



## Cool Tools Show Podcast Episode 45: Matt Haughey

Transcript

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*Our guest this week is Matt Haughey. Matt is the creator of MetaFilter, and the co-creator of Fuely, among many other sites. He spends his free time shooting photos and also rides and races bikes. These days, he works on the editorial team at Slack.*

Mark: Welcome to the Cool Tools show. I'm Mark Frauenfelder, Editor in Chief of Cool Tools, a website of tool recommendations written by our readers. You can find us at Cool-Tools.org. I'm joined by my co-host, Kevin Kelly, founder of Cool Tools. Hey, Kevin.

Kevin: Hey, it's good to be here.

Mark: In each episode of the Cool Tools show, Kevin and I talk to a guest about some of his or her favorite uncommon and uncommonly good tools they think others should know about. Our guest this week is Matt Haughey. Matt is the creator of MetaFilter and the co-creator of Fuely among many other sites. He spends his free time shooting photos and also rides and races bikes. These days, he works on the editorial team at Slack. Hey, Matt, how's it going?

Matt: Good. Great to be here.

Mark: Yeah.

Kevin: Yes. It's great to have you.

Mark: I'm on Slack all day long with the Boing Boing crew.

Matt: Awesome.

Mark: Yeah. It's great. What do you mean as being on the editorial team?

Matt: They've originally brought me on to help out with blog post, and tweets, and words, and now I do UI copy and pretty much anything. We have a small team. Basically anywhere there's words, we have taken to look at it. There's a distinctive voice to it all. It's informal but informative is what we're shooting for. We spend a lot of time trying to make it friendly.

Mark: That's great. Kevin, I invited you to a Cool Tools Slack, but I don't think we've ever [crosstalk 00:01:33].

Kevin: Yeah. I keep wanting to get to know Slack better, but I don't know. I don't do enough collaborative work right now to demand it. Maybe when I get on to my next big project, so I can put out a book or something where there's more people involved. I think that will be perfect.

Mark: Yeah. I think it might be good actually for Claudia, me, and Scott Hepler to be on there, because it's email.

Kevin: Done. Right.

Mark: It's fantastic. We'll do it. All right. Well, cool. Matt, you've got some cool things, I took a sneak peek at your picks.

Kevin: I did too. I'm envious that I didn't know about some of these before.

Mark: Yeah. I haven't heard of a single one.

Matt: Yeah. The first one is ... It's the first that came in my mind because it's true to the heart. I think of Cool Tools that I've reading for years and years, which is trying to find the right ice cream scoop. It's this impossible journey of the last 5 years, probably for me. I just did the dishes last night, put some away and I noticed, I think we have 6 ice cream scoops.

Mark: You guys like ice cream over there.

Matt: Yeah. We eat a lot of ice cream. We make ice cream. Every year somebody says on Twitter or on Facebook, like a friend of mine will say, "This is the best ice cream scoop ever. It's so incredible. It has the technology that's just better than any other." I always buy one, and so I have 6 different ones. None of them are great. They're all terrible. They've all tried to be great. Then I backed a Kickstarter for the greatest ice cream scoop ever. It's called a Belle V, B-E-L-L-E V ice cream scoop. I would say this is one of the few Kickstarters that showed up with big promise and totally delivered. It is easily the best thing for just rock hard ice cream that you just pull right out of the freezer.

Kevin: Tell me why it's so good, because looking at it, you can't really see ... It's a beautiful sculpture shape, but advantages aren't evident.

Matt: Yeah. I would say it has a massive handle that feels great in my hand, just really over built, compared to the size of the scoop, and it's at this nice angle. The scoop is not that aggressive and it's easily the best ice cream scoop I've used. The best thing to do is take ice cream out of the freezer, wait 5 minutes, and then scoop, but if you want to eat ice cream immediately, you just drag and skip across the ice cream. This ice cream scoop just dives into the hardest ice cream I have in our deep freeze and works.

I think they come in a right hand and a left hand version, because it just at a perfect angle for each. I think it's just the handle. It's just so beefy. It distributes all the force, and the angle of the scoop is right. All my other one feels the scoop is too far back. I have some wacky ones that are filled with liquids, and you warm them up, and they're supposed to cut through cold ice cream, and they don't do that great of a job. It's just awesome, bulletproof-like. It's build like it'll be here for a hundred years. It's just nice good scoop.

Kevin: You think it's the ergonomics of it, the fact that they're maximizing or optimizing your force of your hand at the right angle with the right leverage, et cetera.

Matt: Yeah. I think it's the smaller scoop and the angle of scoop. It's more like a big spoon. It's not too ... All the other ones I have, they curl over too much, so you're pushing too much force, and it's hard. Maybe the side way shot of it is probably the nicest and gets to the heart of it. I guess the front of the scoop is only about half, the half of it is gone, so it cuts into the ice cream. I've spent 5 years trying to find a perfect ice cream scoop, and this is the one for me.

Kevin: That is the perfect cool tool review.

Matt: I can't believe its 50 bucks. I feel bad. I think it was maybe 30 bucks on Kickstarter if I think back.

Kevin: Well, just wait until the Chinese get to it.

Matt: Yeah. I am surprised looking at their website. Now, that's 50 bucks, I don't remember spending that much, but this is truly, yeah, the best one I've spent half a decade trying to find.

Mark: That's great. I love that handle. It looks super beefy.

Kevin: It's a solid handles or is it a hollow handle?

Matt: I think it's hollow, but it's such a large. [inaudible 00:06:17] No way this could possibly every bend. I think the one I have is powdered coated black instead of chrome-

Kevin: They call it stainless steel. Yeah.

Matt: Yeah. Stainless. It's all polished and ... The other one on the site is way more beautiful than mine. I think mine's just black, but it's perfect.

Mark: That is super cool. You've got another one called the, and I'm going to mess up their name, Menaul backpack.

Matt: Yeah. That was another, and that's actually also a Kickstarter. I think Menaul, I think they're playing off minimal. I would say this is great despite 2 problems. One of them would be like, this is classic, I don't know. Everything about the site and the product seems like digital nomad stuff people who travel a lot use this product to which is a weird term that's been thrown around. I'd back it at Kickstarter because it was like, "Oh, it seems like these people are putting a lot of thought into a travel backpack." It seemed like it did a lot of nice things.

I think I got it 2 years ago. Unfortunately, it looks like they're sold out, and I think [inaudible 00:07:27] a new one or a smaller version, and they're probably going to release the old version. This was also expensive. I think I paid on Kickstarter 200 or 250, and they want 300 for it, the last time I checked, and they're selling new.

This backpack is like ... For the last 2 years I've been travelling with it, I can take 4 or 5 day trips now with the computer and nice clothes. I've gone to conferences where I have to dress in a suite and stuff. It's the most thought went into a backpack that I've ever used. There's a pocket for everything. Anytime I would think, "Oh, I wish you did this." I'd stick my hand there, and there is a special clip just for that thing you do. You could store the straps instantly and pull them out. It acts like a carry on when the straps is put away. The zippers go all the way around, so you can pack your stuff flat on the table.

The computer stuff is great. It's got like a laptop sleeve, a tablet sleeve, and then all these pockets for phones and keys. There's a clip for you to hold your keys. When I'm on a trip, I'm far away from my car that sit down at the airport. It's just like a lot of little things like that where there's so much thought. In the very bottom of it, there's a rain cover that zips into its own special pocket. This is the most thoughtful bag I've ever had. There's a side pocket for a water bottle, and it has a cinch strap. When I saw it, I was like, "You could just make it for a 16 to 25 ounce bottles, that's mostly what people carry, but there's a hidden cinch strap. That's the forethought that goes into it, that whatever you are carrying on the side, it make sure it fits perfect.

Kevin: The size of it ... Also, I was just wondering if you have done the same thing where you've been trying many, many bags over the years. How is this compared to some of the other ones that were very popular, the Rixtys or the Eagles? Is it [inaudible 00:09:33] that kind of put it under your seat size or carry on overhead size? What's the general size of this?

Matt: I have found that I can keep it under the seat in front of me if I'm in an exit row, or have a little more space, like what they call the extra seats, the united plus kind of seat. I think it will be a little tight for me, I'm 6'3", on a normal economy class plane. I would have nowhere to put my feet if I put it in front of me, but it's not that big. It totally fits. It's carry on, less than carry on size.

Mark: How does it work getting it through the TSA security? Is it easy to pull out your liquid bag and your laptop?

Matt: Yeah. If you pack ahead of time, in your mind, I put that stuff on top. Lately, I have the pre-check stuff now, so thank God, I don't have to worry about that. In the past, I would just put that stuff at the top, so I could just [inaudible 00:10:31].

Mark: Sure. Did you actually pay for pre?

Matt: Yeah. I did, yeah. Oh man. It's the most complicated ridiculous process that takes forever for ... In the end, you have a 15-minute talk with a FBI guy or something, a TSA guy. It's the worst ... Have you guys gone through this? It's the worst website I've ever seen.

Mark: Why is that not surprising?

Matt: It looks like from 1995. It's big government, it's terrible. It never emails you. You've check back on it by hand. You can't tell. There's always red text everywhere. You can't tell when you press the submit button, if you've made an error or not. The success messages look like error messages. It's like the worst process. I was once going to write a secret walkthrough guide to how to get through it.

Mark: That would be great.

Matt: Yeah. It's so awful, but in the end you get ... It takes me 30 seconds to get into the Portland Airport most days.

Kevin: A very similar tool to a very similarly bad process is global entry, which I use a lot, because I fly international. The same kind of thing, they have something called the interview with the government, which is basically giving your finger prints. That's what the interview means. There was no interview. I thought you'll ask him whether he blunted a communist party or something. No, no, no. It's just like-

Matt: They actually scan your retinas in certain cities.

Kevin: Yeah.

Matt: I did it in Seattle, and they didn't have that capability, and they told me to look for it in Vancouver. I had to drive 3 hours to get to this weird airport to talk to a guy.

Kevin: If you have pre, then you don't have to take your laptop out, your shoes off, et cetera. Then you can [inaudible 00:12:17] bag. Right this minute, I'm packing for a 6-week trip overseas that includes the tropics and cold weather. Is that going to fit into this bag?

Matt: That's going to be hard. I think the most ambitious thing I ever did was go to Italy for 2 and a half weeks with one small carry on, but it was uniformly hot, so I didn't need a ton of clothes. For me, stretching out for 4 or 5 days seems like ... I could probably go a week inside this bag, it's okay. Every time I land and someone is picking me up, like when I'm speaking at a conference, they'll be like, "Where's your bags? What? Are you a minimalist?" "What?" I was, "It's on my back. Let's go, man. No baggage claim, let's go." It's amazing. It just a well-thought out bag, and I've had fun traveling with it.

Kevin: Okay. Great. Wonderful. Right now it's not available. [inaudible 00:13:19] it might be. Who knows? We'll check.

Matt: It looks like they only had one model, the big one on the right on their website. I think that one on the left would be a new model, and I think that's probably what they're about to announce.

Kevin: It's even smaller. Okay.

Matt: Yeah. It's a pretty big bag when you see it in the Instagram photos. It's on the side.

Mark: Matt, tell us why you like socks from the Athletic.

Matt: Yeah. This is great, and the story behind these is even better. You guys probably know about the Portland Airport and the-

Kevin: The carpeting.

Matt: Yeah, the ugly carpet. This was the guy who said in a bar a couple of years ago to his friends, like, "Hey, we should make clothes that match the Portland Airport carpet as a joke to just lay on it and take a photo." That's all it started with. Then he sat down. He's like, "What's the last I could do that would actually be a doable thing?" It came down to the socks. They're originally just cycling socks, and he just made them for ... There's a big cycling community in Portland. The minimum order was 72 socks, and it was 500 bucks. He'd been thinking about this, and he did it, and he thought, "Maybe I'll sell 20 pairs." I think they are sold in an hour, and he just kept taking more orders.

I think by 2 days later, he had sold hundreds of pairs, and now to this day, sold thousands, and to the point where him and his wife quit their jobs. They open a socks store, and they custom designed socks. Basically, they release a sock every month for the last 2 years. They just have these amazing colorful socks. They're mostly for cycling, that's what they're designed for. It's just a thin sock, like a dress sock, and I just wear them all the time with shoes, shorts, whatever, if it matches my shirt or my shoes. I have a bunch of crazy Nikes and all sorts of crazy colors that match mostly socks.

I just really just love them. They're mostly nylon, partly wool, some are all wool. There's no other place I found with just a ton of wacky colored socks that you will get compliments on constantly when you wear them.

Kevin: They've changed the carpet in Portland Airport, right?

Matt: Yeah. They changed it this new, it looks like salmon motif to me, and they even made a new sock. They show Jeremy 6 months before it, like, "Hey, there's the new carpet. Can you produce the socks on day 1 you have to do the sock? We want to make it cool." It's not as crazy of a pattern or bright color. There is a new sock that goes with the new carpet.

Mark: The airport people actually called him and told him to come down and check it out and make socks based on it.

Matt: Yeah, the new one.

Kevin: They were trying to make it cool again.

Matt: Yeah. With the old one ... Yeah, he made these socks. He sold a zillion pairs to just cyclist and it sort of started spreading. Then the airport called them, and he was like, "Oh God, here it comes. Cease and desist time. Oh no." They were like, "These are so great. Can we order cases of them for all of our employees." They're so happy about it, so they didn't shut them down.

Mark: That's great. That's the right way to do it.

Matt: Yeah. He was totally convinced, like, "It's over." We sold a few hundred pairs, it's over. They sell them in the airport now and all the little stores. They've approached them early on the new carpet, because I wanted people to not hate it. They said, "Hey, make some socks."

Mark: That's smart, very cool. Everything you've talked about so far, Matt, I have never heard of, so I'm really loving this. This is some art display object that you put in your house, called the EO1.

Matt: Yeah. This is another I did not set out to be like a big Kickstarter day, but this is also Kickstarter started. This was a guy from Dig, Jake Levine and his crew. They're part of Bay Works in New York. The re-launch of Dig was ... I think he was in charge of it. He wanted to spin off from that, and do hardware startup. His idea was ... Originally, it was just a 24-inch monitor turned on its side, portrait style, with a Raspberry Pi connected to it. Then he thought what if you could control it from a website, any image you find online, you could right click and say, "Send it to my wall"? That was the original idea for it.

Then they did a Kickstarter, and they hired a bunch of ... I think he's got a team of 10 people, and there's the hardware guy that made beautiful wood frames for them and stuff. It showed up about 3 months ago, after I Kickstarted it last year. I think it's for sale now, but it sells 500 bucks. That's a little pricy. It's amazing. It comes with this wall cleat with a level built into it. They give you wood screws and even a pencil. They tell you exactly what drill bits to use. You put it on, and then you just clip it in, and it's got Wi-Fi in it, and you just plug it in. Now it's all controlled by a phone app. It finds your Wi-Fi, it logs in.

Now basically, they're building up like an art gallery side of things. It's less about just grab any image off the internet and send it to my wall. It's more like we have this curated art collections from actual artists that we pay, and that's included with this, and so you just scan through your iPhone app. Then you can pick from artwork rotating every month. They've got 5 or 10 new pictures. You can also upload your own as yourself, and send it. You can also see anybody else on the system, and what they're putting on their wall. You can copy what they're ... You can display it on your wall too if you see something cool.

It's just like they're trying to pull the internet into the real world somehow, and it's really beautiful. It's really beautifully built, and it just does what it says. You could turn it off at night and stuff when you sleep, so it's not this big giant bright thing.

Kevin: It's like electric art where in a sense, you're still having a painting on your wall, you have a painting that could change. I guess the resolution and the brightness is maybe sufficient these days that it would look like a painting I guess. Do you find that yourself or other people that you have something static up there that sits, and it's there for a month, then you change, or do people wind up having a screensaver, like words in motion, or it's changing every day or every hour? How are people using it?

Matt: I think there's an idea of collections on it. It's like I have about 40 different images that rotated through, and I think there is a setting until I just auto change it every day. For me, I think I've been changing it about once a week. When I basically look at it and go, "Oh that's still there", and I pull up my phone, I can change that. Yeah. I change it probably about once a week. When I first got it, I would probably change it every day. They used to have ... I was in the early beta test for it. There used to be a lot of friends

profile. I could see what all my friends are displaying, and we would all trade images that way, and widen it with the actual release.

Kevin: It certainly could do moving images, right?

Matt: Yeah. It does animated GIFs, I forgot to say.

Kevin: Yeah, good. That's what I would have. I would have the GIFs going on at day and night.

Matt: Yeah. If you have a perfectly looping animated GIF that's portrait aspect ratio, it works out pretty nice. [crosstalk 00:21:26].

Kevin: What I think would be kind of cool is the ability of having your friends forcing images onto your wall.

Matt: Yeah.

Kevin: You got to see this, and then it disappears in your kitchen. You're watching, and they always have this ... There's this GIF that's amazing I guess.

Matt: Yeah. I think that was the original plans, but I don't think I've seen that feature in the release.

Mark: Can you just pick ... Can you set it so that you just get random images sent to it, so you don't know what you're getting?

Matt: I haven't dug into that, but ...

Kevin: Sure.

Matt: Yeah. Sure.

Kevin: For you, Mark, yes.

Mark: Okay, great. This is so cool.

Kevin: I like it. I guess the idea is just completely self-contained within the frame, except for a power cord going down. Is that-

Matt: Yeah, that's it. It's just a power cord, so there's just a wider black cable that's really thin, then going down to a wall unit. They make them on stands or wall mounted. I guess it's a Raspberry Pi is embedded in the back. You can't see it or anything. It's really nicely done. It's a matte finish monitor, it's a really nice design monitor turned on its side.

Kevin: What's the size of it?

Matt: I would say it's probably a 22-inch or 24-inch monitor.

Kevin: 24-inch monitor.

Matt: I'm guessing, 22-ish. It's a pretty ... There it is, 23-inch monitor, basically turned sideways.

Mark: It's fun to see who's looking at the art who has it displayed.

Matt: Yeah, let me see. Do we-

Mark: We can just click on a painting, and that will show who's currently looking at it, who's looked how long they have it displayed.

Matt: Yeah.

Mark: Actually Meg Hourihan, the co-founder of Blogger is a customer.

Matt: Yeah.

Mark: This is really cool.

Matt: Yeah. Let me see. That's my library. I could see activity from friends. I've had the same picture up for a month, but usually it's about 7 days is normal. Yeah. You can just cruise through the whole system and see what everyone is showing. There's lots of looping GIFs.

Mark: Are they working on a larger one too? It would be great to have a huge one.

Matt: Well, it's like ... I have them on my wall, next to a bunch of art work mounted. It looks just like the others. It's like a pretty good size. They could totally ... I'm sure internally they must have gotten a 42-inch plasma screen at Walmart or something to just try to see what it's like. I would assume the resolution might breakdown a little up close. It's a really cool fun thing to have.

Kevin: Yeah. I've always imagined a world where your walls covered with screen savers. The idea that things were ... Actually, what I like is ... We have it mounted in the interval at the [inaudible 00:24:32], which is Brian Enos 77 million paintings, which are basically drawings of things that very very slowly change. You can hardly see them if you stare at them, but if you come back in a few minutes, you know it changed. It's constantly changing very very slowly. There is this never ending new art being generated. Although when you look at it, you see only a still image.

Matt: Wow. Yeah, that would I think an enormous file.

Kevin: Yeah. He does it in a generative way, so it's actually-

Matt: Yeah. It be cool if it was all processing files. It's like if you exchange just recipes with each other [crosstalk 00:25:17].

Kevin: Yeah. I think this is a whole new genre of this e-art, or whatever, e-frames.

Matt: Yeah. This called the EO1, so I'll assume there'll be a 2 and a 3, and they'll start to do cooler stuff.

Kevin: I want the EO12.

Matt: Yeah. I told them I've always wanted t a minimalist MAME cabinet in my house. I actually built a huge MDF arcade cabinet from the '80s sort of, and put a PC in it, and you could play 2000 games, but it was this monster. I always said, "You know what? A portrait monitor is the aspect ratio of most 80s games from arcades. If the iPhone app is a controller, and it could run Galaga or something, that would be an amazing Easter Egg. I told the founders that was a joke, sort of a half-joke, chimera-like. That's not a bad idea. The EO12 might be amazing.

Mark: Yeah. That's cool.

Kevin: Great. Okay. Wonderful, fine.

Mark: Yeah. Very great, Matt. If people want to find out what you're up to, where should they go?

Matt: Probably me on Twitter is probably the best thing these days. I'm M-A-T-H-O-W-I-E on Twitter, or I think my medium is now Matt.Howie.com which is my first name dot my last name. Yeah. Twitter is probably the best.

Mark: Okay. That sounds great. I just wanted everyone to know that you can find links to the items that Matt has talked about and our show notes at Cool-Tools.org. Matt, this has been great. Really fun talking to you.

Matt: Yeah.

Kevin: Let's do it again, because you got a lot of great stuff.

Mark: Absolutely. We'll hit you up again soon.

Matt: Okay.

Mark: Now you're on the hook with us. Okay. Have a good one, Matt.

Kevin: Yeah.

Matt: All right.

Kevin: See you later. Bye. Thanks.

Matt: Nice talking to you guys.