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Max Roberts

Hello everybody and welcome to the Max Frequency Podcast. I am your host Max Roberts and joining me this time returning my friend, the professor himself Scott White. Hello Scott, how are you?

Scott White

Doing well, Max! So good to talk to you again. It's been a minute, so it's good to nerd out a bit with you again.

Max Roberts

It is... Oh yes, it has been a minute. It's been just over a year, around a year. You were on episode 19, a big badonk, badonk, badonk, badonk. I don't know, that's what I called

Scott White

Yeah, we'll go with that. We'll go with that.

Max Roberts

the episode. That's what I called it. It was a January of 23. We were talking about Mega Man, Battle Network Legacy Collection. That was the hotness getting

Scott White

So good. So good. And there's been so, like, I don't know if you've been keeping up with, like, the fan community of Balanetwork, but like, random, like, Japanese cell phones were discovered to have the, like, thought-to-be-lost digital, like, Phantom of Network and Legend of Network games, and they just, like, a week or two ago they released the fan-translated versions of them that you can play.

Max Roberts

ready to come out. I did, I saw this.

Scott White

And it's like, "Whaaaaat? That's so cool!"

Max Roberts

It is awesome. I remember, not those obviously, because I didn't realize they existed, but I remember freaking out about that with Kingdom Hearts and Coded.

Scott White

Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts

Kingdom Hearts Coded, a Japanese cell phone game, and then obviously that got brought over to the DS eventually, but they had some really... Do you ever remember God of War Betrayal, the cell phone game? It is canon. They count it.

Scott White
I... do not.

Max Roberts
There was an FAQ on the God of War website and it says, "How many God of War games are there?" and they gave the number or whatever it was at the time. And if you tally it all up, it includes Betrayal. It canonically counts and Sony acknowledges its existence. It's so very goofy.

Scott White
Really? That... that's really... now, kind of just because we're going off on random tangents, did you hear about the, like, huge fan kind of mod for Kingdom Hearts 358x2 Days that someone had made using a special, like, modded version of Citra, which is, like, the-- or not Citra, but Melon.

Max Roberts
Mm-mm. Third yes. Oh, Melon, yeah, yeah.

Scott White
Uh, Melon is DS. That gives, like, 358x2 Days widescreen support, they make it a single-screen game, they do all this stuff to it, to make it, like, a game you can play on your PC and stuff.

Max Roberts
No, but this sounds... That sounds incredible.

Scott White
I only-- I know, I only found out about it earlier this week, but since we're talking about, A, you brought up Kingdom Hearts, and fan things, and random mobile things, I figured this would fit, so...

Max Roberts
I did. It is 358 over 2. That was a game I obsessed over, both preview cycle and the

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
game itself. I still have the cover issue of Nintendo Power with it, you know, that iconic Kingdom Hearts art that just is so captivating. I reread

Scott White
Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts
that interview over and over and over and over and over and over again. And then I got the game, so I went on a cruise here. This actually all ties together. This is beautiful. So ironically, the day we're recording this, which is I

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
believe the 29th of May 2024, this is the 16-year anniversary of the very first

Scott White
Yep.

Max Roberts
podcast I ever published, ironically. And I bring that up because one of my co-hosts on that show, I was, I don't know, 12 at the time, he and his family, they invited

Scott White
Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts
me on a cruise. I had never met this person before in my life. And for some reason my parents let me go. I don't know. But anyway, my parents gave me money and I flew to Louisiana to meet them and we stopped in like a mall or whatever and so I took the money, meant for souvenirs and trinkets, and I went to a GameStop and I bought Kingdom Hearts and WarioWare DIY and my mom was

Scott White
Ohhh, okay.

Max Roberts
disappointed that I spent all my money on video games instead of knick-knack trinkets. But I still have Kingdom Hearts. I do not have WarioWare, which I do kind of regret, but I still have Kingdom Hearts.

Scott White
And let's be real, you would have pitched, or lost, those Knick-Knack trinkets by this point.

Max Roberts
I have nothing left from, because I did get a couple of tiny things, but none of that is still around. But I still have Kingdom Hearts, so who's the winner? And I remember playing it on the ship. One time I couldn't sleep or something, it was the middle of the night, and I went out on deck and I had my DS with me and I was alone on a cruise ship playing Kingdom Hearts. So I have a fondness for this game and it's such a shame that when they redid everything they didn't eventually make a playable version of it. It's still just cutscenes in this HD era.

Scott White
I was gonna say that, it's like, it is such a shame that this didn't get the Re Chain of Memories upgrade treatment, granted that was a PS2 game, yada yada, but like... Come on now. Come on.

Max Roberts
It feels more important than ReCoded to get the HD, but again, this is

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts

me assuming game development ease, but they both were on the DS, those games, so I imagine the asset crossover is very similar. So if you bring one up, I assume bringing the other up isn't too big of a leap. But anyway, 358.

Scott White

Well, Re Coded was just a video, too.

Max Roberts

Right, but I was saying if you brought it up from the DS, but I guess you'd have to rebuild everything anyway, because you're not taking those DS assets. None of it.

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

It's such a shame though, man. This game was so cool. It was like, you can play as

Scott White

It really is.

Max Roberts

the organization and it had multiplayer. I remember this, I was terrible at the

Scott White

Multiplayer.

Max Roberts

time, but I was at Dual Shockers in my one and only PAX I went to, which was 2019 PAX East, and Chris Combendio, big Kingdom Hearts fan, they invited me, like

Scott White

Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts

we came up with the idea to play together to bring our DSes because we both had never played the multiplayer in 358. But I was in a funk the night that we decided to play, so I was a little rude, and I think I apologized, and if not this is my public profession, an apology to you Chris, but I was a little short and not the nicest person. I think I was having a little PAX funk. It

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

happens. So, but we did play it, and it's so goofy that, alright goofy was

Scott White

It is.

Max Roberts

probably a poor choice of words there, but you can play as Mickey Mouse in, I believe in his organization cloak, but you can play as all the organization members, which is so cool. It's, what a good game.

Scott White

Mm-hmm. You can play as Sora. I think Sora and Mickey are, like, unlockable characters.

Max Roberts

[Mumbling] Unlockable 358 over two characters. That's a Google search that will work. Oh look, IGN NDS cheats. What a deep cut here.

Scott White

As well as Riku, Donald, Goofy, the King, and Sora.

Max Roberts

Nice. I remember Mickey and thinking that was very silly. Oh my goodness gracious. Well, since the last time we spoke just over a year ago, you've become a dad.

Scott White

Yeah. I have.

Max Roberts

Congratulations. Welcome to the club.

Scott White

Yeah. Oh, thank you so much. Yeah, it's been a, it's, I know, it's been fun. He's ten months old, little Oliver.

Max Roberts

It's the best.

Scott White

Crawling and borderline walking and babbling and smiling all the time. He's just, he's a joy. The baby babbles are some of the funniest and cutest things I've ever heard. But yeah, it's great.

Max Roberts

Mm-hmm. They're the best sounds. It is, kids are really a joy. I love it. Eloise is, I just say a year and a half. I'm not one of those by the month dads. I

Scott White

Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts

just, now that she's a, she's over a year, I'm just doing it every six months. So she's a year and a half, but she'll be two in September, and she's, she's this close to like forming sentences that are coherent beyond just pointing and saying

Scott White

Oh, wow.

Max Roberts

a word for a thing. And her latest skill is, we seem to have identified most barnyard animals both by appearance and sound they make. So we have fun throwing

Scott White

Ooh.

Max Roberts

little barnyard animals and she goes and retrieves them and then mimics the sound of them. But I'm trying to teach her that, that donkeys, they don't say "hee-haw," they say in the morning I'm making waffles. And I'm trying to get her to, which is very difficult for a two-year-old, and then I'm trying to get her to, for ducks instead of "quack quack," or she would say "wack wack ack ack." Don't have quite the cue

Scott White
Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts
sound down. Do you have any grapes is kind of what I'm trying to teach her.

Scott White
[chuckling]

Max Roberts
We'll see if those stick in the long run. But as someone who's slight, like what, oh gosh, let's just ballpark it and say a year ahead, give or take a few months.

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
A year ahead in dad, daddom. I at least know that since having a child my game-playing has completely changed, like my habits in time. I'm kind of curious

Scott White
Yeah. Yeah.

Max Roberts
where you're at, which is the balance of dad mode and then personal game mode.

Scott White
Mm-hmm. So for, it really depends, like, when I'm reviewing a game or I'm doing something that will help me pay for daycare,

Max Roberts
Yeah.

Scott White
my wife is exponentially more open to me playing games, especially for longer stretches of time. But outside of that, it's, I still have a couple hours a night, but it's like, I don't, I'm in this weird rut where

Max Roberts
Yeah.

Scott White
nothing, I'm not getting that, like, big draw to play something. Like, I'll play, like, portable games. I have a whole new appreciation for games I can play laying in bed or remote play, things like that. But I'm kind of just, like, in a "I don't know what I want to play" kind of mood, unless there's, like, a big game, like Final Fantasy VII Rebirth or 16 or Trails coming out. Like, unless it's, like, a big game that I'm really looking forward to, I'm just kind of like, "Okay." With working, so I do a lot of computer work and working in the Unreal Engine for my normal job, so

when I get done, unless I have something, like, I'm reviewing or doing guides for, I honestly kind of turn away from the screen and I'm reading a lot more.

Max Roberts
Yeah.

Scott White
It's like reading for fun. And that's kind of how I end my nights. With the unknown of when Oliver will wake up at night, I kind of go to bed or start shutting down early, where,

Max Roberts
Hmm. Yeah, you're shutting down.

Scott White
like, so right now we're recording this around 9 o'clock and usually I would be like, "Okay, I'm in bed, I'm reading at this point." And, yeah. But it's like I still get those, like, when I'm at work or just sitting around, it's like, I wanna stream. I wanna play games. But it's like I'm not drawn to, like, one game. It's almost like analysis or analysis paralysis or, like, too many options to play. But, yeah, it's like I play when I can, when I feel like it, or when I'm doing it for work.

Max Roberts
Yeah. That's where I've mostly found myself over this last year and a half,

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
with chapter select being kind of the primary kicker to play a bunch of games.

Scott White
Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts
And it just so happens that the games that we were playing when we had Eloise and since then our big series with Resident Evil, which we talked about

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
together and then Pokemon, which are big and beefy, we finished those and now we're in this Metroid and Castlevania season of life. But so far this year

Scott White
Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts
we've kind of, Logan and I have taken a bit of a pot, like almost like a summer vacation. He's finally played Elden Ring, which I've wanted him to play for so long because he's such a big Souls fan and he hasn't touched it at all. And I

Scott White
Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts
finally chipped away at, I finally beat great Ace Attorney 2 Resolve thanks to

Scott White
Okay.

Max Roberts
the collection. So and then obviously I had to play, I finally played last it was part one leading into part two remastered so I got my kind of double

Scott White
Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts
feature there. But really I've used that to keep me on track. Beyond that I haven't played anything additional outside of the show. I've dabbled, like

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
Abby and I one night played Mario Party 2 so after Eloise went to bed we busted out the switch and just played Mario Party 2, which was actually pretty fun and funny because we both, we forgot how hard the computer is in that game. Donkey Kong kicked our butts, like we were not on a team together and she was trying to do, you know, we're trying to beat each other but quickly we united to try and stop Donkey Kong and it failed. So that was it. I, the other thing

Scott White
Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts
that I remember doing was, because I haven't, I haven't been paid to play a game since 2020, 2019 somewhere in there. The last game I was paid to play was Mario Kart Tour. I did a season stretch for the wiki. That was the last one I was paid for I believe. Yes, yeah, I think it's still accessible. I don't know if it's

Scott White
There's the mobile game, right?

Max Roberts
getting more updates but yeah I did the mobile game for like one season of that

Scott White
Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts
which was pretty interesting. It's obviously very micro transaction-y but you don't have to engage with it and I didn't do that so it uh at least I've sunk some time into that. But I remember talking with Abby and I was just like

Scott White
Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts

"On Thursday night can you put her to bed?" specifically and I'll just after dinner and I clean up and stuff like that's when I'll go play something to try and get some chunk of time significant instead of what I normally do

Scott White
Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts
is play in the mornings so I'm up before either one of them and I'll get up I'll do my thing and then I'll maybe have an hour somewhere between 30 minutes to an hour to play something and that's when I try to fit stuff in because I'm too old

Scott White
Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts
of a man by the time Eloise goes to bed, Abby and I do yoga and then I'm like

Scott White
Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts
ready for bed so I'm an old man and go to bed between 9 30 and 10 and I I just

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
can't keep I can't stay awake at night to play a game unless it's fortnight

Scott White
Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts
with the boys or something and you know that keeps me energized but that has been the the cadence or rhythm lately like I still haven't played uh tears of the kingdom that is a that's next on my docket though is my follow-up I'm I'm finally gonna play it it came out right when we moved and I just haven't touched

Scott White
I'm... Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts
it

Scott White
I just wanna say I'm so glad Baldur's Gate beat Tears of the Kingdom last year. Like, I... Like, in everything.

Max Roberts
I did the game awards and everything

Scott White

Like, it seemed like even now so many things are being talked about about Baldur's Gate, like memes and characters and yada yada yada fan art, but like Tears of the Kingdom, like, crickets.

Max Roberts
yeah you right

Scott White
And it's like, as a person who never... I appreciated what Breath of the Wild and Tears of the Kingdom did, but I legitimately had more fun watching the videos of what people made of Tears of... Inside Tears of the Kingdom than I ever did actually playing it.

Max Roberts
not

Scott White
And I... scratch that. I enjoyed when the item duplication stuff was still in, and I lost so much interest when Nintendo patched all that out.

Max Roberts
[Laughing] -Uh-uh.

Scott White
Like, I legit have an old Switch with... That's my Tears machine that I won't ever upgrade, so if I ever do wanna play it, I can have all the kind of like... I don't have to worry about farming for this or that or... to make all the funny things, but...

Max Roberts
-Well, couldn't you... couldn't you just put in the physical version of the game and just not patch it? Would that not have the bug?

Scott White
That would work unless... But the problem is Nintendo made it so you have to update it to play it.

Max Roberts
Okay. Oh, really? Oh, interesting. I did not.

Scott White
Yes, they do this kind of s***y thing where I think it's tied to the Switch's firmware itself. Like, it notices it's an unpatched thing, it's like you can't even start a physical cartridge of a game if it's not to the correct patch.

Max Roberts
Huh. I've never seen that before, so I guess that... interesting.

Scott White
Yeah. Yeah. *sigh*

Max Roberts
That is sucky, 'cause you should just be able to... 'cause it runs from the cart, you should be able to just boot it, huh? Hmm. Not cool Nintendo. Just let us play the cartridge, please.

Scott White

Yeah. Let me duplicate things. It's a single player game with no like online leaderboards, so let's just... let me do all my crazy stupid things.

Max Roberts

Yeah. It's interesting you say that.

Scott White

silence

Max Roberts

I'm aware of the things you're talking about in passing. But since I've been off Twitter for... Oh, gosh. I don't know. A solid... year and a half, two years?

Scott White

A Fortnite?

Max Roberts

Yeah, Fortnite. It's been a while.

Scott White

Mhm.

Max Roberts

So I missed all of the buzz and talk around Tears of the Kingdom, and most games of significant size and stature.

Scott White

Mhm.

Max Roberts

Like, everything I'm getting is either from a YouTube video, and I had previously, like, trained YouTube to not show me Zelda stuff, 'cause I was trying to remain spoiler-free,

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

and articles, like, just things like that. Or someone will share something in a Discord I'm in, and then I kinda get touch points there.

Scott White

Mhm.

Max Roberts

So, like, I saw a couple of funny things that people made. I remember, like, a Burning Man-type thing with lava or fire appendages and things like that.

Scott White

Mhm.

Max Roberts

Like, I remember that in the beginning. But I really have no idea what happens in Tears of the Kingdom, both from... I get that you build things,

Scott White
Mhm.

Max Roberts
like nuts and bolts, which is my favorite analogy.

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
But beyond that, I really don't know the scope of the sky stuff or the underground stuff. Like, I don't know. And I'm excited to finally figure that out, which will be cool. But back to your original thing, which is I'm glad it beat Baldur's Gate. I have also not played Baldur's Gate, but I am...

Scott White
I'm glad Baldur's Gate beat it.

Max Roberts
Oh, yes, sorry, thank you. Yes, Baldur's Gate beat it in most things.

Scott White
Mhm.

Max Roberts
And I would just, from having not played either one of them, or really knowing much about either one of them, I would agree in that sense, simply because... Well, Baldur's Gate does have the number three in the title. It is... It's new, right?

Scott White
Mhm.

Max Roberts
It's this wholly new incarnation of that game.

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
And Tears of the Kingdom, while I'm sure is a great game, and at the very least I'm going to enjoy it, I'm confident in that statement,

Scott White
Mhm.

Max Roberts
it is more Breath of the Wild, or refined Breath of the Wild, or whatever you want to put it.

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
And there's a known quantity to that, and I think there's a depth and richness, it sounds like, in Baldur's Gate that really connected with a lot of people.

Scott White
Mhm.

Max Roberts
And I appreciate that. I think that's more exciting to me from an award perspective, or type thing.

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
Like, what's new and pushing things forward? And I think, just like developers have looked at Breath of the Wild for the last... Is it seven years?

Scott White
Mhm.

Max Roberts
I think it's seven years. The last seven years, and have implemented the things from that game into games we're seeing today, in the past couple of years, I imagine Baldur's Gate is going to have a similar effect on RPGs going forward, is kind of what I'm sensing from it. You correct me if I'm wrong, but does that sound correct-ish?

Scott White
I... I... so... I think a lot of companies will try to cash in and do the Baldur's Gate thing without realizing what effort and like passion it took to make Baldur's Gate 3 as good as like Baldur's Gate 3 was.

Max Roberts
Mm-hmm.

Scott White
I'm super concerned that Baldur's Gate 4 will just be Hasbro throwing a bunch of money at a studio to push out a Baldur's Gate 4 in a couple years just to cash it on the name without really understanding what went into it. And not every game needs to be Baldur's Gate 3. Like, it's probably a generational defining game, but it's a game that not everyone should try to replicate. And I think the biggest takeaway developers should have with Baldur's Gate 3 is that give games the time they need to cook to be what they can be, to be as good as they need to be, and make games that your team is passionate about.

Max Roberts
Make the kind of game where your director will go to an award show in a suit of armor. [laughs]

Scott White
Yeah. Have fun with it, you know? Um... yeah.

Max Roberts
Have fun with it. I also have Google give you a bunch of money, and then... [laughs] And then shut it all down.

Scott White
Yeah, but that's my takeaway.

Max Roberts

Rest in peace, Stadia. I like the sound of that. I don't think Baldur's Gate is a game for me. It's a few notches too deep of an RPG, or too traditional, it seems to me, in that sense.

Scott White

Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts

I'm more Witcher, probably as deep as I'll go in an RPG.

Scott White

Okay.

Max Roberts

But I do like the idea of it. Does that make sense? I like the...

Scott White

It is a great multiplayer game.

Max Roberts

That is... I didn't even know it was a multiplayer game until a buddy of mine,

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

he plays predominantly on PC, and he wanted to play a game together, and he said, "Well, the games I'm playing with his other friends right now are either as Baldur's Gate 3 or Helldivers 2." And I was like, "Well, Helldivers 2 is \$40,

Scott White

Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts

and a team shooter is way more my speed than Baldur's Gate." And I was like, "I'll do Helldivers." But that was when I learned that it was even a multiplayer game.

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

I don't even understand. I guess that fits, though, with the Dungeons & Dragons-type theme, right?

Scott White

You just make a character and then each of your friends makes a character and you go around being assholes doing stuff. It's very much the Dungeons & Dragons experience.

Max Roberts

Right, and so... Is Baldur's Gate a sub-property of Dungeons & Dragons? How are the two related? Because Hasbro owns Dungeons & Dragons, right?

Scott White

Yeah, so... yeah.

Max Roberts
Or Wizards of the Coast or whatever it is?

Scott White
Baldur's Gate in, like, Forgotten Realms is, like, a plane of existence within Dungeons & Dragons proper, so there are, like, sourcebooks and things that this is all kind of pulls from, like, characters and lore and things.

Max Roberts
Okay, so it's like it exists in the wider IP.

Scott White
Yeah. It is a... yeah.

Max Roberts
Got it. Okay, that makes sense to me. Because the two kind of keep coming up together, and I was like, "Ah, I assume they're related then, if they keep mentioning it."

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
It's more than just a -- it's like Dungeons & Dragons. It seemed far more frequent.

Scott White
No, it is Dungeons & Dragons. It's just, like, one of the worlds that they have sourcebooks and things for that describe, like, the cities there and whatnot, so...

Max Roberts
Got it. Got it. Okay. Very, very cool.

Scott White
Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts
And speaking of RPGs, and the difficulty of said RPGs,

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
and the levels of them, I found it kind of... Not even kind of. I found it interesting. I was kind of scrolling through your Twitter, or X account, I guess, now. And came across Super Mario RPG, and you had mentioned that you wanted --

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
you liked the idea of this, of introducing RPGs to Oliver through this game, and potentially others. And I -- and I think you would too --

Scott White

Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts

I always have thought about, like, how would I introduce games to my kid, should they even be interested in them?

Scott White

Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts

And an article that's always stuck with me, and I've talked about it on this show before, but it's playing with my son by Andy... Bayo? Bow? Basically, the gist of it is,

Scott White

Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts

Andy, when his son was four, gave him a plug-and-play Pac-Man joystick thing. And from there, for the next, I don't know, four or five years, basically took his son through the console generations. You know, Atari 2600, NES, Super Nintendo, and so on and so forth,

Scott White

Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts

all the way up to, I think N64 is kind of where they stopped going in order, and then they jumped to PC and things like that. And I've liked that idea for Eloise,

Scott White

Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts

but I'm curious what you are, like, thinking or planning, because ten months far away from obviously being able to even --

Scott White

Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts

I did see the picture of him holding a PlayStation controller, though. It was very cute.

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

Well, it's his now. Yeah. Get the Fisher-Price one and just spray paint it.

Scott White

You know, I have the Fisher- I have this Fisher-Price one, but man, it's not as cool as the Silver Dual-Jacques 4 that's years and years old, but... but yeah, he's... he loves the controllers. He's learning the whole hand... the handhold of it, so...

Max Roberts

Safe paint. It is not. He's going to get the claw.

Scott White
You got to.

Max Roberts
It's a part of our nature. But what -- so, like, what are you thinking about -- I don't know, maybe I'm thinking too far ahead for myself,

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
but what are you envisioning? Should Oliver express interest, besides chewing on a controller, and actually playing something, you know, that Dad plays or anything like that? Like, what are you thinking?

Scott White
I like the idea of, like, I would probably... 'cause I feel like I read the same article or heard about it years ago, 'cause I remember thinking it's such a good idea, but I never was... the Atari was before me, so I would start at the NES era, and I think it's a really fun idea.

Max Roberts
Same.

Scott White
There... he will... I don't think it can pull a rug over his eyes so he doesn't know that there's better looking video games ever.

Max Roberts
Yeah, I don't think that's possible.

Scott White
Like, the author in the article you mentioned did, or was trying to do, but I like the idea of, like, okay, this is... let's play some Mario, like, you know, NES Mario, and kind of working up to it. But with portable emulation technology now, it's like the fact that I can walk around in my pocket with a little emulated... like, a little handheld game system that's like a PSP, but play up through PS2 games, and by the time he's four, he'll be playing PS3 and PS4 games. It's nutty, but having, like, a little device I can quickly plug into my TV and it's like, here's every Nintendo game, or here are the best ones, it's exciting, and I'm anxious to see what he gravitates towards.

Max Roberts
Right. Mmm.

Scott White
He loves also going towards my bookshelves, so it's like, is he going to be more of a board game kid than video games, or is he going to kind of split between, is he, heaven forbid, going to be a jock, and make me watch sports? I don't know.

Max Roberts
[laughs] Learn the sports.

Scott White

But yeah, I haven't put too much thought into it, just because the technology is changing so rapidly anymore that who knows what technology will be like when he is four or five, and what will really be available.

Max Roberts

Right. That's a fair point. Who knows even what I'll have in the next -- because I'm thinking -- I started playing games at five, and so, like, in my brain, that just seems like a good age to start. I don't know.

Scott White

Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts

I have this really -- I have that 8-bit dough arcade stick, because it seems like an approachable arcade stick without getting into the really complicated stuff for, like, 90 bucks. I'm like, what if you just give her that, and you just -- you boot up the mister, and you put Pac-Man. And, like, here's Pac-Man. Or here's Galaga. Or, you know, any of those. I feel like that's kind of -- because they theoretically have no frame of reference for any of this. To be fair, she was a few weeks old when I was playing Resident Evil 4, and she was sleeping in my arms, but she's not going to remember that. [laughs] And so I like that idea, but I'm -- the selfishness comes through, and I'm like, but the N64 is where I started and, like, really picked things up, and I feel like that's where my love of things really blossomed, you know? Smash Brothers, Paper Mario, Zelda. Banjo-Kazooie, all that stuff. And it's like, well, dang. All this stuff is at the fingertip. I don't know. And then I start spiraling out, and I'm like, but then you have everything at your fingertips, and it's like,

Scott White

[chuckles]

Max Roberts

now you're overwhelmed, and you have that analysis paralysis. But she doesn't have analysis paralysis. She doesn't know.

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

And I hear -- you know, I have friends with kids who are much older, and they're, like, cutscene skippers, and then they come back later and go, well, what's happening in the story? And it's like, well, if you just sat there and watched it, you would know.

Scott White

Mm-hmm.

Max Roberts

Or, you know, they're bouncing between games all over the place. And I don't know. I'm very optimistic going forward with this eventually and just seeing how video games take shape. She loves controllers and remotes, and also -- the kids just love pushing buttons and making things blip and bloop.

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

But I'm -- [laughs] Yes. Yeah, that is the best. I'm staring at all my controllers, and it's certainly -- yes, I clearly also love things that beep and boop. [laughs]

Scott White
[chuckles]

Max Roberts
I've made an entire lifestyle out of it, so I guess it's the curse of us going forward. I am -- so Super Mario RPG, you know, you really --

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
is that like a primo early RPG you think? Because I -- my gut is always, like, Pokemon. Pokemon is baby's first RPG to a degree. But how are you -- is that where you would start? Or just, like, that's on the sample platter of RPGs? As the professor, you know, what do you --

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
throwing them into Final Fantasy --

Scott White
No.

Max Roberts
[laughs]

Scott White
[chuckles] The thing, like, why I would probably opt for specifically Super Mario RPG remake over something like Pokemon, it's like, Pokemon you're still dealing with strategy, like, type advantage.

Max Roberts
Mm-hmm.

Scott White
Like, there's more mechanics that play a bigger role in success. Not to say that you can't just level your way out of any predicament, but with Super Mario RPG, specifically the remake, it's more about, you don't have to worry about, "Okay, I have to swap Mallow in because this enemy is weak against lightning."

Max Roberts
[laughs]

Scott White
It's like, "I want Mario to jump on things, cool, he's jumping on things because I'm hitting the button just like the game." And it's got, like, the super flashy limit break attacks now that weren't in the original.

Max Roberts
Mm.

Scott White

The game wasn't, the new game wasn't balanced around a lot of the new mechanics, like, a lot of the cool, like, swapping out party members. So, all the boss fights and things are still geared towards you having a party of three as opposed to a party of six now. And just hitting A does something. Y does something, like it's tied to the face buttons. And you don't, it's easy, the writing's funny, it's got cute zany graphics. But yeah, that, I think, just a mix of all those reasons are why I think makes Super Mario RPG such a great introductory RPG experience where you can let the kid run around, try the combat in tough times, easy hand over the controller. And it's just kind of fun to watch, so yeah. I think it's definitely up there as, I can't think of another RPG that I think is better as, like, Baby's first RPG, like at six.

Max Roberts

Yeah.

Scott White

Like maybe six or, like seven or eight. Yeah, at seven or eight then it's like, okay, yeah, let's do, let's do some Pokemon.

Max Roberts

I have yet to play Super Mario RPG. That was one that eluded me as a child. I became aware of it, I think, like most people. With Super Smash Bros. Brawl and the Geno rumors

Scott White

Mm hmm.

Max Roberts

was when I first became aware of even its existence as this precursor to Paper Mario, which I loved and still do love.

Scott White

Mm hmm.

Max Roberts

And then early COVID --

Scott White

Mm hmm.

Max Roberts

21, maybe? Or maybe 20. I don't remember specifically. I think maybe it was 21. Some guy on Facebook was selling some games, and one of them was Super Mario RPG, and I snagged it from him for 25 bucks. I was like, "This is the move."

Scott White

Mm hmm.

Max Roberts

And I have yet to play it. And then now the remake has come out, and I have not picked it up yet. That's just budgetary reasons, trying to buy less this year in the game department. I saw my list of all the games I bought in 2023, like, just picked up, and it was actually quite shameful at 65 games.

Scott White

Mm hmm.

Max Roberts

[laughs] And I don't -- I'd have to go through. I didn't mark how many of those I specifically played. But the collection behavior got a little out of hand in 2023, so I've reigned it way back. And so far in 2024 -- so my plan was to only buy three games. That has not happened. But the three games are Super Mario Bros. Wonder,

Scott White

Of course.

Max Roberts

and that was because I made up this rule of three after I had bought it due to a price error at Target for, I don't know, 30 bucks or something. The last was part two, remastered.

Scott White

Mm hmm.

Max Roberts

That's just max essentials. And then the Thousand-Year Door remake, which I wanted to talk to you about. But then for my birthday, I -- so I did get Helldivers II to play with that friend, but that was a gift someone gave that to me,

Scott White

Mm hmm.

Max Roberts

so I didn't have to pay for that. But for my birthday, Playasia had a deal where you could get three games for 100 bucks. And having just finished The Great Ace Attorney Chronicles, I said, "Now is the time to get both a copy of the Phoenix Wright trilogy, which is only in Japan, physical,

Scott White

Mm hmm.

Max Roberts

and then I snagged a Japanese copy of Apollo Justice solely because the spines say, I assume, 'Ace Attorney' or I think it's -- is it 'Geikuu Saiban'?

Scott White

Gekto Saiban or Saiba, something like that.

Max Roberts

Yeah, something like that. Saiban, I know the Saiban part. I don't remember the front. But it says that, presumably. And then it has a one, two, three, and then Apollo Justice trilogy has four, five, six, and they line up on the spines, and it just is so visually satisfying to me.

Scott White

Mm hmm.

Max Roberts

So I bought that. And then the third game, I learned late last year, kind of November-ish time, that for some reason, Final Fantasy VII Remake Integrate for the PlayStation 5 is not in

production anymore in North America and costs like \$140 used. And I was like, "That doesn't --" Yes.

Scott White
Seriously? What?

Max Roberts
So the physical version of Integrade, which is PS5 exclusive, is no longer in print in North America, and the secondhand market is like \$120 plus. So I got the Japanese one because it has English on the disc and, like, you can play it, and that was only like for, you know, by itself, I think, goes for like \$40. Well, then -- so I bought that in like early May or whatever, and those just shipped a week or two ago

Scott White
Mm hmm.

Max Roberts
and they just showed up yesterday.

Scott White
Nice.

Max Roberts
But maybe last week I had to go to a UPS store

Scott White
Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Max Roberts
and next door was a GameStop, and I was like, "I'll go walk into there." GameStops are pretty depressing these days, but it's always worth -- I usually go in, actually, to see if there are Wii U games, ironically, because sometimes they have like a tiny, tiny Wii U section. But what do I see when I walk in the door right there to the left? "Final Fantasy VII Remake Integrated for the PS5 for \$60." And I'm like, "Well, crap. Now I have to buy this."

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
So now I have two copies of Final Fantasy VII Remake Integrated.

Scott White
Sounds like a good investment.

Max Roberts
It is, but it's really -- it's Eloise's investment, because I'll never -- I can't -- I won't sell it.

Scott White
Mm hmm.

Max Roberts
You know, that's my problem. Anyway, I've only bought eight games so far this year, which I think is a lot better than 60-whatever I had from last year so far. So, so far so good.

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
Long tangent aside, Paper Mario. We're just jumping right in.

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
Because it's semi-related to Super Mario RPG, but you joined Logan and myself on Chapter Slicked, Season 1, Episode 3, which is happening three years ago now. Holy smokes.

Scott White
Long time.

Max Roberts
But since then, Nintendo finally heard our pleas, our cries. They've answered our prayers. They have remade it for the Nintendo Switch from the ground up, Intelligent Systems back at the helm. It just came out. How are we feeling? How are you feeling? [Laughter]

Scott White
Uh, I have two copies due to a GameStop error, both sealed and I haven't touched it.

Max Roberts
Tell me about the error. What happened?

Scott White
I got a notice that my payment was declined, so I used another payment method and that wasn't declined. But then I got charged and received two copies, including the one that my payment was declined for. And yes, I was charged for both.

Max Roberts
So why not just return the second one?

Scott White
Because I know how all the Paper Mario stuff goes and this will probably be much like an intergrade.

Max Roberts
[Laughter] Good man, good man. I have a Sora --

Scott White
I'll keep one sealed. Or maybe I'll keep both sealed. I don't know.

Max Roberts
We'll see. I have a Sora amiibo sealed for the same reasons. I'm just like, this is the one. This is the one.

Scott White
I have... all... so I have two sealed amiibos, sorry amiibos, because I had intended to open one, but I just haven't yet.

Max Roberts

Yes.

Scott White

And I keep most of my amiibos sealed.

Max Roberts

I tried to do that in the --

Scott White

Like I only have three unopened, or three opened out of my collection.

Max Roberts

I tried to do that in the beginning, but I quickly ran out of shelf real estate, and so I decided to open them. And I've opened pretty much everything since. I actually only have four amiibo, ironically,

Scott White

Nice.

Max Roberts

behind me on a shelf, still sealed. Sora. I intentionally bought two Sora's to keep one sealed. And then I have the Tears of the Kingdom three set, all three of them, and I just haven't opened them yet, because I do have -- I have every Link amiibo -- Er, no, scratch that. I am missing two Link amiibo, two Breath of the Wild ones, the hooded rider, and --

Scott White

Mm hmm.

Max Roberts

What's the other one? Maybe I do have the bow and arrow one, so maybe I am just missing the hooded rider. Anyway, I've been keeping up with the Zelda ones.

Scott White

As just a brief side tangent, and I want to get your idea, like input, I miss green tunic link. Like I never got sold on near naked like Roman link from tears or blue tunic link.

Max Roberts

[laughs] I am --

Scott White

I missed like my classic green tunic. I'm a purist.

Max Roberts

I am so much of a purist that I would not go fight Ganon, or Calamity Ganon in Breath of the Wild

Scott White

Mm hmm.

Max Roberts

until I did all of the shrines and got the classic tunic outfit. And I remember Logan calling me, like, he's like, "What are you doing? Just go fight?" I'm like, "No, I got to be garbed in this game's version of the green tunic." It wasn't good enough to play with, you know,

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
the ones you could scan in from an amiibo. It was, "I need to be in, like, this world's green tunic." So I'm right there with you. Big -- I mean, I like the Breath of the Wild and then Tyr's designs just visually, but Link is always in a -- the green tunic. The only acceptable alternative outfit --

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
and this is purely because of my childhood -- is the lobster shirt from Wind Waker, the blue shirt. That's the only acceptable alternative. And that's after you beat the game, you know, new save file. Yes, see, we agree. We're on the same page.

Scott White
Yeah, it's a nice little bonus.

Max Roberts
No, you're totally fine.

Scott White
Okay, sorry about that tangent. I just need to...

Max Roberts
Those are the tangents that are worth it. But for Paper Mario, I picked up a copy, and I just -- I had to boot it up just to see it. It was kind of -- they announced it, and I was like,

Scott White
Mm hmm.

Max Roberts
"I still don't believe this is real. Like, it's so hard to believe, even though I have it now in the house." And it's just stunning, just visually. It's just like I'm -- it's like coming home, you know? It feels so good.

Scott White
Mm hmm.

Max Roberts
And I was actually -- you know Tomas, right? Tomas Franzese? Yeah, yeah. So Tomas interviewed me for a Digital Trends article

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
about why the Thousand-Year Door got the remake it deserved, which is cool. I'll have a link to that in the show notes, his article. But the thing that I was most excited about was the fact that this game that the Paper Mario fandom, as eclectic and weird as we all are, we have almost unanimously touted

Scott White
Mm hmm.

Max Roberts
Thousand-Year Door as the best one. And the problem with Thousand-Year Door is it's always trapped on the GameCube. There was -- you know, you could play the original through Virtual Console,

Scott White
Mm hmm.

Max Roberts
and actually you can now on the Switch through NSO. So, like, the original is still accessible in some format. And then the Super Paper Mario, the Wii, it's fairly cheap and still playable up through -- I guess now that's the next trapped one, if you're going back as far as you can, is Super Paper Mario. And then the 3DS one, you know, that just shut down a year ago, I think, so now it's trapped.

Scott White
Mm hmm.

Max Roberts
But we always touted Thousand-Year Door as the best, and it was getting harder and harder for people to access it and to play it. And so I'm just so excited for a generation of people who have either grown up hearing about this game, think, and like, "Well, how do I play it?"

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
having access to it, or people who have never played a Paper Mario game before in their life, and they just, like, they see it, and they think it's cool, just like I did when I saw a demo kiosk in Target and thought, "Mario folding into a paper airplane was the coolest thing I had ever seen in my life."

Scott White
Mm hmm.

Max Roberts
And I think that's what is most exciting about this, is finally it's just an affordable way to play this really great game. And it seems like, critically, people seem to think that it still holds up and makes at least me not feel like I've been crazy for the last 20 years.

Scott White
Yeah, I mean, you can't escape just the praise that everyone puts on Thousand Year Door, like whenever a new Paper Mario comes out, it's like, what is it like Thousand Year Door?

Max Roberts
Mm-hmm.

Scott White
So it's good that Nintendo decided they wanted to print some money with releasing this. The fact that they still haven't ported over Twilight Princess or Wind Waker to Switch still boggles my mind, but that's neither here nor there.

Max Roberts

Finally print some money with it. I imagine that's, I mean, it has to be this year.

Scott White

Shadow dropping at Nintendo Direct in the next month.

Max Roberts

Zelda's an annual franchise, sneakily, and with the Switch entering its twilight years, I feel like now's the time, like, this summer, direct, whenever it is, I feel like. It's a bit... Yeah, they'll just be like, "And the Zelda games are coming, whether they're separate or together." And they'll be like, "And the Metroid Prime games are coming, whether they're separate or together."

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

It's going to be this remake, remaster palooza here at the end of the year, which I'm fine with as we gear up for whatever Super Switch turns out to be.

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

But yeah, it's just, I'm so happy that this game is real, this game exists, and I can't wait to play it.

Scott White

Mm hmm.

Max Roberts

I won't play it right now. Not that I couldn't or wouldn't. I would love to play it right now.

Scott White

Mm hmm.

Max Roberts

It's just not on my priority list, and I'm not in a hurry to play it. Like, it's always been there, and it always will be there. I have noticed a couple of changes. Apparently, like, the color of your Yoshi, the method to how you would select that is different, which I find a little interesting. Seems a little more precise.

Scott White

Mm hmm.

Max Roberts

I don't know. It's cool. I just, I want to see. What I really would love, and I guess it's hard to find out, but I want to know what the kids and people who have never played it before think about it. Like, that's what I really want to know is,

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

you know, I know how I feel about it, and I know how, like, your average gamer

Scott White
Mm hmm.

Max Roberts
would probably feel about it, who's aware of it, but the people who are new to it, I don't know. That seems cool. Do you -- like, what do you think the future of Paper Mario is now? Like, we had Origami King, which was interesting, an interesting game, but not traditional in the sense of traditional RPG mechanics and whatnot,

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
but what do you -- do you think this is a sign of the future here?

Scott White
I... Not in the least. I think when they eventually do another Paper Mario, it'll go back to not being like Thousand Year Door. I think it'll have some weird mechanic that will be divisive and be light on RPG mechanics.

Max Roberts
[Laughs] Mm-hmm.

Scott White
And people will be... a whole new generation will be like, but this isn't like Paper... or Thousand Year Door. But no, I don't. I do not see Nintendo suddenly after all these years with this remaster, seeing the error of their ways and giving people what they want in a Paper Mario game.

Max Roberts
[Chuckles] I agree. I agree.

Scott White
Mm hmm.

Max Roberts
One of the things I took away from playing all of them back-to-back in Chapter Select was, Paper Mario has never been traditional in that sense. Like, they always have new mechanics, and that makes, actually, Thousand-Year Door the odd one out, where it was more of a refined sequel than any of the future games would ever be.

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
Like, every game after it is different significantly, and so I feel like it's Paper Mario's nature to change, which is aggravating to fans of the first two games specifically, but, yeah, I think -- I think whatever the next Paper Mario is, it's gonna be a wholly unique idea, and people will either love it or hate it.

Scott White
Mm hmm.

Max Roberts

It'll have good ideas. It'll have bad ideas. If there's anything, though, that they take away from the response here to the remake and implement into the future, I really would just love to see unique characters again. After a few games where everyone is just a toad,

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

I really want to see, you know, goombas and koopas talking and interacting that aren't all just the villain characters. They're just normal citizens of the Mushroom Kingdom

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

or wherever it is. Like, that's what I -- I'm not even asking for partners. Like, I've let that go, too. I just want to interact with unique Mario-themed characters in towns and levels and things like that. That's all I really want. And no more origami, please. They look so creepy. The other thing -- again, I was scrolling through your Twitter just to, like, touch base where you are. Get a pulse on what you've been up to.

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

I had no idea you wrote board game reviews. I had no idea you were such a huge board game person, but lo and behold, you're out here -- you're at PAX East playing a bunch of board games. I think you have a board game table, like one of those big fancy ones from a Kickstarter or something.

Scott White

I do.

Max Roberts

Like, it's supposed to be a nice table, right? Like, a really nice table.

Scott White

Mm hmm.

Max Roberts

Yeah. See? So you're a big board game guy, and I saw that you had written a review --

Scott White

Mm hmm.

Max Roberts

at least on IGN, I'm sure you had written reviews other places for, like, this Guilty Gear Strive board game. You wrote an article about best beginner board games, which some of those I have played and do enjoy, like Ticket to Ride or -- is it Azul? Yeah, Azul, Betrayal, Haunted.

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

I just always say, like, Betrayal at the House on the Hill, but that's not the name.

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

I have the -- I have the Scooby-Doo version of that game. That one's cute.

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

Not as tough, but cute. So immediately, my brain went to, "How -- like, what's your approach to doing a board game review?" Like, I have a lot of friends who are super into board games, and I am, like, the slightly above casual board game player.

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

Like, I'll play whatever -- you teach me the rules, I'll play whatever. But I do not have the breadth or depth of understanding of board games and their mechanics that I see a lot of friends have,

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

so I'm fascinated by this.

Scott White

It definitely poses a different problem... like different problems and approach when compared to like a video game review. It's a lot more of a event almost. Because you got to find people to play and then you got different modes, but it's... I love playing board games. It's a hobby that I've really dove into probably the past four or five years.

Max Roberts

The COVID boom. Okay.

Scott White

Even like pre-COVID. But yeah, the past few years... actually, it's... most of my collecting has been post-COVID.

Max Roberts

Okay.

Scott White

But like before COVID, I was always into like Magic the Gathering. I love card... like collectible or trading card games. And then yeah, I just kind of started going into the board game space and watching board game YouTubers and watching playthroughs of things and that got me hooked and just started playing and loving them. And yeah, now I'm doing buyer's guides and reviews and all sorts of cool stuff. So it's been fun.

Max Roberts

So talk to me about PAX and board games at PAX, 'cause the one and only time I went, I saw the board game area, but I didn't even go in there. I was there for, you know, all the video game stuff of PAX.

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

What is -- Is it similar in the sense that, like,

Scott White

Not really. Not at like PAX East or West. So there's a board game specific PAX. There's PAX Unplugged, which is just board games, just tabletop things where you get a lot more of those things.

Max Roberts

developers are there showing off and previewing and playtesting their board games, too? Is it the exact same vibe? [Laughs] Ah.

Scott White

And then Gen Con, like tabletop have like their own big events. But in terms of like the PAX East and whatnot, you have a huge space for people to play board games. Like there's a lot of board game vendors. So a lot of people will buy board games and then set up and play them with friends and random people on the show floor. So that's there's a big play area and that play area is also open later than the main show floor. So people can stay around and play games.

Max Roberts

Mm.

Scott White

But there are some developers or in publishers that appear and do demos and that you can also buy games from. But the vendors are the big, have the most presence, I would say, in terms of the tabletop for PAX East and West. Yeah.

Max Roberts

Gotcha. I want to circle back to this review thing, and, like, you have to get people together to play the game,

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

because that seems like the biggest difference to me.

Scott White

Mm hmm.

Max Roberts

I remember the one game I had -- I reviewed, that I had to get friends together to play was

Scott White

Mm hmm. Yeah.

Max Roberts

Shovel Knight Showdown, and I wanted to see what the party -- the multiplayer was like with people, and that was easy. Like, I just said, "Hey, guys, I'm doing this review,

Scott White

Mm hmm.

Max Roberts

like, how we play this," but it took, you know, maybe an hour, because it's just a Smash Brothers-type thing.

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

But a board game is such -- Or I -- They're not all like this, but they can be such an investment, where it's -- You're coming over one night or afternoon, we're sitting down, we're learning the game,

Scott White

Mm hmm.

Max Roberts

or I'm teaching you about the game, and then we're playing a few rounds, and -- Or our game -- You know,

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

it's a much harder commitment, it sounds like, to get people together to play, from a work perspective, of like, "Hey, guys, I also have this deadline where I got to write about this 'Can you help me out?' type thing. What -- How do you -- How do you round up the -- the pals for that?"

Scott White

Yeah. So in terms of like stuff that I've done for IGN, the two reviews I've done and I have a couple more that I'm working on right now, it's far less embargo restrictive for that reason. So ideally, I would love an opportunity to get preview builds of things that are going to like Kickstarter because the Kickstarter and crowdfunding scene for board games and tabletop stuff is immense right now. With those, it's much more of a time constraint. But you also don't usually get many full reviews of those. You'll get impressions and breakdowns. But with board game reviews, it's... You... I don't have that same time crunch. Yes, I want to get it out in a relatively timely schedule, especially when I get sent a game. But it's not like, "Oh, embargo lifts on X date. I have to play through a 60 hour long RPG." I mean, those are far more difficult than getting out something for a board game because... Like with Guilty Gear Strive, it's a card game. Games can take, okay, maybe about 30 minutes, maybe 45 minutes if it's really back and forth. But four, five or so games in, I have a pretty good understanding of, "Okay, this is the system. These are the mechanics I like. These are where I kind of find the game's shortcomings." So in a lot of regards, it's also not nearly as big of a time commitment. And I have a number of friends in different friend groups that like board games, so if I'm, "Hey, do you want to come over for an afternoon or a day or meet up at the local brewery? I have a

game I need to test for review. I'll buy you a drink." It's worked out pretty good, so... Yeah. Mm-hmm. Yeah. I don't think so, and maybe it's because I haven't done enough board games, like board game reviews, but I feel like because you're so much more ingrained in having to pay attention to the mechanics and how things fit together matter so much more, and it's much more tactile. You kind of instinctively look at things as critical. There are definitely aspects of games that I have come to realize that matter more to me than others, like a good storage solution. Like, how long does it take me to actually get it to the table? Is it easy? Is there a good organizational structure? Like, does the box or instructions tell me how to put everything back where it's supposed to fit so it plays nicely? Or little things like that. But I guess when I'm playing with friends, it's also very... Because it's an interactive and very group-based thing, I'm just like, "What do you guys think of it? What didn't you like?" And things they might have picked up on. Oh, I didn't really like how this was handled. I can get a lot of different perspectives and viewpoints all at once to help me also be critical. These are just normal people playing games, so I'm getting a view of what other people might just randomly pick up on that they might not like or what they appreciated. So it's also because it's almost a collaborative experience. So that helps me be critical and know what to look into a bit more. So... Yeah. Mm-hmm. Yeah. Yeah, I mean, there are some games you can play solo in addition to multiplayer, but a majority of people play board games as a social experience.

Max Roberts

I like the sound of that.

Scott White

They play it with friends, but they play it with people at board game cafes and stuff, so it makes it fun to... It gives me a reason to hang out with friends, so yeah, it's good. It's different, but I value it a lot.

Max Roberts

I love it. I like the sound of it. I'm curious. So what's the hot... Or, not the hot... What's your favorite game right now? I feel like, board game-wise, I feel like this is something that changes quite a bit. What's your go-to game right now? Sure.

Scott White

It's hard to have a go-to game when, to your point, I can only meet up with friends once a month, maybe twice a month if I'm lucky.

Max Roberts

Well, like, just what are you feeling lately?

Scott White

I'm really enjoying... They really nailed the Slay the Spire board game. That is really, really good. They really nailed the feel and being able to play it co-op, like I played through it with my friends I brought to my friend's house a couple weekends ago for our monthly game night.

Max Roberts

Okay.

Scott White

And we played through a couple acts, and they nailed it. It's a lot of fun. And then I'm really liking... Right now I'm in a big kick to play war games, whether it's Axis and Allies, I want to get into that. Risk, Dune Imperium is a big one, really popular, really fun, kind of area control deck building game. And I also bought War of the Ring, which is like this big war game set in the middle, or set in the Lord of the Rings timeframe, where one people... Or one or two players are the free peoples, and the others are the evil Sauron groups, and there's like 100+ little

miniatures that you maneuver, and then you have the fellowship, and you can throw the ring in Mount Doom to win.

Max Roberts
Was that a Kickstarter?

Scott White
I'm very anxious and excited to get a chance to table that and play, but Slay the Spire. No. So that's been out for a while. So that was a... I watched YouTube videos and my resolve broke, and I ordered it off of Amazon.

Max Roberts
Oh, okay. That seems to be the way most of this stuff goes.

Scott White
Yep.

Max Roberts
I don't even remember how I found out about Root, but I found out about it.

Scott White
I love root. I love root.

Max Roberts
Man, I wish we lived closer, because my hurdle with Root is, at least like the group of people that I've played with, it always has changed.

Scott White
I love root. Mhm.

Max Roberts
So it always is explaining the game to people every time, and it just takes so much longer.

Scott White
Mhm.

Max Roberts
And the real kicker is that Abby does not enjoy Root, so I don't have a built-in house buddy to play with. So I don't play it as much as I would like, but I do love Root. Root is very fun.

Scott White
So you should check out the digital version of root. Very, very good.

Max Roberts
I think I have the mobile version, but not the one on computer. I'd have to check. But I assume that has multiplayer, like an online... okay, that probably helps significantly.

Scott White
Yeah. Yep. But yeah, it's by a group, they're called Direwolf Digital, and they've handled a lot of digital adaptations of board games, and they do really good. Like they have a really good Munchkin digital adaptation, Everdell, Sagarta. They have a lot of really good games. They have a digital version of Clank coming out soon, which is a really fun deck builder and kind of dungeon diving one. But yeah, it's good. They got good stuff.

Max Roberts

Okay, so Root is on mobile, on the respective app stores. It's on Steam.

Scott White

Mhm.

Max Roberts

And it's on the Nintendo Switch. I did not... see, now that's more enticing.

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

Because I don't... oh, it is on Mac on PC, so I could do that too. Oh, interesting. Very interesting.

Scott White

Yeah, I don't know if it's cross play. I'm not 100% sure. But yeah, I mean, the digital version is really solid.

Max Roberts

I will... Probably not. Oh, and they have the expansions!

Scott White

Yep.

Max Roberts

Oh, very good. Because I have... I have Underworld and River Folk. I did not get Clockwork.

Scott White

Yeah, it's 15 bucks. Yeah. Yes.

Max Roberts

I don't know what this exile is, Partisans and Vagabonds. Anyway, okay. Duly noted. I will look into that. Thank you. Very, very cool.

Scott White

Mhm.

Max Roberts

I... you mentioned Kickstarter is like hot. It's the board game hotness. And this is true and has been true.

Scott White

Yeah. Yep.

Max Roberts

And I've only backed a couple of games on Kickstarter. I don't have a long list of Kickstarter backers.

Scott White

Mhm.

Max Roberts

I have a keyboard, one set of puzzles, and two books, and two games. So I got Dustbiters, which is a very light... I think it's only two players.

Scott White
Yes.

Max Roberts
Card game, very Mad Max inspired. It's from I Am 8-Bit. It's very cool. Very quick. That's fun.

Scott White
Mhm.

Max Roberts
And then I got... Because I Am Me, I got The Last of Us board game. Which is supposed to be sometime this year, but... You know, things get delayed all the time. But it looks super cool. Have you ever played the Escape of the Dark games? Because...

Scott White
Yes. I have escaped the Dark Castle, and it's fantastic.

Max Roberts
Tell me about it. Because I have not found anyone in person who has played it. And I only... I truly only know that I like the art style.

Scott White
Yeah. Yeah, it's a super atmospheric, like you mentioned the art style, but super atmospheric. It's very easy to pick up and play. It's like a dungeon crawling, randomly generated dungeon that's hard to succeed at.

Max Roberts
So talk to me about it.

Scott White
And you roll dice, and you have like a character that have their own specific dice that are slightly better at succeeding in certain checks. And it's a lot of fun.

Max Roberts
Yes.

Scott White
It's a small enough game that it's great to take to the bar with you. I've taken it to the brewery and played with some friends, or my local barcade, and played it there. But I don't have any of the expansions for Dark Castle, and I haven't played Dark Sector, but I really, really like Escape from Dark Castle, which was the first game they did.

Max Roberts
I have in my Amazon wishlist the Sector one, because I like space.

Scott White
Okay.

Max Roberts
That was the one, but I have not obviously bought it.

Scott White
Mhm. Mhm.

Max Roberts
And now that I bought the last of this one, I'm like, "Well, I will just play this one first then."
Again, leaning into my identity, I suppose. But it looks, I mean, I'll have a link to this in the show notes as well. At the very least, just go look at the art, either for the last of—I'll have all three of them in there. You should—the art is stunning. It truly is. I am excited about the, you know, to learn and play this game and all this stuff, but

Scott White
Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

Max Roberts
the Kickstarter seemed to be where all this board game stuff is happening. I mean, I bet there's a whole category. Probably. Have you played Gloomhaven? Because that was when I found out just because it costs so flippin' much and weighs even

Scott White
So I played the digital version of Gloomhaven. I reviewed that. And I do own the physical version of Gloomhaven as well, that I haven't...

Max Roberts
more. Okay. Yeah. That's like a "we as a group are gonna commit to this for the next so long."

Scott White
That's one of the ones where it's... Those are hard because they're campaign games, and they require you to have a consistent party to play, group to play. But one day, I'll play real Gloomhaven. Okay. Mhm.

Max Roberts
I'm looking at—so if you just go to Kickstarter and click on the Games tab, I don't actually think there's a single video game here on the front page of all of this, which is totally fine. No, maybe I found a video game.

Scott White
Mhm.

Max Roberts
I don't know. There's some—this is the thing about board games. I feel like they—more so than video games today—actually, this is 1000% true, I feel like. Back in the day, a video game—I'm thinking specifically of renting, but it could have been when you were in Toys R Us or whatever. You walk, you look at the box, and you go, "That looks cool. I wanna play that."

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
I feel like that doesn't matter now with video games.

Scott White
Oh, yeah.

Max Roberts

I feel like the packaging is so vital for a board game still. There's a—I mean, the top game right here is Vicious Gardens, a brutally fun gardening

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
game, which, okay, that sounds cool. I've played the bird game before. If they can make gardening exciting, then why not? But the art is stunning on these cards, and I think a lot of board games or card games

Scott White
Yeah. Yeah.

Max Roberts
or what have you, the art—the presentation seems to go very far in the board game world. Wingspan. That's the bird game. And they have a dragon version of that now, I saw.

Scott White
Yep, Wormspan. I got that because I thought the... Whatchamacallit, the birds were stupid. And I know it's supposed to be really good, but I just can't bring myself to play bird game.

Max Roberts
That's fine.

Scott White
Kind of along those same lines, I'll send you a picture right now. There's this small little card game. It's called Sea Salt and Paper, and all the art on the card is paper origami.

Max Roberts
My gosh!

Scott White
Like, just pictures of origami. And that's a very good game I've heard. I haven't played it myself, but yeah, it just fits in your hand. Really, really popular. Lightweight game, but yeah, it uses just cool pictures of origami for their cards. And yeah, there's such a variety of games in the board game space, which has been really exciting to dive into and kind of witness.

Max Roberts
That's so... Mm-hmm. Yeah. It feels... I mean, I have one group of friends, specifically, one family,

Scott White
Mhm. Mhm.

Max Roberts
and like I said, they have a library of games, and it is... It is like walking into that rental store back in the day, that Blockbuster, that Hollywood video, and I truly just hand myself over to them, I'm like, "I don't even know what all these games are."

Scott White
Mhm. Mhm.

Max Roberts

Sure, there are a few favorites I have that I've picked up on by playing with them. The Quacks of Quiglemire, or whatever, it's like a... yeah, the potion-y game.

Scott White

Quitlinburg or whatever? Yeah, I've heard of that one. Mhm.

Max Roberts

I like that one a lot. They have a... I think it's called Dice Forge, or something.

Scott White

Mhm.

Max Roberts

It's a cool game where you build dice. But other than that, I just give myself over to them.

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

But I do go and look at these games that they have, and the boxes, and the spines, and that looks super cool. They're... maybe because it is... It's... hmm, how do I phrase this?

Scott White

Mhm.

Max Roberts

The development of a board game, I think, has more flexibility in its presentation than in a video game, and probably can iterate faster to find the design that you want, because... Again, this is all me talking out of ignorance. But these origami cards... I feel like iterating on that probably was quick, and then refining it is what took the time. But if you were generating all of these crazy 3D Paper Mario origami assets, it took however long it was to make that game.

Scott White

Mhm.

Max Roberts

I don't know. Board games are very unique, it feels like, and it just kind of... The last five years, and I'm only saying that because that seems to be when my friends really got whole hog into board games to the nth degree,

Scott White

Mhm.

Max Roberts

but my eyes have been opened to this entire world, and it is cool to observe. I just can't financially invest into it the level that they have, but... Again, I guess I have a library card essentially by being friends with them, I suppose.

Scott White

So, kind of in terms of the iteration aspect, one of the things that the board game world has is they can rely on a lot of people trying their game for no cost to them, thanks to things like Tabletop Simulator on Steam or Tabletopia and things along those lines where they can push demos or they can invite people to play, in essence, their mod.

Max Roberts
[grunt]

Scott White

Which is their game, get feedback and then quickly just, in essence, make a patch. Okay, we're gonna add some more cards. We're gonna change the wording of this. How do you feel then? So they can get a lot of people trying their game for no real cost to the player and no real cost to the developer, but they can get lots of feedback. Which I think, which in interviews and things I've done with developers and people that have made board games is incredibly instrumental and an incredibly powerful tool they use. Yeah.

Max Roberts

That makes sense. And it's interesting. It's like public playtesting, essentially.

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

Actually, you know what? Now that I'm thinking about it, I think one of the updates during the whole Last of Us Escape the Dark process was a playtest in Tabletop Simulator. Here's the post. Wow, okay. That's a little ironic. They're using a video game and iterating on it in a video game to then create the physical board game. Very cool. What an interesting crossover of worlds.

Scott White

But like honestly, if you're big, if you ever want to play board games, I like there is Tabletop Simulator could download a usually 20 bucks on Steam, but then always goes down for sale.

Max Roberts

Sure.

Scott White

And then just you use mods. It's great. But then there's board game arena, which is a browser based online or game kind of service. It's 36 bucks for a year and you get like hundreds of games.

Max Roberts

Mm-hmm.

Scott White

You can play with friends. You have a Zool you can play on there. He ticket to ride all these games and they a lot of them have really good tutorials so you can learn new games. It is a wonderful service. Yeah.

Max Roberts

Is this all officially licensed? Like, okay.

Scott White

No, it is an official site like a fish. Everything's made through there. Really, really well done. I love to use it. And with it being browser based, it's great for all manner of things.

Max Roberts

Right, because anyone can do it. Yeah.

Scott White

Yeah. But no, like they had like official wingspan is on their terraforming Mars as a Zool Jaipur, Lost Ruins of Arnak. You have family games, you have tile placement drafting, solo games, short games, competitive, cooperative, just. And then you also have like your classic like card games and things so.

Max Roberts

Huh. See, man, I'm learning a whole new world out there.

Scott White

Oh, yeah.

Max Roberts

[singing] A whole new world.

Scott White

You have like friends list. You can play with friends. There's like tournaments they hold on this thing. You have like a little ranking. It's all sorts of good stuff.

Max Roberts

Huh. Cool. There will be a link to those in the show notes as well. Wow. Catan. That's a staple for sure.

Scott White

Catan's on here. Yeah.

Max Roberts

Huh. Oh. Leaderboards. The whole deal. Whole nine yards. Huh.

Scott White

Highly recommend if you like board games, plus it's cheap, like 36 bucks for a year. It's three bucks a month for their premium service.

Max Roberts

Very, very cool. No, that's not bad at all.

Scott White

And if you and if you don't want a premium service, you can play for free. There are some games are locked to you. But if like, say you still want to play and I want to play because I have a premium service, I can just invite you to my game. So you can still play. You just can't start those games. Yeah.

Max Roberts

Oh, wow. So that's like a download play on the DS. Like, if I own a game, you know, like Mario Kart DS, you could only be a shy guy, but you could still play the whole game and race everything. Huh.

Scott White

Yeah.

Max Roberts

Neat. Well, I think that does it, Scott. It's ten o'clock. It's both our dad bodies bedtimes. So, daddy bedtimes. Thank you so much for coming on the show, man. I really, really appreciate it.

Scott White
Daddy bedtimes. Yeah.

Max Roberts
Folks can find you online. You're @professorrpg. Great handle. Great handle.

Scott White
Yeah.

Max Roberts
You write over at, what is the website's name? RPG University? RPG site.

Scott White
RPG site. I do stuff for IGN now. And then irrational passions. I'm also still over there doing stuff. So.

Max Roberts
Very cool. All right. Irrational Passions, RPG site, IGN. Those are the places to be.

Scott White
Yeah. Yep. And, and my podcast will be back looking at August just taking a bit of a mental breather with RPG University. Just, it's just gets busy and hectic so but yeah, that'll be coming back in, in August is the plan so yeah.

Max Roberts
It does. I love it. RPG University. Check it out. Scott does have an episode on Paper Mario and the Thousand Year Door. With Diablo, which number? There you go. See, you should go check that out.

Scott White
Diablo's creator, the creator of Diablo David Breivik Yeah, turns out he really likes Paper Mario. Yeah.

Max Roberts
You should go check out the show in general, but there's a specific episode recommendation for you. And go check out Scott's work at all those sites. Links will be in the show notes. As for me, you can find all of my writing and stuff over at maxfrequency.net, which since the last episode of this podcast has gone over a major redesign, so you can go check that out. And then my other show, Chapter Select, a seasonal podcast where we bounce back and forth between a series, exploring its evolution design and legacy. Like we said earlier, season one was Paper Mario. Scott was on our Thousand Year Door episode, but we've done a whopping six seasons so far,

Scott White
Thank you for listening.

Max Roberts
ranging from Paper Mario to Pokemon to Banjo-Kazooie. So all that stuff in between.

Scott White
[Applause]

Max Roberts

And we are currently in the works on the Metroid Prime season and a Castlevania season. So you can keep your eyes out, your ears open for those. But until next time, thank you all so much for listening, and adios.