

Wonderful! 143: Rare, Exclusive Gak

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[theme music plays]

Rachel: I'm gonna get so sweaty in here.

Griffin: Are you?

Rachel: It is... hotototot.

Griffin: Okay. Is this the show? Are we in it?

Rachel: Hi, this is Rachel McElroy!

Griffin: Hi, this is Griffin McElroy.

Rachel: And this is Wonderful!

Griffin: It's gettin' sweaaatyyy!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: It's not—it doesn't feel that bad to me.

Rachel: See, you're used to it.

Griffin: Y'know what it was? Mm, I had my big fat gaming rig pumping out pixels and frames. Comin' at me hot and heavy. Master Chief was there. Just so fuckin'—just poundin' out the bad guys, and it was getting hot and sweaty in here. So I apologize.

Rachel: Griffin has a very sparse office that has 700 pieces of electronic equipment in it.

Griffin: True. So then, one might actually argue it's not sparse at all. In fact, it is filled with electronic equipment. Yeah, that's true. I imagine if I get the PC running, I imagine if I get the 3D printer running, all at the same time, it's just gonna—it could be a sweat lodge. I could go on a real journey in here. But I don't think it's that bad, and we're only in here for a little bit, so let's...

Rachel: And I will also say that a lot of these electronics help you make a better podcast, which... is a timely thing.

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: 'Cause we were talking about better podcasting through... the MaxFunDrive.

Griffin: Maybe I wouldn't say that the uh, the money that our listeners have so kindly sent us over the years allowed me to enhance the podcast by buying a 3D printer.

Rachel: [laughs] I'm not talking about the 3D printer.

Griffin: No. But there is plenty of stuff, uh, within eyeshot of investments into the show.

Rachel: Yeah, these fancy microphones.

Griffin: Sure. The—I mean, there's a power converter cleaner thing that I don't know what it does, but apparently it makes things sound better. There's all kinds of stuff.

MaximumFun.org/join is the link you can go to if you want to support our show and the network at large. Uh, it is the MaxFunDrive, going on right now. I think we have this week and next week, right? And then it's over?

Time's runnin' out. If you want to become a member of the network, and you want, uh, the cool gifts that we have arranged for folks who give at whatever level feels comfortable for you. We'll go into those a little bit later

on in the show, but uh, yeah. Please help us out. The turnout has been great, but we still need help, especially... y'know, during these weird times where we are not touring, and certain, uh... ways that we were making our living have become, uh, completely cut off from us.

So once again, MaximumFun.org/join. You have a small wonder? I can go first, if you'd like.

Rachel: Please. [laughs]

Griffin: We've been watching, uh, Taskmaster, right? And we've talked about it like, every week. We're just like, really dog pounding through that show.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: It's a lot. And we are currently on the season with James Acaster on it, who I first became familiar with through uh, The Worst Idea of All Time. He was a guest on there several times, and I thought he was hysterical.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: Uh, and so, I think it was last year or the year before last, we were on a trip, looking for something to watch on TV, and uh, he had a four-part special on Netflix.

Rachel: Have you not talked about this?

Griffin: Called The Repertoire. I may have brought it as a small wonder before, but we've started rewatching it again, because it's so fucking funny. He's so funny! God almighty, he's funny. It's really good standup. Uh, so, that's what I'll bring.

Rachel: Uh, I'm gonna say... wearing my glasses again.

Griffin: You have been bespectacled more than uh, you usually are!

Rachel: I had this lifestyle where I really only needed my glasses when I was in front of a computer, and I was only really in front of a computer when I was working. So I got in this habit of not wearing glasses unless I went to work. And that lasted for several months, into this uh, pandemic. And then I just realized, y'know why I wore glasses? 'Cause they help me see better, and I liked the way they looked. [laughs]

Griffin: The traditional two reasons for wearing glasses, yeah.

Rachel: I should—even though I'm not leaving the house, maybe I should wear them again. And so, I uh... just got a little reminder of like, "Hey, that was functional, and not just related to leaving the house."

Griffin: Cool. [laughs] That doesn't make me worry about you at all.

Rachel: [laughs] One day I'll get to wearing pants that are not cozy, but I'm not there yet.

Griffin: You wore jeans to like, run out somewhere on one of our few excursions out of the house, and you were like... it was like watching a baby giraffe learn to walk again.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: There was something about the stiffness of the fabric that you were just... not used to. I think the second you crossed the threshold back into our house...

Rachel: Yeah, I had to remove those.

Griffin: You just ripped—you ripped them off like you were a professional wrestler. Like, no way.

Uh, I go first this week. I would like to talk to you about a subject that I don't know... you probably have some passing familiarity with, but you

certainly do not, uh, I believe, have a deep, deep admiration for. Tony Hawk's Pro Skater.

Rachel: Ohh.

Griffin: Tony Hawk's Pro Skater, named after the professional skateboarder, Tony Hawk. What's your exposure to Tony Hawk?

Rachel: I was trying to think. So, as we've mentioned before on the show, I was not a Nintendo household.

Griffin: Oh no.

Rachel: And I pretty much stopped playing video games once I entered high school, which was late '90s. So my exposure to Tony Hawk actually didn't happen until college, when my friends hit this like, nostalgia tour of eBay that involved getting old games.

Griffin: Right. Well, at that point, it wouldn't have been too super old, 'cause the first Tony hawk came out in 1999. So you just barely missed the boat.

Rachel: And this was—yeah. This was like, 2003 or so, when I was like, "Oh, what is this Tony Hawk?"

Griffin: Okay. I mean, 2003 is still, uh, I would argue, the prime of the Tony Hawk series. There were a ton of Tony Hawk games. The first one came out on PlayStation, Nintendo 64, and Dreamcast back in 1999, and it spawned this whole series that went on for a very, very, very long time, until some more recent attempts to make Tony Hawk games have been terrible.

Rachel: And brought skateboarding terminology into American households across the country.

Griffin: Oh, sure. Christ Air became a sort of household phrase.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, yeah. It was a... I realized, after um... what was the other one I did? Oh god, I can't remember. It's like a cultural sort of phenomenon situation. Like, it is a—NBA Jam is another sort of like, great, uh, like example of this. Of just like, I feel like I didn't play video games like this, and then Tony Hawk's Pro Skater came out, and it was like, all I could think about. All I could play for a very, very long time, because me and my group of friends got extremely into Tony Hawk's Pro Skater.

And it did like, familiarize the world with skateboarding in a way that uh, y'know, indie skateboarding tapes, or the X Games, or whatever had never really had the crossover appeal to do.

Rachel: Yeah. You just knew about the pants.

Griffin: You just—what?

Rachel: The skateboarding pants. The big pants.

Griffin: The what—the skateboarding pants?

Rachel: The skateboarding kids. They wore the big pants.

Griffin: I guess so.

Rachel: And the Vans?

Griffin: Uh, the Vans, I'll give you. I don't know about big skate—are you talking about JNCO jeans?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: I don't think those were—I don't think that was the dominion of skateboarders.

Rachel: I feel like that was the skater look!

Griffin: Okay. Uh, we could go back and forth about JNCO jeans. Uh, but yeah. So, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater. 1999. You controlled one of uh, any number of actual pro skaters. I'm trying to remember... I bet if I sat here for like, ten minutes, I could remember most. Bob Burnquist was one of them. Uh, oh my god. Shamefully, I am blanking. There were so many.

Uh, and you play in a series of levels, and there are different goals in the career mode of Tony Hawk's Pro Skater that you had to accomplish, like uh, y'know, achieve a certain score in two minutes, or go find this hidden VHS tape, which was... [kiss] Delicious.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Or uh, the most common one was collect all the letters in the word 'skate' in order to accomplish that goal. And as the series went on, the career mode evolved and became like, way more in-depth with a lot more stuff to do. All the way up to Tony Hawk's Underground, which was my personal favorite, where you actually created a skater.

You could, I think, take a picture of your face with a digital camera. And at that point, it would—you'd save it onto a floppy disk, and put that floppy disk in your computer, and then like, email it to this specific email address that the game would generate for you, assuming your PlayStation 2 could connect to the internet, and then you could rip it. It took forever, but then like, that's Griffin! And he's wearing a beanie, and he's really good at skateboarding, just like me! And you could like, invest money in your board.

Rachel: Do you think that's where you guys got the idea for Monster Factory? Do you think that was the...

Griffin: I mean, we did a Tony Hawk game on Monster Factory, so that's very full circle, if so. Um, that like... the career mode was like, so dope. Like, we would go through and accomplish every goal, even when like, the levels were super annoying. It would take us so, so, so much time to do it.

That Tony Hawk's Underground game, by the way, was so great, because it also had a map editor. And uh, our friend Justin made Huntington, West Virginia in the map editor in Tony Hawk's Underground. We probably spent... maybe 300 hours total, like, playing in Huntington.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Even like—we knew like, every single square inch of it, and all the like, in-joke references that were in there from like, the little NPCs who would give you the missions to do things. And we just spent so much time playing that game.

But... that reminds me of like, the best thing, personally speaking, about Tony Hawk's Pro Skater was the multiplayer. So good. It was so good. Because it had the like, things you'd expect, like uh, two people do skateboarding for two minutes, and we see who can get the higher score.

There was also graffiti mode, where every time you did a trick on a ramp or something, you would change that ramp to your color. And whoever had the most objects at the end of time, uh, that was their color, won. But you could also steal an opponent's object by doing a better trick on it.

Rachel: Wow!

Griffin: So there's like, a lot of strategy to it that was really fun. The one we spent the most time playing was HORSE, where it set you in front of like, a ramp or a grinding rail or something like that, and said you had ten seconds to like, do a trick. And y'know, you set the score, and the other person had to beat it, and then they could set the score, and then it just went back and forth and back and forth like that.

I'm not like... I was thinking about this while I was prepping this segment. And like, the since memory of just like, on a Saturday, after like a sleepover, just playing HORSE in Tony Hawk Pro Skater 1 or 2 or Underground or whatever. Like, for the entire day. Like, that's just all we—we snacked on something in the 'ito' family, and just... played Tony Hawk HORSE just like, nonstop. It was so good.

Rachel: Can I ask you about these tricks? This is what I never understood.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: The tricks, was it like a memorization of which buttons in which order? Or were you just mashing?

Griffin: Oh no. I mean, maybe when you started out, you were just mashing. But uh, y'know, they would add certain things to each title. But the core DNA of like, what you did in Tony Hawk, like, never changed. The square button did flips, the circle buttons did grabs, triangle was grind...

Rachel: Oh! See, I never learned that.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: I was like, how are people doing these things? I had no idea.

Griffin: Yeah. And so, y'know, over time, you would learn how to, y'know, do a kick flip off a ramp. And then, as you were landing, do like a manual so that you could link it to the next trick so you could grind. And by the end of it, by the time we hit Tony Hawk's Underground 2, me and my friends were just like, bored gods. Where we would just like, hit—

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I'm not kidding. We would have—we would play HORSE, but if you were still doing your trick after the ten seconds ran out, you could do it. You could keep going until you finished your trick, either landed it or crashed. So we'd grind in a circular pool for like, eight minutes. Just going through and getting like, a trillion points and then saying like, "Okay, your turn."

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: It was so satisfying and so good, and it just introduced like, a new kind of game into our like, already pretty robust video game vocabulary. And

I think that that's like, really neat every time that—I feel like I can pinpoint the exact times that that happened throughout like, my history of playing games. And Tony Hawk Pro Skater was like, such a huge, like, landmark thing.

And of course, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the soundtrack. The sound track to the Tony Hawk's Pro Skater games—

Rachel: Oh my gosh.

Griffin: —was a collection of uh, mostly punk and ska music.

Rachel: Yes!

Griffin: That is so... so like, mm. So delectable. So memorable.

Rachel: I am surprised that you didn't have more of an affection for ska, based on the music in Tony Hawk.

Griffin: Well, that was the only ska I really, uh, enjoyed, I would say. Yeah, I never really went through a ska phase. Uh, despite how many like, sort of checkerboard items of clothing I would say that I owned at various times.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: But god, it was iconic. Like, it was like... these songs were—I also didn't go through a punk phase, but I did go through a Tony Hawk Pro Skater phase, where I would listen to a lot of these songs.

Rachel: It was probably uh, probably because you were never much of a rude boy.

Griffin: I was—

Rachel: Which is a ska joke.

Griffin: I know. I got it.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Um, I don't think I even need to play any of the songs here on the show, because I think I can just sort of psychically inject it into the minds of everybody who—

Rachel: Oh yeah.

Griffin: So I can just say like, Superman by Goldfinger. And it's just like...

Rachel: [laughs] You're there.

Griffin: It's just, you're there. You're there with me. Uh, they did a remake of Tony Hawk Pro Skater 1 and 2 a few years ago that wasn't very good, but they're just doing it again this year, I think. Just another remake of Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 1 and 2. So maybe this one will be good, but I—man.

Rachel: [laughs] Can you still play as Tony Hawk, and is he old?

Griffin: Uh, I think so. I think you probably play as like, his kid. I think his kid's also a skateboarder at this point.

Rachel: Aww.

Griffin: Tony Hawk is also like, pretty solid. I did an interview with him once when I was still writing about video games, and it was like, a weird thing, 'cause like, I have no knowledge about the guy himself, aside from like, what buttons I can press to make you do kick flips.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: But he was very—he is very funny and very self-deprecating. There's like, a long list of times that he has cited of people like, not knowing who he is, despite the fact that he is like, kind of a household name.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: It's delightful. What is your first thing?

Rachel: My first thing...

Griffin: Yep.

Rachel: ... is caves.

Griffin: Oh, yeah! Caves! Very afraid of them, but cool things, these caves.

Rachel: [laughs] Much like, uh, Texas is the lone star state, and West Virginia is the mountain state. Missouri? Cave state.

Griffin: You're kiddin' me?

Rachel: Mm-mm.

Griffin: Didn't know it was so porous.

Rachel: Over six thousand caves in this state.

Griffin: Holy shit, that's a lot of caves.

Rachel: Mm-hmm. Um, I've always really liked caves!

Griffin: Yeah, caves are great. The best thing about caves is the verb for exploring them is one of the best words, I would say, in the entire English language.

Rachel: Did you know, actually, the formation and development of caves is known as... speleogenesis?

Griffin: Speleogenesis?

Rachel: Which is, I guess, where spelunking comes from.

Griffin: Probably. Uh, did you—did you do a lot of spelunking growing up?

Rachel: No. No. No, we just walked through paved arm-rail caves.

Griffin: Oh no, I would count that as spelunking.

Rachel: Oh, really? I thought—spelunking I thought was like, you're repelling. You've got gear, and you're... got a little head lamp.

Griffin: Maybe.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I mean, I don't know. I went into a cave. I wouldn't call that cave hiking. There's a word for it. Spelunking.

Rachel: The way you described your cave experience seemed very rogue. It seemed very like... like, DIY cave exploring.

Griffin: I had a couple times of DIY cave exploring. Uh, mostly at uh, our youth pastor's farm house had caves, like, in the back that we would just like, dip into with flashlights until we got very afraid, which didn't take very long. But there was also Carter Caves, which I want to say was in... Kentucky somewhere, that was like you are describing, like, guided paths through like, really genuinely gorgeous, gorgeous caverns.

Rachel: Mm-hmm. Um, most caves are solutional caves, or also called karst caves, which is when the rock is soluble. So like, limestone.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: Chalk. Marble. Y'know, when it can be worn down by water.

Griffin: Right. What is the—what is the—how could any other cave be formed?

Rachel: Well, there's like, volcanic caves, too.

Griffin: Oh, I guess so! Where there was like, a volcanic channel of lava that like, over time, went—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Huh, interesting.

Rachel: Yeah. Uh, caves in general, though, can't be more than 9,800 feet vertical below the surface, just with the pressure of rock. If it's like, deeper than that, it would like, collapse in on itself.

Griffin: Yeah. Oh, and here it comes. Now my like, claustrophobia is kicking in.

Rachel: [laughs] I'm sorry. Uh, it's difficult to tell how old a cave is. Um, but there are what they call isotopic dating techniques, where you can look at the cave's sediments to see... kind of like rings on a tree. Like, you look and examine the cave dirt.

Griffin: Right. I imagine there was also just always like, old as fuck. This cave is so old. You would not—nobody's ever like, "Oh shit, this cave is... this cave is two months old! Huh! Wild!"

Rachel: [laughs] Um, uh, I want to talk about a particular cave close to my heart.

Griffin: Oh yeah?

Rachel: Which is Meramec Caverns in Missouri.

Griffin: That's—I've heard of this.

Rachel: Yeah, there are billboards frickin' everywhere around Missouri.

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: Which is probably why you're familiar with it, if you've driven anywhere in Missouri or surrounding states, you've seen a billboard for this cave.

Griffin: What's so great about this cave?

Rachel: Um... well, it's existed for the past 400 million years.

Griffin: Okay...

Rachel: Which is pretty big. Um, there's also a lot of lore surrounding it, which I will get to. But I will say, it is 4.6 miles of cave underground, which is a lot of cave.

Griffin: Wow!

Rachel: Um, there's a lot of caves in Missouri worth mentioning, but Meramec is kind of the show piece. Part of it is because there is a structure in it, um, that they call, uh... the wine table.

Griffin: Ooh!

Rachel: Which is the world's rarest cave formation. It is an onyx table that stands six feet high, and is supported on three natural legs.

Griffin: Wow! Impressive. [laughs]

Rachel: Fancy cave.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Uh... the story of the cave is kind of fun. It's got a real circus quality to it.

Griffin: [laughs]

Rachel: The big story – and they'll tell you this when you do a tour of the cave – it was supposedly a hideout for Jesse James.

Griffin: I feel like every cave has a... yeah.

Rachel: [laughs] I know. Um, back in uh, the 1870s, the legend is that a sheriff tracked James and his brother to the cave, waiting for him to emerge, but then he found another exit throughout the cave and escaped.

Griffin: Wow.

Rachel: Um, but I think who really kind of made it famous is Lester B. Dill, who was the big showman for the cave. Um, he invented the bumper sticker as a means of promoting the caves.

Griffin: He was the first one to do bumper sticker?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Okay. All of a sudden, all these fuckin' billboards make sense.

Rachel: Uh-huh. Um, he... in the 1930s, started traveling the country, offering to paint farmers' barns for free, as long as he could paint Meramec Caverns on the roof. At one point, 400 barn billboards existed in 40 states, and 75 still remain today.

Griffin: So this is more a segment about like, uh, the inventor of mass advertising.

Rachel: [laughs] They also—this is what is hilarious. In 1960, they rented billboard space in the cave.

Griffin: Seems excessive!

Rachel: And they claimed it was the only underground billboard in the world. [laughing]

Griffin: Okay. So then they had billboards other places, like, "Come see the only underground billboard in the world!"

Rachel: Um, they also like—in Missouri, they advertised it as like, "Jesse James' hideout!" Meramec Caverns.

Griffin: Yeah. Oof. Wow.

Rachel: Um, it's a... it's kind of charming. It's funny, like, when family and relatives would come to visit, we would take them to Onondaga, which was like, a classier kind of cave experience.

Griffin: Yeah. [laughs]

Rachel: More—more national park. Y'know, like, America's... y'know, wilderness kind of feel. Meramec Caverns is like, Branson.

Griffin: It's where they get funnel cakes in the cave. There's just natural funnel cake formations growing inside.

Rachel: Um, they have several rooms of the cave that they have named, based around like, the theme behind that room. I mentioned the wine room, where the wine table is located, that... y'know, rarest cave formation.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: They also have a greatest show under earth room, where they do a light show. [laughs]

Griffin: [snorts] I doubt that—unless they've been doing some serious updates to this light show, I doubt it still holds that title.

Rachel: And then there's the Hollywood room. So, there was a movie called Tom Sawyer in 1973 that starred Jodie Foster as Becky Thatcher, and they get lost in a cave, and that is filmed in Meramec Caverns. Also, an episode of Lassie was filmed in that part of the cave.

Griffin: Whoaaa.

Rachel: They still talk about that on the tour today. [laughs]

Griffin: That's sad and great and perfect.

Rachel: Um, and just to give you like, some Missouri folksiness... like, the tour guides will kind of take you through these rooms, and they'll kind of tell you things. I mentioned the wine room. On the tour, they will tell this joke that, y'know, it was called the wine room for the wine table, but it is now called the wine room because of the whining that visitors do when they learn the room is only accessible after climbing 58 stairs.

Griffin: [bursts into laughter]

Rachel: Doesn't that just put you on the tour? Don't you feel like you're on the tour right now?

Griffin: I really just went on a fucking, like, my own personal mental Jungle Cruise sort of situation.

Rachel: [laughs] My biggest thing that I remember, and my parents always found it kind of funny... like, so it's paid. You walk in. There's a gift shop in the cave.

Griffin: Perfect.

Rachel: And at some point, they sing the Star Spangled Banner, and they have a flag wave. At some point in the tour. I want to say it's the end of the tour. I don't know if they still do this. But just to really bring home the kind of like, patriotism and splendor of this wonder.

Griffin: Hole. [laughs]

Rachel: They like, full on play and have a flag wave.

Griffin: This hole loves America. America loves this hole.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I'm like, traveling back to like... I was remembering, while you were talking, about a trip we took to Ruby Falls in Chattanooga.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: And I like, have all these memories of like, doing a rock tumbler thing, and like...

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: There was something with like—we did actual panning for gold, and like, all these things around Ruby Falls, which was like, this sort of touristy underground waterfall situation.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But now I'm also having this like, Mandela effect situation where I can't remember if that's a trip I actually went on or not.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Or if that's just like, a thing I remember, like, my brothers doing? I know—I need to ask them about this.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: I think it's a nice waterfall? I don't remember.

Rachel: We um... we used to go to this cave, like, every year. Partially because it's a great summertime activity, 'cause it's like, 60 degrees.

Griffin: So cool. It's so nice.

Rachel: Um... and also, it's just—I don't know. There's something really cool. Like, the stalactites, stalagmites, the whole... the whole thing of caves. The water in there. Uh, these just like, incredible drips and structures and bats and...

Griffin: The acoustic, like, reality of being in a cave is like, the most incredible thing about it for me. Like, uh... yeah, when we used to do sort of unauthorized spelunking in our, y'know, farm land caves, uh... the... it's like those—I'm really fascinated by uh, like, anti-noise chambers that like—like, are scientifically, like, completely devoid of sound. And so, you go inside, and soon, like, the sound of your own heartbeat is so loud that you like, can't—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I feel like caves kind of have that going on, in a way that I find very, like, hypnotic.

Rachel: I thought... I thought the love of caves was so deep that I could take a geology class in college, and it would be successful for me. That was not the case.

Griffin: No.

Rachel: Turns out there are more than just a few types of rocks.

Griffin: Ugh, basalt? Ugh!

Rachel: And I just... I couldn't hang.

Griffin: No one's got time for you, basalt! Is basalt related to salt? Is it—is it—

Rachel: I don't even know the word you're saying. I'm sorry.

Griffin: Aw. I may be saying it wrong, is the other problem. So, just a couple primo... just...

Rachel: [laughs] Just real rock heads over here.

Griffin: Just a—yeah. Hey, can I steal you away?

Rachel: Yes?

[ad break stinger plays]

[advertisements play]

Griffin: Well, looks like we got a couple gormbopons, and I would love to read this first one if you don't mind.

Rachel: Please.

Griffin: I haven't looked at it, so, um... it's from Tess, for Nate. Says, "Congratulations to my wonderful boyfriend, Nate, for finishing his master's in electrical and computer engineering! I'm so proud of you for all the hard work you put in, especially when you had to take classes at home. Wherever you end up working, I know you will do great. I love you so much, my top shscientist. Don't forget to drink water."

I don't know if that was for, um... I don't know if that was for Nate, or for us, or for just the audience. But I do appreciate that Tess added in, uh, "Do you have particular pronunciations you need to clarify?" Which is a service we offer all of our jumbotron writers. "Shscientist isn't a typo, it's just scientist with a 'sh' sound at the start."

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah. Do not correct it. This is an important part of the message.

Griffin: Fantastic. No, that was mostly me saying that so people didn't think I made a goof-'em-up.

Rachel: No no no, I appreciated that she gave us that guidance so we didn't somehow gloss over it on accident.

Griffin: Sure, of course.

Rachel: Uh, can I read the next one?

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: This message is for Daniel. It is from Nicole. "Dear Daniel, I entered to win this jumbotron on July 3rd. Then, that evening, you proposed to me!"

Griffin: Ooh!

Rachel: "I need more than 350 characters to express all the reasons you are wonderful. But to sum it up, thank you for being my best friend, and for blessing my life. I love every inch of you and then some. P.S. Thanks, Mike, for introducing us both to the McElroys."

Ooh, a two message in one there!

Griffin: Ooh, got it in. We frown on that! That secret... the deception!

Rachel: This is for Daniel! Mike, get out of here!

Griffin: Get the hell out of here, Mike! We're not gonna tell you again! You pay for your own fricking message!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: One sweet missive at a time, folks! Or else they all get mixed up in our heads.

Rachel: Can I hear your second thing?

Griffin: Yes. My second thing, I think you will find much more relatable than Mr. Hawk and his uh, aerial sort of journey. Uh, I want to talk about... wow, I am really—you could carbon date this episode based on the topics, uh, we have selected so far.

I am going to talk about Rilo Kiley, because I—

Rachel: Oh!

Griffin: I've been getting like, nonstop, like, uh, Facebook ads or whatever. I think back in... I want to say like, 2004, I like, did, for the first and only time, likes on Facebook. Like, "What are the movies you like?" And it was like, well, um... Lost in Translation. That's like, where I was at. Uh, and now, to this day, it's like, "Happy 50th birthday, Lost in Translation!" Like, I need to just get rid of all of this, 'cause it is not why I use Facebook.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: But Rilo Kiley is one of those things, and they are re-releasing their first self-titled LP, which is like, incredibly rare. I've never heard it before. And as far as I can tell, it's like, not on the internet anywhere. So um, it just reminded me how much I really like Rilo Kiley.

Particularly, two albums. There was, uh, Execution of All Things, and More Adventurous, which I think came out in 2000 and 2004. Uh, and I just... wow. Listening to those albums while preparing this segment was, again, just a really, really great little time capsule. But it also led to like, kind of a realization about myself and my music tastes that I found very interesting.

Uh, if you've never heard Rilo Kiley, you... first of all, that's a fuckin' lie, 'cause they've been, uh—they've had their songs in everything. Uh, I have

an extensive list of TV shows that their music appeared in. But they were an early oughts rock band. They were on Barsuk Records, which was an indie record label in Seattle that had, uh... it's probably, pound for pound, my favorite, like, collection of musicians to ever exist.

Barsuk had Death Cab, Harvey Danger, They Might Be Giants, Rilo Kiley, Maps and Atlases, uh... Phantogram was on there. And The Long Winters were also on Barsuk Records.

And I think like a lot of Seattle rock bands, Rilo Kiley was very guitar-forward, and very, um... uh, just sort of like, y'know, loud and melodic. It was led by Jenny Lewis, who has gone on to have an incredibly, like, successful career since then. We saw her in concert at uh, Austin City Limits, which was very fun.

Rachel: We did!

Griffin: Uh, but I first sort of like, became aware of her music through Rilo Kiley, like I think most folks did. I actually started listening to Rilo Kiley because somebody told me, uh, that the... that Jenny Lewis was in The Wizard. She played like, the—

Rachel: Yeah! The girl.

Griffin: I can't remember her name. The girl. The one girl. [laughs]

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, that goes across the country, playing video games. Um, and uh... I want to just, I guess, playing one of their biggest songs, which is off the album, More Adventurous, called Portions for Foxes.

[‘Portions for Foxes’ by Rilo Kiley plays]

Griffin: I didn't know this. That song is named after a very, like, obscure Bible verse. It's also, like, one of the catchier songs I've ever heard about like, a really unhealthy physical relationship.

Uh, and I—like, there's something about that juxtaposition of it being a very fun, very poppy, very memorable, catchy song, uh, about like, kind of a toxic situation between people that feels very Rilo Kiley, and feels very, like, of the music from that era.

Uh, there's just something really clean about that song. Like, um... Jenny Lewis' voice is like, incredible, and she can like, alternate between these very kind of vulnerable verses to just like, wailing through the choruses. But I also feel like, uh, the guitarists of this band are... it's so incredible. Everybody played guitar. Not at the same time, but like, everybody was a multi-instrumentalist.

And so, that's why it's very guitar forward. And I feel like I could do all the guitar parts from this song, like, with my mouth right now.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, and that, I think, is like, indicative of the Seattle rock music that was coming out around that genre. And thinking about it, listening to this band, and listening to the music again this morning, and then also, looking back over the history of uh, bands that I've talked about on this show... I always—it was always a subject that I was interested in.

This idea of... when I am older... I'm talking about like, when I was in my teens or whatever. Looking forward, like, when I'm older, what is going to be like, the crystallized era of music? Or the crystallized like, canon of music? That is like, my... the like, music that I identify with. The one that I like, really think established my like, core musical... likes and dislikes, right?

And looking back, like, my mom and dad were like, into uh, Chicago and Sly and the Family Stone, and um... and Steely Dan. And like, these bands. And whenever we went on a trip or something, uh, I remember we stayed with our friends, the Stutlers, once, and they had a record player. And they spent the whole weekend playing records, and it was like, the same, y'know, four or five bands.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But they all knew every word, and I became like, really interested in like, okay, so this is your guys' music. Like, this is the...

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And y'know, there was that for people who grew up in the '90s, who were like, yeah. Like, came up through grunge, and so like, that was my... and looking back, I think like, that 2002 to 2005 era is where all of my musical tastes really crystalized.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: And I think listening to Rilo Kiley, it's like... that was kind of the sound it crystalized around.

Rachel: Yeah. I made a mistake, I think, while I was in college. I mean, it wasn't a mistake, but... I became friends with a group of people who exposed me to a lot of music, but they exposed me to a lot of music that had already happened.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And so, my window in college... I missed a lot of those like, new artists. I mean, I heard—I would hear some of them on the college radio station, but mostly, I was hanging out in a group of people who were like, "Hey, have you heard much Stone Temple Pilots?" And I was like, yeah, sure, let's go back to then.

Griffin: [laughs]

Rachel: And I kind of missed the music of the period. It was only like, several years later that I heard Rilo Kiley.

Griffin: Sure. I very much lucked out, because I was in that camp all through high school. The only bands I listened to were like, They Might Be Giants and Ben Folds.

And then, in like, my freshman year of college, I hung out with like, mostly like, hipsters who uh... some of which are very dear friends. Some of which turned out to be very unsavory individuals. But, their impact on like, my musical taste is like, very clear, because they sort of broke me out of that... that echo chamber, and showed me a bunch of music, some of which I found completely intolerable. But some of which, like Rilo Kiley and Clap Your Hands Say Yeah, and uh... Wolf Parade, and like, all of these bands.

And uh, TV on the Radio is one of those bands. Like, all of that stuff really came about in, I guess it was college, right? I guess it was around that time. And that is... it is strange for me to reflect on like, that's when I found the music that I'm going to like, like for the rest of my life.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And... I just think Rilo Kiley is like, it falls perfectly—it is the median of that like, that interest.

Okay, so, the songs that Rilo Kiley had music in. The shows, rather, that um... that they had songs in. Dawson's Creek. Buffy the Vampire Slayer. Six Feet Under. Gilmore Girls. The OC. Grey's Anatomy. One Tree Hill. Doll House. 90210. And Wedding Crashers? They had a song on the soundtrack for Wedding Cra—

Rachel: Wow.

Griffin: So just like, all of it.

Rachel: That is a very specific time period.

Griffin: See? It has crystallized around the crystal! It's like, yeah.

Rachel: It's like a four year window.

Griffin: Yes. It is a perfect four year window that is like, uh... I don't know. Just where a lot of my musical interests lie. And uh, yeah. Rilo Kiley. Great ass band. They broke up in, I think, like 2011, 2012, and have sort of flirted with, y'know, doing a tour here, or uh... putting out like, an EP here.

Uh, but... yeah. These two albums, specifically, if you've never listened to them, uh... check out More Adventurous and Execution of All Things. Uh, which came out in 2002, and to leave us off, I want to play Spectacular Views off that album.

[‘Spectacular Views’ by Rilo Kiley plays]

Griffin: I just felt very much like NPR. Let’s listen to... Spectacular Views, off 2002’s The Execution of All Things. What’s your second thing?

Rachel: Before I do my second thing, should we say something else about MaxFunDrive?

Griffin: I think we absolutely should say something else about MaxFunDrive.

Rachel: Can we talk about the levels, maybe?

Griffin: Yes. Let’s talk about the levels. So, uh, whatever level you are comfortable giving at, we fully recognize that it is a weird and bad time. Uh, but whatever support you are able to give, we very, very much appreciate, and uh...

If you give at five dollars a month, you are going to get access to all of the bonus content. Over 200 hours of bonus content for all the shows.

Rachel: Yeah. And that bonus content keeps droppin’. I just listened to Lords of Crunch the other day.

Griffin: Lords of Crunch, yes.

Rachel: And it is a delight.

Griffin: That is The Adventure Zone live show that Justin DM'd, using a cereal-based game that he created himself. It is a...

Rachel: A+.

Griffin: It is a wild, wild journey, that one. Uh, there is so much bonus content, and if you enjoy our shows, uh, and you have not listened to it, you are missing out on a lot, a lot, a lot of stuff. And that's at five dollars a month.

Ten dollars a month, you get access to an enamel pin designed after the show of your choice by Megan Lynn Kott. They are beautiful, beautiful pins.

Rachel: Yeah, so when you donate, uh, you can select all the shows that you listen to to receive part of your donation. You can also select whatever pin you want.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: So y'know, obviously, we're gonna push our Wonderful pin, but there are a lot of great pins out there.

Griffin: Great pins, great shows.

Rachel: For you to choose from.

Griffin: Uh, yeah. That's the great thing about, when you join the network, you do choose exactly—Max Fun takes a portion of what you give, to y'know, keep the lights on and support us in the ways that they support us. But then you elect to give, like, specifically to the shows that you listen to.

Rachel: Yeah! And so, we'd encourage folks who are gonna continue their donation to still log in and maybe update with the new shows you're listening to.

Griffin: Yeah, of course. We also just started doing boosting this year. So like, if you don't want to jump from the ten dollar donation level, where you get the uh, the pin and the membership card and the bonus content, but you don't want to jump up to 20 dollars, y'know... you can do 12. You can do 13. You can do whatever.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: If that reflects like, how much you've been listening to our shows, then that's awesome. \$20 a month, you get the card. You're gonna get the pin. You're gonna get the bonus content. You also get a Max Fun game pack that has a bunch of really cool shit in it, like dice and cards.

Rachel: Yeah. Some cards, and yeah. It's cool.

Griffin: Other neat stuff. There's other, uh, levels that you can give at, which you can see, again, at MaximumFun.org/Join. Uh, but yeah, if you're thinking about doing it, y'know, there's not much time left in the drive, so we would encourage you to just go do it now. Doesn't take very long. And um, we really, really, really appreciate you. It has—

Rachel: You don't want to know what my voice sounds like without this beautiful microphone.

Griffin: Yeah, it's true.

Rachel: And we need those donations to get these beautiful microphones.

Griffin: Here, actually, let me plug in the old microphone real quick so you can hear what Rachel's old voice sounds like. [makes electronic sounds]

Rachel: [nasally] Griffiiiiin...

Griffin: [laughs] Why would it—

Rachel: [nasally] It's time for me to do my second thing!

Griffin: But why would a different... are you gonna do the whole second thing in that voice, or should I switch the mic back?

Rachel: [nasally] Nooo!

Griffin: Okay, let me plug this other mic in. Crash! Oh, I dropped it on the floor and it broke!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: So now you do have to do the whole second segment like that! Oh no! And if we're gonna buy a new good microphone, we need folks to go to MaximumFun.org/Join! Here, you can use my microphone, and I'll use the bad one.

[nasally and weird] Okay, babe! Go on right ahead!

Rachel: [laughs] My second thing... is... Na na na na na na Nick, Nickelodeon!

Griffin: [nasally] Alriiight!

Rachel: [laughs] Can we share this microphone so you stop sounding like that?

Griffin: Yeah, absolutely. Are we talking about the whole frickin' channel?

Rachel: Yes. You have talked about Are You Afraid of the Dark. We have addressed Snick.

Griffin: Okay, Snick's gotten its time in the spotlight.

Rachel: We have not talked about the network as a whole.

Griffin: God, I'll be honest, babe. That feels ambitious. That feels—that feels like a lot to cover in one segment.

Rachel: Well, I'm not—I'm not doing a whole book here.

Griffin: Okay. There probably is—I would read the hell out of a book about old Nickelodeon.

Rachel: Yeah, I would too!

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Uh, Nickelodeon was the first network devoted entirely to kids' programming.

Griffin: Really? Wow!

Rachel: I know. You'd think PBS, but PBS had adult programming on it too.

Griffin: Oh, yeah, sure. No, yeah.

Rachel: It was conceptualized by Dr. Vivian Horner, uh, who worked for the Bank Street College of Education and launched in Columbus, Ohio.

Griffin: Huh! There's a lot about Nickelodeon—I would've thought, for sure, it launched at Universal Studios.

Rachel: It officially launched on April 1st, 1979.

Griffin: Whoa, holy shit! What?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: It didn't launch in like, 1991?

Rachel: No. I mean, that's when we're familiar with it, but it was around before then.

Griffin: What was on Nick before we were watching it?

Rachel: So Nickelodeon started with a show called Pinwheel.

Griffin: Oh yeah, okay!

Rachel: Which was similar to Sesame Street. There were, uh, action scenes in a Victorian-style boarding house with Muppets. I mean, they were puppets, would be more appropriate I think.

Griffin: Sure, yeah. Muppets are—the Jim Henson estate is very litigious.

Rachel: When Pinwheel was phased out, it was replaced by Eureka's Castle.

Griffin: I was gonna say, now I remember Eureka's Castle.

Rachel: Yeah, that's probably what you were thinking of.

Griffin: Yeah yeah yeah.

Rachel: Um... I loved Nickelodeon. Like, as a kid? Like, to have a network that I could just turn on, and anything was for me? That was ideal.

Griffin: Yeah. I mean, literally anything that came on the... I can't think of another TV network that was ever like that. And I think Nick, I aged out of it at some point, but... there was a channel that you could just turn it on, and it would have something.

Rachel: That was like, when we got cable, that was like, my number one destination.

Griffin: Absolutely.

Rachel: Um, it, as I mentioned, just started with the one show. Uh, and when they started to build out their programming, it was still only from eight AM to 11:00PM. And then it would switch to the movie channel. [laughs]

Griffin: I guess, yeah, that makes sense. Sure.

Rachel: That makes sense, right? Um, it—kind of the hallmark that kind of started it, and kind of gave the origin to the green slime that is associated with Nickelodeon, is the Canadian sketch comedy, You Can't Do That on Television.

Griffin: That was... okay, yes.

Rachel: 1981 is when that started.

Griffin: On Nick?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Uh, well, that was its American debut, was on Nickelodeon.

Griffin: Okay, interesting. I think that probably established the grand tradition of Canadian television shows joining the Nick network, because most live action shows that were on Nick were Canadian in origin.

Rachel: Um, the green slime also, as you'll recall, uh, showed up in Double Dare.

Griffin: Double Dare it showed up, and uh, Figure it Out, and...

Rachel: And the Nickelodeon Kids' Choice Awards, which started in 1988.

Griffin: That—yeah. I guess there was lots of slime being flung around. I imagine Mr. Jim Carrey ingested an unconscionable amount of slime during his many appearances on that awards show.

Rachel: Uh... [laughs] So Nickelodeon started with no advertising. Much like PBS, it was just children's programming. When it wasn't children's programming, like the interstitial was actually a uh, person dressed as a mime.

Griffin: Okay. [laughs]

Rachel: When it was commercial-free service, it was a male mime, uh, portrayed a character doing tricks in front of a black background in between programs.

Griffin: How did they get money to make the network?

Rachel: So that was the problem.

Griffin: [laughs] I could've frickin' told you that, Nickelodeon!

Rachel: By 1984, they were operating at a loss of ten million.

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: Uh, they did a rebranding that year, and within six months, it became the dominant channel in children's programming. Uh, they rebranded themselves as the first kids' network, 'cause that was when Disney Channel and Cartoon Network were comin' up, and that's when they started doing traditional advertising as well.

Griffin: Alright.

Rachel: I mean, if you think about it, the origins, as I mentioned, was um... y'know, with a woman who focused on education. Y'know, and so, she's focusing very much on the Sesame Street vein of, what is gonna be beneficial to kids' education?

Griffin: Absolutely.

Rachel: As they operated at a loss, it became, what is gonna keep us in business? [laughs]

Griffin: Right, yeah.

Rachel: Um, in 1985, also to keep kind of viewership high, is when they launched Nick at Nite.

Griffin: Alright!

Rachel: So that was when you got like, the Donna Reid show, Bewitched, all those kind of older shows so that adults would keep watching it in the night time.

Griffin: Yeah. That was when we would just turn it off.

Rachel: Yeah. [laughs]

Griffin: `Cause those shows were boring as hell, and...

Rachel: As soon as it went black and white, it was like, "Oh, this isn't for me."

Griffin: Oh, goodnight. Bye!

Rachel: [laughs] Um, 1990, Nickelodeon Studios came about.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Which was always like, the big prize for Double Dare, was that you could go to Nickelodeon Studios.

Griffin: Did you ever get to—did you ever go?

Rachel: No! Did you?

Griffin: Yeah! I mean, it was at Universal Studios in Orlando, Florida. So if you went to—if you went to Universal, you could do it. And I remember, we went, and they were filming *The Mystery Files of Shelby Woo*.

Rachel: Ohh!

Griffin: And it was like, the fuckin' coolest shit ever.

Rachel: That's cool.

Griffin: I got some special, limited edition Gak.

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: I got special, secret Gak that I took home to all my friends and was like, "Guys, look! It's thermodynamic! So it's purple, and you slap your hand into it, and it turns... "

Rachel: Ohh! Wow!

Griffin: I think they eventually released that on the market, but I was first on my block with Hot Gak!

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: All my friends were like, "Is that Hot Gak?" I was like, "Yeah. I played with it while I watched *The Mystery Files of Shelby Woo* in person."

Rachel: [laughing] Um, Nickelodeon Studios closed in 2005 and was converted into The Blue Man Group Theater in 2007.

Griffin: A shame. A heartbreaker.

Rachel: Uh, this is also around the time they did Nickelodeon Magazine, which I had forgotten about, but was a result of a multi-million dollar joint marketing agreement with Pizza Hut.

Griffin: Okay?

Rachel: And so, Nickelodeon Magazine was available for free at Pizza Hut.

Griffin: I don't remember that. Damn, I wish I had that hot tip. I loved that magazine.

Rachel: Um, the reason you think Nickelodeon came about in the early '90s is because that's when they started with Doug and Rugrats and Ren and Stimpy and Rocko's Modern Life.

Griffin: Yeah. The four horsemen.

Rachel: And then—[laughs] And then, a year later was Snick. So that was Are You Afraid of the Dark, Clarissa Explains it All, All That, The Amanda Show, Kenan and Kel...

Griffin: Boy howdy.

Rachel: Which launched the careers of Kenan Thompson, Amanda Bynes, and Jamie Lynn Spears.

Griffin: And Kel Mitchell. In a different—in a different direction, but sure.

Rachel: In a different way. Uh, Nickelodeon released its first feature-length film in 1996, with Harriett the Spy.

Griffin: Oh, god yes!

Rachel: Mm-hmm. Went on to earn twice its 13 million dollar budget. And then, two years later, the Rugrats Movie, which grossed more than 100 million...

Griffin: Ooh, jeeze.

Rachel: ... became the first non-Disney animated movie to surpass that amount.

Griffin: Uh... are you—are you gonna talk about Nick News with Linda Ellerbee?

Rachel: I am not gonna talk about Nick News.

Griffin: Let's just save that, 'cause that's a whole segment in and of itself.

Rachel: Yeah, we should talk about that.

Griffin: Nick News with Linda Ellerbee is the fuckin' coolest shit that Nick ever did. Alright, we'll circle back to Linda.

Rachel: We'll save that. I was just gonna end with, uh, 1999, where the channel previewed SpongeBob SquarePants directly after the Kids' Choice Awards, became the most popular Nick Toon in the channel's history, consistently ranking as the highest rated series for Nickelodeon since 2000. By 2001, a third of the series' audience was made up of adults.

Griffin: Wow! I think I missed that by a hair's width.

Rachel: Yeah, SpongeBob was after my time, for sure.

Griffin: But now Henry's been watching it, and it's great. 'Cause it's like, fuckin' funny. Like, it's very—it's one of very few shows that Henry watches that I watch and I'm like, that was fuckin'—hey, this SpongeBob guy is funny!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Um... hey. Thank you for making me—this was an incredibly—this was a deeply nostalgic episode.

Rachel: Yeah, it was!

Griffin: Thank you—I mean, we even talked about caves. Which is just old holes.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: 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 one last time, MaximumFun.org/Join. Please think about supporting us, and the other shows that you listen to on the network. And uh, look at all the different pledge levels, and... yeah. We thank you all very much.

There's been lots of folks who have turned out already, and if you haven't, and you like our shows, and you rely on them for entertainment, or y'know, whatever... think about, uh, helping us out.

Rachel: Yeah, and if you're not able to at this time, uh, feel free to just tweet about the #MaxFunDrive to let your friends know, in case they're able to give right now.

Griffin: I think that's it. Let's stop recording, and... go about our days. Um... gonna... gonna—I'm gonna eat a hot dog.

Rachel: Oh. Okay.

Griffin: Yeah. What are you gonna do?

Rachel: Uh, I'm gonna listen to you complain about eating a Hot Pocket later.

Griffin: I said a hot *dog*, but I do love that you... the way you connect me... the like, me that lives in your brain. I could say like, "I'm going to go eat a steak." And you'll be like, "Oh, a Hot Pocket, huh? That's cool."

Rachel: [laughs]

[theme music plays]

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