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Hello everybody and welcome to the max frequency podcast. I'm your host max Roberts and this time I've got a very special guest He's been on my podcast bucket list for years. He's an inspiration of mine both professionally and personally so the founder and CEO of last and media the co-owner and writer of Lily Mo games and The godfather of PlayStation podcast call him Moriarty. Welcome to the show Thank you. Thank you so much. Thanks for having me. I appreciate you. Thank you for coming on the show I really, really appreciate your time. So for the show I did a bunch of research and listening back to old episodes of Beyond, and I Guess I Love You, and Sacred Symbols and stuff. You guys actually were the first—I haven't listened to any spoiler casts for Last of Us Part II, and you guys were the first one I did to go back and actually assess how you guys felt about the game and stuff. But in all of my listening, I came across this clip that should be coming through for you, but I thought it was pretty funny. If anyone would like to play a round of Survivors with me, I have plenty of room on my PSN friends list. My PSN ID is mudkip143. Mudkip, the Pokemon. Okay. M-U-D-K-I-P 143. And that is still my PSN ID, despite... Oh, nice! That's funny. - Despite them be changing, I've been Max Roberts, not available, Max frequency, not available, so. - Yeah, well now you can change your name too, which is good, I mean that was, I never, I always wanted to change my name 'cause my name is still Moriarty-IGN, even though I've been gone from IGN for, I don't even know, what is it, eight years or something like that? But now just knowing that I can change it, that was all I needed. And then it was like, okay, cool, then we can worry about, we don't have to worry about it anymore. Very interesting, it's interesting to hear Greg's voice too, I don't hear him too much anymore. That was Podcast Beyond. You could tell me I said anything at all on those shows and I would believe it because it's just so far away. Thousands of hours ago of content. It's like another world. Yes. Years, coasts, hours, different podcasts, the whole deal. I just heard that and my email came in. I was like, "Oh, I'm hit of the week on this particular episode." Yeah, I remember doing that. Those were during the more sober days of PSN where it was a little more fun in my opinion. It was kind of more secret. I enjoyed that a lot. It kind of reminds me of the great PSN outage in return, another classic, just classic night. Yeah, people loved that episode. I remember that too because we were at home. That's when Greg and I lived together. We were at home and we went in because I think it happened on a Saturday night. I think we got drunk. It's funny. I've kind of, I haven't pitched this idea officially 'cause I'm not anywhere near wanting to do it yet, but I'm gonna write a memoir one day, I think, and I wanna hire someone to go through all of my old podcasts and just gleam personal information out of them. 'Cause we've probably said all sorts of things that would identify those times in my life, and I would love to know those things. I just don't wanna do the work. If you go back and listen to that gut. - That's a lot of hours. - That's a lot, but it would be really interesting to see people just pull out. Nothing about any games or anything, I don't care about any of that. Just like what were you saying about what you did last night or what movie did you see? I think it would be like an interesting reverse diary. And a lot of people don't have that option, which is, so I'm kind of, it's kind of cool, like as long as there's no EMP or like alien invasion, there'll always be some sort of technical imprint of me based on all this stuff. So it's, anyway, I'm getting way off topic, I'm sorry. - You're not, you're actually kind of on topic with the whole kind of guiding themes I have for this episode. You know, your username on PSN Moriarty-IGN has

kind of been, it's been that forever, but C Moriarty was your username on Game Facts. And I still go to Game Facts actually every day. I vote in their poll. Oh, do you log in to get your karma and all that? Is that like, is that something you can do? Karma I think is still a thing, but I'm not logged in. I just go in and vote every day it's just been a habit since elementary school I don't know yeah they I used to love the tournaments they would do where they were like especially I think over the summers where characters against each other and yeah I used I live from probably 1999 to 2003 I lived on game facts I mean I was and then I think my I logged in a few weeks ago actually to see if I remembered my password and I did and my you have like a certain score nomenclature based on long you've been there and stuff and I think mine is ancient which I don't it's kind of cool and my account was made like 21 years ago or something like that because I had originally had a different account and then uh yeah and then I think I made that new one um or unified because you had to make like a separate contributor account and then a board account I think I unified them something in like the summer of 2001 or something like that so yeah game facts is awesome I love game facts I love that it still exists and it's still bumbling around and doing its thing it's cool yeah I There's no doubt I used your Mega Man 2 guide back when I played that game for the first time seven years ago because you talked about it and so I definitely knew to use that. But I still, when I play older games and I'm stuck or need help, I go to Game Facts first. I don't go to IGN or YouTube or anything. I try to read, like capture the time period of the way those things were written. Me too. I agree. I'm always thrilled. I hate video guides. I mean, I like the people that make them and I use them once in a blue moon if there's some like like that recent gold trophy in Stray where you have to like do something without getting hit is apparently like almost impossible and I would probably watch a guide to do that but I love written work because it allows you to kind of still use your imagination in some way or at least connect the dots without like who wants to watch someone do something and then do it who wants to watch a collectibles video where it's like go from collectible a to b to c to the d it's like they're just playing the game for you And it's funny, I just replayed Wild Arms, which is one of my favorite games, when it was rereleased on PS4 and PS5 with trophies. And I used a strategy guide on GameFAQs from front to back to get through the game. I wrote one of the guides on there, but it's not done. I was going to say, did you use your own? Yeah, it wasn't done. And I don't remember that game at all, really, anymore. So, it's probably been 20 years or so since I played it, or a little less. So I used that guide. And it's always a pleasure when you find good written guides for new games, which sometimes but often doesn't. I've said in the past there are like legendarily good trophy guides for games like Bioshock and things like that, but sometimes you have to like kind of cross triangulate. You know, I have my Game Facts walkthrough, I have this trophy list thing, I have this thing up with these collectibles and that's a little more annoying. I'm thinking about playing Final Fantasy X soon and I think I'm gonna have to do something similar to that which is a little obnoxious. I did that for when I was trying to get all the trophies in Persona 4 Golden. I had I had a guide here and a guide there, and I was trying to piece it all together. It was not the best introduction to Persona. - No, I fucked that. I did the same thing this year, actually, and I fucked it up, too. I got really deep into the game, and then I fucked up one of the social links. I didn't do it in time, and so I missed that whole silver trophy, and then I'm like, "Ah, fuck it." I didn't even beat the game. I was so disenchanted. I was right there at the end. I'm like, "Ah, fuck this." I couldn't believe it. It wasn't the guide's fault. I did something wrong, but it sucks. And it wasn't a good way to be introduced to Persona, but I'm too OCD to have it any other way. Oh yeah, there's no other way. I had a buddy, actually a couple episodes ago, Ricky Freck, he was talking about how there's someone, some user on Game Facts who makes the best Yakuza guides apparently, and he's played all of them, but this guy, his work's only on Game Facts, and he just makes these super in-depth rich guides and stuff. I was kind of curious, what drove you to create these guides and facts and walkthroughs and stuff? Like this early 2000s, late 90s or 2000s, you were just writing them. Video wasn't as prominent then, so what drove you? No, it was non-existent on the internet. Totally non-existent. I remember, how old are you? I am 28. So I was born in '94. '94, yeah. Yeah, so you're, like, it sounds so old man-ish to say, like my time or whatever, but the '90s were like a really unique time for the internet, 'cause no one

knew what the fuck it was. Like, when we got on the internet, my friends got on the internet in '94, '95, I got the internet in 1996, and it was revolutionary. I was like, we couldn't believe it. And it sounds so quaint to say like, you know, it really changed, but it did change. And there was something really quaint about it when you were kind of on the inside and it felt like you were contributing to something that was growing and secretive. And I'm not talking about Game Facts, just like this general movement of internet content, communication, connectivity. I remember being on MIRC and ICQ and all these places, talking to people and making friends. And I was friends with people on the Game Facts boards, and I know some of them in person still. I had, I don't know if you know the name Devin Morgan, but he's basically the administrator of Game Facts now. and he was a huge writer when I was there. He's a little younger than me actually, and we were good friends. And I just had dinner with him in San Francisco, I mean not just, but when I was there, five, six years ago. And so a lot of the characters actually have remained the same as well. But I think I was just really lucky to have lived it during that time. I say this sometimes, but imagine humanity, how long it takes for things to take root and how there are just lost generations in the middle, like where nothing happens basically, No one's able to take advantage of the next big thing. And then over the last 200 years or so, it's accelerated so much, wherein individual lifetimes and generations miss or contribute to something. And the internet, the early dial-up internet happens to be one of those things. And I think Game Facts is kind of a product of that. It felt like it was anti-establishment because we didn't need Prima and Brady, and we didn't need all Nintendo Power. Like we just do it ourselves and we'll share them for free. and it had this real vibe of, that you don't really get on the internet anymore, 'cause even YouTube, YouTube was the last bastion of that in the beginning, but once they allowed monetization, which was of course essential to the platform and is awesome, but once they allowed that, it wasn't like that anymore. People, you couldn't monetize on YouTube for years. And that's like how you knew you really loved the game, and I feel like Game Facts was kind of like that. But I was really attracted to strategy guides as a kid too, like print strategy guides, I lived for them. And they were so cool, that's kind of, In '94, you were still alive during that era, but you were during that era of tension where when I started writing for IGN guides in 2002, my whole job was to put these people out of business, and we did, because it was like, "Our guides are free and they're better, and we're a little slower. We don't get super early access to alpha builds, but just wait a week and you'll save 20 bucks," and it totally worked. But I love those old guides that we put away, and it all started with Nintendo Power and the interstitials and I always look at the Dragon Warrior games on, which are Dragon Quest 1, 2, 3, and 4 on NES as seminal games that got me into Strategy Guys because that was during the era when games came with so much boutique shit inside the box and you would roll out the map and there would be like a booklet and enemy compendium and all this shit. I'm like, "This is dope. This is cooler than the game." And that's still a... I still fantasize, it's so weird, about writing Strategy Guys. I think it's so fun. It's just I have no time or inclination to do it. Now I have a brewing business idea that we want to get off the ground for strategy guys, but I wouldn't be writing them. I feel like there's a market for them still to this day. That's how I was as a kid. I was reading instruction manuals. I remember Christmas, I forget the year, but whenever Halo 2 came out, that Christmas my cousin got an Xbox. 2003 I think that was. In Halo 2. And he left the instruction manual. I didn't have an Xbox. I think I only had like an N64 and GameCube around that time. And I would pour over that and just read about the flood and the covenant and the different weapons and things. Donkey Kong 64 strategy guides. I like almost like the books more than the games sometimes. And that was a huge inspiration for me which eventually led to freelance guide writing over at IGN. Inspired directly by you talking about, you know, this is how you get your foot in the door. This is how you do these things. - Do you still do that? - No, the last guide I did was in 2019. I started working full-time at Walt Disney World around that time and just kind of had to pivot 'cause I didn't have the time and stuff. But I ended up doing guides, helping on Breath of the Wild, God of War, some of the bigger, those were some of the big ones, Red Dead 2, so, but I started-- - And it's all Wiki style now, right? - Yes, it is. - Over there? - Yeah, that kind of sucks. Like all my guides were turned into Wikis and they don't exist

anymore. It's kind of sad. - I had to dig for your grand theft auto four guide. - Oh yeah. - I dug around on the web archive and I found as some of the links don't necessarily work and stuff. But I remember that era of IGN guides where they were these, they were almost like websites in of themselves with big banners and pictures. And if you had the membership, you could download the PDF. - Even download on your PSP. I saw that today, the GTA was like a PSP optimized guide. You guys were just going all out. How, like what was the transition like for you from game facts to IGN, switching from more solely text-based facts to these bigger, more ambitious projects? - It's funny you ask that because it was like an evolutionary thing where when IGN got in touch with me in 2002, we couldn't take, like, It was so foreign to be able to take screenshots with your computer that we, like, freelancers weren't expected to do that. And we would sometimes submit the guides and they would do the screenshots and if they were smaller guides they would just, um, they would just put the text up and we would kind of, you know, make it a little prettier. Like, like there's a really good, it probably doesn't exist anymore, but one of my great guides was Link to the Past when they released that on Game Boy Advance, the Four Swords version. And we didn't have screenshots for that but we just made it really colorful and like really nice. So it was kind of It was kind of like an evolutionary thing where we started getting away from the 79 word document and got into color and bolding and all. It sounds quaint, but as you know with Game Facts, that's not the way facts work. They have a whole different vertical of guides. That didn't even exist until 10 years ago or so where you can use HTML and guides. That's way after me. So eventually, it's funny you ask because we had this thing called Snappy. I'm sure people can go look it up. It was this thing you used to plug into your parallel port. It was one of the first mass-produced screenshot things, and it was actually made for pirating TV shows, I think. But you would plug it into your parallel port or your printer port, and then there would be a yellow composite cable that would go to a console, and you would just have a run through. It was this really complicated thing. It was annoying as fuck. And you would have this app open, this computer program open on your computer, and you would click a button and take screenshots, and it would freeze for a second and take it and and just kind of cash it away, and that's how we would get the screenshots. However, Mark Ryan Sallee, who is like one of the editors and chief of IGN guides, invented this amazing invention, which I still hear in my sleep to this day, because we had these driving pedals, and you could connect the driving pedal through a button map to be the click button for the Snappy. So you would constantly be clicking it, And instead of taking one screenshot at a time, because you had to do it, you would just constantly be pressing the button. And so in the corner of the IGN guides, you would just be like, different people's screenshots as they were playing the game, because you could just capture an infinite amount of them. And so it was a very do-it-yourself sort of situation. And you were talking about the pages, like the pagination was a nightmare. At that time, we had a proprietary backend at IGN called Network in a Box, NIB. And it was made by a guy named Frank, seriously. He was like an engineer, and he was the only one that knew how it worked. And this, and IGN was like the one, and IGN ran through this for like more than 10 years. Eventually he left and like they untangled all of it. And we got into like, you know, WordPress and shit like that. But that was like in 2012 or something. We were using this thing NIB until then, and you had to go into the backend and publish every page individually. And so if you publish a 200 page article, but you update it, So like say you only updated pages 196, 197, 198, you'd only have to update those, but if you updated like the image map on the top or something like that, you had to go through and update all of them and publish them one at a time and they would fail and there was like a batch publisher but it didn't work. It was, writing guides was a real struggle just because you had to compete with all of that. If you talk to the guys that wrote on Prema and Brady guides I never got to do that, but people at IGN used to ghost write for Prema and Brady and they weren't allowed to but they would write under fake names 'cause it was so lucrative. And that stopped after I came to IGN, so I never got to take advantage of doing that. But their whole crunch was time. Our whole crunch was getting anything to work. Like they had, because Prima and Brady guys would go to get the game early, they would sometimes go to the studio. They would have instructions about where everything was. It wasn't like they were looking for

anything. They just had to get it done. And I knew people that was like, you have three days with this game in a hotel room. Like here's all the instructions, write it, get it done. Here's \$5,000. Like that's literally how it worked. - Holy smokes. - For us, it was more like you have a few weeks, take your time, make it better, but have fun jumping through all of the hoops of Nib and capturing these photos and doing all that kind of stuff. It's almost trivial now. And video, I remember the first time I ever even thought about doing a video guide, we did with Final Fantasy XIII. So that was 2010, I think, and 2011, something like that. And then after that, I was off of guides. So I missed the whole video guide era completely. And that's, I was coming into that. It's funny you're talking about this snappy thing and it sounds a lot like how Elgato got started. I was reading about this not too long ago. They had a similar product. It was like to hook up TV and watch it on your computer and then people were using it to play games and then they entered the capture card business and now they have a foot pedal product that you can map to buttons and stuff and take screenshots or record videos or do whatever else. Yeah, it's so funny. I'm not going to take credit for that because Mark Ryan is much smarter than me, but that was revolutionary for us, just having that pedal. I wonder if that somehow snuck out to them in some way because I wasn't the only advocate of the pedal. I'm sure that leaked out that way as well. Yeah, it was a game changer for us. Having these little 480p images was awesome. It was completely, totally wild to be able to show people what you were talking about. Yeah, it just changed, it changes everything. And then, it's pretty much the focus now, whenever you write a guide, is video first. I did Cuphead, and that was really hard. But essentially it was just— Yeah, I could imagine that. I—oh boy, gosh. There was a boss fight, the pirate ship. I was really struggling with it, and the game had come out by that point at the game, and roommate at the time got it on PC and he beat it and I was so mad. I was like, "I need to beat this because I'm being paid to." And when I did beat him, it was great. It's tough, man. That pressure is interesting. I tried to never put myself in a position where I couldn't do a guide based on skill. I would prefer to do longer games and more procedural role-playing games than do things that were skill-based because I never wanted to get caught up. There were a couple of times I got fucked on guides where I was like, "I can't do this but that was fairly rare. It was close for Cuphead and Celeste. I did not realize how tough Celeste was going to be. I just saw it and was like, "That looks like a really good game." No one wanted it at the time and I took it and then that turned out to be a very difficult game. But the whole, I mean the video is what it all is now. In time at IGN it was all, "You need to capture this video." You sit down, you play the game, and you're recording it, and then you're going back through your footage and taking screenshots from that and writing about the whole process. I would even travel with my PS4. I had a trip when Red Dead 2 came out. I took the PS4 and my laptop and captured everything with me, and I was just hunting legendary animals like cougars and stuff up in the mountains. But was the thing. You needed to have video of it or a screenshot or something because everyone clicks on them. That's what it seems like. Well, yeah, it's just way more sellable. I totally understand that angle like the CPM on a video is exponentially higher than on an article. And the audience is kind of trained to use video now too, so it might be that as well just about sheer popularity. But it's funny you bring up the video thing just about capturing because I've been thinking about that in my mind about I haven't written a guide in years, but how would I go about doing them today in the era of video? Would I just play the game, record it, and then watch the gameplay and write the guide from that? Because people might not – I mean, it's hard to believe. We would play the game for like a minute, pause the game, right, and then pick up the game controller, play the game for a minute, pause, right? And that's how it was. That's how guides were written. Now I'm like, "Well, what you were saying is interesting." yeah, record yourself playing for a day and then watch it back and write as you go might be more efficient. I don't actually know the answer to that, but I have thought about that mechanically. By the end of it, Red Dead and God of War specifically was when I started implementing it. I actually had a notebook, a journal on the side, and I would record in chunks, you know, half hour, hour chunks or mission base. So for Red Dead, you know, if it's one particular story mission, I just record the beginning to end of that. And I would write, you know, this video or at this time in the video, I was doing this and just, you know, I found in God

of War four ravens and these items and that way I could refer back to the video and not be like, was it in this file or that file? And then you've got to think of splicing it all together. If you're producing a final product that's just video, you know, Cuphead, it could take 30, 40 minutes to beat a boss, or an hour, three hours. And it's like, well I just need the one run, or Celeste is probably a better example because the levels were longer. And it's like, well I did really well at this part or I need to edit this death out. And so then you're just condensing everything. So then you really go through the footage. Yeah, I was going to say, it would be interesting to splice these together, like it's a whole new game. I'm a fucking fossil. I wouldn't want to make guides like that, and that wouldn't be my interest in making them. I feel like it was slave labor back then, and this just sounds even worse. Because now you have double the expectations. Pretty much my whole time doing guides, it was about \$500, and then some bigger ones I would get more. I think by the end of Witcher 3, which included just the base game, main campaign, and then the first DLC campaign, I think it was around \$1,000. But that's hundreds of hours of game time. Yeah, it's fucking insane. That's insane. That's a ripoff. I know because it's like, I don't blame you for doing that. I was the same way. We used to get paid \$200 when I started for Strategy Guides. And I would do anything. I would lick shit off a floor to fucking work at IGN when I was 18 years old. It's like, whatever, dude. And I think that's what, I appreciate people kind of advocating for better pay and I treat my employees and my freelancers way better than IGN ever treated me, like not even fucking close. Like, not that Dustin people make fun of me, but like, Dustin makes more money as the executive editor of a fucking ragtag Patreon podcast than I ever made at IGN. You know? And our freelancers are all, they don't invoice me. I pay them without them invoicing me. I give them bonuses and treat them well and send them presents and handwritten notes. It's like, so I've learned a lot of lessons about how to treat people and retain them, but I don't blame people for being like, I'll do whatever it takes, 'cause that's another route. That's a totally another route in. And it sounded like you were kind of maybe traveling down that route, and I knew many people that were doing that as well. You can brute force your way in through that, but it requires a lot of toil. My freelance time at IGN happened to coincide completely with my four years at Northeastern. Making a couple thousand dollars a month, if I did a lot of work because I was also freelancing for other parts of the site, I was like, "This is awesome. This is going to buy me all the weed I need, all the alcohol I need, and all the food I need." That was all I cared about. I wasn't even thinking about working at IGN full-time. I kind of have given up that dream and was just doing what I needed to do when I was gonna go to grad school, but they hired me. So I wasn't even, I got sucked in by just kind of setting all those seeds earlier on. So I don't think there's necessarily anything wrong with working hard and yeah, it's like, yeah, it was \$3 an hour or whatever. It's like, yes, but you were trying to do something and there's something to be said about that as well. - That was, I mean, I totally listened to you and Greg and other people at IGN at the time of just saying, you know, you gotta go out and do it, you gotta get in front of the camera, you gotta write a blog, like all this stuff. I've been writing online since 2013, and the Wikis were my way into IGN, and I think, you know, while I was at college, I met my wife, and that was a huge, it wasn't just me that would have had to move out to California and stuff, so that was a huge factor. And then the cost of California, I think, was insane. - It's insane, I can't believe that people, Dude, my mortgage on my house, I have a brand new house, new build on a nice plot of land. It's like 2,500 square feet, pretty modest, garage, driveway. I have a pool in the backyard. It's like \$1,400. Oh my gosh. Your mortgage is less than my rent and I'm in Florida. Well, it's like I put quite a bit of money down, but it just goes to show you that my apartment in Santa Monica was like \$3,400 a month. And my apartment in San Francisco was \$2,000 something a month, but it was because it was rent controlled. I lived there with Scott Bromley and then I lived there with Greg and we just never left. So we kept the prices down, but I can't even imagine. We had a three bedroom apartment in San Francisco. I can't even begin to imagine what our old Chinese landlord, Johnson, would have gotten. He lived upstairs and he was probably amped when we left. He was probably amped up. He was probably stoked. Yeah. There was one more guide-focused specific question I just wanted to ask. You clearly have a love of guides in that process and also trophies. I mean, it's

undeniable you love trophies. And on LilyMo's site, there's like a trophy guide section and they're written and they're put up on, I wanna say PlayStation trophies. I have it right here. Did your love of that stuff inspire you guys put this stuff up on Lilymo? Was it there before you? It was before me, believe it or not. Yeah, Barry did these things because Barry's connection to me was through trophy hunting. And so there's the Venn diagram of people that would be in the strategy guides who are into completionism and then who are in the trophies has to be substantial overlap in that Venn diagram. And so Barry's one of us and he made those on his own as a way to kind of help promote the games. Because remember when Harboxia one came out that was 2018 I want to say. It sounds funny because it's four years ago, but it was different. There weren't as many games that were like, "We're easy platinum trophies." We were trying to make a game where it's like, "Yeah, you want to play this game, it's fun, and in a few hours you can get the platinum trophy." And so I think his idea was just trying to retroactively get a marketing pop out of having those guides available. Because people go to PSN profiles and are often put off of games where they don't have any information on them. And there wouldn't necessarily be a game about any information about Hyperoxia or Twin Breaker or something if we didn't put it out there ourselves. Even our... We're struggling to sell games more and more because of the crowded marketplace, so we need to find every way to market. And we try to market the trophy and achievement enthusiasts, which we feel like we're simpatico with. It's funny, we learned a really hard lesson, though, about Xbox achievement people, which were not, which is when we added free achievements to Hebroxia 2, we thought we were doing a good thing and they fucking flipped out at us on the plot. Because we broke the 100, or we broke the 100, like we broke their completion percentage, which was important to them over there. Wherein like, the platinum trophy is what shows you on PlayStation that you have 100% so if the percentage has changed, no one really gives a shit. It's like, that's just extra. So it's like, we didn't really understand that about them, so we still have much to learn. Yeah, I think that there's no doubt that I segued my love of guides and completionism and all that into trophies, and that's just how it's lived on. Yeah, it's definitely been a huge inspiration and just thing for me, too. I love chasing those trophies. I did it with, I don't know what the last Platinum I had was, but I remember The Last of Us Part II. That was a big push for me. And now I think all I have to do is was a permadeath run and I'll have the 100%, but I have the Platinum and Last of Us 1 was last a few years ago, did that on PS4, spent a lot of time in Factions, which I'm hoping to get to later. But we kind of on the writing train, we've both written, I would say definitive histories of Naughty Dog. You absolutely, I would like to think mine is definitive as well. But you wrote Rising to Greatness over at IGN in 2013. I want to say they started publishing in September of that year. So The Last of Us had come out in June and then, you know, Rising to Greatness started trickling out over five parts, bigger than all the other histories you ever wrote. Do you miss writing long form pieces like that? I think those are a dying form in media in general. But do you miss that? Yeah, I do. I miss it a lot. And there's just no way to, I guess, monetize it effectively anymore unless you are one of the lucky people that can do it on substack or do it somewhere else. I just don't, even when I was at IGN, they would tell me this is like a loss leader. We're doing this as a prestige piece. This isn't making us any money. It's just to say like IGN is the home of Naughty Dog, like all the definitive information at the time about Naughty Dog. And if you still go to the Wikipedia for Naughty Dog and a lot of the early PlayStation centric games, they're all pockmarked with citations of me, which is cool. So they were, they kind of saw the long game and I think that that long game exists like Like it's not to poke fun, I'm not trying to poke fun at Xbox or anything, but it's like they can do whatever they want with Xbox and Microsoft because Microsoft does other things. And that was kind of the way IGN treated a lot of this work was do whatever you want. And we'll publish it, it'll be on the front page, it'll make us look great, it's not going to do very well. And these articles didn't. A lot of people don't want to read these things and they want to have the boiled down versions, which is what everyone else wrote when they read my pieces. But I miss it most of all because no one does it. I sound arrogant when I say this and I don't care, I guess. I don't mean it to be that way, but there was no effective replacement of Colin Moriarty in games media when I left. There was just no replacement of the person who loved long-form

research articles and talking to devs and getting their stories and all of that. Some might say Danny O'Dwyer is maybe the best equivalent of that today, but I would argue Daniel Dwyer comes off much more as a marketer in a lot of ways to me. It's not an open-minded, all bare your soul kind of thing that a lot of his stuff does. It's not. Like when you're getting-- I mean, I think a lot of that stuff, especially Bethesda comes off as just marketing that they did for free. So I like the balance of written work because it allows you to kind of paint the tail, use quotes in an effective way, cite back to history, and do all the rest. I'm surprised that no one ever stepped into the void and was able to do it. I think the other part of what's missing is my political persuasion, but that's totally another thing. I'm just surprised that no one came in and said, "Well, someone's got to do the long-form shit that Colin used to do that brought us a lot of respect," and then there's no one ever really did it. I think that that was kind of the end of that era of IGN, and it's something different now. If people like it, it's fine. I have no disrespect against IGN. They're the reason I'm here today doing what I'm doing and I appreciate that. I'll never forget the people that helped me and gave me a hand and gave me an opportunity, but it's pretty soulless compared to what we used to do and I don't think you would ever see something like this on IGN today because it's too hard. And I just don't think they have the wherewithal to do it. I just don't think anyone there could even begin to tackle a project like that. Yeah, I totally see it. I get excited when I do see some pieces that come out, especially ones that explore pieces of history that were lost at the time. One I always think of was the "Agent" article, the Rockstar Agent one, over by Blake Hester, put on Polygon. That's awesome. He talked to people and dug through, and it's obviously not as long as the history of just one game's failed development. But when those pieces do come up, I personally get excited because I feel like it's almost the only way to learn about those. I guess you could sit down and have long podcasts or interviews or videos, but reading it, I think it comes off better. You learn more. You can spend time. You don't have to cut things out for time or content. You can just go as long as you need to. Yeah, there's something too kinetic about video for me. It's like why I'm not really great at it. I'd we put our podcasts on YouTube but we're not a video product we don't consider ourselves a video product and I think a lot of that comes from the fact that I like we like our people like four-hour podcast yes four hours that's what we're gonna what's what we're gonna do today and not all of it's gonna be useful but let's at least take our time and yeah you can't do that in a video that's made for an algorithmic churn on IG or on YouTube rather that that requires you know watch time and all these things I don't know it's it's a very complicated game people out there are playing and I would love more long form content but I think it's just going to come. That will always be available, I just think it's going to be more from boutique sources and I don't think that it pays well enough. You were talking about I don't know what people make anymore like in freelance and I don't know. I'm disconnected from that now. Yeah, so I don't know what it looks like. I can't imagine it looks very good but how much are you really going to make? The history of Naughty Dog took me months to do and then research and write and go through and annotate. It was a long ass project and it's not even done. I didn't even finish it. That was one of my next questions. Back when I was writing Chasing the Stick, I tried to look for an answer as to why Part 5 never came out. For this show, research kind of came back across a tweet where you'd said you responded in an IGN comment, but those comments are all gone now. So that whole part of the website and the IGN blogs is all gone. So I actually don't know and/or remember. I'm sure I read it back in 2013 or 2014, but why did Part 5 never come out, which would have focused on The Last of Us? Yeah, it's because I took too long to write the story. So it was going to take a long time to write, but I had to sit on everything and kind of go sequentially. So it all began with, you know, Ruben and all those guys in the beginning. And I had to get to The Last of Us. But by the time I got to The Last of Us, the conversation was completely outdated and the end wouldn't have been The Last of Us because Amy Hennig was gone. And I had no access anymore to Naughty Dog at that point. They wouldn't let me back in. Because when I interviewed, I interviewed everyone almost at one time with sub-supplemental stuff. I spent a couple of weeks at Naughty Dog and stayed at a hotel and went to dinners and interviewed people and just sat with a shit ton of people. It was like a fact-finding mission and then I had all

of the transcriptions written outside like someone had to go through all that shit and put it on paper. So that took time. And then I had to start from the beginning. I had to cut it up. I didn't know how many pieces I was going to get cut up into but by the time I got to the fifth part, it would have felt so stupid to have written it where it's like Amy Hennig's gone, Uncharted 4 at that time was, we have like no idea what's going on with Uncharted 4. There's a huge dispute based on our reporting at IGN about the nature of Amy Hennig's leaving. Sony and PlayStation and Naughty Dog disputed our characterization of her being pushed out. We still, I mean, I can't speak for them, like, that was what we were told by a very reliable source. reliable, I would say, source. In terms of who it was that told us this. So we stand by that stuff. And so it caused a lot of problems where we didn't have access, we had a bad relationship with an autodog at that time because of our reporting. And it just, I didn't have the information necessary to finish the article, basically. It's like, well, I can write about The Last of Us, but it's gonna be a very short, it's gonna be like 4.5 or something like that, or 5.1. And then I'm gonna have to go back or we're gonna have to wait. I don't know, man. One of the main characters of the story is fucking Amy Hennig. She's gone I don't know what I'm supposed to do. So that's really the story about it and it sucks But I just I have so I have a ton of shit I never published like I think I have all the transcriptions though but I would think and I'm sure there's information in them and there's stuff they told me that I There's stuff they told me I get the one the one thing that I did do to get access to my dog was I said if After we talk there's something you want to take off the record You're allowed to do that before I begin writing and they did take certain things off the record and I respected that it was nothing too crazy one of the main things that they took off the record was about the nature of PlayStation 3's launch and I was stable I was able to Eke a story out of that which is that PlayStation 3 was supposed to come out in 2005 they explained that and that is the source of the article but Why it was supposed to come out in 2005 and why it didn't they struck that and so I did allow certain things But they were pretty They were they were pretty you know hands off and I think they were just kind of not really paying attention like they had a PR Guy there who was like have tuned out so I don't think he I couldn't believe the shit They were telling me yeah, and I'm sure it was fun, but I would like I still talk to Neil and you know we're friends and It would be fun to do that again, but unfortunately They're all tethered to Sony PR which I have a horrible relationship with so it's like we I can't really talk to them on the record Right you would have to be all It would have to be all off the record and yeah, I mean that's with anyone I talked to a lot of people PlayStation but sure a lot of it is yeah, well all of it is off the record because To parlay them to get on the show I have to kind of bend the knee as it were and I'm not doing that right I'm I would never expect you to that was I mean I Kind of when writing chasing the stick which I You you're an inspiration for that at the time back in 2020 I don't know if you've ever read or listened to it totally fine Yeah, I'm looking it up now because I feel like I did you send me this maybe or did I? Think I at least tweeted it at you, and it's definitely in show notes, but I can't remember this yeah I wrote kind of the ps4 time so I kind of pick up a little bit Where you left off? I obviously not the last of us on ps3, but the beginning of ps4 and so You were invaluable for a lot of this in this time But the major difference between what you were able to do and what I ended up doing was you actually had access I had a couple of people that did Agree to talk to me, but then that all fell through and no one actually ended up. I'm sticking I but Bruce Straley Responded to me which was kind of very nice of him, but that never went anywhere same with them Taylor Oh, Kurosaki? Yeah. Yeah, yeah. They would, I was going to say, they would be awesome people to talk to because they're not there anymore. So I don't think they give a shit. And Bruce always struck me as someone that didn't give much of a shit. But since we know now that he's back and doing another game, I assume they didn't want to burn any bridges, which is fine. Yeah. It was nice to see him come back into the game space the other week, though. It was nice to see him pop a spot. Well, I think it's cool because he openly left because he didn't know if he wanted to do it anymore. And I think that that's really cool. Like we're seeing the same thing with David Jaffe where he keeps saying like, "I don't really want to do this anymore." You know, he told me on my show that he got a hundred million dollar offer to do, you know, a budget offer to do a game with Tencent. He turned it down for ethical

reasons, which I think is excellent. But it's cool when these guys that are very smart leave and then they're summoned back because it means that there was a clarion call they could not resist. And that's the Bruce Shraeli we want. We don't want the burnt out, uncharted four Bruce Straley who didn't even want to make that game. You know, so yeah, it's cool. That whole, that was wild. That whole ride. And I also think, I will say that I also think Straley would, should be more interested in talking because I think he's basically been erased from the entire development of The Last of Us, which he's been, which he co-developed and I know, I know that that bothered him, but I think that he's kind of allowed that to happen to himself too. Like he should talk, he should have talked to you. It's you know, especially with the part one remake, getting ready to come out here, actually a month from the day we're recording this. Oh, that's exciting. Isn't it? I'm so pumped. Yeah, it truly is. It truly is. I'm so fucking amped. Me too. I'm so jazzed. But I watched the video that they put out a week or two ago after the leaks, which I mean, leaking a 10 year old game, I don't know. It's an interesting thought. But Neil's there talking, obviously promoting the game, and he's saying this is the definitive way to play The Last of us. I would love to know what Bruce thinks of this project, just how he feels about it, because they were there, the whole team just in the trenches making this game that they thought was going to tank the studio, which is wild in hindsight now that it's got a TV show and all this other stuff. I would love to know how Bruce feels about this particular project. I think it would be fascinating. I get the vibe. I do not know this. I want to be clear about this. I don't talk to Neil about this or anything. So I'm not saying anything. But my assumption based on what we know about the Last of Us remake is that this was kind of, I don't want to say foisted on Naughty Dog, but that they saw a product that was like halfway done. "Mmm, like, we gotta do it, I guess." I think that's kind of what people are not, like this was seemingly started by that San Diego studio, that Mumbauer. - Visual arts, right? - Right, right, that Jason Mumbauer was doing, he's out now doing that game with John Garvin, who used to be at Bend. And I think that either the game was not up to snuff, or Naughty Dog was like, "Well, we wanna do that." 'Cause I think what we're finding out, and again, this is all evidentiary, right? You kind of have to look around, but I think there's a growing individualistic power at the different studios, and I think, I'm gonna use Sly Cooper in Sucker Punch as an example. Recently, Sucker Punch released the statement about Infamous and Sly Cooper and all this, saying there are no games, right? - It felt very strange and out of the blue. It was weird. I think they did that because when a few weeks later they announced that they were taking things offline and they were releasing like "Infamous 2" or "Infamous 2nd Son" DLC that was behind a collector's edition wall and all these kinds of things, I think what they expected was people were gonna say, oh, well, maybe a new "Infamous" game or a new "Sucker Punch" game is coming out and Sony has a great tradition of letting other teams fuck with games. And "Slide Cooper 4" was made by an outside studio. And I think what Sucker Punch was kind of communicating, if you read between the lines, was like, I don't think so. Like you guys all think that there's gonna be a new Sly Cooper game or a new Infamous game, but no. Like, no one else is working on one, we're not working on one, and we're telling you that, not Sony. And I think that's a power play. And I think they've kind of worked into that position, wherein Sly Cooper was made without their blessing. And it's interesting to note that Sony owned Sucker Punch at that point. So Sly Cooper 4, being at Sanzaru, made in secret, and there's a whole story about that, right? - Interesting. - I think this is a different sort of situation. And yeah, for those that don't know the story, Sly 4 was made by Sanzaru, who's now owned by Facebook, Meta, to work on Oculus content. But they made the game, they basically made a vertical slice in secret and presented it to Sony, without permission, and said, "We wanna make a Sly Cooper game." In return, Sony was like, "That is totally fine. we would love for you to make a Sly Cooper game, your task is to port the original Sly Cooper trilogy to PS3, and that's what they did. And so this all happened without Sucker Punch. And I just don't think that that's the reality we live in anymore with Sony IP. I think Sucker Punch now has much more control. And I only bring that long story up to say Naughty Dog definitely has that kind of control. And I think that if they got wind of a project that wasn't up to snuff or that they wanted to do that was dealing with an IP of theirs. I think that they now have the power to kind of step in and do that. And I feel like that is what part one is. I feel like

part one was under development somewhere else. Naughty Dog took it over and I wouldn't be surprised if many people at Naughty Dog weren't working on it at all. That it's being made primarily through Naughty Dog production with a lot of external developers. We're gonna find out when we go through the credits when the game comes out. But I wouldn't be surprised if it wasn't a big Naughty Dog push. I think this is something they're doing to kind of protect the game and rename it as well, part one. And get this new thing out. Horizon even had their new logo, right, for Horizon, the first Horizon game with the one in it. Think they're trying to get their ducks in a row. So I know people are mad about this, and I always say opportunities taken or opportunities are gone, like they cost, right? Every game you make is a game you can't make. But I don't know that that quite fits here, 'cause I just think that Naughty Dog was like, we, this isn't up to snuff and maybe we, much like they did with Last of Us Remastered, maybe we can learn the console a little bit too. And that paid dividends obviously. I think that's absolutely part of the strategy. One of the things I noticed with, you know, learning and reading about Naughty Dog was the transition from PS2 to PS3 was difficult because they started from scratch and built everything up from the ground there for Uncharted. Right. And on PS4, exactly that, they took The Last of Us, remastered it for PS4 to get their engine ported over as fast as possible so they could start Uncharted 4 and future projects and stuff. And I think we're seeing the same pattern here with PS5. We had The Last of Us Part II patch for PS5. I mean, that's as small as you go today, I would suppose, just getting everything frame rate up, all that sort of stuff. We got the Legacy of Thieves collection, which they did, and that is porting PS4 games all the way up, incorporating PS5 features. And now we've got part one, which is definitely visual arts and reports. I even saw one tweet, I don't remember the developer in general, but they were at Bend. So, you know, Bend's involved with this in some way. Yeah, and they were also, Bend is also involved with that Uncharted game that was kind of floating around too. So I just, yeah, so I'm sorry to interrupt, but it's, I think it's not at all consolidating. Yeah, bringing everything back into the house. And now, Factions 2, that, will that be cross-gen? I don't know, that's really late in the gen. I feel like they've gotta kill the PS4 version of that. No way you gotta kill PS4. I would imagine that one of the major reasons God of War has taken so long is because of the PS4 version of the game. I would imagine that's the end. That's gonna be the end of that. Except for MLB. That's gonna be the end. I hope so. That's been my biggest concern, or one of my big concerns in general is this cross-gen stuff. It just holds back development and innovation because you've got to make it run on 10-year-old hardware now. Right. I think some of their games as a service that they're planning are going to be on everything. I'm sure they probably thought I'd shit on PS3 if they could, but it's like... But I think for single-player Naughty Dog-style games, I just... And Factions is not single-player, but Factions is being positioned, as far as I understand, from reading things. And That's a full \$70 game. I think people are expecting some little thing. And I think people are going to be surprised that this has morphed into a mega project. And it's exciting. I just want to know what else they're working on because there's inevitably another project. Yes, that's the other secret project. I mean, even in Neil's and Kurt Marginal's Twitter bios, it's like secret project or question marks and things like that. And devs do that. They have fun. But clearly they're working on something new and I personally hope it's new IP. I just think that would be exciting. Although I wouldn't, you know, if they had the right story for part three, I wouldn't, you know, I would not be disappointed in that. But I will say that I didn't want part two. I thought part two was amazing. Yes. But when it was announced, I was like, I don't need this. But now that they did a part two and the way it kind of ends and I was like, I need, I kind of need a part three. Like that's kind of the way I feel is like, I don't think you can stop here. I think they give me one more unfortunately, but I would love for them to... What I would love for them to do is not do it for a long time. Yeah. Like 10 years. And get Ashley Johnson back and she's older. But you don't have to return right away, but I do think that it's kind of begging for something, but it can't be now because of factions. Like that would be so stupid. They'd basically be the Last of Us studio. I don't think so. Yeah, I don't think so. They've never been that. They've consistently put out four games every PlayStation generation. Crash 1-2-3 in racing, Jack 1-2-3 in racing, Uncharted 1-2-3 in Last of Us, and then Last of Us Remastered, Uncharted 4, Lost Legacy,

and part two. So that's the PS4. And I feel like that number might be bolstered a little bit with these ports and remasters and remakes and stuff. think that'll bolster their numbers this gen, but I'm curious how long it'll be until, you know, a new or whatever the secret game is is out because will that be a whole PS5 generation that seems a bit too long? Yeah, I agree. And by the way, what I hope is I just because I don't understand some people's thinking it's like they should do this or they should do a first person shooter or they should do a, you know, a mascot. It's like, no, they should make third person narrative driven action games, which is exactly what they do. It doesn't have to be the last of us are uncharted, but this is the exact thing that they need to be doing. And so that's my only hope, whatever it is. I hope that that is what it is, is linear third person narrative driven action. That's what their wheelhouse is. No, even when those choices started to kind of seep in the uncharted four, which were meaningless, like I was like, fuck, you know, I remember seeing that because I I remember they showed that at PSX, and everyone was like amped up. And I was like, oh my God, what? 'Cause I was expecting to turn it on and have like upgradeable weapons and shit like that. They've resisted all of it, and in Uncharted. And I think that, so whatever it is, I really hope it's that. Like I'll be so bummed if it's like Naughty Dog's open world game or Naughty Dog's return to Jack and Dax. Oh, what a waste. Because it's not that, yeah, everyone says Sony does kind of game very well but the king of the mountain is Naughty Dog so like they should continue to do it no matter what anyone else does. And you would think, I mean their studio has been built and designed and hired for these types of projects. Their whole engine and just development process is built for these games. Totally. And there's a fluidity that I think they're trying to develop internally in the studio's family to lift off the various burdens of, let's say, PC development, extraneous stuff, middleware, all the things you have to deal with and saying like, "Oh, we have a Nixxis for that. Oh, we have a Bluepoint for that. We have a Valkyrie for art assets now." We don't need to necessarily go outside the family anymore, and we can take all of this boring shit that actually some people have a real passion for. There's no doubt that the people at Nixxis love porting things to PC. That's like what they do. That sounds horrifying probably to most of a game studio. And to say to that studio, you don't have to worry about that at all. Just create something new. And it'll enter the pipeline and find its way wherever it needs to go. For people that are much more capable by the way of doing those things than you, which you're the creators. And I think Sony's building something like this. I think Haven, in reading the recent interviews with Jade Raymond, it sounds like that's also what they are. a game, but it sounds like mostly what they're doing is building a cloud-based system where games can be developed from afar. Because people log in through VPNs and from afar when they're working on games to share builds and all that. And it seems like the purchase of Haven was to secure whatever they're making. Like the game is secondary. And I like seeing Sony think like that because they already have the talent to make the games they need to make. They need to unencumber that talent. Like, Decima is really cool, but why is Guerrilla making a fucking engine? Don't worry about that. Use Unreal Engine. We own a PC that now, if you're Sony. We don't need to worry about that. Why are you porting Horizon to PC? We have someone that can do that for you. And so I think that the prolific kind of development of games, like the four games per generation that you're talking about, will no doubt slow down. But I think Sony's doing everything they can to expedite that problem that Shawn Layden said when he left, which is that our games are too expensive and they take too long to make. And you can see they're nibbling around the edges. Bungie is the same thing. Yeah, with Destiny, but also just Bungie's knowledge when you're talking about that. Dude, they let them keep everything. Yeah. I mean, can you imagine working... If I were at a studio, like a middling, and I don't mean as an insult, but a middling Sony studio like, I don't know, Media Molecule or something. I was like, these guys can just publish their games wherever they want. They can say whatever they want. They can have whatever political messaging they want. They got \$1.5 billion in retention bonuses between a thousand of them. So everyone made a lot of money, six figures for most of them. And we're over here making fucking dreams on PS4. And we don't have that kind of freedom. I think they know that-- and by the way, they don't exist in PlayStation Studios. their own vertical under Sony. Sony owns Bungie as a separate thing. But

I think that that was also done to be like, "We need you." We have no idea what we're doing. And they say as much in that recent – I don't know if you saw that really fascinating Brazilian release about the acquisition of Microsoft. Did you see anything about this? JE: Words flew by, but I didn't dig into it. BK: Basically, in Brazil and in other countries, companies – when a major corporation is being purchased by a major corporation or there's like a merger. I'm sorry. – Yes. No, I'm remembering. I think I saw Benji tweet about it. – Right. Companies can submit. The government asks, "What do you think, Capcom? What do you think, Square Enix?" And they ask Sony, "What do you think?" And Sony was like, "We don't like it." Because even if we made something like Call of Duty, it's so entrenched and they have such an advantage that it would take us years and and generations of consoles to be able to edge them out. And it goes to show you why Bungie was so important to them because they're able to, they don't care about Destiny. They want to know how they did it. And they were willing to give them whatever they wanted to understand how they did it. And that's fucking crazy. And I think that that also shows a whole new era of Sony. And it's important to remember, again, Haven and everyone else is in one family. Bungie's its own thing. And I think that they were willing to do that because the sauce was so important and I love that. I mean that's why I think it's so exciting. We don't know fucking anything about what's coming on, coming past God of War with the exception of vague Spider-Man 2, vague Wolverine, okay? Both from the same team and so it's like, dude, it's about to pop off. Like I don't know if it's gonna happen sooner or later but it's gonna pop off and it's gonna be great. – It has to and they keep these little drops of PSVR2 as well, I mean just a couple, I think last week or two weeks ago, the UI and just VR tech has always been something I've loved and it followed you know as close as I can I've got the quest and the PS VR 2 and I'll use any headset I can get my hands on but PS VR 2 looks like a generate actually like two generations of VR leap for from PS VR but the tech there is gonna be wild and when you pair that with the PS 5 and just but what what is out there a Horizon game. I'm trying to think, what else from first parties? You know? Nothing. We don't have anything else from first parties. Insomniac could make something. They have a history making video content. I would assume that that's got to be in the cards. Yeah. Yeah, so we'll see. It's fast. It's like, it's a very frustrating time to be a PlayStation fan, and this is what we say on Sacred Symbols all the time, but the longer it goes—because I was even saying to our guys in our employee Discord, like, numbers are soft right now. We can't—like, Patreon's going down a little bit. can't, but I'm like, I can't really worry about that. There's nothing to talk about. I don't blame people for being like, well, I'll come back when football season starts again, you know, that kind of thing. But personally, even though it's not great for my business, it's like, I love this tension where I'm like, I hope this lasts as long as possible. I hope they get through the entire calendar year without saying a word about anything. That would be nuts. I think that would be fucking crazy, but I think that they might do it. And I'm kind of identifying that the reason that they're doing it, and I think we see shadows of it in their recent finances, is they don't have consuls to sell. They don't want to say anything, because they're selling everything they can make. Why promote something that you can't find? They are literally selling fewer of them than they were last quarter. They can't make enough of them. They're way off base on their fiscal predictions. It's worrying for them. I think they're concerned. They're really not able to make enough. Inflation is out of control. They're probably also starting to eat shit on the cost of these things. They're not going to raise the price like Oculus was raised. That would be insanity for them to do that. So they're locked in. Their entire \$70 increase, you know, \$10 increase from \$60 to \$70 in their games wiped out by inflation. So they're probably totally eating shit right now and it's probably freaking them out. But I would assume that they're waiting to say more because they're like, "There are no consoles. What do you want us to do?" They know better than to lead with PC shit. If they want to start selling games, and they're like, "Well, we have PC shit to talk about." People are going to be like, "Oh, no, no, no, no." So I think they know their audience better than that. So I think they're in a catch-22. It's like, "Well, our competitor isn't doing shit. They don't have anything this year." We at least have God of War, and we can just wait it out, start accumulating more consoles to sell, get them where we need to start continuing to fucking do what they're doing, which is putting them on like 747s and shipping

them at great cost to just get them places. So they don't get caught on shipping containers in Oakland for three weeks. I can imagine that the situation, that logistical situation, is not good for PlayStation 5. And I think that that has a lot to do with why they're not saying anything. Because it's like, well, what is the point? all we're going to get is continued complaints about how no one can find the console. It's like, well, and the only thing that makes me scared about that is like, do you continue to support PS4? But I think they realize like you can't, you just can't, you can't. It's cutting off any development potential for the PS5. If it's got to work on both, you're cut off at the knees because it's got to work on super old stuff. So I think it ends there. And so, yeah, I would love for them to get through the entire year and just not even say a goddamn word about anything. I think I'll be hysterical. I think people would start losing their shit at that point. But I think you would, I would assume if not this month and next month there will be like some sort of showcase I would assume for God of War and for... God of War definitely. Yeah. Yeah. People are back to school. They're getting back to their desks at work. They're off vacation. They want to play games. Everyone's getting back into the mood. We saw their retention right now is horrible. Like they were writing about it in their fiscal stuff like no one is playing games. The industry is down precipitously across everything except for subscriptions as we saw. Double digits in a lot of them, like double digits down in software, double digits down in DLC, double digits down in microtransactions. People are just not interacting as much. Now this is a readjustment from the pandemic normal, but I think when people start swinging back, when they start missing games, when the weather starts turning, that's when you strike. I would imagine that they have a game every quarter next year for from first and second party and I would imagine two of them will be like a single player game and two of them will be the first of these games as a service and it'll be I'm fucking I hate these games but I'm stoked to see what it's going to be like as an analyst what are they going to do they've never done anything like this which is which is incredible they've never even tried like they've done a few things like kill strain and a few things but that drawn of death but these were these were both of those games were not even supposed to be games of service they were not sold because they were overpriced and no one was going to buy them so this is like their first intentional release of a game as a service with the knowledge of Bungie and all the rest will be very exciting and one of these games hits we might be looking at Naughty Dog is like a second a secondary studio compared to whoever makes their big game and that's what's so interesting about it like what if that game comes from gorilla or London, right? And suddenly their game churns half of Sony's revenue. It's like, well, that's nuts, but it's possible. Anything's possible when it... You just look, I mean, you just look everywhere and you just see games for free. I mean, even look at Fortnite. There were the rumors that Last of Us was coming to Fortnite and that got shut down, which I thought was kind of funny, the way Neil just came out and said it. That seems very rare for him to just speak out directly and deny something. But yeah, I don't know. I don't know what that was all about. I kind of read it as them not wanting to be associated with that game, but that would be a great game for to be associated with. So I don't know if I'm reading it correctly. Yeah, because Uncharted was in Fortnite, so right. Exactly. Yeah. And I just think that that's like, why wouldn't you want to be involved in that? But I could just imagine, I could just imagine all the people with the Joel skins running around with golf clubs and that's going to go one of two ways. Yeah, that's a great point. I mean, it just might not be possible based on the interpretation of that particular character. But yeah, it was interesting to see him say. I wish, again, I say over and over again, I wish people were, entities were less precious with information. The film industry is a great example. They just say whatever they want. Like, it's clear. They just announce things, things never come out. All the time, all the time. Most of the game, TV shows and movies that we talk about on the show never come out. It's like, "Yeah, this guy's option this and he's writing this and this is what they're doing." And it's like, "Why is it so secret in games? It's annoying." It can be. There was one more, I think, Trina thought I definitely wanted to pick your brain about, specifically with factions too, as we're all kind of calling it right now. You mentioned earlier, it sounds like there's a huge narrative component to this game, even though it is multiplayer I think it sounds like a \$70 game you you agree with that one thing that I remember that I came across when writing

chasing the stick was this multiplayer design hiring video that's still up on their YouTube channel from like 2017 and there's a quote from Neil in it I'll just I'll read it really quick quote what we don't want is multiplayer to feel like a mode we want it to be almost its own game its own experience it might start with an idea a world or an idea of a mechanic or even more recently a certain feeling that we're after. And then we will explore, okay, what kind of world can evoke that feeling, what kind of mechanics can evoke that feeling, what kind of psychological situations can we put multiple people in that speak back to the theme that we're after." That sounds like factions to me through and through. In 2017 they were clearly working on it. It was probably still within the scope of "we will attach this to Last of Us Part 2, before that was inevitably separated. But what do you, all we know is its narrative and clearly set in San Francisco. What do you, what are you thinking about this? I'm curious about, like, for some reason my mind kind of goes to Massives work with The Division when I think about the potential of this game. I envision something like a squad based, up to four player kind of game, where there's a much greater emphasis on narrative, which I think that that game and Outlanders and some other, or Outriders rather, and some others tries to work in. But I think the challenge that they have to overcome, and perhaps why it's taking so long in addition to it being a different sort of game for them to make is, it might be hard to hit those narrative beats in a multiplayer game inherently. It might be an unsolvable problem in some way. They might be dealing, because of the gravity of their games, they might be dealing for the first time with some of these issues. Like, just as an example, I'm playing Cyberpunk recently, which is awesome, and during the serious moments you can move your character around, do whatever you want, and I can't help but like jump around, right, and just do whatever I want. Like, just breaking the immersion. If someone else was watching that, that's a huge problem. So if I'm playing with someone else, and there's like a serious thing, I'm jumping on her head. Like, just little things like that have to be kind of narrative, navigate it around in a narrative-based multiplayer game? Like how... Do you have like a Gears of War style thing where it just, you just disassociate from the game and it becomes a CG rendered? Do you allow people to kind of act out and talk and make choices and do all these things and how does that affect emotion? Because I think that's the thing Naughty Dog is known for most is emotion right now. And I think that that's kind of lost. Uncharted and The Last of Us, shared DNA, and that they're both about people and characters you love. And if they can figure that out in factions through a proxy of a character, basically, because everyone's just gonna be playing skins of characters that exist, potentially, I think that they could have something really special. And I think the reason why it's taking so long is because they know they can't just release something. It's gotta be, it's gotta work like it's got to really work and so I believe in the potential of this game. Again, I see it as a I don't know anything about it, but in my mind's eye, I just see it as a four person division style shooter and I think it's going to be much more kinetic than the last of us is factions on PS3. I think that they're going to retool the shooting to be different and I think they already started doing that in the last was part two and Uncharted obviously so so yeah I mean that's the way I envision the game is a game that can be played by yourself because I think that that would be a huge mistake for them to make a game that you cannot play by yourself that's their bread and butter but I think making a game that you encourage and nudge people towards playing with other people and obviously that's the natural state of factions itself I think they have the potential of doing something cool and by the way they they were also experience experimenting on with like meta games in factions, which I think they can do again as well. Factions connected to Facebook and did all sorts of weird shit. That was kind of forward thinking. I think that if they can... could there be an app tied to it? Can there be a separate spinoff game or something put into the original games or something that all ties it together? There's a good reason to invest in The Last of Us' universe. However, my reservation about factions is that we are seeing a downward tail in sales for The Last of Us and I don't know if this is going to solve that. I think the game will do very well, but I don't know if it's the wisest use of time if there isn't something else in the works, which obviously there is. Yeah, it's interesting to think about that with the downturn in sales, just twos being softer than ones. It's just not the same as it was. But with the TV show on the way, part one seems to, if the show is

really good and gets a lot of people talking and stuff, I hope is a great show, you know, I'm crossing my fingers for it, that could potentially help a lot and then you have the part one there and part two and they both run on PS5 and do all this great stuff so that's, I see potential there and then you hear, oh there's a multiplayer game on the way. It could help the, you know, that IP in particular. I think another, again I don't know anyone at Naughty Dog but they haven't made a multiplayer focused game I'd say since Jack X Combat Racing. And even that had a single player component to it you could just play through this campaign. But they want to put the Naughty Dog name on it and obviously be proud of it. And I think there's probably, I would suspect, more pressure on a multiplayer game. Definitely. Generally speaking, I think they're probably under extraordinary pressure. I think they've met, I think over and over again, they've met and surpassed expectations. Like I think The Last of Us Part II is their best game. But I think that eventually they're not going to meet expectations. I don't know if, it's just not possible. So I just don't know if it's this game. They have to be very careful. Naughty Dog's reputation that people are ready to rip these guys apart like at a moment's notice no doubt. And they know that too. So yeah. It is, it's funny you say that. I back in 2013 when I was working at Kmart, a coworker of mine there, you know, I was excited for The Last of Us. I'm all jazzed about it." And he was like, "There's no way it's going to be good. They can't keep cranking these games out, especially at their pace then. It was every two years." And I remember waking up on my birthday was when your IGN review of The Last of Us went up and you'd given it a 10. And I felt excited simply because I was like, "Haha, I'm right, you know, coworker. They can keep going." And I believe they've continued that trend, but you're right. It's how do you sustain this. I don't know. It doesn't seem sustainable forever. No, what I expect will happen is that Factions will come out and it'll do well and people will really like it, but I think that there'll be a great anticipation for whatever lays beyond that for most people. And I think people will maybe look at Factions as a sign of a new era of PlayStation and that might be true. I mean, I think that... I think... here's the double-edged sword of the situation as far as I see it is that Sony wants a free-to-play or game as a service persistent hit and they're gonna get one and so they're going to like it's going to happen it will happen not because they're Sony but because they're trying so many different things that one of them is going to work and how that will affect their output elsewhere is going to be very interesting because they're gonna look at a 150 or 200 million dollar game like The Last of Us Part II and be like, "Well, okay, we made \$100 million in profit on this and we could have made \$500 million in profit if you guys made something else." So it's going to be interesting to see like how important their reputation is in the space for that when they inevitably are tempted away from it, which is what's going to happen. And this is why I think this does mark a new era for them because I don't think – I think people need to steel themselves a little bit for what's to come. It's not going to be we've been very we for single player people and PlayStation fans we've been very very lucky that they just have consistently just given us exactly what we wanted and I just as strange as it is to say I just think that we're going to have to make way for some new stuff you know yeah I can see it it's no matter what it'll definitely be an interesting generation with the PS5 not only for Naughty Dog but there are other studios and stuff It's like you said earlier, we don't know what's coming beyond God of War here in November, which is besides Spider-Man and Wolverine. And that's kind of exciting to not know. Definitely. I have plenty of games to play. I also don't get excited about releases until they're in my hands. I'm really looking forward to The Last of Us Part 1. I'm amped about it, but I'm not going to spend time thinking about it until I just play it. And there's just a lot of things to play. So they could stop releasing games for 10 years and I think I would be fine with that. It would be horrible for my business and theirs, but it would be fine. It's like, okay, there's plenty of stuff to play in the past. So I'm not eager, I am eager, but I am not longing for them to re-emerge in some way. Well, I've got one more question for you before we wrap up. I was looking at your trophies because you're Colin. I could be wrong. I could have missed it. But you haven't played Uncharted Lost Legacy? No, no, I have not played it. Why? I don't know. I just, well, I do know that it came out at a time, that like six month period when I wasn't really playing games in 2017. So there is, that is part of it, because I usually just play things that Sony releases at

launch. Right. So I just kind of missed it at that point. And then, yeah, I just never got back into it. I think I kind of retroactively soured on Uncharted 4, which is why I'm eager to get back to that and play it again. Because I just feel like I rushed through it at the time and I just wasn't really enjoying it. It was that embargo kind of grind that I've totally moved away from. So yeah, Lost Legacy is like, I want to play it but I really feel like I actually need to get back to Uncharted 4 first in some way. Just because I want to go in that sequential release order and have a better feel for things. Now, Dagon and I on Knockback have gone through Uncharted 1, 2, and 3 and we are going to do 4 even though breaks the rules of the show. We're gonna do four probably this fall. So I would imagine Lost Legacy will be around the corner after that. Okay. Yeah, I've not played it. I'm excited to see what you think about it because it was, it started out as single player DLC and expanded into its own standalone \$40 game which was also unique for Naughty Dog at the time. Much shorter experience that does some experimentation, I mean, you'll see it. The Seattle area in The Last of Us Part II is heavily inspired by a particular part of Lost Legacy and stuff. So it's interesting to see those design things get tested out early on in Lost Legacy. So, well, I think that's everything I've got for you and the listeners today. Thank you so much, Colin, for your time and just joining me on this show. I want to give you this time to just promote or share anything that you would like to share with listeners. Colin our PlayStation podcast and all the other content we do at patreon.com/laststandmedia. You don't even have to be a patron to just see that. That's just a general newsfeed of everything. So it's just where everything lives. So it's kind of like our one-stop shop. And yeah, I appreciate your time. It was fun to talk about Naughty Dog and PlayStation. Always happy to do it. Thank you very much. Thank you everyone for listening to this show. If you would like to follow Colin on Twitter, he pretty much just tweets about work and the shows that he produces now with the very, very occasional personal update. But you can follow him over on Twitter @notaxation and like he said, Last Stand Media, Sacred Symbols, Knockback, Defining Dukes, those are all the shows under the Last Stand Media brand. For myself, you can follow me on Twitter @MaxRoberts143 and my writing over at maxfrequency.net. We also have Chapter Select, a seasonal podcast where we bounce back and forth a series and explore their evolution design and legacy. Season four here, getting ready to start up with the fast and the furious, but then in the spring we are doing Resident Evil. So looking forward to that. So thank you all for listening, I hope you have a wonderful rest of your day.