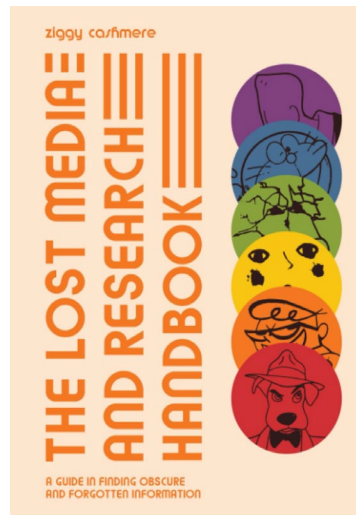


**Jacob Pruitt, under the pseudonym Ziggy Cashmere, is the author of the book “The Lost Media and Research Handbook: A Guide In Finding Obscure and Forgotten Information” (Ind., 2023). This interview was conducted by the Library of Congress on February 29, 2024.**



**Library of Congress: What first piqued your interest in the cause of lost media? Was there one item that you were looking for at one time?**

Jacob Pruitt: I guess I was introduced to it at a really young age. My parents were antique dealers so I just was raised around old stuff, and a lot of it, you know, when you're young, you're not familiar with it. So, I guess that kind of started it.

Then, I remember, when I was a kid, I would make up arcade games that didn't exist and I would draw them and show them to my dad. I'm like, “Hey, dad! There's this game you've never heard of.” I guess that was one of the first things I did.

Then, when I actually got involved with the community, I was like 13, and there was this music video for a song called “Nightmare on My Street” by Will Smith and DJ Jazzy Jeff, and the video was destroyed by Warner Bros. New Line Cinema sued because they used the character Freddy Krueger. My parents brought that up once when I was a kid. They were talking about it, and I said, “That's interesting!” So I looked up a lost media website and I wrote an article about it on the Lost Media Wiki, and I guess, from there, it just snowballed into where we are now.

**LC: Did you ever find it? Does it exist?**

JP: I didn't find it personally. It's interesting. I wrote the article in, I think, October of 2018 or something like that--it was a long time ago--and a few months later, this lady uploaded a copy of it to YouTube from a VHS recording. Then, a few months after that, the video was taken down, and the reason why is because Warner put up an “official” upload of the video. I like to think that my article started that.

**LC: It certainly helped, I would think.... If someone's going looking for “lost media,” what is the first thing they should do?**

JP: They should really just research it: just what it is, really understand where it came from, why it was made, why it matters. Just make sure you know what you're talking about, and also figure out if you really want to find it because you are interested in it or because you think it should be preserved for ominous reasons, if that makes any sense. I see a lot of people want to

look for something just because it's lost, and I don't think that's enough of a reason to look for it. I really think you should be looking for something because you actually want to see it, because the content itself is interesting, not because of its reputation.

I see a lot of people come and they always ask for help and ask for somebody to look for something that they want, and I think that's the wrong way to go about it because, I mean, at the end of the day, if you're looking for it, you should be able to direct your own search, and I don't think it's right to come in and just ask people to search for it for you. Because other people don't care like you do. So it's up to you to find it.

**LC: Do people contact you or the wiki site and say, “Hey, Ziggy! Find this for me?”**

JP: It's a bit of a potluck. At the Wiki, there's a “request for articles” page so you can request an article to be written about the lost media you're interested in. What's ironic is that you yourself can write the article. To be fair, other people do have more experience doing it. So that will be written and they'll ask the entirety of the community if they can search for it. The writer will ask specific people that they think are relevant to the search for it.

**LC: When did you first decide to do a book? When did you decide that there was an audience that needed this sort of information?**

JP: I noticed a lot of people just didn't know where to start with their searches. I had already had some success in the past. I can't remember, specifically, what I was doing when I wrote this. I had already had some discoveries before and I had some success and I've talked to a lot of prevalent members in the community, so I figured I should just put all that knowledge together into one spot so people understand what to do when they begin looking for something.

Before, there were some guides out there, but they were old and they weren't very comprehensive, so I got in touch with people that did forum posts [on the topic] and I got in touch with some old friends and then we just kind of compiled it together.

A lot of the information I have in the book is just compiled from what I did when I searched for the stuff I wanted. I'm usually fairly successful. So that's what started it, I guess, so other people could know what to do, because a lot of people just don't know where to start.

And you have to be your own lawyer as well. I have a whole section in the book about legal stuff because you have to know about it. All of these things are owned by these companies. Often, these companies don't care about it anymore. So, they're just abandoned works. They're legally still owned, but the owners don't care enough to enforce it, so it's this weird gray area.

**LC: Have you had a good reaction to the book?**

JP: Yeah, I've had good reactions. I think I had one bad review. I have a bit in the book about how I say it's not good to watermark, and that's a controversial opinion in this community. Watermarking is a thing with collectors and archives and museums. They all do the same thing. They'll have an item and then they make it public [but] they will put their own watermark on top of it. With archives, it's a little more understandable because they have a legal obligation to it but, with collectors, it's a little less needed. They do that because people will steal it and upload it and say that they found it. I think, at the end of the day, it doesn't matter who found it as long as it's out there. Anyway, somebody had said that that [paragraph] was a bad idea--“People should reserve the blah, blah, blah.”

But, overall, the book has been positively viewed. The main issue is that it's a book and some people don't want to read a book, which is understandable. I mean, we're dealing with people my

age and younger and who are on the internet 24/7. A lot of us function off videos. I mean, a lot of the lost media community is based off of YouTube videos. And a book is the opposite of that.

**LC: Have you heard of some happy endings based on the book from people who found things?**

JP: I've had people who say they wanted to get advice and it helped them start out, but I haven't heard any results. But every search is definitely different. I mean, I have had searches ... there's a Disney short that I found because I just bought the DVD off eBay and that was it, that was the end of the search. And then there's the opposite where I have to get in touch with producers and directors to find something.

**LC: Are the producers, etc., usually amenable to you when you approach them?**

JP: It depends. I learned just recently that when you talk to these people, when you want something that's not available to the public, you really have to tell them why you want it for something besides preservation, because preservation is a really vague reason. When you're an artist and somebody else wants your work from 20 years ago, you want to know why they want it besides to save it. When it's your work, you don't care about saving it usually because it's just tissue paper to you. So you have to tell them you want to see it because you liked it, and that's another reason why I said before that when you're searching for something like this, you want to search for it because you yourself are interested in the subject.

Usually I get a pretty positive response from contacting people. I have had problems before with people saying, "Don't contact me!" or "Why do you want this?" It's various. If you find people that were part of it as a passion project, they are usually very happy to talk about it because it's their baby. They're really happy to talk about it because nobody has asked about it in years. That's a really good feeling because you're giving attention to something that they loved and that nobody else really got the chance to love in many, many years. That's always nice. That's always fun.

**LC: Is hunting for lost media a full-time job for you?**

JP: JOB? No. I mean, I never get paid. It's a fun hobby. It's definitely a fun hobby. I never really searched for something just to look for it. If I come across something I want, and if I can't find it, then I go searching for it. I have a book that I've been working on called "Drawing for Nothing" that is all about canceled animated films. There's a plethora of unused, unfound stuff. I guess that would be where a lot of this hobby has put me. It's me searching for stuff for that book.

**LC: Are you most interested in video, film, animation, audio?**

JP: It really depends, but most of it's animation and software, video games. I haven't been interested in many movies. There's a few out there that I was interested in, but they're a lot harder to find. I noticed, especially, that the older they are, the harder they are to find. Even the ones from the '80s are hard. And even when you get in touch with the people that made them, a lot of the times, they don't have them.

What's really interesting is that a lot of these lost shows, they still exist but they exist with collectors, and these collectors have them but don't share them for a multitude of reasons: it costs money, it costs time. Sometimes they are too lazy, sometimes they're too selfish. It's really dependent on who it is.

There's a game I've been wanting called "Nightmare" and it was this prototype arcade game from the '80s, and I just want it because it looks cool. I like it. But the person that has the only known copy hasn't shared it yet. He has a different philosophy in how media should be preserved. So it's a battle of ethics.

**LC: What has surprised you the most in this whole area of lost media hunting? Is there anything that stands out?**

JP: Surprise? I don't know if I've been surprised so much. [But] I have learned a lot about the community. There's a lot of intricacies to it. There are subsections to it. It goes so deep. It's just very deep. I mean, there's different communities to the same community; the community has communities.

There's these people who search for logos from VHS tapes. Not the content, not anything else, just logo introductions, and there's a whole community for that. There's a community that searches for just bumpers from TV broadcasts from 20 years ago. Not even very old. Just like 2002. It's just stuff like that. I guess that was a little surprising. It's surprising the kind of things people are really interested in. Like, right now, the hot topic on Lost Media Wiki tends to be a Nickelodeon. I guess that would be what was surprising to me. A lot of it's fueled by nostalgia.

**LC: What do you think is your primary reason for looking for things? Because they're entertaining?**

JP: Yes, entertaining... but I guess, the thrill is at the heart of it. Yeah, the thrill to it. I get to be the first person that saw something in years. I get to see something that wasn't meant to be seen, and then I also get to see something that I just wanted to see. Like I said, I always have to look for something that I actually want. So, I think the thrill comes second. What comes first is just "I want something."

**LC: Of all the things you found in your career what are some of your favorite discoveries?**

JP: I tend to forget them. I guess one of the greatest things I found, and I don't know if I should be admitting this publicly, but there was that Disney short called "Glago's Guest," which they didn't release. It was meant to be shown before "Bolt" [2008] but they didn't release it due to poor test screenings. So I had wanted it just because it seemed interesting and it was just a really weird Disney short. If you watch it, you don't think it's from Disney. I found it because there was a screener disc of it being sold on eBay. The only reason I even found that is because I was looking for it beforehand and I found another listing for it from years ago and I just put an eBay alert on it for the next one that pops up and it did. I just got really lucky.

A lot of the stuff I find is junk that only I know about or very few people know about. I'm working on this documentary about the movie "Foodfight!" [2012].

"Foodfight!" has a very complicated history. I won't get into it, but I have [stuff from] an early version that nobody's been able to see, and I got some assets from the movie, and it's from 20 years ago. So I have these 20-year-old 3D models on my computer from a movie that never got finished. So stuff like that; I really was happy to find.

I guess I don't have anything super specific.... Oh! There another one, "The Act." It was this arcade game. It was basically the last 2D animated arcade game and I had wanted it just because I liked animation and video games, so it's fitting. I had searched for it and I found the person who had a machine sitting in a thrift store. They had this arcade in a thrift store, out in another state, I forgot where. I had to get in contact with a friend of [the owner], and then that friend

would contact that guy and they dumped the disc, and it was a whole thing, but that was a lot of fun. So, I guess that would be my favorite.

**LC: In the world of “lost media,” is there a holy grail?**

JP: I mean, the community has a lot of Holy Grails. Right now, the hot topic has been the uncensored audio for this episode called “Sailor Mouth” from “SpongeBob.” Because in “Sailor Mouth,” they cursed in the show, but it's censored by fish sounds, like dolphin squeals. We know that an uncensored version exists, so that's been the holy grail for a lot of people. But I guess for me, I don't really have one to be honest.

I think it just changes depending on whatever I'm interested in. I guess right now, it would be that early version of “Foodfight!” because I don't have the actual video yet, but that will definitely change after I'm done researching the movie. It just changes depending on whatever I'm looking at....

Speaking of holy grails, there's a [TV] show called “Turn On” [1969] that was recently leaked.

I know the guy that leaked it originally and he had discovered that this show is likely in public domain because it doesn't have a copyright notice and, also, they didn't have registration, so by the 1909 copyright law back then, that means there's no protection. What's interesting is that the owners themselves didn't know this so they were constantly taking it down from Youtube. But, they officially uploaded it later. But, before that, they were taking the posts down because it was copyrighted to them, but not legally.

The guy who had the copies uploaded fully the only two episodes that exist. And then, I had actually contacted George Schlatter's [the producer] paralegal and I accidentally let her know that it got leaked. I did my best not to let her know. But, anyway, it was kind of a good thing because she found that out and then they took it down but that had created so much demand for it online that they ended up releasing it officially on YouTube anyway.

And then what's great is they released the third episode, which they had to freshly edit because they never finished it. They had to take all the old footage and edit it themselves into a third episode, which is really cool.