

EPISODE 83

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:09] ANNOUNCER: Welcome to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist, brought to you by OnePitch. The guests on our show include some of the most notable journalists from the top US-based publications who cover topics including technology, lifestyle and culture, health, science, consumer products, and business news. We discuss their role, the types of stories they cover, what their inbox looks like, and how they connect with sources.

This week, we're joined by Nathan Ingraham, Deputy Managing Editor of Engadget. In his role, Nathan keeps track of the site's daily news operations, and also covers Google, Apple, gaming, apps, and weird Internet culture. Prior to Engadget, Nathan was a news editor and reporter for The Verge. During the episode today, Nathan shares more about his role and responsibilities as Deputy Managing Editor, the best way to approach him if you want to work together, why he appreciates brevity and camaraderie, and more. Let's dive into the episode now.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:01:17] BB: Welcome, everybody. This is Coffee With a Journalist. I'm Beck Bamberger, founder of BAM. An agency that works with all venture-backed technology companies doing crazy things like building robotics that take you across Egypt. I don't know. Weird stuff. And OnePitch, which is the producer of this fabulous podcast, you guys know and listen to. There are sirens in the background. There's everything happening. And today with us, ooh, we are so lucky. We have Nathan Ingraham here, Deputy Managing Editor over at in Endgadget, which we'll chat all about.

Nathan, thank you for being here.

[00:01:50] NI: You're welcome. Nice to talk to you, Beck. What are you drinking?

[00:01:53] AH: Actually, just sparkling water at the moment, because it's kind of late afternoon for me and late afternoon for you. So I imagine no coffee.

[00:01:58] NI: That's right. Although I will plug one of my favorite spots, Function, in Philadelphia near the Italian market. Very good if you're in the neighborhood.

[00:02:06] BB: Okay, coffee. Always, I am one of those people that before I land in whatever city I'm going to, I immediately check and go, "Okay, local coffee shops." I check if there's a blue bottle. Okay, where's the blue bottle in relation to where I'm staying? Is it walkable? If there's no blue bottle, okay, where else am I going to go? I mean, I have to scope it out.

[00:02:25] NI: We have a pretty good coffee culture here. I would say all over the city with all different neighborhoods. I'm kind of obsessed with just trying as many shops I can get to, but Function does really – They do unique recipes. Like they have an orange creamsicle latte for the summer, which is like, yeah, real good.

[00:02:40] BB: Where coffee meets science it says on their website. Oh! Oh, lab lines Coffee. Okay, well, this is not a coffee show. So we're going to keep moving along here. But, oh, I'm bookmarking this. Okay, next trip to Philly. Amazing. Oh, and they have press? Look at them. They get media coverage.

[00:02:57] NI: They did a lot of baking during the pandemic. They kind of like pivoted to like doing a lot of baked goods so they could have takeout and stuff.

[00:03:04] BB: You can go on our website and shop coffee or bread. Amazing.

[00:03:09] NI: This might have just turned into a coffee podcast.

[00:03:11] BB: Okay. Okay. Let's focus. Let's focus, Nathan. Alright, first, first, for those who are maybe not familiar, let's do two things. One, how would you describe Endgadget for those who maybe don't know, and then also more your role, because a lot of times we have reporters on here, or maybe an editor, but you have a little fancier bit of a title, which is Deputy Managing Editor. So let's start with Endgadget.

[00:03:29] NI: Yeah. So Endgadget has been around for about 15 years. One of the kind of originators of technology blogging back when like cell phones were new and exciting and like the computer industry was changing constantly. And we've evolved from the sort of bloggy routes to being a site that covers basically, however, technology touches culture and society. So we're still a very product-focused in that way. We still write about the things you should and shouldn't buy, and what's good, and what the big companies are doing. But we also try to do like Zoom-out and do bigger picture stories on how tech is impacting different parts of your daily life. So be that economics, or politics, or obviously we do gaming. Yeah, there're a lot of sites that are doing stuff like that, but we've got a really long history in that business, which is nice.

[00:04:13] BB: Yeah, they are definitely the originators on all things tech. And then tell us a little bit more on your function.

[00:04:20] NI: Yep. So Deputy Managing Editor is a fancy title. That means my responsibilities cover our sort of short form news coverage primarily, which is the sort of bread and butter. News comes up. We want to get on the site quickly, ideally within the hour or sometimes within 10 minutes. So kind of the short, fast turnaround 300 to 500 word stories. I do a lot of looking for that news. I vet it with other editors. I assign it to the right writers. I help them get the post at the door.

Someone once said that like I had a hand in like a quarter of their work, basically like they write most of these posts. Like you sort of get like partial credit for everything I publish. But I'm not doing that. I still do reporting editing and writing when I can. So it's really like a balancing act of like what's going on a given day. That depends on what I can do.

[00:05:08] BB: Yeah, you had this iPad piece that came out, YouTube. You used talk about Microsoft, IKEA. Oh, look at them building these speakers. Wow! Yeah, lots of fun stuff.

[00:05:18] NI: I do a lot of speaker stuff lately. It's kind of like a personal interest thing. But I also write a lot of coverage of Google and Apple and kind of weird Internet stuff occasionally. I like to dabble in games. I don't have like a single heartbeat, which is kind of fun. I kind of need to know

—

[00:05:32] **BB:** It's kind of nice.

[00:05:34] **NI:** Yeah, I try to stay on top of everything as much as you can. I mean, again, everyone's got little blind spots because there's so much happening. It's hard to see it all. But –

[00:05:43] **BB:** So how's your inbox?

[00:05:46] **NI:** Oh, boy. Honestly, my inbox is a super challenge, just generally speaking. I cleared it a little while ago, and I've got 164 things in it unread right now.

[00:05:57] **BB:** How long was a little while ago? Like yesterday?

[00:05:59] **NI:** A couple hours ago.

[00:06:00] **BB:** Oh my God! A couple hours ago? And it's back to 160?

[00:06:05] **NI:** Yeah, it looks like from 9 to 10 I got like 20 emails maybe that are still in my inbox. And some of those are stuff from our parent company and some a few internal things. I know you work with PR. So like there's a ton of pitches here.

[00:06:23] **BB:** Yeah. Well, that's the focus of the show is like, okay, how crazy is it with pitches? And what do you do about that? Because how do you keep up? And I know just everyone on Twitter right now especially is just saying like, "Oh, my God, funding announcements are off the charts. Everyone's raising." It's a crazy time in tech. So what's maybe the ratio of pitches you get?

[00:06:42] **NI:** Like in terms of stuff we would cover versus not?

[00:06:45] **BB:** Yeah.

[00:06:46] **NI:** Oh, god, it's out of whack. Unfortunately, I don't ever put any company or person in class, because I understand everybody's got to get their job done. But the percentage of stuff that I get that isn't really relevant is very, very high. So of those 150, like I'll probably just go

through and get rid of 75% right off the bat. Yeah, it's tough. But I'll say like the thing that works best for me is when I can build a relationship with somebody. And that happens when they know what we cover as a site. I don't expect someone to know exactly what I cover. But I want to get the sense that they've looked at the website before they send the pitch. If they do all is, say, "Hey, like let me check us out." Or I'll say – I like to get to a point where I can say, "Look, I might not respond to everything you send, but I want you to know that if you send it, I'll at least take a look. And when I have the bandwidth or interest, I will definitely like get back to you on it."

[00:07:40] BB: Mm-hmm. And now, do you have a filing system of sort? Flagging? Coloring system? No? Or you let it ride?

[00:07:47] NI: I wish I did. So I'm not one of those people who ever gets to like 10,000 on red like that I can't do. So I try to like make sure at least every week I get it mostly clear. But yeah, I mean, for a while I use different labels in Gmail, or it's a Google doc or a Google-based system. But I found that I don't really use them much. So I just rely on search. And like there're a couple of things where I'm like, "Okay, if I know I need to get back to this, I'll flag it, or start, or whatever." But my system is pretty unsophisticated, I would have to say.

[00:08:15] BB: Yeah. A lot of people though that I talked to on here use the inbox purely as a search function. So they'll just punch in, "Oh, yeah. What was that crypto dog thing?" Oh, they punch it in and it pulls up from four and a half months ago. And then they reach back out. So that's a big finding for, I think, people on here, is just to know like, "Oh, no, your email can be – You can be get responded to. It might just be three and a half months later.

[00:08:39] NI: Right, exactly.

[00:08:40] BB: Oh, there you go.

[00:08:41] NI: So the only thing that worries me about searches if I'm not searching on the right term, "Oh, I missed something." It's very good. I mean, it's very, very good for the most part, but sometimes I'm like I feel like there should be something coming up for this, but I maybe not getting the word right.

[00:08:54] BB: Yeah. I wonder if that's maybe a clue for PR people to make sure they put at the bottom of the email or the pitch, like the search terms or something.

[00:09:00] NI: Keywords, yeah. Oh no.

[00:09:01] BB: Keywords fall. Oh, God. Okay. So, ooh, we do have an audience ask I'm going to ask you, Nathan. Okay, we got somebody here. Let me scan down. This person, Jocelyn Brandeis, JBLH Communications is asking, "If a PR person could grant you one magical request, what would it be?"

[00:09:22] NI: Read the site and understand what we cover before you email, because it makes it way more likely that you'll get a response.

[00:09:30] BB: Yeah.

[00:09:31] NI: And I just want to get a sense of knowing that we're going to both get some value out of the time spent in the interaction, if you know what I mean. For example, like I still get – This is funny. Back when I was at The Verge, for a little while I wrote a few music related things. We kind of like covered whatever there whatever we felt like. And so I wrote a few like top songs were listening to this week. Kind of little short things. Took some feedback from other people to staff and just publish those for a bit. And I think because of that, I'm still getting pitches about musicians. And I'm personally interested in it sometimes. And so occasionally those actually have some value to it. But it's funny, because you write about something once and you'll get pitched about it forever. And I think maybe that's actually a better way to frame what I was saying is that it makes you know what the person's currently doing. Just because they hit something once back in the day doesn't mean it's a relevant subject matter for them now.

[00:10:23] BB: Yeah. Oh, it's so hard, because you're just trying to predict and trying to figure out. Well, this is what OnePitch is solving. So there you go. That's our thing. Okay. Hopefully we answered that question, Jocelyn, because she was asking.

Nathan, given your wide array that you can cover at your leisure when you do have the ability to do so, how do you come up with inspiration for a story? Are you in the shower? Are you like – Is there a way this happens? And then sometimes, does any of it actually come from a pitch?

[00:10:57] NI: Yes, sometimes definitely. Again, like the people who I talk to on a regular basis kind of know where we're going with things and know that's usually more like the straight news kind of stuff, right? Like they'll have some news. And I'll be like, "Yeah, like sometimes that'll be a jumping off point for a bigger story. So yeah, I'll say when I'm thinking about something besides like immediate news coverage, it comes out of what's happening in the news for me. That's kind of like my primary idea, inspiration places, is like responding to what's going on.

So an example of that is a couple months ago, Apple redesigned the iMac, and they made some major design changes. And I couldn't help but notice that on the back of the base model there's only two USB C ports on their laptops, and before the iMac had a whole array of ports. So it could be like a true proper desktop computer. And I started thinking, well, there're probably some people who are mad about that, which is not that interesting. But it also might forecast the direction that they're going to keep going. At the same time, they've been lots of rumors about the next MacBook Pro that they're going to make. And supposedly Apple is going to bring back some of the ports and accessibility stuff that they removed four or five years ago, which is not something they usually do. Anyway, this is all to say that those two things made me think, "Okay, let's break down what they're doing here and what it might mean for the future of what they're going to do with their computers." So that's like a news reaction kind of story. I hate to call it a hot take, but it's a little bit in that vein of like, "Ooh! Something happened. And I have this response that I just have to put on the Internet about it," right? That's like the most basic and kind of fast turnaround stuff that we do and that I like to do, is just being plugged into what's happening the news cycle in finding stuff where I know that part of the industry well enough to just quickly like, "Okay, what's my like reaction to what's going on here? Is that reaction worth sharing?" Like let's work shopping and say – Right, it's not just blast off the first thing that comes to your mind, is to put that idea through at least a little bit of rigor, and vetting with some other editors. And then they say, "Yeah, you've got something here."

And another example recently was Google was going to make some changes to how it handled third-party cookies. It was going to stop allowing them and use its own kind of new technology to

do that to offer similar ways to see what people are browsing without being as invasive and filling them around the Internet. And my first reaction to that was, “Oh, I think Google might be doing this because they've been putting so much antitrust pressure, and so much like tracking pressure that they're trying to get ahead of that and move to something that's a little bit less evil, so to speak. I mean, Google that uses third-party cookies.

But it turns out I was kind of wrong about that, because they got a lot of pushback on that, because cookies are such a standard. And what they were doing is not a proven standard. So they are actually putting that apostrophe where they continue to refine the idea. So it's a case where like my initial reaction wasn't right. But that's going to happen sometimes, because you don't have all the information. But yeah, that's kind of another example of how –

[00:13:52] BB: Isn't that also – Not to go down this path, but that seems very common for Google, I've heard. Just something will be adopted. Okay, it'll be going for two years, and then it's dropped. And then now it's no longer a priority. Then maybe it gets picked back up again later on. And then maybe –

[00:14:08] NI: Yeah, and that's definitely true. Although in this case, I think what they did is probably more responsible, because, A, it hadn't been rolled out. They were working on it and being open about communicating their work, which is good. And they clearly took the reactions to heart and then said, Okay, we're going to like pump the brakes on this and think about it more before making the change. So like, in this case, I'd say they did the right thing. And that's not to say they don't do the right thing other times on the discontinued products, but it makes it kind of harder to say like, “Oh, I'm going to go all in on a particular Google thing because you worry like, “Well, what if they pull the plug?” Not going to happen for Gmail or search, but I could still see being a little weary sometimes.

[00:14:48] BB: Yeah, scares me a bit. Because you get into things like, “Wait. Damn. Damn.” But like Hangouts came, got much better, for example. Thank God.

[00:14:55] NI: Right. I mean, they've had a ridiculous – I've been writing for years about how goofy their strategy with chat is. It's just like they have a really hard time like sticking with

something, but I think, at the very least, like it is getting better. But knock on wood, we'll see if that sticks.

[BREAK]

[00:15:12] ANNOUNCER: Today's interview will continue after this brief message brought to you by OnePitch. Are you curious to see the unique ways one pitch helps PR professionals and marketers pitch journalists? Head to onepitch.co learn about our new OnePitch score and see how easy it is to find the right journalists to pitch your news to. Sign up for your free account today. Now back to today's episode.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[00:15:37] BB: Well, next, I would love to, Nathan, do this little fill in the blank section. So I'll tee you up with the phrase and you fill in and we'll see what we get.

[00:15:44] NI: Sure.

[00:15:45] BB: Perfect. My favorite sources always –

[00:15:49] NI: Send me info that they know I can use and respect my time with it.

[00:15:54] BB: That's good. That's clear.

[00:15:56] NI: When I say respect my time, I mean, not going on for too long about something, getting the meat of the information to me as quickly as possible so we can do something with it. And then the best sources are ones who can kind of be available to go back and forth as needed. Be that once or 10 times. It's finding that balance of camaraderie almost as well as brevity.

[00:16:19] BB: The most annoying source is always –

[00:16:21] NI: Email my personal email. Nuff said.

[00:16:25] **BB:** Where do they find it?

[00:16:27] **NI:** You can find anything these days, right?

[00:16:29] **BB:** It's true.

[00:16:30] **NI:** Actually, I put a thing on my Twitter bio saying if you pitch my personal email, you'll get deleted and blocked.

[00:16:38] **BB:** Oh, good, good. Put that out there. You'll get a response from me if –

[00:16:43] **NI:** IF you send me something that I'm highly likely to write about.

[00:16:48] **BB:** Yeah. So simple. You can follow up with me if –

[00:16:55] **NI:** If I don't respond in a few days. I don't mind to follow up. Again, like I think it's the balance of everybody. We're all trying to do our jobs. And honestly, sometimes I have 100% miss things that I've meant to get to. So I definitely don't mind a Bump. Yeah, a bump is totally fine. More than one is fine if I know you and I've worked with you before. But if you don't get a response after a couple like –

[00:17:18] **BB:** You're good.

[00:17:19] **NI:** Yeah, and I prefer to like not respond then to like respond and be a jerk about it to be honest. Some people –

[00:17:24] **BB:** I know. Just responding not interested. Yeah.

[00:17:27] **NI:** Yeah. Yeah.

[00:17:30] **BB:** Oh, God. Okay, it would be a huge help if you –

[00:17:34] NI: Read the stuff I've written recently before you send me a message.

[00:17:37] BB: Yeah, very clearly. The best compliment I received about my work was –

[00:17:43] NI: That it helped someone learn something about a topic they were interested in. It seems pretty straightforward, but that means that I was able to communicate the context and the importance of the story, or help somebody make a decision about something they wanted to buy. And knowing to say like, “Okay, your work contributed to that is like a great thing.”

[00:18:05] BB: That is nice. Do you get a lot of readers who say like, “Oh, that really helped me pick out the speakers. I love them.” Like anything like that?

[00:18:11] NI: Yeah, sometimes. I mean, a lot of people obviously get negative stuff. And I'll say I'm lucky that I get a fair balance of negative and positive stuff respond to my writing. I think part of that is I'm lucky to be a white guy. So there's less of the sort of online harassment that goes on there. But yeah, no. I mean, a lot of times you'll see maybe people are in comments that they can be critical or sharp, but I'm like, “Oh, you've actually got a good point there too. So I'll take that in our consideration. But yeah, just as often, I feel like people are pretty complimentary about what we put out there.

[00:18:45] BB: That's nice. It's good to hear, especially in this era of cancel culture and all this crap. Okay. The last best thing I ate or cooked was –

[00:18:53] NI: I had this pizza up in upstate New York. Town is slipping my mind. I was just there a couple weeks ago. This place, all these pizza though. Man, just very simple, but like really nice, like Neapolitan cross like stone fired up. And a good pizza is basically one of my favorite things. I kind of treat it very religiously. I grew up in Connecticut, where there's a fairly good spread of pizza. And then I lived in some cities where there wasn't such good pizza, San Francisco. And being back on the east coast – Back in the east coast in Philadelphia, man, we've got the best Italian food here.

[00:19:31] BB: Yeah, Phillies cheese steaks, as my mom likes to say. She's from Philly. Yeah.

[00:19:35] NI: Oh, is she? Great.

[00:19:36] BB: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. And her biggest complaint for my entire life being in California, born and raised, is like there's never any – There's no good food. She just is like – Just in the state of California, there is no such of standard Philly cheesesteak sandwich in existence. I understand. I understand the travesty of this.

[00:19:58] NI: But I think that's reasonable. It's such a reasonable thing, right?

[00:20:02] BB: Definitely.

[00:20:02] NI: Yeah. It's one thing find good pizza. That's not true. I mean, actually I'm thinking about San Francisco now and a couple of good pizza places I had there. But you want to just be able to like walk into a place and like get the goods. That's how I am anyway.

[00:20:17] BB: Yeah. Yes.

[00:20:19] NI: But then again, the Mexican food is just obviously are famously good there too.

[00:20:20] BB: Oh. Well, off the charts. Off the charts, especially if you're in the South Bay, which I'm from. So, oh, yes. Okay. Quarantine has taught me –

[00:20:30] NI: The value of ending your day with a proper end, and not letting it just kind of drag on throughout the night.

[00:20:36] BB: Ooh! Do you have a routine? Do you have a way in which you end work?

[00:20:40] NI: I do.

[00:20:41] BB: Tell us. Tell us.

[00:20:42] NI: Yeah. I mean, mostly for me, it's that around between five and six or so, I have to walk the dog. So that's just always a nice check. I can be like, "Okay, I got to go do this." And

like sometimes I might hop back on and finish up a couple things that maybe were not fully baked yet or send a couple emails or whatever. But that's the time when I'm like, "Alright, I'm going to sign out a Slack. I'm going to like leave my work laptop up in the office, head downstairs. And from that point on, I'll try not to look at my work, email or work Slack or what have you. Most of the time I'm successful. Obviously, in news, you kind of have to allow for that not to happen, but we have a good west coast crew who keeps things rolling once I sign off. So yeah, usually, it's just making sure that you end the day instead of just accidentally working until like eight or nine o'clock. It's one thing if you do that with intention, but it's not great, I would say, to get in the habit of doing it by accident.

[00:21:39] BB: Yeah, that's good that you have a process. I know some people like do a walk, have a tea, have a thing. But yeah.

[00:21:48] NI: When it's not super hot, I'll go running after work. Summer is a little different because it gets very, very –

[00:21:52] BB: Hotter than hell.

[00:21:54] NI: Yes, usually. Usually kind of a first thing in morning, or gym thing. But yeah, it's just nice to have like a good long break from that.

[00:22:01] BB: I do a run every morning. I feel you. My perfect Sunday is –

[00:22:07] NI: Waking up at a – Wait. Are you're talking to ice cream or Sunday the day?

[00:22:12] BB: Oh, good clarification. Sunday the day.

[00:22:16] NI: Nice. So yeah, it's waking up at – Wake up feeling rested, regardless whether that's at 7:30 or 930, and having a nice, slow ease into the morning, which usually involves a good coffee from somewhere nearby. Yeah. And then reading I'd say it's kind of another nice like ease into the day with a book and some coffee and either homemade decent breakfast or like a little snack out. But yeah, just like good coffee, good bite to eat, good book is kind of the way to start the day.

[00:22:50] **BB**: I love it. Mine is good coffee, absolutely, but also New York Times Sunday edition in print. Absolutely.

[00:22:58] **NI**: I get a Philadelphia Inquirer, because when I signed up for their online subscription during the pandemic, I thought it was really important to have local news and to support the local news. And it was actually cheaper to like just have them send a Sunday paper as well. So I get that on Sundays, and I don't read it every Sunday. But I do like to flip through that when I can. It's a nice throwback. Nothing to click on, nothing to tap on.

[00:23:20] **BB**: Nothing to – I know. I do enjoy that. Well, what are you reading, Nathan, besides the local paper? Because we like to ask reading, listening to, watching. We'll take anything of wherever you get your stories.

[00:23:31] **NI**: Yeah. Well, just today, I read a great long piece on BuzzFeed news. The title was Watching the Watchmen by Ken Benzinger and Jessica Garrison. And it was about the kidnapping plot in Michigan for the governor there and the sort of undercover embedded FBI people who made that happen. And then it went from beyond that into getting into like the FBI in a broader sense, and like what's the like plusses and minuses of these kind of embedded agents, and then also obviously getting more into the mindset of the kind of people who might do these things and how it related to January 6th and all that stuff. So kind of a heavy read, but really well reported, really detailed, had a great narrative to it. So that was like a really good piece. And I love seeing that stuff come from BuzzFeed. They're doing some great work.

Yeah. And I also just read a book called *The Book of Koli*, by M.R. Carey, who wrote *The Girl with All the Gifts*, which is one of my favorite fiction books of the last five years or so. And this one was really interesting because it's got some post-apocalypse vibes to it, but it's like way, way far out. Like it's not 20 years after something went down. It's an untold hundreds, thousands maybe of years.

[00:24:45] **BB**: Perfect. That sounds safe.

[00:24:46] NI: Yeah, there's little hints of like society left, but they don't really understand it at all. So they find some like features. They've stumbled upon some futuristic technology. So you're getting a little bit of like taking some jumping from like the 2000s or the 2100s and bringing that forward in time to a world where they have no electricity and no anything and don't even know what society was like back then. So like seeing those two things combined is really interesting. Really good. Yes.

[00:25:15] BB: What an interesting thought to think about not – Well, I mean, this is our existence too. We don't know what the hell happened three – We know some ideas. We don't know everything at all and still figuring out things on the daily. So, yeah.

[00:25:29] NI: Right. We're doing it as best we can. And it's not dissimilar to the plot of a game that I played a few years ago in PS4 called Horizon Zero Dawn. It was really well received when it came out. And I just recently replaced it. And it's the same kind of deal that the society in that is a thousand years past where we are now, but they have no idea what happens in this intervening time. So you see like these remnants of the old world, and like street signs occasionally, or like rusted out buildings, but they don't know – The history was lost. So they don't know. And they're trying to fill in the gaps kind of. And that's interesting to me, versus like if there was an apocalypse today, God forbid, there'd be people who survived 20 years and could say, "Oh, back in the day, we had a president and a government, and these were cars, and this was a computer. But all that stuff lost to memory is like a really interesting thought.

[00:26:24] BB: God! Ooh, interesting. Damn, I love some good sci fi.

[00:26:28] NI: Yeah, it's a good sci fi.

[00:26:30] BB: Oh, man. Oh, I'm reading right now Andy Weir's *Hail Mary*.

[00:26:34] NI: The new one. How is it?

[00:26:35] BB: Yes. You know, I like it – No, I like it. I like it. He just can be a bit cheeseball to trying a little too much. He wrote *The Martian*, which is fantastic. And so it has a little bit of that. But, man, can that guy articulate complicated – I have no idea what this guy's scientific

background is, because he clearly is dialed in. I have no way to verify all the things he's saying. But it's enjoyable. It's fascinating to listen to. I do enjoy that. And it's good as a listen. So I'm listening to it.

[00:27:10] NI: Oh, nice. Yeah, I just recently re-watched the movie *The Martian*, which I think one of those rare cases when like – I think all credit to Andy Weir for making such a great story. It seemed to come alive. Just like takes it to another level, I think, because it feels so real and just makes you think about the possibilities of space travel like that and how wild it could be and how interesting and –

[00:27:34] BB: Yeah. Well, speaking of. We're recording this on the day that Bezos just went into space, and came back, I guess, in one piece.

[00:27:42] NI: He did. He did.

[00:27:42] BB: So there you go. I was kind of nervous. I was like, "Oh, God. Oh! The PR on that would be horrible."

[00:27:49] NI: Yeah. Good luck with that one.

[00:27:52] BB: God! Yeah, anyway, he's back. So yeah, speaking of space travel, feasible. We're getting there. Nathan, now, totally on a different topic.

[00:27:59] NI: Yes.

[00:28:00] BB: Not the future of the world. But what's the future of journalism look like would you say?

[00:28:05] NI: Yeah, that's a hot topic these days, as always, I suppose.

[00:28:09] BB: Yeah, absolutely.

[00:28:10] NI: And I think when you asked me that, the first thing I think about is how lots of – Not lots of, but a non-substantial amount of writers from large, well-respected publications are striking out on their own a bit, right? I'm friends with Casey Newton, who was an editor at The Verge for a good – Longer than I worked there, but we work together for a while. And he recently left to do his own newsletter. And he had been doing a newsletter there for a good couple of years. So he had like the audience. He had format. But nonetheless, he's one of a number of people who are moving away from having the sort of support and resources that a full like newsroom offers, which is interesting, because he still can find scoops and break news. But the question is, is it going to be – When you're a one man operation, when does it become too much? Or when you're not able to like get the story that you want to get while still maintaining this ongoing daily newsletter? It's just really interesting.

But I think that certain people will certainly be able to make that work. And I think he's doing a great job with it so far. So as Charlie Warzel from New York Times. His newsletter is also great. But the problem that I have is that I can't pay all the writers that I like \$10 a month for their work. As horrible as that sounds, I have to pick, right? I can afford to subscribe to X number of these a month. The number will be different for everybody. But at a certain point, if my budget for news is \$200, or \$500, or whatever it is, I'm going to hit it while still – I also still need subscribe to The Times and the Inquirer and like so on and so forth. And this is like an ongoing question.

[00:29:51] BB: Oh, this is what we've been talking about for – I talk about this every single one of these podcasts of just like what is your monthly budget going to be? \$500 a month just to get all subscriptions you want and your Apple+, and your whatever plus, and your Paramount – It's just like, "Oh my God!"

[00:30:06] NI: Right. It's an extension of having 17 good streaming services all with different stuff that one wants to watch. I mean, we're basically back in the world of cable again, right? Where cable just bundled altogether?

[00:30:17] BB: In a way.

[00:30:18] NI: Right? Eventually, what will someone just pick for 100 bucks a month, you get –

[00:30:23] BB: It'll have to. It'll have to, in my opinion, because how can the consumer sustain that?

[00:30:28] NI: Right? I mean, some people can like, "Okay, I'm going to sign up for Disney when the Mandalorian comes out. I'm going to watch that and then cancel it. And then –" But like no normal person wants to juggle stuff like that.

[00:30:39] BB: No one wants to deal with that. No, exactly. Not, exactly. Oh, man. I'm kind of waiting to see who's going to bundle that or whatever. Yeah.

[00:30:47] NI: Yeah. But to answer your question about the journalism, it's probably going to think be somewhere in between the lone wolf newsletter style and then like the old school newsroom. I mean, I know that Casey and Charlie and a few other people have sort of – Not to say collaboration, but there's a loose network of people there who it's like if you sign up to any one of their newsletters, you got access to a Discord, for example, where like all of those writers were in it and like engaging with their community and that sort of thing. And it makes you wonder like will these people – I don't think they're going to properly form like their own news organization necessarily, but they might share resources somehow, or just kind of like podcast networks developed, right? Where it used to be like so and so was doing a podcast. And then it made sense for a company to manage a number of these things and they can start sharing resources and that sort of thing while maintaining their distinct identities.

[00:31:37] BB: Ooof! I don't know. We're going to see. I guess we're going to see. Oh my gosh!

[00:31:42] NI: Well, we've come to probably my favorite part, Nathan, which is the madlib. and I will tee you up with the word and then we will see what we fill out when we get to the end of this thing. Are you ready?

[00:31:55] NI: I am as ready as I can be.

[00:31:58] BB: That's the right answer. Okay, what's an emotion?

[00:32:01] NI: Stress.

[00:32:02] **BB**: No one said that before, but kudos to you. Okay.

[00:32:06] **NI**: I think that's an emotion.

[00:32:08] **BB**: That is an emotion. Yes. It's a noun and an emotion. Yes. Go ahead. Adjective?

[00:32:15] **NI**: Adjective. Disheveled.

[00:32:18] **BB**: Jesus. Okay. What's another adjective?

[00:32:22] **NI**: Introverted?

[00:32:23] **BB**: Introverted. Perfect. Okay. A greeting of any kind?

[00:32:30] **NI**: Howdy?

[00:32:30] **BB**: Howdy. A verb.

[00:32:35] **NI**: Drive, like driving a car.

[00:32:37] **BB**: Yes. Yes. A noun.

[00:32:40] **NI**: Picture Frame.

[00:32:43] **BB**: Picture Frame. Another additives.

[00:32:47] **NI**: Complicated.

[00:32:48] **BB**: Complicated. A cringeworthy PR term or phrase?

[00:32:55] **NI**: The uber of blank.

[00:32:56] **BB**: Oh gosh. The uber of blank. Are people still saying that?

[00:33:01] **NI**: Not so much. It's like kind of a crypto. I'd say probably another one is we're the Bitcoin of – Yeah, we're Bitcoin of –

[00:33:10] **BB**: Mm-hmm. Part of a pitch?

[00:33:12] **NI**: Email signature.

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[00:33:14] **BB**: Okay. Email signature. Email signature, okay. And a length of time.

[00:33:23] **NI**: 18 hours.

[00:33:25] **BB**: 18 hours. A person preferably alive.

[00:33:30] **NI**: Jeff Bezos.

[00:33:32] **BB**: Hey, there you go.

[00:33:34] **NI**: Timely.

[00:33:35] **BB**: Very. And an emotion.

[00:33:38] **NI**: Joyful.

[00:33:40] **BB**: Joyful. Okay. Are you ready?

[00:33:42] **NI**: Yes. Let's hear it.

[00:33:43] **BB**: Here we go. When I think of the future of journalism, I feel stressed. The pitches I receive have gone from disheveled to introverted. If I receive a pitch that starts with howdy, I drive. When I write stories on picture frames, I get complicated. My favorite pitches include the uber of blank and very specific email signatures. I normally take around 18 hours to respond to

my emails. But if it's Jeff Bezos, I will respond immediately. If you do get a response back from me, you should know that I'm very joyful for you.

[00:34:16] NI: That's pretty good actually.

[00:34:18] BB: That was a good one. I agree. I agree.

[00:34:19] NI: Although I'm just going to point out that I'm not a Jeff Bezos pocket, although he doesn't actually run Amazon anymore. So –

[00:34:23] BB: Just to be clear. That's true. That's true. You never know what can happen. You never know what can happen. It could happen.

[00:34:31] NI: Like as much as to say he owns the Washington Post. He doesn't run it.

[00:34:34] BB: Yes, owns. But I don't know what his now extracurriculars are going to be post-Amazon. Anyway, Nathan, thank you so much for this. Absolutely such food. We had good time. We learned about Endgadget. We learned about a fabulous new coffee place, which I'll definitely have to go to. So I'm excited about that. And thanks for the sci fi recommendations, and everything else of course.

[00:34:55] NI: Yeah, it was great to talk to you. Thanks so much.

[00:34:59] BB: So fun. Thanks so much. We'll chat with you soon. All right, bye-bye.

[OUTRO]

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with a brand-new guest and even more insights about the journalists you want to learn more about. Until then, start great stories.

[END]