

Wonderful! 140: The Atomic Collage

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Jesse: Hey, folks. It's Jesse, the founder of Max Fun. Since we postponed our annual MaxFunDrive in mid-March, we have gotten a lot of questions about if and when we'd be rescheduling it. And honestly, we've been asking ourselves the same thing.

Well, now, we have an answer for you. The 2020 MaxFunDrive will start on July 13th. That's coming up soon. We decided to have the Drive now, because it's always brought a lot of joy and excitement to our community, and certainly to us. And to be totally honest, it's also the main source of income for some of our hosts.

Like pretty much everything right now, this year's Drive is gonna be a little different. We'll still be bringing you very special episodes, fun community activities, premium thank you gifts, but we also know it's a weird time, and for some folks, a really difficult one.

Some people are in a position to become new or upgrading members. Others can't right now, and that is okay. We'll have ways for you to support Max Fun at every level, including some ways that won't cost you anything.

We're also gonna run the Drive for four weeks instead of two. We didn't think it was a good time to be rushing anybody, and having a longer Drive lets us be a little more low-key in our Drive pitch. It also gives us more time to do fun stuff, like the weekly live streams we'll be putting on for charity throughout the Drive.

Most importantly, we want the 2020 MaxFunDrive to highlight all the ways we support each other and our communities. We also want to show how grateful we are to you for making all the work that we do possible.

Stay safe. We'll see you July 13th for the MaxFunDrive.

[theme music plays]

Rachel: Hello, this is Rachel McElroy.

Griffin: Hello, this is Griffin McElroy.

Rachel: And this is Wonderful!

Griffin: Do you think the audience would... be okay... with just 45 minutes of dead air silence? Me and you climb under the desk, lay down, take a quick 45 minute snooze.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I'll turn on the meditation app. I'll turn on some white noise. We're in the studio, so I can crank the... y'know, the sound system with some—

Rachel: And that Soulja Boy.

Griffin: I can crank the Soulja Boy, because I know that you love listening to that to help you sleep. Um, and the two of us... will just treat ourselves to a little schnooze. 'Cause our listeners are always talking about, "Hey, you guys are always just pouring your heart out of your sleeves, into our open ears and mouths, and what have we done for you lately?" And it's like, that's a good question. Maybe we could just do a dead silence, 45 minutes of episode, and you don't tell on us to... the advertisers, or Max Fun.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: Do you think they would—our audience is a decent size. Do you think they would all be cool? 'Cause all it would take is one weak link...

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: ... to send an email to Jesse and be like, "Hey, get them in trouble."

Rachel: If you took that 45 minute snooze...

Griffin: Yeah?

Rachel: Do you think it would really make a difference?

Griffin: It would make more—it's better than nothin', huh?

Rachel: I guess that's true.

Griffin: I think it'd be great. And I think let's try it, starting right now. Can't sleep right now anyway. I'm too excited to talk about how, uh, excited I am... to talk about how excited I am on this week's episode of Wonderful! It's a show where we talk about things that are good. And uh, how are you doing?

Rachel: Um, pretty—pretty good. Pretty good. A little stressed.

Griffin: That's a lie. I feel like neither—we just had a remote teaching sesh with uh, our son's daycare, which is reopened in a limited capacity. We have not sent Henry back in.

Rachel: I think... y'know what helps? I keep reminding myself that they are doing this because they think we want it.

Griffin: Yeahhh.

Rachel: They're not doing this to set us up to fail. They're thinking, "Let's offer them something."

Griffin: Oh, it felt like it though, huh?

Rachel: [laughs] 30 minutes.

Griffin: 30 minutes.

Rachel: Sitting on the floor with his classmates, learning about the planets.

Griffin: Of Henry playing like, a reverse staring contest, to see how long he could go without looking at the people talking to him on the computer

screen. It was rough—rough stuff!

Rachel: I just—I keep reminding myself, they think we want this.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: They're not doing this because they think we need it.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: They think we want it.

Griffin: Yeah. They're so wrong. Um, hey, do you have any small wonders, though?

Rachel: [laughs] You always ask me first, and I'm never prepared to go first.

Griffin: Right, but ultimately, I—

Rachel: So I think you should just like, declarative, “I have a small wonder.”

Griffin: I'm going first. Uh, grenadine. I enjoy it in a cocktail. Uh, it's a cherry syrup. Long before I was, uh—before I drank adult beverages... we'd go to Applebee's, and I would say, “Let me just get some Coke with some grenadine in it.” 'Cause they didn't have Cherry Coke most of the time. I'd just be like, “Let me get a Coke with some grenadine in it.” And that was always such an exotic treat for me, uh, was Coke with grenadine.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I've always fostered a love for this sweet, red syrup, and uh... I enjoy it in many a beverage for grown folks, these days. And uh, that's my story, folks, and I'm stickin' to it!

Rachel: I will follow your theme, and suggest... taking a fruit juice, and putting it in a cocktail.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: We have been really good lately about getting a lot of—a lot of fruit items. Uh, we've had some watermelon, some pineapple, uh...

Griffin: Maybe, uh—not to brag... watermelon, pineapple... you heard of 'em? Oh, we got 'em.

Rachel: Uh, and so, a lot of times, I will take the juice from that fruit. I will put it in my cocktail.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: It is a summer treat.

Griffin: You haven't lived until you've seen Rachel pick up a whole watermelon with her hands, and just squeeze it.

Rachel: And just squeeze it.

Griffin: And the juice comes out without the sort of hull of the—the husk of the watermelon breaking. I don't know how the fuck she does it.

Rachel: Yep.

Griffin: It's pretty incredible. It's like she—

Rachel: I squeeze it, looks like a deflated balloon.

Griffin: It's like she's wringing out a towel. It's incredible. Hey, you go first this week. What—what you got on deck?

Rachel: I am bringing something, and I'll be curious to hear your experience with this, because I don't know if this was just a phenomenon for me.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: I'm talking about collage.

Griffin: Collage of... many things put together into one thing?

Rachel: Uh, things cut and glued on a piece of paper, in a pleasing array.

Griffin: Are we talking about, uh... sort of the—the—like, artistic, like, Eric Carle... is that the dude's name? The Hungry Caterpillar fella? I did a whole fuckin' segment on him. I can't remember his name.

Rachel: Yeah. No, that is.

Griffin: He like, worked in collage. Are you talking about that, or are you talking about like, here are some pictures of some of my favorite members of 98 Degrees?

Rachel: Why just one and not the other?

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Both.

Griffin: Okay. Maybe it also could be like an artistic spread of pictures of Nick Lachey's face and body, and abs, nipples, powerful arms...

Rachel: [laughing] Just isolating particular body parts and pasting them separately?

Griffin: Yeah. I can see your dad like, going into your room and being like, "Hey, Rachel, what—" And just seeing you putting together a *huge* poster

board of just Nick Lachey's nipples. And where they have sort of found their way to the surface.

Rachel: Oh, this is terrible. This is...

Griffin: Just a—just a—

Rachel: This is grotesque, Griffin.

Griffin: Like a highway map of Nick Lachey nipples.

Rachel: No. Uh...

Griffin: No? Okay.

Rachel: Just to be clear, I was not a fan of the 98 Degrees.

Griffin: Baby, you don't have to impress anybody here. We're all friends here.

Rachel: Um, collage was a biiiig thing for me in maybe middle school? This was something that you would give to other people. A lot of times, on a birthday.

Griffin: Whoa!

Rachel: You would take photos, uh, and cut them up into little shapes and put them on a piece of paper. I was suggesting that you might have experience with this, 'cause I thought maybe after one of your theatrical performances, there were collages made of people in character.

Griffin: Mostly as like, directors' gifts. And in fact, that was fairly traditional. Um, more like, scrap book or poster style design. Not like, y'know... I feel like when you say 'collage,' you have to be cutting interesting shapes.

Rachel: [laughs] Not necessarily.

Griffin: You can't just include a bunch of pictures all glued together.

Rachel: Not necessarily.

Griffin: Uh, the only time I remember me doing this is, I made one for myself of all my friends.

Rachel: Yeah, right?

Griffin: Uh, that I had in my room. I bought like a big poster board at like, Wal-Mart or something like that, and I was very excited about it, and I just like, thumbtacked all these pictures of uh...

Rachel: One of my friends, uh... this was several years ago, now, was cleaning out his stuff from his parents' house, and found his collage from high school. Posted it on Facebook, tagged us all. It was... a trip.

Griffin: I remember destroying my collage and just taking all the pictures down off of it, I think when I moved to Cincinnati. Because I had to do a real hard—I was really trying to condense my life, Marie Kondo style, long before that was a thing. And... saying like, "Well, I could fit all the photos on this in one very small sandwich-sized Ziploc bag, or I could carry an entire huge fuckin' poster board with me across state lines." Didn't make the trip.

Rachel: I will say, in middle school, one of my friends gifted me a blank journal, but on the inside cover was a collage of Leonardo DiCaprio photos.
[laughs]

Griffin: And was this – I imagine the journal didn't come like this.

Rachel: No. No, this was—

Griffin: The journal—okay. So what was the thinking there? Just like, here's where you can write some—here's a place for you to safely write some of your most erotic poetry about Leonardo DiCaprio?

Rachel: [laughs] My argument is that she took an impersonal gift of a journal, and made it personal by cutting up pictures of a celebrity that I liked and pasted them.

Griffin: But what's the message, though? Because a journal is like, where you do some creative writing, or maybe a little bit of introspective writing. And is like, "Here's a journal, and I'm gonna go ahead and give you a prompt. Look at all these Leo nips. It's Leo nips all over the front cover. You look at those, you center yourself for 15 seconds, and then you begin writing."

Rachel: [laughing] You have a strange misunderstanding of what a teen girl finds attractive about her love interest. It is not typically nipples.

Griffin: I think... your memory is starting... I—

Rachel: Mm, no, you've got your finger on the pulse of...

Griffin: Mm, finger right on it.

Rachel: [laughs] Uh, collage is something that is also used in high art form. Uh, not just... y'know, teens. Um, we became most familiar with it, I think, as a—as a globe, uh, with the cubist painters. Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque. They kind of, uh, would take a painting, and then maybe cut out some newsprint in a shape or something, and put it on the painting. It's also called mixed media, a lot of times.

Griffin: I don't know, I call it frickin' lazy. Just paint. Just paint it. Use paint to paint it.

Rachel: [laughs] Who is this character, by the way?

Griffin: I don't know. I'm so tired.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs] I don't know who it is. I don't know who's comin' out of me anymore.

Rachel: Um, but this was not actually something that they originated. This is something that has been around forever. Uh, Japanese artists began to stick paper onto silk as early as the 1100s.

Griffin: Whoa!

Rachel: In Europe, paper collage happened in the 1400s. Uh, the technique of just kind of taking prints and putting them on canvas is something that is very common in the Victorian era. This happened a lot in scrapbooks, and homemade Valentine's cards.

Griffin: Adorable.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And I mean, stained glass windows is also, if you think about it, just glass collage. If you really sit down, and you think about it.

Rachel: Oh, like a mosaic, I guess, would be another example of tile collage?

Griffin: Tile collage. And really, if you really think about it, paint on canvas is just a paint collage.

Rachel: Ohh.

Griffin: And if you think about it, a sandwich is just a meat, lettuce, and cheese and bread collage! If you really think about it... I am a blood, muscle, and bone collage. Think about that.

Rachel: Wow. You are writing a poem over there, and I am loving it.

Griffin: The universe is just an atomic collage. Whoa! That's something! Hey babe? There's something to that. Write that down. Write that down in your Leo nipple journal.

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: Atomic collage. Ooh, that's good! Ooh, that's powerful!

Rachel: Atomic collage. That is good. Um, there was actually something similar, uh... feminist artists in the 1960s. There was an example of a piece called Body Collage.

Griffin: [bursts into laughter]

Rachel: Uh... where the artist rolled around in shredded printer paper.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Her body painted in wallpaper paste, in what she called an active collage.

Griffin: Cool. That's neat. It also reminds me that, I don't know. Oh man, I can't go down this whole rabbit hole. There is a series of GI Joe, uh, like, PSA spoofs that were like, early internet videos.

Rachel: Oh, is this body massage?

Griffin: Just sounds like body massage. Sorry.

Rachel: Yeah. [laughs] That's nothing.

Griffin: It's nothing! It's nothing. It's absolutely nothing.

Rachel: Um, this is also something pop artists use. Just taking every day, ordinary objects in their work.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: And then, also, if you think about the '70s and '80s, posters for bands like The Sex Pistols used a lot of this collage.

Griffin: Oh, sure.

Rachel: Uh, so, I think it's interesting to just kind of look at, y'know, this is like an at home, a decoupage, you take a table, you put a bunch of pictures on it, suddenly it's art.

Griffin: Love it.

Rachel: Or y'know, you can go into a gallery and see a lot of this, too.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: I think it—I find it really, um, accessible. Because a lot of times, as an artist, um, my skills of capturing an image are... are not great. Um...

Griffin: Oh, don't sell yourself short, babe.

Rachel: But if I can cut it out of a magazine, paste it on something? All of a sudden, I don't have to draw, y'know, that globe. I've got a picture of a globe, and I put it on there.

Griffin: Really obsessed with globes this segment. Just a lot of globe chat. Uh, can I tell you about my first thing?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: My first thing is weird and abstract and sort of conceptual, which is just sort of where my mind is at right now. Opening a treasure chest.

Rachel: Oh!

Griffin: It's always so good to open up a treasure chest.

Rachel: This must be why unboxing videos are so popular.

Griffin: I think it is. There's a lot of sort of ways that you can extrapolate this idea out into the real world. I think yes, unboxing videos. I think, uh, the surprise eggs, surprise bag sort of YouTube craze for kids. Uh, where they, y'know, make fairly cheap toys, and you open up a bag, and oh man, there's a one in 48 chance of getting this, y'know, silver Gudetama or whatever the fuck!

Uh, it's a very universal thing, and especially in sort of the domain of video games, opening a treasure chest is like, such a common thing. Um, and it struck me that like... regardless of the game or whatever thing, uh, regardless of like, whether or not I even know what's inside said chest... every time I open up a chest in some game or whatever, there is a dopamine kick associated with that that is just sort of like, irrefutable. 100% of the time, no matter what.

And I think that's kind of like, uh... the—I don't know, the icon of opening a treasure chest, the symbol of opening a treasure chest being that sort of like, consistently exciting... it's kind of incredible.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: Um, and it's like—that's ubiquitous across like, all games. Zelda is like, a huge example of that, where you're exploring dungeons, and there's little chests with, y'know, cash or keys or bombs or whatever the fuck in it. But every dungeon has one big chest that you're working your way towards, and every single time, you're opening up that big chest like, "Oh shit! Here it goes!"

Uh, D&D obviously, any roleplaying game, it's like a big thing. I've been playing a card game on my phone called Slay the Spire, which is all around like, one to two hour long runs. Along the way, you'll open like, a dozen chests. And even though I've played it for so long, every chest, I'm like, "Fuck yeah! What's gonna be in this one? I don't know!"

Um, also, I think that there is a—we mentioned the surprise bag, uh, toy craze. In video games, there's also a concept called loot boxes, which, uh, became sort of legislated over the past few years, because it's like, y'know, this game is free, but here's a random box you can buy for a dollar that might have a new costume for your guy in it! And kids were spending... hundreds and thousands of dollars on these loot boxes, because they were not sort of financially responsible, or financially sort of educated. Uh, and game developers were sort of like, enticing them to blow huge, huge stacks of cash.

Rachel: Also, yeah, you have no understanding of money.

Griffin: Yeah, that's the thing. And so, like, legislators have sort of uh, come after that practice and made it more sort of, uh—you have to be more transparent about like, what's in these boxes, and what your chances are of getting each thing, and uh, y'know, if you're a YouTuber, you can't juice the system because a developer like, paid you money to give you a fake box that, [in a high-pitched voice] "Oh man, this one has all kinds of great stuff in it!"

I don't know why I talked like that just now. But basically, it's gambling.

Anyway, treasure chests as like, a concept, as an icon, uh... are a—are a trope largely because of pirates, and the like, concept of buried treasure, which, y'know, is the origins of this idea of keeping treasure in a box in clandestine locations.

Um, and archeologically speaking, there are lots of examples of troves that have been discovered, or hoards that have been discovered, and like, so much so that there are like, all kinds of categorization systems that archaeologists use when describing, uh, what are they called... wealth deposits.

Which is really interesting. I'd never really looked into it. There's a concept called a founder's hoard, which is comprised of like, unfinished objects that the like, creator was planning on returning to.

Rachel: This makes me think of the pyramids.

Griffin: Well, that's—I mean, yes. The pyramids also, uh, largely included what were called votive hoards. And votive hoards were, essentially, hoards of treasure that were never intended to be dug up. Like, that is their final—they are buried there, intended to be their final resting place. So, for a lot of ceremonial purposes, the pyramids had a lot of votive hoards.

The idea of buried treasure is almost entirely, like, fictional. And there's certainly some examples, like, throughout history of just sort of like, mad rulers burying their vast sums, and then like, it instantly being found, because somebody didn't keep a secret or whatever the fuck.

But the idea of a pirate doing this is almost unheard of. The only one, uh—the only pirate sort of confirmed to do this was William Kidd, who was sailing in New York City. He started out, I think, a privateer, but he for sure slipped into doing, uh, a great deal of piracy. And so, he buried treasure... I think in Long Island somewhere, before sailing into New York City to use as a kind of bargaining chip, in case he was caught and prosecuted. He could say like, "Well, uh, don't hang me, 'cause there's all this treasure."

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: That gambit did not work. He was killed. Uh, and this became sort of the origins of a lot of fictional stories, like the uh, *The Gold Bug* by Edgar Allen Poe, and most notably, *Treasure Island* by Robert Lewis Stevenson. And that is how this like, idea of a treasure chest being this object of desire, uh, hidden away in some dungeon or whatever, rose to prominence.

I think that that is just a cool idea. Like, I think it's a cool thing that there is a... games are all about building around like, feedback loops of uh, y'know, challenge followed by reward, where your efforts are sort of put through the paces, and then you receive a prize for said effort at the end of it. And almost ubiquitously, that prize is a treasure chest, and y'know, even though it's been in every game forever, it's... every time I open a treasure chest, I'm like, "Fuck yeah, here we go! What's in this box? Let's find out!"

Rachel: I bet like archaeologists and paleontologists, like, I bet that's part of the reason they got in the game, right?

Griffin: Oh yeah, oh yeah!

Rachel: This idea of just like, stumbling upon something incredibly valuable, y'know? That you have to like, work to, y'know, identify.

Griffin: And I'm sure that there's an archaeologist that like, cracked open a crypt somewhere, and there was just a bunch of gold and treasure laying on the ground, and they're like, "Ah, fuck. If only this had been in a chest. That would've been so much cooler."

Rachel: [laughs] It's so messy.

Griffin: I could also get into like, the concept of mimics, which is another sort of fiction, obviously, game thing, of monsters in the shape of treasure chests, which is like a manifestation of—

Rachel: Oh, I didn't know about this!

Griffin: Yeah, I mean, it's like a tropey sort of D&D thing. But it's also—

Rachel: Y'know what I'm picturing right now?

Griffin: What's that?

Rachel: I'm picturing a treasure chest with arms and legs. Is that... that's right?

Griffin: Yeah. And a big tongue, and sharp teeth. Yeah. More or less, yeah, essentially.

Rachel: Wow.

Griffin: Uh, but that would—if I talked about that, I would sound like a big nerd.

Rachel: Oh, well...

Griffin: As opposed to a cool athlete. [laughs] Like I have so far today.

Rachel: [laughing] Like you'd normally... yeah.

Griffin: Hey, can I steal you away?

Rachel: Yes!

[ad break stinger plays]

[advertisements play]

Rachel: Griffin, we have personal messages!

Griffin: Yeahhh, baby!

Rachel: [laughs] This one is for Nick. It is from Shannon. "You are the most wonderful person I've ever met, and after one year together, I still can't believe you exist. Thank you for coming into my life and loving our tiny furry idiots as much as I do. You make every day feel like a Friday pizza party, and I can't wait to hang out for the rest of our lives. Bread babes forever. See you later. – Lick"

Griffin: I don't know why Friday pizza party hit me as hard as it did.

Rachel: Me too!

Griffin: Because I heard that, and I was like, "What does that mean?" But then I thought of like, what a Thursday pizza party looked like, and I was like, "Fuck that!"

Rachel: See, I was thinking like, it was more like, the class had earned it, and they were rewarded...

Griffin: Oh my god, yes!

Rachel: Mm-hmm. Like you got enough stickers or something, and now you got a pizza party.

Griffin: We got enough stickers. We're gonna get some five dollar hot and readies, and we're gonna watch the first 45 minutes of Finding Nemo!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, here's another jumbotron. This one's for John, and it's from Emma, who says, "Hey love, I'm writing this on your couch, soon to be our couch, because I'm finally moving to Austin! I couldn't ask for a more supportive, caring partner, and I can't wait to start our life together. Here's to many years of endless pop culture references, homemade pasta, and... [sighs] ... finally getting me to watch The Wire. Love you always, of course."

Rachel: I would recommend Austin as a destination.

Griffin: Uh, yes. Maybe not in the middle of them dog days.

Rachel: That's when you moved here, right?

Griffin: I did. I moved here in July.

Rachel: Yeah. [laughs]

Griffin: So the days didn't get much doggier than those. I think I showed up here and immediately, my underwear was just like... completely saturated with sweat. Like, I stepped off the plane, and it was just like, *shoonk!*

Rachel: [laughs]

[Maximum Fun advertisement plays]

Griffin: Hey, what's your uh—what's that second thing?

Rachel: My second thing is...

Griffin: Mm.

Rachel: ... a trip to the Poetry Corner.

Griffin: Hey! Oh my gosh, I feel like it's been so long! [sings a jazzy tune]
Hey baby, I hear the poetry callin' to salad and poetryyyy!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: [singing] We got some lines, we got some versus, and baby, come along with meeee! But I don't know what to do about those salads and scrambled poeeems... they're calling in.

Do you like how I shortened 'poems' into sort of one, like...

Rachel: I do, actually!

Griffin: Like... pomes! How do you say it?

Rachel: Poem.

Griffin: Yeah. Pome. It's stronger.

Rachel: [laughs] I would like to talk about... an incredible poet, who I knew first as a poet, but is actually known for many things. And that is Audre Lorde.

Griffin: Oh, okay!

Rachel: Anybody that has taken a women's studies course, has studied feminism in any way, has heard of this incredible woman.

Griffin: I've heard of this incredible woman.

Rachel: Yeah. Uh, I actually—I was wondering if I was kind of off in thinking of her as a poet first, but she has created 11 volumes of poetry.

Griffin: Whoa.

Rachel: And five works of prose.

Griffin: That's so—that seems like a lot.

Rachel: That's a lot!

Griffin: That's 16 things altogether.

Rachel: Audre Lorde was a black American writer, feminist, womanist, librarian, and civil rights activist. She described herself as, quote, "a black lesbian mother warrior poet."

Griffin: Fuck yeah! Fuck yes!

Rachel: Mm-hmm. Uh, so she—she passed away in 1992, but was kind of at the beginning of the whole concept of, uh, intersectional feminism.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Because, as she described herself, y'know, a lot of her... a lot of her qualities crossed over and impacted her feminism. And she was always kind of critical of non-intersectional feminism. And this is kind of one of those famous things that you may have heard before.

This is a quote from one of her essays. She said, "Those of us who stand outside the circle of society's definition of acceptable women, those of us

who have been forged in the crucibles of difference, those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are black, who are older, know that survival is not an academic skill. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths.

For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us, temporarily, to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change, and this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support."

Griffin: I have heard—yeah. Okay.

Rachel: Yes, right?

Griffin: Okay, yes. Yeah.

Rachel: [laughs] Uh, she became an academic relatively early. She started as a poet, got her poems published in Seventeen magazine, and then got a fellowship that allowed her to teach, which is actually where she met her partner of many years. Uh, and um... became kind of a member of this academic area that was primarily white, and kind of had to discover a lot about herself and her priorities and her interests in that experience.

So she was a poet, but then, also became an academic and ended up writing a lot of essays about her experience. Uh, and I wanted to read one of her poems.

Griffin: Please do.

Rachel: So this is from The Collected Poems of Audre Lorde. It was copyrighted 1978. It is called A Litany for Survival.

"For those of us who live at the shoreline
standing upon the constant edges of decision
crucial and alone
for those of us who cannot indulge

the passing dreams of choice
who love in doorways coming and going
in the hours between dawns
looking inward and outward
at once before and after
seeking a now that can breed
futures
like bread in our children's mouths
so their dreams will not reflect
the death of ours;

For those of us
who were imprinted with fear
like a faint line in the center of our foreheads
learning to be afraid with our mother's milk
for by this weapon
this illusion of some safety to be found
the heavy-footed hoped to silence us
For all of us
this instant and this triumph
We were never meant to survive.

And when the sun rises we are afraid
it might not remain
when the sun sets we are afraid
it might not rise in the morning
when our stomachs are full we are afraid
of indigestion
when our stomachs are empty we are afraid
we may never eat again
when we are loved we are afraid
love will vanish
when we are alone we are afraid
love will never return
and when we speak we are afraid
our words will not be heard

nor welcomed
but when we are silent
we are still afraid

So it is better to speak
remembering
we were never meant to survive.”

Griffin: Jesus Christ.

Rachel: [laughs] Isn't that incredible? That is—is such... a beautiful expression of the experience of being marginalized. Right? Like—

Griffin: I mean, in a way that you and I could never fully comprehend, for sure. That is like—I am struggling for words over here.

Rachel: I—there are moments in that poem that I just think are so succinct and brilliant. This idea of, ‘so their dreams will not reflect the death of ours,’ I find incredibly powerful. And she talks a lot about this idea of, y'know, when you are in a group of marginalized people, you are often told to be silent. To kind of adapt to the culture so that you can get along. And Audre Lorde oftentimes said like, that is not a way to success for us.

Griffin: No.

Rachel: Y'know, that is not who we are. That is not gonna bring us the freedom we want. Um, the Audre Lorde Project was founded in 1994, two years after her death. It is a lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirit, trans, and gender non-conforming people of color center for community organizing. And it is all building on her legacy of speaking out for oppressed and marginalized groups.

She left such a legacy in her writing and in her activism that like, the work still continues today in her name, which is an incredibly powerful thing for a poet.

Griffin: It's so—that was so fucking incredible, baby. Thank you for uh, bringing that. I for sure had like, heard her name before, but I had never like, heard her poetry before, and that one is...

Rachel: She's an intimidating person to bring, because it's difficult to talk about her impact in a, y'know, ten minute segment. [laughs]

Griffin: No, yeah! Of course.

Rachel: Uh, but I wanted to draw attention to her poetry, 'cause I think a lot of people do know her for her activism and her essays and her critical thought. But her poetry is incredible, too!

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: This um... this is an important person to look into, if you are not familiar with her work. And there is a lot there that just reads as revolutionary, but then, is also so common sense.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Y'know, there's something kind of intimidating about a lot of philosophers and intellectuals and academics. And I feel like she stays very rooted in who she is, and the power she can bring in just being that person. Uh, and so, I would recommend it.

Griffin: And I'm gonna talk about fuckin' Fritos or whatever...

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: No, uh, my second thing is, uh... I'm actually pretty excited about it. I was struck, because yesterday, I was singing one of these songs, and I was like, "Oh my god, how have I not brought this?" I want to talk about Schoolhouse Rock.

Rachel: Oh!

Griffin: Schoolhouse Rock! It strikes me, um... I was gonna talk about this like, later in the segment. I am, I want to say like, around 2000 or so, I was definitely like, early teens, late tweens. Uh, I was in a production called Schoolhouse Rock Live, which was written in 1993. And it was essentially like, a stage performance of something like, 20 Schoolhouse Rock songs. And because of that, I am intimately familiar with those 20 Schoolhouse Rock songs.

Uh, it's the nature of like, being in a show. You have to memorize your lines, you have to memorize the lyrics of the songs that you sing, and it just so happens that the lyrics of these songs are so, like, deeply educational about these like, incredibly foundational subjects, that like... I know them very well.

However, most of the 64 episode run of Schoolhouse Rock took place in the late '70s to early '80s. And so, I imagine there's lots of people who uh, were not in the production, Schoolhouse Rock Live, who maybe have no exposure to Schoolhouse Rock. And that's why I thought it would be like, good to talk about as a segment.

Rachel: Yeah. There was a lot of like, nostalgia in the '90s for like, that time period. And so, I remember that being like, a real cool thing in the like, mid to late '90s of like, "Hey, look at this super retro looking stuff."

Griffin: There have been a couple of revivals of Schoolhouse Rock. I think in the '90s is... there were, I think, eight seasons, right? And the main canon of Schoolhouse Rock exists in the first four seasons, which I'll dive into.

The fifth season was like, Computer Chip Billy inside the... and it was like—I think that was the season that was in the '90s, and it was like, all about how computers work, but it was like, a month later, those episodes were outdated. Where it was like, "I've got eight kilobytes of RAM!" It's like, no, get the fuck out of here.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: No way, man. The uh—Schoolhouse Rock. If you are like, not familiar with it at all, was a series of three minute long educational cartoon music videos, essentially, tackling a very broad range of subjects that aired on ABC, mostly in the '70s. And like I said, there have been a couple sort of short-lived reboots here and there.

I think in the late aughts, there was a short season about climate change. Um, which is awesome. But the main body, the like, songs that everyone talks about when they talk about um, Schoolhouse Rock, are the first four seasons, which cover, uh, science, economics, history, mathematics, and civics. Which is like, a lot of stuff. There's a lot of words in there that bored me, a 33-year-old man, that like, enraptured the youths at the time.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And they had—these songs had so much staying power because of like, how catchy they were. The whole series was created by a guy named David McCall, uh, who was an advertising exec. And the story goes that his son, uh, was having a lot of trouble with his multiplications tables, but uh, McCall realized that his son also knew all the lyrics to every Rolling Stones song.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: So like, he sort of put two and two together. He hired a guy named Bob Dorough, who—to write a song about multiplication, and that song was called Three is a Magic Number.

Rachel: Yes!

Griffin: Which is the first episode of Schoolhouse Rock, is Three is a Magic Number, and I'm gonna play it right now.

[‘Three is a Magic Number’ from Schoolhouse Rock plays]

Griffin: So uh, an animator working at the same firm as David McCall made these visuals to accompany the song, and then they pitched it to ABC as a

series, where it attracted the attention of Michael Eisner, and then it took off like a rocket.

Rachel: I feel like my friend had a like, alternative rock version, where a bunch of musicians got together and did covers of these songs.

Griffin: Almost certainly, yes. Yes. I think that that, uh—I remember that as well, but I don't, uh... god, it's so hard to—there were so many alternative rock covers of every imaginable type of music under the sun.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, so the first four seasons, I will go in order. The first season, it's Multiplication Rock. Just what it says on the tin. Three is a Magic Number in there. Uh, also, My Hero, Zero, another memorable song, and Figure Eight. Both of those songs were in the musical.

Rachel: I don't remember these. I just remember three.

Griffin: [sings] Figure eight as double four! You don't know that one? Okay, anyway.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, the next season was Grammar Rock, which is probably, pound for pound, the one that people know the most songs from. Can you name any, uh... can you name songs from Grammar Rock? I will be curious to see how much this has been—

Rachel: No.

Griffin: Really?

Rachel: No.

Griffin: Conjunction Junction?

Rachel: Ohh. Conjunction Junction.

Griffin: What's your function? Uh, we got Unpack Your Adjectives. We got Lolly, Lolly, Lolly, Get Your Adverbs Here.

Rachel: Oh my gosh! These—okay, yes.

Griffin: Uh, Rufus Xavier Sarsaparilla, a song about pronouns, which was my number that I had to sing.

Rachel: Aw, Griff.

Griffin: Which was this just endless screed of madness that was—it was the hardest song in the show, and I had to do it, because it's all about how uh... it's like, Rufus Xavier Sarsaparilla had an armadillo named something something something, and uh, he knew a woman named something something something something... but you can say that much, much faster with pronouns, is the whole hook of the song.

Anyway, uh, just a lot of bops in Grammar Rock. Uh, then, during the bicentennial in 1976, we get America Rock.

Rachel: There it is.

Griffin: Which is where you get all of your history, and your civics...

Rachel: This is the one. When I think of Schoolhouse Rock, I think of I'm Just a Bill.

Griffin: I'm Just a Bill. You get uh, Mother Necessity, and The Preamble, which was in the Schoolhouse Rock Live musical, and saved me in so many different, like, history classes at that point, because The Preamble is literally just the preamble to the Constitution.

Rachel: Oh, that's handy!

Griffin: [sings] We the people, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility... provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare aaand, secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity! To ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America!

Rachel: Wow.

Griffin: This was 20 fucking years ago!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: This was 20 years ago, I was in this show, and I remember it!

Rachel: I remember, we had to memorize that in ninth grade, and we did not get that song at our fingertips. And that would've been very helpful.

Griffin: It's literally—that is all the song. They repeat it from there. It is just the preamble to the Constitution. And I remember it, because it took place in song form. And that's incredible!

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: And then, the fourth season, the final sort of season of the main run of the show, was Science Rock, which has, uh, a few jams in it that are lesser known. Uh, Interplanet Janet, which teaches you the planets of the solar system. Uh, Do the Circulation, which is all about the circulatory system. We get Victim of Gravity, which is about gravity. Uh, but then there's also Electricity, Electricity. Which is also a fantastic song.

Uh, and the songs, as evidenced by the fact that I can remember one 20 years later, word for word, uh... the songs were super catchy, the show was super well-received, and like, the amount of sheer educational work done by this program is literally immeasurable. And that is such a tricky needle to thread. Like, educational kids' TV programming that is not just sort of, um, vacuous and sort of like, the lessons of which are not sticky. Like, they're intangible. Like, that is such a difficult thing to pull off.

Rachel: It is, yeah!

Griffin: And Schoolhouse Rock, uh, so many of its 64 episodes, of its 64 songs, are incredibly memorable, catchy, well-written, well-performed, like, and very helpful, mnemonically speaking, songs.

Rachel: Better than Baby Shark.

Griffin: Waaay better than Baby Shark! Um, and I just—I just love 'em. I love the songs for their educational purposes. I also really loved being in that show, 'cause it was like, all my friends and I just like... it was an easy—there was not a lot of emotional weight.

Rachel: Was there choreography?

Griffin: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Do the Circulation was out of control. We had to get that blood pumpin'.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, yeah. And... that's it. I want to end with the final song from Schoolhouse Rock, which is one of my favorite songs. I don't know if you've heard it before. Uh, it's The Tale of Mr. Morton. It's all about subjects and predicates, and I think it's just a really nice, pretty song. So I'll end my segment on that.

[‘The Tale of Mr. Morton’ from Schoolhouse Rock plays]

Griffin: Do you want to know what our friends at home are talking about?

Rachel: Yes!

Griffin: Well, Meredith says, “I've gotten into embroidery recently to pass the time. There's something about the action of sewing that is really calming and fun to do. It's also a great way to keep my hands busy while listening to podcasts.” Yeah, I have never, uh... I...

Rachel: My grandma was like, incredible at embroidery in her, um... in her early days. Probably close to my age, actually.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Uh, and... I love it. I just—there's something so, um... it feels like an heirloom. It feels like you're making an heirloom.

Griffin: Yes, absolutely.

Rachel: Like, when I see it, I feel like, this is something that somebody is going to keep forever.

Griffin: Like the creepy boy holding a cat that...

Rachel: [laughs] No, holding a little ball and cup.

Griffin: Is that what it is?

Rachel: That's what it is.

Griffin: Okay. I thought it was a cat.

Rachel: There is a cat in the picture.

Griffin: Okay. We have a large embroidery thing that Rachel's grandma made. And it's beautiful, it's well done, it's incredibly—

Rachel: It is haunted.

Griffin: It's incredibly haunted.

Rachel: It is certain that it contains the soul of a young child.

Griffin: Yes. Or that the soul of a young child somewhere contains the painting.

Rachel: Is trapped. Yeah. It's hard to say.

Griffin: It's something. There's something, I think we can all agree. There's something. Sandra says, "A big problem in Minneapolis, especially at the lake by my house, is people feeding ducks human food. To solve this, the city of Minneapolis made little rubber duck picnic table centerpieces, reminding people to not feed the ducks. It's very cute to see little rubber ducks all around the picnic area, and it seems to be very effective!"

Rachel: That's so charming.

Griffin: It's very nice. I remember I learned, uh, shamefully recently, not to give ducks—not shamefully recently, maybe within the last decade or so. Uh, because I said something on like, a podcast. Like, "Yeah man! Give a whole baguette to a duck! It'll be awesome! The ducks have earned this!" And then got a bunch of people who knew much better than me, saying like, "Nooo no no no!"

Rachel: You needed a Schoolhouse Rock song.

Griffin: I did!

Rachel: Like, [sings] don't give bread to a duck!

Griffin: That's really good.

Rachel: [sings] Don't give milk to a cat.

Griffin: Well... are you not supposed to give milk to a cat?

Rachel: No!

Griffin: Okay, see? I apparently need this song very importantly! [sings] Chocolate is not for dogs! It's important to remember that!

Baby. The reboot.

Rachel: We're done.

Griffin: It's coming back!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Hey, uh, thank you to Bo En and Augustus for the use of our theme song, Money Won't Pay. You can find a link to that in the episode description. And thank you so much to Maximum Fun for having us on the network.

Rachel: Yeah! You may have seen that they have announced the upcoming MaxFunDrive. You can find a lot more information about that online.

Griffin: Yes! We had promos for it in this exact episode that you are hearing now, uh, for more details, but it's kicking off very, very soon. And uh, it's gonna be much more low-key than it has been in previous years, and uh, we have some—we got some fun stuff planned for ya.

Rachel: Yeah, just like a celebration of the great network that we are on. And the great creators that are included in it.

Griffin: Yes. Uh, and... I mean, I think that's it. Hey, uh, my new graphic novel that I made with my family comes out next week.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: We got in a huge box with like, 60 copies of it here at our house, so I don't know.

Rachel: It's a big ol' book.

Griffin: It's a big book! Big, big book.

Rachel: Lot of work went into that.

Griffin: Uh, yeah. Mostly by Carey Pietsch, the illustrator of the book. But you can find it at TheAdventureZoneComic.com. Please preorder it. That would be very cool of you. Um, and uh... I think that's it. I think that's where we're gonna wrap it up. And um... well...

Rachel: Thank you to flowers and trees.

Griffin: Thanks to flowers and trees.

Rachel: Thanks to grass and bushes.

Griffin: Oh. Doing great work this week, bushes. Clouds though...

Rachel: Clouds.

Griffin: What is this show turning into?

Rachel: Clouds and sun...

Griffin: Clouds, sun, stars, space! Air!

Rachel: Mmm.

Griffin: All part of the beautiful atomic collage. Oh, god! Just... is it too late to change the name of the podcast?

Rachel: No, definitely not.

Griffin: I'll send it—I'll send an email to Apple.

Rachel: [laughs]

[theme music plays]

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