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Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. And guess what? It's MaxFunDrive time! This is the time of year when we both celebrate the members of Maximum Fun and ask you to join Maximum Fun by going to MaximumFun.org/join. This whole operation is supported by your memberships, and we could not appreciate them more. It's also the time when we share our most special episodes. And this, friends, is one of those. Look, if you're ready to become a member right now, just pause the show, go to MaximumFun.org/join. It's so easy. You will feel great about it. Otherwise, I promise by halfway through this episode, you will feel that way. Let's get into this very special docket with a very special guest.

John Hodgman: It's a very special docket, a very specific docket, and I'm so glad we can get into it. Because I cannot wait to introduce this guest. He's an actor, he's a comedian, he's a co-host of the podcast *Threedom* with Scott Aukerman and Lauren Lapkus, *The Neighborhood Listen* with Nicole Parker, and *Stay F. Homekins* with someone named Janie Haddad Tompkins! He's also universally renowned as the top podcast guest of all time, because everyone likes to talk to him, including us. We're very lucky to have him here for the MaxFunDrive and to call him friend. So, let's call him.

Friend, is your name Paul F. Tompkins?

Paul F. Tompkins: (*Singing his answer operatically.*) It iiiis!

(*Jesse cackles.*)

John Hodgman: That's wonderful. Welcome, Paul.

Jesse Thorn: Paul's ready to rock!

Paul F. Tompkins: I'm ready to rock, to roll, to rumble—to stop, drop, and roll. It's wonderful to be here. It's nice to see you guys. It's been a while since I've visited the pod.

Jesse Thorn: Paul, can I ask you to stop, drop, shut them down, and then open up shop?

Paul F. Tompkins: I like to stop, drop, and rumble.

Jesse Thorn: Okay. Fair. Look, I'm not here to make you uncomfortable, Paul.

Paul F. Tompkins: Look, the most important thing is stopping and dropping.

John Hodgman: That's right.

Paul F. Tompkins: We can all agree on that.

John Hodgman: Paul, it's so exciting to have you here, especially since the topic for our docket today is very specific. The topic is “Paul F. Topics”.

(Jesse giggles.)

Paul F. Tompkins: Wait, whaaaat?

John Hodgman: We asked our listeners what they wanted to hear when it comes to your judgments on the issues of the day, topics related to—or in the areas of expertise of—Paul F.

Tompkins. And our first Paul F. Topic is going to hit pretty close to home, and I'm not talking about Philadelphia yet. Jesse, why don't you hit us with a topic?

Jesse Thorn: Listener member Kelly in Rochester, New York writes, “My husband's brother was set to get married in the spring of 2022, but then he and his fiancée moved the date up to November 2023 as a ‘fun surprise’. This was the same weekend as Paul F. Tompkins’s *Varietopia* show in Brooklyn. We had tickets for the show, and we were looking forward to seeing one of our favorite performers and visiting New York City. Instead, we spent the weekend with 25 strangers in Atlanta and my husband's divorced parents. It was emotionally exhausting, and Atlanta is boring. How can we punish my brother-in-law and his wife?”
(Chuckles.)

Paul F. Tompkins: Wow. Lots to parse here.

John Hodgman: Paul, before we get into how to punish these people—the punishment phase—tell us first about *Varietopia*, what we're talking about here, for people who may not know.

Paul F. Tompkins: John, thank you for asking. *Varietopia* is a variety show that I host. I've been doing it off and on for many years, and brought it back after quarantine. I realized how much I missed it, and it's been going strong ever since. It's music, it's comedy, it's any kind of performance that can fit on a stage.

John Hodgman: And you're fitting a lot on the stage, because there is a full orchestra, pretty much.

Paul F. Tompkins: Well, in Los Angeles and New York when we do the show. But anywhere else—

John Hodgman: Okay. On the road, it's a dude with a kazoo? Yeah.

Paul F. Tompkins: *(Laughs.)* It's me and a boombox.

John Hodgman: And a big piece of cardboard on the stage, so that you can—

Paul F. Tompkins: Yes, of course there's cardboard on the stage. But yeah, it's really fun. It's a different show every other month at Lodge Room in Los Angeles. And then we're going on tour this year, starting next month. And we're hitting a bunch of different cities. You can go to PaulFTompkins.com/live for all of those dates.

John Hodgman: Now, I went to this particular *Varietopia* show at the Bell House in Brooklyn, November 2020—what was it? Three. And I have this review to offer Kelly and her husband who missed it: you messed up. It was a great show. Anyone who missed it to go to a wedding was a fool.

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I don't care how close to the wedding it was. This was one for the ages. Paul, would you agree or disagree?

Paul F. Tompkins: The show is more important than love. And I have to say the idea of moving your wedding up as a fun surprise?! I've never heard of such a thing. It goes—it absolutely is an insult to everyone. A wedding is a thing that you clear a date for, and that's it. It doesn't change! You don't do that!

Jesse Thorn: It doesn't say, "Save some dates."

(John laughs.)

Paul F. Tompkins: Yeah! If there's some sort of emergency or somebody falls ill or, you know, whatever—a hurricane wipes out your reception venue. I understand that, but not a fun surprise! *(Laughs.)* That's not a—first of all, it's not a fun surprise!

John Hodgman: No. So, like if we could all get in a TARDIS together and go back in time and space and say to Kelly, when she opened up the email or whatever saying, "Hey, surprise! Wedding's much earlier!"—would you counsel her don't go to this wedding?

Paul F. Tompkins: What's the relationship again?

John Hodgman: It's her husband's brother's wedding,

Paul F. Tompkins: That's tough. That's very tough.

(John agrees.)

And I guess it depends on how well those brothers get along. Obviously, the parents' marriage is a wreck. And—

John Hodgman: Legendary. Legendary shipwreck.

Paul F. Tompkins: They clearly despise each other, otherwise it wouldn't be mentioned—the fact that they're divorced. (*Laughing.*) That I guess they—I don't know if it turns into a, you know, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* situation with them.

Jesse Thorn: Look, my parents are divorced. They both came to my wedding. And nothing popped off. But all expended much emotional energy in maintaining the peace.

John Hodgman: Yeah, I mean, let's be clear. There are definitely amicable divorces. There are divorces that are for the betterment of both members of the couple and the family. There are exes who can get along really well at weddings. I'm just talking about Kelly's father and mother-in-law, a legendary shipwreck of a marriage. Should never have happened.

I don't know about that, Kelly. Maybe that's not true. But I'm just imagining. You brought it up, so it must have meant something to you.

Jesse Thorn: I'm sure Kelly is grateful for her husband (*chuckling*) existing in the world.

John Hodgman: That's true. That's true. That's true.

Paul F. Tompkins: And it sounded like a pretty small wedding too, which makes it harder to get out of.

John Hodgman: 25. 25 people.

Paul F. Tompkins: I mean, they just mentioned 25 strangers. There could have been other people they knew there (*laughs*) that they're not counting.

John Hodgman: That's true. That's true.

Paul F. Tompkins: I judge a wedding by how many strangers are there.

John Hodgman: I forgot about that weird wedding tradition. Something old, something blue, something borrowed, something new. And also, 25 randos that you just—you know, you pass out tickets at the Grove to come to your wedding, just—

(*Jesse cackles.*)

Paul F. Tompkins: A baker's two dozen of strangers.

Jesse Thorn: In front of the dancing fountain.

John Hodgman: Yeah, exactly.

Paul F. Tompkins: Yeah, I would—I mean, without knowing how close the brothers are, it makes it very difficult to advise don't go to that wedding.

Jesse Thorn: They've gotta go to the wedding!

Paul F. Tompkins: Yeah, I feel like unless you are legit estranged, you gotta go.

John Hodgman: May I use an internet term?

Paul F. Tompkins: Please, I wish you would.

John Hodgman: Counterpoint, they don't have to go.

Jesse Thorn: Wow!

John Hodgman: Counterpoint, they should skip it. Go back in time and skip it.

Paul F. Tompkins: Wow!

John Hodgman: I don't know. We're all of a level of—I don't want to say maturity. I'd rather say age—where feces doesn't really matter that much anymore. A long, long time ago—and we'll call this person—what's a—? Ted. Ted's a name.

Paul F. Tompkins: I was terrified you were gonna launch into “American Pie”.

(They laugh.)

John Hodgman: My wedding song, by the way. My first dance.

(Jesse cackles.)

Paul F. Tompkins: Do you know—on the topic of weddings, when we were planning our wedding and we were putting together the playlist for the reception, my mother-in-law, whom I love dearly, really campaigned hard for us to include “American Pie”.

(John “oh”s.)

And I thought this is insane! I've never heard “American Pie” at a wedding.

(John “mm”s noncommittally.)

And so, we're like, “Alright! I'll put it in there.” People loved it. I was astonished.

John Hodgman: I'm sure they went bananas.

Jesse Thorn: Wait, did it fill the dance floor with—?

Paul F. Tompkins: It did. Everybody got out there. Everybody sang along. I was stunned.

John Hodgman: I was gonna say the reason that's a surprise perfect move, once I thought about it, is that it's a song that a certain generation would love to sing along to when they're drunk and in their cups. And also, it's one that you can sing along to and get excited for while sitting down next to Aunt Harriet at the big table or whatever. Like, it's not a dancer; it's just a yeller of a song. But I mean, people were dancing to it. That's weird. 'Cause there are a lot of tempo shifts in that song.

Jesse Thorn: But couldn't you play like "Sweet Caroline" or something that people love singing to that isn't so sad?

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Paul F. Tompkins: If my mother-in-law suggested that, we would have put that on there. But look, everybody loved "American Pie"—even the 25 strangers.

John Hodgman: It worked. (*Laughs.*)

So, what I was going to say is a long, long time ago, we were drinking whiskey and rye. And we were young people. And one of the first people to get married in our friend group was a person that we will call Ted. And Ted was getting married across the country. And I was definitely going to go to Ted's wedding. It was the first big wedding! And my wife, who's a whole human being in her own right—who was then my girlfriend and also still a whole human being in her own right—also wanted to come, but couldn't get off of work. And she was very upset about it. And she said—she expressed this to her mother, and her mother very wisely said, "Oh. Oh dear, don't worry. There'll be more Ted's weddings in the world. There'll be more Ted's weddings in the future." And my mother-in-law was absolutely right! At least two of them that I can think of.

Paul F. Tompkins: With Ted?

John Hodgman: Yeah, that's what I'm talking about.

Paul F. Tompkins: Oh boy!

John Hodgman: Yeah. Well, you know, people don't always get it right. Divorce is there for a reason. I'm sorry.

Jesse Thorn: But Ted wasn't her brother!

John Hodgman: Maybe I'm sanguine about this because I have no siblings, so I don't care, and I live only for myself.

(*Paul "mm-hm"s.*)

But I do kind of feel like—I mean, we opened this conversation talking about what an unmitigated party foul it was to change the date of your wedding—

Paul F. Tompkins: Absolutely.

John Hodgman: —as a fun surprise, absent any other context. Maybe there was some compelling reason why it needed to be moved up. I don't know. You know what I mean? But absent any other reason, if I've got a date to go see Paul F. Tompkins in New York City, if I've got a hotel room booked and airplane tickets booked and so forth, and you come back to me and say, "Sorry, it's not next May. It's six weeks from now." I think you'd be well within your rights, Kelly, to go ahead and say, "I'm really sorry. I have to miss it. Here—I'm going to send you a pretty good gift, and we'll celebrate with you down the road."

Paul F. Tompkins: John, I will say that the lack of siblings maybe is hampering your view of this a little bit, because it's a big deal. Family drama is a big deal and—but that aside, you can say to someone, "No, I can't make it, because you changed the date on me." And a thing that I have learned over the years is that it's okay to not give a reason why. You can just say, "I can't do that." And your reasons are your own. And it's not for the other person to judge whether or not that's a valid reason to not do something.

Because I used to, if I wanted to avoid doing something that somebody asked me to do, I would say, "I can't do it, and here's why, and blah, blah, blah." And you know, I'd sometimes find myself making something up, because I thought I didn't have a good enough reason. But the reason is, for whatever reason I have, I can't do that. And that's good enough.

John Hodgman: Another internet term or a phrase. "No is a complete sentence."

(Paul agrees.)

Something that I've read many times, and I think to myself, "That's a very powerful sentence, and I wish I could act that way."

Paul F. Tompkins: So true, bestie.

John Hodgman: It's true. Maybe I'm being a little cold. I was born that way. Siblingless. Alone in this universe. But I'll offer this. I'll split this baby down the middle and say Kelly could have said no, and her husband could have gone to his brother's wedding, and she could have enjoyed—

Paul F. Tompkins: That's very true! That's very true.

John Hodgman: Do you know what I mean? Like, that's a great—would have been a gracious way to get out of it. But what's done is done is done. They missed your show. How do we get punishment or satisfaction or justice now that it's been done? You have to understand that Kelly has since had a—they have a little baby now. And they live far away from New York or Los Angeles. Maybe they will be near one of the places that you're going on tour for *Varietopia*, perhaps.

Paul F. Tompkins: Yes, indeed. And if memory serves, those shows are archived online on my Vimeo page. And so, you may watch them then. I feel bad making you pay for it twice. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: Well, maybe the brother-in-law should pay for it!

Paul F. Tompkins: Yeeeah, how about it? Yes! That's a great solution. I was also going to suggest—and this is from a movie I saw called *Goodfellas*—where you convince the brother and his wife that they have become made men in the crime family. And then you invite them to a ceremony, and then of course you murder them.

Jesse Thorn: Creative.

John Hodgman: That definitely—not only does it balance the scales in the Omertà community, but also it sends a message.

Paul F. Tompkins: I mean, it's extreme, but it's there as an option.

John Hodgman: I'm going to paraphrase *Goodfellas* with a judgment here. Here's my message to Kelly's brother-in-law, whose wedding messed up their chance to go see *Varietopia*. “*(Censor beep)* you. Pay them.” That's the quote.

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(Jesse laughs.)

Kelly's brother-in-law, you owe Kelly and your brother a trip to go see *Varietopia*. Go to—what is it? PaulFTompkins.com/live?

Paul F. Tompkins: Yes. We'll be there in Brooklyn again, next month.

Jesse Thorn: And the divorced parents have to babysit together to make it possible.

(Paul laughs.)

John Hodgman: There we go.

Paul F. Tompkins: You have to get their parents back together.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, if we got a time machine, I think we should be *Parent Trap*-ing this thing.

John Hodgman: *Parent Trap* the whole—*Parent Trap* this situation. I'm very excited to be here in our sometime Manhattan chambers, here at Digital Island, where I don't have a gavel. But I did find a rubber finger puppet of a giraffe, which you can see if you check us out on

our YouTube page. YouTube page, boy oh boy am I old. This is the sound of a giraffe gavel. Boink, boink, boink. Judge John Hodgman rules on that one, that is all. Let's go to the next one.

Jesse Thorn: Paul, can I ask you a question that I want to know?

Paul F. Tompkins: Absolutely.

Jesse Thorn: I, of course, have always admired, respected, and resented you for your extraordinary talent and because you are better friends than I am with a dog named Tugboat—who is the dog I probably love most out of any dog that doesn't live at my house. How many dogs are you currently friends with? 'Cause you're a legendary befriender of dogs.

Paul F. Tompkins: I would say I'm probably friends with about... six dogs.

John Hodgman: You better get this number right, because these dogs are going to get mad if you don't count them all.

Paul F. Tompkins: I know. There's six dogs that I would say I'm absolutely friends with. Then there's—

Jesse Thorn: And 25 strangers. (*Laughs.*)

Paul F. Tompkins: 25 strange dogs that I attend functions with. There's two dogs who are frenemies with me.

Jesse Thorn: Oh, wow!

Paul F. Tompkins: They're warming up to me so slowly at a glacial pace, but it is happening. Yeah, the rest are just dog friends I haven't met yet.

John Hodgman: Because you don't—but you have no dogs of your own. You just go through Los Angeles.

Paul F. Tompkins: (*Pointedly.*) That I know of.

John Hodgman: You go through Los Angeles, and you befriend dogs that you come across in your day. Right.

Jesse Thorn: Okay, the reason I ask is that our friend Chuck Bryant from *Stuff You Should Know* wants to know: "Has a dog ever full on rejected your friendship?"

Paul F. Tompkins: This is unfortunately true. This has happened to me. And this is a dog named Georgie, who is the dog of my dear friends Catherine and Mike. And Georgie is an adorable doodle of some kind, who has mostly brown fur and a little, white beard. I think she looks very much like Kris Kristofferson. And—

(Jesse and John cackle.)

Georgie is very soft and fluffy, and I really love her. And she absolutely does not care for me, and there's nothing I can do. No amount of treats will change it. And I think it stems from very early on. Now, Georgie is not a very warm dog to begin with, with strangers. But there was an incident where, at Catherine and Mike's home, I accidentally stepped on Georgie's foot.

Jesse Thorn: Oh my gracious.

Paul F. Tompkins: And I believe that Georgie has never and will never forgive me for that.

John Hodgman: Right. I don't like it. Georgie, I'm wagging my giraffe finger-puppet finger at you. You ought to be friends with Paul F. Tompkins. Boo.

Paul F. Tompkins: All I want to do is love her. That's all.

John Hodgman: Yeah, well.

Paul F. Tompkins: That's all I want to do.

Jesse Thorn: John, we've got more "Paul F. Topics", but let's talk about the MaxFunDrive for a second, because it's a special time of year.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: It's *Judge John Hodgman*, and we are now officially entering the second week of the MaxFunDrive. The second, John, and final week.

John Hodgman: That's right, week two of only two! MaxFunDrive is only two weeks long. Two weeks out of every year, we ask you to think about what these shows mean to you, and if you're not a member, to consider becoming one. Or if you are a member, to consider upgrading or boosting your membership, all at MaximumFun.org/join. That means 50 weeks out of the year, we say nothing about it. But two weeks out of the year, we talk about it a lot. Because it's meaningful. It's how we keep the show going. And the way to keep the show going is to go to MaximumFun.org/join.

Jesse Thorn: We have in the studio here the producer of *Judge John Hodgman*, Jennifer Marmor. Hi, J.

Jennifer Marmor: Hi!

Jesse Thorn: Welcome to the J Squad. J Squad reunited on microphone.

(Jennifer cheers.)

John Hodgman: Hello!

Jennifer Marmor: Hellooo!

Jesse Thorn: Jen, you've been at Maximum Fun a long time now.

(Jennifer confirms.)

I hadn't counted it up, but it is more than a decade now.

Jennifer Marmor: Yes! Yes it is. I was hired in 2013.

Jesse Thorn: Originally, you were like one of the first people that we hired at Maximum Fun. We hired you just to be... office person?

(Jennifer chuckles and agrees.)

Like, this was when MaxFun was what, three or four people, maybe?

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John Hodgman: Right.

Jennifer Marmor: Yeah, it was like you, Teresa, development, and *Bullseye*, it felt like.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, I think that's about it. And you've worked your way up the ladder to now producing the flagship show. *(Clears his throat with playful gravitas.)*

(Jennifer laughs.)

What does a producer actually do on *Judge John Hodgman*, besides chime in charmingly occasionally on the air?

Jennifer Marmor: *(Laughs.)* Well, I do a lot. You know, some of you have heard my voice before, but mostly I'm behind the scenes. And there's a lot that goes into making the show. I talk to all of the litigants that you hear on the show and some litigants that you don't hear on the show. I book studios that they record from. I, you know, put together the recording and the release schedule. I prepare the case information and the docket clearing scripts for John and Jesse to use. I work with our two editors now—our video editor, Daniel Speer, and our audio editor, A.J. McKeon. And we all work together to make episodes for you as good as possible and, you know, make it so that they are reliably available in your podcast app every week. And that's most of what I do and other behind the scenes work.

Jesse Thorn: The video stuff is new this year. This is something we've just been doing the last few months.

(Jennifer confirms.)

We've been building up that capacity. I think it's kind of a big deal for us, not just because we had to, you know, get cameras and set them up and so on and so forth. But you know, you had to build a workflow so that we can cut both a video and an audio version of the show that we can be really proud of.

Jennifer Marmor: Yeah, that's right. It's definitely been an interesting adventure, you know, because I've been an audio producer for a long time. I've been working on this show since 2016. I know Jesse from our college radio days at KZSC in Santa Cruz. And it's a real shift, you know, in thinking about video with audio. And the only reason why I've been able to do that is because we've been to work with our team at Maximum Fun, who set up the video—and because we're working with our video editor, Daniel Spear, who's been able to give me some pointers about like what I should be looking for and what, you know, he needs.

And, you know, we're only able to do that because of our members. Because they contribute to the show every month, you contribute to the show every month. And you know, it takes the load off of me having to do this all by myself, you know, and doing video, which I don't know how to do, and being able to work with somebody who does know what to do!

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, I mean, John, something that you and I talked about was—you know, this is a big new frontier for us to add video to the show. And it's quite an undertaking financially, resource-wise. And when we decided to do it, John, one of the things we talked about was that we had support from members, and we felt like we could count on increased support for members as we increase what we do on the show. Like, that has always been how it's worked. Our members have always stood behind us as we have expanded the program.

John Hodgman: You know, Jennifer Marmor, Judge John Hodgman here. We've spoken before.

Jennifer Marmor: Hi. Yes, hello.

John Hodgman: Uh, a quick question. So, you know, you started at Maximum Fun when it was just a couple of people. We both enjoyed watching the network grow, and to become more ambitious and to include more shows—not only to survive but to thrive, thanks to the generosity and the commitment of our listener members. Obviously, Maximum Fun just went through an even bigger transition recently to becoming an employee-owned co-op.

And I just wonder—you know, a lot of people who listen to the shows maybe don't think about all the people who are not on mic, who are behind the scenes, and what Maximum Fun means to them. And so I wonder if you could maybe tell us a little bit about what this journey has meant to you and what it means to be an employee owner now.

Jennifer Marmor: Yeah! You know, what's interesting about Maximum Fun is that—one of the many things—is that a lot of our staff here were fans first, members first. And when we happened to be hiring, you know, for whatever position, it was like, “Oh, maybe I should apply for this place that I love.” And they've gotten the job. You know, Stacey Molski is our

Director of Business Operations, and is one person who—you know—I knew as a MaxFunCon attendee and we've all known, you know, in various ways through the MaxFun world. And she moved to California, and I don't think with the intention to work at Maximum Fun. But like, we needed help in the business department, and she was hired. And she's been, you know, instrumental in bringing on new shows, you know, working with our CEO to keep the business running—

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—and keep those business operations going. Which I'm saying business a lot, because I don't know how that works! I'm learning a lot as a board of directors' member at the co-op. But like, she is amazing at what she does! And—

Jesse Thorn: I don't mean to be cliched, but like—it's a vibe, right?

(Jennifer agrees with a laugh.)

Like, it is—the fact that we hire from the MaxFun community so often is not reflective of us like, you know, wanting people who are like in our cult or something like that. It's really about the fact that the people who are attracted to our shows are the kind of people that we want to spend time with and the kind of people that we trust with our work, you know? And I think that feeling is often mutual, right? That like the audience trusts us in the same way that we trust you. And we're really grateful for that trust. And like, a piece of this, of course, is that we—as creators at Maximum Fun—actually like work for you, the people who are listening to this. Like, advertising is a portion of how we make our money. You know, important, but it's a much smaller portion than membership. We strictly limit advertising, and we often turn down advertisements. And the reason that we are—

John Hodgman: And that is not—that's not a meaningless luxury, by the way. The fact that we are able to—

Jesse Thorn: It's a big deal.

Jennifer Marmor: It's a huge deal.

John Hodgman: —to advertise with companies that we believe in and trust, is down precisely to the listener support. The listener support means that we're working and creating content for the people we care about, which is you. We're not trying to meet some weird growth expectation that some venture capitalist or a corporate hiree has decided to arbitrarily place on something. We're not dealing with any top-down controls. Every podcast is owned by its creator, and every podcast is supported by the listeners, but also by this incredible staff of people behind the scenes at Maximum Fun who are getting the podcast out there, managing the community, making sure that the community is functioning properly. That is doing all the things that like—you know, I don't know how to do! I'm like you, Jennifer Marmor. I do not know about biz ops. If I knew about biz ops, I'd be in a different biz.

Jennifer Marmor: Right. And you know—and it's amazing that, you know, so often we hear about people working in other places, whether it's media or not, where they're expected to put in as much work as possible and really treat it like their own, take it on like it's their own, but they don't own what they're doing. They just need to act like they own what they're doing. But with Maximum Fun becoming a co-op—and I just now realized that I'm wearing my co-op t-shirt today! Real big coincidence, but because we're worker-owners, you know, we already were feeling like we were putting in as much as we could. Because we're fans of what we do, because we love the people that we work with, and it's a really good team, and we stand behind our shows. But do own what we're doing, you know. It's not this like indistinct sense of ownership that a corporation is asking us to take on. You know, where they say, "We're all family here," but like, they're not. You know.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, the Walton family is the family, right?

(They laugh and Jennifer agrees.)

John Hodgman: Yeah. Fandom isn't a paycheck. Fandom isn't health insurance. Fandom isn't benefits. Fandom isn't vacation time. All of those things that the MaxFun employee-owners have and enjoy are paid for by listener contributions like yours. I mean, there are other ways to fund podcasts, God-or-Whatever knows. But I can't think of a method that is sort of more fair, more aligned with our values, that ultimately rewards the people who are actually working on the shows—whether as employees of MaxFun or as the creators themselves—that is simple and understandable and believable and, frankly, sustainable is this one. In a time when podcasts have gone through a lot of business changes, particularly on the corporate side, and advertising is down, we've been able to not only—as I say—survive, but thrive. And it's all down to you, the listener members, and your support.

Jennifer Marmor: Yeah, and watching how the podcast industry has boomed and busted and boomed again and busted recently, it's been kind of—it's a little scary, you know, to be like, "Okay, well this is my full-time job. This is my career." But at the same time I've really felt safe at MaxFun.

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Because I know that we're not beholden to corporation who's gonna decide that, you know, we're not meeting their bottom line, and they're gonna just let us go. Or they're gonna sell to another corporation and then dissolve the staff and do whatever they want with our IP. Like, I've felt really safe, as I've said. *(Chuckles.)* You know, I've just—it's been nice to know that like, our model, while not the common business model, seems to be the business model that has kept us going and that has really enabled us to keep doing what we love to do and take on more shows and take on more staff.

Jesse Thorn: I'll say this, like as the guy who built this model and as the guy who initiated the transition to worker-ownership, I built it always with membership in mind and always with sustainability in mind. And those two things are completely hand in hand. You know, one of the reasons that I never sold in any of the various rounds of giant companies buying small podcast companies is that I couldn't see a way forward that would protect the things about Maximum Fun that are special. But in becoming a worker-owned cooperative and in

being supported primarily by our members, I think we have built something that is resilient and sustainable and thriving even in a really difficult time in our industry—and something where, when there are struggles, when there are challenges, we are all able to bear them together and bear them better. And that, you know, our ability to do so protects all of us. And that comes down to the folks out there who are listening, to you who are listening right now—that you take the simple step of becoming a member is what makes it possible for us to have done this. And I'm very grateful to you and very proud of us.

John Hodgman: Jesse, it sounds to me like you're about to turn around and make the ask.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah.

John Hodgman: So, let me pause for a second. Let me—I'm sorry to interrupt you. But Jennifer Marmor, it's me, Judge John Hodgman. We've spoken before. Nice to see you again.

Jennifer Marmor: Yes, hello. Nice to see you.

John Hodgman: There's some—I get very, very frequent feedback. People love hearing you on mic.

(Jennifer laughs.)

Jesse Thorn: It's true.

Jennifer Marmor: Is it all from my dad? Are you sure that Bob Marmor isn't messaging you a billion times?

(They laugh.)

John Hodgman: No, it's—

Jesse Thorn: Bob Marmor, the man of a thousand voices.

(They laugh.)

John Hodgman: If you saw my email, if you saw—you know, if you monitor the Reddit, any places it's discussed, it's like whenever you're on, people are like, “I love hearing Jennifer Marmor.” And so do I. So, you're here now. I'm going to throw it to you. Jennifer Marmor is on the mic.

Jennifer Marmor: Here I am.

John Hodgman: Look, we ask so much of you as a producer. It probably is unfair to say, but would you make the ask?

Jesse Thorn: I would love to. Will you please join us? MaximumFun.org/join.

John Hodgman: How are you going to say no to Jennifer Marmor?

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome back to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. This week's episode is “Paul F. Topics” with the legendary Paul F. Tompkins.

Paul F. Tompkins: I would have said—and forgive me, because I love a portmanteau—Paul F. Tompics.

John Hodgman: From now on, this episode is dedicated to Paul F. Tompics.

Paul F. Tompkins: Yes. Victory in our time.

Jesse Thorn: This feels like a challenge to me, (*chuckling*) to say Tompics seven more times over the course of the next 45 minutes.

John Hodgman: Is it Tompics or Tomp-pics?

Paul F. Tompkins: Tompics.

John Hodgman: Tompics. Paul F. Tompics.

Paul F. Tompics: I’m not picking anything.

John Hodgman: No. You're picking on us.

Paul F. Tompkins: (*Gleefully.*) Hee-hee! I'm a bully.

(*Jesse laughs.*)

John Hodgman: You’re a delight. Everyone knows you're not a bully.

Jesse Thorn: But they also all know your classic bully impression!

(*Paul “hee-hee!”s again and Jesse cackles.*)

John Hodgman: That really brings me back to fifth grade recess.

Paul, everyone knows that you are not a bully. Everyone knows you cut a very fine jib. You like to wear nice clothes. And it's no surprise that we've had a few questions about—some wardrobe questions. Some sartorial questions, not only about the suits and such, but also hats.

We've got a question about two kinds of hats. It's a little loaded in the age of the internet. Jesse, why don't you give this one to Paul?

Jesse Thorn: This is from Maximum Fun subreddit user u/HeavierThanAir, and the question is, "What finally is the difference between a fedora and a trilby?"

Paul F. Tompkins: I'm very glad you asked. Every trilby is a fedora, but not every fedora is a trilby.

[00:35:00]

If memory serves, from my years as a haberdasher at the famous Hats in the Belfry on South Street in Philadelphia. The shape of the fedora, the brim and everything, that's what makes it a fedora. And a trilby is a smaller, tighter version of that.

John Hodgman: That means the brim is not quite as wide.

Paul F. Tompkins: Yeah, the brim is shorter. The crown is shorter. And like—your Indiana Jones, the professor of archaeology, he wears a fedora.

John Hodgman: Yeah, that's true.

Paul F. Tompkins: A snap brim fedora. And a trilby is the kind of—the trilby is the hat that became called the fedora when people like characters from *Entourage* would be wearing them. You know. So, that's what a lot of people mistakenly just refer to—it's not mistakenly referred to as a fedora. But it is not as specific as what—and I think you want to be specific, because you're talking about that kind of hat that you hate.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah.

(They laugh.)

Paul F. Tompkins: And the type of person that wears it, that you're leery of—that is a trilby.

John Hodgman: Paul, would you sport a fedora or a trilby today? Do you like that kind of hat?

Paul F. Tompkins: Yeah! I often do. Yeah. Not a trilby though. Trilby does not work for me with my head and face shape.

John Hodgman: But not because of any cultural connotation, simply because you don't like the way it looks on you.

Paul F. Tompkins: Do you know what it is? They're also—a lot of them are very—they're sort of cheaply made. You know? They're very mass marketed. You can get nicer ones. But

honestly, if I were to wear a trilby, I would have to take a page out of the book of my friend, Lowly Worm, and make it an alpine one.

John Hodgman: Woah! And would you drive around in a little apple car?

Paul F. Tompkins: Of course I would!

John Hodgman: That apple car has got to be so much fun to drive around in. I bet it tips real easy, though. It's pretty tall.

Paul F. Tompkins: Yeah. But then it just rolls. It just rolls. You know what I mean?

John Hodgman: Yeah. We've got some hot hat talk coming up, where we're gonna visit a bunch of different hats in a moment. But let me—before we leave the topic of hats, Paul, you mentioned Hats in The Belfry, and I got very excited. I'm always so excited whenever you say Hats in The Belfry, because I love that weird hat store. And if you ever want to hear me being excited, get Paul's recording of his *Laboring Under Delusions* show, The Bell House Edition, from Brooklyn—live in Brooklyn. And when you mention Hats in the Belfry, you will hear someone in the background going, “Wooo!”

(Jesse chuckles.)

And Paul gets very confused as to why someone's doing that. That person is me. I'm getting very excited in that recording. It's...

Paul F. Tompkins: *(Laughs.)* Did I know that?

John Hodgman: No. You didn't know, and it freaked you out, and I apologize.

Paul F. Tompkins: Is this a reveal right now that was you? We never talked about this before!

John Hodgman: Have I never told you? Maybe. I don't know. I mean, I remember it.

Paul F. Tompkins: *(Laughing helplessly.)* I don't think you have!

John Hodgman: It was a great—anyway, go get Paul's Bell House, Brooklyn, recording of *Laboring Under Delusions*. But you brought up that you had worked in a haberdashery, and a number of people wrote in wanting to know if you could settle or explain the difference between a haberdasher and a milliner. Can either of you? You're both sartorial gentlemen.

Jesse Thorn: A milliner makes hats. A milliner is like me and Paul's friend Cody Wellema of Wellema Hatworks in Altadena, California.

Paul F. Tompkins: That's right.

Jesse Thorn: He makes the hats. A haberdasher is someone who sells gentleman's clothing.

Paul F. Tompkins: Yes. A haberdashery covers more than just hats.

John Hodgman: Alright! That's the answer that everyone was looking for.

Jesse Thorn: Here's one from MaxFun member and subredditor u/Baltanerdist. "Is it ever okay to buy a pre-tied bowtie?"

Paul F. Tompkins: Sure.

John Hodgman: Paul says sure.

Paul F. Tompkins: I think it's fine, because when I would wear bowties—I'm going to say this was before 2007/8—it would be a pre-tied bowtie. If I had to wear a tuxedo for something—and then eventually I was like I want to teach myself how to do this. So, I watched a number of YouTube tutorials, and none of them was really getting me to the finish line. I remember I had bought a bowtie, a self-tie bowtie, and I was doing shows with AmyMann, we were on the road. And I said, "You know what? I'm just going to quickly watch some videos on my phone and learn how to do this so I can wear it for the show." And I tried for an hour. I watched multiple videos. And at the end, I got it to sort of look like a bowtie, but it still wasn't quite right. And I also gave myself a repetitive stress injury in my arms where I could not feel my hands for about an hour, 90 minutes.

(John "woah!"s.)

And had to like trust that I was holding the microphone correctly. *(Laughs.)*

(John "oh no"s through laughter.)

And I eventually saw a video that included a part that the other videos did not include.

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They included an angle the other videos did not include. I was like, ah! That's it! So, yeah, I like being able to tie a bowtie. But I'm not really strict about what's okay and what's not okay with fashion, because fashion is all made up. And if you want to wear a bowtie, and you don't know how to do it, sure. Throw in a self-tie bowtie. They make good ones now. They make some that don't look pre tied, but it's fun to learn. I would say it's okay to wear the pre-tied, but it's fun to learn how to do it. And you'll be glad that you did.

John Hodgman: Paul, you taught me how to tie a bowtie at your wedding!

Paul F. Tompkins: I remember that. You know, there were—I had two pupils at that wedding. *(Chuckles.)*

John Hodgman: Oh, I thought I had signed up for the solo mentoring, but okay.

Paul F. Tompkins: No, two guys signed up for it at the same time, and I was double booked. There was nothing I could do. (*Laughs.*) But I think I was able to teach you, but I was not able to teach Phil, unfortunately.

John Hodgman: Oh no, really? Is that why he's always wandering around with that untied bowtie around his neck? Even to this day?

Paul F. Tompkins: (*Gravelly.*) Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Judge Hodgman?

John Hodgman: Here comes Jesse Thorn.

Jesse Thorn: I hate pre-tied bowties. I don't think—look, think if you're put in a situation where you have to wear a bowtie, like you're in a wedding party, and you don't have the chance to learn how to tie it yourself, I don't think anyone is going to judge you. I think it'll be fine. But I kind of feel like if you're going to do it regularly, like if it's going to be part of your life, it's a do it or don't do it situation. Because I feel like a self-tied bowtie looks so much better. And I think the mistake sometimes that non bowtie wearers make is they think their goal in tying their own bowtie is to make it look like a pre tied bowtie, which is to say to have it be perfectly aligned and—

But actually, the purpose—like, if you're wearing a bowtie, the reason you're doing it is to have an unusual and expressive form of neckwear, right? Like, it's—you know, maybe you're a doctor and you don't want your long tie to, you know, be unsanitary or whatever. That's why a lot of doctors wear bowties instead of long ties.

Paul F. Tompkins: Because their ties are constantly dipping into open wounds.

Jesse Thorn: (*Chuckling.*) Right, there's like reasons where you don't want—some people wear a bowtie because they don't want a long tie flapping around.

John Hodgman: Yeah, that's why Orville Redenbacher wore a bowtie, because otherwise this tie was going to get in the butter.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. He didn't want his tie getting popped.

But like, I feel like when you are tying it yourself—which I think as Paul said, like it's not super hard to learn. It will pop in when it pops in. And for a lot of people, the secret is that it's just exactly the same as tying your shoes. Some people don't have the like way to shift the geometry in their head from their top of their shoe to their neck, just different kinds of brains. But for a lot of people, it's like, “It's the same as tying your shoes.”

And then they're like, "Oh, okay!" And then they can just do it. But I think that the reason that you wear a bowtie is for the expressiveness. And that expressiveness takes the form of it being floppy, it being uneven, it being expressive. And so—

John Hodgman: A little imperfect, because it's fun. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: And I find myself—unless, you know, there are bowtie—if you're Pee-wee Herman, or you're in the Fruit of Islam, then that little straight—you know, if you're Brother Mouzone from *The Wire*, that little straight '60s pre-tied bowtie is what it is. But like, I always—like, for example, when watching *The Good Place* and seeing one of the most brilliant actors of our time in a wonderful role, Ted Danson, who always wore a bowtie—I was always bummed that it was obviously a pre-tied bowtie. And when you're making a TV show, I'd imagine there's continuity issues. But it still was always a bummer. 'Cause I thought like if he's wearing the bowtie as a character thing, that he's like that kind of guy—well, that kind of guy loves to show a little something in his tie.

John Hodgman: Well, let's jump ahead here to this question from listener member Chris Hockman, because this is pertinent. It's a very open-ended question for you, Paul. "What is gauche? Are there any strict fashion crimes that you think that someone should never—a person should never do or wear?"

Paul F. Tompkins: I don't think so.

John Hodgman: No?

Paul F. Tompkins: I think you can wear whatever you want. I mean, one of the great things about living in the time that we do is that people are allowed to dress in their own way, and there's not a social uniform that everyone has to follow as there was in days gone by. I used to be stricter about this stuff, and now it's like, it's up to you if you want to play by the rules of—

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—these things go with each other, these things don't go with each other, that kind of thing. That can be fun, you know, if you want to put together an outfit like that. That said, I think that fashion is—it's all made up! And it's like, if there's no practical reason to not do something, then do it! You know.

John Hodgman: Is there any an occasion where it would be inappropriate to wear a suit with little anchors on it, modeled after the suit that the mayor wore in *Jaws*?

Paul F. Tompkins: Absolutely no occasion is inappropriate for that.

Jesse Thorn: I'd wear that in a baseball game.

Paul F. Tompkins: Absolutely. I will say this though, and because it's on the—we mentioned weddings earlier. I think there are occasions where if somebody asks you to dress up, you gotta dress up. Because it's—there is something fun about the ceremony of things. Like, this is the only time I do this is for this occasion, you know? And I think that's a—I think that that's something that you should observe. And I think that if you're somebody who doesn't like suits or you don't like dresses or whatever, find your way that you're comfortable with that while still abiding by the dress code. There's so much stuff out there. There's so many ways you can go where you're still wearing a suit and tie, you're still wearing a dress, but it doesn't make you feel uncomfortable.

John Hodgman: Something a little special and elevated, at the very least, that will show you're honoring the fact that you're blowing off Paul F. Tompkins *Varietopia* show to go to this annoying wedding in Atlanta.

(They chuckle.)

But you're doing it out of respect for the relationship that your husband has with his brother.

Jesse Thorn: Fashion is also a social act, right? It is an act of communication and communion with others. And so, I think it is important to remember that you are making a choice in that area. You're not only choosing something that affects you, but something that communicates with the people around you. And so, just as on *Judge John Hodgman*, we often have those dads who think they have a system that supersedes everything else.

John Hodgman: Right, because it's quote/unquote “logical”.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, or whatever.

John Hodgman: Right. Or whatever. Right.

Jesse Thorn: I think that when we are getting dressed every day, we are expressing ourselves, but self-expression is not the only goal of getting dressed. Right? Like, at a wedding, part of what you're doing is communicating that you're participating in a ceremony with everyone else, where part of that ceremony is that everyone wears this similar kind of outfit. Right? That we're all doing that as part of this act together. If you go to an office where people wear suits and ties or, you know, long skirts or whatever, part of that act is a specific social choice, right? It's a choice that we all wear this thing together to show that we're serious about the work that we're doing.

John Hodgman: Let's say you are a finger puppet giraffe at Digital Island Studios in Manhattan, and you can't tie a bowtie, because you don't have arms. Is it okay to use a Ricola from the bowl of Ricolos on the table and look like this? Is that a good bowtie?

Paul F. Tompkins: I think that looks smashing.

John Hodgman: Doesn't that look good?

Jesse Thorn: It's really great. And it has all those Swiss herbs.

Paul F. Tompkins: I would wear that if it were bowtie sized. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: Can we commission a Ricola shaped bowtie for Paul?

Paul F. Tompkins: *(Laughing.)* Honestly, I think that would be really funny!

Jesse Thorn: I think that would be the Oscar Mayer Wienermobile of bowties.

(Paul agrees with delight.)

John Hodgman: There we go.

(They giggle.)

Jesse Thorn: This one is from listener member Corsair. "Top five hats." Schultzbuster said, "Beret,"—this is top to bottom. "Beret—"

Paul F. Tompkins: *(Hurriedly.)* Oh no.

Jesse Thorn: "Sou'wester, Bretton cap, Straw Cattleman, newsboy cap."

John Hodgman: Number one is newsboy cap.

Jesse Thorn: First of all, Schultzbuster, I happen to know that you don't live in America, but this is America, and baseball cap has to be in there.

(Paul cackles.)

There's no top five hat list in the United States that doesn't include baseball hat. That's insane. That's madness.

John Hodgman: We're going to be talking about baseball later, and Paul is wearing a baseball hat right now.

Paul F. Tompkins: It's true. Beret as number one is astonishing to me!

John Hodgman: No, number five. That was number five. They were counting down.

Jesse Thorn: The beret was number five. They were going down. Yes.

Paul F. Tompkins: Oh! Number five. Still, a beret would not have been in my top five.

John Hodgman: No.

Jesse Thorn: I've worn a beret some lately, John. I wore a beret on tour. I liked it.

Paul F. Tompkins: What's a Sou'wester?

Jesse Thorn: Is that the kind of hat that you wear in a nor'easter? Like, that big Gorton's fisherman hat?

Paul F. Tompkins: This is a joke list.

[00:50:00]

I do not accept this list.

John Hodgman: Yes. It's that big yellow cap that you see on a fish stick box.

Paul F. Tompkins: Oh, come on! Come on.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. Don't be silly.

John Hodgman: No, that's not a fashion hat. That's a weather protection hat exclusively.

Paul F. Tompkins: No one wears that hat because they like wearing that hat. It's because they work at a lighthouse, and it sucks!

John Hodgman: What's a Breton cap? I don't know what a Breton cap is.

Paul F. Tompkins: That's like a sort of—not a Greek fisherman's cap, but a sort of peaked cap. I do like a Breton.

Jesse Thorn: It's probably (*adopting a French flair*) Breton.

Paul F. Tompkins: (*In a comically exaggerated French accent.*) Breton!

John Hodgman: (*Mimicking them.*) Breton. Breton. Hat to Breton.

Jesse Thorn: It is a lot like a Greek fisherman's hat. It's also a little bit like a cabbie's hat. It's like an all-black cabbie's hat.

John Hodgman: And now that we've talked about a bunch of different hats, I feel like—do you feel warmed up? You ready to go? You got a top five? Paul F. Tompkins's top five?

Paul F. Tompkins: Sure! I'm gonna say, top hat number one with a bullet. I'm gonna say a straw boater, number two.

(They oooh over his choices.)

Then I'm gonna put your peaked cap variety, number three. I do love a peaked cap.

John Hodgman: I don't—forgive me, I'm not sure I understand what a peaked cap is.

Paul F. Tompkins: Like any sort of uniform looking cap, boating—

Jesse Thorn: You know, like a bus driver hat or—

Paul F. Tompkins: Just a general—yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. From like the—a very structured uniform hat down to like a sailor's fiddler cap or whatever. Like, that style I really like.

John Hodgman: Sure. *(Inaudible)*.

Paul F. Tompkins: Number four, uh... I'm going to put a newsboy there. And number five, baseball hat.

John Hodgman: Yeah. I got my number one hat, corduroy Hartford Whalers baseball hat, sent to me by Jesse Thorn. Cannot leave the house without getting one compliment from at least one hockey dude. The greatest. The greatest conversation starter if I want to be friends with hockey dudes.

Jesse Thorn: Paul F. Tompkins is, of course, from the great city of Philadelphia. And we will be covering Philadelphia topics in just a moment.

And it's MaxFunDrive time right now! So, let's talk a little bit about that!

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: So, Judge Hodgman, this is the absolute final break of the 2024 MaxFunDrive. This is not just of this MaxFunDrive, of this year. This is something we do once a year. So, we're going to break it down for you. Number one, become a member of Maximum Fun. You get so much cool stuff.

John Hodgman: That's true. Even at \$5 a month, you get all of the bonus episodes, including a brand-new bonus-bonus episode that just unlocked, thanks to your generosity. We met our benchmark, so everyone—every member, I should say—got in their bonus feed, me impersonating Tom Waits for 20 minutes over a number of different songs.

(Jesse laughs.)

Including—is “Rainbow Connection” in there? Jennifer Marmor? Am I getting a thumbs up? It is. Yeah. Okay. Tom Waits singing—John Hodgman as Tom Waits, singing “The Rainbow Connection”. That’s a lot of fun. Obviously, our bonus episode for this year, “Kinding Them With Kindness Part 2: Look Who’s Kinding Them Now”, with Richard Kind. You know, if you are already a \$5 a month member and you are able to upgrade, I can tell you that at \$10 a month, you can get our beautiful “Friend of the Court” lapel pin. A little bit more, you get a MaxFun bucket hat and our Games on the Go pack. And Jesse?

Jesse Thorn: Yes.

John Hodgman: I have a little announcement to make.

Jesse Thorn: (*Chuckling.*) I’m ready to hear it.

John Hodgman: We got a little surprise. Now, once a year, in conjunction with MaxFun, if we hit a benchmark, Jordan Morris and I will record our annual—once per annum—podcast on the subject of cheese, called *Shooting the Bries*. It is spelled B-R-I-E-S, *Shooting the Bries*. Greatest title for a podcast ever invented by—who was it? Jesse Thorn.

Jesse Thorn: Correct.

John Hodgman: And Jordan and I love talking about our love of cheese once a year. I think we’re going to hit this benchmark. It’s a stretch. But if we get 10,000 new upgrading and boosting members within the next 24 hours, Jordan and I are going to live stream *Shooting the Bries* this Friday at 1PM Eastern, 10AM Pacific. We are going to be eating cheese live on screen on the *Judge John Hodgman* YouTube channel. That’s [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](#). And what is the cheese we’re going to eat? Spicy cheese.

Jesse Thorn: Extreme spice, right? Talking about extreme spice?

John Hodgman: We’re talking about habanero cheese, we’re talking about ghost pepper cheese, we’re talking about Carolina reaper cheddar cheese. It’s gonna get—and many, many other spicy cheeses in between, including something called Dragon’s Breath Cheddar and Scorpion Pepper Cheese.

[00:55:00]

It’s gonna get hot up in here. And I will leave my clothes on, but I am probably going to be sweating out of my eyeballs on camera for you as Jordan Morris and I *Shoot the Bries* and take the Spicy Cheese Challenge. All we need are 10,000 new upgrading or boosting members within the next 24 hours. And you will get that extra stuff, but do you know what? It’s not the extra stuff that matters. It’s the fact that you love the shows and you’re able to support them that keeps Maximum Fun going. And we’re so grateful. And if you haven’t yet become a member—well, I’m telling you, we’re running out of time.

MaximumFun.org/join is where you go, because this is the last time we're going to talk about it on this podcast. We're going to have some fun on the streams and so forth, but this is it. When this week is over, we're not going to talk about it anymore.

Jesse Thorn: And look, we know that you don't necessarily (*chuckles*) love hearing us talking about this. You know, if we could magically snap our fingers and have a budget for the show, we would! But—

John Hodgman: Hang on. Let me just try, Jesse. (*Snap.*)

Jesse Thorn: Did it work?

John Hodgman: Didn't work.

Jesse Thorn: Okay, I guess people got to go to MaximumFun.org/join. (*Laughs.*) Here's the truth. When you are a member of Maximum Fun, every single time you listen to one of our shows, every single *Judge John Hodgman* you listen to, you know that you are part of that show. You know that you are the reason that show exists. And that really is a wonderful feeling. I know I love to support my favorite podcasts. I love to support my other favorite media forms as well. And I love to do it directly. And there is no more direct form of support than supporting a MaxFun podcast by becoming a member of Maximum Fun.

That money goes straight to the podcast and straight to supporting that podcast with a worker-owned cooperative. That's a really big deal. But Friday is the very end of the drive. So, we hope that rather than putting it off, you will do it now. Go to MaximumFun.org/join. It takes three minutes, *maybe*, to become a member of Maximum Fun. And then you have an entire year, and thereafter, to feel great about yourself.

John Hodgman: I know that we've said a lot of the same words over and over again, in the way that sometimes you say a word over and over again to yourself, and it loses meaning. Like, sarsaparilla, sarsaparilla, sarsaparilla. What am I even saying anymore? Gratitude, podcast, contribution, MaximumFun.org/join. I appreciate that we've said it a lot, but here's the thing. After Friday, we're going to stop saying it. And it will be very possible for you to completely forget all about it. And we hope that you don't. We hope that before that happens, you go to MaximumFun.org/join. I'm a supporting member. I know that the money that I give every month to Maximum Fun, where I work—I have chosen the podcast where that money is going to go, just like you can! Because I love those podcasts, and I want to support them. And I know that's how I keep those podcasts going.

There are other podcasts I listen to that aren't Maximum Fun. They have a different way of supporting themselves, and I support them that way too. I've said it before, and I'll say it again. If you like something, if you value it—and you want to support them, and you have the means to support them—the way to do it is the way that they ask you to support them. This is what the ask is. Go to MaximumFun.org/join today or before the end of the drive. Become a member. And when we stop talking about it, you won't be thinking about it. I don't want you to go into the rest of the year thinking that you might've become a member and then you didn't. MaximumFun.org/join.

Jesse Thorn: I want you to spend the rest of the year listening to *Judge John Hodgman* and every time you hear it, thinking, “Oh yeah, that's me. That's me in my ears. That's me making this possible. Me and the thousands of other people who became a member of Maximum Fun, we work together to support this operation.” And make completely independent, creator-owned, worker-owned media a reality in a time when media is contracting all over everywhere. All you got to do to make that happen is go to MaximumFun.org/join, and do it now before the MaxFunDrive runs out.

John Hodgman: I'm only going to say it five more times. MaximumFun.org/join.

(Jesse counts each instance after John says it.)

MaximumFun.org/join. MaximumFun.org/join.

Jesse Thorn: That's the big three!

John Hodgman: MaximumFun.org/join.

Jesse Thorn: That's four if I'm counting right.

John Hodgman: MaximumFun.org/join.

Jesse Thorn: The final time. And guys, I get to say it one more time too. MaximumFun.org/join.

John Hodgman: I hope that those mouth sounds have not become meaningless to you at this point, because they're really, really meaningful to us. They mean everything to us. Your support literally means everything to us. We couldn't exist without you. We are grateful that we can count on you, and we encourage you to go. What's it? The thing again, Jesse?

Jesse Thorn: It's MaximumFun.org/join. Thanks so much for listening to us on the show every single week, all year long.

[01:00:00]

And thanks so much for listening to us while we ask you to support us. We know that it's a lot of work for both of us, and it means the world to us when you decide to become a member.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: It's the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast, Paul F. Tompkins edition.

John Hodgman: And Paul, we've mentioned that your home city is Philadelphia. That is where you are from.

(Paul confirms.)

It is where you worked at Hats in the Belfry on South Street.

Paul F. Tompkins: It is where I worked at Beta Only Video.

John Hodgman: Beta Only Video.

(Jesse “wow”s.)

Paul, when you were on South Street, maybe you went over to Jim's Steaks.

(Paul confirms.)

Maybe you—the great Philly pizza company.

Paul F. Tompkins: Yeah, absolutely! Absolutely.

John Hodgman: There used to be a great like antiquarian bookstore on South Street.

Paul F. Tompkins: Yeah, absolutely. Big orange cat in the window always? Absolutely. Soaking up that sun?

John Hodgman: Yeah! I used to walk South Street, because my mom was from Philadelphia, and my family still lives there. And I just—I love talking about Philadelphia with you. So, we had to talk about some Philadelphia stuff. Jesse, what's the first one we got?

Jesse Thorn: This one is from MaxFun subreddit—

John Hodgman: u/UND88.

Jesse Thorn: “Who wins in a fight, Gritty or the Phillie Phanatic?”

Paul F. Tompkins: The question is false, because they would never fight!

Jesse Thorn: Bingooo.

John Hodgman: They're friends.

Paul F. Tompkins: They would never fight. Phillie Phanatic, greatest to ever do it. Gritty has injected so much fun stuff into the concept of mascot. You absolutely love to see it. He really legitimately entertains me. Like, the Phillie Phanatic is I think the best of the classic mascots, and Gritty represents the future of what mascots could be.

John Hodgman: You're saying that neither one of them could be hypnotized by a supervillain into fighting with the other one?

Paul F. Tompkins: No, never.

Jesse Thorn: I have to say like... the idea that same guy and his firm created the Phillie Phanatic, whatever, 40/50 years ago now, then re-revolutionized mascot construction with Gritty, 30/35 years later is absolutely extraordinary to me. What an act of genius!

John Hodgman: I didn't know it was the same person, the same mascot designer.

Jesse Thorn: This guy runs a mascot firm! He's a genius. I heard an interview with him one time. He's like the ultimate Kiwanis Club speaker.

(John laughs.)

Like, just his entire life is like an expression of like motivational aphorism in the absolute purest and best way. Like, he really is like, *(cartoonishly)* "I just follow my joy!" And you're like I believe you, sir! That sounds great!

Paul F. Tompkins: "Every half century, I come up with a new one!"

(They laugh.)

Let me say this about Gritty. And I'm talking directly to the camera right now.

John Hodgman: Alright. It's watching you.

Paul F. Tompkins: And if you're just listening, I'm talking directly to your ears. I remember when Gritty was first debuted and all the people online tried roasting him and saying, "What is this nightmare fuel?" And blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And I knew he was good. And I told you all. I told you all! You'll see, eventually. You'll all love this guy. And I was right.

John Hodgman: Gritty got the PFT vouch!

Paul F. Tompkins: I knew it. I could see it! He was beautiful!

John Hodgman: It's almost like people online don't want to like anything.

Paul F. Tompkins: Exactly!

John Hodgman: Counterpoint. It's good.

Paul F. Tompkins: (*Giggles.*) Yeah! It's not like mascots are debuting all the time. But we've gotten so, you know, poisoned by the internet that anything that's introduced now that's whimsical, we're like, "This sucks!" And it didn't suck. It was great.

John Hodgman: How did you feel when the Phillie Phanatic debuted in—I think it was 1978 or so?

Paul F. Tompkins: Yeah, I was a little kid! I loved him!

John Hodgman: Was that a big deal? I remember it was a big deal to me, and I wasn't from Philadelphia.

Paul F. Tompkins: Yeah! Of course! Absolutely. Yeah. 'Cause the Phillies, I don't think, had a real, 3D mascot like that that was fun and interactive or anything. They had like a few—

John Hodgman: I think they had to like—

Paul F. Tompkins: They had Phil and Phyllis and, you know, all that. But they weren't the same as what the Phillie Phanatic was doing, which was—

John Hodgman: Phil and Phyllis sound like grandparents. That does not sound like fun. Even with a PH.

Paul F. Tompkins: Oh, guess what? To little colonial children, yeah. They're not a ball.

John Hodgman: Oh, problematic much? No, thank you.

(*Paul laughs.*)

What did you—did you know that they changed the Phillie Phanatic design? They lightened the fur and put pink stars around its eyes?

Paul F. Tompkins: I did. And I finally got—I got used to it. I got used to it. It was very— (*chuckling*) it was honestly very jarring to me at first, but I got used to it.

[01:05:00]

Jesse Thorn: Did you guys know that the San Diego Chicken is just a guy, and he's like in his 70s now? He's always been the San Diego Chicken, he owns the San Diego Chicken, and he may die and bring the San Diego Chicken with him to his grave?

Paul F. Tompkins: He's got to be buried in the costume.

Jesse Thorn: One assumes.

Paul F. Tompkins: You have to.

John Hodgman: Is there anything San Diegan about a chicken that I'm missing? Like, is there any—

Jesse Thorn: Absolutely not. No.

John Hodgman: It's just random.

Jesse Thorn: The San Diego Chicken is like the Harlem Globetrotters or something. It's not tied to San Diego in a meaningful way in 2024.

Paul F. Tompkins: Was it—maybe I'm misremembering this. Was it originally a radio mascot that became sort of gravitated towards the Padres or something?

Jesse Thorn: I believe it. I don't think Gritty and the Phillie Phanatic would ever fight, but I think the Swingin' Friar and the San Diego Chicken might have it out.

Paul F. Tompkins: For sure. Absolutely.

John Hodgman: Friar versus Fryer, right?

Paul F. Tompkins: Ah-haaa! You've done it!

Jesse Thorn: Eeey!

Okay, here's something from listener member Nick W. "If I'm in Philadelphia, should I eat scrapple? Is it actually good, or is it something people in Philadelphia eat because it's there?"

John Hodgman: Yeah, here we go.

Paul F. Tompkins: Well, I mean, we also eat it because we think it is good. I personally love it. It's its own taste, and I'm extremely biased. I'm extremely biased. I go to the point of having it shipped here, so I can have it on the weekends as a little treat. But my wife from South Carolina finds it disgusting, hates the smell of it cooking, will not eat it. But she will eat boiled peanuts, which is just wet peanuts!

(John cackles.)

So, everybody has their thing. Every region has their thing. And sometimes people can get into it. Sometimes people can't. I would say try it, at least! You know, if you are carnivorous, give it a shot. And if you don't like it, I get it. I'm not going to try to convince you otherwise. Food is food! Like, there's no—scrapple is not an essential vitamin source. So, I'm not going to try to tell people, "No, you must eat this."

Jesse Thorn: Well, it was to people in the British Navy in the 18th century.

Paul F. Tompkins: Of course.

Jesse Thorn: That's how they held off scurvy.

Paul F. Tompkins: But I'm not going to try to convince somebody they have to eat a brick of sweepings, because I think it's good.

John Hodgman: Meat sweepings.

Paul F. Tompkins: Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: I'll say this. John, I'm from San Francisco, as you know, and live in Los Angeles. I've been to Philadelphia a few times. Each time, I have eaten scrapple. And maybe it's because I like the idea of a brick that combines the sort of sausage and carb into one thing. That sounds pretty good to me, and I ate it and liked it! It's not something I would have shipped to me, because I don't have the emotional attachment to it that Paul has. But I certainly would, you know, go out to one of those Amish breakfast places in Philly and have them fry me up some, for sure.

John Hodgman: For those who don't know, scrapple is a kind of sausage loaf in the Mid-Atlantic region—Philadelphia, South Jersey, Baltimore. And it has—I think that it does have origins in the Pennsylvania German Amish community.

Paul F. Tompkins: Yes.

John Hodgman: But it is, you know, food—it's called scrapple for a reason. It's right there in the name, scrap. It's trimmings from pork that you wouldn't otherwise have used for.

Paul F. Tompkins: It's everything that's not good enough to make it into a hot dog.

John Hodgman: Right.

(They laugh.)

There should be a scrapple van. You know what I mean? Like, if there's an Oscar Mayer Wiernmobile.

Paul F. Tompkins: Ooooh! You know, the cyber truck is almost a scrapple van. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: That's true!

And you form this into a loaf. You grind that stuff up with cornmeal, I think typically. And you form it—and sage, and you form it into a loaf, and then you fry it. Now, I love scrapple. I

love scrapple even though I do have to eat it to live, because as a child, I was cursed by a Philadelphia mummer. And if I don't eat scrapple twice a year, I will expire. But even so, even though it is mandatory, I enjoy it very much. And I would say that you can have it shipped to you, sometimes you can find it. We used to be able to find it in the freezer section of our supermarket in Maine for some reason. I don't know why. I mean, sometimes it manifests in strange places. I actually just had it last weekend, because my sister-in-law found it in a market in the Upper West Side. I gotta get up there and stock up.

Paul F. Tompkins: Wow.

John Hodgman: But if you're gonna try it, you really should wait 'til you're in Philadelphia where they know how to make it, because it's not easy to make. You have to either deep fry it, which is the—

[01:10:00]

That was the Little Pete's way, as you'll remember, Paul, when we went to have breakfast there once or twice.

(Paul confirms.)

In a diner, they'll take a big slice of scrapple, and they'll deep fry it. Because it's got to form a crust. Otherwise, it's just mush. Or you have to cook it very slowly in a pan, but if you're in Philadelphia, I'm with Paul. And if you eat that kind of thing, you should give it a try, because it's one of the few places where they actually know how to make it properly. But Paul, I got a couple of follow ups. A little bit of a lightning round.

Scrapple or pork roll? You can only have one.

Paul F. Tompkins: Oh, scrapple.

John Hodgman: Cheesesteak or hoagie or cheesesteak hoagie or roast pork sandwich?

Paul F. Tompkins: Cheesesteak.

John Hodgman: Just straight up. With or without onions?

Paul F. Tompkins: With.

John Hodgman: What kind of cheese? Whiz or no whiz?

Paul F. Tompkins: Whiz, please. But if not whiz, American cheese is very good on a cheesesteak.

John Hodgman: I agree with you. And do you have a preferred place to get it in Philadelphia?

Paul F. Tompkins: My preferred place was always Ishkabibble, which was a little window on South Street between 3rd and 4th.

John Hodgman: I remember that. Boy, they had some quaint names for businesses on South Street.

Paul F. Tompkins: Boy, they did! You know, these baseball players also have some strange names these days.

(Jesse chortles.)

John Hodgman: Tasty Cake? Here we go. Last one. Tasty Cake or Bookbinder's Snapper Soup?

Paul F. Tompkins: *(Chuckles.)* I'd take the one and dip it in the other.

(They laugh.)

Take a bite of that crumpet, and then dip it in there. Let it soak up the brine.

Jesse Thorn: Paul, we've got one here from listener member Brendan. "Philadelphia water ice or lunar water ice? Which is to say the ancient water that is frozen at the poles of the moon."

Paul F. Tompkins: What color is it?

Jesse Thorn: Gray. I gotta say gray.

Paul F. Tompkins: Nah, water ice then. Wooter ice, excuse me.

John Hodgman: Wooter ice.

Paul F. Tompkins: Wooter ice. My favorite flavor? Red!

John Hodgman: *(Laughs.)* Is that? That's how you order it, right? You order it by the color?

Paul F. Tompkins: No, it's just by flavor. But when I was a little kid, I was just like—it was all colors to me.

John Hodgman: That's what they call Italian ice in New England.

Paul F. Tompkins: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's—shaved ice is more—first of all, you got the ice cream in there as well, but it's more granular. And Italian ice or water ice is more—it's smooth. It's got a creamier texture to it. It's really good.

John Hodgman: It's sort of like a dense sorbet, maybe.

Paul F. Tompkins: Yeah. The last time I was in Philly, I had a water ice for the first time in decades. And it was truly delicious.

John Hodgman: Last time I was down the shore, I went to Rita's Water Ice, and I said, "It's sort of like a dense sorbet, isn't it?"

Paul F. Tompkins: And Rita said yes.

John Hodgman: And Rita said, "Yes, you're the expert."

Paul F. Tompkins: "You're right, hun."

John Hodgman: Yeah. Speaking of the moon, by the way, and the lunar surface thereof, our friend David Rees recently posed a question on their podcast, *Election Profit Makers* with John Kimball, and I'm going to pose it—well, I'm not going to pose it to you, because it's dumb. If your safety was assured, would you rather walk on the surface of the moon or walk through the wreck of the Titanic? Obviously, you're in a containment suit of some kind.

Paul F. Tompkins: The moon.

John Hodgman: The moon, right? It's obvious.

Paul F. Tompkins: I feel like there's—something about shipwrecks, underwater shipwrecks, is so scary to me. It's so eerie and spooky. And I don't—I think it would really freak me out.

John Hodgman: I think it's self-evident that the moon is the only answer, but let me rephrase a slightly different question. If your safety was assured—again, you would survive this experience—would you rather walk on the surface of the moon or watch the Phillies win the World Series from the surface of the field of Citizen's Bank Park?

Paul F. Tompkins: Oh, like I'm on the field?

John Hodgman: You're on the field.

(Paul laughs.)

Jesse Thorn: And specifically, David is talking about you can walk around on the field completely safely without interfering with the play. You're guaranteed. So, you can walk out to left field, you can go over to shortstop. Wherever you want to be, you're not messing with the game and you're safe.

John Hodgman: Yeah, you would experience it, but I guess you would be like invisible and intangible to the play. Like, you wouldn't be interfering with the game in any way. Maybe they would see your footsteps? No, because then they would get distracted.

Paul F. Tompkins: This is a harder question than I thought it would be.

John Hodgman: Those are your things. But you'd be alone, obviously. You'd be watching. And they would win the World Series.

Jesse Thorn: And if you wanted to participate in like the World Series celebration, obviously you would have to wrap yourself in bandages.

Paul F. Tompkins: Yeah, which might be scary to the players. And I don't want to bum them out. They just won the World Series.

(They laugh.)

Jesse Thorn: I don't know. Most baseball teams have at least one mummy, right?

Paul F. Tompkins: Yeah. But now there's two?! You know what I mean?

John Hodgman: Right, that was the old—

Jesse Thorn: I think John McGraw always kept a mummy around for good luck.

Paul F. Tompkins: If this is our mummy, who's that mummy?!

[01:15:00]

John Hodgman: Paul, people may or may not know that, you know, in the past—I don't know, the past maybe five to eight years or so, you have really gotten into baseball.

Paul F. Tompkins: I reignited my childhood love of the game. Yes.

John Hodgman: Yeah, you're wearing a Phillies baseball cap right now, which looks very snappy. And so, I mean, we've talked about it for a while, and now a decision must be made. Would you want to walk on the surface of the moon as a tangible human being? Or would you want to walk around the field during the World Series-winning game of the Philadelphia Phillies?

Paul F. Tompkins: Meaning that the Phillies do win that World Series?

John Hodgman: That is right.

Paul F. Tompkins: *(Sounding almost disappointed in himself.)* I gotta go with the moon. I mean, it's the moon!

(John “wow”s.)

You know what I mean? Like, as much as I've—first of all, trying to convince people that this story is true, that I was there invisibly for the game is gonna be—

(They laugh.)

That's gonna be the rest of my life. No one believes me.

John Hodgman: So, you would go to the moon, because not only would you get to experience the moon, but everyone would know you went to the moon. And then you'd get to be in a ticker tape parade, and you'd be famous for it.

Paul F. Tompkins: I hope so!

John Hodgman: Paul, I have one last question for you before we go. And this isn't a judgment question. It's a trivia question. Because I learned this, and it surprised me as I was doing my research.

Paul F. Tompkins: Oh, alright! Fun.

John Hodgman: According to the obituary of this famous Philadelphian broadcaster in 2016—famous Philadelphian broadcaster dies in 2016. According to this person's obituary, what do Elvis Presley, Martina Navratilova, Jim Henson, Frank Perdue, and the Phillie Phanatic all have in common?

And I'll give you a hint. The Phillie Phanatic, according to the Wikipedia article I read, debuted on this person's program in 1978. Was introduced to the children of Philadelphia on this program.

Paul F. Tompkins: Can I hear the list again?

John Hodgman: Yeah. Elvis Presley, Martina Navratilova, Jim Henson, Frank Perdue, and the Phillie Phanatic.

Paul F. Tompkins: This seems impossible, but I'm going to say they all appeared on *Captain Noah and His Magical Ark*.

John Hodgman: Sound effect, please!

Sound Effect: Ding!

John Hodgman: Indicating triumph, because you're absolutely right. They all appeared.

Paul F. Tompkins: Wooow! It was either that or *Al Alberts Showcase*.

John Hodgman: *(Laughing.)* I don't know—I don't even know that one.

Paul F. Tompkins: Man, I feel—it's a shame. I mean, is there such a thing as local programming anymore? Because that was—

John Hodgman: YouTube, I guess.

Paul F. Tompkins: Local programming was so... it was a special, weird thing that, you know, I took for granted at the time. And when I think about it now, *Al Alberts Showcase* was a variety show hosted by this man, Al Alberts, who was in a singing group, Al Alberts and the Four Aces. And I think their big hit that charted was “Heart of My Heart”. And so, he would host this show that over the years just became Al Alberts and a bunch of little kids. And the little kids would tell jokes. And they would sing songs. And Andrea McArdle, Broadway's first Annie, I think broke out of *Al Alberts Showcase*.

But it really—over the years, I don't remember seeing an adult on the show besides Al Alberts in the last decade of that show.

John Hodgman: Maybe there's a good reason there isn't local programming anymore. ‘Cause it's starting to sound a little creepy.

Paul F. Tompkins: (*Laughs.*) There was never anything untoward implied about Al Alberts; he was just this grandfatherly type guy and he would—you know, the kids would call him Uncle Al and say, “Uncle Al, I have a joke for you.”

And he would say, “Okay. What is it?” And they would just like stammer their way through this corny old joke. And then he would—you know, he would act like he'd never heard this joke before. And the audience would applaud. And yeah, but *Captain Noah* was a kid show with a nautical theme. Captain Noah had this ark. He dressed in this old-fashioned maritime uniform, and he would have guests on. And they would do crafts. And you know, they would send in—he would encourage kids to send in pictures.

John Hodgman: Send your pictures to dear old Captain Noah.

Paul F. Tompkins: That's right. And they would put them on the air as the song, (*singing*) “Send your pictures to dear old Captain Noah,” would play.

John Hodgman: (*Laughing.*) Oh no! Wow.

Paul F. Tompkins: And they would sing the song for as long as they showed the pictures.

(*John laughs.*)

There were not many verses to it. So, they would start it up from the beginning. And they would show, you know, these terrible kids' drawings on the air. It was adorable!

[01:20:00]

John Hodgman: Paul, that was so lovely to hear you sing that song. And thank you for being here. It's such a delight to have you on the show whenever you can come by.

Paul F. Tompkins: It's always my pleasure, gents.

John Hodgman: You're going on tour with *Varietopia*. I happen to know that you're making a swing through New England.

Paul F. Tompkins: That's correct.

John Hodgman: Going to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, of all places. And Waldo, Maine! The Waldo Theater in Waldoboro, Maine, which is going to be a delight. I'm going to try to hit that show. And Kelly, if you're out there, you got free tickets coming to you from your brother-in-law for any show that's closest to you. Just go to PaulFTompkins.com/live, and also make sure to listen to *Threedom* and *The Neighborhood Listen* and *Stay F. Homekins*.

Jesse Thorn: If you're listening to this and it's not already evident to you, Paul F. Tompkins is the greatest comedy podcaster in the world. And you should be listening to at least one of his programs, if not all of them.

Paul F. Tompkins: Oh, that's very kind. (*Chuckles.*)

Jesse Thorn: Drop our show, listen to his.

John Hodgman: And if you Google *Captain Noah* and go to the Channel 6 website where they have some of the old shows archived, there's one that comes in from 1977, top of the list. At the end of it, Captain Noah introduces his wife, Mrs. Noah, who's always on the show, and his daughter and his grandchildren. And he sings the song, and they've got a goat that they're holding. It's the most adorable—like, I couldn't stop. Also, I just want to say thank you also to our new mascot, Ricky the Ricola bowtied Giraffe. Picks no fights with Gritty or the Phanatic. He's one of the top mascots of all time. And Paul, is there anything else you'd like to mention before we let you go back to your regular life?

Paul F. Tompkins: No!

(*John laughs.*)

Jesse Thorn: Thank you, Paul. Then the docket is clear! It is MaxFunDrive. This is the second and final week of MaxFunDrive. This is something we do only once a year, so this is the absolute best possible time to join. You can get all kinds of cool bonus content and our deepest appreciation at any level, starting at \$5 a month at MaximumFun.org/join. If you're already a member, you can also give a little boost. Maybe you picked up one of our great new shows like *Free With Ads* or *Valley Heat*, and you want to make sure that a little money's flowing their way. You can upgrade, whatever you want. MaximumFun.org/join. But this is the last time we're asking on the air, so please do it now at MaximumFun.org/join.

The link is also—you can just up that podcast app. The link's right there in the show notes. Tap on MaximumFun.org/join. It is available to you.

John Hodgman: And remember, you can only get those thank you gifts like our “Friend of the Court” pin during these two weeks of the MaxFunDrive. So, time is running out. You can see that pin on Instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman and when you go to MaximumFun.org/join to join or upgrade or boost or do anything to your membership. MaximumFun.org/join. Won't you please go over there and join us? We really can't do it without you, and we're so glad to be able to do it with you!

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, so many thanks to everybody who has already joined this year. This has been a huge year for us! We have a new editor in A.J. McKeon. We have a new video editor in Daniel Speer. We've got all this new video equipment that we're making videos of the show with. We have, of course, as always, our brilliant producer Jennifer Marmor. And it is your membership that makes all of their jobs possible. We couldn't make the show without them, and they couldn't work here without your membership.

Judge John Hodgman, of course, created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. You can find photos from the show and all those cool MaxFunDrive thank you gifts [@JudgeJohnHodgman](https://Instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgman) on Instagram, also on the Maximum Fun page for this episode. We're also on TikTok and YouTube, [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](https://YouTube.com/JudgeJohnHodgmanPod). Follow and subscribe to see our episodes and also our special, video only content.

John Hodgman: Paul, speaking of all of your wonderful podcasts. You have an amazing podcast with your wife and whole human being in her own right, the actor Janie Haddad Tompkins. And it's called *Stay F. Homekins*. You do it once a month.

(Paul confirms.)

And I was extremely excited to be a guest on one of your bonus Patreon episodes.

Paul F. Tompkins: Yes, we're reacting to episodes of *Vanderpump Rules*, because our recapping skills prove to be nonexistent.

John Hodgman: Oh, okay. *(Laughs.)* Well, I was very thrilled to be a part of that and to be introduced to the Vanderpumpiverse. Reality TV is full of disputes, which only leads me to imagine that our audience must have some disputes centered around reality TV!

[01:25:00]

Are you Team Sandoval? And thus alienating everyone in your life? Do you like the new cast of *The Real Housewives of New York* even though your Bravo text thread hates it? Does your partner think that *Love Island US* is better than *Love Island UK*? Ooh, Nas and I have a beef, a bone to pick with you about that! Send in your reality TV show disputes to MaximumFun.org/join, and maybe we'll hear one on a future case.

Jesse Thorn: We'll take any dispute, big or small, MaximumFun.org/jjho. And of course, when you do that, we're always grateful to hear that you are a Maximum Fun member. We'll talk to you at MaximumFun.org/join and next time on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Transition: Cheerful ukulele chord.

Speaker 1: Maximum Fun.

Speaker 2: A worker-owned network.

Speaker 3: Of artist owned shows.

Speaker 4: Supported—

Speaker 5: —directly—

Speaker 6: —by you!