

Love What You Love Podcast

Episode 9: Nerd Culture with Arthur Woo

July 14, 2020

Hey, I'm Julie Rose. Welcome to *Love What You Love*. I'm an author, creator, and enthusiast, and I've always been fascinated by the things people are super into, because they're always a unique expression of curiosity, and joy, and wonder. So every week I'll introduce you to another fascinating human who's into really interesting stuff.

Welcome back! Or, Welcome! This podcast exists to give you a bit of a rest, a bit of a respite, and to a little bit of light into the world. [from *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, Samwise Gamgee: "There's some good in this world, Mr. Frodo. And it's worth fighting for."]

If you'd like to support the podcast - and I'd be stoked if you did - consider subscribing and leaving a rating and review on Apple Podcasts. Ratings and reviews there help spread the word to new listeners. Also, I'm now including links to my guests' favorite nonprofits, and I'm also including a rotating list of my own favorite nonprofits, so definitely check those out in the show notes.

I've known my next guest, Arthur Woo, for what is colloquially known as a long-ass time. One of the first things I learned about him is his passion for nerd culture, and in the many intervening years, that passion has not waned, and his impressive collection of nerd culture goodies has indeed grown. In this conversation, recorded back in February, we talk origin stories, when *Star Wars* isn't *Star Wars*, diversity in the comic book world, and so much more. So find out why Arthur loves nerd culture, and why you might learn to love it too.

Julie: Thank you, Arthur Woo, for joining me today. I'm very excited to talk with you. We've known each other for a while, and one of the things I know about you is you're extremely passionate about comic book culture, and superhero culture, and *Star Wars*, and lots of stuff.

Arthur: [laughs] Nerdy stuff, yes!

Julie: Exactly! So I want to understand... Maybe to start, let's talk about the scope. What are all the things you are super interested in?

Arthur: Wow, Jules. First, thank you for the time. I'm flattered and honored to be part of this. I do podcasts for work and I do podcasts personally with groups, but this is the first time it's about me, so this is in an interesting experience. Thank you for that.

The scope... Wow. Do you have two hours? [laughs] Because if you're aware of the big San Diego Comic Convention, which has morphed the past 10, 15 years... I have said jokingly but it's not even a joke: everything under one roof is everything I love.

Julie: Got it!

Arthur: So for those who might not be familiar, that's the annual convention every year in San Diego that is, like... started off as focused on comic books only, but has morphed into this mecca, holy land of nerd everything. You're talking about comic books, and movies, and television shows, and sci-fi, fantasy, toys, video gaming, tabletop gaming, horror, and everything in between. It's all there, so it's a difficult question because you like one thing, and obviously these things cross over into each other. You just sort of gravitate towards certain things.

I'm one of those fans... You know, there's always, like, competition debates, like, "I'm Marvel," or, "I'm DC," or, "I'm *Star Trek*," and, "I'm *Star Wars* only." And I'm like, "I love it all!" I don't care!

Julie: So what is it about fandom? You know, there's a million other things you could do with your time, or your money, or with your interest, so why... And I'm sure money goes into this, but we'll talk about that later. So, why fandom? Why these kinds of things? And within that, if you had to pick, amongst all your children, what is your "favorite child"? Or your favorite three children?

Arthur: Oh my gosh. So, I guess easiest way to think about it is... I would have to take a step back. Let's talk like, "Ooh, secret origin!" Everybody has an entry point into things that they like, right? For me, my entry point was when I was younger, maybe five, six, seven. At that time there was, obviously, nerd culture, but it was really more on the down-low, so to speak, or it was very pocketed and I didn't really know about it. A lot of this stuff was "under the covers." It's not out in TV or media.

As a little kid I would be at my grandparents' place after school, and my grandfather... And this was back when comic books were everywhere. They were available, like, in drug stores, convenience stores, malls, spinner racks, and also specialty shops. He would always grab comic books for me. It just so happened that, you know, the early ones that I got were mostly Marvel and mostly DC. And when you're that young and impressionable age, you're like, "Oh my gosh! What is this?! So cool!" Colors, and powers, and heroes. As a kid you don't have money to buy things, so you tend to re-consume the stuff you have over and over again, like toys, games, whatever. That sort of already placed a bug, like, "Oh my gosh!"

I think this was around the same time when *Star Wars*, was hitting. Early '80s, those movies are, like, taking the world by storm. I didn't see the first *Star Wars* in the theater; I was too young, but I remember being taken to see *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*. That was, '80 and '83. So, I was only, like, six, seven, eight, nine at the time. That kind of plugs into science fiction. Now you're like, "Oh my gosh, this is crazy!" And of course, that trend started a lot of the television shows we used to watch back in the day.

If you did watch television shows religiously back then and are a fan of that genre, you remember things like *Battlestar Galactica*, and *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century*. I would absorb and consume anything that's available. Obviously, you start to develop preferences, so a combination of all these things, the media, the nerd stuff, emerging and then also me being exposed started to build my fandom. And you think, "Maybe I'll outgrow it, maybe I won't." But I guess, for me, I just continued.

In high school they finally opened up a comic shop within walking distance to my high school and my home. Now you have a place to congregate with likeminded fans to talk about stuff, right? And you're able to see stuff and have product in your hands. When I went to college I actually worked in a comic book store for a year as a summer job.

Julie: Feeding your addiction.

Arthur: Yeah, exactly. I was basically working for the store. They shouldn't have paid me. They just paid me in product, right? [laughs]

Julie: Right.

Arthur: I just continued to, kind of, like this stuff. You always love it.

Julie: I've seen the pictures of your collection, and so I know...

Arthur: Sickness. [laughs]

Julie: Yeah. [laughs] I know *Star Wars* is a continuing interest. Are there any fandoms that you've gotten into as an adult that are surprising to you? That you're like, "I never thought I'd be interested in this."?

Arthur: I've always liked science fiction and superhero stuff, so that was always kind of a given. I like fantasy, but I wouldn't say I'm the biggest fan of all of them, and it has to be very particular in order for me to, kind of, connect. It's nothing against the genre, it's just that there's certain things that we all connect differently to.

Surprisingly - and I'm not a reader of the books - but *Game of Thrones*, I kind of came in a little late, and I was very surprised because, one, I heard about it a little bit but I didn't pay too much attention until I started to hear more things about it. And of course, wow, I was hooked. So I became more of... I wouldn't say I'm an OG *Game of Thrones* fan. I'm sure there are fans out there that can quote chapter and verse left and right and quote me under the table, and I'm okay with that. We're all experts in something in fandom. But I would say that's probably the most recent one that I can think of. That's very relatively new.

Julie: And you say everybody's an expert in something in fandom, so what are you an expert in?

Arthur: I would call myself a traditionalist. The comics. I do a separate podcast with my buddies and we all have these entry points into nerdism. Some of us are film, and one guy is more of, like, the animated series from the '90s, all those shows. Another person is mostly from the movies, so he's actually the person who's the most unbiased. We call him the voice from the ignorant masses, for fun. And it's good because you want different perspectives and entry points. And then we have one guy, he's really, really young, so he hasn't even seen half of this stuff out there, so we're always poking fun at him, saying, "Oh my gosh, when this was out you weren't even born," or, "you were only two years old at the time." So, we have this fun dynamic.

For me, my role there is kind of like the comic book traditionalist, or the historian. So whenever there's a comic book movie, I'll be the person they all ask about... And it's flattering. I don't want to show off, but it is flattering when they say, "Hey, how much of this is true or cannon?" or, "What do you think about this?" or, "What's the background of this character?" and I'll kind of just get into it. That's, I would say, my strength, my expertise, mostly the comic books. Definitely Marvel first, then DC. I haven't read *everything*, obviously, and I'm stronger in some areas than others. I could carry a good, strong conversation pretty confidently. And it's not just the characters, but it's also the history behind them, the creators, controversies, the industry itself, and things like that.

I'm a huge fan of Stan Lee, and I was fortunate to see him at conventions the past few years prior to his passing. It was, I think, two years ago, 2018, where he passed away, we all know that. And it was very sad, but as someone who's been following him for a long time, you kind of expect it, given his age and things like that. There was a day

where I was at work, and I was kind of in one of those heads-down moments where I was just, like, doing stuff, so I wasn't paying attention to any kind of news. And then all of a sudden in the morning, people are pinging, like on my chat channels and my mobile, like, "Oh my gosh! No! Not him!" Oh gosh... that's really sad. And then you start to digest the news and I'm kind of sad.

The funny thing is... I guess it's kind of funny but also kind of flattering in a weird way, some family and friends are actually reaching out to me saying, "Arthur, are you okay? I heard the news." "Oh my gosh, this is so sad, I love Stan." They're sharing their stories and they're like, "Oh you must be devastated. How are you?" And they're kind of coming at me as if I lost a family member. And I'm like, that's kind of... It *is* sad, don't get me wrong. I'm not trying to downplay his death. But at the same time it's sort of weirdly flattering because they think of me as somebody who would be deeply affected by this. And I *was* affected, don't get me wrong, but as somebody who follows this, you sort of have been, unfortunately, preparing yourself more or less. So, it was kind of strange, that's how people have regarded that about me, so I'm actually kind of flattered, again. So I can confidently say I can carry a conversation about comic book culture.

Julie: That leads me to two questions. One is what you think is the best adaptation. And then the second one is, I want to talk about diversity in the comic book culture in terms of, like, gender, and race, and all that stuff. So maybe we can start with what you think the best adaptation is.

Arthur: There's a lot of really good examples. I think what I'll say, generally speaking, at least for the past 10, 15 years, is what Christopher Nolan did with Batman was quite good - except for the third movie, and that's a personal taste thing. But his *Dark Knight* and his *Batman Begins*, were like, "Wow!"

Julie: What did you like about that?

Arthur: He brought back a lot of "real world" aesthetics, and he, like, "This is my story, and it's not the superheroic-type things." It's believable to a very strong degree. Now, I love the Tim Burton movie from '89. That was fantastic, and Tim Burton has a style, but it also has that style where, "Eh... can't actually happen," right?

You look at Nolan's and you're like, "This is believable to a very strong degree." I can believe that this can happen or this guy can do this. But he also paid homage to a lot of... the right background, the character motivations, the understanding, and the lore. I'm not one of those purists or traditionalists where you *have* to have page-to-screen. C'mon, that's ridiculous, right? The ones who are really good are the ones who can honor what's on the page but can adapt it for the medium. Know when to hold the line but know when to let go and be flexible.

In Marvel's case, I think, collectively, my gosh, what they've done in the past 10, 15 years is phenomenal. It blows my mind actually, when I talk to fans, where if you had asked me 15 years ago, or even 20, "Arthur, one day we're going to have an Avengers movie. And we're going to have Cap, and Thor, and Iron Man, and Black Widow, and Hulk." I'd be like, "You're smoking something! Impossible! *Impossible!* No way!" I don't know how they pulled this off. There's certain movies within that whole universe that are, like, standouts. The adaptation of the whole Infinity Saga, especially the last two movies,

Avengers: Infinity War and *Endgame* would not have been possible if you didn't have the previous movies to support that.

When they first had the first *Avengers* movie, which was already a big thing itself, because my friend and I, when we watched *Avengers*, we were thinking, "Oh my gosh, this movie is either going to be the greatest thing since sliced bread, or it's going to be a disaster." There's no midground for something like that. Freaking amazing! They actually pulled it off. But there's an end-credits sequence there that, you know, they showed a character called Thanos, and my friend and I look at it... We were probably one of the only people in the theater, like, "Oh my gosh!" And you don't introduce a character like him if you don't know the repercussions. We were kind of half-joking at the time like, "I wonder if they're ever going to adapt the famous Marvel story *Infinity Gauntlet*." Like, "Nah. Too complicated," because in the book there's a lot more going on.

And then over the years, you start to learn about the plans and you're like, "Wow. They're actually going to attempt this!" Part of it is curiosity. You're like, "How are they going to do this?" And part of it is, sort of, like, this could, again, be potentially disastrous. But they've built up so much good credibility that you're like, "They can do it." And they did.

Now, everybody and their mom has at least heard of Thanos. It's crazy. I'll go to the mall and you'll see, like, an Infinity Gauntlet mitten for cooking. That's crazy. When you see things like that, or like a cup in the shape of an Infinity Gauntlet... when you've gotten that mainstream, then you've reached a different level. Again, if you'd asked me 15, 20 years ago... What a weird world I live in now where my aunt can ask me about the Infinity Gems, and ask me what they do, and you can go buy it at, like, a Target for their kitchen. This is a very strange world!

Julie: Compared to when you were coming up, it must be...

Arthur: Yes! It used to be, you'd have to have debates defending your fandom, which is kind of challenging because you would be looked down upon and they'd say, "You like that kind of stuff? That's stupid." Or, "You're dumb," or you're "mentally deficient," or, "that's for kids." Whatever. I've heard it all. And now those same people that used to debate or denigrate, now they've come back and said, "Now I realize it!" So part of me is like, "Haha! I told you so!" The other half of me is like, "Thank you."

Julie: So I wonder, people who are OG comic folks, you seem to, like, embrace this higher profile now, but is that typical of the folks in your... especially around the folks that you came up with? Are they like, "Uh, it's all sold out. It's dumb now," Or do they love it?

Arthur: I'm sure there's always a group of them that are like, "Ugh," you know. But general speaking, I get the impression that they're happy. Getting something like a television show, or getting a movie was already a hurdle. We were just happy to get something. Whereas now you're more demanding. "That's stupid! The coloring on his armor is off color from red to green, and I can't believe they used that armor from Issue 70..." So we've gone from, "Just give me something. I'm happy if it's kind of crappy," to, "Wait a second here..."

The pendulum has swung. It's very odd. Now I think we have more stuff than we can actually consume. It used to be like, "I'm just dying for a show," or, "I'm dying for more movies." Now it's gotten to the point where - and again, I'm talking to my good nerd buddy - we don't even have enough time in the day, or hours, with where we are in our life to even consume. We actually have to say no to stuff. Ten-year-old me would be all over it.

Julie: Do you feel like there's going to be a pendulum swing back where nerd culture is going to, kind of, not be mainstream or not be cool anymore?

Arthur: There's so many different layers of nerds now that it's like, "Okay, you don't have to like the superheroes. Maybe you're just into horror, or science fiction, or maybe you're just into fantasy." But a lot of these things mash up into each other, so they're starting to be not so neatly defined or bucketed. There may be a point where we kind of just take it for granted. Like, how many crime shows are there? How many medical dramas are there? How many action movies are there? There's a lot of great ones, there's a lot of middle tier, and there's a lot of crappy ones, and you just sort of accept that they're there. And I think this nerd culture of things, it'll just sort of be there.

Part of it is, I think, also generational. You're now having a generational group of people who are now adults. You have the buying power to... especially in my case, to buy back your childhood, or get the things that you weren't able to when you were younger, or continue to enjoy this stuff, because hey, I can buy this stuff now. And I don't have to have my dad breathing down my neck saying, "You can't watch this!" or, "I won't buy this for you." Well, I'm going to buy it myself.

But then you also impart this love to the next generation. That has now shifted because it's become acceptable. Now it's like, I would take my daughter to the Free Comic Book Day event every year.

Julie: I was going to ask you about that. How old is your daughter?

Arthur: Seven, going on eight.

Julie: And she is starting to get into this culture, right?

Arthur: Funny example: We were at a family trip to Disneyland, and my daughter's a girly girl, so she wants to do the princess stuff. There's this thing where you can go and get a makeover, you can get dressed up in a dress, you can walk around and be a character that you like. She wanted to be Ariel from *Little Mermaid*. She looked like Ariel, and she was really happy. And she was walking around the park, and then she says, "Hey Dad, I want to go to *Star Wars* land and I want to go ride the Millennium Falcon ride." I'm like, "Okay, let's go do it!"

She always wants to be the pilot. It's a new ride. The ride is made up of, you know, you can be a gunner, or a pilot, or an engineer. She always wants to be one of the people piloting the ship because she thinks that fun and more interactive. She doesn't just want to sit there and press the buttons to do something. She wants to do it. And there's a shop in that *Star Wars* land where you can make a droid... Of course you have to buy it. I'm okay with it, and she's here in her Ariel dress walking around *Star Wars* land in a girly-girl outfit, but she's in the droid factory, picking the parts she wants, putting it

together, and I'm helping her. And I'm like, "Okay, you want to make a droid? I'll make a droid with you."

I don't try to impart what she likes. She'll like what she likes. I'll share what I like, and if she picks up on it, great, and if she doesn't, it's okay. It's like, "Dad loves this stuff." You can go to my office and you can see it. I'll let you touch some of the stuff, but I won't let you touch some the other stuff. That kind of thing.

Julie: Right, right. I'm not really deep into the culture. I kind of flit around the edges. But I've heard horror stories about women who have to, like, "prove" themselves. "Oh you're a girl? What happened in *Avengers* blah blah blah... Prove your nerd cred." Is that getting better? Because I know that was just really bad for a long time.

Arthur: I would say it is getting better, but there is still a lot of work that needs to be done in terms of getting more female creators, voices, and setting the tone. This could almost be a separate topic in and of itself. I'm happy to talk about my perspective on it in a future episode if you like. But what I can say is that, you know, it has been traditionally been a male-dominated industry. There are some male creators that were definitely more progressive than others, or at least were more sensitive or aware, versus others where I don't know if it was necessarily malicious, but they just simply don't know. They were just going through it with their perspective of, "Why don't we just do a character this way, and we'll have her in this kind of outfit," or these kind of situations, or what have you, right? And you have artists and creators doing that.

I think that has changed the past few years, but the same things that you start to see in other industries have also, unfortunately, occurred, in the comic industry specifically. All the negative stuff like harassment, or bias, or lack of opportunity. There are some groups of fandom, unfortunately, where they feel like, "Hey, comics should be like in their old days. They shouldn't be preaching social justice. They shouldn't be talking about..." I don't want to sound like a weird stereotype here but, like, "Comics are so woke now." Whatever terms you want to attribute to the market.

And I think about that, and I'm like, "Have you read *X-Men*?" They're a social justice group! They're a metaphor for discrimination. Hello! That is pure social justice. There's other heroes that I can quote, and like, "What have you been reading?" There's a weird section of fandom that think, like, "The heroes have to be traditionally this way, and we don't want to be preached to. We don't want to have stories about other nationalities or genders. We just want action and the traditional hero." I don't want to say it's just about the white male, but there's also a section of fandom that says, you know, the characters should just have action and not talk about real world things. And I'm like, "Do you even read comics??"

A lot of these stories have to do with these kinds of things. If you look at Marvel in the '60s, Stan Lee again, a lot of his stuff is very progressive. They were reflecting the real world, like civil rights, women's suffrage, discrimination, and they used their characters to tell those stories in different ways. If you didn't pick up on that, then that's on you, but to say that we should go back to the way it was because we don't talk about those things, "I don't want that in my comics," is kind of ridiculous because they've been there for years. A lot of those characters get their powers from radiation or nuclear accidents. That was very much that era of war with Russia, Cold War, and the scare.

Julie: Right, atomic age.

Arthur: Atomic age, right? So they're reflecting. And also, the character, the Black Panther, civil rights era, and then when they created other female characters. Ms. Marvel is one of them, who we now know as Captain Marvel, came from a lot of the early feminist movement and a character to, kind of, speak to those things. So for people to say, like, "I just want traditional comics to be doing this, and I don't want to be preached to. I don't want to be talking about social justice topics," blah blah blah. I kind of scratch my head. Like, really? Not everything has to be a heavy topic. We can definitely have the fun, turn off your brain sometimes, just a fun, light-hearted adventure. But to say that I don't want *any* of that and it has no place, is like, "Really?"

Julie: They don't know their history.

Arthur: Yeah. I'm like, "Really? Then maybe you should read something else." At least in my opinion, you're wildly misinformed.

Julie: You know, one of the things that helps is when you have people of color and women writing these stories. So, who are some of the authors, artists, maybe series that you would recommend by people of color/women?

Arthur: I would say... and I've been trying to catch up myself, because a lot of times I just read according to the writers. I don't really care if they're a woman, or a man, or if they happen to be Black, or white, or Asian. I just don't even realize it. I will just read quality. But it was interesting because when I was the *Wonder Woman* movie, it was amazing because it was able to overcome a lot of hurdles going against it. You now have a character that is widely well known, but not necessarily a character that is easy for people to connect with, and not everybody knows what she's really about. Like, if you bring up Superman or Batman, you've got five bullet points on your finger, easily. Everybody can say, "Oh, last son of Krypton, Kansas City farm boy, superpowers of a god, Daily Reporter. Boom, right there. Batman: Parents killed, avenger of the night, wants justice, lots of toys, really smart, fight. Boom.

You ask people about *Wonder Woman* and they're like, "Um... bracelets? I think Amazon?" You don't really know. So, the movie really was able to encapsulate that. I've read her over the years more, so that also inspired me to go back and read other runs of her character. She's had a couple ones I haven't been able to get to, but there is a series... it happened to be written by a man, but he's really well known to write really strong female characters. His name is Greg Rucka, and he also writes prose, and novels, and I think one of his movies was *Whiteout* starring Kate Beckinsale. But he's somebody who happens to really, really understand writing females, strong female characters and a lot of depth.

I read his *Wonder Woman* run, and I'm like, "Wow! This is really, really good." I was really engaged and engrossed because he wrote her in a way that was not stereotypical and definitely not sexist, with depth, but also really engaging. I've read his other stuff too. He's somebody who can really write, has a strong voice for characters. So if I had to say, just based on what I've consumed, his *Wonder Woman* run is one that springs to mind. There's other creators and artists that I definitely follow, but that's the one that comes immediately.

Unfortunately, we need more. We definitely need more in film, and TV, and even in comics, to do that. With Captain Marvel, the character that you've seen in the movie starring Brie Larsen, the costume that she wears is actually pretty recent, and that was redone by a female writer, Kelly Sue DeConnick, when she took over that book in 2012. So, it's relatively new, eight years now. She gave her a really full-blown head-to-toe costume, but it looked really cool. It looked great on her, but it didn't seem like it was made with... for lack of a better word, like, with a male gaze. That's only my perspective. She was also somebody who has reestablished that character and reinvented that character, along with also giving her a costume to reflect that.

I tend to be very character driven, but also who's writing it, or whoever is the artist, and if it happens to be, you know, Asian female, or a Black male, great! I don't care. It's great. But I think it's important because they do bring something to those characters.

Julie: Exactly. After we're done here maybe you can give me, like, a list of links, creators to follow, or series to read.

Arthur: Absolutely. And it depends on the character. Certain characters will obviously have certain creators or runs more. Obviously, Batman has had, like, a crazy load of creators over the years, versus other characters who may not have as much. So the choices can be limited sometimes and maybe not as diverse as we would like, but that doesn't mean they're bad.

Julie: Right. So, you've been a nerd for a very, very long time.

Arthur: Yeah.

Julie: And you finally got to go to Comic-Con... was it two years ago now?

Arthur: Three years ago.

Julie: Three years ago. Tell me about your experience.

Arthur: Wow. Everything that I imagined and then some. It was overwhelming, and also awe-inspiring. It was 2017. It was something I've been wanting to go to for years but I didn't... it wasn't until my friend and I made an active effort to try. It's one of those shows where you can't just "go" because you can't just buy tickets. It's so in-demand that it's a lottery system for tickets, and you just have to be lucky to be able to buy a ticket, or your friends can get a ticket for you. So, for us to finally go in 2017 was already a big deal.

That year, there happened to be a lot of great industry news, like, a lot of movies and television shows. But going there for the first time, it was definitely, kind of like, overwhelming, where I would probably liken to going to this buffet you've heard of that's amazing, and you're just overwhelmed with, "What do I eat first?! The appetizers bar! Look at all these entrées! The dessert looks great too!" And you're sort of torn, like, "Where should I focus?"

I went the year afterwards. I wasn't able to get in last year. I am going this year. Yay. I was able to get in this year. But I've been telling people: treat it like a buffet where you pace yourself. You can't get to everything, but you have to pace yourself.

It's funny because that whole area gets transformed into this huge nerd mecca holy land of things. Even Downtown San Diego, which is amazing. They get in on it where

after the convention's over, you go to the bars and restaurants, and I can see, like, a couple and one's dressed up as Princess Leia, the other's Game of Thrones, and they're obviously married. Or you're in the bar and you see Spiderman hanging out with a Star Trek character, and they're drinking and eating. It's a mishmash of everybody, walking the streets, or at a restaurant, or at a bar, and a Transformer will be crossing the street, and you have Captain America walking by, and then you'll see Luke Skywalker, or some other weird mashup of something, and it's totally normal. And you're like, "This is freaking amazing!"

And that year I happened to be able to catch a lot of celebrities. We're talking, like, some 10 or 15 feet away, and others, like, they happened to be at a panel I was able to get in.

Julie: Those panels are hard to get into, right?

Arthur: Yes, absolutely.

Julie: What did you actually get into?

Arthur: I got into one that happened to have the Netflix show *The Defenders*. One of the big draws for that one was they were having Sigourney Weaver there. Like, "Wow! I've seen Sigourney Weaver! Oh my Gosh!" We're talking like, *Alien*, *Aliens*, among other things, right? Amazing.

Julie: *Ghostbusters*.

Arthur: Yeah. Just to be able to see her, even if it's 50 feet away on this panel talking about this show. Woah! And then you had the cast members of the Marvel Netflix shows on that one. I walked by one booth and, at the time it was... I must've been 15 feet away; Steven Spielberg was there hanging out, and I think he was promoting *Ready Player One*. I was shopping at this Marvel booth to get something, and they closed it off, and it was promoting *Thor: Ragnarok*, so then Chris Hemsworth and Ruffalo come out. Like, holy cow! And I'm stuck there, I can't move, so I'm like, "Okay, great!"

That year was also the *Justice League* movie, so Ben Affleck and Gal Gadot were there, and I was only, like, 20 feet away. I couldn't get into the line, but I was like, "Oh my gosh! There's Gal Gadot!" Freaking amazing. And she's on a high... with *Wonder Woman*, and *Justice League*, and all the stuff she's doing, and Ben Affleck was there and the rest of the cast. So, that year happened to be... That was the year I actually went to the Stan Lee panel, so I'm not only seeing celebrities from TV and movies and catching them either in passing or just trying to be a few feet away on panels, but making a very concerted effort to see certain creators that I've been following.

Unfortunately, that was the last year that Stan went to that convention, because he didn't go the year after because of his health, and then he passed away in the subsequent year. But just being able to see him at that panel was amazing. And I saw a lot of other artists and writers. I'm one of those, again, traditionalists where it's great to see the TV and movie stars and stuff like that, but I'll actually go to the tables and meet with writers and artists that I've been following for years, get signatures and things like that. So for me, that's like, everything I love under one roof.

Julie: Exactly. So, did you actually break the bank buying collectibles?

Arthur: Yeah, so the first year I did buy stuff but I wasn't as prepared because I only brought X amount of bags and things. The second year I went, I definitely went in with a plan. I had a suitcase within a suitcase, which was empty except a small set of clothes for changing, and that was it. So, I checked in the suitcase within a suitcase, and I brought it, and I came back with both of them full. Now, I was buying stuff for my daughter too, and maybe a friend or two, but the second time I went I came definitely prepared.

Julie: You know, obviously you are really passionate about nerd culture, and historical comics, and all that stuff. If someone wanted to get into comic books, what would you say is a good place to start?

Arthur: I would always ask, like, what do you want to read first? What are your preferences? Because you're talking close to 50+ years. What are you interested in? What genre? It could be science fiction, it could be superheroes, fantasy, a mash. I could be based on a movie you saw, or a television show, or a character. And then once you've nailed that down you start to then say, "Oh, okay, then you want to read this." For example, an easy one is, "I love the Marvel stuff they did with the Infinity Gauntlet. Where can I read that?" And I'm like, "Well, I'll give you the original *Infinity Gauntlet* book." Or there's the *Watchmen* television show on HBO recently - fantastic, by the way. Read *Watchmen*, it's based on that book. Or, "I really like Batman." Then, "I will recommend these three runs."

Julie: Is there a place online where you can get... like, a recommendation engine? Or would you suggest people go to their local comic book shop?

Arthur: Yes on both. Well, comic book shops, there's not as many as there used to be, unfortunately, depending on where you live, and accessibility, and if they're run well. The stores that are run well are where the people are actually customer-centric, not running it like their own little frat house and being the stereotypical comic book guy from *The Simpsons*. They will be able to direct you and, kind of, target.

Online it's a little trickier because there's so many sites out there in so many areas. There's groups that are better... I actually joined a Facebook group about six months ago. This guy... He started it about a year and a half ago. I thought it was quite good because it sort of replaced the "talk shop" that I used to miss when I used to go in every Wednesday to buy my books. I don't do that anymore because, you know, different life circumstances. I just can't keep up.

But part of the fun of going to the shop was being with likeminded folks. So, that group has now, sort of, replaced that. We're all talking about Marvel stuff, but there's new people, and veterans, and we all just have this shared love. And for the ones who are new, they ask the same questions, "What should I read? What should I not read?" And this group has been actually quite good because everybody's very civil, which is great.

Julie: Wow! What an idea.

Arthur: Yeah, on the net, right? Everybody's all helpful, and no personal attacks. There's some debates and stuff like that sometimes, but there's nobody, like, knocking anybody for either not knowing, or maybe making a mistake. There are groups online that are good to join, and there's also forums, so it's hard to find one place, per se, because it's so

scattered, and there's places that are better than others. I can always provide links later on if you're interested, at least the ones I go to.

Julie: That'd be great. One last question for you. If you could wave a magic wand, is there an adaptation that hasn't been done that you would just die to have?

Arthur: Gosh... Well, I'm already kind of impressed that they did something like the *Infinity Gauntlet*. It's a very loose adaptation, by the way. On TV, actually, Warner Bros./DC, they did *Crisis on Infinite Earths* through their five-parts shows on the CW. It had a ton of fan service, but it was great because it was like, "Feed me more fan service!" It was fantastic. I was watching it online with my buddy, we were both watching it together, like *Mystery Science Theater* style, but without the snarkiness or comments. Well, we were snarky but we're not insulting. There's a difference.

So we're like, "Wow, you've already adapted that!" So now I think it's just a matter of telling new and interesting stories, or maybe adapting the smaller-run stories. I don't necessarily need an exact adaptation from a story, I just never thought I would get what Marvel put out with the *Infinity Gauntlet*. That's just nuts. Or even *Crisis*. So now I'm like, "You've done two of the biggest of all time..." And there's obviously others, but gosh... I'll never have that attitude like I did before, like, "Impossible. No way!" We've kind of gotten way past that now, where if you have people who are passionate, and bold enough, and have that vision, and have resources to execute on it, it can happen and it has. I mean, the past 10, 15 years has shown it.

For me, now I think it's more like, more characters or different characters interacting. That's really... It doesn't even have to be an adapted story, but like taking minor characters or unknown characters and doing something new, or mixing them up with established characters. Who would've thought six years ago you'd have a movie about a talking tree, and a talking raccoon? *Guardians of the Galaxy*, right? Those are, like, C, D-level characters, even to comic book fans, and now...

Julie: Really?!

Arthur: Absolutely! Even at the time when I heard the news, I'm like, "Really?" A lot of comic book fans either aren't aware of them or have very limited knowledge of them. There's probably a small subset that really, really know them, but their appearances have not been much at all. But you ask the person at the time, like, "Why would you do a movie on these weird C and D-level characters that not even fans are aware of or have much knowledge on?" And history has shown that it's not necessarily the bad ideas, it's how you execute on them.

You can do almost anything if you can do a talking tree and a raccoon movie. I won't put it past anybody now, because they've done it. That kind of movie, that's some kid's *Star Wars*, potentially. Some eight-year-old kid will watch *Guardians 1* and *2*, that's probably their *Star Wars*. *Star Wars* won't be their *Star Wars*. *Guardians* will be their "Star Wars" because somebody did it.

Julie: Anything's possible now.

Arthur: Absolutely!

Huge thanks to Arthur for the time and the deep knowledge. I'll be posting some pictures on social media of Arthur's incredibly impressive collection of, well, everything. In today's show notes I'm also including link Arthur provided to some creators you just can't miss.

Obviously, Comic-Con didn't happen in person this year, but they are doing Comic-Con at home, which starts on July 22nd. If you're interested, check out Comic-Con.org for more information. You can find Arthur on Twitter [@ArtWoo](https://twitter.com/ArtWoo), and you can find the podcast on Instagram [@LoveWhatYouLovePod](https://www.instagram.com/lovewhatyoulovepod), on Twitter, [@WhatYouLovePod](https://twitter.com/WhatYouLovePod), and the website is LoveWhatYouLovePod.com.

Zeke Rodrigues Thomas at Mindjam Media provided amazing editing assistance. You can find Zeke at MindjamMedia.com. Also, huge thanks to Emily White for the episode transcripts, which are available to patrons at [Patreon.com/LoveWhatYouLovePod](https://patreon.com/LoveWhatYouLovePod).

So be good to yourselves, be good to each other, and love the hell out of whatever it is that you love. You need it, and we need it. Thanks for listening. Let's hang out again soon.

Links:

Here are some of Arthur's recommendations for creators you should check out:

[Christopher Priest](#): Longtime industry writer of various titles for Marvel, DC, and many others. Various parts of his acclaimed Black Panther run were used and adapted for the *Black Panther* movie.

[Gail Simone](#): Prolific writer of various works such as *Wonder Woman*, *Birds of Prey*, *Batgirl*, *Deadpool*, and other independent books.

[Greg Rucka](#): Crime stories and strong writer of lead female characters including *Wonder Woman*, *Queen and Country*, *Whiteout*, and *Lois Lane* among many others.

[Ed Brubaker](#): Acclaimed crime and superhero comic book writer of various works such as *Criminal*, *Sleeper*, *Incognito*, *Velvet*, *Batman*, *Daredevil* and *Captain America*. His highly regarded *Captain America* run was the basis and adapted for the Marvel Studios movie *Captain America: Winter Soldier*.

[Mark Waid](#): Over the past 33 years, Mark Waid has written a wider variety of well-known characters than any other American author, from Superman, to the Justice League, to Spider-Man, to Archie, and hundreds of others. His award-winning graphic novel with artist Alex Ross, *Kingdom Come*, is one of the best-selling comics of all time.

[Epic Marvel Podcast](#): Podcast and [Facebook group](#) that talks and shares about classic Marvel stories, collected editions, and other nerdy related stuff.

Arthur's favorite nonprofits:

[The Hero Initiative](#) creates a financial safety net for comic creators who may need emergency medical aid, financial support for essentials of life, and an avenue back into paying work. Since inception, the Hero Initiative has been fortunate enough to benefit creators with more than \$1 million worth of much-needed aid.

[Sacred Heart Community Service](#)

[Asian Americans for Community Involvement](#)

[Christian and Missionary Alliance](#)

A rotating list of my favorite nonprofits:

[Equal Justice Initiative](#)

[Higher Heights Leadership Fund](#)

[Second Harvest Silicon Valley](#)

[The Nature Conservancy](#)

[The Trevor Project](#)

[Vote.org](#)

Additional editing by [Mindjam Media](#)

We're on [Patreon](#)

Hang out with me on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#)

Check out my books at [JulieKRose.com](#)

LWYL Music: [Inspiring Hope by Pink-Sounds](#)

Transcribed by Emily White: [HireEmilyWhite@gmail.com](#)