

Love What You Love Podcast

Episode 41: Pokémon with José Mendoza

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Welcome to *Love What You Love*; I'm Julie Rose. I'm insatiably curious about people and the world around us, and absolutely in love with passion and unselfconscious enthusiasm. Every other week I geek out with someone about the thing that they love, and then I share it with you.

Welcome back! Or, Welcome! I have to be honest; the day job is doing its very best to try and kick my butt lately. It's been so incredibly busy, but it's been such a relief to know that I have this podcast to fill my heart and reenergize me again. And I think this week's guest can totally relate.

José Mendoza is what you might call a *Pokémon* superfan. By day, he works in marketing in the entertainment industry, but his passion since he was a kid has always been *Pokémon*. In this chat, we talk about all the ways to experience *Pokémon*, how *Pokémon* takes you on a journey in more ways than one, nostalgia, the joys, and sometimes literal dangers, of watching *Pokémon*, the best *Pokémon* of them all, what on Earth happened to his guest bedroom, and so much more.

So find out why José loves *Pokémon* and why you might learn to love it too.

Julie: Hello, José! Thank you so much for joining me today!

José: Hi Julie. Thanks for having me.

Julie: I'm very excited to chat with you because, little known to me, *Pokémon* is, like, the highest-grossing media franchise of all time, which just blew my damn mind. And I don't know anything about *Pokémon*, but I do know that you are super into it, so...

José: It's crazy to think that this franchise from, like, the late '90s is so big that it's the biggest one, beating out Mickey Mouse, and Marvel, and Harry Potter, but yeah, it's true.

Julie: My god, that's incredible. So, are you an OG *Pokémon* person, or did you recently get into it? When did you start getting into it and what was it that got you into *Pokémon*?

José: Oh gosh. Well, *Pokémon's* been around since, like... in Japan, it came out in 1996, but in like '98 is when it kind of... The anime started here and then the video games came out, and that just, like, blew it out of the water. And what people thought was a fad, you know, around that time, has stuck around. And it stuck with me because it really just brought me so much happiness and joy, and still does as a 32-year-old man. [laughs]

Julie: Nah man, that's good! So what is it about *Pokémon* that brings you joy? Where did you get your start, and why does it have staying power with you?

José: I think the thing with *Pokémon* is it's the idea that you are a young boy or girl going off on adventure, exploring the world, and you're collecting these creatures that you're battling with. It's sad to say because some people have compared it to, like, animal fights or street fights, and it's just like, "No, but it's cute. Not all that bad stuff." Focus on the good stuff. It's just the idea of going on a journey, and collecting friends, and getting stronger, and at the end you're the champion, *Pokémon* Master, or whatever you call it. But it really just ticks off all these boxes in my brain. I love lists, and collecting things is one of the things that *Pokémon* is about.

Julie: Maybe you could just do, like, a primer on how *Pokémon* is played and what the universe is like.

José: All right. So, for *Pokémon*, the name actually comes from “pocket monsters” because it is a Japanese game, so they condensed it into *Pokémon*. And the idea is that you are a young boy or girl on a journey. You start the game; you choose one of three options. Every generation of every video game that’s released since has had, like, its own select three. And from there you go around collecting *Pokémon*, going to different gyms, where you beat someone who’s an expert at a certain type of *Pokémon*. And then once you have enough badges you battle against... The Elite Four is usually what they’re called. And then you’re champion.

And then 40 hours later, you do it all over again. Or you go through your list, and collect, and evolve *Pokémon* that you’ve missed because every different area has different *Pokémon*. There’s grass types, water types, flying types. And in the original series, a lot of them are based around, like, animals, and maybe inanimate objects. In recent ones, there is one that’s a keychain. But you know, it’s kind of the mix and variety that *Pokémon* exists in the real world. And this year is actually the 25-year anniversary, so there’s a lot going on. Katy Perry just released a *Pokémon* single in partnership for a song called “Electric,” so...

Julie: Wow!

José: It’s everywhere! *Pokémon*’s everywhere.

Julie: That’s incredible. Now, were you a kid that liked to play video games at that time, or was there, like... somebody said, “Hey check out this *Pokémon* game. You’re going to love it.”?

José: I think the animation is what caught my eye initially. And so many commercials for the video game that had just come out, so... They were really good commercials, at least for a nine or ten-year-old. They caught your eye and it’s like, “I want to play that.”

But yeah, at the same time, not long after, the *Pokémon* cards were around and the *Pokémon* cards are still here. I mean, I don’t know if you saw recently, Target even said that they were going to start selling *Pokémon* cards because... Like, *Pokémon* cards never left, but now they’re out there, like, pop culture again. And then I think it, like, triggers a memory in people, like, “Oh yeah! *Pokémon* cards. I used to love those!” And people have an idea like, “I had this favorite *Pokémon* that I liked.” It’s huge again.

And unfortunately, part of the reason Target is selling it is that it’s so big that you have scalpers out there buying all the cards trying to make a buck because there’s always the idea that there’s common *Pokémon*, uncommon, and then the rare and on the cards there’s holographic foil. Back in my day, there was a shiny Charizard. And these cards sell for \$3,000+ if they’re in mint condition. Like, retirement kind of situation because people are willing to pay big money for these rare things that trigger a nostalgia in their brain.

Julie: Yeah, I’ve seen Twitch streamers who are just, like, opening *Pokémon* card packs.

José: Yeah, so a lot of them tend to be older cards from... Every three months The *Pokémon* Company would release a new expansion, just, “New *Pokémon*, new cards, new options,” and a lot of them that are rare, like from back in the day... because they’re

old card sets. They don't really make those anymore. So, these vintage card sets that people are unpacking, that's worth a lot of money.

Julie: Yeah. Are you collecting *Pokémon* cards right now?

José: Gosh, you know, I've bought some in the last, like, ten years because when I was younger, you know, my parents were poor and cards are not cheap. Every pack can easily be between \$3-5, and you're paying that for ten cards. And it's like, "I have no one to play with." It's like opening a Christmas present, and I always get a little bit of that feeling, like I'm opening a gift, "Let's see what I get." Sometimes it's nothing. Most often it's nothing. But sometimes you're like, "Wow! These beautiful, shiny cards!" And I'm going to put it in my folder and never see it.

I have a lot of these folders in boxes, of just cards, and cards, and cards. I think at some point I'm going to find this boy or girl that is just so in love with *Pokémon* as much as I was and I need to be like, "Here you go. Your heart is going to explode out of happiness and it's going to make me happy." Because you know, you're passing on the gift of something that you love and that someone else appreciates. If someone had done that for me when I was ten, you know, tears of joy. Isn't that what it's about? Having a good time with it?

Julie: Yeah. So, the difference with *Pokémon* cards and, like, collecting baseball cards is that... there's nostalgia in both, but with *Pokémon* you can actually play a game with the cards, is that right?

José: Yeah, it is the *Pokémon Trading Card Game* or *TCG* for short. There's huge tournaments, prize money. The company has done, like, scholarships for winners in the past. And they do different levels, like masters, and intermediate, and younger kids for like ten and under. But a lot of these kids are really good. I could never go up there because part of it too is, like, to build a competitive card deck you kind of have to buy some of the best cards or collect enough... Because you know, you're opening random booster packs, you don't know what you're going to get, so it is a bit of an investment. But that's how they get you. [laughs]

Julie: It's a little bit of a bias towards people who can actually afford to buy the cards.

José: Oh yeah. I tried to get my fiancé Max Miller from *Tasting History* into *Pokémon* cards right in the beginning when we met, and he was just like, "I can't keep up. I have *one* good card, and I really need like four good cards."

Julie: It's going to take time and a lot of cash to get that together.

José: Yeah, a lot of cash. I mean, I feel bad for parents. But again, there's a reason why I didn't have any when I was growing up. It was an investment. And now, just opening them up is what brings me a little bit of joy and hopefully I can find someone to play with just casually in a non-pandemic world.

Julie: Besides the obvious differences, how is it different to play the card game versus the video game?

José: It's very, very different. I mean, the idea of collecting *Pokémon* is kind of, like, the base of the video game. You want to fill out your Pokédex, which is essentially an encyclopedia of *Pokémon*. I think at this point there's almost 900 different *Pokémon*. It's like, I don't know the elements to the periodic table, and I don't know the names...

I couldn't call out all the plants if I saw them in a picture, but I could tell you *at least* close to 800 of the 900 different Pokémon.

Julie: [laughs] That's awesome!

José: Because you know, going from ten years old to 32 that I am now, it's like every few years they have a new generation and they'll introduce, like, "Here's another 100, or another 75, or 150..." And it brings in the new generations. Like, you're pushed out... And the games themselves haven't really evolved, is the thing. They're all very easy. There's no hard mode, and I wish there was for someone who's older at this point and, kind of, knows the way about the game because I've been doing it so long. I'm an OG, I guess.

Julie: Yeah, exactly. So, were you playing video games anyway, or was this, like, your first entrée into playing video games?

José: I've always been interested in, like, Nintendo Entertainment System, like *Super Mario* and old ninja turtle games. They're actually pretty hard. A lot of the "retro" games, that we call now, that were, like, the 8-bit style, *Mega Man*, very, very difficult. But the *Pokémon* games are not... I don't want to say 'real time' where you're, like, running around and things are coming at you. It's menu-based, like, "I have 50 HP," which is hit points, "You hit me, and then I hit you, and then one of us is going to win." Once you have zero hit points, you've lost. It's an RPG, so you play at your own pace, nice and mellow. I don't need anyone else.

Actually no, part of the appeal of *Pokémon* back in the day is you would play it on your Game Boy, which is where it got its start. So, they introduced the idea of evolving Pokémon, but you needed to trade with someone, so you needed a link cable to really collect all of them. Because they would release... They still do. They release them in two versions. One version has most of them except maybe, like, ten. The other version has most of them except different ten. So in order to collect them all, you had to swap with people, and that's how they got you.

Julie: That's brilliant.

José: Yeah, I know. And they still do it. Like, they double their numbers because there are some people who are obsessed (like myself) who are just like, "I want them all, so I'm just going to buy both versions." So I bought a version for myself and then a version for my partner, which he doesn't even really play as much, so it's like, "Gimme that! Let me make enough progress to get the ones I need."

Julie: That's amazing. So how many Pokémon have you actually collected?

José: Every game has different batches, so it's like... I've been transferring some of them for years through different generations. So I have some really old, like, sprite Pokémon in my games that, you know, they've been around for years at this point.

Julie: Is it based on, like, your user profile that you collect all of these...?

José: The thing is, technology has developed, like, what used to be just pixels is now 3D rendered creatures on screen. So, you went from Game Boy Pocket to Game Boy Advance, to GameCube, Nintendo 64 at some point. So, they've given systems where you can, like, transfer your file data. So, obviously I've lost a lot of... Because you know, you get older and at some point you lose your Game Boy, you lose your game, your

friend never returns your game to you. At some point it's like, "All right, let me carry the ones I like over," and you transfer them through the generations.

But yeah, the internet becoming a thing, the wireless connectivity, where back in the day you used to physically connect a cable. Now it's something you can do online, like, "Here, I'll trade you this Pokémon for that Pokémon."

Julie: Do you remember the very first Pokémon that you collected?

José: It's the one that's given to you. They're all numbered, they have a national Pokédex number that's like their identification number, so it would be the Bulbasaur. I actually have so many different plushies because it's my favorite from back in the day and I've carried it over. I have what I call, like, a Bulbasaur shrine.

Julie: I love it!

José: And then, because I've been working and, you know, my career and stuff, I've been able to afford this dream that I had of buying all these plushies, and so now our guest bed's just covered in 200+ plushies. A lot of these are the ones that have made it over into the *Tasting History* as just a little Easter egg in the back.

Julie: Yeah, I was going to ask you... I've seen on your Instagram pictures of your collection. That's massive! That's a huge collection of plushies.

José: [laughs] It's like, "Yay, let me check this one off. I collected this one and now I'll move on to another one." But the thing is, sometimes they release new ones that are, like, in an outfit, ones that I already have, and it's like, "Can I justify buying this?"

Julie: Yes!

José: Yes I can. "This one has a costume and that one does not." So, I have way too many plushies and not enough room.

Julie: That is amazing.

José: There's a reason why they're the top media franchise; because there's people like José collecting 300+ of them.

Julie: They're genius marketers. It's brilliant.

José: I mean, gosh, they're all over the place. And again, the *Pokémon* cards... It's cyclical. Like it maybe dies down... it's still always there, but it pops into the cultural zeitgeist again. I saw articles where it's like, "This '90s celebrity that had disappeared..." and I'm like, "It never left. You just were not paying attention because you're not in that bubble." And the bubble has expanded currently into the real world; I don't know what you want to call it.

Julie: Now, how do you... pre-pandemic and hopefully post-pandemic, how do you connect with other people that are into *Pokémon*?

José: I think just having friends that have similar interests. We like video games, and if Max is not going to trade his Pokémon with me, good thing I have ten other friends who are playing the different versions that I can play with. And besides the trading card game, online they actually have virtual video game tournaments too. Again, similar to the *Pokémon Trading Card Game*, different levels, people competing, building their team of six super-powered Pokémon to battle other people. It's a whole thing. It's a kid's game but there's a layer of, like, complexity back there where you're, like, doing math, and feeding your Pokémon super vitamins, and you're breeding different

generations of Pokémon and hatching eggs, trying to get the best statistics for your team. It's involved.

Julie: Yeah. So, there's an element of, you don't just collect a Pokémon, you can crossbreed and create new...

José: There's almost a genetics... Some Pokémon belong in different egg groups and you can, like, crossbreed them. They won't make new species, but the stats carry over and the different attacks that are unique to different Pokémon can be transferred through generations. It's a thing. And then you layer on the randomness of Shiny Pokémon.

Shiny Pokémon, I believe, have a one in... I'm going to get grilled for misquoting, but it's like a 1-in-7,000 chance of appearing. I've actually, in all my years playing *Pokémon*, I didn't encounter one until, probably like, six or seven years ago. So that's how rare it was. Mind you, they didn't appear in the first generation of games, but by the second, Shiny Pokémon were a thing. And the odds of getting one... Maybe as a kid I did get one, and I didn't know, and I was like, "My game has a glitch." Shiny Pokémon, they're usually a different color.

It's carried over into *Pokémon Go*, which is kind of... Do you remember *Pokémon Go*, like the summer of *Pokémon Go*? Where there was world peace and everything was great? [laughs] People were swarming different areas trying to find... I still play *Pokémon Go* and I'm appreciative of it because it's kind of opened it to other non-gamers because it's a casual game. You just flick a ball and you're done. But the fun's in the... It's geo-based, so if you're walking down the street in real life, you're walking down the street in *Pokémon Go*, and somebody might pop into your screen. And that's kind of the only reason I was able to get Max into knowing the Pokémon. Because he plays with me daily, a few minutes at a time, and I appreciate that.

Julie: Besides connecting with your friend group, are there conventions where people go to talk *Pokémon*?

José: You know, I'm sure they exist but I think a lot of it is more at the community level and the different events that *Pokémon* sponsors, like the tournaments for the video games, the tournaments for the cards. E3, Nintendo, which owns The Pokémon Company, it's also called Game Freak. They always have a huge booth for anything *Pokémon* that's coming up. They tend to release the games, like, every three years, like, "Here's the new generation, here's the new Pokémon. Here's a bunch of new plushies for you to buy." [laughs] "New clothes, new cards, new everything."

Julie: Are you also into, like, the anime, and the manga, and the movies?

José: So the anime, it really is for ten-year-olds and down. [laughs] Even though there's a continuity from, like, when the main character Ash Ketchum, which is just a pun on "catch 'em", he's been ten for the last 20-something years. So, I think that allows newer kids to be able to be brought in at any point, but it's no fun for someone who's older. Like, "Dude, you still suck after 20 years. You're trying to be a Pokémon Master and you haven't caught anywhere near enough to be close to that."

Through the generations, the series evolves, and there's throwbacks to past characters, but it's not the best animation, let me tell you that. And again, it's for kids. You watch an episode and it's like, "I'm good." But as far as the manga, it tends to be similar. It's also very young.

Julie: Now, is there a generation of Pokémon that you think is the best?

José: You know, everyone who played when they were little always says that the first generation is the best generation. But I mean, sure, there's a lot of great ones... because everyone's like, "They have the best designs..." And it's like, "Are you sure? Because one of them's just a ball, and one's just a blob..."

I think I had the best time with *Pokémon Platinum*, which I believe was the fourth generation. Again, they're good marketers because they release two sets so you can try and collect... you'll trade and maybe buy both versions. Maybe a year later they release a third version in that generation, and that one has, like, added bells and whistles, and maybe you can collect a few more. They always get you.

But my favorite version is the Platinum version, which was a third version of that generation. It just had more bells and whistles, more to do, more post-game... You know, you beat the game, "I'm the champion," and there's just more going on in the back.

Julie: Like what?

José: Just more trainers, stronger tournaments going on in the main game, new areas to explore. That's what it tends to come down to. Because you know, once you beat the game you've defeated eight gym leaders, you're the Master, and it's like, "Now what?" Well, there's a whole new island to explore. So that's what it tends to be.

Julie: Now, have you always been a person who likes to collect stuff?

José: Gosh, it's hard to say because, you know, being young and not having a lot of money, there's not a lot to collect. Comic books, I always wanted to read comic books, but comic books tend to be pricey. They are only a few dollars, but as a kid, those few dollars were going to, like, AAA batteries to power my Game Boy Pocket so I could play more *Pokémon*. I'm just digging through my couch to find change, and maybe my mom's purse, to get that extra dollar to really get those batteries. But as an adult, that sense of satisfaction of crossing off, like, "I did this, and that, and now I have all this."

Julie: So has *Pokémon* helped you get through the pandemic?

José: Well, it's always there, so it's a good outlet for me. There are so many different games. There's the main series of games where you're going on your journey, but they have puzzle games, they have... *Pokémon Go* is the biggest spinoff. *Pokémon Snap*, they released a sequel, and that one's a bit of a cult classic between gamers, and you're just on rails, essentially, taking pictures of Pokémon living in the wild.

I know it sounds boring, [laughs] but for someone, you know, who hasn't really experienced a Pokémon in 3D when you're younger, because you're used to pixels... Black and white pixels is where we started, so to see them fully realized in their "environment," that was fun. But they finally released a sequel to it recently, and that's been fun. Very Zen.

Julie: It's not, like, Fortnite where people are coming at you?

José: Oh my god, I'm not great at playing, like, huge multiplayer games because, you know, you get kids, you get different skill levels, and I kind of land in the middle of that. It's like, "I'm good, but I'm not *that* good."

Julie: Now, do you have another video game that you play regularly besides *Pokémon*?

José: I tend to play whatever is the newest... like *Resident Evil Village* came out, but it's a horror game and I have to be in the mood and willing to get scared. So I want to play during the day so I don't get as scared, but you know, I work during the week, and I'm done by seven, then dinner, then it's nine o'clock and I can sit down and play, but it's late and I'm scared. [laughs] So, I play it on the weekends when it's daytime and I can commit, like, two hours because, you know, you've got to get in that state of mind. Because you know, if you get scared enough you get used to it after a while, like, "I know what to expect, I know what I'm doing. I'm good to go."

I'm also big into *Kingdom Hearts* and *Zelda*, which again, a lot of these games are just, like, going on a journey. You are the hero and saving the world or whatever.

Julie: Do you like to travel outside of *Pokémon* and your work world? Do you enjoy traveling?

José: I haven't really done too much of that, to be honest. I tend to keep to myself, I'd say, and at home. I've lived in LA pretty much my entire life. LA is big, but LA-adjacent is as far as I've gone. I'd like to in the future though. Definitely the Pokémon Center in Japan. They have a few of those, and they have one... I think Europe has one. But now they've set up, like, online shops where you can pretty much get a lot of the similar goodies. But that hasn't stopped me from importing Japan-exclusive, but I am paying the shipping rates. That's the hard part.

Julie: Remember the Disney store that used to be in the mall? Is it the same kind of thing?

José: It's pretty much that. It's all *Pokémon*. Nintendo has a store in New York that's... there's like a *Pokémon* area, which is pretty cool, that I've been to. But it's more Nintendo, anything in the Nintendo umbrella. But they have *Pokémon* cafés, like, dedicated to *Pokémon*, in Japan, where they serve you dishes that are shaped like Pikachu. It's adorable.

Julie: Are you sure you want to eat Pikachu though? That seems a little... [laughs]

José: It's so cute it's hard to eat! No, I'm sure it's delicious. But no, it's like Pikachu's face is just stamped on things. It's exciting. I hope to go one day soon.

Julie: If you were to spend a day as a Pokémon, which one would you choose and why?

José: [laughs] This is an easy answer. Snorlax, because all he literally does is eat and sleep. And I do plenty of eating, but not enough sleeping. And he's pretty chill, and he's famous. People love him, he's big and strong, and sleeps and eats, and that works.

Julie: I love that. It's perfect.

José: I want to bring up, for *Pokémon*, they've had... When I was growing up it had gained so much popularity that it was all over the place, the cards. And you know, I was in fourth and fifth grade, and you know, I'd heard in the Spanish news, like, "*Pokémon* is the like the devil," or reports that very religious families were worried about the gambling aspect of swapping cards and selling them, or that people were being possessed by this fascination with *Pokémon*. But you know, it's still huge. PETA has lobbied campaigns against it because in their heads it's like animal cruelty, even though they don't exist.

But in Japan, back in 1997, they had an episode that didn't air after that time because it induced a lot of seizures when it aired. It was called "Electric Soldier Porygon," and there was rapid alternating flashing between the red and blue colors, and it just

caused seizures. And it was so big at that time, a lot of people were watching it, and 685 kids ended up hospitalized.

Julie: [gasp!] Oh my god!

José: But this show, it has never aired again, but it has... I believe *South Park* and *The Simpsons* parodied it. Yeah...

Julie: Wow. Have you actually seen it?

José: No. [laughs] I should though. But I'm a little older now. I don't need a seizure. I don't need that hospital bill.

Julie: [laughs] Good call. Has *Pokémon* gotten you into any other anime or manga that, kind of, came off of the *Pokémon* world or sparked an interest?

José: For kids my age, it's definitely one of the earlier ones. Like, *Dragon Ball Z* or before that time. *Dragon Ball* was a huge thing. I feel like right now anime is all over the place. We have it... Like, Netflix has so many new options. I think *Castlevania* just came out, the newest season; season three or four. And I really enjoy it. Other great ones are *Fullmetal Alchemist*... *Attack on Titan* is actually one that I was able to get Max into because it's based on, like, a futuristic alternate reality Europe with giants that eat people, but that's just a spin on it. But yeah, it was definitely a gateway anime, I would say.

Julie: Now, is there other media that you're obsessed with?

José: I really enjoy going to the movies, because I work in marketing at Disney. Working at Disney, just really the appreciation for the work that goes into not just making the movies but actually marketing it and putting it to people. So I tend to go to the movies quite often. This last year has been sad because, you know, so much was delayed because so much money is made at the box office before it goes to DVD and Blu-Ray, and finally streaming. So there's not a lot of movies that I've been watching. It's kind of like catching up, "What did I miss in the last few years?" There's actually a lot. Like, I've never seen *Indiana Jones*.

Julie: WHAT!

José: I know! It's crazy.

Julie: Did you finally see it?

José: No, I need to. [laughs]

Julie: José!!

José: I know! Here's the thing... and I tell this to Max all the time. I grew up in a Spanish-speaking household, so I watched a lot of Spanish cinema. Unfortunately, a lot of it is inappropriate to a ten-year-old because a lot of it's about drinking, and romance, and it's just so inappropriate. So you know, I was watching that and a lot of horror movies because my parents would let me watch English horror movies. I love scary movies now and it's hard because Max doesn't like them. So I get one, once a year. I'm cashing in this year's for *A Quiet Place Part II*.

But yeah, so *Indiana Jones* is on my list because a new one's coming out late next year, I believe, so I need to brush up on those. *Back to the Future*, I think I want to watch those. And I don't know, there's just so many.

I've had people, like, "You're older. Why do you watch cartoons?" And it's like, it makes me happy. Isn't that enough? I'm not hurting anyone. I'm not doing anything bad. My money's going toward something that genuinely makes me happy and that's enough for me.

Julie: So, are there things that drive you crazy about *Pokémon*? Like, "I love everything about *Pokémon* except for this"?

José: I think a lot of it tends to be... Like, I actually like that they refresh it because it does... you know, "Here's some new creatures for you to collect," after I've already collected pretty much most of them, I'd say, at this point. It keeps the franchise alive. It brings in new people. But the video game is, kind of like, my start and what I tend to latch onto. Again, the game is made for younger kids, and they haven't really added difficulty levels to it to really keep it challenging to someone who's been with the series for the last two decades. 25 years, that's the anniversary this year; they're pushing the 25-year anniversary. That's how the Katy Perry thing happened. They're releasing new merchandise every month for every generation throughout the year.

Julie: Oh man, I hope you saved your money.

José: I'm not saving it because I'm spending it!

Julie: [laughs]

José: "Let's see what they have this month." Pokémon Center is making so much money off of me. [laughs] But yeah, the series has evolved but it hasn't really been as welcoming to the older generation, just from a challenging perspective. That's it.

Julie: Are there misconceptions about the world of *Pokémon*, or people who play *Pokémon*, or are into it, that you really hate?

José: The obvious one's, like, PETA says that you're abusing Pokémon. Like, it's just a video game. I'm not actually an animal abuser. Or "It's an obsession." Like, don't say I'm obsessed. I'll buy the shirts and stuff, but I go to work, I wear slacks, I have my tie. I can separate it. I love it but I'm not, like, *crazy crazy* for it. Do what you love. Just do what you love.

Julie: Presume somebody's old like me who hears this and says, "Oh, *Pokémon* sounds actually pretty cool." How would you recommend they get started with it?

José: Well at this point, you would probably have to buy a Nintendo Switch. That's a \$200 investment, I think. It's a console, but it's also the handheld one. I think any of the games are honestly pretty easy to jump into. I say easy, but as I think about it, it's like, "Well, there's the element-type matchups..." like fire beats grass, grass beats water, and water beats fire. So that's the basic, like, triangle. But then there's steel, then rock, and dark, and poison types. So now as I talk about it, it's like, "Maybe it's a little more complicated." The first three are easy to understand, like rock-paper-scissors. That kind of exists when you're playing the game, what matchups work best against others. But I really do think that they are easy to get into. They are text-based role-playing games.

Julie: Besides getting the switch, can they go back and try older versions of *Pokémon*, or just start with the latest one that's out now?

José: Nintendo tends to remake them every few years, like past ones, because... You know, the *Pokémon* that they release in each generation tend to be unique to that game, and

then they'll add some of them in future games. But to be able to collect the entire collection of that generation, it's harder because... you know, no one's been playing for that long. I mean, I have and a lot of people have, but a day-to-day person maybe doesn't have time to collect all 900 of them. So you could start with older ones, but then you would have to get the older consoles unless there's a remake, and there's a remake coming up of my favorite one, actually, next year.

Julie: Awesome. Well, José, thank you so much for taking so much time to educate me and share your passion. This has been so much fun.

José: Thank you, Julie. I appreciate it. I could probably talk for hours and hours, and I think this is how Max feels when he talks about history. He could talk about it forever. He talks about 1066 and how much fun it is, and I guess this is me talking about *Pokémon*, that same vein. I love it.

[snippet from Pokémon Gen 7: "absorb" sound; optimistic chimes]

You can find José on Instagram [@WorldAgainstJose](#) and on YouTube [@KetchupwithMaxandJose](#). Of course I'll put all the links in the show notes. Huge thanks to José again for sharing his love and his passion.

[snippet from Pokémon Gen 7: "absorb" sound; warpy waves and a blast]

Just a reminder that you can find this podcast on Instagram [@LoveWhatYouLovePod](#), on Twitter, [@WhatYouLovePod](#), and the website is [LoveWhatYouLovePod.com](#).

All of the transcripts for *Love What You Love* are available for everyone on the website. Thanks to Emily White, transcription magician and proprietress of The Wordary. If you need transcripts, reach out to her at Emily@TheWordary.com. The music for *Love What You Love* is called "Inspiring Hope" by Pink-Sounds. A link to that artist is included in the show notes.

As always, thank you so, so much for listening. Let's hang out again soon.

Links:

Find José on Instagram and YouTube

José's Favorite Nonprofits:

[Best Friends Animal Society](#)

[Hope of the Valley Rescue Mission](#)

[Save the Manatee](#)

My Favorite Nonprofits:

[Everytown for Gun Safety](#)

[Humane Society of Silicon Valley](#)

[Southern Poverty Law Center](#)

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