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Lisa Welchman:

Welcome to Surfacing.

Andy Vitale:

Yes. Year end holiday, look back all the things episode this time.

Lisa Welchman:

Yeah. This time we have an extra special, very special guest. Would you like to introduce this guest, Andy?

Andy Vitale:

Yeah. This guest is someone that you know better than I do but we know over the course of the podcast, that's been producing this podcast, Rhys Welchman.

Lisa Welchman:

Yes. Rhys Mitchell Welchman, who if everyone who's read my book or heard me talk or been around me in any way or another, know that I'm quite fun of my son. He's also written the kickass theme music to the Surfacing Podcast.

Andy Vitale:

Yes.

Lisa Welchman:

Which is way more rock and roll-y than I thought it was going to be. I was going to go for like sad girl ambient, but I got outvoted by both Rhys and Andy. Rhys is also our announcer on the podcast as well. I thought it'd be a good idea to get together and just talk about some things. I moved to the Netherlands, we made a podcast, what that experience is like, whether or not it met our expectations.

Andy Vitale:

Yeah. We talked about the episode that resonated the most or that we enjoyed the most this year and what we hope for next year.

Lisa Welchman:

Yeah. I hope everybody enjoys it. I hope everybody's having a good end of the year and whatever you do, whether or not it's celebrate a holiday, take some time down or party harder, enjoy doing it.

Andy Vitale:

Yeah. We'll see you in 2022.

Rhys Welchman:

The obvious way to start off is how has working on this project together turned out in regards to maybe potentially how you thought it would go and how did that change in reality?

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Andy Vitale:

That's a deep question.

Lisa Welchman:

Yeah. We're both going like, "Wow, that's an actual real question." We thought you were going to be like, "What did you have for breakfast?" Or, "Hey, who's your favorite guest?" Something like that.

Rhys Welchman:

Well, I mean, at the beginning is a decent time to... it's like I have a very strange relationship with you both because I receive a lot of breakthroughs or whatever you might want to call it and I still maintain that there has not been one bad episode.

Lisa Welchman:

Oh, that's nice to know.

Andy Vitale:

Yeah. That's awesome.

Lisa Welchman:

So anyhow-

Andy Vitale:

So the numbers point to one really bad episode.

Lisa Welchman:

Yeah. There is one really bad episode.

Rhys Welchman:

And I think I know which one that is.

Lisa Welchman:

But I think it's more... I think it's... Which one do you think that is?

Rhys Welchman:

I'm not certain.

Lisa Welchman:

You can't say anyhow.

Rhys Welchman:

Yeah.

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Lisa Welchman:

I think it's a badly titled episode.

Andy Vitale:

Right. It's the Should Designers Learn to Code episode, which just has the lowest amount of listens or downloads, but I think that the title--

Rhys Welchman:

But yeah, that's not really what the episode ended up being about.

Andy Vitale:

Right. Exactly. It wasn't about that. It stopped being about that five minutes in and then dove into how to build digital teams and what that looks like and setting up organizations. It went down a couple of interesting twists and turns. Actually, that's one of the ones I've enjoyed the most, but to answer your original question--

Lisa Welchman:

Is that the one that you downloaded in West Virginia so that we could have somebody listen from West Virginia?

Andy Vitale:

No, that was not.

Lisa Welchman:

I've outed you, Andy.

Andy Vitale:

That's true. There's pockets of the country that people have never listened to in the U.S. Alabama's a state that we have zero listens, I think North Dakota. I could look at the map and West Virginia was one and West Virginia was literally this one spot that hadn't been touched when everything else around it had been. So I was driving last week to Detroit through West Virginia and I was like, "Damn, I might as well download an episode while I'm here. So I could A, let my wife listen to it and give her opinion, but B, just get that West Virginia listen while I'm here." So I did. I cheated and got us West Virginia.

Rhys Welchman:

The numbers are a lie.

Lisa Welchman:

We're ignoring Rhys's question.

Andy Vitale:

No. So in my mind, I think I have an answer, but it doesn't... It's not a fully formed thought. I think that originally when we had done this, the idea was just to have interesting conversations. Actually, when we

first connected the idea was to write a book, but the conversations that we had around that were more interesting than sitting down and writing the book. So we thought, "Well, hey, if these conversations are interesting to us, maybe they're interesting to other people and then let's invite some other folks on that we can continue to have interesting conversations." And throughout the process, it started with like, "Let's get people who create digital things, makers for the web," and then it transformed into, "Let's just talk about people that are doing interesting digital things that impact people's lives."

Andy Vitale:

And now, it continues as we learn what people tend to like or what we perceive people like. It's become like, "Let's talk to the people that are actually leading and doing this work so that we have really interesting insights amongst to our own, when we have guests that people could take away practical things from." But the only difference is like, I don't know, there's nothing that I didn't expect. It's still been fun. The conversations are still interesting and even the weeks that we don't record and we chat, which are still more often than we record, those conversations are still fun and fruitful.

Rhys Welchman:

Early on when you guys kind of were forming what these conversations were going to look like, and I don't know, because yeah, it's like, as you said, it was more like, "Well, we realize that just talking to these people who are at the very forefront of making something or keeping something up, that's very integral to a lot of people's lives, is the interesting thing. And we don't really have to do anything else to that to make it cool and make it interesting to a lot of people," because you have yourselves who are experts in the area, but also myself, and I think I've told you pretty much every time I've gotten one of these, it's like, "Oh, well, I mean, me from my background, I don't do anything near as hands on with digital as any of these people, but I'm never not entertained by the full conversation." I didn't think that I would find conversations on the topics so interesting in my personal, very non-digital life.

Lisa Welchman:

Well, but most of it is about how to work well together as a team and that's what you do. I mean, you're working with bands.

Rhys Welchman:

Yeah, that's the secret. That's the secret. Is that it's all the same. We're all talking about the same things.

Lisa Welchman:

We are. Everything is the same. I've had this conversation with you before. I think for me, I think when you asked that question, I thought... And this is odd for me. I think I was expectation free. I've been thinking I had had a podcast before called CMS Advisor. I think I recorded 12 episodes and this was way early in the podcast world and I don't know if you remember those, Rhys. Yeah, of course you do. I should probably dig some of those old ones out and you can put links to them in the show notes, because some of them are really funny. They had sound effects. I went to a studio and we got them produced and all of that. But I had been talking about wanting to do a podcast for maybe the last five years or so, but I knew I didn't want to do it by myself because it's a long haul, right?

Lisa Welchman:

By yourself. There's just a lot of work involved in it in getting it done and I like collaborating with people. So for me, I think it was really like, can we do it and can we keep making them? I mean, it was more practical like, "Can we get it done?" Because there's a lot of work in it. So I think I didn't really have any expectations and I don't. One of the things I really like about working with Andy is that things we work pretty organically. We've been spending a lot of time, I think, as Andy said, talking about what's resonating with people? What's resonating with us? What do we want to spend our time talking about? And one of the last things that we said was I think we've spent enough time describing the room, right?

Lisa Welchman:

Almost everybody who listens to the podcast probably understands the problem set that we're trying to solve. So I think in the next year, what we're going to want to do is bring more guests on who actually know how to solve the problems and have solved the problems at a high level so that we can be more prescriptive about the advice that people get because most people know it's a problem. And while it's fun to sort of commiserate over it, that doesn't really help in the long haul. So there'll always be an element of that I think, but we're going to move into that and in a lot of different ways. We're starting to put together our first training class on leading digital teams, which I think is going to be really cool and just have a lot of practical information that I think people could use. So that's the direction things are going from where I'm sitting.

Rhys Welchman:

Because it always detracts into speaking about leading a team, building a team, how you want to behave, act as a leader of said team. Yeah. It always comes down to that, especially the deep dives and I think I don't remember who... I'm sure it was your idea, but the deep dives, I think, are the hidden gem in this project anyway, because I always seem to have the most fun with the deep dives. Maybe it's removing-

Lisa Welchman:

Is that because you get to edit your mom?

Rhys Welchman:

I get to edit you no matter what and you're the one who send me the notes.

Lisa Welchman:

Like you're like highlight, delete.

Rhys Welchman:

You're the one who sends me the notes.

Lisa Welchman:

It's like therapy.

Rhys Welchman:

That doesn't necessarily come into play, but it removes the variable of the guest and the guests have always been lovely, but it just kind of allows you to get to the crux of a problem. There are some guests who... Things take... There's some guests where it takes a turn for the maybe over-conceptual a little bit.

Lisa Welchman:

Yes, yes.

Rhys Welchman:

And we're talking in generalities that aren't very helpful, like you say, where sometimes you want to be talking about this is this fit problem that a lot of people face in a lot of different workplaces and this is how from our personal expertise, what you need to do to solve that, which is the point of the whole podcast and-

Lisa Welchman:

Well, yeah, but I don't think we knew that ahead of time. Right, Andy?

Andy Vitale:

Right.

Lisa Welchman:

I mean, I think, I don't know that we had a conversation about trying to solve problems. Right?

Andy Vitale:

No.

Lisa Welchman:

I think we just wanted to guess, right?

Andy Vitale:

I think we just wanted to highlight interesting things that people were doing, which even looking at our first guests with me, right? The goal with that conversation was we were just coming out of a really interesting election season and she had extensive experience in designing ballots and designing materials to help people go through the election process and vote. So that one was timely, but then when we get into some of the other ones, they were all interesting in their own ways, but not as timely, I would say. That one was just the right time, the right one for the first episode, but every other one was how do we have these guests that are a mix of people who others may know really well or people who aren't well known, but are doing really interesting things?

Andy Vitale:

And then on top of that, being intentional to make sure that we're representing as many groups of people, as many different people from as many different background that are doing equally interesting things so that it didn't become a podcast like everyone else's with the same seven or eight guests in a

row, the same 10 old white dudes that are just, I don't even know the word, philosophizing. I'm going to make a board about bullshit, right? Yeah.

Lisa Welchman:

Philosophizing. Philopholing.

Rhys Welchman:

Well, I remember that being a really important almost mission statement when you started out. Us being like, "We're going to speak to people who are at the forefront of their issue, of their workspace, whatever it is."

Lisa Welchman:

I mean, I think I would give us a B on that. Yes, that was all... I think it was part of our mission statement, but when I think that for me, I won't speak for Andy, but I think that when people talk about DEI, which is the big topic that we haven't put in on the podcast, diversity, equity and inclusion, right? Andy and I probably talk about that topic weekly, right? What we need to address that topic. How do we address that topic? And I have always been like, "I want to address that topic in practice." Right. So I want the podcast to be that way. So when I look at the guest list, I think it's a fairly diverse group of people and the other thing that was really important to me was to not bring a diverse group of people on and talk to them about being whatever category they want to be put in, but to allow them to express their professional expertise, because I think one of the challenges about being any type of marginalized or minority person in any situation, whoever that is.

Rhys Welchman:

I say that's all they want to talk to you about.

Lisa Welchman:

That's right. That's all they want talk about is like, "What's it like to be a black girl in tech?" And it's like, "Well, I can tell you my story, but the thing I've actually been doing for 25 years is this. Can I talk about this?" "Oh yeah, but just tell us about being black." And it's like, "I don't really know." So we really... For me, almost to a fault that we've done that to the point where we've actually not addressed the actual diversity, equity and inclusion topic. So that's hope something that we're hoping to address next year, get somebody great on to really just talk about that and drive straight through that. Particularly, as it relates to that being on digital teams, digital teams being across the board, more diverse so that you can build better product. And I know Andy, and you talked about that in the leadership one, and I'm always talking about that or we are always talking about that.

Lisa Welchman:

We should build products that work for every human being. And yes, that's a stretch goal, but the people left outside of that goal shouldn't be the people that are left outside of that goal now. Nothing's ever going to be absolutely perfect, but the point is, I think, people aren't even trying, right? They're not even trying at all to do anything and they're defaulting back to building product. It's kind of like when Volvo designed the three-point seatbelt, they designed it for a six-foot tall man. Right? So not a person with breasts, not a short person, not a... I mean, it just... So it just engineers certain things into products from

the get go that's really challenging and we see that across the board in digital spaces. I will stop talking about that, because that's like a ramp machine that once you turn it on, you can't turn it off. You're going to say something, Andy and true to forum, I cut you off.

Andy Vitale:

Oh, I don't remember what I originally intended to say, but I do know that what came to mind as you were speaking is we've got a company like Facebook who just changed their name to Meta and are about to create a metaverse of things.

Lisa Welchman:

Of insanity.

Andy Vitale:

But it seems like they've been running a huge PR campaign. I watch the commercial a lot now where they sit down with-

Lisa Welchman:

Is there a commercial?

Andy Vitale:

There's a commercial and it just says, "Paid for by Facebook." So it still says Facebook, and they sit down with someone that was a content creator or content strategist. They talk about what it's like to really focus on telling the story that people want to hear and surfacing articles and news items that are relevant to different people. So I look at the roles that they've been hiring and I look at their... We talk about this. They definitely have policies. They definitely have some sort of governance framework and again, it all falls on the decision maker, which we've talked about a lot, but it does look like from someone that does look in from time to time on them, that they look like they understand what they need to do. It's just a question of will they actually do it?

Lisa Welchman:

Well, I mean, if we're going to talk about Facebook, the challenge with any company that's in that situation is that they have baked things that turned out to be... I'm not saying that they did it with intent, right? From the get go, because I don't know that that's entirely true. I think it's a terrible situation. So I'm not stepping aside from that, but I don't think somebody intentionally went in and said, "Let's cause these sorts of problems." I think they just weren't thinking about it and they weren't checking about it, but the problem is that it is when you've baked it into your fundamental business model, it's really hard to get out. Right? So that's why it's really important, putting on my governance cap, to address those things early. Right?

Lisa Welchman:

So you need to make sure that when you're creating a business model, that there aren't some fundamentally unethical things in it because once you bring it to scale, they're just going to get worse and worse and then when you have to try and correct them, it takes an act of Congress, if you're talking about a U.S.-centered thing or a board level decision in order to...



Lisa Welchman:

What was that thing they just did where they dumped all that data? I mean, that's huge, right? You end up having to do things like that or changing the name of the company to run away from yourself. Right? These are huge things that maybe didn't need to happen if earlier on in the process before the scaling happened, things had been addressed, but anyhow, we don't need to talk about that since we've got Rhys here. We don't have to talk about governance-related things. We could talk about other stuff.

Rhys Welchman:

No, I mean, this is what I'm accustomed to listening to you guys talk about that.

Lisa Welchman:

Yeah. I know. But usually, you're not here. Maybe we should change the topic to something more lighthearted and fun.

Andy Vitale:

Rhys had another question.

Lisa Welchman:

Oh, what was the question?

Rhys Welchman:

Okay. So this is kind of bridging off of...

Lisa Welchman:

Is this another serious question?

Rhys Welchman:

It might be.

Lisa Welchman:

Oh my God.

Rhys Welchman:

I mean, it's-

Lisa Welchman:

I was thinking like, "What's your favorite popcorn? Who makes the best chicken ribs?" Honestly, this is where I thought we would be. I did not know we were going to be talking about governance.

Rhys Welchman:

Well, I mean, that's what the podcast is about. So you guys talk about-

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Lisa Welchman:

This is special holiday podcast.

Rhys Welchman:

It is. I'm not saying that-

Lisa Welchman:

And who does have the best fried chicken? Royal Farms?

Rhys Welchman:

Yeah. But-

Lisa Welchman:

Who has the best fried chicken where you are, Andy?

Rhys Welchman:

Well, yeah. Andy doesn't have Royal Farms.

Lisa Welchman:

He likes Popeyes.

Andy Vitale:

Oh, well, I had Popeyes' turkey. Right? So Popeyes makes a deep fried Cajun Turkey that they freeze.

Rhys Welchman:

I'm listening.

Andy Vitale:

And then you buy it and then that was my Thanksgiving turkey and it's delicious.

Rhys Welchman:

It sounds awesome. I would totally buy that.

Andy Vitale:

I mean, I don't even... It was expensive this year. It might have been like 50 bucks for it, but-

Lisa Welchman:

For a whole turkey?

Andy Vitale:

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A whole turkey. So that's not bad. It's already cooked. If I were to deep fry it myself, I would've burnt the house down. So I got to not have to worry about that, but no, that's been the go-to. I think last year was the only year we couldn't get the Popeyes turkey because we literally didn't go out. So we got a turkey breast or something.

Lisa Welchman:

They had COVID.

Andy Vitale:

A turkey [crosstalk 00:22:11].

Rhys Welchman:

Okay. There we go. There we go. There we go.

Lisa Welchman:

COVID is a topic.

Rhys Welchman:

No, that's my second question, but it was slightly serious. I didn't know if we wanted to go serious again. So given that this is a project that more or less came out of COVID, the COVID situation.

Lisa Welchman:

That's not true.

Rhys Welchman:

Is it not true?

Lisa Welchman:

No.

Andy Vitale:

No.

Lisa Welchman:

That's not true.

Rhys Welchman:

Was it being spoken about before? Was it being discussed or whatever before it started?

Lisa Welchman:

When did we start talking?

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Andy Vitale:

Probably January, January of 2020.

Rhys Welchman:

Okay. That doesn't count. That's too close.

Andy Vitale:

We were... We actually started talking in November of 2019.

Lisa Welchman:

Yeah. Yeah, yeah. That's what I was about to say. This was not a... I don't think that the pandemic had anything to do with the fact that we started a podcast. I think we tried to write a book, that wasn't going to work for a variety of reasons and we were like, "Let's do a podcast. Honest, am I wrong, Andy? I think it wasn't that complicated.

Andy Vitale:

No, it wasn't that complicated. I mean, by the time we started the podcast, the pandemic had already started, but we were working on the book from before the pandemic through the first, I don't know, few months of the pandemic for sure.

Rhys Welchman:

Because as a lot of the conversations took the turn of, "Oh yeah. Well, now we need to talk about how we're going to organize people and keep these projects on track with these tools that we have, like Zoom or whatever, instead of having meetings and having an all-hands meeting or something like that and talking about it.

Andy Vitale:

Yeah. I think, I mean, the whole world changed. We've all seen it in different areas. So for us, the topics, the only real deep pandemic benefited topic I think that we had was the episode with Kevin Hoffman, where we talked about how to have meetings now in a remote world or a remote first world, but a lot of companies were going that way before the pandemic. I think the pandemic just created this opportunity for a lot of companies to... They had no choice, but to go distributed flexible digital first. I think what we're seeing now though is more interesting. I think there are some companies that are staying that way and there are some companies that are so like, "That wasn't us, and innovation happens in hallway conversations and the only way to get progress done is face to face."

Andy Vitale:

And to those companies, a lot of them, the pandemic is over and they're rushing to get people back into the office and what we're seeing is a lot of people aren't ready to do that and a lot of people are leaving. I think LinkedIn or someone called it the great migration, right? There's a lot of people switching jobs. And even for us at my job, we have people accepting offer-

Lisa Welchman:

The great resignation.

Andy Vitale:

The great resignation. That's right. I call it the migration.

Lisa Welchman:

No, that's when all the Black people went from the south to the north after World War II.

Andy Vitale:

Was that what it was? Was that really what it was called, The Great Migration?

Lisa Welchman:

"The Great BI Migration sometimes known as the Great Northward Migration or the Black Migration was the movement of 6 million African Americans out of the rural Southern United States to the urban Northwest, Midwest and West that..." According to Wikipedia.

Rhys Welchman:

Okay. Well, anyway, I didn't doubt you. It would be foolish for me to. That is a real kind of thing that I've seen a lot in people that are my age. "Well, this job's only doing in person and stuff and this job's doing... Staying how it was," because my job currently is the definition of, "This meeting could have been an email," because I don't have the time. I'm speaking to people who are... My job as a touring professional, not as a podcast editor. It is...

Rhys Welchman:

You never really have an appropriate time to speak to somebody on the phone. If you do, it's rare and it's very quick lessen like read off of some things that you've written down, because this person has very little time to speak to you and you need to mine each other for as much information in a short amount of time as possible. That happens a handful of times. Usually it happens over very, very, very condensed down emailing only information. "I'm sure you're a very nice person, but I'm just sending you all this information because I want you to know... I want to know that you have it," sort of stuff.

Lisa Welchman:

But I mean, that's interesting to me because putting on a show, putting on a rock show every night in a different venue is a very interesting team challenge, right? And requires from a governance perspective, extreme coordination. Then there's this crazy element of people. So you've got the talent and then you also have a different set of people that are showing it, that are at the venue that you're arriving from and that personality set and that culture or whatever, but you have to make it work. And then you lather, rinse, repeat and do it over and over again. So that's really interesting. So my question to you would be is there any information that Andy and I talked about in the podcast that you used?

Rhys Welchman:

Yeah.

Lisa Welchman:

Or tactics or information that you used when you were last on the road, because you just got off the pandemic and did your first real road trip for what? A month long or something?

Rhys Welchman:

It was almost a month. Yeah. Well see, that's like it all comes back. For me, the most resonant part of the podcast is whenever you guys break it down and start talking about being a team leader, leading people, leading a project because that's what a tour is. It's just a big project because it's... Then you break it down, you can make it seem more sensational than it is. It's just we're going out and we're going to try to make as much money as possible in these places by doing marketing, which usually is out of your hands, but putting money into marketing, putting money into merchandising, trying to get as many people in the door as possible, trying to get as much money from those as people while they're inside as possible, and then-

Lisa Welchman:

It sounds like drip marketing, right, Andy?

Andy Vitale:

Yeah. But the interesting thing about that too, I mean, aside from the just curiosity of what it's like to open back up and have a ton of people in a venue on a daily basis in different cities is you rely a lot on a core team and an extended team and that extended team changes from city to city. It's the local hands that help do the work.

Lisa Welchman:

Oh, you used my language, Andy. My God, you said phone extended team. It's like made me smile. Sorry.

Andy Vitale:

So just curious, how has that been coordinating that? Do you rely more on the core team? Does the core team guide the extended team or does it all feel like one team each and every day, even though the team members change?

Rhys Welchman:

It definitely does not feel like the same team because the quality of the team is different every day and that comes down to myself because I got sick on this tour. Sometimes I was not great at remembering to do things or whatever, but also yeah, it's like there is a new challenge set every time you arrive somewhere. It's weird like, "Oh wow. Yeah. This place has a really good audio department, has a really good PA. I'm not going to struggle at all for headroom on the PA or whatever." But some days, there's a couple speakers on a stick and the guys are great, but there's a couple seat speakers on the stick. You have to make that work. Yeah, because there's the aspect of like, "Well, what's... We're moving, so we've got to keep moving."

Rhys Welchman:

But I think what a lot of people miss is that it's still people at the end of the day and therefore, you're not going to gain anything from trying to be a dick about it. It's just, "Hey, look, this is this person's house."

That's how I say it. That's how I say it. At least it's like, "This is your house. I'm just visiting. We're going to do something. We're going to do this. It's been contracted. If this show doesn't happen, we're both going to be in a lot of trouble." So yeah. I don't know. Yeah, that aspect of this podcast always resonates with me. It's that like, "No, we're going to have to come in and even if this guy hates me, we have to execute on this show. We have to execute on these four things, four bands, four things." So yeah, I generally see it as one team because the people at the venue know the information. Generally, they're not trying to make problems with anybody. If you just ask them and demonstrate a little bit of leadership for your people, that will go a long way.

Rhys Welchman:

And I think that's one of the places where I definitely have gained something from listening to this podcast whereas a TM, as a tour manager, you're essentially the team leader for the tour and if you just demonstrate a little bit of understanding of the situation that you're in and the people that you're around, that goes so much better than any kind of technical or accounting tricks that you might know. Is just like, "Okay, I'm demonstrating a little bit of empathy or emotional maturity in this situation. I'm going to ask X person about how we can maybe change this situation to where it can be a little bit more advantageous for me, and I'm going to be honest and open about it and what do you know?" So they are more likely to be like, "Oh, well, yeah, let's see if we can change that for you as opposed to going in, throwing your weight around, trying to throw all these crazy big words around about how this is going to go, and yeah, I don't know. Hopefully, that is a helpful answer to that question.

Lisa Welchman:

Well, it's reminding... That last behavior you just talking about reminds me of the way some people can work inside large corporations. Am I right, Andy? It's just a... You're either open to discussing and open to possibilities with other people, or you're close to it because you've already decided that you know the answer or you've already decided that you don't really want an answer. You just want control. You just want power or control or some other kind of stuff and that's management style. So you could be a good corporate leader, Rhys, don't you think, Andy?

Andy Vitale:

Yeah. I think it's important. The thing that you mentioned was the goal is still the same. So the team members may change, but it's still the outcome that we're going after. And no matter what the team you have that day is made up of, the end result is still the same. The show has to go on. It's got to be the people that are there to see it have to leave as excited about it leaving or more than when they got there. It's holiday season. I've got beard ornaments in my beard and a shirt on and I have a hat that I have to...

Lisa Welchman:

Because normally you don't wear a shirt?

Andy Vitale:

Yeah, that lights up. Normally, I don't wear a shirt. No.

Lisa Welchman:

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We'll have to get a... You'll have to take a selfie and we can put your picture of you in all of your beard ornaments.

Rhys Welchman:

That'll be it. That'll have to be the main picture for it.

Andy Vitale:

I'll make sure I put it.

Rhys Welchman:

Are you sincerely one of those people that it's like, "Thanksgiving is over now, now it's Christmas?"

Lisa Welchman:

I've got to tell you, Andy and this fricking pumpkin spice peppermint hot chocolate shit is something else really like...

Andy Vitale:

Yeah. So I'm seasonal all the way through. So in my mind, it goes from Halloween right into Christmas-ish season. The seasons are more like... pumpkin spice is a season that starts at the end of August and that runs until yesterday or today, which is when I busted out the first peppermint mocha of the season. So yes, it's probably been... So I listen to Christmas music scattered throughout the year. Right?

Rhys Welchman:

Oh man.

Andy Vitale:

They're just in my playlist because it brings me joy when I hear it.

Rhys Welchman:

I'm really, really happy that brings you joy.

Andy Vitale:

I love Christmas music, but what I've learned from-

Lisa Welchman:

Do you get to have a Christmas tree at home?

Andy Vitale:

Yeah. It's up now too. It's small. Since we've moved around a lot, it's a four footer, but--].

Lisa Welchman:

It goes from pumpkin spice to mocha. Do you do any of the other holidays?



Andy Vitale:

Yeah. I mean, I love Thanksgiving. My Popeyes turkey and some stuffing that I'll be re-eating throughout the next couple of days. Now so the other holidays, like we do Valentine's Day and 4th of July, right? 4th of July's hot dogs for me. I love hot dogs. They have this wonderful gingerbread flavor Mountain Dew. It actually tastes terrible, but the-

Rhys Welchman:

No way. What the hell?

Lisa Welchman:

Oh my God, Andy. You could have told me.

Andy Vitale:

The graphics on the can are so cool.

Lisa Welchman:

Gingerbread-

Rhys Welchman:

What the hell?

Lisa Welchman:

... that's just like Gingerbread Mountain Dew. It just sounds wrong on so many levels.

Andy Vitale:

It tastes like Cola. It just tastes like regular Cola.

Lisa Welchman:

Well then, have a Cola.

Andy Vitale:

But it's a gingerbread man throwing a snowball. It's got good artwork on it. Now that we're in Christmas season, full bore, I have to do something Christmas every day. So last night, I watched a new Home Alone movie on Disney Plus, and it was okay.

Rhys Welchman:

What?

Lisa Welchman:

Is there a new Home Alone movie?

Andy Vitale:

It's a British kid who... I don't want to give away the whole thing, but it's like Home Alone. It's the opposite.

Lisa Welchman:

Nobody else is watching it, Andy, you can give it away.

Andy Vitale:

They think that the kids stole this doll that's worth money to help them save their house. So they go to break into the house to get the doll back. Remember that on-

Lisa Welchman:

I would love to... This whole thing should be like a day with Andy, because I have a feeling it's kind of weird.

Andy Vitale:

It's definitely weird.

Rhys Welchman:

I do have another question that I wanted to ask. Not for any deep reason, but does any episode stick out to you as your favorite and why? Any episodes specifically that struck you or-

Lisa Welchman:

I'm going to look at the list.

Rhys Welchman:

... came out of nowhere as something that was a bit more impactful maybe for you than you were maybe expecting.

Andy Vitale:

Yeah. So for, for me, the guest list is interesting because there are some guests that we know both together and some guests I had never met or Lisa had never met because they were either personal connections or maybe neither one of us had met. So the one that stands out off the top of my head is Ron Bronson. Right? The conversation with Ron Bronson was so much fun. Ron had so much energy.

Lisa Welchman:

That was going to say.

Andy Vitale:

Was it?

Lisa Welchman:

I was going to say it was Ron. I was going to say, Ron too. I laughed. He made me laugh.

Rhys Welchman:

I mean, Ron's was by far, probably the best.

Lisa Welchman:

You think so?

Rhys Welchman:

I think.

Andy Vitale:

Pesäpallo

Lisa Welchman:

And that's really... It's so funny. Yeah. Pesäpallo, you know what it was? After that, I emailed him and said like, "Here's what I like. Can you pick some teas for me?" He nailed it.

Andy Vitale:

Yeah. For my wife's too.

Lisa Welchman:

Your Korean tea, shit, he completely nailed. Plus, he just... I laughed through that whole thing. It's so funny you picked that.

Andy Vitale:

Ski ball, all of the things.

Rhys Welchman:

Yeah. There was plenty of what I would call work talk involved in that as well, which I think, I don't know, the work to play aspect of the episode is important, but also you were still speaking about these problem spaces that you run into, the things that are being poorly managed, people that are poorly designed and not being kept up, there was plenty of discussion of that, but it was just a very lighthearted, fun episode, whereas others can kind of get bogged down for me, at least on the work side of stuff. Or maybe just go down a road where I don't really understand, which is fine because I don't need to understand everything, but generally, if the context is good, I can hang with most of the conversations you're having. And yeah, that one stuck out for me as well. For sure. 100%.

Lisa Welchman:

Well, that went by fast. So that's like a consensus.

Andy Vitale:

Yeah, that's awesome.

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Lisa Welchman:

We'll have to let Ron know.

Rhys Welchman:

Yeah, for sure.

Lisa Welchman:

Best episode of 2021. Well, thank you, Rhys Mitchell Welchman for joining us.

Andy Vitale:

And also-

Rhys Welchman:

That's me.

Andy Vitale:

... for making our shit sound so good.

Lisa Welchman:

Yeah. That's true.

Rhys Welchman:

That's my pleasure.

Lisa Welchman:

We've gotten better, right?

Rhys Welchman:

Yes.

Lisa Welchman:

I have to learn to stop interrupting people, which is hard for me as you well know.

Rhys Welchman:

I do know.

Lisa Welchman:

On my last, I don't think I ask any question. Last thing before we wrap up, so what's everybody looking forward to next year? Anything. Podcast, life, in general, shoes, different new holidays yet to be invented that have pumpkins in them?

Andy Vitale:

I just would love a bit more return to normalcy. I think this year, there's been steps in that direction, but I still don't feel that that everything feels back to normal and the closer we could get to that to going out and all of the conversations and meeting people and doing things, it just brings a different dynamic that we could bring back to life and to the show. So I would love more normal.

Lisa Welchman:

What about you, Rhys?

Rhys Welchman:

Yeah, generally, there in... Without getting into it because it would take hours, my whole world in the concert live performance area is operating under this very false sense of normalcy, which I don't like and nobody really likes because it just leads to a lot of discomfort on somebody's part. On the concert goers part, having to jump through hoops specifically regarding to having to show vaccine records or test results or something, and that also comes back on the venues because that means you have to staff somebody whose essentially job it is to say, "Well, if you don't have this, you can't come to this show that you want to see. And the reason that I do this work is because I love being able to provide that experience for people, because I know that it can be extremely important, extremely powerful experience for somebody to be able to see somebody they really admire play.

Rhys Welchman:

And when it comes down to it, it just means less people are coming to the shows and people don't feel comfortable at the shows. And yeah. So whatever needs to happen for people to feel a little bit more comfortable coming out and just being out and it's difficult, it's going to take time. It's going to take more resources and just time for people to trust that they're not going to get hurt. Yeah. That's really what I want because it's a very weird uneasy feeling. We're making steps in the right direction though, but it's still very uneasy. Yeah.

Lisa Welchman:

Cool.

Rhys Welchman:

And you?

Lisa Welchman:

Wow. What am I looking forward to? Well, this year was so huge for me. I moved from America to the Netherlands, and I'm starting to feel normal. So I would say that, but this is starting to feel like home for me. I'm looking forward to getting more integrated in Dutch life and starting to really learn the language. Can understand, hear a little bit of Dutch now. I'd like to do that, maybe making a few new friends here. I've got a few friends here, so it's good, but it'd get more socialized, more at home year, finish unpacking all the way. Just practical stuff like that.

Rhys Welchman:

Very fair. Yeah. And one last thing, I wish for another great year of the surfacing podcast.

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Lisa Welchman:

Yay.

Rhys Welchman:

Being involved in this project has been a pretty big surprise that I would be so invested in the content as I am. I enjoy every episode. Like I said before, every episode is fun and interesting for me to be able to get my head stuck into and edit and stuff, and as someone who also lives a bit in their own head and in their own little world, it's very, very, very nice to be able to essentially pick somebody's brain about something they're really passionate about for an hour or two every week or so. So yeah, another great year of the Surfacing Podcast.

Andy Vitale:

Awesome. That's awesome.

Lisa Welchman:

Anyhow-

Rhys Welchman:

Yes.

Lisa Welchman:

... well, I'm going to kick you out, Rhys.

Rhys Welchman:

All right. Thank you for having me.

Lisa Welchman:

Thanks for listening. I hope we find ourselves in a more comfortable and better place this time next year and Merry Christmas, Andy. Here's my attempt at peppermint and hot cocoa. (singing).