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Hey everybody, welcome back to the Max Frequency Podcast. Joining me this time, Michael Kazawara. Say it right again? Michael Kazawara That's enough. That sounds great. John "Slick" Baum Okay, Kazawara. Michael is a freelance writer, and him and I have actually worked adjacently together for at least a few years at IGN when we did wiki guide writing stuff. And I used to always see, Michael has this icon that he had on IGN and it's actually his icon here on Discord of like some fire and just orange fire and blue fire. I'm not quite maybe you can tell me the origin of the picture, but this is this ball that kind of meets halfway in the middle of these colors. And I would see that little picture pop up everywhere in every wiki all over the place. So I've known about Michael for a long time and we've never really spoken and so I wanted to reach out to you, Michael, to actually get to know you and talk with you because I've never talked to another wiki person besides the actual IGN people. [Matt] Yeah. No, yeah, and it's same story. I've seen you around everywhere. I've seen you on Twitter, but there hasn't been this actual discussion like there is now. This is the first time after what like six, seven years? I don't remember how long ago you started, but that's kind of my range. Yeah, I started... what was it? I want to keep saying Days Gone. That is not the name of it. I guess the first one I was paid for was Tales From the Borderlands and Dying Light. Nine in 2015. So yeah, about six, six, seven years I did some, uh, Donkey Kong Country Tropical Freeze is technically the first one I worked on, but that was back when I was a fan and was just like, how do I do this? I'm just going to do it. So, I mean, honestly, that's really kind of the main thing I wanted to talk to you about was our stories writing Wiki guides. because I feel like a lot of people use guides but don't necessarily know how they're made and how they come about. So what what's your story with doing wiki guides? It depends how far you want me to go back because I could go I can go way back there's so many details that I could try not to include but... Go as as far back as you would like. - Okay, I will go back over a decade ago. - Do it. - So, okay, here's my deal. I have, that I currently still run, I have my own website. It's called Mario Party Legacy. It focuses on the Mario Party series, of all things, the Mario Party series. I started that when I was in like, junior high, high school, something in that range. It was 2008, so whatever that was for me. I'm we're old. That's the point here. Didn't do any guide work there. But once I started to branch out beyond just covering Mario Party, I started to include guides. So some of the first guys I did were, let's see, it was Paper Mario sticker star, New Super Mario Brothers, you Luigi's Mansion, Dark Moon, a lot of the 3DS era games. And with Mario Party Legacy, it was successful enough that I was able to get myself some press tickets to E3. And since I'm from Arizona, so I'm very close to California. It's a six hour drive. It wasn't like this huge cost thing to go, minus hotels and all that. So I had started going to E3 in 2012. And I would go I have since gone every year since until you know until last year 2020 whoops that sucks, but yeah in 2013 I was in the Nintendo booth and I believe that was the year where they they had like a media hour where one hour before the show floor opens they let media into the Nintendo booth and You just got to circumvent a lot of the lines and the busyness and all sorts of things like that. And I remember once that media hour was coming to a close, I remember seeing Sam Claiborne from IGN. He was just there playing a 3DS game. And I was there with my friend and I was saying like, "Oh, there's someone I want to go talk to. I know who this is. You know, I admire their work and blah, blah, blah." and I was just sitting there waiting for the right moment

from like get up and get away from this this game so I could go talk to him and introduce myself and my friend who is a lot more is extroverted the right word I don't know he's very jump into the situation he kind of dragged me over there while he was still playing this game and kind of pushed me into that situation to talk to him and that's exactly what I did. I introduced myself, chatted for like two minutes and we exchanged business cards and from there I was able to email him later and ask about wiki work and I think by it would have been August or September when the wonderful 101 came out, I was assigned to that as my first wiki guide project for IGN and that's where it all started. Yeah! That's awesome that you've actually been not only you went to E3 once but you you had been going for years. I'm extremely jealous. E3 is kind of always the it's you know for the longest time it's probably been a lot of people's dream to go not just as a fan you know but as someone in the press so that's actually super dope. I only have like little artifacts from e3 because of Logan my friend Logan Moore he's gone a couple of years he actually snagged me like the last of us part 2 vinyl they had there and the spider-man newspaper that they did for that I actually have the spider-man paper frame that's fun and then I hate Brendan Graber who writes wiki's over at IGN he snagged me one of the Zelda coins from the breath of the wild you guys that's awesome and it is so good he is I'm forever indebted to Brendan for snagging me that your your story actually isn't too far off from mine except for the fact of meeting him in person in the sense that I kind of it dawned on me one day I was working at Kmart and I used to work stock like you know putting things on the shelves and organizing the stockroom and when you're in the back of the store, I'd listen to podcasts. And it dawned on me one day while listening to podcasts beyond that people get paid to talk about video games and write about them and do this stuff. It just kind of clicked. Can you imagine? It's a job. And I thought, I want to do that. And so that became my goal going forward there from high school and stuff. And one thing that Greg Miller always said on that show was, start your own website, get in front of a camera, and do all this thing. And so I started to practice those things he told me to. I made a blog at Go Left Gaming, which is still up there, goleftgaming.wordpress.com. That name rings a bell. Yeah. Yep. That was inspired by a Miyamoto quote about, you know, rewarding the player that goes left instead of right, probably in a 2D plane. And so that was the idea there. And anyway, these wiki guides are things and they seem fun and I'm thinking how do I do this? And Donkey Kong Country Tropical Freeze was coming out for the Wii U at the time. And the night before the game came out, I kind of just said, "I don't know how this works. I'm just going to write the guide for Donkey Kong." Now of course, in the back end, IGN already has a writer. I think it was Andrew Eason, if you're familiar with him. That's another name I haven't heard of in a long time. Yeah. Right? And so he was the assigned writer and I downloaded the game the night before and when they, the next day when I could play it, just started writing, doing the first level and somehow I don't know how it was working, if they had a code beforehand or not, but I was putting things up there, trying out this new capture card I had gotten and I start tweeting back and forth with Sam like how do I do this and suddenly we're DMing back and forth ideas for the design of this guide and he puts me in touch with Andrew and I'm helping out with that and I'm was 2014 I would have been I guess I would have been just in the end of high school at the beginning of college and so I only did the first four worlds of that game but I also wasn't paid so I don't part of me feels bad for stopping but the other part of me is like, "Well, I wasn't paid for it." But it got my feet wet. And then I did the same thing for Hitman Go, because I really liked that game on my iPad. And at the time, mobile wasn't a place they were experimenting with with wikis, and they didn't have a lot of people, so that was good. And then I did all the videos for Cap'n Toad Treasure Tracker. But I somehow, again, because I wasn't paid for that, I just put them all on my YouTube channel. So up to this point you were not paid yet for all those things you mentioned? Yes. All those things were mentioned, yes. And then one night, or I guess it was a day, I emailed Sam just kind of out of the blue and said, "Hey, is there an opportunity? Like how can, is there a way I can be paid to make money for this?" And they had some enough budget in their freelance to hire me and they brought me on board. And my first game was supposed to be Dragon Age Inquisition. Thankfully, I didn't end up on that. I don't know how that happened. Maybe I really forget why they didn't give it to me So then my first

game ended up being Tales from the Borderlands, which was perfect place to start. Little more straightforward. Yep, episodic. You've really just got to play it twice and then Dying Light was my next game and that was really big and it was a lot. Yeah, but that I That's kind of how I started this is just Threw myself out there and said hey, please pay me if that's an option And it turns out it was I think that's a that that's a whole different discussion is Working for free payment things like that like my perspective has changed on that it's changed quite a bit over the years and I feel like I'm in a place now where I don't I I Don't want to say I respect myself enough because it's it's a different. You know what you're worth. Yeah Yeah, like I I could never do that now but like back then when you're first starting out, it's I don't know you're just so grateful for everything and you're just so happy for these opportunities that I totally agree Yeah, it is There are some there are some guides that I really Probably did more than I should have for it. Oh Oh, yeah, absolutely, you know, sometimes you just in my head Especially earlier on like one game I did was until dawn this horror decision-based game Still super early on in my wiki writing deal and actually it's the only game I ever got mailed Early physically like I didn't get a digital code early I got the game physically early nice and I still have it and the barcode is like punched out on the back I don't I don't know what that's thought process was there Okay, but I still have it. It's kind of fun and so I'm playing this game and it's decision-based. It's constantly saving, you know that type of situation and The save got corrupted like I lost the save I'm halfway through this game. It's maybe 8 9 o'clock at night. I'm like I Either go to bed and just restarted in the morning or I go get some Red Bull and I play it I get back to where I was and I'd cut the Red Bull I stayed up all night just to get back to where I was and I definitely would not do that now. I would say in the morning yeah, because When you're first starting out you're so you're so willing to just do everything like oh, hey Can you also do this extra page like oh absolutely? 100% I'll get on that right now. And I mean, I'm not saying that that's not how there's that eagerness is Maybe not as extreme and the urgency to get things done is kind of still there, but we also just We recognize that this is the amount of work. This is what I'm getting paid to do and you know as amazing as it is to be able to write about games and to guide people. I really love the idea of being a helpful resource, not so much reporting or being critical. There's this side of being aidful. That whole world speaks to me. I don't know. There's something really nice about providing a page, a help guide that somebody greatly benefits from and is just so thankful for right? Oh I guess the lint of my point was. Go ahead. I actually kind of had that a reminder of that recently. I'm in a different discord channel for this podcast network that I listen to, Relay FM. And I'm a member so I get in their discord and they have a games channel and someone was asking for like switch. Or Maybe it was the, I don't remember. Maybe it was the IGN Wiki, Discord. Either way, someone was saying that they were gonna play Celeste for the first time. - Ooh. - And I happened to be the one that did Celeste back when it launched, I guess. (gasps) In a weird way, I feel like I was one of the people that saw, hey, Celeste is gonna be really good and popular. Please let me do that. And I did, and that, ooh, that game. - Yeah. So I did the full story in the first round of strawberries. And I mentioned that to someone, and they said that they used the guide. And heck, I've gone back and used my own guide. I'm like, "Where was the strawberry? How do I get this?" Because you forget. You don't play a game for you. You come back to it for fun. And then, "How do I do this? Oh, yeah, I wrote this." And that's just always there's a part of it even though it's a wiki and anyone can go in there and change things and add things which is a whole it's a separate layer of the this side of the work for the most part your work is there in some form of perpetuity and as far as the internet can go I suppose and that just feels good because these games especially the bigger ones I think like You know sure we've done. I'm I'm sure both of us have done games that are probably not Getting a lot of traction even when they launched like I did Metal Gear survive That was wrong That was a rough one Yeah, I'm trying to do that. That's definitely happened. Just trying to think which ones were like that for me I have done a lot of Nintendo ones and those usually take off but not always Yeah Yeah, did you do? - Origami King? - No, so Origami King-- - I used that recently, so I didn't know if you did that one. - No, so I did my own. So I've gotten back into writing guides on my own website. And it's, I think this is part of like the know your worth thing, because I just, I'm at a place now where I, it's

just, I guess, not to get into too many details, but it's not as financially, It doesn't make sense financially to write guides for another website when I could do it on my own and it just, in general, like, my Origami King guide from last year, I did really well with that. And I think I'm like the second result on Google when you search for that. Only beaten by IGN, you know, like, it's IGN. They were gonna beat me no matter what I had. - It's, yeah, that's really. - But you know, like, I still, I benefit from that to this day. Like people still, I can go and check right now. There's probably about 10 people looking at different pages in that. I don't know, I'm out of, that's where I'm at with that with IGN Wiki. - I think that that makes a ton of sense, especially bigger games like that. It's just, this is something I think about doing sometimes too, like finding a game and doing a guy, almost doing like a guy for myself in that way. having more control of the creativity and one of the one of the things I think for writing for a big site is When a game comes out especially bigger ish games when they first come out There is a rush or you get as many pages up as possible that cover The top hit secrets trip strings try, you know all that stuff to trend on Google to generate more clicks which generates more, you know, it's a business. And there's a push. And I've definitely been guilty of ignoring friends and family, like, "Sorry, I gotta do this work." I've even—I realized this is probably a bit much, but I helped with Red Dead Redemption 2. And I went to Indiana for like a Christmas vacation break or whatever and I brought my PS4 with me. And I was like, I have to hunt this legendary cougar. Like, it has to be done. In hindsight, probably could have waited or they could have given it to someone else or whatever. But I've done my fair share of probably giving too much to just, you know, writing for other people in general, not just Wikis for IGN. I've written for Dual Shockers, and I did my fair share of commitment there, maybe over-committing stuff. And they, at the time, weren't paying or paying very little. And I understood that going in. It's not a fault of theirs. I was doing it because my friends were there, and it was a way in. And I got to go to my first PAX through them, which is great. So I understood what I was walking into. I was in my 20s. It wasn't like I was blindsided by a very tiny paycheck. Yeah. You know, but now I kind of feel like... Yeah, I know what I'm worth and I know what a guide would require of me and then, you know, so I have to pick and choose there. And the tricky thing with guides is that Sometimes you just don't know until the game's out. You don't know how long it is You don't know how much commitment is required. You know what you don't know what trends are going to Need to be covered it could be you know, the Korok seeds for example big big trend will also big big big commitment you know, or it could be just a Simple trending page on Pokemon where how to catch this one specific Pokemon That's you can do that in an hour or two. It's not a core on commitment, but equal levels of Trending right and you just you can't predict that Unfortunately as freelancers, we just don't really know how to Or are too scared to say hey like this actually is gonna be a lot more work. I Should probably be compensated for that extra work, you know, yeah, I'm fortunate Really I probably and I I just feel I Feel more comfortable saying this maybe just because the guide is it's been a while for this particular one But one of the the better ones for me on just the financial end was the Witcher 3 the Witcher I started out Ended up kind of really being the main quest person for this and then actually funny story they really wanted me to get to the final boss and I was in the I was in Skellige and They were like we really need like this end boss content, which makes sense. They need the end of the game. Yeah, and So I didn't do the main Side I didn't do the main side quest in Skellige So someone else wrote that like that was being handled by someone else But personally I never got that trophy or experienced that part of the quest So it's just this one tiny trophy in my list that's missing. I'm like I could have done that Someday I will go back and replay The Witcher 3 which is totally worth it It is I'm I'm so close to the platinum - I really just have to beat it on the hardest difficulty and collect all the cards And then I get it and I feel like that would be a good platinum to have yeah But anyway, though it turned into obviously a much bigger thing and game with other things outside of the main quest and they They compensated me for that extra work and then I helped with the first DLC as well So like the Witcher actually turned into like a substantial guide not just both just some work But for a return for myself and then I was always thankful to do a telltale one because that Had a set rate per episode. Mmm, so you could count on at least five You know chunks there. So that those were always kind of the better returns But you know,

Zelda, Breath of the Wild is pretty big. Metal Gear Survive, just because that game is so bad. And at the time, and this was a personal problem, sounds harsh, but we had a new puppy at the time. And so I'm trying to play a game that involves RNG and like, I have to commit to it to it until I get the certain monster quest thing and this puppy needs my attention. It's two things pulling at me and I was just like come on come on. Oh, I love that. Yeah. Yeah and so this is making me think about there's been a lot of recent talk about crunch in the games industry. Not on the media side. It's usually the media that's you know really going after the the devs and trying to investigate what's going on there and condemn all that. I find it interesting because we don't really look inward and look at some of the things we do for media. And there is a lot of extended, I don't know about unnecessary, yeah, unnecessary stretches of work that we just feel, I guess, compelled to do, we feel that it must be done. I was doing Fortnite. I did Fortnite wikis from the original season three to season eight. So all of season eight completed. - Good gracious. I can't imagine doing Fortnite. - Ugh, I mean it was fine. It's just that I was getting so sick of it, just having to do it every week and cover every event and cover every new set of challenges that were for winter or for Halloween or whatever. And I would also cover the season launches. That's just like a mega drop of new. - It's a mega dump, yeah. - And I was up from, well, I wouldn't sleep all night. I was just up all night until the next morning, just getting everything in as quickly as possible. And like, that's not very healthy. That's not good. - Not healthy at all. - So that's what this conversation is making me think of. - Yeah. I, you just, you feel a comp- it's weird, because there's a, there's a compulsion and desire. At least I have a desire to like deliver the best whatever I'm working on, the best guide, the best story. And when I look at a game that I'm working on, let's say I have like my list here, I'm kind of scrolling through of what I've worked on in the past of just um you know Cuphead. Oh I did Cuphead. Oh boy. Oh right. Hard. Yeah really hard and my roommate at the time he bought it just for fun on his PC and he was getting further than I was and I was like come on I'm the one that needs to be good at this game. This that pirate boss. When I beat that pirate boss I shouted so loud. So great. But you're really pushing it. I did. I don't know if you've ever helped with their Black Friday Wiki. Have you done that before. Did I. I know if you've done it but I've done like commerce stuff. So I did a Black Friday one year and after that I didn't do a commerce like Black Friday one again because obviously Black Friday happens during the week of Thanksgiving here in the United States and I remember Thanksgiving day and the day after and just being sucked into "they need me to do this" like because you know that's what Black Friday had turned into and still kind of is to this day and I realized what that did on me and my family that year and it wasn't fair to myself and them. And when they asked the following year I just declined. I was just like, "I can't do it this year." And obviously they understand and there are other people that are willing to do the work or can and are content with it. But sometimes there's pushman and it's weird. It's a balance of personal, like, "I have a desire to do this. I want to do this or I'm playing this game and I'm loving it. Like Breath of the Wild, I was extremely happy to play that game. Maybe the Korok Seed stuff started to wear on me a bit, but covering the dragons in that game, that was so much fun. Just living and breathing in that world, I was playing the game anyway. Sometimes there is that happy marriage of personal game time in work and writing. I remember I was fortunate enough to do God of War 2018. And I remember getting the email that I had gotten a code early. I was actually and before the game came out, I had just replayed God of War one through three. I didn't do the spin offs but I did one through three like God of War was on my mind. And I got that email and I was actually at an art show with a friend and Abby and I told them I was like I got got a war and we stayed at the art show But they could tell that I was like very excited to leave like I didn't say all right time to go You know, I finished my commitment But when I got home, I was so excited, you know yeah, and I wanted to do the best there but then there are other times where it's just I Definitely did more than I probably should have And that's just it's hard I even with personal projects I mean, I've maybe I've had the same thing. Sometimes I work too hard on personal stuff. I just get in this zone of I want to do this and get this done and be the best and Or do the best I can not be the best but this isn't Pokemon per se you know, I want to do my very best and I push myself to do that and I I've, for a long time in college especially, I really struggled with that kind

of balance. And then I took a break for two years from like podcasting and writing. And it wasn't until I started my website last year that I really kind of came back into it full swing. I needed to take a break and kind of check myself. Like, "Hey, it's okay." And I don't know if you feel the same way or you've done that for yourself in any way but People got to figure out this balance Yeah, I think it's different when you're doing something on your own you just it all relies on you and you feel like I'd like there's a sense of It's hard to put into words it's just I Know what you're talking about because I've definitely had it where like when you get into that zone when you're working on something and things are just going, they're just hitting just right. You don't stop. You don't really take breaks. You just keep going until it kind of, I don't want to say until it fades, or until you fade, until you're done. You literally cannot go on. So I've definitely experienced that. I can relate. What um, do you have like a funny guide you've done or guide story? Like I, for example, year I did the McDonald's monopoly. Oh what? That's a thing? A guy for that? Yeah Sam wanted to do it one year and so I did it. He asked me to do it. I just sent you a link but it was just... How can you say no to something like that? You have to do it. It was a one your experiment for them but like I would go to McDonald's I don't I didn't go all the time I really looked up a lot of stuff online for strategy and things like that but I went to McDonald's and when they get a coke this is so random and I love that you did this it's it's one of my favorite like I did that and stories do you have stuff like that or did you always work on like real good serious games? Well, I mean for the most part, yeah. Things I deviated from games. I did, uh, I, was it during Star Wars Celebration? I don't remember. It might, this might have been like a, around Black Friday. I did a whole list of Star Wars toys, like old ones, new ones, where can you buy them, using their commerce links, that kind of stuff. That's not very fun, but it was different. I was part of the, sometimes during E3 they rounded up people to help create new, new wikis for new announced games with just like stub articles. I did that. I don't have anything. I wish I had something like Monopoly. That's awesome. I had that. I think the coolest slash funniest things I've done was Monopoly. And then do you remember when hit man? The I guess the reboot of hit man was actually episodic. Do you Do you remember that? - I do, yeah. - So I did the first three episodes of that. They didn't, as far as I know, maybe they did. Maybe they went to someone later. But as far as I was only the first three, like they canceled the contract after that because their hitman content was promoted for with someone at that time. So I got sucked into actually help write scripts for one of their like tips shows. And I had never written a script, at least for someone else to read. So they helped me workshop it a bit, but there is a video out there with Naomi Kyle saying a really bad joke that I wrote, like really, really bad. It makes me cringe to this day. - Do you remember it? - I forget exactly. It was something like psychological torture, or like it was along those lines. I remember the kill, you dressed up as a witch doctor and like poisoned this person in the Italian. level. The Sapienza. Like I remember the kill and exactly what the setup was but the joke was there I'll put a link to it in the show notes but it was something about like committing psychological torture and I think the victim like it involved of their parents somehow so there was a really bad it was really cringy and she said it and I just I've eternally felt bad for that and if I had ever Matt Naomi I would apologize not that she would remember because she's probably you know, she's done a million videos sure You know, they're probably One cringy hitman joke probably didn't make an impact on her life, but it certainly did on mine Yeah, I mean, but here's the thing someone I'm sure someone looked over your script. It's not like they oh they did Sean it was been Sean Finnegan was there and and Dustin Ligarey like people looked at it They loved it. It went through and it was approved but it I think it was really bad I'm gonna have to you'll have to send a link. I'm gonna have to I'll find it in person or see it in video form I so I'm still thinking of anything that's fun So no, nothing as cool as that but I do have some stories of where things went like really bad I mean those can also be fun in hindsight my worst wiki And I always say this whenever anyone asks me was my monster hunter for wiki. I just I could not get into that game. It just never clicked. And if you're writing a guide for it, that's that is bad. It needs to click. You need to know what you're doing. And I think by the end, like I had a grasp of how everything worked and how what to tell people to help them. But man, I just did not enjoy like I had a terrible time. I dreaded it every time I had a boot up that, it was on a 3DS by the way, so

think of Monster Hunter on a little tiny screen like that. - Oh my gosh. - Every time I turned it on, just nauseous, every time I had a riot, it was terrible. I don't know if, I'm pretty sure I finished it. I don't know if I completed all of it. It's weird, sometimes you, there's never like a point where you just, you're officially done. There's always something extra. There's always one little, maybe an extra page you forgot to do or, oh, there's an update. Things have changed, you continue, I don't know. It's unclear sometimes. - There's never a, well, actually sometimes there's a, now you're done, but sometimes it's kind of just vague and you're like, I feel like it's done now. - Exactly. I did the final boss, so is that it? - Does this count? Usually yes in my book, but not so much in everyone else's book. - I would agree. How did you get capture on the 3DS? - Oh yeah, so before I even did Wikis for IGN, I discovered this person who was selling 3DS capture cards that you would attach to the bottom of your 3DS and I mean, it would like hook into your game. So I wouldn't attach it. I had to send my 3DS in to some guy in Utah, the guy that was doing this, and he would unscrew the bottom of the 3DS, attach this extra capture card on, has a little USB output thing, and then they send it back and you just plug it in and it works. - That's actually really cool, I'm jealous. - I think, honestly, I think that's part of why Sam was interested in having me on, I had my Paper Mario and Luigi's Mansion guides and they had these nice images that even they didn't have access to that kind of stuff. So I think that was part of it. Yeah, being able to capture, especially odd, or not odd, odd's hard, not the right word, difficult hardware or difficult games, definitely makes it more enticing. That was kind of why I talked to Jared Petty about the Hitman Go one at the time, because recording on the iPad was easiest if you had a Mac, which I had/have at the time. And so that made it a bit more enticing, but if you could really capture a 3DS or Vita, I've gone through a PSTV rabbit hole lately, and just figuring out how to get that stuff out to the TV is Fascinating if you can capture it makes it even more enticing. Yeah, I recently put homebrew on my my 3ds and my Wii U and Part of the community there that people have figured out a way to basically stream The 3ds screen to the Wii U Which then would allow you to capture it. It's incredibly laggy like it's not Feasible for production purposes or even like game streaming on Twitch or something, but it is kind of cool To see Super Mario 3d world on the TV Which is fun. So hopefully, you know that community could keep going because 3ds capture as far as I'm aware is kind of like Reduced like the that product doesn't really it's harder to get that now. Yeah. Yeah, I Remember was katsu kitty I think was in Japan. She was doing a lot of or they I should say was doing a lot of it and That in the Vita but believe Japanese law like changed the laws surrounding Modifying consoles and that had to go away. Unfortunately. Oh, wow. I did was not aware of that I do remember there was either the guy in Utah or Something going on and in Japan. That's all I remember Yeah, there was a my life in gaming video where they talked they went to Japan and talked about 3D, uh, Try got one at his 3DS modified and then shortly after that that business shut down because of the loss in Japan It was actually it's quite a bummer but yeah, I I've always wanted to capture like the the the 3DS and DS are always alluded me as capture for really it's just Point a camera above it and go but that's not as clean as having direct video output I'm very picky about that. Like I can't do that. I can't do the camera. I have to find like the direct, I gotta do it. - I'm with you. If I can't get direct footage, I don't want it. - Even things like I've seen, I've seen even on the Wikis, like the, and I understand now everyone has access to all sorts of capture cards or even the programs or whatever, but sometimes I see images that were We're not taking directly maybe a videos playing on your screen and you kind of have to clean like crop it out of your desktop And that's your image and like that stuff drives me crazy. I can't do it if it's not like all uniform 1280 by 720 whatever the resolution is Like it I don't know. I'm very very specific with stuff like that. And that's part of why it's nice when you do your own guides Outside of another company you get to like stylize the everything the the graphics the whole layout it doesn't have to fit in the wiki format you can put images where you want them to fit you can optimize them for mobile just like you want them it's that stuff yeah so what's your favorite part of making a guide oh what's my favorite part Um, all the tedious stuff, the very um, like getting the images and this is I'm going into what I don't like apparently. I don't like doing the very tedious stuff okay like the gathering all the images and renaming files and uploading them and inserting them into the wiki

that's really that's a very turn your brain off kind of moment you just have to get it done. I guess my favorite part would be I really do like making location lists so I'll do a walkthrough whatever and you'll find I Play an uncharted you find your little treasures whatever and you put them scatter them through the the wick you're right, but when you make a list and a location list of all I Don't want to use 900 Korax as an example. That's terrible. I don't want to do long list But I think I did Mad Max. There's like a hundred historic relics or something. I don't know Doing that list when it comes together seeing a page like that come together Having it nice and easy have links that at the top that will jump you to different sections The images are nice and clear locations are easily identifiable that kind of stuff I makes me so happy because I Imagine myself as someone who just looked it up is on this page. And like, how quickly will be able to get the information they need? And if the answer is pretty quickly and pretty easily, and they could understand it, then great. I love that great feeling. I think that's my favorite. Yeah. When a page comes together, there's just a feeling of, "I did it." Not only is, like, how to get this artifact, like, answered, the raw question answered, but it looks good while telling that information and it's clear and communicates it. Oh, I love it. I always liked logging my... So I'm sure our processes are, I'm 100% sure different in the way that we do things. But toward the end, I really kind of found a system that I enjoyed where my particular capture setup, I would just record long chunks And I would write in a notebook what I was doing with time stamps. And then I could go back into the video and if I was looking for like in God of War, uh, Odin's Raven number 27, I would have a timestamp for myself that I could go back and just find that screenshot rather quickly. And I liked organizing that information on my end. And maybe that was just cause it made production easier. But. For me, I, I enjoyed that. Which I enjoy organizing the information. Okay. On the page, on my end, I just like being able to find what I'm looking for quickly. And that makes me feel good. Like I did it well. Yeah. One of my- and the inverse of that is one of the saddest things is I just don't have- I didn't have the external hard drives at the time. And so I don't have any of my footage. Like I don't know if you keep your your raw footage and old stuff, but I I don't have any of it anymore. Oh, no, I'm a bum feel bad. I would have to have like dozens and dozens of terabytes to keep up. Yeah, I know it. Part of me enjoys having my first time through playing a game in a weird way. It's almost like a video diary of just how I approached it. And I wish I could have kept some of that stuff. But obviously you can't because it's just, it's so massive. - Yeah, it's not weird 'cause I relate to that. I think I maybe start or just wanted to kind of compile everything into one large video, low quality and then upload it somewhere just so it exists. - I did that for Death Stranding. - Well, and that's a cool thing that you did that. can look back at it and I mean you probably will never look back at it but just knowing it exists that's cool. Yeah I didn't do the guide for that that was that was just me playing the game before the last was part two came out I needed kind of something to occupy my brain and so I finally went back to that game and fell in love with it but also at the time I had gotten a new capture card and so I wanted to play with that. It's the the Elgato 4k 60. It's the standalone one. They have such a long name but it's the one that you can just plug in and it records right to an SD card. Yeah. Do you know that one? So it didn't require me to use my computer to capture which was great for playing personally. So I would just every time I played Death Stranding I recorded it and then at the end of it all I took it all and put it down into a five minute video and watching Death Stranding at like 5,000% speed is pretty hilarious. Oh, that's what you mean by five minute video. Oh no. Oh, I put the whole game. No. Oh yes, the whole thing. That's actually kind of cool. It's kind of like Breath of the Wild's like, "Here's where you've been." Yeah, the little map detail thing. It's unlisted video. I probably should just list it for kicks and giggles. There's no music because YouTube copyright is weird and I get scared of that very easily. But it's... I thought I had a lot of fun with that. Oh no. I'm looking at it now. 25 hours. That's no good. How do you watch this? Part of me wants to know what would happen if I took that video, put it back into Final Cut and then slowed it down 5,000% like what would happen to the video quality and detail and stuff. I'm sure it would just be absolutely crap. There have to be like chunks completely just gone. Missing. Like frames that just could not exist anymore. But it's a lot of, I had a lot of fun with that. I want to do that with more stuff I think. I think that would be a funny, honestly that's probably a really funny video series that that

would work out really well and I just haven't done that and maybe that's my million dollar idea. I'm just sitting on it. - And this could be your test run. - It's just been sitting unlisted on my channel for over a year. Well, almost a year. I did it June of last year is when that video was published. - It's not too late, you got time. - I got time. So I do want to-- I feel like I've been generally negative about this whole process. We've gotten into a lot of things that were not the most positive, not the most exciting to talk about. Is it OK if we talk about some things that we had a great time with, guide-wise? Oh, of course. Maybe our favorite guides. Oh my gosh, yes. Because you're right. We've probably been a little more negative than I even really originally intended. - I'm sorry, I let the charge in. - No, it's like I mentioned at the top of the show, I've never talked to another freelancer about this. None of my friends that also write video game news or for websites and stuff have really done guide work like this. I think I have some friends that have done guides in the sense of BuzzFeed-y click style articles of how do you do this thing with Arnold Schwarzenegger and Mortal Kombat? Like, you know, very-- I mean, honestly, that would be a page in a wiki at IGN. But no one I know has done the full scale of it. And so, just being able to talk about that with you, you know, probably unearthed a lot of the-- man, this is-- it's a lot of work. But it's also a lot of fun. please share the stuff you love. Yeah so I've done one of the big highlights through I want to I have to count but I'm pretty sure I've done minimum 50 full guides over the course of six or seven years and throughout throughout since 2013 I've been a part of the Pokemon guides every every major release starting with X and Y and then what is it Omega Ruby yeah and whatever the whole thing most recently with sword and shield Oh Alohian something Sun and Moon yeah and those those have always been I just I like when it's a big wiki when it's a collaborative effort not just those are fun especially when there's like communication right so when I did which one would it have been I I think it was Sun and Moon. I don't know if you had a chance to work with Casey, for example. So I worked with Casey on Pokemon Sun and Moon when she was still a freelancer, and we were like going back and forth, constantly communicating what we're working on, and hey, let me help you with this, or vice versa. And I don't know, when there was like a team effort, it just felt, I wanna do something besides good, but it felt really good. It felt like an actual, My desire has always been to be a part of some kind of team, some kind of group, you know, freelance life. As much as I've enjoyed my time in it, I've always looked for something more. So whenever I got to experience that in the Wiki sense, that was always just a really cool experience. And I had something similar with that with Sword and Shield most recently. It was another, a lot of people on this guide and we're all working together. And I just, I love that kind of stuff. - Yeah, when I worked with Casey on God of War, so I've worked with her on that. And just coordination feels good, like having a clear direction. - Yeah, yeah. - Just not, there's a focus to it. And also it kind of is liberating when you're playing the game, because at least most of the games I got to do, were ones that I personally was gonna play regardless and like really wanted to work on too but just I was gonna play no matter what and so thankfully ironically I don't know how you want to look at it for Red Dead I wasn't on any of the story content Red Dead I was all weird side mission stuff so I got to do the story frankly at my own pace and that felt really good there wasn't this rush to to be at the end so I really got a soak up Red Dead and that I feel like slightly to lean back to the negative side just for a moment sometimes you play a game you do a guide on it and then you're like I don't want to play this game again you're done with the guy and you're like I'm done with this game but then you sometimes a game is just so good or so special or you really enjoy it that you come back to it and it's still holds this sounds sappy but like that magic. Like Celeste, I've played three, four times, and it's still such just a wonderful game with incredibly tight platforming controls and just a heartfelt story and a great world. I think when that love of game—because sometimes, you know, people always say, "Oh, your job is to play video games." And sometimes you want to say, "No, I do this, this, and this." but sometimes your job really is to play a video game and that always made me happy when it turned out that was really what I was gonna do or play a game I was really looking forward to early. I still get excited when I get review codes. They're still just uh absolutely. I'm playing you know you get a you get a code early. I did I got Cyber Shadow early. Yacht was ever so gracious. Yeah, and I was like, "Yes, please. I will take this." And that game was a hoot. And

that was also under my own website, and I didn't have... I mean, I had the deadline of embargo, but I didn't have... The only pressures were my own, and it just... that stuff feels good. Videos, I love making videos for that stuff. It's good. There's so much good in it. It's not all negative. I promise Just go a little bit back to Because it's so interesting. I'm always scared when I'm about to do a guide is I'm wondering is this going to amplify my enjoyment? or is it going to amplify my My hate for this game because it usually goes one way or the other I don't often find that it's just my experience writing a guide is the same as if I played it normally I'm just looking through my list here and just looking at some of these games. I remember Yoshi's New Island, that 3DS game that a lot of people didn't like. I actually ended up liking that a decent amount because I had to find out collectibles and I was able to focus in on the things that made that game a little more challenging. I think that's a pretty straightforward game and people who played it probably, you know, were just annoyed with the aesthetic and it wasn't challenging and it was just kind of basic. of dove deeper for guide purposes. That ended up helping a lot. But then I look at things like Mass Effect Andromeda and oh no, I just remember. I see the name. I just remember doing these quests thinking, "Why am I doing this? What is the point of this? Why should I even be writing about this?" So that made it worse. Same thing with, have you heard of Agents of Mayhem? - Yeah. - I wrote a guide for that too and I just, the mission structures were so similar that I just, I didn't know what to write about anymore. And that made it suck so bad. - There are those games where it's, there are parts that are so repetitive and you're trying to think of how can I reinvent the same thing? - Exactly. - Oh, you gotta spice up the writing for your own sanity. I felt like that with Dying Light, There were these just statues to collect. There was no trophy tied to them. There was literally was, they were just statues to collect. And I was like, why am I collecting this? There's no purpose to this. But then on the other end of that, there are games, you know, like you said, that really it enriches your experience of digging in deeper. And I feel like I got that with breath of the wild and that doing a lot of the deeper side stuff that I normally wouldn't have and like just cause three I did and that was just so silly and fun and I just kept going from island I even actually used room this is maybe in hindsight this was unhealthy but I get I used my Vita for remote play while I was at my at the time girlfriend now wife's house she wasn't feeling well so she was sick and I went to like while she was awake comforted and didn't just hunt out with her spent time with her but when she fell asleep you just I'd use my Vita for remote play I didn't have to capture anything for this particular chunk of the guide so I was just flying around the island on my Vita over the internet and I paused the map and I'd write the name of the island and like all of the stats or whatever you had to do on the island and stuff and that's fun and give me an excuse to use my Vita for work yeah justify that purchase but that's a use that actually reminds me I we brought this up earlier about your process and I kind of just wanted to bring up how my process has evolved I the way I used to write my guides I would play a chunk say a level or world or whatever I would just play it on my own and then afterwards I would have that video file maybe 30 minutes maybe an hour and I would go through it and write everything down having the knowledge of everything that's happened and whatever I've since stopped doing that mainly for time-consuming reasons I do it now I will write the guide as I play so I I do one thing I've moved a couple of steps I play for one minute it and it's back to typing. I just go back and I type and I just I do it all at the same time so that once I finish the level it's it's done it's written and I have it recorded for the screenshots not doing video if I was doing video that would be a different story but yeah that you that would be unusable video that would yeah no good bad but yeah that's my process now and I I don't remember you were bringing up your process did you say that that's how you used to do it or how you currently do it with the note-taking organizing? The note-taking is kind of where I is what I would do now. You have ascended my friend. You are the guy with a hand on the keyboard and one on the controller and you're doing this. I do almost what you so I guess I'm taking notes while I play. So if I'm doing a quest getting a collectible I will and I'm recording at the same time so I'll do the thing get this go get this red coin I will do the whole thing and I'll play a little bit ahead so I have something to cut off on the end to like fade out of so I'm not just standing there at the end some sort of action to fade out in the editing process for the video and then I'll just stop moving and I'll take notes of roughly

the timestamp I'm at in the video and what that was And I develop a shorthand usually for each guide so that it's quicker on that end. Yeah. But I'll play for hours at a time. So I have a really big video file. But then that's where my timestamps come in to help me trim it up and spit out whatever video I need. Yeah. Yeah, with video, totally different situation. And then I would sit down and just go, "Fafnir's Horde." I'm thinking of God of War a lot. but Fafnir's Hoard and I will just watch, I guess, yeah, I'd watch the video of what I was doing and write out that process of just where to go, what to do, what to expect. So I guess I was doing what you used to do. Like I said, you have ascended. You're in the next plane of Wiki mastery. - Oh, gosh. Do I want to be there? I don't know but you you definitely have developed a much slicker faster process. It sounds like than what I would what I was doing I'm just more conscious of my time. Like I just I can't I can't spend Because usually if I remember Correctly, it was always like oh we expect generally two weeks to finish a game never happened. It was never done Oh that never happens. No matter what the game is. So I'm just I'm trying to scale it back That's that you're you're definitely handling the use of your time much better than I I ever did but you know guides aren't really the only thing that either of us right and you actually You've done the thing that I Didn't slash never could really do Which is you you do freelance stuff Full time right like this is your job not just guides but freelance writing correct? I'm not that's correct. Yeah So like this is your job and you so What else what else do you write about? I see your posts and stuff and you stream but how did this just stem was were wiki guides first and then News and reviews and all sorts of articles for different outlets or did wiki's kind of come in the middle I remember you were talking about, you know, Mario Party legacy But like how did you become like a regular not a regular but you know a freelance writer? Yeah, so I was I was pretty much doing wiki's exclusively for I want to say it's all about 2016 and that's around the time where I realized Hey, if you like if I want to get anywhere in this industry, I'm gonna have to I have to branch out I can't just keep doing this And so from there I started writing for other websites and I started branching it to some news and doing some reviews and features and whatever and it's it's gone to the point now where Even just with IGN not even looking at other outlets I've like just think of any kind of editorial content and I've I've done it in some fashion. I was even Doing things for social I did like a snapchat feature one time and in 2019 I was managing their homepage That lasted for about a year like I did a ton of stuff And all within that I was trying to just expand my experience. So I was writing for CGM magazine I was doing news for them for a while and then I was writing for oh Man, who else have I written for? I'm like a whole list your website has a big picture exactly I'm looking at it now. So I did stuff for Nintendo life I wrote a feature for PC gamer did some TV stuff for Collider One of these are like one-offs. So like Kotaku I did a feature one time. Oh, right I started writing for The Hollywood Reporter. That was really cool that last week. Come on. I forget that That lasted for about a year and then more recently I've been writing for a website called then TV Unfortunately, not writing for them anymore as of two weeks ago. Unfortunately, in games media or any media in general, things are not stable. Your job, your freelance work, your contract assignments, they are not there to last forever. You're always walking on thin ice. You just never know when things are just going to go poof. plenty of pitches that you know we're already in the stages of like being accepted or I've already written an article and things have just had to be killed just circumstances outside my own. So I feel like I'm going into a whole different direction but yeah I've written for those websites and I do a whole bunch of stuff yeah that's that's me. Do you like, like, do you thrive off that freelance lifestyle of just bouncing around from publication to publication with pitches all over the place? Or are you still, I don't know if you ever were working towards just finding one website and being there as a writer, editor, whatever. If that was ever your goal, I don't want to put that on you, but like, is freelance for Is this like the life you you like to live as far as writing goes or is this still just means to an end? All very good questions. I would say that Thrive is a very It's it's a big word a lot of a lot of please please we can edit any word I used I So no, I don't think I I thrive on freelancing I would say that that is not my thing I do understand that freelancing is the road to go where I want to go and yeah I do want something full-time I want some editor position you know that's all that stuff has been the goal so if I'm not doing that then I'm freelancing so it's it feels like a stepping stone to somewhere else and

it's just interesting that I'm talking to you now about this because you know once again a publication, I have to stop working with them, they shut down or whatever, whatever the case may be, and I'm just, I'm sitting here now thinking, okay, so I guess I'm just jumping to another place, and I don't know, I'm doing a lot of thinking this month, and I don't know if that is something I want to do. That's been a thing for months now, or at least a year where I've been looking at other parts of the industry. It's not just games media, there's writing in all sorts of places, there's stuff for narrative design within games, there's copywriting for different websites, there's marketing, there's community type roles, and I've been really focusing in on where could I take my games media experience and talents and fit somewhere a little more stable. Games industry as a whole, not the most stable thing, but I feel a little more comfortable working at a developer or a studio, or I'm assuming here. So that's kind of where my mind has been drawn to. And now with this most recent like, oh, you're out of work again. I'm just really honing in on that and looking, looking to see what I could do to make steps. What I could do to lead myself in that direction. I no longer remember what the question was. But here we are. I get that feeling though, of I never did freelance full time in a capacity like you. I really, my freelance was IGN and I did Dual Shockers for a bit. Um, and that was because Logan Moore was an editor there. Like I knew the guy and he brought me in and I knew a couple of other people on staff as well. And I really, my moment for me, uh, to go on a slight tangent was in college. I was, uh, you know, this was the goal. And at the time, again, following Greg Miller's advice, maybe too much to a T, was he had a journalism degree. And in my head, this makes sense. Journalism is what I should get. And at the time, UCF's journalism program really went through a lot of changes, more toward what you would expect out of a journalism degree today with media and TV and things like that. But the stuff that I wanted to do, long form written pieces, critical thinking reviews, that sort of stuff. Those courses vanished so then I got put into court. I got the degrees, the short version of it. I was fortunate enough to meet my wife and the industry as a whole is in California. That's where it is. and I'm- urinators- I don't know what the living like price-wise is like in Arizona but- Florida- yeah Florida versus California. Actually not terribly far- well actually yeah it's pretty far apart. California costs a lot to live in very tiny spaces. And it wasn't just me anymore, It was me and Abby and I had to kind of do a check of, "Hey, is this really what I want to do, or is there a way I can do this remotely?" And I really... When Danny O'Dwyer moved to the East Coast and did Noclip for a year or two over here, I really thought that was going to be a moment that proved gaming could happen outside of the West Coast. And now Daniel Dwyer's back on the West Coast, so maybe that failed. And then I thought last year with COVID and everyone working remotely, that that would also prove that maybe everyone doesn't need to be in an office in San Francisco to do this kind of work. And I don't think that has panned out as quite well as I've hoped. I feel like people still, I feel like these media companies still want people there together in person. That's interesting. I understand there's a level of serendipity in just being in person with everyone and knowing your team and working together. We talked about having that cohesive teamwork when you're working on a project. That is a valuable asset. But what are we really reporting on and writing about? Video games, movies, TV shows, all of this stuff is distributed digitally now. I've never watched, I've never done a TV review or anything like that, but as far as I understand it you're given access to a screener website, you just watch whatever it is online there, a video game they give you digitally, you download it, you're playing it at home. None of this actually really requires us to live in California. And that was kind of my moment of, "I can't afford this and it's not just me you know Abby's a part of this too and so I I chose to that was also kind of part of why I stepped away was I needed to figure out personally just what I wanted to do yeah and how I could do that and I've found that balance now of well I can just do this for myself and it's actually quite liberating because no one's telling me you need to write about this big article because it's gonna get a lot of clicks I can write about whatever I want to write about and that's fun and it can be as short or as long as I want it to if there's no minimum word count like some places typically require yeah and so when you say that you're looking at different aspects of the industry or where you can go and fit in I get it because is freelance is not dependable. That's probably the right word. You can't necessarily rely on it all the time. And if you do rely on

it all the time, you've got to have a ton of ideas. And I feel like you do have a ton of ideas and you're very good at it. And I see all the stuff that you've put out and you write, I see your tweets and things. To me, you look like a machine and a good one at that. You're not just cranking out stuff. Like I really do think that you're putting out really good work. And so that's why I kind of, that's probably why I use the word thrive. 'Cause you seem, you're excellent at it. Not seem, you are. And so, but I do understand the mentality of trying to figure out where you fit in that space. - Yeah. Okay, well number one, I wrote, that's a lot of nice things to say. So I appreciate that. That's very nice. - You're welcome. But I don't know. I guess, well, first off, I don't feel like I even do that much, really. Like, I see other people in this industry, and they just pump out stuff, quality stuff, on a regular basis. So maybe I put up a good front. I don't know. Well, if I may-- Sure. Again, I'm maybe projecting on other people, but how much crunch do you think is really there? Like if they're cranking out that much, you seem to put out a lot of quality work, I think, and it sounds like you've, you manage your time well for yourself too. At least you're aware of your time for yourself, which I think is a big step for a lot of people to begin with, so. - But I'm also just a little bit different of a freelancer just because I have the luxury of my outside sources to keep an income coming and keep me financially stable. So I have my website and those guides that I've written. I have maybe 15 guides on there that people still look at years later. And that does bring in some revenue, low amounts. But over time, that adds up. And then there's the YouTube channel that I have associated with that. And that brings in a lot of revenue. And I really don't even have to do anything for it. So I have this backbone that allows me to focus on the writing content that I want to do. So even at Venn, I had lots of opportunities to be like daily news, just constantly outputting news, but I didn't have to. So instead I chose to do, I'm going to do this weekly mobile games column because I like, I think this is an important part of the industry we need to talk about more and it needs to be spotlighted. We do. And then the history stuff, which was recent and is now gone. - Which is super unfortunate, 'cause it seriously was one of my favorite things throughout the year so far. I mean, for those listening, you whipped up, they were daily, right? Were they daily or weekly? - So the anniversaries that were included were daily, but the column was weekly. - Okay. - So I would like, on Twitter, I would say, "Hey, these are the anniversaries for this day," just to keep it relevant. And to remind people, I think anniversaries are a cool thing to celebrate. Game anniversaries. Yeah, you would go and just celebrate anniversaries of games and things that came out. You made me feel old. A lot. Yeah. And it's in a good way, though, of like, "Holy smokes." It's really scary. "Wind Waker's how old?" 20 years. Whoop. Where did you get the idea for that? So there were a couple, I think this year in particular there's a lot of anniversaries with Zelda floating around and I don't know what else was around the time. You wouldn't know there's a Metroid anniversary though. You'd have to remind me because, yeah exactly. But it was just there were a couple of anniversaries coming up that people were talking about. Resident Evil was coming up, not at that time, but I knew it was this year and I don't know, I believe that was on Game Facts, they have like a "Here are the anniversaries of the day" list and I was looking through that and I just thought it was so cool to see that, I don't know, Dante's Inferno is having its 15 year anniversary this year, like okay, that's, I actually don't remember if that was the case but it did have an anniversary recently and I think it's just cool to be reminded about these games and just to remember like hey that was actually a really long time ago or hey it's not as long ago as you thought mmm couple of my inverse I wish I wish I had this pulled up to look at but there were a couple of anniversaries that I thought whoa I thought that game was like 10 years old it's only been like four years actually and that can be good or bad depending on the game I suppose I saw I think this I think this week linked to the past had its 29th anniversary which just oh man well to me that sounds right actually well it does sound right but also it's crazy that we still talk about that game and hold it up in such high regard you know it's It's gonna be interesting with the... I mean it already happens but like the N64, Playstation 1 era, I don't know how many of those are gonna hold up and continue to hold up. Hey man, some of those games will never die. Well they won't die, but they might... they're not like the prettiest anymore. I think N64 gets a lot of flack. In some regards. It depends on what. Yeah, in the sense of they went cartridge-based and the limitations that

provided and things and I don't know I always look so fondly back on the N64 and will. Oh me too that was my that was my console I have that's like my nostalgic console I can't say anything bad about it but they're you know there are some good criticisms to to be had Looking at your controller. What happened there? - I don't know. Maybe it's my ignorant child brain, but I've always loved the N64 controller and have never had qualms with it. I even just, I just played Paper Mario for the first time through the Wii U. And I actually used an adapter into a Wiimote so I could play with a real N64 controller. And it was, I like it. I think it feels good. It works, it's just like, why is this extra arm? - The left arm that no one actually ever held? Yeah, I guess. - What games use the D-pad? I can't think of one. - Maybe Puzzle League? Maybe Puzzle League? - See, I feel like adding a D-pad for maybe Puzzle League does not cut it. I gotta admit. - That's fair. No, yes, that is fair. But I like the N64 controller. My favorite's the GameCube though. That's my favorite controller of all time. - I'm not sure which one's my favorite, but that's up there. That's definitely up there. - Feels good in the hands. - What do you call the triggers? What's the name for them? - Analog. - Oh, sure. - With the pressure. - The pressure, yeah. - I mean, they're analog 'cause there's a spring, but it does sense the pressure of, they were doing what the DualSense was doing just without feedback. Yeah, which that was another wild thing when I felt that on the dual sense for the first time. That was an Astro. Not an Astro, I was playing Spider-Man, but even then I felt it. Same thing. Yeah, it's... I can't wait to see what devs do with that controller this generation. Yeah. Exciting times. It is. It is I'd you know speaking of Dan 64 It's in you I know Well, it's in your Twitter Bio if I remember correctly, I'm hoping to remember correctly But you you sir have a big love for banjo-kazooie. I do indeed. This is true and Please tell me about your love of banjo. Well, I well, okay, so you have to understand that 50% like 60 70% of it is just this was my childhood game. I played this nonstop. I played it for hours and hours replaying the same stuff, getting through the really hard sections, failing doing it over and just imagining these worlds in in my head on my own and just thinking what's beyond the boundaries and what's like what could be added to this game I had like notebooks of ideas for new levels and the whole thing so that's why I have a love for that game in addition to it being just a really solid collect-a-thon 3d platformer right yeah looks really great for the n64 it's got great music it's got humor the characters are good. I think comparatively to something like Super Mario 64, which is really great too and plays differently as well. I think it's just such a step up in what a collectathon can be or 3D platformer, right? So I love it for all those reasons And today I love it, especially because I am very interested. And I don't want to say involved, because I do a lot of lurking. But I'm a huge lurker of N64 mods and hacks and things like that. So when I found out that Banjo-Kazooie was going to have a modding tool released that will let you edit objects and import your own levels, I became very involved in that scene and I still am to this day. So, Banjo is part of my life at least once a week, and it has been for years and years. It almost sounds like the technology is there now for those childhood notebooks full of ideas to come to fruition. Exactly. Yeah, I mean, those were terrible ideas. But yeah, Yeah, the right idea Childhood Michael if you could have told him at the time and been like hey someday You'll be able to actually make your own banjo levels on the computer and probably would have blown his little mind Absolutely 100% it would It do you I have so many questions because Recently, I've dipped my toes Into like the world of mods and just things and playing them Actually, quite frankly, it was sparked by one of your tweets last year mentioning Zelda the Missing Link, this fan game for, like, what was the idea? It was set between Majora's Mask and Ocarina of Time. And I was like, this is, this sounds really dope. How do I download this? How do I play this? So I got an N64 emulator on my computer, found the Ocarina of Time ROM, and patched the whole thing and played it. It was so much fun. I was like, "People are out here making this stuff? Crazy." So my first train of thought to try and keep this organized in my brain are the things that you make on the computer in your Banjo tools and stuff. Is that playable on real N64 hardware? So I actually get this question a lot from people. So yes, but playing on an emulator versus playing on real hardware, the limitations are different. So when I create something, I test via the computer and everything checks out and works, but I did not personally test on hardware. going to the resolution will be a lot worse and that's kind of just a given but in terms of the n64 the console itself loading up whatever it

needs to load it's get good chug it could lag more I things you won't really run into on just needs more fog more fog uh-huh yeah I'm sure I'm sure that'll just boost performance perfectly. Yeah, so the answer is probably it'll work, but it needs to be tested and then optimized if you actually want to focus on hardware. So really you just primarily is you play, you design and play for the computer. Which is totally fine. Because the closest I've gotten to designing a game would be something like Mario Maker. You know, very simple 2D tile editor. How do you as a fan and not primarily a developer, and correct me if that's not fair to say, but just how do you design for like a 3D space and doing that? To me, that sounds hard. - Well, the nice thing here is that, and I just wanna make it clear that this is all like for fun and this is just a nice little hobby that I have, which I incorporate into like, this is the thing I stream, so like, this is my thing, people like this, cool. But, so like when you say like, am I a developer? No-ish, but probably no. And it's, and I do recognize that this is, you know, this engine, this Banjo-Kazooie engine is not mine, this is a modification. That's why I prefer to use the word modification over hack, just because that's what these mods are. They are, you have the base game and you create a patch that will add and change things, but you're not actually making something of your, like you're not making a brand new game. You are modifying an existing game. - You're tweaking the things that are already there, just modifying or shuffling around to that that was part of what was interesting to me about missing link was it wasn't go here and download our game it was download this patch file and apply it to ocarina of time and it's interesting because you would think that that would be more of a like a legal problem but i think it's actually the opposite because you are just creating a patch no one's going to go after you because you made a patch for something like you what can you do with that it's when people create actual fan games and engines with ip's that are not their own those are the ones that usually get taken down so i'm trying to think of some like supermars 64 hd that was like a they created that engine to replicate downloaded that as as soon as that went up and that was good because that probably went down pretty quickly because that was a fan game same thing with uh what do you call it asm asmr too the metroid another metroid 2 remake yeah yeah same thing that's their engine and that's why it was taken down so uh so quickly uh then these rom hacks these mods it's just it's a different it's a different mentality it's a different approach and i think that's what keeps them alive it sounds almost like a just like a legal gray area that they don't companies don't seem that aggressive about pursuing and I I could be totally off base here but I feel like because Microsoft owns banjo maybe they're a bit more lax about it than one where Nintendo yeah I'm I honestly haven't checked if did you see that Metroid Prime 2d demo I did I was like oh no this is a fan yeah I suppose you have this concern my thought if I see any of this stuff I just go download it now worry about it later I haven't checked if that's still up or not if Nintendo has come and said take this down or else but with with banjo in particular I feel like you're in a safer yeah you're in better company because Microsoft seems slightly more chill about it yeah and I this is gonna sound a little silly after everything I just said, but for —okay, so to acknowledge what you just said, yeah, with Microsoft, I am less worried. I do think they are more chill, and especially with it being rare, I think rare has always been a little more supportive of things like this. I've seen some Banjo-Kazooie mods that were retweeted or liked by, well, by people who no longer work everywhere, but you know, it feels good. The people that were there when Banjo was being made. Yeah. The people that know Banjo. Yeah, so that just gives you a little bit more confidence in making sure that it's not all going to go down the drain, right? But, so what I was saying earlier, that this might sound a little silly, I... As far as my streams go, and as far as this project that I'm working on, I'm just I'm creating banjo levels. I'm modeling them on stream. I'm making cool ideas Doesn't necessarily mean I'm making something some kind of game or mod or whatever It's just a great fun thing that I'm doing. Yeah, I I think it's I think it's dope. It's it's so cool. Just that sigh Because I don't think before I really but before last year I really hadn't thought about it a lot in this sense of There are people out there remixing modifying changing games to Make new ones or new experiences and things really just escaped me really the only Fan-based projects I ever really thought of were translations and that's mostly because of the infamy with mother three She just and a few years ago. I found out like Metroid fusion has this The Japanese version of Metroid fusion has a

hard mode that the u.s. Didn't get but the English the English Script is in the Japanese game You just have to change some of the hexa really like the hex code. Yeah, I was like well I want that because I I love Metroid Metroid's. Yeah, I wish they would acknowledge Metroid So, you know, I I looked for into that and how to do that on my own and this stuff just seems Fat I'm like I'm discovering a whole new world and it sounds like you've been in this world for a while and yeah The other day I saw you were streaming Ocarina of Time 3d randomizer. Yeah, which yes ha You know, the only time I ever see that stuff is at a GDQ They'll run like a race, a link. Those Link to the Past, Super Metroid remixes, like that stuff's mind-blowing because it's an idea I personally never would have thought of putting two Super Nintendo games together and then randomizing items across both of them. How do you... That honestly playing something like Ocarina of Time randomizer sounds daunting. How do you even approach that? Like how do you get into that? Um, like, how do I go through the torture of it all? Or how did I find it? No, not how you find it, because I feel like that's just a Google search away and sinking your teeth in. Just more, you get the gumption to be like, I'm going to do this. Well, okay, so randomizers. First off, I love randomizers. But they only work for games that you really, you know, you know, pretty well, Ocarina of Time, I know pretty well. I know where all the items are located, I know what the general structure of every temple and dungeon and where the minigames are and things like that. If you don't know that, then Randomizer's probably not going to be the best for you. What's cool is that you take this game that you know so well, that you love, and that you could quickly breeze through on a normal playthrough because you just know it all. Then you throw in the randomizer mix and everything gets swapped around. You're at the start, you're in Kokiri Forest and you go to the chest where the sword's at and you open it and you actually get the hookshot. And you're, "What? What am I supposed to do?" And then you're out here running around without a sword, but you have this hookshot that you can't use, but you also got the Lens of Truth in the Great Deku Tree and you can use that? But it's just, I love the concept of that. And you can adjust how intense of a randomizer you want it to be. I did it with almost all the settings. So it's, I'm at a point now where I just, I don't know what to do. I've completed the Spirit Temple and the most of the Water Temple and Forest Temple. I haven't finished Jabu Jabu yet. I just, I don't have access to it yet. I still need to find Rudo's letter to get past the Zora king. I love being able to play dungeons backwards. Like I got into the fire temple and I already had the hammer. So I was already like blasting away blocks that you could not access until the end of the dungeon. I did that the first thing I did was break those blocks. So I just, I love taking something that you know so well and either creating something new out of it reinventing it in a way that makes it interesting again and that's what these randomizers do, that's what these mods do, and I think that's why... because you'll see people post about some cool mod and then you'll get comments about like "Why don't these people just make their own game? Why are they using this IP?" and to a degree they're right that they probably should make something on their own. If they have these creative ideas and can implement them, they should try to do something on their own, but there is something special and something that you can't reproduce on, I don't know if "reproduce" is the right word, but like replicate with your own unique work. There's just something different about taking like a childhood game, taking a Zelda and making something that's your own out of it. I really love this whole world. I love this stuff so much. Something you just said actually reminded me of this story about another Metroid 2 remake, Return of Samus. You know, that point of, "Why don't these people just go out and make their own game?" And that depends on the individual and what they really want out of this, but I do remember that the creator of AM2R actually now works at Moon Studios and was working on Ori and the Blind Forest. Isn't that awesome? awesome What a perfect fit as far as just that genre of a Metroidvania Mm-hmm and going to actually work on Arguably one of the great modern Metroidvania's. Yeah, it is to To be fair. I've not played the blind forest. I've only played will the wisp but will the wisp was incredible Yeah, it's you know, you got it. Yeah, and that's just That's kind of a really worked out really well sort of in the end for for them and I love that it's so Did is there a banjo randomizer like do your two loves Crossover at all. There's actually somebody working on a banjo randomizer. It's not It's not a stable condition, but I don't know how that one would work. That one might be a little

frustrated. What? I'm it's been a long time since I've played Honestly, I never so I've never I never owned Banjo or to eat for the N64. No but I played it because neighbor kids had it and I go to their house and I would play so I played it as a kid on the N64 mostly - II that's the one I like the most and I Love Tui and now it's really expensive to get those games on the system. And I'm I still look for him all the time but I digress The one I actually really played the most was Grunty's revenge on the Gameboy Advance. Oh, oh wow. Okay That's that's what I still have that one and then I never played Nuts and Bolts But then I of course own it on Xbox now through I actually have rare replay like the disc. I Yeah, I feel like it's weird to say you own an Xbox game now because everyone just seems to have game pass I just I I'm having trouble remembering Because the idea of a randomizer really well, you can correct me if I'm wrong in my head a randomizer is just shuffling the items but are they shuffling doors and like where you go to Some randomizers let you do that, but that's like chaos edition. I don't know if you Because I'm trying to think of what items Banjo would mix up on you. That's the thing. I'm really out of items Right, he had eggs. Well, that's what you could do you could because there's a hundred notes in each level, but there's also Collectibles that you don't really have to collect like eggs feathers and things like that. So you could swap those so notes are in places where an egg collectible might be so that would make it kind of different but Beyond that, I don't know. You probably have to focus more on mixing up enemies. This enemy should not be in this world, but here it is. Mixing up maybe moves, that would make it too complicated, I don't know. It works better with games that are more... I don't want to say bandages are linear, but I would say... Well, I don't know. They have a structure. It's like, you need this to open this door. Right. Or go here, type of thing. The thing with Zelda is that if you get an item early, you might be able to access a different location early as well. In Banjo, if you learn a move early, well, that move's not relevant until world seven, so it's kind of pointless. So that one's tricky. That one's a little tricky. And just to make it clear, when you do these randomizers, when you compile your randomizer for the first time and you create your seed, your version of the game that's unique to you, these items that have been randomized, it's actually random and you're not playing a version that somebody else is playing. When this happens, the randomizer follows a logic so that you cannot like soft lock or you cannot just end your game because happenchance says so, right? There is always something you can do. And I'm at a point right now in this randomizer where I've been streaming and I actually don't know what I'm going to do on Friday. I'm out of ideas. I don't know where else to look for additional items. I've been going through all the grottos. I've been doing the mini games, the gold scullilla tokens. I've been trying to find everything and I don't know what else to do. But the answer is somewhere. It's not that the game's broken like I hit a dead end. It's not like it randomly put what you need behind a spot you can't get to. Exactly. There is... so that would actually, that would instill confidence in me. That's how I approach some puzzles like in a game. There's a reason, there's a solution here somewhere. I've just not seen it. And maybe I need to step away and figure it out or look up a guide. That's what we're there for, right? Do you play these on real hardware, kinda to tie back to your mod and stuff, but is this on your, like for Ocarina of Time for example, you're playing the 3D version, is that on your 3DS? It's not. Or is it on your computer? It's on my computer, but it's mainly, it's funny that I'm about to say this because I'm playing a randomizer, but I don't like wasting time. I'm not a big fan of like doing really tedious stuff or just in a video game if I have to redo a whole section because I died at the end like that stuff will drive me bonkers, right? But with playing on the computer there's some nice tools that let you just speed up the game so if I have to run across Hyrule Field I just click a button and I'm zipping through and I'll have to do that whole thing. So that's mainly why I want to play on computer. But there are people who play on hardware, and it's more authentic that way. Yeah, first of all, I totally get not wanting to redo things. At a certain point, you're just like, I get it. I got to walk here, or I got to do this again. So I totally get that. But there's still a part of me-- and maybe this is loosening up. Because I recently, like earlier this year, kind of went on a mission to back up as much of my video game save data as possible. So like my GameCube memory card, I still need to figure out my PS2 memory card. But you know, my Wii, the Wii U is currently hopeless as far as 3DS, just figuring out how to back up saves in games. So I, that's

why I put homebrew on my 3DS, was so I could copy all of my DS games, and technically 3DS games, but they're a bit bigger and my computer can't run them. But I have now, you know, digital copies of all my DS games with the save data, all my Game Boy games with the actual save data, and I like having some sort of immortalized digital copy of my actual physical game, not just something I googled online and pulled from the internet. You know, it's the thing I actually own and I enjoy that. And so in my head, I do always enjoy running off real hardware when I can. I think that's why I like controllers so much. give are the physical way you connect with the game and there's a level of this is one like when I said I played Paper Mario and I used an adapter to play with a real n64 controller it just felt more authentic to me even though I know I was playing an emulated version of the game because Paper Mario is like a \$90 game it's just not yeah financially feasible to go out and buy these things. That's probably partially why I haven't really sunk my teeth into banjo in my adult life because it's on Xbox now and in my head I just can't get over the fact that it's not an N64 controller. I know that sounds really dumb but in my my brain it just doesn't feel real and I've honestly I've looked up ways to hook up an N64 controller somehow to an Xbox. I've been unsuccessful in these endeavors. But that's why I'm so fascinated by real hardware versus software and stuff because I just, it tricks my brain into thinking it's more real, even though logically I know it doesn't matter. The game is the game. Like, use what you want to use. Well, in Banjo's defense, for at least the Xbox versions, well they are the Xbox Live versions so they are technically the Xbox Live games. So you can look at it that way. Maybe I just have to trick my brain even harder. I never played Nuts and Bolts. Do you have a soft spot for Nuts and Bolts? So I've tried playing it twice and it, I'm sure it's a great game. It's just, the game starts off here like in Spiral Mountain and you see all your characters and you're in this new big open world and you get to the first level and they're like race to that bunny over there with his car and it's, every time I get to them my interest drops so quickly. You can't trick me with this banjo game and then throw me into a racing game. I can't do that. I'm sure it's a fine game though, on its own. How stoked were you when Banjo was announced for Smash Brothers? Very exciting. I don't get excited too often. One of the cool experiences I've had working with IGN is that during... actually three times, three times I got to go to their war room during E3 where everyone's in there and got the table set up and the laptops and everything and you get to watch these press conferences live with all these people and everyone's just getting so excited and cheering and you know it's just all this commotion and what have you. And I don't know, I'm not really that person. I do get excited, but I have my own way of showing my excitement, so I'm not hollering over here when something happens. I'm just like, I kind of look and I might even smile. I might even let that out. But when Banjo was announced, and this time I was not in the war room, I was just watching on my own. When Banjo was announced, I'm pretty sure I like audibly yelled something. then immediately did some Twitter stuff and then immediately talked to my friends and just was in shock. It was a shock. I mean, it was no longer in the realm of impossibility at that point, but it was still a really big deal when it happened. And it— Jared: Oh, yeah. Matthew: What a moment. And then that was not long after that was followed up with Breath of the Wild 2. So, it was a big day. It was like I remember that I was at my desk You know how to eat three on one monitor and work on the other and I had I'm in my cubicle at the time and I have to like Silently can I had I had to be quiet. I had to contain myself when especially when breath of wild 2 came up I That was a really Hard Shift there of my own fault. I could have waited till I got home maybe I Saw you have the banjo amiibo and I have it I I just want to say it's honestly it's probably my favorite amiibo is so beautiful made. Yeah That's great. I love it so much. I Have one one little minor minor gripe because the whole thing is beautiful But I just I don't like the shape of the jigsaw piece in the actual games. It's like It's more. What's the word not vertical, but it's the lines are just very 90 degrees this one's more curvy and more exaggerated and It's not right Maybe it's from Nuts and bolts I Don't think so actually Come on Sakura. I thought you were a man of detail Exactly That's the only but the other amiibos great beautiful. Yeah, I love it. It's good-looking well, I think that was really kind of everything I specifically wanted to talk about and we've I Think we've been doing this for two hours now if my work I forget exactly when we started so I don't I don't want to take up any more time your evening tonight But thank you so

much Michael. This was a blast. I really had a ton of fun. I Am shocked that it took us this long to talk in person. I I yes, I'm especially some of the guides that we overlapped on like him I Imagine if we had done this so much sooner we could have had some of that coordination We were talking about earlier that we enjoyed like no really and it's good to connect with like if you're a freelancer and you're out there listening like connect with people it's It's absolutely worth it. I'm actually I'm very bad at social media, and I try I try to be on Twitter and interact It's not easy for me, but I think it is worth it to have a community to have people that you can Well, this is what I end up doing a lot, but to vent to because it can be frustrating It could be a frustrating industry and it could be very challenging and you can put yourself down a lot So having the support of other people is really important. So So I'm glad we're talking after six years or seven years or whatever me too Please go ahead and plug away my friend The floor is yours. Please tell people where they can find your work and all sorts of stuff Well right now I'm kind of like in this weird limbo of where I work I might Might have something happening with game spot. I'm have my fingers crossed So maybe there but well, we'll see how that pans out but for stuff that's actually consistent I am on twitch a stream every Monday Wednesday and Friday Wednesday are those banjo-kazooie streams where I model the level and people watch me work on it They give me comments and and tips and it's it's cool. It's a cool thing that's at That's how my username super Zambezi Z a n b e z i and that's the same thing for my Twitter So it's really just those two Twitter and twitch. That's mainly where you'll find me perfect, I'll throw links to the Both of those in the show notes so people can click and check that stuff out For those listening that want to see more of my work. You can head over to max frequency .net and check that stuff You know what I'm blogging and writing about over there and then follow me on Twitter at Max Roberts one four three And until next time I just thank you so much Michael and bye everybody.