, now having sort of listened to this whole catalogue, how would you hear it differently, and like why—how would you approach that?
- 00:36:48 Nate Guest I would talk—I mean, I would—this has come up, but I would, I think—so our book pairs a song with an elemental musical concept. So, we do, um, like were talking about tamber earlier. We explore the quality of vocal tamber through the song "Chandelier" by Sia. So, I would probably put "The Christmas Song", um, and I would do form, I think.

[Charlie responds affirmatively.]

We've been talking about how you structure a song and how that's changed over time, and a lot of these Nat King Cole recordings that are using this "A-A-B-A" song form. Which is very different than the dominant song form of our moment, and really since the 60's, which is "verse, chorus" form.

So, I think it would be a cool opportunity to think about, like, why so much music of the 20s, 30s, 40s, and even 1950s used this "A-A-B-A" song form, and what that is. Should we dig into that, a little bit?

- 00:37:50 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Oliver:** *[Emphatically.]* Go in.
- Nate:** Can we go in?
- Oliver:** Yeah, we already started. Let's go there.
- 00:37:53 Nate Guest Well let's, let's explore. Okay, so, take "The Christmas Song". Um, so, "A" section, right? "Chestnuts roasting on an open fire."
- 00:38:01 Music Music "The Christmas Song (Merry Christmas to You)" off the album *The Complete Capitol Recordings of The Nat King Cole Trio* by The Nat King Cole Trio. Slow Christmas music with piano and violin.

*Jack Frost nipping at your nose
Yuletide carols being sung by a choir
And folks dressed up like Eskimos*

[Music fades out as Nate speaks]

00:38:20 Nate Guest Should be "Inuits", just for the record, but we'll let it slide.
[Oliver laughs.]

00:38:24 Morgan Host Fair enough. Fair enough

00:38:25 Nate Guest And then the second "A" section will follow the exact same melody.

00:38:30 Music Music *["The Christmas Song (Merry Christmas to You)" plays again]*
*Everybody knows a turkey and some mistletoe
Will help to make the season bright
Tiny tots with their eyes all aglow*
[Music fades out as Nate speaks]

00:38:48 Nate Guest Great, okay. And then we have the "B" section, which is gonna contrast, right? And that goes, "You know that santa's on his way." We have like, a new melody, a new chorus.
[Morgan and Oliver respond affirmatively.]

00:38:58 Music Music *["The Christmas Song (Merry Christmas to You)" plays again]*
*They know that Santa's on his way
He's loaded lots of toys and goodies on his sleigh*
[Music fades out as Nate speaks]

00:39:12 Nate Guest And then we have a final "A" section.

00:39:14 Music Music *["The Christmas Song (Merry Christmas to You)" plays again]*
*To kids from one to ninety-two
Although it's been said many times, many ways
Merry Christmas to you*
[Music fades out again as Nate speaks]

00:39:33 Nate Guest Damn, okay.

00:39:34 Charlie Guest That's the tag.

00:39:35 Nate Guest There's the tag! We got there. And that's a like, kind of payoff, you know? Like, you've been waiting for that. It's all been building to this moment. Merry Christmas to you. And it's like, wow, how effective is the A-A-B-A song form?

00:39:47 Oliver Host And I would just add, the more you know the song, and because most of us have heard it so many times, you are waiting on it, because you know it's coming. You know he's gonna hit you with that "Merry Christmas to you." Yeah, I think it builds that anticipation because_of its familiarity.

00:39:59 Nate Guest Sorry, "Merry 'Christ-ma-uhss' to you."
[Everyone laughs.]

Um, so this is, I mean—If we grabbed a song at random from—I’m looking at a printout of the entire catalogue we’ve been discussing. All, you know—

00:40:16 Oliver Host 340? Yeah. 349 songs.

00:40:18 Nate Guest If you hear paper rustling, it’s a lot, it’s a tome.

[Morgan laughs.]

I bet if we just like, picked a—you know, flipped through and picked a random song, I think the chances are like 95% that it would be written in this A-A-B-A song form.

It was just like, so ubiquitous during this time period. We talked about “Embraceable You” earlier, that song is really held up very well. But those are probably a small percentage of these recordings. And then most of the other ones have just become sort of, detritus on the, you know, ash heap of musical history.

00:40:51 Oliver Host On that note, Morgan, what are some of the songs that really stuck for you, going through this?

00:40:56 Morgan Host Oh, man. Well, I have to say first, there were some songs that I knew that Nat King Cole—you know, had become precious to me. But in revisiting them in prep for the chat, I listened to them a different way.

One of them was “Nature Boy”. I hadn’t listened to that in a long time. And if we can just hear a little bit of that, Christian.

00:41:18 Music Music “Nature Boy” off the album *The Complete Capitol Recordings of The Nat King Cole Trio* by The Nat King Cole Trio. Slow, flowery music with woodwind flourishes.

*There was a boy
A very strange enchanted boy
They say he wandered very far
Very far, over land and sea*

[Music fades out as Morgan speaks]

00:41:37 Morgan Host Pretty, pretty, pretty.

00:41:38 Charlie Guest Wow.

00:41:39 Oliver Host Shout-out to the flutist on this.

[Morgan responds emphatically.]

Flautist? Flutist?

00:41:42 Morgan Host I listened to it—

00:41:43 Nate Guest Both of them.

00:41:44 Morgan Host Whoever. Everybody that was involved, shout-out to them. But I listened to it differently, and I think more emotionally this time. Um,

It felt sad to me.

I used to do a radio show on KPFF, and my—I was between a hip hop show, and a gospel show. And I was playing sort of dance music and future soul. And I'd always be like, "Well, you can't go from this house music to, you know, Kirk Franklin." As she would come in with her records, I was like, "You gotta segue out."

And, um, one night, I was like, "I'm gonna play Nature Boy. I can't find anything that's a nice middle ground, but I'm gonna go with this." And I didn't play Nat King Cole's version. I played a version by a composer named Ahmed Sirour, and uh, and a vocalist named Cleveland Jones.

00:42:29 Music Music "Nature Boy" by Ahmed Sirour feat. Cleveland Jones. Slow, magical piano and haunting vocals.

*There was a boy
A very strange enchanted boy
They say he wandered very far
Very far...*

[Music fades out as Morgan speaks]

00:42:58 Morgan Host And when the DJ came in I was prepared to fade it out, because I usually fade it out, and she was like, "Uh-uh, keep that going. Keep that going."

[Charlie laughs.]

And I was like, "Yes!"

But in listening to it again in prep for the chat, that was one of the ones that I was like, "I might have skipped by that too fast back in the day." And it sat with me, and it made me wonder if Nat was also talking about himself. And it was just one of those things that was really, really personal to me.

And then also, the song "Can You Look Me In The Eyes," I think, "And Say We're Through".

00:43:29 Music Music "Can You Look Me In The Eyes (And Say We're Through)" off the album *The Complete Capitol Recordings of The Nat King Cole Trio* by The Nat King Cole Trio. Slow, sad, pleading piano and vocals.

*In these arms that used to hold you
As they're longing now to do
Can you look me in the eyes
And say we're through?*

[Music fades out as Morgan speaks]

00:43:52 Morgan Host I mean, first of all, the answer is if you're singing like that, then no, I can't say we're through.

[Everyone laughs.]

I can't look you in your eye. We're going the distance. We're gonna see this thing to the end.

Uh, but also, too, there are certain moments over this compilation, I'm like, "Are you close? Are you far? Is it a big microphone? What's going on in the room?" And this was one of the ones that felt very intimate. His voice feels very, very close. And it stuck with me. This was one I hadn't heard before.

- 00:44:20 Oliver Host Charlie, how about you? Especially as someone who—you came to this partly because your partner here Nate picked it. And in sitting through a lot of this catalogue, I'm assuming, for the first time, were there songs that really jumped out to you?
- 00:44:29 Charlie Guest The one that most stood out that Nate did share with me, was "I'm An Errand Boy for Rhythm".
- [Oliver and Morgan both laugh.]*
- 00:44:37 Oliver Host That's a dope title
- 00:44:38 Charlie Guest Isn't that a great song title?
- [Oliver and Morgan respond emphatically.]*
- 00:44:40 Nate Guest That's a—that's a Cole original too, I think.
- 00:44:43 Music Music "I'm An Errand Boy for Rhythm" off the album *The Complete Capitol Recordings of The Nat King Cole Trio* by The Nat King Cole Trio. Fast, upbeat piano and vocals.
- You can always find me down at Smokey Joe's
That's the place where every gal and gator goes
If you want variety, just step in and call for me
I'm an errand boy for rhythm, send me*
- [Piano flourishes and continues under Oliver's dialogue before fading out under Charlie]*
- 00:45:00 Oliver Host Very different than like, "Nature Boy", for example.
- 00:45:03 Charlie Guest Yeah, and so, this stands out for me because I think this really is pulling us as far as we can go from Nat King Cole the holiday song singer, to actually, the incredibly talented jazz musician. And when I heard this, I was just, like, "Oh, he's just showing off!"
- 00:45:18 Morgan Host A flex.
- 00:45:19 Charlie Guest He's an errand boy for rhythm. He's writing a song so that he has an excuse to play as fast as he can, and have a ton of fun. I love that.
- 00:45:28 Nate Guest I'm gonna pick, uh, "The Frim Fram Sauce".
- 00:45:31 Music Music "The Frim Fram Sauce" off the album *The Complete Capitol Recordings of The Nat King Cole Trio* by The Nat King Cole Trio. Mid-tempo, upbeat piano with playful vocals.

*I don't want French fried potatoes
Red ripe tomatoes
I'm never satisfied
I want the frim fram sauce with the Ausen fay
With chafafa on the side*

[Music fades out as Nate speaks]

00:45:53 Nate Guest And I remember listening to this, and I was like, “Wait, am I like, am I not hearing this correctly or something?” And then I looked at the lyrics, and I was like, “Oh no, it’s frim fram sauce with the ausen fay and chafafa on the side.”

And I was like, “Oh, this is just like, a nonsense song, that’s great. I love it.” But then you get to the very end of the track, and there’s this little like tag that makes the whole thing pay off.

00:46:18 Music Music *[“The Frim Fram Sauce” plays again.]*

With chafafa on the side

[Spoken]

Now if you don't have it, just bring me a check for the water

[Music fades out as Oliver speaks]

00:46:34 Oliver Host *[Everyone laughs.]*

There’s that tag that Charlie just pointed out!

00:46:38 Charlie Guest So rewarding.

00:46:39 Nate Guest And I love it. So, it brings up two things. It’s like, just the joy of like, the performance. And even though it’s such a silly song, “The Frim Fram Sauce”, I feel like these three musicians in the Trio are just giving it like, every ounce of flavor that they can. And it’s just like, the musicianship on display is just astonishing.

And then, with that little tag, it’s also—it’s very funny. Like, “If you don’t have the Frim Fram sauce, just bring me a cheque for the water.” Like, you get, “Oh, this was all kind of an elaborate play,” but it also like, captures something about the moment.

This was a song written a few years earlier, during the depression. And, you know, I think it does capture, in a very comical way, like, the difficulties of that time, too. And like, the kind of tight purse strings that people were dealing with. So, I don’t know, to me it’s like, I love that song because it’s just—it’s fun, it’s brilliantly performed, it cracks me up, and it offers, again, an insight into this time and place in a surprising way.

And that’s what this collection, I think, just, in general offers, is just this—it’s like a treasure chest. There’s so much stuff you can just—and even in our conversation, I’ve learned some songs that I’ve missed, you know? So, that’s—yeah, this is so much fun.

00:48:01	Oliver	Host	<p>We've already talked a lot about, I think, some of my favorite songs on here, which included "The Best Man". Which was a song that, when it came up on shuffle, I was like—I had to rewind it, like, wait, what did he just say?</p> <p>We've already talked about that. We've also talked a little bit about the 1961 version of "Embraceable You", and, I mean, that's just one of my favorite standards. I think Cole does just a gorgeous version. I mean, the versions that are on the anthology, they're all good, but this one in particular.</p> <p>And, if I can just laser in, there's the point where Nat King Cole gets the solo, about two thirds into the song. And, what he does on the piano here, I just—I wasn't expecting it, and just love it. And it really adds to a wonderful vocal performance, but hearing Cole work the keys too was just beautiful.</p>
00:48:46	Music	Music	"Embraceable You (1961 version)" plays again.
00:49:08	Oliver	Host	<p><i>[Music fades low continues to play in the background while Oliver speaks.]</i></p> <p>It's just so <u>pretty</u>.</p> <p><i>[Morgan responds affirmatively.]</i></p> <p>That's the term that pops into mind immediately. It's just such a pretty turn on the piano.</p> <p><i>[Music increases in volume again.]</i></p>
00:49:14	Music	Music	<p><i>["Embraceable You" continues to play.]</i></p> <p><i>Don't be a naughty baby, Come to papa come to papa do</i></p> <p><i>[Music fades out as Morgan speaks]</i></p>
00:49:30	Morgan	Host	I was thinking, you know, also in prep for this chat, I was like, "Nat King Cole probably isn't sampled. Like, no one's sampling Nat King Cole."
00:49:36	Nate	Guest	Yeah, that's true, right?
00:49:38	Morgan	Host	<p>But I found one.</p> <p><i>[Everyone responds emphatically.]</i></p> <p>Kendrick Lamar, featuring Big Pooh, on their song called "Thanksgiving". And he doesn't sample the vocals, he samples the instrumental from "Almost Being In Love".</p>
00:49:49	Music	Music	"Almost Like Being in Love" off the album <i>The Complete Capitol Recordings of The Nat King Cole Trio</i> by The Nat King Cole Trio. Flourishing, grand trumpets.
00:49:55	Music	Music	"Thanksgiving" off the album <i>The Kendrick Lamar LP</i> by Kendrick

Lamar feat. Big Pooh. Fast rap with the trumpets from “Almost Like Being in Love” in the background.

*... who ya? No one, I've done situated myself, I ain't lying
Be sure to be friend cause my foes die five times
The good kid from the mad city
Holding a cereal box instead of a Glock
In a 1992 Cadillac that I got from my pops*

[Music fades out as Oliver speaks]

00:50:06	Oliver	Host	Shout-out to big band samples. <i>[Morgan responds emphatically.]</i>
00:50:09	Charlie	Guest	That’s fun!
00:50:11	Morgan	Host	I mean, I was like, “Kendrick is prolific. Who’s sampling Nat King Cole? Kendrick is.”
00:50:15	Nate	Guest	That’s really cool. Yeah, no, between that, you’ve all dropped some beautiful knowledge tonight. That, and the “Nature Boy” cover—
00:50:26	Morgan	Host	Cleveland J— Oh, yeah.
00:50:28	Nate	Guest	Ho, man, we need to—
00:50:29	Charlie	Guest	That <u>voice</u> . That voice was like the Santa Ana winds, it was so powerful.
00:50:33	Nate	Guest	We uh, we’re gonna listen to that in the car. Right after this.
00:50:36	Morgan	Host	It’s really good, and it stays good throughout.
00:50:39	Oliver	Host	If the two of you had to describe <i>The Complete Capitol Recordings of The Nat King Cole Trio</i> in three words, what would those three words be? And y’all can tag team, so.
00:50:48	Nate	Guest	“Three Little Words”, a track on this album, too. How perfect. <i>[Morgan and Oliver laugh.]</i> Um, alright, we’ll go b—I’ll go first, and then you’ll go, and then—or should we say them together at the same time?
00:50:57	Charlie	Guest	No no no, go ahead.
00:50:58	Nate	Guest	Okay. Um. I’m gonna say, uh, three little words. My first word is effortless.
00:51:09	Charlie	Guest	I have—I have one thing stuck in my head, so I’m gonna break your format. I think you said the perfect thing already, it’s “Werther’s Hard Candy”. <i>[Everyone laughs.]</i>
00:51:18	Nate	Guest	Werther’s Hard Candy.
00:51:20	Morgan	Host	<i>[Emphatically]</i> Yes!

00:51:21	Oliver	Host	Alright, well Nate, then you gotta come up with two more, then.
00:51:23	Nate	Guest	Alright, fair enough.
00:51:24	Charlie	Guest	I stole those so I'm sorry.
00:51:27	Nate	Guest	Uh, "virtuosic" comes to mind. I mean, just like we've been saying, the piano skills, the vocal skills. It's just—it's staggering to me, and innovative.
00:51:40	Music	Music	<p>"An Old Piano Plays the Blues" off the album <i>The Complete Capitol Recordings of The Nat King Cole Trio</i> by The Nat King Cole Trio.</p> <p><i>So I'll just sit and play my piano Until my baby comes back</i></p> <p><i>[Music fades out as Oliver speaks]</i></p>
00:52:01	Oliver	Host	<p>If listeners liked what they heard here, and when they finally surface after finishing this in 2021—</p> <p><i>[Charlie and Nate laugh.]</i></p> <p>—what should be the next thing that they listen to? And, I'll start us off, which is listening to this really made me think of just a wonderful duet album between John Coltrane and Johnny Hartman from 1963, called <i>John Coltrane and Johnny Hartman</i>. I want to say it was probably on Impulse. Just a god tier collaboration with those two people at the top of their craft, and Hartman had just one of the richest voices ever.</p>
00:52:29	Music	Music	<p>"My One and Only Love" off the album <i>John Coltrane and Johnny Hartman</i> by John Coltrane and Johnny Hartman. Slow, tender piano and horns under crooning vocals.</p> <p><i>The very thought of you makes my heart sing Like an April breeze on the wings of spring And you appear in all your splendor My one and only love</i></p> <p><i>[Music fades out as Oliver speaks]</i></p>
00:53:03	Oliver	Host	Morgan?
00:53:04	Morgan	Host	This one was hard for me. I mean my—my instincts at the beginning said—I was gonna say the Mills Brothers' <i>Paper Doll</i> . But I wanted the focus to be on one single singer. So, it would be, for me, probably Brook Benton, <i>Mother Nature, Father Time</i> .
00:53:22	Music	Music	<p>"Mother Nature, Father Time" off the album <i>Mother Nature, Father Time</i> by Brook Benton. Slow, intense instruments under emphatic vocals.</p> <p><i>Tomorrow, you'll have no future And there's nothing worth Thinking of from your past</i></p> <p><i>You're just breaking yourself</i></p>

[Music fades out as Nate speaks]

00:53:43	Nate	Guest	Oh that's cool. I can definitely hear the Cole legacy there, that's really cool.
00:53:47	Charlie	Guest	I have a really strange year, I'm not sure if I can actually get us to there. But the thing that I heard when I was listening to this record, which we haven't talked at all about, was um, some of the— someone who's referencing other popular music, and I heard some of them was like, western-swing, that was happening in his work. And so the place that my ear went to was a lot of the guitar work, and in particular a reference to—I think someone who actually came in after—uh, a player named Speedy West, who played the lap steel brilliantly. And his track "Speedin' West", that's with an N apostrophe at the end.
00:54:21	Music	Music	"Speedin' West" by Speedy West. Fast-paced, upbeat guitar and drums, similar in style to the music under the songs played in the episode so far.
00:54:35	Oliver	Host	I can totally hear Cole singing over that, yeah.
00:54:37	Nate	Guest	You're such a guitarist, I love it. <i>[Charlie laughs.]</i>
00:54:39	Morgan	Host	What year was this?
00:54:40	Charlie	Guest	I don't—I don't have it on me.
00:54:42	Nate	Guest	That's like late 50s or early 60s, I think. And I just—shout-out. Charlie's such a good sport. He wanted to do Daft Punk for this conversation, and I was like, "Nope, sorry! It's gotta be Nat King Cole." <i>[Morgan laughs.]</i>
00:54:52	Charlie	Guest	I loved it.
00:54:53	Nate	Guest	Um, I would go to—I would go next to Slim and Slam. Um, they're two artists around the same time as Nat King Cole. Uh, Slam Stewart the bassist, and Slim Gaillard, the guitarist and vocalist. And I just think—I think what I'm attracted to in music, part of why I love Nat King Cole, is this effortless, this lightness, this cleverness. Like, that's what I love. I'm just always gonna go to, you know—like when it comes to opera, I like opera bouffe, I don't like opera seria. And when it comes to pop music, I like the—I don't know, I just like the light stuff. And Slim and Slam are another one of these groups that just have a good sense of humor, they're funny, and yet they're like crazy talented musicians at the same time. I love that, when you—when people use their prodigious skills with the goal of creating something just, like, light and effervescent, that's like, that's my sweet spot. So, yeah, I'll say Slim and Slam.

00:55:56	Music	Music	“Jump Session” by Slim and Slam. Mid-tempo swing with a few scattered cheers throughout it.
00:56:15	Oliver	Host	Well, that will do it for this episode of <i>Heat Rocks</i> with our special guests, the creators and hosts of <i>Switched On Pop</i> , Nate Sloan and Charlie Harding. Their new book, <i>Switched On Pop; How Popular Music Works and Why It Matters</i> , is now available on Oxford University Press. Shout-out to academic presses that do trade books. Uh, gentlemen, thank you so much for coming through. Obviously, there’s the book, there’s the podcast. Where else can people find more about either you as a duo, or you as individuals online?
00:56:42	Charlie	Guest	We like to chat a lot on Twitter, so find us at @SwitchedOnPop. We’re also on Instagram and Facebook. But we have a lot of musical dialogue with some really brilliant listeners who have a lot to offer, so we’d love to continue the dialogue there at <i>Switched On Pop</i> .
00:56:55	Oliver	Host	Alright, excellent. You’ve been listening to <i>Heat Rocks</i> with me, Oliver Wang and Morgan Rhodes.
00:56:59	Morgan	Host	Our theme music is “Crown Ones” by <i>Thes One of People Under The Stairs</i> . Shoutout to Thes for the hookup.
00:57:05	Oliver	Host	<i>Heat Rocks</i> is produced by myself and Morgan, alongside Christian Dueñas, who also edits, engineers, and does the booking for our shows.
00:57:13	Morgan	Host	Our senior producer is Laura Swisher, and our executive producer is Jesse Thorn.
00:57:17	Oliver	Host	We are part of the Maximum Fun family, taping every week live in their studios in the butterscotch-smooth West Lake neighborhood of Los Angeles. We wanna thank all of our five-star iTunes reviewers, including “Your Friend Jami”, who wrote that our “cast never fails to school me.” While “EbDavDav” wrote to say that Morgan and I have, “Great tempo, and excellent taste in music.” Well, thank you for that! If you, listener, have not had a chance yet to leave us a review, please consider just taking out a few seconds to do so, because it is a key way in which new listeners can find their way to our little show.
00:57:53	Morgan	Host	We also wanted to thank all of our social media fans out there, and our family, including the following folks. Misty Rose, who really loved the episode with our guests, Wendy and Lisa.
00:58:05	Oliver	Host	We are—we’re heavy in Team Purple out there right now.
00:58:09	Morgan	Host	Purple. Thank you, fans of Purple. His Purpleness, Prince, and that album. She was blown to find out that Pat Smear of the Germs and

Nirvana, was in the Raspberry Beret videos, a factoid that was revealed during the episode.

We also wanted to thank Jacobi81 who wants us to do a Bobby Brown episode. Okay. If someone picks that, then we'll go to it. Uh, "Fed to the teeth", I just wanna thank—these names. CurseYourKhan, who also liked the Wendy and Lisa. Want to thank "jazztahara", Keith "The Gooner", Theo Gonzalez.

We also want to thank "scoleroptera". Um, okay. We also want to thank, as always, Lost in Williamsburg, continues to hold us down. Alejandro Delarubia. We want to thank Purple Music. Okay, shout-out to Purple Music.

We also want to thank Gregory the A'ight, as always holding us down. Stubby Wrightmeyer. Okay, shout-out, Stubby. We want to thank Gang Weaponized ASMR. Thank you so much for the tweezyes and the retweezyes. Good to see you all.

00:59:21	Oliver	Host	Good to see you too, Morgan. And one last thing. This is a teaser for next week's episode, which is an encore of Morgan's discussion chat with Tall Black Guy about D'Angelo's <i>Voodoo</i> , which turns—wait for it—it turns 20 years old next week. Bringing it back.
00:59:40	Tall Black Guy	Guest	I mean, I just thought musically, this was some <u>other</u> stuff. You know, I mean, because back then, people were like, at least in the soul stuff, they weren't really heavily relying on the live instrumentations. There's a lot of programmed stuff, so. Like, it just sounded like, <u>really</u> organic. And then, obviously, when you hear D'Angelo sing over it, I mean it was—that marriage between the music and his voice, it was just absolutely insane. And then you find out later that they spent like five—anywhere from five to seven years just studying before they actually even actually <u>made</u> the record.
01:00:35	Music	Transition	"Crown Ones" off the album <i>Stepfather</i> by People Under The Stairs
01:00:37	Nate	Guest	You can write one of these A-A-B-A songs so fast. I mean, you can just churn them out. Because, I mean, even just saying it, A-A-B-A, that's—three parts of the song are using the exact same melody. And they'll—even as what you'll often hear will have kind of a lyrical refrain that returns. I mean we could write one right now. Let's write a <i>Heat Rocks</i> A-A-B-A song. <i>[Oliver laughs, and Morgan affirms emphatically.]</i>
01:01:05	Oliver	Host	Here we go.
01:01:06	Nate	Guest	So <i>Heat Rocks</i> is gonna need a little tag that comes at the end of each "A" section. And I know each "A" section is gonna be the same length, let's say, 8 bars. Um, so I just kind of have to fill in the blanks a little bit in order to get to that "Heat Rocks", so I'm going to need a couple rhymes with "rocks". We'll probably use "socks". Um, "mocks".
01:01:26	Oliver	Host	Box.

01:01:27 Morgan Host Locks.

01:01:28 Nate Guest *[Nate repeats Oliver and Morgan's suggestions.]*
Okay, great.

01:01:29 Charlie Guest Disc-jock...eys.
[Everyone laughs.]

01:01:31 Morgan Host I like that

01:01:35 Nate Guest Jocks? Jocks, yeah jocks.

01:01:36 Oliver Host I think we have a new theme song formation going. Maybe for year three, we gotta flip this.

01:01:38 Morgan Host Yeah, shout-out to Thes One, we're moving on.

01:01:42 Nate Guest So then, just so—and I'm not gonna say this is the greatest song ever, but just to illustrate, I think, how quickly you can churn these songs out. So it'd be something like, um:

*If there's an album that really rocks your socks
Come on down to the American Cement Building
For some Heat Rocks*

That's where we're recording, by the way. Okay, so that's one "A" section, boom. Just moving right along.

[Everyone laughs.]

Alright, let's go on to number two, you know? Um. You know:

*When you get there
Oliver and Morgan will welcome you into the box
drop some knowledge, spin some tunes
it's time for Heat Rocks*

We got through.

01:02:18 Morgan Host Yes! Nate's got bars!

01:02:19 Oliver Host Wow. This is the art of genesis, right here.

01:02:21 Nate Guest We got through the second "A" section. Alright, now we need a "B" section. And this is where we'll, like, introduce, you know, some contrasting idea, or some doubt, or something. Like, um, you know, uh:

*It doesn't matter if it's jazz, pop, or soul
anything from...*

			Who did Shana do on the show just recently?
01:02:47	Morgan	Host	Oh, Jodeci.
01:02:48	Nate	Guest	Yeah, Jodeci.
			<i>Anything from Jodeci to Nat King Cole</i>
			There we go!
01:02:51	Morgan	Host	<i>[Emphatically]</i> Yes!
01:02:52	Nate	Guest	Made it through the B section. Uh, and then we need one more “A” section, um. You know:
			<i>Anyone listening from the nerds to the jocks will find something to love when they tune in to...</i>
01:03:07	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Everyone: <i>[In unison]</i> Heat Rocks!
01:03:09	Nate	Guest	Wow. We made it.
01:03:10	Morgan	Host	Yo, we got our new theme song. And it’s been recorded.
01:03:16	Speaker 1	Promo	MaximumFun.org .
01:03:18	Speaker 2	Promo	Comedy and culture.
01:03:19	Speaker 3	Promo	Artist owned—
01:03:20	Speaker 4	Promo	—Audience supported.