



This Is Jeopardy! The Story of America's Favorite Quiz Show

Episode 13 : Jeopardy!'s On

A Production of Sony Music Entertainment and Sony Pictures TV

Buzzy Cohen: There are all types of fans in this world.

Announcer: And immediately right off the bat it's bam, bam, bam, so exciting to see that happen!

Announcer: I've been waiting for this moment for so long [cheers]

Announcer: It's time to go!

Buzzy Cohen: And when it comes to fandom, there's a hierarchy of sorts.

There's the casual fan - sporting jerseys and hats - after that comes the superfan, making regular pilgrimages to the fields, arenas, stadiums, what have you.

And then there are those who border on something closer to a fanatic. Almost a religious zealot. But in the best way.

Bob Boden: I'm so glad I rescued this from the trash cuz it's a one of a kind.

Buzzy Cohen: You might recognize this voice.

Bob Boden: My name is Bob Boden. I'm a longtime game show, aficionado, fan turned writer, producer, and executive.

Buzzy: I think it's safe to say that 'aficionado' doesn't go far enough... Bob is a proper game show obsessive who has a garage chock full of game show memorabilia. It is a collector's heaven (and probably Marie Kondo's nightmare).

And here he is, standing in that very garage, one January afternoon, earlier this year.

Bob Boden: If you want audio, this is the place to get it.

Buzzy Cohen: Bob directed me and my producer to a rectangular box - with eleven different big red buttons.

He pressed the first one.

Bob Boden: So, uh, number one, this is the face off sound on family feud [sound FX]

Buzzy Cohen: Yep, every single button plays a different game show sound.

Bob Boden: Pyramid had a really unique sound to indicate an illegal clue, and to my knowledge, no other show has used this sound, and that is the cuckoo.

So I gave an illegal clue.

Buzzy Cohen: Bob is pushing the buttons with glee - the familiar sounds of shows he watched throughout his life ringing out.

Bob Boden: Number five is The Price is Right. Number six. This is the longest sound. This is the big victory sound from The Price is Right.

Buzzy Cohen: He keeps going, till he finally lands on one of my (and America's) favorite sounds.

Bob Boden: And, number nine. [sound]

Buzzy Cohen: Ah yes, the sweet sound of *Jeopardy!*'s Daily Doubles... the thing that viewers have come to associate with high stakes wagering, trivia prowess, and of course, the show itself.

Bob Boden: It resonates as the show that people would watch over dinner or after dinner leading right into primetime.

Buzzy Cohen: Yup - for millions of fans, the show is an at-home sport, played with family, all while soaking in the glow of the big blue game board on the small screen.

Sylvie Lubow: We actually had a TV in the kitchen. Oh, that's right. A little table tv.

Jesse Chin: We used to have a TV in our dining room and we'd normally eat at 7:00 PM, which is when *Jeopardy!* airs here. So I would instantaneously turn the TV onto that channel.

Tess Bartholomew: *Jeopardy!* was always on...like really for as long as I can remember.

THEME MUSIC

Buzzy Cohen: I'm your host, Buzzy Cohen. And from Sony Music Entertainment and Sony Pictures TV, This is Jeopardy: The Story of America's Favorite Quiz Show.

This week, we're experiencing Jeopardy on a whole new level — with and among its fans.

Act I

Buzzy Cohen: *Jeopardy!* fans are everywhere. So it probably won't surprise you to learn that a few of them are actually working on this podcast. But for this act, I'm handing the mic over to one of the outliers on the production team, our very own non-fan, Julia Doyle.

Julia Doyle: It's not that I'm *not* a fan...exactly.

MUSIC: Whimsical spacey music begins

Julia Doyle: I grew up without a television, which - in the early 2000s was enough to send my middle school self into a panic. I didn't see Kelly Clarkson steal the stage on American Idol, I only caught snippets of Spongebob or Suite Life when I was at a friend's house. Cheetah girls, Slime, Survivor — I've had to catch up on it all.

Maybe I shouldn't admit this, but before working on this podcast, I'd never seen a full episode of *Jeopardy!*. Don't worry, I've seen plenty of them by now. It just always feels a little bit like work. (because it kind of is!)

But that doesn't mean I don't want to try and understand the allure of *Jeopardy!*...

So when this episode - all about fans - ticked closer to production, I thought this was an opportunity to understand why people regularly dedicate a half hour of their day to watching a quiz show.

And I knew just the person who could help me here—

Sylvie Lubow: colleague, friend, *and Jeopardy!* fan. You've probably heard her name before - in the credits of this show - or from the episode about the *Jeopardy!* buzzer.

This is how (and why) - one drizzling May evening, nearing 6:30 - I ended up taking the R train south, into Brooklyn.

Sylvie Lubow: Okay. Welcome to...

Julia Doyle: Cue the obligatory bleep...

Sylvie Lubow: Oh BLEEP. [laughs] Welcome to my parents' home in a neighborhood called Sunset Park. Without numbers attached to the home... we're going in.

Julia Doyle: Sylvie and I are standing in the ground floor entrance of her parents' place: a beautiful old brownstone in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. This is the first time I'm meeting her parents.

Sylvie Lubow: My mom's on a Zoom right now.

Julia Doyle: I'm sorry.

Sylvie Lubow: That's okay. You're gonna, are you gonna be off soon?

Julia Doyle: Sylvie's mom, Bobbie, is sitting at the dining table with her computer – she waves at us as we head up the stairs.

Sylvie Lubow: Look at all these gadgets.

Julia Doyle: Oh, I love it.

Sylvie Lubow: Tennis rackets. Old golf clubs. A pinball machine that my dad wanted to turn into a coffee table.

Julia Doyle: Hmm... I bet Sylvie's dad would get along well with Bob Boden.

We go down a hallway - there's a few loose doors propped up against the walls - into a room with three big bay windows. There's a large mantle and various framed pieces of art. Sylvie's dad, Fred, is sitting on one of the couches.

Fred Lubow: We've filled it with, with a lot of things.

Sylvie: Lots of books.

Fred Lubow: I find things and I bring them home.

Julia Doyle: The room is dotted with curios, doodads, papers, art books...sort of like my family home - but, of course, the big difference is - a large television. *Nice.*

Fred is a wallpaper hanger. And he's got what looks like a small paint scraper on a chain around his neck. He and Bobbie have been in this house for about forty years.

We start talking about the decor...including a portrait of a severe-looking woman, sitting in profile. Sylvie admits the painting scared her when she was little. It scares me a little bit, now.

Fred Lubow: I just thought the painting was really well done...I thought maybe I was, it was a find. I thought maybe I, I found a find.

Sylvie Lubow: Everything is maybe a find. Everything.

Fred Lubow: Not everything, but a lot of things. Yeah, a lot of stuff.

Sylvie Lubow: A lot of things are maybe fines.

Julia Doyle: Sylvie and her dad have a similar sense of humor - they gently rib each other, interspersing sharp remarks with smiles. They also share a love of trivia. And the two of them have clocked a lot of time together watching *Jeopardy!*.

Sylvie Lubow: I feel like we went through a phase where it was like pretty daily.

Julia Doyle: Fred started watching *Jeopardy!* when he was in high school, back when Art Fleming was still the host. He's remained a pretty consistent viewer and when Sylvie was a little kid, she started to watch with him.

Then, they started playing along together.

Sylvie Lubow: I would have a sheet of paper. He would have a sheet of paper, pen, pencil, whatever. You would keep track of your own score. Um, We don't, we don't buzz. It's just like whoever answers first and Final Jeopardy!, you have to write it down. You're not allowed to say until it's time to say.

Julia Doyle: Sylvie also remembers playing along with a *Jeopardy!* computer game.

Sylvie Lubow: I remember we had like a CD rom or a disc, and he would, Alex would always say he had some funny line about being a maven, and this was a vocabulary word that I always knew after that.

Fred Lubow: So he taught you Yiddish? A Maven.

Sylvie Lubow: A Maven. That's Yiddish?

Fred Lubow: Absolutely. A Maven. Are you amazed?

Sylvie Lubow: I'm amazed! Oy vey, I'm a amazed.

Julia Doyle: Sylvie and her dad aren't the only *Jeopardy!* fans in the family.

Sylvie Lubow: My mom's aunt, so my great-Aunt B, she was a *Jeopardy!* fan. Oh yeah. You were not allowed to call her on the phone from 7 to 7:30. Couldn't call.

Fred Lubow: Or she wouldn't answer the phone, you know?

Sylvie Lubow: No.

Fred Lubow: She would scold you. Yeah. *Jeopardy!*'s on, don't you know?

Sylvie Lubow: Yeah. And a bunch of my mom's cousins are also big *Jeopardy!* fans, but we've never played like *Family Jeopardy!*. No. Oh. Ooh. Who do you think would win?

Julia Doyle: They look at each other, calculating who would be the toughest competition

Fred Lubow: Who's playing? Who am I playing against? Like, Carrie...

Sylvie Lubow: Carrie, and June. June, you, me.

Fred Lubow: They're pretty smart, but I, I like my chances.

Sylvie Lubow: Laughs

Julia Doyle: Fred tells me he's always had a pretty good memory for random bits of information. Sylvie concurs.

Sylvie Lubow: I always thought he should go on *Jeopardy!*. When I was a kid watching with him, I always said, dad you should be on *Jeopardy!*.

Fred Lubow: I missed my opportunity.

Sylvie Lubow: That's his excuse now. Well, he's too old.

Fred Lubow: Too old, well, yes. Too old to have the quick recall.

Sylvie Lubow: Right. You know what you, you'll say, oh, the answer's gonna start with an S or something like that.

Julia Doyle: Sylvie, her dad, Aunt B, all these cousins – I wanted to know what keeps them watching.

Sylvie Lubow: I like that it's competitive, that there's dollars that are given and taken away. And yeah, it was always fun if I won, you know, it was always fun to beat you. I thought you were like the smartest guy growing up. I've learned since then. Oh, kidding.

Ambi

Julia Doyle: The jokes continued, along with stories about other games they'd mastered over the years — Balderdash, Set, Jotto. But the big glowing screen beckoned everyone back to the mission at hand.

The moment we'd been waiting for, it was time for Jeopardy.

Fred Lubow: Volume up.

Sylvie Lubow: Okay. Oh my God.

Fred Lubow: It's alright. They don't start, you don't jump right into it. They're gonna introduce the contestants.

Sylvie Lubow: Are we gonna try to keep score? We're gonna do our best.

Fred Lubow: We can try.

Julia Doyle: On screen, the contestants and the host (tonight it's Mayim) take their positions behind the lecterns. In Sunset Park, Brooklyn, Sylvie and Fred take their positions on opposite sides of the couch.

ARCHIVAL:

Mayim Bialik: *Good luck as we head into the Jeopardy! round with these categories. Thanks a million, Con must go–You'll remove CON from the front of a word to get the response. Teaching, Some Anagrams, State of the Union, and that's a wrap everybody.*

Lynn, as our returning champ, you select first.

Contestant: *Let's go with con must go 400.*

Mayim: *We can agree to remove con from a word of unity to get this string or twine. Ed.*

Contestant: *What is cord?*

Mayim: *Yes*

Contestant: *Con must go 600. We can verify that removing con from the front of a word leaves us in this place where lawyers work.*

Mayim: *Affirm.*

Contestant: *Con must go. 800.*

Mayim: *The act of taking land by force abandons con to go on a this, perhaps to seek more land to take by force.*

Sylvie and Fred: *What is Quest? I'll give that to both of us.*

Contestant: *What is Quest?*

Julia Doyle: Some of the categories struck me as mind-bogglingly difficult - anagrams to decipher, esoteric terms, US history questions that left me wondering what I had learned in school. Why would anyone want to subject themselves to this?

But as Sylvie and Fred murmured their guesses, it struck me that they were getting more right than wrong.

ARCHIVAL:

Mayim: *About 30,000 men were of military age in this new state during the Civil War, 20,000 Jay Hawkens signed up for Union Duty.*

Fred Lubow: *What is Kansas*

Mayim: *Lynn?*

Contestant: *What is Kansas?*

Mayim: *Yes.*

Contestant: *That's a wrap everybody. 800.*

Mayim: *This chain filled the biggest Postmates order of 2019. 220 items including 20 crunch Wrap Supremes.*

Sylvie Lubow: *What is Taco Bell?*

Contestant: *What is Taco Bell?*

Mayim: *Yes.*

Julia Doyle: The double doors to the room open: Bobbie wants to watch too. Then a surprise guest - Sylvie's sister Molly shows up. The whole family's here now.

AMBI:

Sylvie Lubow: *You wanna play? Do you want Jeopardy!? Come on.*

Molly Lubow: *I'm not good.*

Sylvie Lubow: *Like, it's like our family has a division of sorts.*

We all play games together. We're competitive.

Molly Lubow: *Yeah, but you, I'm not good at Jeopardy! and you guys are...*

Julia Doyle: Molly and Bobbie claimed they weren't *Jeopardy!* players but once they sat down, sharing a large armchair, they started answering questions too...and getting them right.

AMBI:

Mayim: *This loose skirt-like wrap is noted for its traditional use in the Malay Archipelago.*

Molly Lubow: *Sarong.*

Julia Doyle: Sarong *was* correct. That so-called family division - those who play *Jeopardy!*, and those who don't - didn't seem to exist anymore.

AMBI:

Mayim: *In a 1969 novel, Sunny Michael...*

Sylvie Lubow: *What is The Godfather?*

Julia Doyle: Admittedly, I didn't get the family reference, but I was starting to get a feel for the game - its consistent rhythms, its carefully crafted clues - each one building on the next - it got me thinking. Maybe there were some answers lurking around in the recesses of my mind.

To be clear, I had no plans to participate in the game.

But then a clue about a 1952 novel with the names Caleb & Aaron came up... I knew the answer — and shouted it out.

Julia Doyle: *East of Eden.*

Contestant: *What is East of Eden?*

Sylvie Lubow: *Julia's getting in on it!*

Julia Doyle: Sylvie's family cheered for me - and I felt a deep rush of pride. Some random information in *my* head was useful. Maybe that's part of *Jeopardy!*'s magic - there is something for everyone.

Mayim: *All those unsolicited emails you receive are quickly forgotten with this mental condition.*

Sylvie Lubow: *It's spam-nesia.*

Molly Lubow: *Wow. I don't even understand this category.*

Julia Doyle: The game continued in high spirits. And twenty-two minutes seemed to fly by, because suddenly we were on the precipice of Final Jeopardy!.

Mayim: *Classical music. Make your wagers.*

Sylvie's mother: *This is not the classical music crowd.*

Julia Doyle: Classical Music. Ooh. The Lubows moan with despair. Fred and Sylvie strategize during the commercial break. I'm surprised how nervous I am - suddenly the stakes feel high.

Fred Lubow: *I wager everything.*

Julia Doyle: Despite his lack of confidence in the category, Fred's going big. Sylvie, on the other hand, bets more conservatively.

Sylvie Lubow: *I'm wagering 2000.*

MUX: **Fun, suspenseful beat**

Julia Doyle: Find out who the family champion is, after the break.

Act II

Julia Doyle: Okay, so we're back from our commercial break - Sylvie and Fred are preparing for Final Jeopardy!. The question is as arcane as the category promised:

Mayim: *Category is classical music...When the opera Lohengrin premiered in 1850 this man, a future in-law of the composer, was the conductor. You have 30 seconds. Good luck.*

Julia Doyle: Sylvie and Fred tap their pens. The feeling in the room is pensive, somber: no one, it seems, is going to get this one.

Sylvie Lubow: *A future in-law. This man, a future in-law of the composer...*

Julia Doyle: Sylvie gives her dad a resigned look, and writes down *Who is Liszt?* As in Franz Liszt. She tilts her paper to show us.

Mayim: *We'll start with our returning champ. Lynn, what did you come up with? Who is Toscanini? Unfortunately that is not correct. And how much did you wager? 5,000.*

We'll go over to Ed Peterson. What did you come up with? Hayden. Who is Hayden? That is not correct. And how much is that gonna cost you? \$2,401. Leaving you with 7,999.

Joyce, what was your response? [indiscernible] That is also not correct.

Julia Doyle: On the TV, the contestants come up with the wrong answers. Now, we'll finally know —

Mayim: Liszt.

Sylvie Lubow: Shut up! Shut upppp! Oh yeah, baby!!!!

Julia Doyle: In case you missed it: every single *Jeopardy!* contestant got Final Jeopardy! wrong. But Sylvie, Team Liszt, got it right.

Molly Lubow: Wait, kid. How? Imagine if you.... should you go on Jeopardy!?

Julia Doyle: Sylvie waves her paper in the air. She won! Her family's surprised, but not *that* surprised at her abilities.

And with that the Lubows got up - and went downstairs for dinner.

Buzzy Cohen: Wonder if this will turn Julia into a *Jeopardy!* watcher...we'll see. For now, back to the fans.

Sylvie's not the *only* one to celebrate getting a Final Jeopardy! answer that no one else got.

Actor Tess Bartholomew remembers getting a text about this very feat—from her dad.

Tess Bartholomew: Just recently, I remember my dad answered a Final Jeopardy question and none of the contestants got it.

And he not only told us about it in our family thread, he sent the video. He was like, if you guys missed it, here's what the question was. Here's what happened on the show. This is the answer I gave and everyone else got it wrong.

If he had social media, he would've posted it for sure, but he doesn't.

Buzzy Cohen: Tess comes from a family of *Jeopardy!* obsessives, who are pretty competitive.

They all live in LA, and regularly get together to watch the show.

Tess Bartholomew: For the most part, we have our particular niches, right? So like I am a pop culture movie person first and foremost. That's my jam... and my brother and I will get together for like three and a half hours on a Wednesday, go to Alamo Draft House and go to trivia night.

So yeah, it just comes naturally that we would continue the tradition for the rest of our lives.

Buzzy Cohen: But even for the most dedicated trivia families, sometimes they have to make a difficult choice...

MUSIC: Energetic, suspenseful music begins

About ten years ago, Tess' family cut the cord. And by that I mean, they stopped paying for cable. They weren't worried about missing sports games, and there were streamers for all their favorite tv shows... except for *Jeopardy!*.

Tess Bartholomew: We were like, oh no, what are we gonna do? Like I've literally considered getting cable just for that.

But instead of doing that, we figured out, well, my dad did — that getting a digital antenna would work so that we could watch *Jeopardy!* that way.

And he got it at like a Dollar Tree, so it literally had one of those giant stickers that was like, like \$1 and 99 digital antenna. And so he bought one for each of us.

Buzzy Cohen: These are explicitly for *Jeopardy!* use. And it keeps them in check because first of all, you can't be late.

Tess Bartholomew: Another thing about digital antennas is...oftentimes it will not work if you're like sitting in the room at the wrong place. Like it has to be in the right spot. So like we'll have nights where my dad is literally just like waving the antenna around, like trying to find the right signal, and he is like, oh, it's right here. And then you can't move from that spot.

Buzzy Cohen: Half of the battle is figuring out what will get the antenna to work properly.

Whether it's crowding around the screen, one brave person holding the antenna in the air, or crouching for thirty minutes, balancing a digital antenna on a stool (as Tess' dad did), there's something about this show that inspires people to go to almost any length to watch it.

Tess Bartholomew: We kind of like the fact that it's so ridiculous. You know? We're like, this is really funny. Like, I like to laugh at my dad with his hand in the air, waving the digital antenna around, you know, so part of me thinks like, oh, it would be boring if I just opened Hulu... like I would miss the chaos, I don't know....

Buzzy Cohen: This is some serious commitment and a bit zany too, but I'm allowed to say that. Because I also have a digital antenna and that's how I watch *Jeopardy!*.

Still, I started to wonder, with all this commitment to *watching* the show, had Tess' family ever thought about trying to get *on* the show?

Tess Bartholomew: It has always been like a secret dream, I think of all of ours. I think we're a little bit scared. You know, like it's just a very nerve-wracking thing. And then, and then what happens if we embarrass ourselves or not win? Like do we stop watching?

Buzzy Cohen: When you've got a lifelong ritual like this - something you cherish, you look forward to something that connects you backwards and forwards with your family, your history, and your children.

What happens when you finally close the gap between viewer and participant?

Find out more, after the break.

Act III

Jesse Chin: It's really surreal just that, that this moment has come and this day has come and I can finally start talking about it to people and people actually know what's going on.

Buzzy Cohen: Thursday, May 25th. Jesse Chin is sitting at a table in Shaku Ramen, a restaurant off of Northern Boulevard in Flushing Queens. He's a little nervous but mostly excited.

The 41 year old accountant finally gets to reveal something that's been months in the making. He was a contestant on *Jeopardy!* and, tonight, his episode is finally airing.

Jesse Chin: I'm gonna double check to see if anyone's outside or lost.

Buzzy Cohen: He's hosting a watch party to celebrate his big debut—at a bar in the restaurant's basement. Speakeasy style.

Jesse has always been good at *Jeopardy!* - although he did let us in on a little trick he'd play...

Jesse Chin: I actually watched *Jeopardy!* since I was five or six years old when I knew it existed. So I would instantaneously turn the TV onto that channel.

We also used to have a second channel here that used to air the show at 6:00 PM and sometimes I would watch it a little earlier than everyone else. And then when we had our 7:00 PM dinners, I would kind of amaze everyone at like seven years old answering all the questions and everyone would be looking at me like, what's going on here? How does this kid know about nuclear physics?

Buzzy Cohen: Jesse tried out for *Jeopardy!* when he was in high school—when it was still an in-person test. But didn't make the cut, and for 20 years he didn't think about trying out again, even though he kept watching *Jeopardy!*.

Jesse Chin: During the pandemic, I was like, all right, let's give it a shot. And then I took it, I got the email saying, *Hey, do you want to take a Zoom interview and you know, test game session?* And I was like let's do it.

Buzzy Cohen: Jesse nailed his audition and then got the call.

Julia Doyle: Oh, I did want to ask you too... is there anyone's reaction tonight that you're like super curious about? Nervous or excited?

Buzzy Cohen: Remember Julia, the producer from Act I? That is her asking the question.

Jesse Chin: You're gonna probably focus on my mom. She's gonna be really loud. Julia Doyle: [laughs] Good to know I'll keep an eye out for her.

Buzzy Cohen: He's invited family, friends, and coworkers to watch tonight's game. But he's also invited people he met during his *Jeopardy!* tape day, like Joyce Sun, and people he competed against, like Megan Braught.

Megan Braught: I made a group chat for our tape day. Everyone who was there that tape day.

Buzzy Cohen: This is Megan.

Megan Braught: I was the youngest one there, so I said I had an obligation as the resident Gen Z contestant to create a group chat with all of us. And we've all been super active in it and so supportive of everyone's episodes this week and then the two alternates whose episodes will be next week.

Buzzy Cohen: Megan lives in Pennsylvania but had a *very* important engagement in New York - and the timing worked out perfectly for the shared watch party.

Megan Braught: I actually was already in the city, cuz I'm seeing Taylor Swift this weekend. So I've had the tickets for ages. That was always the plan.

Buzzy Cohen: A bonafide Swiftie like myself, Megan even saw a few of Taylor's shows before her *Jeopardy!* taping too.

Megan Braught: You'll hear in the episode, I have no voice. I'm very hoarse because I was at the opening night and then the second night of the ERAS tour, um, screaming my lungs out. And I was going through lozenges like crazy, like for the rest of the days. I was like, I've gotta get this voice in shape.

Buzzy Cohen: In another corner of the bar, Jesse's cousin, Stewart, is recounting some of Jesse's earlier accomplishments.

Stewart: And who would've thought? Third grade spelling bee. Third grade. This has been a long time coming. This is where it all started. Long time in the making. My Jesse. Mm-hmm. Third grade, spelling bee. Long time in the making.

Buzzy Cohen: Then Jesse's sister joins the conversation.

Stewart: She thought she was the smartest, but no, no, no she...

Elaine: I know. I thought...

Stewart: You're not the smartest.

Elaine: I lost the bragging rights.

Buzzy Cohen: It's nearly 7 - which is when *Jeopardy!* airs in New York. People are settling onto leather couches, getting drinks, keeping an eye on one of the TVs mounted on the wall.

There are themed cocktails befitting of the evening: Chin *& Juice, a Megroni, and a Belv-ED-dere & Soda.

All homages to tonight's *Jeopardy!* contestants: Jesse Chin, Megan Braught, and Ed Petersen, who's hosting his own party in Orlando.

A few minutes before the start, people start passing out Gatorades. Jesse calls for quiet —

Jesse Chin: Everyone. All right. Thank you for coming. Hold on. I just want to thank everyone for coming. Uh, so during our tape day, me and Megan and Joyce and a bunch of other lovely people, we got together and we had like a really stupid bonding moment over Gatorade.

So like we just dubbed our taping day Team Gatorade. Um, so I just want to take this time out. If everyone could just open up your bottles.

All right. Can everyone just open your bottles and just say, Team Gatorade on 1, 2, 3. Team Gatorade. Thank you guys. Thanks for coming. I hope you enjoyed the episode and just have fun!

Buzzy Cohen: The mood is lively, excited, and as the clock ticks closer to 7, increasingly nervous.

*AMBI: Everybody shut up *Jeopardy! theme music ***

Buzzy Cohen: The room turns their attention to the TV. The music goes off. They pan through the contestants. This is what everyone has been waiting for.

ARCHIVAL:

Mayim: The part of a flag farthest from the pole is the fly. The part closest to it is this, which sounds like what you did:

Contestant: Hoist.

Mayim: Yes.

Buzzy Cohen: The game is underway and is soon peppered with commentary, even some good-natured heckling.

AMBI

Buzzy Cohen: The TV versions of Jesse, Megan, and Ed answer questions about flags, airlines, bodies of water, and also tax forms.

Mayim: Let's get back to the game, Megan.

Contestant: Numerical words and phrases for 200.

Mayim: It's the basic form most taxpayers use to report income and file their return.

Contestant: What is w2?

Mayim: No.

Contestant: What is W four?

Mayim: Nope. That'd be a 1040.

Buzzy Cohen: At the end of the first round—Ed's in the lead, followed by Jesse, and Megan. People refresh their drinks and drift towards the table under the TV where there's now a buffet of food: small bowls of shishito peppers, skewers of meat and fish.

And the friendly ribbing keeps going...

Elaine: You're an accounting director, but you couldn't get 1040.

Jesse: You wanna know what happened? You and Ed totally threw me off with that accounting question and I thought I misread the question.

Buzzy Cohen: We get some mid-game commentary from Megan.

Megan: I definitely was intimidated by the first category. Um, I just don't know a lot about flag terminology and I think it, it, it scared me. I think that threw me off a bit.

Buzzy Cohen: These are fans turned contestants - turned fans again, as they watch themselves reliving this tape day.

Megan There was a clue I answered. I like was sitting here. I'm like, I don't know the answer to that. And then I answered it on screen. I was like, oh, I guess I do.

No, this is crazy. This is surreal. But I'm having a blast. I was worried I was gonna hate it, like I was gonna be miserable and I'm really enjoying this.

Buzzy Cohen: The room is abuzz with analysis.

Daniel: I saw the sweat on the brow and he made it, cracked a joke, but I could tell he was a little nervous.

Buzzy Cohen: This is one of Jesse's friends, Daniel.

Daniel: I hope he wins, but like, you know, at the same time, he needs to work for it. You know? I don't want him to, I don't want him to get it so easy. No, no, no...

Buzzy Cohen: There are a few people in the room who know exactly what will happen tonight. But it still feels like everyone is on the edge of their seat - anything could happen.

Commercial break ends. The game starts back up. The room cheers through the contestant interviews - where we learn that Megan has a ritual for predicting Oscar nominations, Jesse and his wife got married at Disneyland, and Ed has an impressive magnet collection. Classic *Jeopardy!* interviews.

Then comes the Double Jeopardy round - with questions about music, Shakespeare, politicians, Euro coins, and crossword clues that start with "V."

ARCHIVAL:

Mayim: Fashioned from an old English nursery rhyme, Simon and Garfunkel's, April Come She Will, was featured in this 1967 film. Ed,

Contestant: what is the graduate?

Mayim: Yes

Buzzy Cohen: There's a tricky Shakespeare clue—and some confusion between Nancy Pelosi and Dianne Feinstein.

But soon, Jesse is in the lead, and the room is largely wondering how he'll fare with Final Jeopardy.

The category: Asia. The question: *Trained as an engineer, Premier Li Peng championed this in 1992; it would ultimately displace over a million people.*

Mayim: How much are we gonna add to your score? [indiscernible]

We'll go over to Ed Peterson our returning champ. Your response. What is the Three Gorges Dam. And how much are we gonna add to your score....

Buzzy Cohen: Megan and Ed get the answer right, now it's Jesse's turn.

Mayim: What did you write down? The Three Gorges River Dam.

Buzzy Cohen: The crowd goes wild - and then again, when they realize Jesse didn't just get Final Jeopardy - he won the game...

[cheering]

[Ambi] I can't believe you won, man. I can't believe it. Gatorade shower!

Buzzy Cohen: Gatorade for everyone! Gatorade raining down...and there are cheers, hugs, Jesse unzips his sweater to reveal his bright blue shirt: Future Jeopardy Champion.

His mom is beaming, and she gives her son a big kiss on the cheek.

Jesse's Mother: Oh my God. You don't know how happy... my baby.

Ahhhhh!

Buzzy Cohen: The joy is palpable.

THEME MUSIC

Buzzy Cohen: So now I had to ask Julia - who was at the watch party, who spent an evening at Chez Lubow, who went digital antenna with Tess - did she finally get it now?

Was our resident TV / *Jeopardy!* novice feeling a little bit of the Alex Trebek stage magic?

Julia Doyle: Well, to be clear, I still don't own a TV, so I think superfandom isn't in the cards for me right now. But, I definitely get the allure, the devotion, and yes, the magic.

Also, Lubows, if you're listening, can I stay for dinner next time?

THEME MUSIC

Next week on This Is Jeopardy! The Story of America's Favorite Quiz Show:

Danielle Stillman: We first met our, uh, at our audition in December, 2015. I was there early.

Lincoln Hamilton: And I was there very late.

Buzzy Cohen: This is Jeopardy! The Story of America's Favorite Quiz Show is a production of Sony Music Entertainment and Sony Pictures TV.

It's hosted by me, Buzzy Cohen.

This episode was produced by Julia Doyle.

The series producers are Julia Doyle, Rob Dozier, Sylvie Lubow, and Mia Warren.

Associate Producer is Serena Chow.

Our series editor is Sarah Kramer.

Executive producers are Lizzie Jacobs, Tom Koenig, Sarah Kramer, Michael Davies, and Suzanne Prete.

Production Management help from Susonya Davenport, Tameeka Ballance-Kolasny, and Ike Egbetola.

Our theme music was composed by Hannis Brown.

Cedric Wilson is our engineer.

Special thanks to Charlie Yedor and Steve Ackerman.

And a big, big thank you to the Jeopardy! staff and crew for all their time and help on this. Shout out to Alexa Macchia.

If you loved the show, follow us on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Amazon Music, Stitcher, or wherever you get your podcasts.

CITATION

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