

Wonderful! 252: Hot Tubbin' in the Cold Times

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[theme music plays]

Rachel: Hi, this is Rachel McElroy.

Griffin: Hello, this is Griffin McElroy.

Rachel: And this is *Wonderful!*

Griffin: Welcome to *Wonderful!* This is a podcast where we talk about things that are good, things that we like, things that we are into. It is Wednesday, my dudes, when you hear this.

Rachel: Oh, okay.

Griffin: It is Tuesday...

Rachel: [laughs] You gave me, like, a bolt of panic.

Griffin: No. My dudes, it is— sorry, it is Tuesday, my dudes. When you hear this, it is going to be Wednesday, my dudes. You will know the results of the midterm elections that Rachel and I are currently kind of, like, chilling in.

Rachel: Oof!

Griffin: And for that I am... maybe jealous? Jealous of future you-all? We don't know which way things are gonna go down. It's not a particularly... fun thing to think about, necessarily.

Rachel: Fair. Yeah, yeah.

Griffin: And we can't tell you to vote, 'cause it's too dang late.

Rachel: [laughs] We hope you did!

Griffin: We hope— we sure as heck hope you did. Uh, I just knocked it out, unsurprisingly, DC has its shit together when it comes to, you know, exercising your democratic...

Rachel: [laughs] Not a lot of candidates or, you know...

Griffin: That is true! Or a lot of— I think there were, like, eight, nine things on the ballot total?

Rachel: Yeah. I was gonna say, like, without representation, I don't imagine that ballot's very full.

Griffin: Yeah. It's mostly sort of DC focused. But, um... still. It was bing, bang, boom. In and out of there, no problem at all.

Rachel: Yeah. So it is a holiday here.

Griffin: It is.

Rachel: Uh, and so everything... you know, consequential to us is shut down.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: And by that I mean our son's school, which is acting as a polling place. Now, when I was a kid— I don't know if this was true for you but, like, the school was still open.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: People were— were coming—

Griffin: Were coming into—

Rachel: Yeah! [laughs]

Griffin: —where I was trying to do my work.

Rachel: Can you imagine the safety concerns associated with that, now that I'm looking at it in my head? Of just, like—

Griffin: Well, there wasn't any, like, crime, back in the 90's.

Rachel: [through laughter] Oh, okay. Yeah, yeah, I always forget.

Griffin: Crime is a pretty new thing. Um, no, yeah. That shit—

Rachel: I just remember, like, our teachers were like, "[through gritted teeth] You have to be quiet in the hallway! People are voting!"

Griffin: Yeah. And we did— I would be like, "Why aren't we doing PE?"

And they'd be like, "'Cause that's the room where they're deciding who the President's gonna be."

Rachel: [laughs] And you were like, "Sweet."

Griffin: I was like, "Cool." I didn't know that that was so, uh— that Miller Elementary School was sort of the nexus for the country's political soul. But anyway... uh, yeah. So we're— you know, we're here. We're gonna do our dang thing. And we hope that you enjoy our— our japes.

Rachel: Ooh-hoo, very formal all of a sudden!

Griffin: Do you have a small wonder for me to hear?

Rachel: I do, actually. I thought of it—

Griffin: [simultaneously] Okay, good.

Rachel: —just a moment ago.

Griffin: Okay, good.

Rachel: It is when you put on an article of clothing that you think or you're pretty sure that your partner is going to like.

Griffin: Yeah. Are you currently wearing an article of clothing that you think I like?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: That's flannel, isn't it?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I love you in a flannel. Yeah. [sighs] It's good stuff.

Rachel: I thought generally this is probably something a lot of couples share. Where it's like, you know, you have a preferred item of clothing that your partner wears and you're like, "I'm real excited to put this on, 'cause I know my partner's gonna like it."

Griffin: Yeah. Every time I— and it'll probably be awhile before you see these thing again 'cause, you know, winter is coming— but when I throw on this five inch inseam chuggies...

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I know... I know that you—

Rachel: Get those legs out!

Griffin: —like what you're seein'. Uh, you know, the seven-and-a-half inchers, those are... I think pretty—they look pretty good, make my stuff look great. But those five inchers, boy, that's a...

Rachel: That extra couple inches of thigh, I don't know. I can't explain it.

Griffin: It's— it really drives you wild.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Um, I am gonna say hot tubbin' in the cold times, baby.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I went to Denver with some friends, uh, back home, from Austin. And we rented a place in Denver that had, like, a rooftop hot tub, and it was so choice. It was very cold outside. It had just snowed the day before we all got in, and it's— it's really— I can't understand why it is as delightful as it is, but just bein'—

havin' your head be real cold while your body's real hot? I like that for some reason.

Rachel: Yeah, no, it sounds good.

Griffin: It's also nice to with buds, 'cause it's like a shared, you know, communal warmth. You know? We're all warm... together.

Rachel: [laughs] Okay.

Griffin: Do you know what I mean?

Rachel: [laughs] That seems awfully intimate all of a sudden.

Griffin: Of course it is. It's a hot tub.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Um, I go first this week, I believe.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: I'm gonna talk about... immersive art.

Rachel: [excited] Ohh, here we go!

Griffin: Immersive art... what if when you saw the painting you could go into it, and now you are... the painting too? Hmm? That's the question.

Rachel: [laughs] You know, there was a whole— was it Van Gogh? Was that the whole thing for a while, was making the rounds?

Griffin: That's still making the rounds, and I will get back to it, because that is a big one. The immersive Van Gogh experience that I believe has been in every major metropolitan area on the planet Earth.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But this past weekend when I was in Denver, I consumed more sort of immersive art than I think is probably wise to consume in a, like, 24-hour period.

Rachel: Do you find now that you're in, like, regular society, you're like... you feel like everything is maybe art?

Griffin: I am wondering if I still am in David Byrne's *Theater of the Mind*.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: Like, my body is still there and this is just, like, part of it. Do you know what I mean?

Rachel: You know. [laughs]

Griffin: I worry about that sometimes.

Rachel: Now, I did get a phone call that was like, "Griffin's coming back. Continue the experiment."

Griffin: "He'll be different. So freak his fuckin' bean, man." Um, I'm gonna be stretching the boundaries of the term "immersive art" just a little bit, because I think that the sort of crossover between a more traditional immersive art experience, like the Van Gogh thing you mentioned, and interactive theater, like the David Byrne's *Theater of the Mind*, uh, I think that there is a lot there to talk about, and it kind of scratches the same itch for me. So, uh—

Rachel: This— I don't know. I'm assuming you know this. Um, it probably doesn't surprise anyone. Uh, interactive theater makes me uncomfortable.

Griffin: Sure. I am talking specifically about, uh— "interactive" maybe isn't the right word. Maybe, like, uh, it's explorable... theater. Open world theater. Where— not where you are expected to...

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: ... do lines and stuff like that. But where you are, uh, you know, no longer a passive observer of the thing, but rather the element that makes the art become activated, right?

Rachel: Okay, yeah, I like that. Now, I like that distinction, because for me the thing that I don't like is when you are called upon to interact, and all eyes in proximity turn towards you. And I do not love that.

Griffin: There was some of that in David Byrne's *Theater of the Mind*.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Much to the chagrin of some of our friends, who do not rock like that at all. Um, but to sort focus in on immersive art, I feel like everybody is seeing this pop up everywhere now. Specifically that Van Gogh experience that you mentioned, I feel like everybody has been served an ad for that on Facebook and Instagram and what-have-you. And I think the reason that we are all seeing more of it is because of just how kind of outrageously Instagrammable, uh, those types of experiences are, whether it is, you know, a more traditional pop-up, you know, pop art museum, or whether it is something like the Van Gogh experience, or, you know, anything else that you can really enter into and become a part of. Um, but it— this concept of immersive art has existed, like, long, long, long before social media platforms were even a thing.

There is a woman, a Japanese contemporary artist who is, like, kind of a pioneer of what— this kind of expansion that we're seeing now. Her name is Yayoi Kusama, and she has been active in the art scene since, like, the 1950's. Her big sort of trademark series— and I'm curious if you've seen any of this— are called Infinity Rooms. And they are sort of chambers where all of the walls are mirrors, and then there will be, like, hanging sort of polka dot lights hanging at different, you know, heights around the viewer who, you know, steps on to this platform, and then all of a sudden sort of the boundaries of the room disappear and you're in this, like, infinite space of polka dots and lights and views.

Rachel: Oh. I mean, I haven't participated in any of that, but I know that the concept is still very popular.

Griffin: Well, she is credited as, like, the inventor of that. Because she has taken that idea and done, like, so many different versions of it. In installations, like, around the world, like in New York City and in London and Tokyo and, like, Tel Aviv and... she has these Infinity Rooms, like, everywhere. And she's obviously— she's been in the shit for a long time and does a lot of stuff, but this is kind of like the big thing that she's known for, and sort of something that you see a lot of in— in immersive art as it kind of expands as an internet sort of thing.

The thing obviously that I am currently kind of obsessed is Meow Wolf, which started out as sort of an artist collective space in Santa Fe, and has gone on to expand to become this, like, massive corporation with locations in Las Vegas, and Denver, and I think two are opening up somewhere in Texas, uh, in the next couple of years.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Which is very cool. Meow Wolf is a... a... god. It is really, really tough to define. It is a world that you enter into? And it is, uh, to varying degrees, like, fantastical, and vibrant, and detailed. In Denver, it's in a place called Convergence Station, and there are four unique kind of worlds with four different vibes that all sort of intersect, and you can walk around and check out at your leisure. Uh, there's—

Rachel: Can you help me understand? 'Cause, you know, I haven't done this.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Are you given any guidance when you enter these spaces? Or is it just yours to explore?

Griffin: It is just yours to explore.

Rachel: And is it, like... you know, you can pick stuff up and open drawers and whatever? Or is it all pretty cemented down? Like— you know.

Griffin: No. I mean, it's very much in that vein. Like, there's one world that is kind of like a library world, and you can flip through the books, all of which are... books.

Rachel: [laughs] Okay.

Griffin: About the worlds that exist inside of this exhibit, and it's up to you to, like, kind of flip around them. There's, like, a— there was an arcade game where you controlled rats with these little, um, almost like RC car remotes, and they battled each other. But it wasn't a video game. It was like an actual, tangible sort of, like, thing in a glass box.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Uh, you are heavily encouraged to kind of, like, play around while you're there.

Rachel: Were there kids there when you were?

Griffin: There were, yeah.

Rachel: Okay, yeah.

Griffin: The Denver exhibit, from what I understand, is the most sort of family-friendly. Because there is, like, also this vibe of, like, you know... hallucinogenics kind of welcome, uh, that is, I would say, maybe a little bit tempered down in the Denver version of it. I have not been to the other versions, so I can't really say. Um, but it is incredible. Like, there is a futuristic city street that you can explore, and go in all the different businesses or go to the movie theater and, like, watch these short, experimental, buck wild films. There's, like, this neon castle with, like, mechs outside that you can sort of interact with. There's so much stuff to do. You could be in there for— all day, honestly, and sort of just see different stuff the more that you go through it.

And it's incredible, 'cause you feel like the experience you're having is entirely your own. When we circled back with our friends, 'cause we kind of got separated [laughs] 'cause it was so big, we all talked about the stuff we had seen and, like, all of us had kind of seen different stuff, or seen one or two things that the other people did not know was there. And that is, like, a really cool thing.

Uh, and it really brings me back to Sleep No More.

Rachel: Yeah, I was waiting for you to bring that up.

Griffin: In New York City, which is sort of an interactive theater experience set in a hotel that you can kind of explore and witness the events of this story, uh, that they tell, like, however you see fit. Whether that is following one character as they go from kind of, like, room to room and scene to scene to kind of, like, learn what their arc is, or maybe you just stay in one room and see, like, what— what comes your way. Uh, and like you mentioned earlier, like, it is heavily encouraged that you open up drawers and explore, and really do that stuff.

And for me, like, one of the most rewarding things— probably the most rewarding things about art in whatever form it takes is, like, catching a glimpse of the artist's fingerprints, or like their intent. And I think that is really easy to do, I think it exists in its purest form when you are— when you open up a drawer, and there's a book inside, and inside the book is, like, a thing that somebody had to write to be, like, one of many, many, many details in this much larger experience. For me, that always, like, gives me such a thrill. Partially because, like, I feel like I have stumbled on to something special, but also because I know that somebody worked really hard on this one specific thing that not everybody is going to get to see.

Rachel: Well, and also you love, like, worldbuilding stuff. You know?

Griffin: Yeah, for sure.

Rachel: Like, and that's literally like what is happening in these spaces.

Griffin: Yeah. There's, uh— as somebody who enjoys games, like it is— it is obviously, like, right up my alley. There is— the original Punch Drunk is the theater company that makes *Sleep No More*. They had an exhibit open I think in Boston, and it inspired this game series called *Bioshock*. Because, like, the people who made that game lived in Bo— that studio was based in Boston too. And so, like, going to explore those worlds kind of, like, helped inform their— their artistic work, which I think is also very rad.

Uh, I think there's obvious criticisms about the rise and popularity of immersive art where, like, you know, you should be able to have that kind of experience without it being, like, a giant facility that you walk around in and snap pictures of and all of that jazz, right? Like, you should be able to discover artists' intent just by looking at a sculpture or a painting or whatever.

Rachel: Yeah. What's interesting is that we kind of— we both had our own little experience this weekend.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: 'Cause I went to National Gallery of Art here in DC, which is a very, like, traditional, like, art gallery kind of experience.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: Um, which can still, as you mentioned, be very powerful.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Uh, you know, it is wild to think that you were...

Griffin: Having a— a kind of different— I think it's— it's a totally different thing. I think once this... once you enter into this cross section between art and entertainment and interactivity, like, it is a different thing, where it is less about sort of... logic and, you know, having— I think you have to have some knowledge of art history to really be able to do the work of, like, art appreciation when you are at a more traditional museum. This is way more accessible than that. And that doesn't make it better, of course. But, like, for me it does.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Like, for me, I can't— I can't get enough of it. I wanna go back to Meow Wolf. I want to check out all that stuff. I think I'm good on *Theater of the Mind*.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I think we— I got my bean freaked by David Byrne sufficiently. But, uh— yeah. It's— obviously I'm combining a few different things under this one much larger umbrella, but it's something that gets me really excited. So, that's immersive art. [laughs] Also makes me sound like a— sort of like a smart, like, g—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Like, guy.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Like I could be a teacher of...

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Like a teacher at some sort of prestigious university.

Rachel: Yeah. Like you'd walk in first day of class and write your name on the board and be like...

Griffin: Mm-hmm.

Rachel: "Immersive art. Welcome."

Griffin: Yeah. And I'm wearing, like, all corduroy.

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah?

Griffin: Every time I take, like, a step it's just like, vwoop!

Rachel: Corduroy blazer, tie, button down, socks...

Griffin: Underwear.

Rachel: Underwear.

Griffin: Hey, can I steal you away?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Good.

[ad break]

[music plays]

Jackie: Hi! I'm Jackie Kashian.

Laurie: Hello. I'm Laurie Kilmartin.

Jackie: We do a podcast called *The Jackie and Laurie Show*, and you could listen to it any time you wanted, 'cause there's... hundreds of episodes.

Laurie: Yeah. I mean, we've been doing comedy forever, and we should both quit. So why don't you listen—

Jackie: [laughs]

Laurie: —before we leave this— not only terrible business, but this awful world.

Jackie: And find out why we can't.

Laurie: [laughs]

Jackie: Because we love it so.

Speaker Three: *The Jackie and Laurie Show.* Every week, here on Maximumfun.org.

[music and ad end]

[music plays]

Jesse: Hi, it's Jesse Thorn, the founder of Maximum Fun. I am breaking into this programming to say thank you to Max Fun's members. Your purchases in this year's post Max Fun Drive patch sale raised over \$50,000 for Trans Lifeline. Maybe you already know about the good work that Trans Lifeline does. If you don't, they're a trans-run organization that offers direct emotional and financial support to trans people in crisis. If you want to learn more about the work Trans Lifeline does or support them further, go to translifeline.org. Thanks for supporting Maximum Fun, thanks for supporting Trans Lifeline, and thanks for being awesome people who want to do good in the world.

[music and ad end]

Rachel: Hi.

Griffin: Hi, what do you got?

Rachel: Uh, so my thing... is podcasts. [laughs quietly]

Griffin: Rachel!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: You can't do that on the thing. This is the thing!

Rachel: I have talked about interview podcasts, uh, as a wonderful thing. But I think what really made me think about, like, stepping back and just talking about podcasts generally is that I am in a position now to, like, ride a train, you know, from place to place, basically for the first time regularly since the year 2007.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And in the year 2007, what I listened to and, like, what I listened to and how I listened to it, very different.

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Rachel: I had— I bought myself my very first iPod in 2005, or 2006? Um, and it was like a... a Nano.

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Rachel: And at that time, I'm pretty sure all I had was *This American Life*.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Like, I had music obviously, but the only podcast I was listening to was that. And now... [laughs]

Griffin: Now you have a few.

Rachel: Now when I get on a train it's just like— it's endless. Um, and it just made me think about how grateful I am for it. You know?

Griffin: Yeah. You listen to more podcasts than I think anybody I know. 'Cause it's all— I always— like, if you're not in a meeting, I feel like you have a podcast on.

Rachel: No, that's true. Yeah, I don't actually know anybody else that consumes as much as I do.

Griffin: It's— it's cool. I mean, you're pu—[holding back laughter] puttin' food on my plate, you know?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Each listen.

Rachel: I do. I mean, I do listen to your podcasts.

Griffin: I know.

Rachel: Except— except for the video game one.

Griffin: That's okay, that's okay.

Rachel: 'Cause I don't speak that language.

Griffin: That's alright, you don't have to.

Rachel: Yeah. Um, but I didn't know, and I'm actually curious. Do you know a lot about the history of podcasting?

Griffin: Not—

Rachel: I was wondering when you, like, did your book with your fam if you like, had to, you know, know about anything.

Griffin: I may have.

Rachel: Yeah. [laughs]

Griffin: At some point.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I mean, I was listening to podcasts pretty early as well. And so—

Rachel: Yeah, that's why I'm curious. Because, you know, obviously the articles I read don't mention the podcasts that you were listening to necessarily, so I am curious of kind of where that falls in the timeline. When did, like— when did you guys start *My Brother, My Brother, and Me*?

Griffin: 2010.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: But, like, *Uhh Yeah Dude* started in '06. And, you know... *This American Life* is obviously also a— a proto-one, but that was also on the radio before it was, uh— before it was on the... internet. On the podcast, uh, network of your— of your choosing.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And obviously, like, you know, um... *Sound of Young America*, now *Bullseye*.

Rachel: Yeah, yeah.

Griffin: *JJ Go*, all that jazz.

Rachel: Yeah. So, uh, iPod debuted in 2001. Do you remember when you got your first, like, iPod?

Griffin: 2005.

Rachel: Yeah. I was pretty late.

Griffin: I was also pretty late.

Rachel: Yeah. Did you have, like, an mp3— like a— like an mp3 player?

Griffin: No, I just had a CD player, and I had, like, several spindles of burned disks.

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah. It's interesting now because you're, like, always on top of the most current tech. But I guess when you're a young person it's not like you can access—

Griffin: Oh, I have— I have some money now.

Rachel: Yeah. [through laughter] Yeah, that was kind of the difference.

Griffin: Yeah. I have— I have—

Rachel: Well, you had your Zune!

Griffin: Yeah. That was... I got that from the Gamestop I worked at.

Rachel: Oh, okay.

Griffin: By trading in, like, a bunch of video games.

Rachel: [laughs] It's crazy to me that that was, like, a real currency.

Griffin: Sure, of course.

Rachel: Like, you could look around your room and be like, "If I pile this all together, maybe I can get something else."

Griffin: Yep.

Rachel: Okay. So, uh, 2004, former MTV VJ Adam Curry... not anybody that I have heard of.

Griffin: I know the name. I just...

Rachel: Uh, and software developer Dave Winer. Not spelled like—

Griffin: Your dad?

Rachel: Not spelled like my father's name. Put together an RSS aggregator software. So, like, the initial place where you could get podcasts and put them on, like, iPod devices.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: They were not the ones that coined the whole idea of podcast. In February of 2004, a journalist put out an article. His name is Ben Hammersly. Who kind of suggested some different ideas. Um...

Griffin: Wait. He just wrote an article that was like, "What are we gonna call these things?"

Rachel: I mean, it was a big part of it, apparently.

Griffin: Webeos.

Rachel: He proposed a handful of prospective titles, including audio blogging...

Griffin: Oof.

Rachel: Guerrilla media.

Griffin: [uncomfortable noise]

Rachel: And podcasting. Which is what stuck.

Griffin: Well, okay. Kind of seems like that was the one he wanted, and so he included a couple of—

Rachel: [laughs] He did the other ones that were weird. [laughs]

Griffin: Can you imagine if when I met your parents they were like, "What do you do?" And I was like... "[forcefully] Lights out!"

Rachel: [simultaneously] "Guerrilla media."

Griffin: "[forcefully] Guerrilla radio! Turn that shit up!"

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: They probably would've loved that, actually.

Rachel: Yeah, I know. I mean, you would've seemed like a real bad boy.

Griffin: Yeah, for sure.

Rachel: Which I feel like is something you've been going for for a while.

Griffin: Thanks, yeah.

Rachel: Um... okay. So then, uh, Libsyn.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: 2004, uh, Libsyn emerged as kind of the first podcast service provider.

Griffin: That's what we used for a hundred, hundred years.

Rachel: Yeah. I mean... how long before anybody else came out?

Griffin: I mean, there were competitors, obvs. But, I mean, it was first and best kind of execution for— forever.

Rachel: I mean, that's how when we were doing *Rosebuddies*. Didn't we— yeah.

Griffin: Yep. Started on Libsyn. All of our shows started on Libsyn.

Rachel: Uh, so 2005... um, Apple introduced podcasts into iTunes 4.9 and builds this directory so you can search for them.

Griffin: In 2005?

Rachel: 2005.

Griffin: That feels quite early for that.

Rachel: Yeah. The podcast app didn't come out till 2012, but the idea that you could go in iTunes and, you know, find a podcast by category. Um, and then 2006, Steve Jobs, like, shows people how to make their own podcasts at a conference.

Griffin: [simultaneously] That was nice of him, yeah.

Rachel: He gets out GarageBand and he's like, "Hey. Here you go."

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: "Even you can do this." Uh, and then 2006 is when *This American Life* launched their podcast version of their radio program.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: Um, and then— I mean, it's, like, steadily increased. That's when you see, like, Ricky Gervais and Adam Carolla and Marc Maron, you know, from 2007 to 2009. There's this, like, idea of, you know, "Even celebrities are doing it."

Griffin: Yeah. And I'm glad that that's a trend that has stopped. You know?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I'm glad that no more celebrities launched any podcasts after that.

Rachel: Um, so only five years after podcasts came about, Edison Research reported that 43% of Americans have heard of podcasting.

Griffin: Wow!

Rachel: Which... I don't know if that was your experience, uh, in, you know, 2005 or 7.

Griffin: I'm gonna say no.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I mean, we didn't even start until 2010, right? And so...

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But for forever, for a very long time, people didn't know. And when I say "people" I usually mean, like, you know, older relatives.

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah.

Griffin: Didn't really know what it was.

Rachel: Yeah. Um, and then what really— I mean, what really exploded everything is *Serial* in 2014.

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Rachel: Um, *Serial* was the first podcast to win a Peabody Award, and listenership just grew tremendously. This is an article I found that said, uh... "The

number of monthly podcast listeners in America practically doubled in the five years after 2014, from around 39 million Americans to an estimated 90 million."

Griffin: Hell yeah. Thanks, guys.

Rachel: In the five years preceding 2014, the same metric only grew by 35%. Um, so... yeah. It— it was enormous. And also, I mean, 2014 was a big year for y'all too, wasn't it?

Griffin: Yeah, that's when we wrapped up Adventure Zone. That was very— that was very much when podcasting kind of became a very viable kind of, um... like, only career for us.

Rachel: Yeah. Yeah, and that was the thing. The article I read kind of made the point that, you know, 2010, 2012, like, the amount of ad revenue was kind of stagnating a little bit, and then 2014 it just, like, exploded again. 'Cause everybody was like, "Oh, people are listening to this, and we can advertise... mattresses."

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: You know? And yeah, I mean, obviously now it's— I mean, it feels just as big as ever, I would say.

Griffin: There's certainly a lot of them.

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah, uh-huh. *Serial* also was kind of instrumental in creating that, like, true crime podcast, which I know is real popular.

Griffin: Every one—

Rachel: With a lot of people.

Griffin: Every other podcast, yeah.

Rachel: Yeah. I don't know— I mean, obviously podcasting is important to me, as somebody who benefits from its existence in multiple ways.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Uh, but... I don't know. I just feel like it fundamentally changed the way people experience, like... I don't know, their time, their daily, like... their commute, and their work, and I don't know. I kind of always have a voice in my ear, like, all day long.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Um, which is fundamentally different from any other human being's experience prior to this time.

Griffin: Yeah. I mean, if you wanna look at, like, broad strokes, like, it wasn't— it not like it invented, like, a new form... of communication. 'Cause it like— it basically is radio. Like, it basically— that basically is, like, "You're under the thrall of my voice, and you're gonna stay that way for an hour or so, with brief intermissions in there for me to tell you about, you know... Burt Wolf Ford down Route 60."

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah?

Griffin: Uh, but at the— but there's something about sort of the ubiquitousness of it, especially once it was, like, integrated into... every streaming platform—

Rachel: [simultaneously] Well, and how accessible.

Griffin: —and, like, yeah, all that.

Rachel: I mean, to listen to the radio, there's such a small percentage of people that get their own radio show, you know?

Griffin: Right, of course. Yeah.

Rachel: Like, you're getting to hear voices that you otherwise wouldn't hear, you know?

Griffin: Yeah. It's not something that existed when I was, like, coming up, like in high school. And so it's funny, 'cause that's the time in your life where you're thinking about, like, what your career is gonna be. And I think maybe if it had existed, it would've been something I would've been interested in, because a lot of the sort of, like, you know, genetics of what we did as when we were younger

of, like, entertainment, and radio, and all of that, uh, I think it would've been a very logical career path. But instead we... just kind of had to stumble into it.

Rachel: Yeah. Did any— I mean— well, I guess none of you guys thought about pursuing radio.

Griffin: No— well— no, not really.

Rachel: I mean, you were broadcast journalism.

Griffin: I was broadcast journalism.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And I did radio for a couple of years, the college radio station, which we've talked about before. Um, but I don't think it was ever something that I wanted to pursue. Because frankly, uh... the way that the big sort of players, the, like, one or two monopolies that controlled all of radio, the way that they treated their employees, which I got to witness firsthand...

Rachel: Yeah, and continue to.

Griffin: ... and continue— well, no— I mean, he doesn't work there anymore. But—

Rachel: Well, no. I'm just saying that people who work for radio to this day—

Griffin: Yeah, are not treated well at all!

Rachel: Yeah, yeah.

Griffin: Um, and so I didn't— I didn't wanna do that.

Rachel: Yeah. You know what's [laughs] to a lesser extent, um, I mean, I felt the same way about teaching. [laughs] You know? Like, my... not just my mom, but a lot of my relatives were teachers and I saw, like, what a difficult job it could be.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And I just didn't have any illusions about that being, you know, an ideal position for my mental health.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And so I never— I never pursued it, but obviously, you know...

Griffin: It all worked out in the end.

Rachel: [through laughter] It all worked out, yeah.

Griffin: [laughs] Yeah. Uh, hey. Thank you for listening. 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. Um, thank you to Maximum Fun for having us on the network. It's a great place, with lots of podcasts on it. So if listening to Rachel's segment made you feel like you really needed to start getting into these podcast things...

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: ... Maximumfun.org will have a lot of good opportunities for you. Um, hey. We will not have an episode out next week, and neither will any of the McElroy family of products. We are gonna be doing a kind of a staff retreat experience? We work with a lot of people who help us to make and promote the shows, and plan merch and live shows and all that jazz, and we haven't really ever gotten together all in one place to sort of talk big picture stuff.

Rachel: Yeah, I was gonna say, nobody actually lives within real close proximity to anybody else. [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah, so we are gonna be doing that next week, and we're gonna be taking the week off. But we will be back the following week with a new episode of *Wonderful!*

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: So keep it locked.

Rachel: Oh, and there's still time for people to get tickets to see us in DC.

Griffin: There *are*... time. There are is— there are time for do it.

Rachel: [through laughter] There are time.

Griffin: Go to mcelroy.family, go click on the links. We're gonna be opening up *MBMBaM* with *Sawbones* this coming Saturday at the DAR Constitution Hall, so come out and see us. It'll be a hoot. I don't actually think there's that many tickets available, so...

Rachel: Wow!

Griffin: ... don't sleep, yeah.

Rachel: You know what it was? It was [unintelligible] people were like, "Well, Won— *Wonderful!*? *Wonderful!*'s gonna be there?" You know?

Griffin: Yeah, that's probably what happened.

Rachel: That's probably what happened.

Griffin: That's probably exactly it.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: Anyway, thanks for listening! Have a good one!

Rachel: [laughs]

[chord]

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