- - -

Hello everybody and welcome to the Max Frequency Podcast. I'm your host, Max Robertson, joining me
this time. It's none other than Chris Johnston, aka CJ, aka, how does the Twitter handle go?
The dreadfully friendly pirate CJ. CJ of thieves. Very, very good. CJ, welcome to the show.
Hey Max, great to be here. Yeah, thanks for coming. Thank you for joining me. We, CJ, we met
because you put out a little message.
You actually kind of broke the Discord rules a little bit.
- I did.
- The relay FM. - As I often do.
- I do it a lot too.
It's one of my community fears.
It's like, I don't want to break the rules.
I'm trying not to.
But you asked the relay FM community
if anyone wanted to play test a puzzle game.
You know, you said you could get a gift card,
Amazon gift card, play test it.
It's for a Japanese developer or something.
And I thought that sounded really interesting.
That was what?
That was back in '21, April of '20, COVID times.
And I took you up on that.
Turns out it was for a little game called "Humanity"
by T.H.A. and Enhance coming to PlayStation and PC
later this year, actually just about a month, month-ish.
May. - May, 2023, yes.
- Ambiguous four weeks there, we'll find out when.
And then later I would do another play test for you.
So I just wanted to say that up front for everybody,
that, and Hans, you have paid me before.
But, you're a really cool guy,
and there's a lot more to talk about
than just a cool puzzle game.
So I wanted to have you on the show for a long time,
and I'm just excited to have you here.
- Yeah, I'm excited to be here.
You know, you were the only person
from the Relay Discord to answer that call,
which I was shocked by.
I was hoping that I hear I'm on relay with like-minded people.
You know, someone has got to put two and two together, Puzzle Game Japanese developer,
and maybe like at least ask, "Well, can I have some more information on this?"

But no, you, Max Roberts, the only person from the relay discord, to take me up on the offer.
Well, I'm honored.
I saw really it was an upcoming puzzle game by an established Japanese developer for console and PC.
I was like, that sounds cool. Like whatever it is, it just sounds cool. And I've never playtested before. But I think because of COVID, it really sparked a more remote playtesting, I would think. What is that app called? It's still on my computer in the games folder.
Parsec. Parsec. Seems to be pretty powerful. Is that a common tool these days? Yeah, a lot of people use Parsec for a lot of larger video game companies use it to give review copies to people or preview copies to people without actually giving them code. You play it remotely and someone can't like data mine anything or like have an executable on their computer. So Yeah, it's a pretty common tool for that.
But then also, a lot of the fighting game community use it to simulate local play.
That's another thing that does really well.
It's pretty low latency, so it works pretty well.
And it works with every controller imaginable, so it's just a nice tool.
Okay.
I enjoyed it.
It was a very cool process.
But before we talk about making and publishing and selling video games, I want to talk about a job you had. Oh, I don't mean to make you feel old, but EGM, Electronic Gaming Monthly, you used to work there for quite a while and you started, it sounds like, well, it doesn't sound like your LinkedIn says you started in the summer of '94. That's when I was born, CJ.
Oh no, don't tell me that. Max, no.
Was born in June of 1994 which that made me feel old. I don't know because I feel
So I apologize to you, I guess because I feel like gaming magazines
Were around like my whole life and I miss them greatly
Never had the privilege of working on any of them. They were all kind of dead
by the time I was old enough to even work, but
you were there from
'97 all the way to 2004, so you're there for a solid run.
I just kind of want to talk about that whole time there.
I wanted to kick it off with, so in June of '94,
you were only there for three months.
I don't know if that was, was that an internship
or just short-term gig?
- Well, it was a short-term thing.
So I was only 17 years old in '94.
I had not graduated high school yet at that point.
And that was actually something that EGM,
I mean, a lot of the people who worked at EGM
were very, very young.
So I was the youngest, I think, at the time,
but it was fairly common to have people
who were between 17 and 20 working at EGM.
So it wasn't an internship or anything.
I got hired in the summer, and then when school started,
I attempted to work during the evenings,
and that didn't really work out too well
in terms of my school work and all that stuff,
so I left at that point.
- Okay, that explains June to October then.
'Cause that's that summer school window.

I wanted to, you worked on interface,
letters to the editor, and the press start news.
And I wanted to, I told you before,
I'm gonna try and share my screen with you.
Audio listeners, there will be links to this,
so you can go look at these PDF cutouts,
but I've got, oh gosh.
Can you see the screen?
- I can see it, yeah.
- This is a interface, letters to the editor.
So you designed the layout of this?
- Not exactly.
- Well. - Yes.
- What was this process like?
I mean, there's just a bunch of letters and pictures
and you can win a pair of acclaimed joysticks.
- Yes, you could.
You could get letter of the month.
You can win wireless controllers
for Super Nintendo or Genesis.
Yeah, what I would do here is, you know,
we would get snail mail letters
and they would be dumped in this big post office bin
and I would go through them and read them
and separate out ones that I thought were good.
Any envelope art or interesting things
or the psycho letter of the month.
You know, somebody wrote some crazy thing,
I would put that aside as well.
Envelope art was great fun, yeah,
'cause people, some super talented artists
would do envelope artwork.
And I would just kinda, yeah, set things aside
and look through what we had and put them in the layout.
The layout itself, so Steve Harris,
who was the publisher of the magazine,
would every year decide on what the look
of the magazine should be.
So stuff like the general layout and the background
and stuff was all sort of predetermined.
But in terms of like the content that was there
and the screenshots that were placed,
like I would have to wrangle all of those together.
And like the bad photocopy contest,
I would pick a page in the magazine.
And at this point, the magazine wasn't published,
so it was like proofs.
It was like a big 11 by 17 kind of printout.
And I would just photocopy those over and over
and over again to get the bad photocopy in there.
But I had fun with it.
It was enjoyable because I had written letters
to the editor before for EGM.
And I also had read the magazine for a long time,

so I sort of knew what I would want to read.
So I sort of selected letters based on that.
It's like, what discussions are sounding interesting here?
Like, what can I reply with?
And back then, like it was pretty much,
I was, I had a lot of autonomy to do this stuff.
Like, we had an editor-in-chief,
but there was basically no editorial direction
on this stuff.
Like, they didn't, they really kind of didn't care
what I said here. Ed Semrad was the editor-in-chief at the time, and I'm not sure he read any
of these very closely.
These are all your replies?
Yeah, I wrote all the replies, yeah.
Because I read some of them, but I didn't know who was responding or whatnot. But some
of these are like, they stand out to me now here that we're recording. There's one about
the duo, like, what a time capsule that is.
Like, we're worried, because it's dying.
Or the 3DO needs RPGs.
And then S-video cables for the Super Nintendo.
Like, what a-- whoo, what a time capsule.
I know.
Oh my gosh, it's wonderful.
A very different time.
Now we have 4K HDR displays and HDMI cables.
But back then it was like, should I use these RCA cables
or should I get an S-video cable?
Like, S-video cables are so expensive.
- Yeah, I mean, and even today,
people are using retro upscalers with S-video cables
to get the best picture right on an HDTV.
Some of the stuff hasn't gone away
and then some stuff like the Duo,
or really the 3DO I think even more so,
is just lost, totally lost to time.
- That's true.
- Yeah, and at the time I really liked the 3DO.
And so I think I was maybe the only person on EGM
that liked the 3DO.
And so I would put letters about the 3DO and the Jaguar
and just so I could say something about the 3DO or Jaguar
and not have those ignored in the market.
- I like it.
Some of the news later on,
A portable 3DO was one of the news stories in this issue from Toshiba.
They were guests were talking about it.
We're seeing the PSX start to show up.
Sony's PSX is appearing.
Yeah, I think that issue, I was looking at it earlier, and there's a meme image that
I think is still around today that is from that issue.
So in, I think it was Press Start, there's like two pages on the Saturn, there's like
two pages on the Playstation, and there's a page where, and by the way, all the images
in this section were off of a videotape that Ed just like threw me.
He had gone to some Tokyo toy show or something,

and this was a common occurrence where Ed,
our editor-in-chief, would go to a show,
collect materials and have footage,
and just give it to an editor who didn't go to that show
to write up.
So that was what happened here.
So all of these images are screen grabs off of a video tape.
- It's so awesome. - So you can see
like the Saturn stuff, you can kind of see
that it's taken off of a screen that was made
of like 15 different televisions, like CRTs.
And there's a PlayStation article,
it's very similar, like off TV footage.
And then there's a caption to one of the screens
that says the PlayStation can produce mind boggling effects.
And that's actually like a meme image.
I've seen people like post that image on Twitter
and laugh at that caption.
But that was something that I wrote,
and I had to do that because I have to come up
with a caption for this image.
- Yeah. - And I wasn't there
at the show, I didn't know anything about this.
I was just going off the literature
and the visuals that I saw to write this stuff, so.
- It's so crazy to think that that's how video game,
journalism, and press happened.
- Yeah.
of pre-Twitter sharing video calls, being able to go to shows streaming, all that stuff.
It's just you're taking someone else's word for it or watching a videotape of something
and you're just like, "I guess this is what it looks like," or, "This is what it'll be."
It's so fascinating.
The literature in this case was in Japanese because it was a Japanese show, so it wasn't
like I had English material to go off of.
So it was, yeah, a little difficult.
- A little bit.
One last thing that's specifically from this article was
there's a new player in town, I guess, in it.
There could be a new console from Fisher-Price,
Hasbro or Mattel.
It was a new system.
It'll be 32-bit, CD-based,
and come with a VR helmet and controller with a game for $499, which is, I understand
inflation
would be absurd, but that's how much a VR headset costs today.
Well, that's true.
That is true.
So at least it's not too far off, but I can only imagine what $594 is today.
And I'll tell you what, you probably get sick playing that too.
Frame rate's probably like five frames a second if that.
I remember Disney Quest down here in Florida,
big arcade, like five stories,
and they had a couple of really old school VR headsets.
I mean, stick out like a foot and a half past your face,

hung up suspended above your head,
be like Aladdin's Magic Carpet Ride.
And that thing is not a stable frame rate at all,
and it's just chunking around.
But at the time it was so cool.
There's also a lightsaber,
although they didn't own Disney when that game was made,
so it was, you know, not really,
or they didn't own Star Wars when that game was made.
So it wasn't a lightsaber,
it was just like a laser sword or something.
- Right, right, right.
- Now I can play that in high fidelity
in my living room, it's crazy.
It's so, so crazy.
So these magazines, which would just be mailed out to people
and that's really how news was disseminated
amongst the masses.
And you would end up becoming the news editor there
over time, that would be kind of your prominent role,
as well as other things.
And so, as kind of one of the most prominent sources,
EGM was huge back in the day, was like the magazine.
I would think Nintendo Power would also,
like in the names of magazines that people would want,
EGM was toward the top with some of the review crew,
Sushi X, all sorts of stuff.
this is where everyone got their news.
And I'm just, as the news editor,
what was that like in picking out?
'Cause you essentially got to help choose
what was being discussed, you know?
Like almost leading the conversation.
I know the companies would come out and say,
well, here's our new PlayStation
or here's our new 3D Zelda or whatever.
and that would demand attention.
But you almost in a way got to,
I don't know, you helped people make Christmas lists.
I mean, you shaped a lot of people's knowledge
of the industry.
- Yeah, and you know, I never thought about it that way
during the whole time.
(both laughing)
Like, I thought of it more of just a natural extension
extension of what I loved to do and I was a voracious reader of video game magazines and
So when I was put in the position of then making that content
I just did what I thought people would want to read about and
What was interesting to me and also like what we had information on right like yeah, what what?
What aspects of the industry am I curious about is it VR is it online gaming is it like the Dreamcast has died
And what I would want to know knowing that or
Like Metroid Prime being in development hell

That was a big thing

Isn't it and it's crazy. It just came back out. They just remastered it same studio not same team, but same studio

Yeah, and then I was extremely lucky being the news editor because then I also got to interview a lot of

industry figures that you know, I'd grown up playing their games or

Was interested in talking with them like Howard Lincoln and Nintendo or

You know cause her I with Sony and Bernie Stoler with Sega

So

It was a little bit surreal

Sometimes going to e3 which unfortunately e3 got is cancelled now, so it's dead

officially

Poor III I can't

Disassociate just calling summer video game news e3. I'm sorry Jeff Keeley. I'll never call it the summer games fest

It's e3 in my brain. Yeah, man. What a sad

Just sad state of affairs for that whole conference in general and just more I know necessarily the company per se more just the

everyone getting together at one place one time all the news coming out at once instead of a drip feed over the summer like I

miss that type of energy to

You know cuz we'll get the news. It's still gonna happen this year Xbox will do a thing Sony might

Nintendo

Should but it'll all be separate and Jeff Keeley will have his thing and I don't know

I just missed the one time one place all or nothing

man, I do too because I

When I was growing up

Reading video game magazines and I was growing up as part of the EGM staff, too

But when I was just a reader I used to love those July August issues that had e3 news

Oh, yeah, just like you get the full rundown of everything and it was just amazing and I

Always dreamed of going to those shows and then when I was there I loved it. Yes

It was hard work and I know a lot of people may be in video game

journalism circles or even in industry circles with kind of tap dancing on the grave of e3 and saying

They're glad it's gone. I I miss it. Like I used to love that

show and yeah, it's it's hard work, but

totally rewarding to

Go from appointment to appointment and be running from hall to hall

Like I've got

Miyamoto interview at this time and a Kojima interview at this time and a Yuji knock interview at this time

And it's just like that was kind of amazing to think about

You wait, you actually interviewed those people. I have actually interviewed those people. Oh my gosh, that's nuts, man

- Man, it's so crazy.
- Or Aonuma or Itagaki, like all these people that--
- And today, that's not gonna happen.

They're not all gonna be in one place together anymore.
- No, yeah, you're right, you're right.
- It's so, I mean, those opportunities to interview

those people still come up.

I'm sure Miyamoto actually probably is preparing

for a press tour right now for the Super Mario movie.

- Yeah.
- And then Aonuma with Zelda here in May as well.
So it's, you know, they will be interviewed,
But having Ononuma and Kojima and Shuei Yoshida and Phil Spencer or who was before Phil Dichmatrick
all in the same building area, there's I think more chances and interesting opportunities probably in discussions.
I think you're right, although a lot of those interviews were like, "You have 15 minutes
- Sure. - And if it's like
an interview with a non-English speaker,
there's time to translate to them
and then translate back their answer,
and then that cuts everything in half, really.
- That's true. - Yeah.
- And you know the press conferences,
there's something about things being live.
I understand why companies want to do
these pre-recorded presentations.
Nintendo, I frankly think of as one of the first
major players in video games to do it with the directs.
I wanna direct to you.
And then Sony would go on with their state of plays
and their presentations and now Xbox does it with whatever,
I forget what they call theirs.
And even Apple does it now because of COVID.
Like we'll never get these live press events either
where things can go wrong.
Bruce Shraeli's playing Uncharted and Drake falls through the stage, or Reggie saying
my body is ready. They did make fun with Reggie in the pre-recorded stuff too, but just these
natural moments of whatever would come out on stage will never get that kind of stuff again.
That's true, but I kind of think of that as, you know, as I've gotten older, you know,
sometimes you hear old people say like, "ah, these kids today don't know how good it was back then."
But this is, like, saying this kind of thing about E3 and these press conferences is kind of similar.
It's like, things are definitely always going to change, and you kind of have to get on
on board with the change or be left behind by it, right?
And I actually really like some of the presentations now
just because they can really cram a lot more information
into a lot shorter runtime than they used to.
I remember E3 press conferences,
so before they got broadcasted over the internet,
they were much more business focused.
And actually I think you can see some of them
on YouTube now from like the late 90s, early 2000s,
where there was a much more business focus.
And they were slow.
They were very slow.
And like some of the Sony conferences
that would stretch into two hours,
it would just be like, come on,
like don't show me any more sales graphs.
I want to see trailers.

Like that's what they used to be.
And yeah, like things can go wrong.
And those moments are always fun.
to see and hit this crab in the red spot for massive damage, that kind of thing.
I think it still can happen with prerecorded stuff, but I actually kind of like it now
that everybody is sort of shorter to the point and showing me exactly what I want to see
the whole time instead of downtime.
That is fair.
It's interesting and I imagine part of that is now being on the game developer side, there's
there's more opportunities for more games to be in there and you get to control your
message. I assume that relationship between the company presenting it and you as the
developer,
you know, there's conversation there of this is what we have, here's how it works. So that's
an interesting side of it. Were you at E3 when Wind Waker was shown off? That would
have been 2002-ish, which is close-ish to the end of your time there.
Time there. Yeah, it was close to the end of my tenure. But yes, I was at e3. Do you remember
that?
blowback
Oh, yeah, the toon link stuff. Yeah. Oh, absolutely
yeah, because I had been at the
Gamecube and gameboy advance, uh space world show
Okay, uh before where they showed the realistic link like the adult link
That everybody got excited about and then when they were shown to link
That really, like, killed everybody.
Yeah, I was at both of those showings.
Which side were you on back in the day?
Oh, I was on, I was pro Selda all the way.
Yeah, Selda.
Yes, Selda.
In EGM, like, I think there's a page at the back of the magazine during that time where we
talked about it and I was maybe one of the only pro Wind Waker visual editors
like I was I was on board like I said yeah you know yeah it's a different take
on it but it's so expressive and so different like I can't wait to see what
they do with it you know the game's gonna play well
like let's trust that so and I thought even at the time that the visuals on
show we're gonna look timeless and I think history has shown that Wind Waker
is still just sort of timeless in that visual department. I was looking to
find that issue and I'll do so later but one thing was I guess people were
reporting that Wind Waker was gonna be redone at the time with the no cell
graphics like that was a big rumor at the time and people were so funny right
one way and I mean if I would you want that though eventually they get it right
with Twilight Princess which would be a few years later at e3 2004 with I think
one of probably the most famous e3 reactions ever of the sound of grown men
crying in the theater which is I was there for that one too were you that
Were you in the crowd there for that one? Were you the one crying? I was not crying
No, I was a little bit further back from the front
okay, but I do remember the reaction and it was huge because
Back then. Yeah people didn't like
Wind Waker's visuals, which I honestly I never understood because I always thought they were
great
Yeah
But people really wanted that realistic link and they got it
with Twilight Princess and they cheered for that and it was crazy to watch like
everybody break out cheering

in a conference like that because
Generally speaking those e3 conferences. They did have like a fan section. They would invite some people either fans or
Employees of the studio that would be the cheering section. Yeah, so that would happen but at Nintendo
With that reveal you got a genuine everybody on their feet cheering moment
That you don't
often get in those in those moments like there was one Xbox conference the original Xbox where
Where Microsoft showed something and there had been a section off to the right
there was just Microsoft employees and
At one point during their show only that section like clapped and cheered and hooted and hollered and it was like what is happening?
Like nobody else is cheering might the Microsoft section is is on their feet. Yeah
I'm picturing that I know you said original xbox, but I'm just picturing that for the Xbox one
You know entertainment entertainment entertainment
No, I'm sure that happened at that point. I'm sure there were
Microsoft employees in the crowd who were clapping I mean that happens
I think in any sort of corporate event even Apple events like Apple and Nintendo kind of get that natural
cheering section so they don't have to worry about it too much but
Like every event has those plants that are like ready to hoot and holler
Yeah, so the issue when you joined full-time for your long tenure
That would have been issue 100 which is a pretty cool issue to like be joining on
It's you were the online editor alongside a Helen Lee
So you two were the online editors in November of 97 but as it was issue 100
It was a big celebration of like EGM's top 100 video games of all time.
So I went through that list because I thought that'd be an interesting time capsule of 1997.
So I wrote down the top 10.
Some interesting notes though.
Symphony of the Night was number 12, so it didn't even crack the top 10, which I think in hindsight is pretty interesting.
And Ocarina of Time wasn't even out yet, which is also just bizarre because people loved Ocarina of Time.
The top 10, according to EGM in November of 1997,
number 10 is Saturn Bomberman.
- Yes.
- To be fair, I have never played a Saturn or Dreamcast.
It's a thing that I really wish I could get.
It's just so expensive these days,
and I just totally missed Sega as a kid.
So I have no experience there.
But I did think it was interesting
that the Saturn version of Bomberman made the cut.
Well, because it had like I think the Saturn version if I remember right had more players
You could play with more people. Okay, then
The previous versions of Bomberman. Yeah, okay
Then it was Final Fantasy 3 or Final Fantasy 6 nowadays
Seems to make sense Contra 3 alien Wars was number 8
Super Mario World 2 Yoshi's Island
It's number seven super Metroid at six
super Street or Street Fighter 2 turbo hyper fighting
goodness gracious Capcom super Mario 64 at number four link to the past at number three
Mario Brothers 3 all-star edition was number two

That's a weird one. Yeah, and then number one
Tetris I
Think Tetris yeah, I think
Tetris is a good hold there. I could see an argument for Tetris still being one of the greatest
games of all time, which
Actually today is when the Tetris movie came out.
Yeah, as we're talking. As we are talking. I kind of want to watch that one.
Me too. And you now work at a company that
developed one of the most iconic for sure Tetris games of all time
Tetris Effect. It's kind of interesting full circle. It is, yeah.
Isn't that crazy? Still a conversation.
That is crazy.
So many years later. It's nuts.
Yeah, I think we're seeing more and more that some games are just timeless, right?
I don't think we thought that back in the 90s, honestly.
Like, I think we... there was a feeling that everything new was better than what came before.
Whereas now I think we're sort of looking back at some of the old games and saying,
and saying, well, this still plays great.
And that didn't happen so much in the late 90s.
- Yeah.
- You get a lot of reviews that are like,
yeah, a few years ago, this was great,
but this remake of Mario isn't as good or whatever.
Like, I don't know.
You'd see a lot of that.
I actually remember this issue being produced
And the top 100 list was very contested.
- Oh, I'm sure.
- This was like a several weeks long process
to come up with this list.
And we had a whiteboard where everything was positioned
and we would have meetings where the editors would debate
what goes where and, you know, kind of fight for your game.
like what you think should be at the top.
And it was-- - What were you fighting for?
- I don't remember what I was fighting for.
(laughing)
But I was a big Nintendo kid in general.
And so like, Street Fighter II Turbo Hyper Fighting
was like my favorite version of Street Fighter II.
And so I would imagine I fought for that a little bit.
Like, I'm pretty happy with this top 10, to be honest,
considering the timeframe.
- I mean, it has absolute classics on it.
The Bomberman's really the only one to me
that stands out as an,
especially with Symphony Night two slots away.
- Yeah, that's an interesting one.
- That's the only thing to me,
but the rest I could see still being talked about these,
I mean, honestly, we still talk about Super Metroid
Link to the Past, Super Mario 64, all the time.
I mean, they're still in conversation.
And Tetris, of course.

And Final Fantasy, now on their 16th game, it's crazy.
That's nuts, man.
So, let me see.
There was, there's one more big EGM thing
I gotta talk to you about.
If I don't, I would regret it forever.
21 years ago tomorrow, you, sir, were, yeah, to, I think the chagrin of many Smash Brothers
dreamers, hopers, players, you told them that Sonic was in Super Smash Brothers Melee. And
they clearly labeled April Fools' section, I believe, but no one listened to it and everyone
ride. You wrote the infamous Sonic and Tails in melee. I'm sending you a screenshot of
your little thing. Sir, I fell for this. Me and my friends tried very hard. I actually
booted up my melee save the other day. What was it? I wrote it down. My top on my copy
was four. I have a grand total of fourteen killed in Cruel Melee, but only four with
one character, so I was nowhere close to your mythical twenty.
Haha, twenty. I wanna... Yeah! What was... obviously this was just a joke
at the time, I'm just... I'm curious how you feel about it going from "this is funny"
to it swelling into the rumor, you know, myth type thing that it was, to eventually Sonic
actually really mean in Smash Brothers?
Yeah, like this was the thing.
So in the April issue we would come up with a joke and put it in the magazine.
It was sort of a contest where if people found the joke then they would win something.
I forget what exactly.
And as a reader of EGM back in the day, I loved those things.
They did something where there was a hidden character in Street Fighter II, but you had
to do this ridiculous set of parameters to get him to appear.
And then Simon Belmont in the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles arcade game was one of the
tricks.
And they would make them... those were button combinations that you could just about do.
Not quite. So it was like just out of reach for a normal gamer. And I loved those. I thought
those were great fun. And so when I was working there, I did a bunch of those. And one was
like, I don't know if you remember the Sega Neptune was a rumored version of the Genesis
that had the 32x hardware. It was like an all-in-one. And one year I did an April Fools
joke that was, "We found a warehouse of Sega Neptune's and you're available for purchase
online." And I bought a domain for it and set up a webpage. It's not online anymore.
Do you remember the domain?
- I don't remember.
- Oh my gosh, now I gotta find that.
- It was probably, it was probably so obvious.
I don't even think, it was like probably my ISP URL
at the time, so it was something really bad.
But, and I would, for that one on the webpage,
I put the, a counter on it,
and like those internet visitors' counters
that webpages used to have and it would play...
- It was seganeputum.com.
- Oh, there we go, okay.
It would play a sound clip from Spaceballs,
the one where Rick Moranis says, "Fooled you!"
When you actually press the buy button,
you would go to a page that told you
how many people had been fooled.
And that was great fun.
And I loved that kind of thing.
So the Smash Brothers trick,

It was at a time where Sega was going third party.
That was news already.
And Smash Brothers was coming out on the GameCube and it was one of the biggest releases.
We did this section in the back of the magazine where we would highlight tricks and strategies for specific games.
So Smash Brothers was one of those, Halo was one of those.
the big games that people would continue playing after they came out. So when it came to April,
it was like, "Oh right, well we have to do something with Smash Brothers because that
just makes sense." And what fighters could we put in Smash Brothers that people would be like, "Oh
damn, I have to do this." And Sonic and Tails just seemed like a natural thing to put in. And I
I thought, well, we could get good images of Sonic
and Tails in 3D and make it look like they were
on a Smash Brothers stage and we could get
the fighter select screen because there were,
I think, two holes on the side,
the last row in the select screen where another fighter
or two could definitely fit.
So it was easy enough to kind of botch it
And we had really great art directors on EGM that could make fake screenshots.
And I worked with Mike Reisel, who I worked with on this.
And I took I don't know how many screenshots of Sonic Adventure 2,
or I think it was 2, to try to get a shot that would look natural in Smash Brothers.
And then I would, you know, we'd put this in the layout
and then we'd show people, like, if you were seeing this,
like, what would your thought be?
Like, can you see any place where you'd say,
"Oh, that's fake."
And then we would adjust if they said it was obvious.
And then I came up with the parameters
for the, you have to get 20 KOs
with one character in Cruel Melee.
And I thought I couldn't even get past double digits.
But I thought, okay, what's achievable theoretically,
but people are gonna really struggle with?
So 20 was the number I came up with.
And yeah, it screwed with people big time.
- It did.
It really did.
- Even though there's a hint, there are hints
in the layout, you can see the date that it unlocks is 4/1.
- Yes. - So that's a hint.
- And I think the pose of Sonic is a clear art asset from,
I don't know which Sonic game that was,
but the one where he's standing,
his head's leaning to the side.
I think that's straight pulled from another game
or box art or something.
- It is, yeah.
- So it's--
- And it's in there, it's mixed in
with other real information, too.

It's the first entry here, but it's mixed in
with things that are correct.
- I just like the quote, a dream's been cast.
That's pretty good.
Oh man, we tried so hard, man.
We tried so, so hard.
- Well, I'm sorry, not sorry.
- No, you shouldn't be, 'cause it's really,
I think it's one of the great jokes turned rumor,
myth type thing that actually ultimately turns out
to be true just down the line.
So what did it feel like after years of,
well I guess it wasn't that long,
but years of people like, ah, Sonic in Melee,
that's what I want and you just lied to me.
Now Sonic's actually in Brawl.
What did that feel like to you?
Was that just like a weight off your creative shoulder?
- Oh no, not at all.
There was never a weight on my shoulders.
- Good, good.
- Honestly, I never felt bad about it.
But I thought, oh, you know, that's great,
like that they're introducing fighters from other series.
I actually kind of wondered if this trick
was any sort of catalyst for that discussion,
those discussions to be had or, oh yeah,
maybe we can bring in other franchises.
But also like people did get 20 KOs in Cruel Melee
and they were pissed off that nothing happened.
- You guys, I think you sent them a copy
Sonic Adventure 2 battle or something. It was my understanding.
We ran a contest that if you can actually do it and videotape yourself getting 20 KOs
and send it in, we'll put you in a contest for Sonic Adventure 2 battle on GameCube.
So watching those tapes come in was also really fun because then I could see these people
doing this.
- Doing this. - It's like,
I just picture you're setting up the camera,
filming this grueling effort,
'cause I actually tried it again the other day.
When I booted up my save, I was like,
let me just give this a shot, you know.
Was it too difficult for how old I was,
or was it just too difficult?
It's just too difficult for my skill level,
but it's like pre-YouTube in a way.
Tapes are being mailed to you and you're watching them,
and man, I wish some of those tapes still existed,
'cause that'd be really funny, I think.
- That would be really funny, yeah.
And we watched 'em all, so.
- Yeah, that's wild, that's so cool.
- Any time a tape would come in, it would be like,
all right, let's stop what we're doing

and watch this person do this.
It was great, yeah.
- That's so cool.
I love, it's a thing that's always stuck to me,
and I actually, I don't even remember
how it came up in conversation,
but when you told me that you were the one that did it,
I couldn't, I was like, I'm actually talking
to the person who created this.
I mean, I vividly remember being in my friend's basement
trying to do this.
Like, it stuck with me for so long.
So, while I may have been upset as a kid,
I'm actually quite thankful for it
'cause it's a timeless type of memory for me
and I love it.
It's always tied in with Smash.
- My favorite memory of this was that Nintendo
had a game counselor line at the time
and they had to add in the prerecorded message
that the Sonic and Tails in Smash Brothers Melee trick
is not correct, like you can't do it.
They added that to their prerecorded message
so the people dialed in.
- I wonder if that's up anywhere.
That would be great too.
- That would be amazing to hear again, but yeah.
- I mean, you got Nintendo to essentially issue a statement.
- I think they did it in Nintendo Power as well.
- Okay.
- Where they said, "Nope, wrong.
"It's some other magazine doing a lame joke."
And I was like, "Yes, exactly, yeah."
(laughing)
- That's so cool.
That's just, that's so great.
But after a decade in press and media magazines,
not all at EGM, but a decade of doing it,
you, I'm gonna say jump ship.
I don't know if that's actually like the,
if that was what was going through your brain at the time,
but you jump ship and you go to the other side
of the video game industry in the publishing, producing,
I just put it all in there,
publishing, producing, developing.
You started working at Adult Swim Games for Turner,
but my brain always hears that as the high-pitched Turner
at the end of every Cartoon Network cartoon, the Turner!
And then the boom, boom, boom, boom.
I've been watching a lot of the regular show lately,
and I hear it all the time now.
- Oh, nice.
- It takes me back to my childhood of watching
Kids Next Door, you know, whatever.

Bill and Mandy and what else they have.
Whatever.
You went to work for them back in 2007
as a senior games producer,
and by the end of your time there,
you were the director of Game Creative.
So I'm curious, what was that transition like,
going from covering games to being essentially
the one covered by the press, in a way?
It was a pretty natural transition to be quite honest. I had been reviewing and playing games for
so long that hopping over to the production side was actually quite easy.
And natural, because it's all schedules and deadlines and feedback about gameplay and
like that stuff was were things that I had already had a lot of experience in.
So it actually was a pretty smooth transition.
Like the the only thing that was different really is like seeing okay like now that I'm
the other side you see the struggle that it takes to make any video game any even
the video games that people think are quote unquote bad like it's a struggle
to make any game like it's it is a miracle that anything comes out on time
whatever like and it was fun to be on that side and especially when I started
at Adult Swim, we were doing Flash games for the web and that was sort of a particularly
sort of nascent area where there's like Newgrounds.com.
We spent a lot of time there.
Yeah, and Armor Games where it was like there were a lot of indie games that we now call
indie games that were kind of getting their start there in Flash and that was tremendously
exciting for me because I was sort of over AAA games at that time.
I loved indies and I really liked what some people were doing in Flash.
At the time, I think people had this image of Flash as being the punch the monkey and
get a 20% discount on your next, you know, Nutra, I don't know, Nutra X
mail enhancement drug thing or whatever.
Yeah, all that stuff.
But like there was this area of games that was like extremely exciting and the way that it was
pitched, the way that Adult Swim was doing it was that they weren't doing games based on
shows
or like IP that they had in television. They were doing games based on original concepts and
putting them out on flash. There were games that like the Adult Swim audience could
appreciate.
So I remember Robot Unicorn Attack. That's the one I remember the most.
Robot Unicorn Attack. A game that was done in four weeks time. It was developed in four
weeks.
Yeah. What? That's... Oh my gosh.
Yeah, Robot Unicorn is one of my favorite games, obviously.
But we had been working with this guy, Scott Stoddard is his name,
and he had done, like, flash game fighting games,
and he did a shooter for us,
and none of those games, like, really took off or anything like that.
And he had been working at Disney,
and he was doing these flash games on the side.
And then he got a job at Chair Entertainment,
which are like the Infinity Blade people and now it's like Epic so...
I was gonna say, I thought Epic owned Infinity Blade but they purchased that later.
They do, yeah.
They... no, Chair was like an Epic studio.
Oh okay, I understand.
Yeah.

So he said, "Okay, well I got this job at Chair, I can do one more game for you and
It's going to be like a four week project, like done and done.
And it's going to be a runner, kind of like a cannonball, which was sort of the predecessor
to that whole genre.
And it was the end of the year for Adult Swim and we had like some extra money that, you
know, we had to spend before the end of the year.
So we were like, yes, let's do this game that you pitched.
And so it was four weeks, yeah, right before the end of the year in 2009.
And he finished it up by the end of the year and that was Robot Unicorn Attack.
And initially it didn't have the Erasure song in it.
He put it in there as a placeholder for one of the build deliveries that he gave to us.
And when I played it with that song, it was like, "I think we're gonna have to license
this song because it's just so good with these visuals and everything.
And Turner being a television company, they had a music licensing department so they could
make that happen and they did.
And then it blew up on Flash.
Yeah.
I mean, when it came out, it blew up.
It's in every single one of your kind of like different platforms here from Flash to Facebook
to mobile.
Robot Unicorn Attack.
Always there.
Everything.
Yeah.
Yeah, and we knew it was gonna do well
Before it came out because everybody in the office loved it and
In fact, we started working on the mobile version before the flash version came out
because we knew it was gonna be a game we wanted on mobile and
There it did well at first and then I was with my wife at a concert and
like checking
my email on my iPhone
And my boss emailed me and he said like what is happening here with robot unicorn attack?
And I looked at the web page like the analytics web page. I kept refreshing it and it was just like
through the roof like
Crazier than anything we had seen before
Like what could be causing this is there something wrong with the page that it's like double
triple quadruple counting
But no, it was that
that 4chan
had discovered it.
Ooh.
And... [laughs]
I don't know if you know, I mean I guess it was probably good.
In my brain, 4chan's always a dark place that I'd never want to go.
I know. Yes, it still is.
So you don't really want 4chan to discover anything about you or anything, but...
No. No, but in 2009, they kind of...
They had a lot of...that forum had a lot of sway.
And that and dig I don't know if you remember yes, I do remember dig dig digs a nicer place a
much nicer place. Yeah
yeah, but so those two sites like had hit it and it blew up like crazy and so cool that
was amazing and yeah that so the original developer had gone to work a chair and
Couldn't do any more work for us. So

After he delivered the flash game like we ended up doing the mobile ports and other stuff ourselves with with you know
Third-party developers. It's very cool. I I
Remember the one Facebook game I got really into it wasn't an Adult Swim game, but it was it was mafia wars
I don't know. Oh, absolutely. Yeah, I
Think that's an interest, you know, what was it like?
Now you're now you're working on you know console games PC games, but this flash mobile Facebook kind of era of games
I think was really concentrated at that time. What did you know? What was different about that then?
Compared to what you would see nowadays
Hmm I
Think a lot of ways it's similar
Only back then the budgets were a lot smaller than
than they are now.
And I think the people working on games,
you don't get as many solo productions as you did in the Flash days.
I got to work with Lambier on a couple games,
and that was great fun working with those two guys.
They did Ridiculous Fishing?
Ridiculous fishing. Yeah, they did a game for us called dinosaur zookeeper. Okay, that sounds like a game they would make
It was it was great fun, but I I really liked their games a lot and
actually, that was kind of how we found developers to work with is I would go on new grounds or
Armor games and or the App Store and like play games
from developers that I thought had the production chops
and the gameplay chops was maybe most important
to make like a really good game
and then approached them to do a game with us
like for, as a work for hire.
And a lot of those people were just doing games
as sort of a hobbyist thing,
not getting paid or getting paid very little
from those portals.
And you know, it was great to work with those people.
Like PixelJam had done Dino Run back in the day,
and we got them to do a bunch of games for us,
which was great.
Maddie Thorson, who is Celeste.
Yes.
I worked with her on Give Up Robot,
and a couple of other games,
that we did two Give Up Robot games.
That's so cool.
Yeah. I love Celeste.
- I love Celeste, I worked on the guide for IGN.
I remember my pitch was a saw it in a Nintendo Direct,
kind of tying it back to those presentations,
being able to fit things in.
I looked at that and went, I immediately went,
that game's gonna be special.
And I emailed Sam Claiborne, I was like,

anyone on the guide for this?
And he said no, and no one,
at the time it didn't seem like anyone was really
looking forward to this, and I was like,
there's something about this game.
And then I did the guide for it and then realized,
oh, I have to collect all these strawberries.
(laughing)
- Yeah, whoops.
- Big whoops.
I remember the hotel strawberries being the,
thankfully editing those videos is easy.
You just edit out all the death.
- Right.
- There were hundreds of death.
- Nobody has to know.
- Yeah, no one has to know that I died hundreds of times
to get this one strawberry.
But I remember being like, that's gonna be a game.
And now look at them.
Celeste is huge and they're on Earthblade,
I wanna say is the name of the next game.
It's something like that.
I don't know.
- Yeah, Towerfall and then Celeste.
- Yes, Towerfall, great party game.
- Great, yeah.
- Ouya, poor Ouya.
- Ouya, yeah.
- Oh man.
That's so neat.
I remember playing a ton of Flash games
As in middle school and stuff going over my friend's house. We just sit at the computer and
play all sorts of stuff
It was great. Always a good time. Yeah, and similarly like iPhone was
You know when anyone could make a game on the App Store like you'd see so many amazing
Implementations of swipe control and touch control and
You know, that's how I got working with pickpock who did like flick football was their game
Oh man.
I thought it was great implementation of the touchscreen, just very tactile and fun.
And so we ended up working with them on a couple of games that did very well.
They did Shatter on PlayStation as well, and they now do Into the Dead and a couple other
games are still around.
That's neat, man.
Making console.
- It sounds to me, in a way, it sounds like facilitating
a community of developers to kind of come together
and work for your publishing brand
to just bolster that side of things.
But you're almost, you know, what do they call 'em,
EA calls 'em, when they did that whole initiative
of EA Originals or something, the Yarny Boy,
and they still do it with, oh, what is it,
two, I don't know what it's called,

the game where you're two people going through divorce.
One game of the year.
- Yes, it takes two.
- It takes two, thank you.
So EA is getting certain developers to do that,
and granted, that's EA, that's really big,
and probably trying to bolster their image in a way,
but Ubisoft did that with their own teams and stuff,
but it sounds like at Adult Swim,
you were just, you guys would eventually work
with Double Fine on Headlander, right?
That was, so, it's an interesting,
it sounds like a community approach in a way,
just not you and the consumer so much
as it's you and the developers.
- Yeah, that was the idea, really.
Find indie developers who are doing cool things
and then pay them real money to do it.
In some of those cases, those creators
got to keep the IP of those games.
And in some other cases, Turner owned the IP.
But yeah, I mean, that was the idea.
And we started in Flash, then moved to iPhone,
and then eventually did Steam and console stuff too.
Once the sort of barrier to entry for developers
and for publishers got low enough where we could do that.
Like there was that whole Steam green light process
that indie developers couldn't really circumvent.
Like they couldn't get on Steam,
but we had an in on that with Valve.
Like we were a publisher on Steam.
So we could, that was one of the things that was a benefit
of working with Adult Swim.
Like we can get you on Steam.
So that was, that was pretty big.
- That sounds, it's so interesting to think,
'cause nowadays I feel like anyone can put a game
anything. More or less. Yeah, have you seen how many AAA clock versions there are
and bundles? Yeah. AAA clock is just, I think they're working on AAA clock 17
at this point. Oh my gosh. I think of my name as male. Iterations. The greatest trilogy ever.
Yes, yes. I think that's more of a joke, aware of what it was as a joke and like
knew when to stop and then there's other companies that are just like, "here you go."
We're gonna just take all of the money
Yeah, we're gonna make 20 different versions of this game and maybe people will buy it
because they get an easy trophy or
Hmm or something like that. Yeah
Well, oh well, I digress from adult swim
I I didn't write down when you left adult swim, but it's right here. It's not far away
2019 2019. Thank you very much and then you know
there's a little bit of a gap there,
but you would come on to Enhance.
- Yeah.
- Creators behind Rez, Tetris Effect.
Is it solely publishing or is there development

help as well for humanity?
- It's both.
- It's both, okay.
- It's development and publishing,
but THA is the main developer for humanity.
- Gotcha.
- Yeah, with Enhance people helping out.
- Very cool.
It's more sort of a joint development at this point, yeah.
- So you're there under User Experience Director.
- That's right.
- At least in our working relationship context,
I understand from a play tester perspective
that you're asking, you know, we're play testing.
But what does that entail on the bigger scale?
It can't just be facilitating playtest, I would imagine.
- Originally, it was mostly that, yeah.
And it has morphed like...
When you work in a small company,
it enhances a small operation, like an indie really.
And especially like on the US side,
like a lot of folks that I work with
do a lot of different things.
like their title might be one thing,
but they're doing a lot of other things.
And so User Experience Director is just part of,
I did a lot of that for humanity,
but that's really only part of what I do.
I do a lot of marketing stuff as well,
a lot of like writing for social posts
and press releases and things like that.
Almost anything that needs to get done, I'll do, right?
Like, need to make a video of something
or we need a clip of something,
like I'll hop in and help make it.
Like we did a, with humanity,
when we put out the demo of that,
we put out like a demo walkthrough video
and I did all the gameplay clips in that
and wrote the script, but we had a streamer read it.
So it's a lot of different things.
When you work in a small team and you're putting out a game,
there's so many things to do.
I don't think you realize, certainly on the outside,
how many things are involved in publishing a game
and getting something live.
It's a lot of things.
Taking screenshots, the store screenshots for humanity,
I think most of those I ended up taking.
It's a lot of things.
- You describing that,
- It actually, to me, sounds a lot like the EGM sort of stuff
where you have a lot of agency, it sounds like,
to at least present things.

I'm sure people look at all the screenshots and go,
you know, what best represents the product here
and what do we want everyone to see in the store?
But it sounds not too far off from,
here's the letters we wanna put in the thing
and here's the layout we want,
or here's the news articles we wanna cover.
It doesn't actually sound too far off to me.
- Yeah, it's not too far off at all.
And even working at Adult Swim,
like looking over marketing and screenshots
and writing press releases and reviewers guides
and things like that,
that was all stuff that I did there too.
So doing that with Enhance,
It's, you know, it is an extension of games writing
from way back when.
Like I'm using the same sort of skills there.
Like I'm trying to think, okay, as a consumer,
what would I want to see in these screenshots?
What sort of best represents the product to me?
And in the store description,
like what would sell me on this game?
What sort of animated gifs do I want to see
on the Steam store page, like what would sell me on this?
So yeah, you're thinking about it very much the same
as you would like if working on an EGM layout or review.
So it's a very similar approach
and it's all stuff that I like to do anyway.
So it kind of works out.
- So what is it, I mean, you would have obviously
experience from this with Adult Swim,
but specifically with Enhance here and humanity
and the last two years of working on that,
and it's getting ready to come out,
what does that feel like?
All of this years of work, not just on your part,
but the developers and the team before you started there,
and everyone who's come on afterward,
what does it feel like as you get closer to launch?
- It's super exciting.
So hats off in so many different ways to the development team because they have worked
so hard on this thing for longer than I've been involved at Enhance and they've really
polished it nicely.
It's exciting to me to be any part of the process of bringing that to players.
With every game launch, whether it was a flash game launch or an iPhone game launch or now
like console stuff, I am always super excited on launch day or announced day, almost to
point where I can't sleep the night before because it's very much like I can't wait to see
what people are going to think of this game, what their reaction is going to be, like I hope it's one
way but it could go the other way, like it's very like what's going to happen sort of thing and it's
very exciting. Like the, we were recently with humanity in a state of play presentation
And then we dropped a demo for Humanity that same day.
- Which I always try to make predictions before things,

either with friends or publicly on the blog or whatever.
And Humanity has been the thing in my back pocket
that I'm like, I can't predict this,
'cause eventually it will actually happen.
But I was always before every state of play,
I was like, please come back, please come back.
And it finally did, and I was like, yes, this is it.
Now everyone can see what I've seen
and hopefully respond to it well.
And then there was the demo the day of,
which finally gave me a chance to try it out in VR,
which was, oh my gosh, so cool to finally play in VR.
I tried a lot with my Quest 2 and a really wimpy laptop.
It was a bad time, but it was great to finally
have another piece of it to try.
And so that was really cool to finally see it.
Yeah, and I think the most fun part for me is, you know,
Yuko Nakamura is the director
and sort of the lead creative on humanity.
And this is his first game project, actually.
Like he's a well-known designer in Japan,
like graphic design and website design.
This is his first game.
And so I wanted, we really,
I wanted that to be a good experience for him too.
Like I feel some kind of duty to the development team
to really help deliver this message
in the best way possible to the players.
And I love seeing the reaction to it.
And it's great now in this age of the internet
where you can watch people stream a game, for instance.
So that day when we dropped the demo,
I was watching streams of humanity all day long
for like a week, watching people play it.
And I got this sense of pride for Yugo, for Yugo-san,
because it's like you put this thing out,
you don't necessarily know how it's gonna be received
and to have it received so well
It was just great to see.
And yeah, two years of build,
for me, two years of buildup for Yugo,
they had been kicking around with the humanity idea
for quite a long time, maybe about 10 years or so.
And to see that like finally announced
and you control a Shiba Inu and it's a puzzle game
and it's got all this variety in terms of mechanics
and things to see that and see people's reactions to it.
Was great.
And actually, if I'd worked in the game industry
back when I was working at EGM,
you wouldn't have that sort of immediate
availability of people's reactions.
Like you'd have to wait for the magazine to come out
to see the review or something like that.

And I can't even imagine that feeling of like,
(laughs)
when are the reviews gonna hit?
and what are people going to think of?
Now it's immediate, which is even better.
And you can see that from people on Twitter
and you can see it from people streaming the game on Twitch.
And it's just been really, really good
and really satisfying to be a part of it too.
Like I love that more than anything else,
I think is being a part of bringing these games out.
I'm not a developer, I'm not developing the game.
providing feedback on the game or like watching people play through and then
delivering comments about what I see as potential problem areas but ultimately
it's their creation and I'm trying to facilitate you know having it get the
best response possible and in humanity's case there's also you know a level
creator and things and trying to nurture that community is going to be an interesting task
that I'm going to be involved with and I'm looking forward to very much.
Yeah, I was going to ask what is, not specifically for humanity itself or Enhance, you know,
I don't need, I'm not looking for the scoop here, but what does post-launch in general
look like for any game really that you've done. And you know, the game comes out and
I think today more so than maybe back in the Flash mobile era, games have life beyond the
release, especially ones with level creators and some sort of community longevity focus.
It's not like you stop and you're going to start working on secret video game next project
or Tetris Effect for the whatever platform, you know, you're... it's here for a while,
so what is that? It doesn't really end, does it?
It doesn't. Right? I actually love that aspect of modern gaming. Like, if you rewound time
and told me that like, I could play a game that I loved was gonna get updated or like
continually supported for a year or more after, I would be so stoked about that.
I would be super excited. And so, I mean, that's what modern gaming is, I think, is yes,
there's an initial release and, you know, if you're able to, and some games can do this,
other games can't, like develop a community around it, then you can kind of continue
delivering
content to the people who love your game the most and kind of have this sort of symbiotic
relationship. And we did that a lot at Adult Swim with the mobile games. We would update
those often with new content and I loved doing that. It's because you know those games had
a longer shelf life and people would play those games for a longer period of time, over
a longer stretch of time than just at launch and then they'd put them down or whatever.
And I started to get into some of those communities for games like I'm really big into
Sea of Thieves. And I've participated in that community and I love doing it. I love seeing
that sort of community come up around a game. So if I can in any way help establish that
for any game that Enhance does or anybody that I'm working for, if I can do that, that
would be super satisfying to me.
Yeah, honestly I think we're in a golden age
of video games, and I know a lot of people are like,
ah, games today suck so much, they're live services,
I hate it.
But I love this idea that a game you like can live on
or have extra content, and I've started playing Fortnite
recently over the last year,
because they have the no build mode in Fortnite now.
And that and the Unreal 5 update almost were very close to getting me to download and try
it out because I watched Digital Foundry's video on all the Unreal 5 stuff.
I was like, "Oh my gosh, Fortnite's actually beautiful."

Fortnite looks great.
It does.
It looks beautiful now.
And I started playing that in part
because the last year was very tough for me
on a personal level.
I had my mom passed away and then my brother passed away
and I looked to games like so many people do
as sort of a escape.
And Fortnite actually became my regular evening game,
my kind of wind down game, my comfort game, honestly.
Mm-hmm, because it's not necessarily a in fortnight. I found it's not about
Winning, you know, you're one of a hundred people in the lobby your your odds that you're gonna win are pretty low
but you can still run around have fun and shoot at things and
the way that they've structured like the
Quests and things in that game just make it fun to play as a casual player
And they do this they do a great job with skill based matchmaking where I'm not up against people who are super good
So I feel like I can win in a firefight because there's so many people playing of any age group
and yeah, I'm probably killing six-year-olds, but
It still makes me feel pretty good when I win win a firefight, right? Yeah, so
But like that game
The fact that there's always something new coming out and there's always something new almost every week to look forward to like I really
appreciated that in over the last year and
so I appreciate that about any game that I play now and I
Feel like you know working on a game, hopefully you will be somebody's favorite game. Hmm, you know, that's
that's
Incredibly rewarding you put out a game and somebody says that they love it
That's the best right like and then to be able to like deliver them more content is
even better or like have a conversation with somebody who's a real fan of
Whatever game you're working on like that's so rewarding
and
Yeah, ever since I started in this half of the industry like looking at like somebody's you're gonna be somebody's favorite game
It's like that's awesome to think about.
I want to meet that person, I want to talk to them about the game.
That is cool.
That's awesome.
I love it.
I love it so much.
Well, thank you so much for your time, CJ.
I really, really appreciate you coming on the show and talking to me.
Yeah, thanks very much, Max.
This was great.
We talked about a lot of things that I've never talked about in other places, so this
great. That's a little actually surprising considering what your show has over 800 episodes.
Well that's true. But nobody nobody asked me about the first issue of EGM that I worked on
in the letters section. I think that's interesting, for sure interesting to talk about, so I
appreciate the questions. One more question actually, just going way back to the to the EGM
stuff. In my research looking for all this stuff, I've got these PDF scans. Honestly, a lot of them
aren't really great quality. I know the video game history museum, I think that's the name of it,

they have every issue of EGM and they're doing actual nice scans and they're trying to preserve
this stuff. How do you feel about your written work, reviews, news, whatever? It's not lost,
I could go find it, but it's not searchable or necessarily attributed to you. It's just
in the EGM ethos. How does that feel, having your work kind of just not lost to time, but
lost to time in a way?
Yeah, and most of the EGM issues that I worked on were before the internet really picked up.
And so, like, there's...
When people think of EGM, they often think of the era that was just after I left.
Which is fun.
But to me, I'm just happy that I have a tangible representation of what I've worked on.
Yeah.
Like, that has been important to me.
And yeah, like I think that's what it is.
It's great to have a tangible representation.
You know, I did a lot of online writing for GameSpot also,
and all that is definitely lost time,
because that's not even searchable anymore.
Like even if it was attributed to me,
you can't find that anymore.
So like having that tangible time capsule
of these EGM issues is actually very,
I'm very happy that it exists
and I'm happy that I have copies of all the issues
that I worked on.
- Good.
- I think, yeah, a year ago,
my storage locker got broken into.
- I remember talking to you about that.
That was super sucky.
- And all of my video games, my entire collection is gone.
is gone, which is something I'm still dealing with today, just like the grief over that.
But they didn't take the magazines. Which is so... I mean, I get it, the monetary value of all the
video games. And I'm sure you had an impressive collection, I can only imagine, over the years.
I'm sure you had all the old stuff, all the good stuff. And some of the...
3DO fan over here, you may have had one of those. White Whale.
Yeah, oh my gosh. Do you have way of the warrior? That's my of course. Yeah, that's what I want man
That's what I want to work for. I need I need that Naughty Dog
3dr
It's a terrible game. I know that at the time it's terrible though, but the story of how I made it in their little college dorm with
It's they get their classmates and professors to be the characters. It's so funny. Anyway, I love that. Yeah
Yeah, but they didn't take the magazines and I'm very thankful for that because now I don't have to track those downs at the very least
but
Yeah, that's sort of I'm holding on to that as yeah a physical representation of like the work that I did
back in the late 90s 2000s and that is
Great to have like I I do occasionally look back at that stuff and it's hard to read stuff that you worked on
so many years ago as I'm sure you know like looking back at old writing and like

Sometimes it can be a little cringy. Oh
yeah, for sure I my review of the last of us like my
original back at 2013 review I'm
Whoo, I needed to calm down a little bit
Yeah
I love it and what it's become and all that stuff, but I was acting like I had
I've seen the light and was trying to preach the gospel
to people over here.
(laughing)
It's like, everybody, you must play this.
Yeah, sometimes, but that is still up.
No matter how embarrassing or cringey any of that is,
I've definitely made it a priority to preserve my work.
I even--
- That's good.
- I found I had this old red hard drive,
and I have the original Windows Movie Maker files
and videos and recordings of all of my original stuff
that I was doing for Smash Brothers Brawl on YouTube.
- Oh, great. - Like what would have been
my first steps into this type of work and industry.
I have it all.
And I don't know why I was a digital pack rat,
but I was and I still have it today
and now it's backed up to like 37 different places.
So I'll never lose it unless everything blows up at once.
- Right. (laughs)
- But it was-- - That's important though.
- Yeah, and I went,
And I actually just used it for the first,
I have the original recording,
and I used it in a clip of this
Super Smash Brothers Brawl anniversary special we did
on the show a couple episodes ago,
and I was able to use that, the real file.
- That's awesome. - The real, I was like,
that's kinda cool.
I sure, I sound like, - I love that.
- I didn't, I hadn't hit puberty yet, but I had the file.
(laughing)
- There you go.
That's so awesome, I love that.
- Yeah.
Preserve your work, people, it's important.
You will thank your future self, I promise.
- You definitely will, yes.
Definitely preserve all that stuff, even if it's cringey.
- Yes, you can preserve it privately, but keep it,
'cause it will help you down the line.
Being able to look back is essential, I think, so.
- It's true.
- Well, thanks again, CJ, for joining me on this show.
Where can the people find you online,
both personally and professionally over at Enhance?

Where can the people go?
- Well, I'm Superpack on Twitter,
although I'm not really posting too much on Twitter anymore.
But I am on Mastodon.
I'm on there as superpack@mastodon.social.
And I do post there.
And then, let's see, oh, yeah,
I do a podcast every week about video games
that you can check out on playeronepodcast.com.
It's called the Player One Podcast.
have been doing that show since 2006,
and yeah, we have 850 some episodes of that.
- I couldn't, when I saw that, I couldn't believe it.
What an impressive, just amazing run.
And it's not like it's over, it's just like, I can't.
I've been podcasting for, I think, 15 years,
almost this year or something,
and that's been over the years in multiple shows,
and just one show for 10 years, whoo.
Yeah, it's crazy to think about.
It's a show where I'm talking with former journalists as well.
Like Greg Sewart used to work at EGM as well.
He was the reviews editor and previews editor.
And then Phil Theobald used to work at EGM and GameNow and EGM2 and Expert Gamer and
Nintendo Power.
He also worked at Nintendo Power.
And so we hop on a call every week and talk about video games.
It's great fun.
So player one podcast anywhere you get your podcasts.
Then Enhance is Enhance EXP on Twitter.
There's also @humanitygame for humanity stuff.
And we're Enhance Experience on YouTube and all the other places as well.
So people can check that out.
And then look forward to Humanity coming out in May on Playstation 4, Playstation 5, and
Steam.
And it's, as you say, VR compatible, so PSVR 1 and PSVR 2.
Yes.
Everyone, go check Humanity out in May.
I know there's some game called Zelda or something coming out, but check out Humanity.
Yeah.
Definitely worth your time.
Forget that Zelda game.
Tears of the Kingdom, whatever.
Who needs it?
- Fuse things together?
No, lead a bunch of tiny humans places as a Shiba Inu.
That is the real game right there.
That's what you're gonna be doing.
- Yes.
- So, everyone look forward to that in May.
If you'd like, you can find my writing and work
over at maxfrequency.net.
You can check out my other show, Chapter Select,

Seasonal Podcast, where we bounce back and forth
between a series exploring its evolution,
design, and legacy, season five.
Right now, Resident Evil, I'm in the thick of it, man.
I'm playing Resident Evil 4 remake, I'm getting ready to start Resident Evil 5 co-op with
Logan so I'm just immersed in Resident Evil land these days so you can go check that out
as well.
But thank you all for listening and until next time, adios.