

**[00:00:01.330] - Nathan**

Hello everyone, and welcome to another episode of Nonsense and Noise, a podcast about the queer pop culture and media experience. I'm your host, Nathan Kato, and date of recording is February 27th. I just finished eating dinner, so my brain is a little slow. I had got some nice takeout and watched Digimon Ghost Game. It comes out every Sunday.

**[00:00:28.030] - Nathan**

It's been an interesting experience watching that show just because it's so different from previous Digimon shows. But yeah, it's been a cool experience. It's very different. But then also, I don't know, some of the beats are actually any of the beats are the same? There are some things that are kept the same, obviously between other Digimon seasons in the franchise, but this one is very interesting thus far.

**[00:00:51.160] - Nathan**

And I feel like as Digimon grows as a franchise, the pacing of the story is just sometimes not good. So far, that's my only complaint with Ghost Game, but probably we'll do an episode all about Ghost Game later at some point. It's just me this week we're launching into a series on the universe and the sort of culture and everything of Avatar, The Last Airbender, and just that world that has been established. So yeah, it's just going to be me for this week and we might have guests on for other episodes, but I'm also going to be going a little bit more free form, starting from kind of here on out where it's going to be like, not necessarily. Each episode is going to be in one larger topic.

**[00:01:38.480] - Nathan**

It will just kind of be like kind of whatever I want to talk about, mostly because it's like how I wanted do the show originally. But yeah, that's kind of how things are going. And other than that, work has been consuming my life. I was almost considering not recording an episode today just because I wanted to stream some more Legends Arceus and get the story done. But I figured I was actually really excited putting together these episode notes.

**[00:02:04.410] - Nathan**

So I was like, you know what? Let's just record an episode of the Pod and keep things moving along. But other than that, work is just like there's just like so much going on and I would really love to not be the single point person for some of the stuff that I'm facing at work just because I'm still pretty new to the job. I started at this place back in the beginning of May last year. So it's almost been a year and I'm still kind of getting the hang of things.

**[00:02:35.480] - Nathan**

And there's like three sort of major topics that I need to learn and I have completed or not completed per se. But like, I've learned a good amount about like topic one, but like topic two and three I still need to learn about. And the learning curve is quite steep. So it's like just like taxing trying to know about two basically have to know topic one and topic two for this project. And I'm still learning topic two.

#### **[00:03:04.200] - Nathan**

And then of course, on top of all of that, there's business processes and things and it's just difficult to try and get done what I need to get done while also learning things simultaneously. And then of course, I have a project manager who's just like constantly. It feels like she's just constantly on me about deadlines and stuff. And I realize that that's her job. But also I really wish that there was kind of more grace extended because I don't really know what I'm doing.

#### **[00:03:32.170] - Nathan**

So yeah, that's work. And I'm trying to not think about going back to work tomorrow. And by going back to work, I mean just signing back on to work. But that's kind of just my every Sunday, every Sunday night. But outside of work, the video game *Legends Arceus* from *Pokemon* continues to consume my life.

#### **[00:03:52.500] - Nathan**

I've logged over 100 hours on that now. And mostly just like that's, not even on the story. That's really just like me trying to get all the perfect Pokedex entries, which has been very gratifying for when it does happen. And it gives each time I play like some level of okay, this is what I'm doing for the time that I'm playing. But yeah, it's been fun.

#### **[00:04:15.270] - Nathan**

But also I'm in trouble because another game that I'm really excited about comes out this Friday. I'll cover that in the pop culture update section, but yeah, I don't know, I'm tired overall. That's nothing new. Like another episode of me being tired. Wow.

#### **[00:04:32.920] - Nathan**

And yeah, I think as everybody knows, or if you're a new listener, this episode, or this episode. Wow. This entire podcast is completely independent. This is something that I kind of do on the side for fun and to help me with covering costs for hosting the audio file on where you found this, which is right now SoundCloud. I have a Patreon to help defray those costs and I'll get a little bit more into the Patreon at the end of the episode.

#### **[00:05:01.100] - Nathan**

But at the top of the episode, I like to do Patreon shout outs as a nice little thank you for folks who are supporting the podcast. So this week's shout out goes out to a friend of the podcast, Vesper Adelaide. He was on as the guest for last week's episode talking about the Yin-Yang Master Dreams of Eternity. If you haven't listened to that episode yet, please go do so. It's a lot of fun.

#### **[00:05:24.890] - Nathan**

Vesper and I have watched this movie like close to ten times in total. So give that a listen and then give the movie a watch. But Vesper, thank you so much for your donation. I really appreciate your support. And also thank you once again for coming on the pod last week.

#### **[00:05:37.780] - Nathan**

It was a lot of fun talking to you about... wow, last week. More like beginning of the month. Thank you for coming on the Pod it was really fun. It's always fun to talk with you about our favorite media and stuff. So that's Patreon, let's move into the first segment of the show.

#### **[00:05:54.660] - Nathan**

This is where I talk about pop culture updates. And right now, pop culture is covering mostly, like, movies and video games. But I was talking with another friend of the pod, Josh. He was on an earlier episode talking with me about this Boys Love media called Heaven's Official Blessing. But they were like, hey, do books count?

#### **[00:06:15.390] - Nathan**

And I was like, of course, books fully count as media. I just haven't really covered books here just because it's not, I guess, not as easily consumable per se as other like, as video games or movies. Reading obviously takes time, but I think in the future we may have some episodes talking about books from queer authors and stuff, so be on the lookout for that. But, yeah, for right now, these pop culture updates are really just going to center mostly on movies and video games. And as usual, this list is not exhaustive.

#### **[00:06:47.890] - Nathan**

These are just kind of like little things that I picked up on when doing a quick search for stuff that's coming out this month and stuff that piqued my interest in stuff that features like, at least with the movies, representation from people of color or other marginalized identities. So, yeah, without further ado, let's get into the pop culture updates. So I think actually on my episode with Josh we talked about this first movie that's coming out March 2, West Side Story. I think this is really mostly bears mentioning just because it's kind of a classic story. It's a retelling of Romeo and Juliet.

**[00:07:24.320] - Nathan**

I haven't seen West Side Story, period. All I know about this is that Ansel Elgort is in it? And I'm kind of tired of him. So that's coming out on March 2. If you're curious about the story of West Side Story, please go and take a look at the Wikipedia page.

**[00:07:42.410] - Nathan**

I need to do that myself. I didn't put any of that in the show notes for myself, so that's on me. But also, like, kind of the movie that I'm not really as excited about. The next movie that's coming out on March 4, which is probably closer to the date of release for this pod, the episode. There are two movies coming out on March 4.

**[00:08:01.210] - Nathan**

One of them is After Yang or After Yang. And it's a story about a robot Android, not phone Android, a robot Android that starts to malfunction. And the story follows the father of this family as he tries to get it repaired. And the father character is played by Colin Farrell. And the Android itself is played by an Asian actor.

**[00:08:29.520] - Nathan**

So that's kind of the main thing that I wanted to highlight. And I had seen some cool and, like, good chatter about it online, so I'm not super worried. But obviously there are some things to be a little wary of here with why is an Asian person playing the robot and not, like an actual real life person just because it's not a stereotype per se. But it never really helps to have an Asian person or even another person of color playing, like, a non human sort of thing. So I'm a little concerned with that.

**[00:09:04.340] - Nathan**

But we'll see. I'm actually pretty excited for this movie. I do want to see it. There are other people of color. The wife and the daughter are both people of color.

**[00:09:13.800] - Nathan**

So, yeah, this movie seems pretty interesting. The other movie that's coming out on March 4 is more limited release. I don't know if After Yang is limited release or wide release or not, so you're going to have to do a little bit of research there. But the other movie that's coming out, I know this one is limited release because it's a foreign film called Great Freedom. Actually, I don't know if it's foreign, but it's a story about a gay German man in postwar Germany who's repeatedly imprisoned for being gay.

**[00:09:41.610] - Nathan**

And over the course of his time, like, going to prison again and again, he starts to fall in love with his cell mate, or a relationship starts to blossom between him and his cell mate, who is apparently a convicted murderer. And this is kind of like, I don't know. I'm a little skeptical about this story just because Diversity Win, the gay character is in love with a criminal. I don't know. We don't need that.

**[00:10:08.160] - Nathan**

That's not the story that we need right now. I mean, it could be an interesting taken that like, oh, he's was like convicted murderer, but he actually didn't do it and he was framed or whatever. So that could be like, I don't know, maybe a more scathing indictment of the criminal justice system. I don't know. But we'll see.

**[00:10:26.710] - Nathan**

I'm not really too impressed by the premise, but that's Great Freedom. And After Yang, both of those are coming out on March 4. And then the week after March 11, there are a couple movies coming out as well. There is from Disney Pixar Turning Red. It's a movie about a Chinese American girl named Mei who turns into a giant red panda every time she gets emotionally worked up or anything.

**[00:10:54.980] - Nathan**

And this movie looks really cute. I will say the main sort of thing I'm just annoyed with is basically like, every time there's a Chinese American girl in a piece of media in popular media or like, even a Chinese girl, it's just like, tell me basically my joke about this is always like, "Tell me your favorite Chinese heroine, and then explain to me why her name is Mei." And I don't remember exactly how prevalent this name is in tropes and whatever. But there's Mei in Tortoro the little sister. There's a Mei in Overwatch as a playable character.

**[00:11:37.890] - Nathan**

There's going to be Mei here in Turning Red. I don't know. Let's branch out a little bit. I understand that this is probably because they're like, oh, we're like choosing the name to be beautiful because Mei is one of many Chinese word for beautiful. But I'm also just like, there are so many other names that we could use.

**[00:12:03.890] - Nathan**

It doesn't even have to be that like, it could have been like, hey, this is a story about this Chinese American girl named Jenny. I don't know. It doesn't just have to be Mei. It's once again just like, I'm sure this is going to be a really cute movie. But also Chinese people are more than just like women and girls named Mei.

**[00:12:25.490] - Nathan**

It's just like there's a flattening going on and I don't like it. And it may not be intentional. But also at some point, intentions don't matter because the impact is people who are not Chinese are seeing this and they're just like, wow, that's goofy. Like another Chinese girl named Mei. I bet they're all named Mei.

**[00:12:44.650] - Nathan**

And then that just perpetuates just a stupid and, like, dumb stereotype that obviously we do not need to perpetuate because bottom line it's racist. I'm not going to say that this movie is racist, but I'm just saying it's falling into a pattern of that, which I'm not too thrilled about. Still probably going to see it because like I said, it does look really cute. And I do like the overall, I think the theme is going to be like looking at emotional maturity and how do you get in touch with what you're feeling?

**[00:13:14.530] - Nathan**

Because I do think that is something that's important even to definitely important to talk about with kids and then also very important to talk about as an adult, because I do think that more people need to be in therapy and need to understand what they're feeling and how their feelings are making them respond and interact with other people. So, yeah, that was, quite frankly, my too long diatribe on Turning Red, which I'm still going to see. It is coming out on March 11. I'm not sure if that's theaters only or if it's going to be on Disney Plus simultaneously, but that is coming out on March 11. Also coming out on March 11 is a supernatural thriller film called Outsiders. This movie is featuring a Black main character played by Skylan Brooks, where basically the main character goes to a party, and then after the party, this one girl disappears.

**[00:14:05.480] - Nathan**

And the setting is a small Southern town, so probably predominantly white and people are just like, the Black kid did it. And so the main character has to basically work to clear his name and in the process of trying to clear his name and find out what happened to his classmate, there's some other stuff that pops up. I thought it initially was like a murder mystery, but actually it is categorized as a supernatural thriller. So that one seems like it could be really interesting. So that is everything coming out on March 11. March 18, another couple of movies coming out. First, one of note is Umma. This is featuring Sandra Oh, and the story follows a Korean American woman, or I think maybe Korean immigrant who lives on a farm somewhere in America with her daughter. And then the remains of her mother are sent over from Korea.

**[00:15:00.200] - Nathan**

And then the main character, played by Sandra Oh, is very concerned that she might literally turn into her mother. When I was reading the description of this movie, the description was like, she's afraid of turning into her mother. And I was like, oh, basically the whole age old sort of trope of like, oh, I don't want to turn into my parents, but I think this is, like, literally turning into your parents because this movie is categorized as a horror film, if I remember correctly. So that seems really interesting. That's Umma spelled U-M-M-A.

#### **[00:15:32.040] - Nathan**

Coming out on March 18. Also coming out on March 18 is the movie Alice, featuring Keke Palmer as the titular Alice. She portrays an enslaved person on a rural Georgia plantation under characteristically brutal and disturbed plantation owner. And then she escapes from the plantation, but then finds out that it's actually 1973. So I'm like, not exactly sure if this is, like historical fiction, sci-fi time travel stuff, or if it's like she was in a bad cult where, because she was Black, she was enslaved. We'll see.

#### **[00:16:08.600] - Nathan**

I don't know. But then she's rescued by a political activist played by Common. And then Alice learns about the concept of Black liberation and everything. And it's a story tracing her journey through the post civil rights era American South. I am a little worried about this movie just because I'm not sure exactly where it's going, but I'm also excited.

#### **[00:16:31.250] - Nathan**

I think, from what I remember about Keke Palmer, she generally has pretty good takes and whatever. So I would hope and assume that she's in a movie that is good and explores interesting concepts and themes. So, yeah, that's Alice coming out on March 18. And then the final movie to cover, which I am super excited about, comes out at the end of March, March 25 called Everything Everywhere All at Once. It's a movie featuring Michelle Yeoh as the main character.

#### **[00:17:02.580] - Nathan**

And this is sort of like what I think the director and the people talking about it on Twitter have characterized as a sci-fi Kung Fu movie. So Michelle Yeoh's character basically, like the entire cast of characters, everything takes place in one universe, but this movie relies heavily on the concept of, like, a multiverse. So Michelle Yeoh's character in, let's say, just like the main universe, basically, as she tries to figure out what's going on, she leverages all of the abilities that her other universe counterparts have. So I think for me, the most memorable scene was like, there's a universe in which Michelle Yeoh's character is one of those sign twirlers, those people who stand on the road and they have signs and they move them and they're advertising for a place, but she takes that skill and uses it to use a riot shield to protect herself and also defend herself against, basically just counterattack people who are attacking her. So it's like that sort of thing.

**[00:18:11.260] - Nathan**

And I'm really excited. It looks really cool. Also equal parts very goofy, because there is one part where this one person's head in the trailer, at least, this one person's head explodes into confetti and it's not gory or anything. It's literally just like somebody pressed a button and then the head is gone and just poofs into confetti. And it's quite funny.

**[00:18:33.480] - Nathan**

So, yeah, I'm really excited for that. That comes out on March 25. I hope it's a wide release, so that way I can find somewhere to watch it. The main issue that I've found with movies that are like limited release is just like, oh shit, where am I going to be able to see this? Though I think sometimes with the limited release movies, they end up coming out like as a wide release later.

**[00:18:54.010] - Nathan**

I believe that's what Parasite did, but I really don't remember because that was prepandemic and all that time just sort of like blends together in my head. So, yeah, that's all the movies that I had to talk about. Moving on to video games. The first and foremost actually, even chronologically too thing I'm excited about is Tuesday, March 1. So I play this video game called Valorant.

**[00:19:16.590] - Nathan**

It's a tactical first person shooter and there is a whole host of diverse characters. And one of the characters is a Japanese gang member. His name is You, and he was supposed to be like this really tricky character and like, really like, I think the thing with tactical shooters is sometimes it's a lot of mind games, but like, his character was supposed to be super heavy on the mind games and a lot of Valorant relies on audio, so you can hear people's footsteps if they're running and everything. So You is getting a rework and it's pretty major and I think it's going to be hugely game changing. So I'm really excited for how that goes and I'm really excited to give it a try.

**[00:20:06.610] - Nathan**

So that's coming out March 1. Also coming out March 1 is a game called Far Changing Tides, and it's an action adventure puzzle platformer about a boy and a boat. I saw this on the Indie Showcase. It looked really cute. I don't know if I'm going to get it, but I figured it was worth mentioning.

**[00:20:23.990] - Nathan**

That was kind of like somewhat of the theme for some of these. It's like, I don't know if I'm going to get it, but I think it's worth mentioning. So that's March 1. The thing that I mentioned earlier in the episode that

I'm in trouble for March 4 is when Triangle Strategy comes out, I kind of lost track of time. I thought I was going to have more time to finish Legends Arceus before Triangle Strategy came out, but that's clearly not the case because I think I'm probably.

### [00:20:52.190] - Nathan

I don't actually know how close I am to the end of Legends Arceus, but I'm like, I've just unlocked the last area. I don't know if there's more to happen after that, but yeah, I'm like 100 hours deep into Legends Arceus and I'm not done yet. And Triangle Strategy is coming out on March 4 and definitely going to stream that. It's a tactical RPG game, turnbased strategy, if you remember anything from like, I guess if you played anything like Final Fantasy Tactics Advanced or like Fire Emblem or something, it's sort of like that same grid based turn based strategy game, but it's a lot more like Final Fantasy Tactics Advanced in that the maps have like elevation and stuff. The art style is very similar to Octopath Traveler.

### [00:21:38.530] - Nathan

All the characters are Sprite art and everything, and they're 2D, but they take place in like a 3D background, so it looks really cool. And I think I might have mentioned earlier this game is very like choice based and a lot of the choices have very far reaching and heavy consequences. So it's very hard to decide what's best to do, especially since the premise of the game is that it's political, there's a political struggle. So for example, one of the other choices I mentioned choice before, but one of the other really heavy choices is like, do you accept the aid of another country to help turn the tide in terms of military might? And you think that would be like an easy yes/no, but that comes at the price of sacrificing the liberty of a certain group of people within your Empire.

### [00:22:36.410] - Nathan

I think for some people it might be a little bit clearer because it's just like, oh yeah, of course, if this was real life, I'd be like, no, I'm not going to sacrifice people just to get those resources because we don't want to perpetuate systems of oppression and colonialism and white privilege and stuff, because that whole concept is very reminiscent of just like basically just shafting a bunch of group of people to get what you need. So in that sense, it's an easy decision if you are like super... I guess even if they're super immersed in the gaming, you're just like, I'm like a ruler trying to make these complex decisions. Maybe it's a little bit more difficult, but yeah, it's like those sorts of really heavy decisions and that can actually change who comes and goes from your party. And I think they're not hard and fast routes defined, but there are different turning points in the story and I think even main characters can choose to leave your party if you decide one way or the other.

### [00:23:45.920] - Nathan

So that's like a very interesting game that has lots of replay value. Probably going to sink a ton of hours into that as well. But yeah, that's Triangle Strategy that's coming out on March 4. Next on the list is Chocobo GP or I'm pretty sure that stands for Grand Prix. That comes out on March 10.

### [00:24:01.930] - Nathan

I guess Final Fantasy decided we want in on the racing game franchise or like the racing game genre and what better way to do that than with giant birds? So that's Chocobo GP. I don't really have anything to say about that because I personally am not interested in it, but I'm sure some people are and it looks kind of goofy. But then again, I've never been one for racing games. So after that there is Tunic coming out on March 16.

### [00:24:27.810] - Nathan

This one actually caught my eye because I preordered or I think I signed up to be on the waitlist or something on Steam for this game like years ago, I think probably back in late 2015 or early 2016 or something like that. But I've been waiting for this game for years. It's a little RPG game where you play it's like an adventure RP ghee? RPG game where you play as a little Fox. It looks just super cute. I don't know if there are any trailers out yet, but yeah, I've been waiting for this game for a really long time and I'm excited that it's finally coming out.

### [00:25:01.900] - Nathan

That's March 16, Tunic. And then March 17 is Persona Four Arena Ultimax. It's a 2D fighter game for fans of the Persona franchise. On the 22 of march is Rune Factory Five. I only heard about this on Twitter from a couple of voice actors that I follow, but I'm not really too familiar with the Rune Factory franchise, but apparently it's like a tame and farm monster sort of thing. So that's coming out on March 22.

### [00:25:30.870] - Nathan

Another game I am excited for is Kirby and the Forgotten Land coming out on March 25. I think I already blabbed about this on another previous episode, but I played a different Kirby game and had a lot of fun. So this is coming out on March 25 and I think... I don't want to. Never mind. I'm not going to make any statements just because I don't go to the Kirby fandom.

### [00:25:53.210] - Nathan

I'll say something and then it will turn out that I'm completely false. So yeah, Kirby is coming out on March 25. And then the last title to highlight is Marvel Midnight Suns. The date is actually TBA, but this is a tactical fighting game and I took a look at at least the description and it seems pretty cool. I'm like just imagining like a tactical turn based strategy but with Marvel characters and it could be cool. I'm curious.

**[00:26:19.450] - Nathan**

And then of course the thing that happened today at 09:00 a.m. Eastern time, there is a Pokemon Direct... Generation Nine got announced. I don't know if Game Freak really should be announcing Gen Nine because Gen Eight, in my opinion, had a lot of problems. That's another episode on its own. But the starters and everything were released today.

**[00:26:38.790] - Nathan**

There's not really any sort of like gameplay announcements or anything, but Gen Nine was announced and at least the clips they showed looks like they're leaning heavily on the Legends Arceus engine. So it seems like it could be cool, but we'll see. I don't really know how this is going to go, but yeah, so that is all the pop culture updates. Wow, this is a really heavy first segment. By heavy, I don't mean like emotion wise.

**[00:27:07.090] - Nathan**

I mean just this thing is longer than I think I've ever had an opening segment. So I'm going to take a quick break and then we'll come back with the main content.

**[00:27:16.790] - Nathan**

And we're back from the break. So as I might have mentioned before, the podcast is now moving to covering the series of Avatar the Last Airbender and the universe associated with it as proposed by one of the Tier Three Patreon followers. So I figured what better way to start than by talking about the history and conception of Avatar, as well as sort of like the tenets of the universe? So this episode might actually end up being a little bit shorter than normal just because there's not really too much of a conversation to be had.

**[00:27:51.750] - Nathan**

This is just sort of like getting into the building blocks of this world and the real life inspiration that was used to make them and everything. This is a lot more like just facts than opinions. So yeah, this Avatar was created by two white guys. I forgot their first names, but there's Konietzko and DiMartino. And according to Konietzko, the series was conceived in early 2001 when he took an old sketch of a balding, middle aged man and imagined the man as a child.

**[00:28:26.950] - Nathan**

He then drew the character herding bison in the sky and showed the sketch to DiMartino, who was watching a documentary about explorers trapped at the South Pole. Konietzko described the early

development of the concept as there's an air guy along with these water people trapped in a snowy wasteland and maybe some fire people are pressing down on them. And so that's sort of like that's the outline of literally the first episode and it was introduced to the public in a teaser reel at Comic Con in 2004 and the series premiered in 2005. Apparently this was really inspired not only by what I mentioned before, but also the creators were interested in other like, really big lore titles. They use the term Legends and Lore.

### **[00:29:15.920] - Nathan**

So this is like the worlds of Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings, where there are these really big complex worlds that are built and to be explored, and they wanted to take a different approach to that genre. And so according to them, this is a quote directly from the Wikipedia page. Our love for Japanese anime, Hong Kong action and Kung Fu cinema, yoga, and Eastern philosophies led us to the initial inspiration for Avatar The Last Airbender. So with all of this, the really impressive thing to me is that they manage to actually create a world that doesn't feel, like, too crummy.

### **[00:29:56.610] - Nathan**

I know when I read the thing of, like, we were inspired by our love for anime, Kung Fu cinema, and Eastern philosophies, I'm just like, that is just like, literally as an Asian person is like, so many red flags just taking all these things, and you're like, we really love them. And now we're going to do our own take, and just like, do we have to do our own take of these things that are already established? I understand that's how innovation in media happens, but sometimes, especially, I think what I'm getting at here is a lot of the way that this is framed really feels like the beginnings of appropriation, right? Because a lot of the time when stuff is being appropriated, whether it be from Asian culture or really from anything else, it's people outside that culture being like, we love this so much that we want to do our own spin on it, and there are ways to do this respectfully. And then there are also obviously doing things respectfully is much more difficult because it requires a lot of research and a lot of just, like, touch points with the culture itself to make sure that it's very clear that the final product is inspired respectfully from that culture.

### **[00:31:13.490] - Nathan**

So an example of that where things go wrong, obviously, is, as I talked about in the very first episode of this podcast, Shang-Chi was based on cultural stereotypes, and there was no research done. It was just like, oh, like, there's this Asian American superhero, but, like, his quote unquote superpower is like, he can do Kung Fu. And this is my main beef with most Asian American superheroes that have been created is like, nobody really has a superpower. People are just, like, martial artists, and they're, like, really good at it, and that's cool. But also, it's not a superpower, like, whereas you've got other characters where their power isn't necessarily like, oh, you can fight well, but it's, like, actual, like, superhuman strength or, like, telekinesis or, like, flight.

**[00:32:04.540] - Nathan**

There are so many other things, so it's very easy to appropriate and just be like, oh, this seems like what this culture does, and you just scratch the surface of it. I think more recently, by recently I really mean from last year, is the white person who decided to start a company founded on the basis of this Asian rice porridge dish called congee. She was just like, oh, we're elevating it to the Western palate, and it's like, look, we didn't need help elevating this to the Western palate. The Western palate actually needs to keep up. The Western palate needs to actually elevate itself to the tastes and understanding of not necessarily what congee is, but this thing existed before, and it didn't need to be taken and bastardized because they were just like, let's put blueberries in congee, and congee is kind of like a vehicle to eat leftovers very traditionally. It's stewed rice sometimes, like.

**[00:33:08.130] - Nathan**

I know I've had it at dim sum, and there's actual different things in it and stuff. It is its own thing, and it doesn't need to be like, we don't need this whole thing to be like, oh, we were inspired by our love of congee to make it better because it doesn't need to be made better. It's already good as it is. So, yeah, it's just interesting how this all starts in a way, like the conception of Avatar and how this all started. Right.

**[00:33:36.800] - Nathan**

It just seems like that seems like a perfect recipe for disaster and just like a really bad series. Like I said, if I heard that from somebody, like, I think you might want to maybe pump the brakes a little bit and talk to an Asian person and get their thoughts on this. And better yet, talk to at least three Asian people to get their perspectives. And thankfully, that is what the creators of the Avatar universe did. They brought in a lot of different cultural consultants.

**[00:34:09.270] - Nathan**

There was Edwin Zane, and Siu-Leung Lee. Both of those folks are the cultural consultants for the show. They also had a martial arts consultant who was used to create the bending styles, which is the sort of, like, not necessarily superpower in this universe, but basically like a cultural fixture for each of the four nations in the Avatar universe are based on the ability to bend an element, whether that be fire, earth, water, or air. And these forms are all based on actual Chinese martial arts. So they did bring in a martial arts consultant, and that person was Asian as well. And also the music seems pretty good, too.

**[00:34:52.030] - Nathan**

It's not like two tropey, and the music was created by two white dudes, Jeremy Zuckerman and Benjamin Wynn. And I will say this is an interesting topic that maybe one day I'll get into a little bit deeper, but the music seems good. But then also there I feel like, are very heavy Asian elements that were brought in

actually quite well, and not to the point where it feels like, too tropey, because I feel like sometimes when you're analyzing art or like, you're analyzing things from a culture, you're just like, oh, it boils down to, like, X, Y, and Z component. And then you take those things and then you try and replicate them. And sure, it might sound like it's from that culture, but it also is very heavily tropey, and this is especially the case for music.

### **[00:35:50.180] - Nathan**

So the two sort of major examples that I've got of this for music. The first one, which is a little bit more accessible for the general audience, is, like, for Jewish music. The Jewish scale or I guess like the stereotypical Jewish music scale is a little bit different from European-centric music system. If you think about songs from what's that... *Fiddler on the Roof*, the musical system focuses on a lot of now this is where I'm going to get a little technical, but the music focuses a lot on half steps, and it's overall just a slightly different music system. It's not the same sort of scale that we're accustomed to hearing in current music as well as just like the rest of Western European traditional music.

### **[00:36:48.250] - Nathan**

And so when the music for *Fiddler on the Roof* was written, those particular elements were taken and replicated and ultimately assembled into the songs in *Fiddler on the Roof* that have this sort of like the Jewish folk music sound. How authentic is it? I don't know, obviously, because I'm not Jewish and I don't have that connection to that sort of cultural touch point. But the other thing that I can think of more, and I think this also might be pretty a little bit more accessible, too, for folks, is a lot of the iconic Spanish music or what you think of when you think of Spanish music. For example, the *Carmen Suites*.

### **[00:37:39.010] - Nathan**

Both *Carmen* suites were written by a French composer, Georges Bizet. And there are a lot of musical motifs that pop up here and there that were used to evoke Spanish flair and culture. So is the *Carmen Fantasie* authentically Spanish, really? No, because it's written by a French person, but also that's kind of like what I'm getting at here. And it's also like, I guess another thing you can think of is that sort of like sting you think of that shows try and put in when they're just like, oh, we're talking about ancient Egypt, and then you probably have that little snippet of music going in your head right now.

### **[00:38:27.170] - Nathan**

And is that actually Egyptian? Probably not. So this whole concept of it's not racist per se. It's like this really interesting way of taking the packaging or taking bits and pieces of the original element of the music from a culture, and then just really just kind of like being like, we're going to do that, but like ten times more obvious. And then it ends up sounding like it is evoking the culture.

**[00:39:00.230] - Nathan**

So depending on the piece of media, it works. But yeah, that's also something interesting where none of the music for Avatar was actually composed by an Asian person, like using that sound. And I think it would have been really interesting, especially given that, as I'll talk about later, there are a ton of different cultures represented in Avatar, and they're not just Asian or not just like stereotypical East Asian cultures that are portrayed. So that was a long tangent on music and everything. But I think that is important to note when building this world and just like thinking about all the music that gets put in as a background to build the atmosphere, right? It's very interesting that those elements they're taken and developed by white composers, and the whole white composer thing isn't new. The music for Shang-Chi was composed by a white dude, and Shang-Chi's theme has lots of Asian elements, from the drums to a lot of just, like, how the scale or, like, the music system. Once again, it is distinctly Chinese. I'm very surprised that they didn't use more Chinese instruments in it, like a pipa or erhu.

**[00:40:17.790] - Nathan**

But, yeah, this isn't new, and I really do kind of wish we could see okay, let's give a composer of color from that particular culture a chance to spread their wings and show us what a sort of more not necessarily more authentic, but let us tell our own stories and use our own voices through stuff not only just, like, visual representation, but also just, like, literally everything else. So that is really too long of a spiel on the music and everything. But once again, Avatar is toeing the line constantly between appreciation and appropriation. And I will say, I think for the most part, the appreciation shines through the most. There are some parts where I do think they could have either consulted more or they really shouldn't have done, and the things that I feel like are disrespectful the most are like...

**[00:41:19.390] - Nathan**

And I'll get into this a little bit later as well. But each of the four nations is kind of like they have direct mappings to real life people. So the Water Tribe and the Air Nomads have a little bit more of a direct mapping to one group of people in the actual world. But the Earth Kingdom and the Fire Nation are both kind of just like a mishmash of just like China, Japan, and Korea just like everything together. And it's just like these cultures are very different from each other.

**[00:41:56.670] - Nathan**

And also both China and South Korea have really big beef with Japan for what Japan has done in the past during the World War II era. So it just feels disrespectful to combine all three of these very distinct cultures into just like, this mishmash of whatever and be like, oh, we didn't want to make any... I understand that obviously, in Avatar, the last Airbender, the Fire Nation, there's a lot of imperialism and everything involved in that. And honestly, if they wanted to say this is just straight up Japan, I would

probably be fine, because it's like, hey, Japan actually did that. That was not necessarily the whole basis for World War II, but it was how they operated throughout World War II.

#### **[00:42:50.900] - Nathan**

But, yeah, it just feels really disrespectful to be like, so the Water Tribe is like, this sort of people, this culture, and the Air Nomads are this culture, but then Earth Kingdom and Fire Nation, they're like everything. They're like all of East Asia. And it's also just weird because, like, you have all that. And then, like, at least in the Ember Island episode, this is like a very, very specific cut, too. The Ember Island episode, it was actually only recently I saw this and learned about it, but a lot of the architecture and everything on Ember Island is actually from Thai culture.

#### **[00:43:26.600] - Nathan**

So it's cool that the showrunners were like, hey, this is supposed to be like a vacation place and whatever. So let's put stuff that looks a little bit different. But also, I don't know, that just feels kind of weird to me, too, because then it's just like, oh, like Thailand and other Southeast Asian cultures are not quote unquote real, because I don't know, you think of all the really gimmicky island sort of vibes and culture, not even culture, but it's mostly just, like, island vibes and, quote unquote, island decor that people have. So I'm thinking, like a very white person Tiki shit. Some of that, yes, is based in actual Tiki, which is from Polynesian cultures, but it doesn't have any of the importance or the meaning attached to it anymore.

#### **[00:44:19.930] - Nathan**

It's just like, we're trying to give you tropical island vibes, and that sort of disrespect, or that sort of handling is just like, we're not taking this seriously. For the in Avatar Universe depiction of Thai culture and architecture, it's not just a vacation. People live there, and Thai culture is real and authentic, and it is worthy of respect, just like any other culture in the world. So, yeah, I just feel like this sort of thing...

#### **[00:44:58.210] - Nathan**

You'd really only notice if you're Asian, because as I've mentioned before on this podcast, Asian is such a huge monolith that is used to encompass for the most part, I think people are like, oh, you're Asian, and they really think about East Asian, but Asia is huge. There's Siberia, and then there are people who look East Asian, and they are technically actually Russian because they are in Russia, but they look East Asian. And you also have Central Asia and South Asia, Southeast Asia. And that's not even getting into, like, the Pacific Islander umbrella. There are so many distinct cultures that each have their own language and food and customs and everything.

#### **[00:45:54.050] - Nathan**

I think the Asian American experience is one of like, yes, we put aside our differences and we come together as a united front, but we also really look at those differences and honor them and find beauty in them. For example, I'm half Chinese and half Japanese. Well, it's technically half Taiwanese and half Japanese, and there are huge differences between cultures and customs between my two heritages. But it's really cool. It's been really cool and it will continue to be really awesome to learn about my heritage, not only in context of the parent country, but also just the experiences here. Because right now I'm just thinking off the dome, the Japanese American concentration camp experience during World War II, that didn't happen to any other Asian group.

#### **[00:46:51.750] - Nathan**

Was it extended to Chinese Americans? Unfortunately, yes. Because unless you're really familiar, I myself can't tell just by looking like, oh, that person is like Chinese or Japanese or Korean or whatever. But I think that is also, on the whole, generally, people can't tell the difference. And so a lot of Chinese Americans during World War II actually wore patches on their shirt that said, I am Chinese.

#### **[00:47:20.770] - Nathan**

So that way they wouldn't be rounded up and sent to the Japanese American concentration camps. So all of these cultures are so different. And overall, it just feels really bad to just get lumped together, and it's just like you're all the same. There's no difference between you. And it's just ultimately disrespectful.

#### **[00:47:42.460] - Nathan**

So that's I think somewhere where they could have done a lot better. I do think that overall, the product is fine, but that is certainly something that I think of when I'm just thinking about some of the character names and just like the cultural aspects of everything, and then also how all the characters like the characters, their names throughout the series at certain points are actually, like, written out using Chinese characters. And that's cool. But also I feel like gets into a little bit of exoticism because really, I think the one thing that actually is really strange to me that the universe never really talks about is that these are four very distinct cultures. And even between the Water Tribe and the Air Nomads, each of those cultural enclaves are so far apart that the culture of each of those locations is so different from each other.

#### **[00:48:40.510] - Nathan**

I'm surprised that they all have a common language. Like, I know that was mostly just for narrative's sake because it would be difficult to be like, oh, yeah, we have four different nations and four different languages and nobody can communicate. Right? That would be difficult. I think it'd be better world building.

**[00:48:59.000] - Nathan**

But I understand for a kid's show that's a little difficult. So they're just like, we're going to have everybody speak their own language. But yeah, I think it would have been cool to actually dive a little deeper. And I think I don't know if that decision was made purely because this was a kid's show or if that was just a detail that was completely overlooked because there are just so many different cultures that are represented. And if naming conventions actually followed the cultural norms that come from each of the source cultures, you wouldn't actually have some of those names. Like Zuko sounds Japanese because it follows more or less like the same system for Japanese phonetics. Azula does not.

**[00:49:52.510] - Nathan**

Azulon does not either. Sozen kind of does. Ursa 100% does not. So that's just like a small crash course of just like, okay, well, we're taking from these source cultures, and we're ultimately making our own thing. So maybe it doesn't really matter. But yeah, I think it just could have added some more richness if it was just like, wow, there's actually... To me at least it's just like this whole other dimension that could have been explored of like, wow, there are four distinct cultures, and they each have their own language.

**[00:50:26.720] - Nathan**

And I think it would have been really cool, like, interaction to also include. Okay, so that's the history of the series. And then in terms of just exploring more of the sort of, like, backdrop and everything for all of the cultures, the four major cultures that are shown in Avatar. So I'll start with the Fire Nation. The Fire Nation is loosely based on just like East Asia in general as I mentioned before, with some hints of Southeast Asia appearing in the background. And I think really this most mirrors Japan just because of the imperialism from that is put forth from the Fire Nation and its militarism.

**[00:51:08.910] - Nathan**

This was very much the case for Japan during World War II. Japan was trying to very much to be like the United States. So this is very much a read on the US, like, militaristic, imperialistic, colonialistic, just like they're focused on expanding territory and conquering. And this is very much the case for Japan in World War II, taking control of a lot of islands in the Pacific and as well as even moving into parts of China and everything. So honestly, if it were me, I'd be like, you know what?

**[00:51:48.520] - Nathan**

Let's just map this directly to Japan and we'll just leave it at that instead of just being like, this is all of East Asia, because like I said before, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean cultures are very different. Those are the three main ones that people think of when they think of East Asia. Well, those are the East Asian cultures, but even though there's only three, there are so many differences between the three. And I really

do wish that this show had honored those differences a little bit more. And then the bending art that is found predominantly in the Fire Nation is fire bending, and this is based on Northern Shaolin style.

### **[00:52:25.610] - Nathan**

And this sort of group is called a bei pai, which is just like Northern style. And this martial arts form is very dynamic and aggressive, and a lot of the forms are very fluid, and they're able to change direction of where force goes. And the main difference between Northern Shaolin and Southern Shaolin is to focus on leg work, kicking and acrobatics. Sorry. Northern Shaolin focuses more on legwork, kicking, and acrobatics.

### **[00:52:53.300] - Nathan**

And to me, this seems like a pretty apt choice just because it's very evocative of fire being forceful, but also, like, really graceful and acrobatic. Like, you think of flames flickering and everything. That's kind of like acrobatic and everything. And also it's really cool because if you've listened to the episode where I talked about the martial arts in Shang-Chi, this is very akin to the martial arts style that Wenwu uses and that Shang-Chi or Shahn grows up learning how to use. Northern Shaolin is very aggressive, very forceful. And as we see in Avatar Last Airbender, at least this portion of that universe's history or I guess, time period or whatever, a lot of fire bending's, I guess fuel is like anger and not necessarily toxicity, but it's just like a lot of anger and aggression, which is interesting because I feel like most of the time with Asian martial arts, the focus isn't necessarily on, like, oh, I'm getting anger out or like, I'm being aggressive.

### **[00:54:06.260] - Nathan**

It's a lot about control and learning about your body and your mind and how they interact, which I think we end up seeing over the course of the last season of Avatar The Last Airbender, where after Zuko joins the Gaang, he can't fire bend because he's no longer as angry and doesn't have as much aggression. And then this is, I think, the thing that Iroh was trying to emphasize, just like, hey, this is like we need to break the cycle of violence and aggression. So I think there's a lot to be said for also what firebending stands for, so that is firebending. So then onto the Earth Kingdom. This is also loosely based on East Asia as well, though this seems to be a little bit more rooted in Chinese culture.

### **[00:54:57.850] - Nathan**

So, for example, Ba Sing Se is, like, based on the Forbidden City in Beijing, and the walls of Ba Sing Se are based on the Great Wall of China. And also what I was saying before about language and stuff, a lot of the names in the Earth Kingdom, like, for example, Ba Sing Se, those sounds and those phonetics all sort of like work with actual Chinese, whether that be Mandarin or another dialect. Like Mandarin doesn't have the there wouldn't be Sing, it would probably be like Xing. So if you're wondering about the pinyin,

it's like X-I-N-G instead of S-I-N-G. So, yeah, there's lots of parallels to Chinese culture in the Earth Kingdom.

### **[00:55:45.060] - Nathan**

And although, as I said before, this is like this weird mishmash of, like, all the East Asian cultures with the Fire Nation and the Earth Kingdom, because Omashu... That... I remember there was an episode about the founding, and they actually had the Chinese characters for Omasu written out. So technically, I guess Omashu is like a valid set of sounds in Chinese. It's just like, not ones that I would have thought to put together, but yeah, I'd have to look at the Chinese characters again. I mean, this is also like a testament to the cultural consulting, because Chinese has so many different characters, but also like a finite number of sounds. Basically, for Omashu technically, it's like three sounds, oh, ma, shu, three syllables, and each of those syllables has a plethora of characters that could be used for any of those pronunciations.

### **[00:56:55.340] - Nathan**

And so it takes a lot of time and skill and insight to choose the characters for those sounds that also have a good meaning. Instead of being like something nonsensical.

### **[00:57:10.670] - Nathan**

Once again, I do wish that the parent cultures for the Earth Kingdom and the Fire Nation were teased out a little bit more. But for the most part, the Earth Kingdom seems to be a little bit more or little bit less kind of an egregious... Not even egregious, just like less sort of noticeable sort of deviation from the real life culture itself. And then, of course, the bending art for the Earth Kingdom is Earth bending. This is based on the Southern Chinese martial art style called Hung Gar. This is due to the inspiration was Hung Gar's firmly rooted stances.

### **[00:57:52.130] - Nathan**

And when actually doing some research into Hung Gar, I learned that students who learned this martial art actually spend the first three years learning stances before they actually go into any learning like actually any forms, any other forms and actual footwork and everything. It's all about learning stances and being steady and firmly rooted. And then also of note is Toph's style of Earth bending. And she does not actually use the same form as traditional Earth bending. So she doesn't use Hung Gar.

### **[00:58:30.420] - Nathan**

She uses the Southern Mantis style, which originates with the Hakka people. This is once again another Southern Chinese martial arts style, but it's a little bit more dynamic than Hung Gar. But also this form focuses mostly on the feet, keeping the practitioner balanced and never vulnerable, which is very true to

Toph's character. And metal bending actually is also based on the Southern Mantis style, which is really cool that this sort of like nuance was taken and included in the universe. And once again, like Kudos to the cultural consultants and the martial arts consultants, they did a lot of heavy lifting and are not getting credited enough for it because overall, the show, like the universe is so good.

#### **[00:59:30.540] - Nathan**

And now with the other form of Earth bending that shows up later in Legend of Korra, lava bending does not actually have any form differences from Hung Gar. Lava bending is just like, it's the same as Hung Gar. It's just like you kind of change the Earthbenders, like change the phase that the Earth is in from solid to liquid. So that is Fire Nation and Earth Kingdom and then moving on to, I guess the more like, spiritual nations. You've got the Water Tribe, Southern and Northern Water tribes.

#### **[00:59:59.170] - Nathan**

And these people are loosely based on the Inuit and the Sireniki. So the Inuit are natives of the Northern Canadian regions. And then Sireniki are also like one of the Arctic Peoples, but Arctic Native Peoples, but in Russia, like Siberia, that sort of location. And so I obviously can't speak as much to this just because I don't have any connection to those cultures. But it was really cool to also see that included in this universe because it very well like this universe could have definitely just been like, OK, we're going to take the big three East Asian cultures and then something else.

#### **[01:00:46.800] - Nathan**

So it is really cool that they included Native peoples, and I really do wish that more Native... Maybe there were in the cultural consulting. Maybe the cultural consultants actually reached out to Native folks more, but I think it would have been better to have someone from the Inuit people and a Sireniki person actually speak to the representation of their culture, because obviously when culture is expressed in an appreciative and respectful manner, it goes so far. The example I always point to is Frozen 2 and how the Sami people were depicted in that movie. And I'm not going to get too much more into that.

#### **[01:01:36.510] - Nathan**

Like, this episode is already super long, and I'm probably going to do an episode on Frozen 2 at some point anyways. And then the bending art for the water tribes is water bending, and there are three different types of water bending. There's the combative, healing, and blood bending. I didn't do quite as much research into forms and everything for the healing arts, but it didn't really look like healing had a specific tie to any martial art. It's just like you put your hands over the place and you've got some water and you do stuff, and it's sort of more like internal sort of thing.

**[01:02:12.270] - Nathan**

As far as combative water bending, that is based on Taijiquan, which is actually technically another martial art. But an interesting thing that I learned about Chinese martial arts when doing the research for this is that there are two different schools, like two different major branches of martial arts. So there's Neijia, which literally means like internal or internal house. But basically Neijia stuff focuses more on your relationship with your body and your breath. And it's like more of a spiritual aspect.

**[01:02:50.420] - Nathan**

Yeah. Just like focuses on harmony with your body and just focusing on before, just internal aspects as compared to the other two martial arts that I had mentioned before, the Northern Shaolin style, as well as Hung Gar. Those are called waigong, which is literally translates to external exercise. But the focus for waigong is like a more traditional martial art where you're using your body as a weapon, whereas neijia. Neijia arts are not necessarily used for combat. So it's really cool that both water bending and air bending are based on neijia martial arts.

**[01:03:33.020] - Nathan**

So for water bending, taijiquan, it was chosen for the body structure and movement, as well as its focus on breath. And just like the visualization of water moving during taijiquan forms. As for blood bending, blood bending is kind of the opposite. I didn't do any, like, re watching or anything, but blood bending. A lot of the forms are a lot more jerky, and they're more like marionette sort of gestures, like someone controlling a puppet.

**[01:04:09.130] - Nathan**

I don't think there's a martial arts form associated with this. I think it's like some of it is just like based on taijiquan, but some modifications. It's just a little bit jerkier. So that is water bending and the Water Tribe culture. As I mentioned before, I think it would have been really cool to have the Water Tribes speak more or less the same language, but different dialects that are for the most part, mutually intelligible.

**[01:04:39.820] - Nathan**

But also they've got their own sort of unique things, maybe even to the point of, like, Mandarin and Cantonese. For the folks who don't have any command of Mandarin or Cantonese, they're not completely unintelligible. Like for example... For me, I only know Mandarin. So unless I see the Cantonese written out, I don't think I can put everything together. But I think people who speak Cantonese can actually listen to someone speaking Mandarin and put it together.

**[01:05:13.840] - Nathan**

And I also think that's because Cantonese, while it's an official language of China, Mandarin is really the official is the central official language of China. And so a lot of Cantonese speakers learn both Cantonese at home as well as Mandarin. And so I think there's a little bit more navigation there. But I think it would have been really cool to have that touch where maybe Katara and Sokka say something to Paku. And Paku is just like, wait, what?

#### **[01:05:42.950] - Nathan**

I understood most of that. But what was that thing that you said? I think that would have been, like an even cooler concept and dialogue to happen in this world building. So that is the Water Tribes. And then moving on to the final major group of people, the Air Nomads.

#### **[01:05:59.860] - Nathan**

The Air Nomads were loosely based on Tibetan monks. So Tibet is the westernmost region of China, also known as the Xinjiang Autonomous Region. It's where a lot of the issues with the Uighurs and everything is not necessarily based, but that's sort of the area of the world that it's happening in. And I think it's really cool that they included this sort of cultural area in the world of Avatar, because Central Asia is this really interesting intersection of all these different cultures. There's this one, I think it's a Kazakhstani restaurant by me.

#### **[01:06:47.420] - Nathan**

And, like, I've eaten there a couple of times, and it's this really, really cool blend of like, you've got influence from the Mediterranean, you've got influence from Russia, you've got influence from India, you've got influence from China. Obviously. It's such a cool place. And I think Central Asia gets forgotten a lot. And it's also just thinking about the Uighurs and everything.

#### **[01:07:13.870] - Nathan**

It's also really cool melting pot of religion and everything. There are Muslim people, and in addition to the other sort of religions, I think Buddhism is, like the official religion of China. Don't quote me on that. I did not do my research for this part, but Western Asia is just like, such a cool melting pot of cuisine and culture and everything. It's really cool.

#### **[01:07:40.080] - Nathan**

I was doing some poking around, looking at some restaurants, not in my neighborhood, but up in a different neighborhood of the city, because I saw a friend last week, and she was just like, let's get dinner and I was like, yeah, let me take a look at some other places. And actually I think this ended up being like a couple of African restaurants. I'm trying to remember. It was a place that was Somali cuisine. And they

have a dish called biryani, which is the same name and the same concept as an Indian dish, and also a Pakistani dish also called biryani, which is rice based.

### **[01:08:21.810] - Nathan**

And there's like meat and vegetables and everything. So maybe one day I'll have another friend on and we'll talk about food, culture and stuff and how that all... It's really fascinating to me. But all that to say, Western Asia is really cool.

### **[01:08:34.440] - Nathan**

It's very cool and awesome that they included that sort of cultural touch point here for the Air Nomads. So that is the people themselves. As for the bending art that they use is called air bending and have mentioned that particular format. I once again mentioned in the Shang-Chi episodes as baguazhang, which loosely translates to eight trigram palm.

### **[01:08:59.480] - Nathan**

And this form was chosen because of its focus on dynamic circular movements and rapid directional changes. Once again, this is a neijia form, so this is focus. It's not really used for combat. It's mostly used for focusing on your relationship with your body, your breath, and just like a lot of more internal focus instead of using your body as a weapon. So that is sort of a crash course of all the building blocks for Avatar.

### **[01:09:26.660] - Nathan**

I did not get into any of the minority cultures. So like the Sand Benders or the Swamp, the Foggy Swamp tribe, those are really the only two minority cultures I can think of in the Avatar universe. I also didn't really get into what Ty Lee does, which is or I guess maybe I can talk about that real quick. But it seems like the bending arts involves interacting with the concept of chi, which is like more or less translates to breath and is the character used in the Avatar intros when speaking about when they show air. But apparently it's kind of like Naruto.

### **[01:10:11.740] - Nathan**

I'm really hesitant to say that, but it's kind of like Naruto, where Naruto uses Chakra for ninjutsu. Whereas an Avatar, to be able to bend properly, you need to have your chi points open or whatever and Ty Lee with like, I'm pretty sure this is based on acupressure and everything and acupuncture, but basically hitting vital chi points to block off your flow and disrupt it makes it so that way you can't bend. They really didn't go too much into chi blocking in the shows and like the mechanics and everything behind that. It

was certainly a really cool concept, but yeah, I don't think they... Sure they did a history of how the Avatar came to be and how people were bending things and stuff.

### **[01:10:59.990] - Nathan**

It's like it's a gift from the lion turtle. And even then it's like when the lion turtles with gift bending or even like in the finale, the series finale where Aang energy bends those points that he touches on... Is his name Azulon? I think it is a Zoon. No, that's the grandpa. No.

### **[01:11:23.350] - Nathan**

Ozai. Oh, man. Oh, gosh, I took too long of a break. It's getting late. But yeah, the points that he touches on Ozai, those are like, major.

### **[01:11:36.170] - Nathan**

I think those are actually correspond to Chakra points, but then I think Chakras are also like, I would have to do more research on this, but I'm pretty sure those points actually also lined up with major chi points. So that's something else to be explored a little bit more. It'd be cool to see that, but we don't really get any explanation of that in either Avatar The Last Airbender or Legend of Korra. So I don't think we're going to get it, although with Avatar Studios, who knows? We might get more material, but so that's it for the world of Avatar. Overall and just kind of like, wow, I'm at an hour and a half recording, shoot! With my thoughts for this series.

### **[01:12:18.070] - Nathan**

I really do on the whole really like Avatar. This came out when, let's see, I have to scroll back in my notes, this premiered in 2005. So at this point I was twelve. And now that I think about it, I was super excited for this show. I thought it was a movie, but I remember my parents were pretty strict with the amount of TV that I could watch.

### **[01:12:43.460] - Nathan**

So I remember hiding in the basement to watch this show because I was just really excited because I'm just like, wow, this is like the first cartoon that I've ever seen that has an explicit focus on Asian culture and really the first time that I'd ever seen anyone like me and like, talking about culture that was like mine on television. And thankfully, Avatar has aged pretty well. I will say that when it was put on Netflix early in the pandemic, like, early in 2020, I watched the original series and it all held up pretty well. It's really well done and I really liked it. And I think it's a really cool gateway into appreciating Asian culture.

### **[01:13:29.660] - Nathan**

In addition to the things that I highlighted that I think are like, kind of shortcomings here, I do think that this show does also lean very heavily into the trope of Asian mysticism and just sort of like exoticifying Asian culture in general, which is like, really tired and like, we don't need it anymore. It just really helps. Asian exoticism really helps to just like, other or like, make people who are Asian feel like they are other, which obviously is not helpful, especially like, right now. So I do wish that... I would have to give more thought as to how to sort of unexoticize this, but that is something that... I think some of it is fantasy. So like, okay, we do need a hint of the mystical, but I also think there's a way to do it respectfully.

#### **[01:14:22.000] - Nathan**

Not to say that Avatar did it disrespectfully because I really don't think the focus is on the mysticism. I think the bending arts and stuff, like, it's grounded enough in the reality of that universe. It doesn't seem like too bad. But yeah, there are some issues that I have overall with Avatar, and I do think that Avatar as like a franchise and the universe. I think that the white creators really should let it go.

#### **[01:14:49.910] - Nathan**

I do think that the creators have established a strong enough world and, like, they have established, like, the building blocks, and they should let actual Asian people take over. Like I said, they've made the building blocks. But I think that Asian creators should be playing in the sandbox because it's a world based on our culture. And as I started to sort of highlight with my Boys Love series. It's really weird to consume media about you, but that's not necessarily for you.

#### **[01:15:22.970] - Nathan**

I think Avatar is this really cool exception where it's like both about Asian folks but also for Asian folks, just because I don't think there's like a specifically, like, we don't want Asian people to interact with this. But yeah, I think it's time for the series to come under leadership from an Asian American person, like, from AAPI people just to better communicate the stories and add that much more cultural richness. Wow. I've been talking for a long time. I'm going to take one more break, and then we'll come back with the final segment of the show, and then I'll let you guys go.

#### **[01:16:01.330] - Nathan**

All right. Welcome back from the break. I'm going to try and wrap this up very quickly. So once again, the last segment of the show is called What's Your Nonsense? This is where I or my guests, whenever that happens, we'll talk about something that we're into that we'd like more people to get into. And my current nonsense, this is going to be a little bit heavy and sorry for ending the episode this way. But as folks may know, Russia invaded Ukraine last week. Yet another historic event is happening during our lifetimes. And a network media executive put out a statement that he later retracted, being like, all Russian Americans and Russian people in the United States should be rounded up and expelled from the country.

**[01:16:47.810] - Nathan**

Their assets should be seized and frozen, whatever. And if you know any history, if you know any American history, then maybe this sounded familiar. And you'd be right, because that is pretty much exactly what happened to Japanese Americans during World War II, because there was a lot of racism and xenophobia and just fear during World War II, especially after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. And people were like, oh, we should just lock the Japanese up because they might be spies, which is just like the most absurd notion that... It's just so stupid and very racist. So I would highly recommend looking into the stories of Japanese American concentration camps during World War II.

**[01:17:37.840] - Nathan**

Learn about some people's stories. I would share mine, but this episode is getting really long already, so I'm not going to do that. Maybe I'll share that. Maybe I'll make that a Patreon exclusive. Maybe I'll do that.

**[01:17:52.500] - Nathan**

That sounds cool, but yeah. So I would encourage you to learn a little bit about the history of Japanese American incarceration and the concentration camps during World War II. Learn about what actually happened and my people's stories and how this affected us, because it's just so upsetting and stupid and infuriating to see some idiot white person parroting exactly the same thing that changed the course of my grandparents lives and changed the course of my family history, all because people were scared and people were xenophobic. It's just really upsetting to see that. And this is something that's not extended only to Russians in America, but also the Chinese in America.

**[01:18:46.250] - Nathan**

So if you're interested in the Stop Asian Hate or as I've mentioned before, AAPI are important movement. I would highly encourage you to learn about Japanese American concentration camps during World War II. Those experiences. And now that I'm thinking about it, I am going to do a sort of Patreon special where if you pay into, I'm going to say even available to all Patreon tiers. So that way it is accessible.

**[01:19:17.670] - Nathan**

But I will talk about my family history and my relationship to Japanese American concentration camps and everything. So learn about that! So that way history doesn't repeat itself. There are definitely parallels between the Japanese American concentration camps and the Jewish concentration camps over in Germany. There are certainly similarities and also there are some differences as well.

**[01:19:42.800] - Nathan**

So I'd encourage you to learn about that. So that is sort of the heavy nonsense that I would really like people to get into and really learn more about.

### **[01:19:56.250] - Nathan**

So that is the final segment. If you enjoyed listening to this podcast, thank you so much for joining me. I would like to remind you all that this is a completely independent venture. I do all of the recording and the editing and everything all by myself, and I pay SoundCloud to host me. I also pay a transcription service to help with doing the transcription of all of the episodes.

### **[01:20:24.410] - Nathan**

So I use Patreon to help offset those costs. So if you liked what you heard, please head on over to the Patreon and check out the subscription tiers and see what is right for you. There's tier one, which gets you a shout out on podcast. I did a shout out earlier at the top of the episode. Tier two gets you early access to the episode.

### **[01:20:48.600] - Nathan**

So normally I'll take about a week or so to edit the podcast and get it transcribed. And then pretty much the moment I'm done with transcription, I will upload it to Patreon and upload the episode as well as the transcript to Patreon and everyone who is at least a tier two or above gets to listen to it that day and then the day after I release everything to the general public. And then tier three gets you the ability to suggest topic ideas. So as a reminder like this segment as well as the previous segment on Boys Love, these are both tier three topics that were suggested. So if you'd like me to talk about something or get somebody on to talk about some piece of media from like a person of color or queer perspective like consider subscribing at a tier three and I will say you don't have to keep... Just do it for as long as you feel that you'd like. Any amount of support means a lot to me and also helps so the Patreon you can find if you search on Patreon for Nonsense and Noise Podcast or just Nonsense and Noise then you should be able to find it.

### **[01:22:03.130] - Nathan**

It is a picture of me drinking some wine and if you would like to hear more of me and my own silliness you can find me on Twitch and Instagram and Twitter at kahtonotkayto. That is K-A-H-T-O-N-O-T-K-A-Y-T-O. I'm predominantly active on Twitter where I have manic episodes about people who I respect suddenly deciding to follow me and I am just generally silly over there. I'm really not using Instagram too much anymore so really just follow me on Twitter. If you follow me on Twitter you'll also get notifications for when I go live on Twitch. As I said before, I'm streaming Legends Arceus I'm going to try and stream the fifth part of Legends Arceus sometime this week before Triangle Strategy because I think I'm going to dedicate Friday to streaming Triangle Strategy and probably the rest of that weekend too.

**[01:23:01.170] - Nathan**

So look out for that. Thanks again for tuning in for this big ol honker of an episode and I look forward to talking to you guys again soon. Thanks, bye.