

-- Speaker 1 00:00:19 Welcome everybody to episode 10 of the WP mainline podcast for Thursday, September 2nd, 2021. I am your host, Jeff Chiller and joined by John James. I just want to pinch your cheeks. Jacoby.

Speaker 2 00:00:33 My cheeks of the red dinosaur cheese.

Speaker 1 00:00:35 No, no, no. Your, your cheeks don't mention the right dentist. So I'm here. Come on, man. Well, I'm bro, that stuff's supposed to be a NDA. You signed about the red day

Speaker 2 00:00:43 As well. That's out the window now,

Speaker 1 00:00:46 I suppose, but John's referencing, uh, before the show I was telling him about, I have a stuffy little red dinosaur on here and if it wasn't for Twitter, which is my gateway to the outside world. And I just sit here and I talked to the red Dennis, and I say, John, John, talk to me, John, what do you think I should do? And he just looks at me with these big googly eyes. He never says anything, but I love him anyways. So there you go. If anything ever happens to you, you live on as this stuff for a Dennis on Jeff Smith. Good to know. Well, how's your week going, sir?

Speaker 2 00:01:20 Uh, it was good. We, uh, Carrie and I went camping last weekend. We were in,

Speaker 1 00:01:25 You had to take, now you want to go again

Speaker 2 00:01:27 To, we did go again and it would, if it was hot, hot and soupy and it was humid and everything was just bugs galore. There was tons of bugs and full of flies. Very bad boat. We survived. It was fine. It was a lot of fun. And, uh, here we are

Speaker 1 00:01:46 Good, good to go. That's why you went to experience all of that and then come home and here's penny there's Paul, and then there's no bugs. We brought

Speaker 2 00:01:54 The dogs with us, which was a whole other experience because they're there in door dogs for sure. Oh man. Did, were they scared or they were scared in the tent when it was raining. Uh, penny does not like thunderstorms and uh, so we, uh, I didn't get much sleep the first night. That's okay.

Speaker 1 00:02:18 Yeah, I've actually been struggling, sleeping myself, just tossing and turning. I don't know what it is. I can't get me a good night's sleep. Um, uh, by the way, before we get into today's episode, we have an awesome guest lined up and we're going to probably go back in time. It's going to be like a WordPress time capsule. So I'm looking forward to it. Um, I do have advertising available now for the show. So if you're interested in getting your product service or some sort of message out there to our listeners, you can visit WPmainline.com hover over the podcast link. And you'll see, uh, a new LinkedIn advertising information. So you can buy a block of episodes and, uh, contribute to the show me out and, uh, get your message out to our listeners. So if you're interested to check that out and also if you can, if you're not already subscribed, check out the latest episode of the do the Wu podcast by Bob WP or Bob Dunn.

Speaker 1 00:03:14 Uh, he recently hand me on the show and we covered a lot of ground related to WP mainline, um, trains and just general WordPress stuff overall. And I, I don't know what Bob did to me, but after being on a show, I think he, I think he hypnotize me because now I'm actually doing the loo. So I, uh, I actually have WooCommerce installed on WP main line and I'm using it to sell a product called podcasts advertising. So I'm using it to manage a stock and be able to sell episodes. And now I'm paying who commerce.com \$29 a year because I needed to use an extension to manage minimum and maximum numbers for my orders. And, you know, at first I was complaining about it and then Brad Williams asked me on Twitter. He says, well, how much would it cost you to come up with that code or to write that code yourself?

Speaker 1 00:04:07 And I said, bro, I already went through the checkout process. You don't have to tell me, you don't have to ask me a question. So, you know, \$29, that's nothing. If, uh, you know, get a couple of advertising packages purchased here or there and get a couple new members, \$29 piece of cake, no problem. But I will say this is my first time finally having a legitimate use of WooCommerce and the, uh, the setup sort of the setup wizard that they have onboarding wizard. And I thought it was fine. It worked good, setting up new commerce was good or what commerce payments. And I found out through purc --

-- having an extension. I will come to snack time after you make the purchase on the checkout or purchase page. There's a way to connect your site from woocommerce.com to your site and will automatically install and activate the extension for you, right from the purchase page, which I thought was really cool.

Speaker 2 00:05:03 Like it's really convenient, pretty sweet. We have, uh, we've had that in mind and had it somewhat planned out for easy digital downloads for a long time and just never prioritized it, but it's pretty cool. And that works well. I agree.

Speaker 1 00:05:19 Yeah. So, so now I have between blue commerce give WP and paid membership pro I'm starting to lose track of all these checkout forms I have on WP mainline for, for people to give me money. But, uh, Hey, it's, this is a new experience for me, this new products I get to use new, uh, uh, plugins and whatnot. So it's providing an increased depth of knowledge of WordPress. And, uh, I've already found like two bugs in certain things. And in some of the stuff I'm using, but it's, it's nice because, uh, some of the people who follow me on Twitter, I've reported these things and boom, they go right in, they've issued, put my bugs under the boat tracker and they're already working on it. I'm doing my part to contribute to WordPress both financially and through Twitter.

Speaker 2 00:06:10 There are look at Chico.

Speaker 1 00:06:12 Yeah, look at me, go. All right. So with that said, let me introduce today's special guest. I've been looking forward to this. It's a man who most who almost needs no introduction, but I'm going to introduce him anyways. His name is Brian Gardner, and you may have heard of him through the likes of studio press or way, way back in the day, their revolution theme. Yeah. See, now I'm going way back. And, uh, he's here, uh, on the show from Chicago. Hello, Mr. Brian Garner. Thank you very much for being on the show today,

Speaker 2 00:06:44 Gentlemen, it is most definitely a pleasure of mine. Uh, I will say this though, as you, as we talk about nostalgia, sort of the pre pre-show stuff. And, uh, even the mention of revolution every time I hear that my brain thinks the same thing I've written over and over again, which was 10 years ago, which I was doing five years ago, which now means that we're 15 years ago from all that, that floors me, that that is completely mind blowing that, uh, all of this stuff, all of that stuff. I mean, we were, we've all been around since then, but, uh, yeah, that's a little bit of a trip,

Speaker 1 00:07:19 Man. I had this, this is cool. So I have you on the show and I can pretty much ask you any question that comes to mind and, you know, I'll just start with the, with the going way back. We'll start there first because cause I have this opportunity, but uh, looking back at the revolution theme, first of all, perfect name for ended up being an actual revolution in the WordPress space. But uh, I mean what, looking back at it, is there anything, uh, that sort of comes to mind in terms of, did you see that kind of response or did you ever think that revolution theme would, uh, turn into what it did?

Speaker 2 00:08:00 Uh, I did not. I mean, I can't sit here and say that I knew when I did this or launched it or, you know, sent the email to the first list or whatever that it was going to completely change my life, but also alter the trajectory that WordPress itself went through. Um, I will say this, I, it revolution, this is like one of the big lessons and business lessons in life. I learned at a very early age. Uh, revolution was not the perfect name from the perspective of it was being used for something somewhat similar. And I got a cease and desist. And so that was like the first lesson in life was don't you can't just call something what you want. And so ever since then I've done excessive due diligence. And my mom wrote a book on copyright also. So like there's, you know, people think it's, it's, it's all fun and games and it is for the most part, but there has to be an element of big Boyness or big girlness right in, in all of this. And so, uh, come up with an idea don't you, you just can't launch it. It just doesn't work like that. And, uh, and so that was a pretty good lesson, uh, outside of the gallery part, yes, revolution, uh, was perfect. It was spot on, it was, uh, you know, revolutionized the way people use WordPress. And so, you know, I --

-- , I sort of take pride in, you know, being around in that time and being a part of that movement, uh, and just really glad that I'm still here. Believe it or not.

Speaker 1 00:09:26 We're we're talking about what was it? 2008, 2009, I think 2006. Oh my God, Jesus. Like that's way, way, way back. Oh my goodness gracious. Oh man. The WordPress days back then where it was, I found it difficult just to add sidebars. In fact, I don't think I've ever edited a sidebar through the, through PHP before and a theme. I'm like, I'm like, why can't the theme author? Just put everything as a sidebar. So wherever I want to put a widget, I can put a widget. You know, I just work that way back then.

Speaker 2 00:10:00 No, but back before there was a menus UI. Even you were using pages for a your, your, your hierarchical menu layout, the only thing you had was pages.

Speaker 1 00:10:12 So after, after revolution, uh, obviously with the cease and desist, when that we come to studio press, and then we go through this sort of mini era, I don't know if we're still in this era, but we went through a, uh, an era of theme of framework. So it started to seem like everybody and all these different Dean developers had a theme framework to base their designs off of, or had similar functions or tools that they were building their theme. Now they had like a foundation they could build, they could build off of since with common CSS and common rules or common functionality or whatnot, studio press had the Genesis framework. And, uh, how did, how did that framework transform your business?

Speaker 2 00:10:57 You know, as I think about it, I'm pretty, pretty good with naming stuff because Genesis itself was a pretty good, uh, pretty good name, kind of for what it was, although, um, there probably a few people in this space who thinks that their theme framework stuff, uh, sort of predated Genesis, but that's, that's fine. Um, Genesis transformed it in a way. Uh, you know, it's funny Nathan Rice and I have always sort of had this relationship where, um, from a program standpoint, I would talk to him in English and say, is it possible to do this? And basically he would write like, kind of write it back to me in the PHP version of it. Like in other words, I would say, you know, if header goes left, can, you know, such and such thing happened, right. So we would always kind of talk like that.

Speaker 2 00:11:41 And so, uh, I, I do remember, uh, very early on once he came on board and I said to him, I'm like, look, you know, all of these studio press themes that we have, you know, there's a lot of redundancy in the code, in the themes, functions, files, and markup and all of these things. I'm like, is there a way to just like extract all of that, put it in its thing, right. Because that's what I called was put it in a thing. And then just sorta like have like a skin, which is essentially a child theme so that I could do design stuff, but not having to like, uh, you know, just not reinvent the wheel. Cause it was just all similar code, but what would happen is like there would be a new way of doing something and then I'd have to go back and update eight different themes because they all use sort of some derivative of what I had built to begin with.

Speaker 2 00:12:26 And so, uh, that was sort of the, the reasoning behind an early conversations around Genesis, uh, which at the time I was really naive, I was like, let's call it core, like a core theme, but then he's like, you can't do that. That's what we're press calls itself. I was like, yeah, you're right. That's probably not smart. So, uh, so it's just another little window into sort of naming, but, um, but yeah, Genesis what really changed and all of that, I mean, that just helped me build the product. Um, but what happened was sort of through that, the adoption of, and the fallout of some other things that we just won't talk about today. Um, the development community really adopted the way Genesis had been built. And that really is why Genesis became what it did. And, um, you know, I even just yesterday, uh, was talking to somebody and had mentioned sort of the accidental illness of the, like the developer community that formed around the product itself.

Speaker 2 00:13:24 And, um, that was something I had no idea what was going to happen. I was just going to sell a bunch of themes to end users and do well, but, uh, that was sort of the, the, just th --

-- e accidental illness of, of it all that the developer community became what it did with Genesis. Um, and when I, when I realized, uh, how many people's livelihoods were based on stuff that we had built, even though it was still on top of WordPress. So they used, they needed both, but, you know, there was, um, one instance where it was work camp. I can't remember which word camp it was, but, uh, and this was like the moment when I was like, wow, a woman came walking across the, the, um, the room and she handed me a card and she said, you know, my name is so-and-so. I flew in from Hawaii to meet you. And I wanted to thank you because your product allowed me to leave my job, which I was unhappy with, be home with my kids and build not necessarily a huge little agency, but just, she got to live her dream. And it was that moment where I was like, okay, like, this is why I did what I did and why we do what we do.

Speaker 1 00:14:31 And I remember actually word camp, us Philadelphia. And I had a, there was so many things going on in there, but I managed to run into you at one point in, I remember you telling me that there was going to be a, a sort of a gen, uh, studio presser, Genesis framework meetup there, where there's going to be all of these people and, and users who are going to get together, actually have a meetup. And I remember you saying how much you enjoyed being a part of those meetups and talking to people and just learning about how your products have impacted their lives and how they're you've you've been able to through Genesis framework and through what you're doing, able to allow so many other people to have their dreams come true.

Speaker 2 00:15:15 Yeah. It, it's quite humbling. Um, but I mean, that's what WordPress did for the three of us, same, same thing, you know, piece of software that allowed those who know how to work within it and use it in a way that, you know, that they see fit, build a business around it. And I think we all sort of have similar conversations at some point. And I know I've had them with Matt to saying, Hey, thanks for doing what you did, because if it weren't for you and what you did, I might not be here doing what I'm doing. So I'm exactly,

Speaker 1 00:15:45 And, and sort of, sort of going back in time again, you know, one of the biggest highlights for me are, uh, milestones and as a WordPress historian, sometimes I like to think of myself, but, you know, throughout the 2009, 2010, 2011 era, it was like the GPL era of, of, of WordPress, where everybody under the sun who had some sort of interest in WordPress was talking about GPL. And what is it, derivative work. And how much of, how much of WordPress did you use in order for it to constitute a derivative work? And you were involved in those conversations and many of the other theme shops were involved in those conversations, you know, looking back at it now, do you just kind of laugh about it, laugh at the, at the concerns and laugh at the conversations and laugh at some of the, then that's so behind closed doors conversations that you, and maybe some of the others had with Matt about the GPO and, you know, what were some of your concerns at the time? And, you know, like I said, looking back on it, you just kind of laugh about it now, or do you think, do you think all of that was warranted?

Speaker 2 00:16:52 Yes. And yes. I mean, it was all warranted because, you know, it was all we were selling. This was all new, you know, we were establishing like essentially case law, like, like what, what are we doing here? And there, you know, what is the unofficial jurisdiction on what we can all be doing in that? Because people were making money from a thing that nobody necessarily expected that would become a really, you know, a marketplace for lack of a better phrase. But, um, I mean, of course I look back on it and think, you know, I felt like I was 22 at the time, you know, but again, like I, you know, think of it this way. Like I had left my day job, my, you know, relatively good paying with benefits day job. And I had a young son at home and Shelly wasn't working.

Speaker 2 00:17:34 And so when I kind of revolution turned into like, I guess it was revolution when, when it went fully GPL. So even at that point, I was making really, really good money. And I, it felt like I was doing the thing, even though I really wasn't necessarily. Um, but I needed to validate that. And it was so impor --

-- tant to me to figure out exactly what to do, because I really wanted to swim properly along the big fish, uh, that I flew to San Francisco specifically to sit down in a conference room and talk to Matt about exactly what I was doing, what my model was, what was right. Sort of a thing. And not that he's necessarily the judge, but I mean, have anybody to help, help me understand what the GPL was and how it applies and how to change, if anything, what I'm doing so that, you know, I felt like, and Jeff, I think it was, um, it was on theme shaper, but it may have been in response to something you had said.

Speaker 2 00:18:27 Uh, I remember to this day, and I could probably find the permalink to this comment that he said, I will give significant promotions to anybody who fully embraces the GPL. When I saw that comment, I knew, I knew, and that's when I emailed him directly. I think I replied to the comment, but then I emailed them and said, Hey, can I fly to San Francisco on my dime and talk about this? Because, um, it feels like I'm on the other side of where I should be and I want to be on the side. I should be on. And I remember, I remember that. And so I flew out there and we sat down and we talked about it and, you know, he cashed his check in terms of significant promotion at the time. Uh, I so, so much that I think he even offered to buy, uh, licenses for those who are using alternative pieces of software.

Speaker 1 00:19:13 And he did, he actually spent thousands of dollars. Yes. He did many, many things. Well, there you go. Yeah. I remember at the time when he created the, uh, it was almost like, uh, a whole 100% GPL section on the wordpress.org scene director. And he was promoting companies like studio press, and probably I themes and maybe, maybe press 75 if it was, if it was there at the time. Uh, but there was all these different theme shops he was promoting and he absolutely bought themes from those companies for users, if they asked thousands of dollars worth. So it was very smart of you that's and I can, I can put myself in your shoes. I could see how concerned you'd be in, you know, if you were on the other side of, like you said, if you're on the wrong side or perceived wrong side, or what have you, you know, things could have went, uh, you know, way differently. I would rather be on the side of Matt Payne for my themes for other people to use versus, uh, you know, being on the outside, looking in. Yeah, there

Speaker 2 00:20:16 Were no egos involved here. I didn't have a need to do it my way I won. Well, I mean, I did it in, in my, my, uh, my style, but I wanted to do it the right way.

Speaker 1 00:20:27 Well, fast forward to about what was it, 2018 and big news came out, WP engine acquired city oppressed. Now you described it as the right move at the right time with the right partner. And you, you had been with, you've built up studio press. You were with it for long, for so many years. Um, kind of describe what you mean by the right move at the right time. I mean, this was your baby. This is something you, you, you created that you grew into this very successful company that provided a living for so many people. And so why the decision to,

Speaker 2 00:21:05 Well, th the, the one big part you left out there was that at the time and all the way back in, uh, 2009, I believe studio press had rolled into the larger entity of Copyblogger media. So, yeah, so there's that. And around the time that, you know, 20 18, 20 17, we had established several lines of business, uh, at Copyblogger copyblogger.com. We had launched, um, synthesis, which was like a managed WordPress hosting, also launched, uh, the Rainmaker, uh, uh, platform and podcasts. We had a lot of things going on of which sort of studio press didn't necessarily fall by the wayside, but it was just, we had a lot of people doing a lot of things in the company. And around that time, you know, I was sort of experiencing, is I think Brian was too, Brian started kind of playing around with his little side projects I was doing, I think, no sidebar.

Speaker 2 00:21:57 And I was kind of mentally checking out because it had been so long. And then this thing called Gutenberg was coming. And, you know, at the time I was like, I, you know, we, we were, we had a relatively razor thin, uh, crew on studio press. And so we had started a little movement called studio press sites, which was basically to cannibalize the sy --

-- nthesis brand and try to start to, to simplify the lines of business we had so that we can kind of compartmentalize things because we had, as a company had gone through several rounds of just meeting with folks for investments or acquisitions, and nobody wanted all of it. Cause it was just too many things, you know? And so we were like, okay, so the feedback we got from that was, uh, maybe we should spend some time and try to like kind of isolate each of these lines of business so that they're more, you know, compartments that can be easily deployed in any situation.

Speaker 2 00:22:48 Uh, so it just so happens that, uh, around that time Gutenberg was coming and I, and I talked to our team, I'm like, look, I feel like this is going to be a really big shift in the industry and the way things are done. And I'm not, I didn't feel that we had the team or the ability to execute at the level at which I thought the brand and the community needed. And so I said, either we really need to double down on this and like refocused internally to accommodate this, or it's time. I think we find somebody who can do it justice. And so, uh, this was 2017, maybe the, um, where camp us, December, 2017, Brian Clark and I were down in Nashville for that. Uh, and I think he needed to hear it from me. Like we sat across the table at the steak house right next to the Hilton, and I looked at him in the eye and I said, I don't think you know this, but I'm prepared and ready to emotionally sell studio press.

Speaker 2 00:23:43 Uh, and so at that point, then we just started talking to hosting companies, you know, there was probably a handful of people that made sense, the big, the big ones. And I had in my head, a sort of mental sort of like one through five, like who would be the most, you know, favorite to go to type of thing. And, uh, I'll be honest. And I would tell this to Jason and Heather and I at the time WP engine was at the bottom of that list. I didn't know a whole lot about them. I just sort of seen things from the outside. Uh, but I learned very quickly in the, um, the communication and the, the acquisition process that I had a hundred percent misjudged them. And, um, yeah, that's was the right, you know, it was the right time, the right, the right team to take over and

Speaker 1 00:24:29 Well, Hey, at least it wasn't EIG. We're all thankful for that. Yeah. I'm trying

Speaker 2 00:24:34 To think. I don't think we had any, they were not on that list of people. We had talked to them long before that, just about the whole entity, but when it came to studio press, they were not on that list.

Speaker 1 00:24:45 Wow. That's, that's fascinating. So, um, I imagine through the, here's some, here's some that I want to ask you. I mean, we don't have to get into exact numbers, but I imagine, uh, through the acquisition of studio press, just from the outside, looking in that the acquisition probably involved got six, seven figure tides. It's gotta be seven figures based on your customer or something like the time. So, I mean, with, with that, it just seems to me like why after an acquisition like that, it seemed to me, like you kind of took a break in the WordPress scene, you were doing your own thing, or you also, you co-founded agent engine, which was a digital digital spaces for real estate organizations and whatnot. But from the terms of running the thing business and being like this really active person in the WordPress community, from my perspective, like you took a break and then now you're back. And this kind of brings us to the forefront of what you're working on with frost of yuppie, getting back into the whole thing business. But why, why even, you know, with an acquisition with, with the, with the figures, I'm thinking about why even come back. I mean, it seems like you could just go about your life, pay for the college tuition, have a house, have a kid and just ride off into the sunset. And now you're back.

Speaker 2 00:26:02 Well, without going into detail for very obvious reasons, right. I will say this, uh, you're somewhat off base. Uh, Mr. Miyagi from the karate kid in one scene told Daniel things are not always as they appear. Okay. And so also keep in mind, there were five partners, uh, at Copyblogger and I, all I, all I will say is that it was not, uh, an equal distribution. And even on top of all of that, I, I really do think when someone hears the word acquisition, they immediat

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-- ely, ah, a hundred million dollars. He was living on a beach and I'm like,

Speaker 1 00:26:37 That's me, that's the guy.

Speaker 2 00:26:40 No I'm going to, I will do. I will debunk that myth right now. I in Chicago and I've been to a beach since we sold oppressive. Uh, and so I think just aside from all the other reasons why I'm back, uh, one of which is that I am not a trillionaire, which I think a lot of people, uh, presumed was the case. That being said, you don't need to beat that horse. But that being said, I still needed some time away. I needed to, as I say, walk the proverbial wilderness and just sort of doing and floundering around doing my own thing. And so I, the last three years there's been several little ideas or projects that I've pursued. Uh, agent engine was probably the most formal of them. And that was going to be the next plan, uh, until the pandemic hit and real estate industry went upside down and the real estate agents,

Speaker 1 00:27:28 As a lot of things went upside down.

Speaker 2 00:27:30 Yeah. I mean, the strange thing is that real estate that industry got so hot, you would think, oh, selling stuff to real estate agents would be the perfect time to do it, but they don't have time to think about digital nor have a need to go online to, to market themselves because everybody in their brother was, you know, had a hundred offers on the end. And so, like, I think, I think that will change at some point, like the market will sort of correct itself. And not only that there there's, you know, 25% more real estate agents in the industry because everybody jumped into it. Uh, and so all of a sudden there's going to be like some real stiff competition and some sobering situations. And unfortunately agent engine will probably be long gone by then. Uh, but it was Justin Tadlock. We talked about him earlier.

Speaker 2 00:28:16 Uh, Justin Tadlock had written a post, uh, talking about the block pattern, uh, directory, which@thetimewassortofbetaonwordpress.org. And it's like, I had heard about block patterns and it just seemed like there was just all this vocabulary around Gutenberg and the editor I'm like, okay, you know, I was sort of paying attention. I was sort of not. And I'm like, okay, what is, what is this? I've got time tonight. I'm bored. So I clicked over, I saw like the, the, the tiles of all the different patterns that were there. It wasn't many, but I'm like, let me just see how this works. So I hit the copy button. So was like, what is this copy? How do I copy a pattern? What I do with it? Right. Uh, so I opened up my word press. I think it was my blog or something like that. Just opened up a blank page and just hit paste and the editor and the pattern showed up.

Speaker 2 00:29:01 And I was like, what? It's like, you kinda, you know, we, we, uh, WordPress is really great and it powers so much of the internet, but there's still parts of it where we're like, how can it be that sophisticated that it worked the way we thought it wouldn't kind of a thing. Like, it's gotta be like a more complex way this has to happen, but it really wasn't. It was literally just hitting copy button from some place and pasting it. And it was that night where I was like, I spent more time and I think I ran the next morning and just like really obsessed over like, you know, developing hypothesis in my head around like what I think this is all like, how it works and where it's going. And I did some more, more research. I ripped open a theme I was working on and just started playing around with some things.

Speaker 2 00:29:41 And I, and I very quickly landed on the spot, uh, of, I, I think I have a, sort of a new system that could be built, uh, to deploy multiple designs with only one theme. And so, uh, and on top of that, like, I was also dismissing like WordPress as I had been in it so deeply before. And we were missing you. Well, I, you know, I felt that on some level and, um, I needed my time away. It's kind of like the, the prodigal son, right. You know, on some level. Um, but I just, I miss WordPress. I miss community. I miss building for people. I miss designing stuff. And it's like, you know, like since I'm not on set island in the mamas, like I have a, a duty to do something here. And so it's like, let's just start doing things that feel right.

Speaker 2 00:30:30 And things will fall into place when they will. And you know, here we are four or f --

-- ive months later, and frost is on the verge of hitting the street and a troop beta sense. It's been around for a little while and available for purchase as, um, some, some people on this show might know about, but it's true. I am, uh, I am an early adopter and in my heart. So thank you. When you, when you sent the, uh, uh, you tweeted something and, uh, uh, and I was like, oh yeah, I gotta check this out. Uh, cause I need one, obviously, Brian, we, you and I go back a really long time, but, uh, I was really excited to see what your next project was because, um, because you just have such a, such a good track record of, uh, of seeing like a step or two ahead of what I feel like most other people see.

Speaker 2 00:31:25 And, uh, and I did it like Gutenberg and, uh, um, and like the direction that teams are going is one that I have explored, but not a prioritized really, uh, doing what you have done with frost. And so I knew that you would come up with a solution that I would like. And so I was really excited to check it out and it did not disappoint. Uh, I mean, I already told you that Brian, so more live mostly I'm telling our listeners and Jeff, but, uh, so I'm, I'm writing frost on my blog. Uh, so you go to my blog, you'll, you'll see for us in action. And, uh, it is, uh, it's next level without being,

Speaker 1 00:32:11 Uh, it's cross going to actually get you to write in Gutenberg and publish some posts that already is well. Okay, thanks. Thank you, Brian. Thank you for creating for us for the sake of John John's battle.

Speaker 2 00:32:27 I think it really speaks to sort of, I guess, just my commitment to sort of the WordPress way. And I realized there's a little bit of, you know, uh, sheep in just following the way WordPress is things, but sort of even through Genesis and all that, we always made the, the sort of the fundamental commitment that we would always just do things that were the easiest to do it with inside of, you know, uh, we're breasts. And so when I, when I saw that thing from Tatlock and I was thinking things through, and I'm like, I just, I refuse to come back into WordPress and sort of do things in a, uh, backward compatibility sense or a mindset. Like I'm not going to come back and create like old Genesis themes just to try to do it again. Like if I came back, I made the commitment to myself that I was going to try to learn everything that was going to be in the future and sort of do the escape where the puck is going to be versus where it is thing.

Speaker 2 00:33:17 And I was like, you know, if I will not come back, unless I can do it in a blazing trail kind of way. And so, uh, when I, when I saw that and had the epiphany, I'm like, okay, I think there's still so much resistance even now. And the editor is way, way, way, way better than it was a year or two or three years ago. Uh, and you know, the whole idea of classic breasts. And, and I realized that there's a need for that for bigger agencies or bigger websites and things like that, but just like moving forward for the, the, the, the commonness of WordPress building stuff, unlike there's no other way than to embrace the way the editor is, you know? And I'm like, there's going to be a challenge. Cause I got to learn stuff like steam dot Jason. And like there's some, some stuff that I'm like, I got to do a lot of research, but, uh, I, I missed not doing stuff like that. And so, um, so yeah, so I'm here and I'm loving it and I feel like I'm revolutionizing again, the way things might get done. And that feels pretty good. No,

Speaker 1 00:34:18 I, I love the movie, John wick, and you haven't seen it and we've already, we've already told you that's your first like, put that on the top of your, to do list. And there's a character in their name, Winston and Winston says to Jan wick, have you really thought this through? I mean, to down to the bone, you've got out, once you dip so much as a pinky back into this pond and you may well find something reaches out and drags you back into it, steps, and this is, this is exactly what's happened to you. You've dipped the pinky back into the pond with frost WP. And now you're back. You're telling everybody you're back just like John lake. Does you got to watch that movie, man, there's so many references to what you're doing with WP and what he does in the movie, but a welcome back.

Speaker 2 00:34:58 Well, thank you. I'm going to correct you right now becaus --

-- e I needed, I needed to set this precedent moving forward, uh, for us WP, the only element in that is the domain we're going to the street it's being called frost. Um, so as we refer to it, I would appreciate a frost for just being got the, the thing I didn't want to spend a trillion dollars to get frost.com. So, uh, plus I thought the WP was somewhat expected, but I also knew that I wanted to call it frost and that there would be a challenge in trying to sort of control the branding or the way it's talked about. So, um, so yes, frost is then, uh, and, and yeah, so it,

Speaker 1 00:35:36 And plus I always get away with saying you're working on something cool, because you are.

Speaker 2 00:35:43 Yeah. Here's, here's what I liked about it though. Here's I want to talk about frost before we, before we wrap it up. Here's what I liked about it. I I'm, I'm going to pitch it for Brian since he hasn't pitched it yet. Is that it, it really is an awesome, like middle ground of like a combination of like Gutenberg block patterns, but like three preset patterns with like minimal styling, like, but not so minimal that it doesn't already look good. And then you can easily sort of style on top of it or around it. Like, it's such a cool, I don't want to say framework, but it's like a cool, uh, balance between building a site with a, or building the beginning of something that you're going to customize later with it. Like, it's sort of why you're framing and it's, but it's all very native Gutenberg, WordPress looking at feeling with some special sauce in there that I feel like Gutenberg really needs. And so it, uh, is a very cool piece of software that sort of goes beyond just being like, it's not just a design system. It's not just built on top of Genesis. It's not just these, it's like a combination of multiple things that come together to make it something that I think is really, really cool. So,

Speaker 1 00:37:07 Well, what, what's the difference between what you're accomplishing with black patterns and frost versus, you know, it reminds me, it sounds similar to what people would do with the page templates. Now what's the difference? There is the block pattern, just an evolution of what page template into work

Speaker 2 00:37:28 I don't want to, I don't want, well, like it's, uh, not really. It's, uh, it's sort of the middle ground. Like it's, it's a bunch of presets, preset block patterns that have intentions around them that, uh, so that you, as a user, you don't really have to think a whole lot about them. Like, there is a sort of, uh, like a combination of a hero or a, a profile areas, section blah, blah, block pattern. And there's all these like useful layouts that are just chunks. They're just pieces. They remind me of like a, um, like anyone who's used like tailwind UI, or there's just like a, it's like a, uh, a prefabricated bunch of markup that you can definitely modify because they're all just nested blocks. Uh, but, uh, they come all packaged together in like a nice sort of uniform way, uh, where you can line them up and set them up real quick and build a page, uh, very, very rapidly.

Speaker 2 00:38:31 And, uh, I don't know if that answers the question, but at least, uh, and Brian, you can definitely, you should add to it cause I'm probably not doing a good job, but yeah, I, you know, I think you did. I did it justice, you know, page templates weren't necessarily around like con like preconfigured stuff. Like page templates were always like, I want to use this layout, but just no sidebar. And so like at a very elementary level, for the most part, some of these page templates, like we have stuff with like Genesis, there'd be like a landing page template, which would basically unhook the header and footer and stuff like that. Uh, this is well beyond that. I think, you know, the frost is three, well, frost is two things. It's a theme and it's a library plugin inside the library plugin, uh, our, what John talked about, sort of the wire framing block patterns, which, uh, are demonstrated on the frost wp.com/demo site, more of a black and white sort of build wire frame sort of thing, pre configured sections.

Speaker 2 00:39:31 Uh, but then we also have a thing called page layouts, which are essentially importing sort of live real world, um, single page layouts, like for instance, like maybe you're selling a real estate property. And so it allows me to take the block patterns --

-- and then like bring them to the real world, whether it's a landing page of book sales page or whatever, uh, one click, it just will show up in the editor the way it is. And then you customize from there. And then the third thing, and this is something I'm working on populating now. So John you'll see an update at some point in very quickly, uh, our starter sites, which are very basic, you know, starter sites for very specific, uh, verticals or niches. And the demos are also on the frost wp.com site. There's a starter sites thing. There's six of them that we'll launch with, uh, for those who know me, this is like my way of sort of scratching the design itch and doing it in a way with, with one click. People can have a place to start like a true website about page contact, page homepage, kind of thing. Uh, and so like frost offers, uh, several ways it can be used from rapid prototyping online for clients all the way to just like literally the website in a box kind of thing. Uh, all of which, uh, as John also said, uh, currently, so like it's all built around WordPress core blocks and that's it, like in other words, there was no other black libraries that it requires at the moment. So, um, so again, yeah,

Speaker 1 00:40:56 Back in the day, you know, it used to be themed frameworks and you'd build a child theme that would tap into the pair of theme at K the framework. Um, now, now it sounds like for us, it's kind of the framework and the child theme stuff is not all Gutenberg S with, uh, with the blocks and the block patterns is, is that kind of too simplified of a, of an explanation of that sort of the advancement of between the two?

Speaker 2 00:41:21 No, I wouldn't say it's too simplified. I'd say it's pretty much spot on. Um, yeah, I, you know, I don't have any intentions of frost ever being more than just the one thing that it is, you know, and of course the only caveat is of course when full site editing is fully baked into WordPress. And when that's the thing, frost will sort of naturally evolve into a full site editing theme, uh, time to be determined, but that's of course, you know, WordPress's time timeline too. Like

Speaker 1 00:41:51 I speak in a full site adding, what does that mean to you? What, what, what do you envision or see in the future with frost and the ability for full site I didn't with blocks,

Speaker 2 00:42:01 Uh, not significantly different than what it is now, the only exception being, uh, what Genesis controls, you know, mainly just top to bottom site markup and placement of things will just get cannibalized by, uh, you know, temp, the templating system that ultimately, and I don't know how I feel about this yet, but, um, that we can control a steam authors, but then users can build themselves in the dashboard with the template editor, I think is what it's called, where they can say, Hey, I want to build my landing page template by removing, like, by just creating a new template, putting no header or footer on there, and just, you know, using, uh, blacks to, to fill that. Or, you know, if there's a, you want to have a sidebar on some pages, very easy to build like an entire template that can be used, which includes, you know, I don't know if we call it a sidebar, but maybe there's columns or something like that, but, uh, does different uses. And so I still, I think the jury is still out of my mind on how that's gonna, how that's gonna work. I understand the sentiment behind it. I just don't know. And I think my favorite question will ultimately be, is there a way to like, completely remove the template editor from the dashboard, sort of like, uh, even if it's a display, none, but because I think that just like all things like it can be irresponsibly use and all of a sudden, like trip people up really quickly, I would think. But, um, we'll see,

Speaker 1 00:43:23 In, in your exploration of learning Gutenberg and building blocks, is there at any point, did you come across an instance where you build something and said, man, this is, I can't believe how easy it is to do this, or to build this or have it do this versus what it was like, you know, 5, 6, 7 years ago, certain features in a theme,

Speaker 2 00:43:45 Uh, probably every day of my life now, I think, oh, wow. The, the old and people who who've built with Genesis, or just anything in general will understand this, but like we would build the Genesis theme. It would have a front page file, w --

-- hich you would then have to go in. And there was certain widget areas that lined up with very specific things. Uh, and then the no doubt there would be the person in support who would say, how do I clone that? You know, like I want to have like a second page like that. Well, the sh the short version is you have to duplicate the page template, register a whole bunch of new widget areas, make sure like mark up all lines up and things of that nature. And so that at the time it's how it had to be done. Uh, but now it's the ability when I, when I tell, I go back to that moment, I don't even know if I've told Justin this, but when I go back to the moment where I realized that it was literally copy and paste, and the code worked in what feels like a magical way, uh, sort of behind the scenes, uh, it amazes me now, like I literally, this morning was testing out the starter site import, I literally clicked a button and the site was set up like that.

Speaker 2 00:44:51 Um, and then of course, even beyond that, then you can go in and very easily move sections around just the block patterns are in groups now. Right? So like the layers. So if you want to move, like the contact section, that's on the homepage, further up the page, you don't have to go into the, the page template through certain lines of PHP. Copy that gets a copy of colon. Then you've got the boys scream at death, literally can just go to the group and hit the up arrow. And those were the days resections up. And, you know, like every day I'm like, I just, it blows my mind now. And yeah. So, oh man. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:45:30 I haven't even messed around with black patterns or black groups yet, but I know I'm thinking right now. So when I create the show notes page for the, for this podcast, I go to the custom post type and I've been inserting the same blacks that I use all the time, but I'm thinking, well, why don't I just create like, either a pattern or I guess I could just create reusable, blacks, put all the blacks together and I can just put them onto a group. And then whenever I get out of the show notes page, just access that group and boom, all my black severe, and I could populate them. How come I'm not doing that?

Speaker 2 00:46:04 Let me jump in. I haven't gotten there yet. Uh, I, in our zoom chat, uh, I just dropped a link. Uh, speaking of podcasts, Jeff, I don't know if you saw it, I've seen it. It looks good. Yeah. And it's great. Like you could literally like duplicate that or move that up and down a page. And a, and if you follow me on Twitter, you, I even copied this block code easily and dumped it into 21 to see 20, 21 to see what it would look like. And, uh, you can go on Twitter to see, it looks just as good, just the same. And I was like, this is where the revolution, not from my perspective, but just what WordPress is serving up, our ability to do and how to use with that. Like, this is when all of a sudden you're like, okay, now I can very easily build, you know, uh, a template for, you know, podcast episodes where you've got that section up at the top. And maybe that below that maybe there's like a, you know, a left sidebar for like sponsors and the right side is where like your scrollable transcript box will go and, you know, two clicks. And it's just like your pages there. You just replaced the, you know, the upload media file. Like, I I'm very happy with it. It drew me back all of it with regards

Speaker 1 00:47:16 To black patterns, something that was of, of a concern and the way things were done, no, what the, what the child themes and certain things with the functions that PHP and theme files and what have you, that there are things in shortcodes something like theme lock-in that, that was the concern back in the day, looking at looking at black patterns, the reusable groups, things on that nature is with the new paradigm of theme design. Is there anything that strikes out at you that could be considered a form of theme lock-in or something designed in such a way to where you're, you're limited to having to use this theme for something to look a certain way?

Speaker 2 00:47:59 I would think that there are, um, and I don't understand why they are, but also don't necessarily agree philosophically with it. But, um, a way to lock people in would be to, to have a theme that corresponds with a, you know, a group or a library of custom blocks that, um, that means like you see, like, if I'm using a blo --

-- ck library that has markup that is very specifically written in a CSS of a theme, and you can't use that black library anywhere else because you, you lose all styles. Uh, I will say this, I think, um, black libraries as they were two years ago, which were like, oh, this is great. This is great way to extend WordPress. I think WordPress itself has cannibalized. Many of them already, uh, does, based on the advancements they've made, I think nine and 10, nine out of 10 people use black libraries. Just so there's a container block.

Speaker 1 00:48:55 Yes, yes, yes. I ran into this where I was looking for an accordion list or an accordion style block, and there wasn't too many options available to where I, to where I just wanted that one block. So just, I wanted to install a plugin where I get that one black, but everywhere you look, if you wanted it, you had to install plugin and you get 72 other blocks.

Speaker 2 00:49:14 Well, that's the jet pack syndrome, right? All these modules for the one thing. So the first thing you do anyway, that's, that's another conversation, but, um, but now like the way to accomplish what many blocks do is just to create, like the podcast episode is a perfect thing. Like somebody could say, oh, I'm gonna make a custom black library that has that. Well, you don't need to do that. You just create a block and wrap it up in a group, and then you've got something that can work on any theme.

Speaker 1 00:49:40 Yeah. It almost sounds like with the block patterns, it could be like the ultimate source of collaboration between all the different theme shops. Well,

Speaker 2 00:49:48 That's what the block pattern library is on. Uh, the repository. I mean, keep in mind, it'll, it'll be relatively elementary in the same way themes are, but I think it's wordpress.org/patterns, um, which is essentially that like everybody contributing, I actually contributed one of the, uh, black patterns that are on there to be used on anything. It's the menu. It sort of forked the one that I had done for frost, just to see if I could do it. And, um, so there's a contribution there for me. And so that's sort of where that is. I think the ultimate goal is to have that be on page on the, uh, the repository and they may have even already sort of cloud hosted it, the software where you can import anything. That's there also just by adding the pattern with the presumption that the theme supports, those, those things. Um, and so I think we're already seeing stuff like that, right? Kind of like the app store ask approach, which is everybody putting it in one place. And then just being able to kind of A la carte pick what you need.

Speaker 1 00:50:46 And that, that sounds pretty, I got to get into this block patterns and check out what's there. And, you know, Chris lemma he's, he's participated, he's actually submitted a black pattern. He did. I bet you, I could do it. You think you should, it should be my homework assignment. Right? I should, I should probably contribute a black bear. I could probably come up with something. So one of the things I wanted to ask you before, before we wrap it up, I've noticed that you have this fondness for the colors, black and white. Why, why is that now? You, you make black and white and gray scale look. Excellent. And I just look at those, some of the things you design, I'm like, man, it looks so good, but it's, so it, do you hate color or do you just love black and white?

Speaker 2 00:51:30 Uh, Chris Wallace used to always, even when I built my house, the last house that we built, it was really all black, black, and white with an accent color. That's sort of the ongoing joke. Uh, and so, you know, I don't mind color. I, I think, uh, when it, when it would always pertain to like studio press demo sites, like I always just use the color that comes from the images that we would use and say no need to compete with that by having like red and blue all over. Like I realized there's used cases, uh, for, for some of, you know, for branding and other things like that. But I'm just a simplest at heart, like part of the minimalist design has just become a thing for me. So it's always easy to just create in black and white use an accent color, like, which is just enough and then photography to go with that. So, um, and it's my style, like, you know,

Speaker 1 00:52:19 Revolution black and white.

Speaker 2 00:52:21 Yes, it was, it was, uh, ro --

-- ugh falls, really good at using color in certain things. And there's great. Great, great, great designers out there who just, you know, color all over the place. But, you know, I think people just hone in on the style that they just like to, to do it in. Um, I think music's no different, like I just do it a certain way and that's the way I do it. And if you like it, you like it. And if you don't, you, don't kind of a thing. But, um, I try to step outside of my box room once in a while. And I'll be doing that with frost for sure.

Speaker 1 00:52:49 Well, I, I like it. I mean, I liked the way you use the, the colors and then, and then it actually kind of provides a canvas for users who, you know, whether it's linked colors or photography or different featured images, the image is actually pop more on a black and white theme, I feel.

Speaker 2 00:53:05 Yep. So

Speaker 1 00:53:08 One of the last things here, and then we'll let you go. We've had conversations here recently with, throughout the WordPress community and even on this show about the barriers to entry, like developing for WordPress and for Gutenberg is so high now because of JavaScript and the build tools and just the things you've got to up just to get to the point where you can contribute back to WordPress. How, what has your experience been like learning Java screen, maybe learning, learning it deeply like Matt told us all to do, you know, so many years ago, what is your experience been like learning Java script and learning how to build blocks and work with WordPress in a JavaScript way versus, uh, the mainly PHP way.

Speaker 2 00:53:49 Well, I'll tell you this, uh, this is going to be very quick answer because I don't have experience with any of that stuff. I don't write in JavaScript. I don't know how to build a block. I don't know how to do many of the things that from a really deep development programming perspective, these people are talking about. Uh, I'm, I'm all self-taught with all of it. And as a designer, first mentality sort of opportunistic second. Um, my, my stick is just working with, what's been given to me now. I realize that that's sort of an easy way out because I'm not building the things that I'm using. Uh, I'm just, I've just chosen for my business. Yeah. That's just, that's what I do. And I, I can write CSS in my sleep. Uh, I've realized that very talented people have built and are continuing to contribute to WordPress and all of the core blocks that are there. And I don't need to build anything because I think I'm smart enough to manipulate them into patterns, then page layouts and starter sites. And that's how I've chosen to go forward. So, uh, unlike some of the others, Chris Wagman, I think was the one who had written that originally, you know, these people are true programmers and they build the things that I use. And so like, it's, uh, those are the people who these questions are kind of directed more towards. Cause you know, I, you know,

Speaker 1 00:55:08 I, I think your conversations back in the day with Nathan raison, you know, if you do this and do this, can you put it in the thing and make the thing, do this? I think like that's the official language between designers and developers. So it was kind of nice to get the background info on that. So I don't know, John, anything you want to ask her or put in the show before we wrap it up? Nope.

Speaker 2 00:55:30 Those, uh, I'm just happy to hang out with Brian anytime.

Speaker 1 00:55:33 Okay. And I can't, I can't believe you're using frost frost and I'm not. So I don't know, maybe after the show, maybe I'll be, uh, you know, get a little

Speaker 2 00:55:44 Is exciting. It's uh, like I said earlier, it makes me enjoy using the, uh, the block editor. I use

Speaker 1 00:55:52 January press on WP mainline. And the thing about generate press is that, you know, it has those site templates, which are really nice. I actually use one of those to get the WP mainline up and going. But every time I go in and I want to change something, I have to figure out, I have to like relearn it. Like, is this an element? Is this, this it's this, that there's so many different things involved with the January press site builder that I kind of think that maybe I should go to something that's like full Gutenberg, black based to where I'm not having to worry about all the other stuff and maybe it's simplified. So I, um, I should prob --

-- ably give a frost a good run-through because I like it, man. I liked that podcast, black too.

Speaker 2 00:56:32 Speaking of really quickly, I'm going to pitch pitch frost finally. But, um, we talked about Bob Dunn earlier, Bob wp.com is also running for us and he's using the link page pattern that was built. And he built that page, which is essentially like a link tree clone or a Lincoln bio sort of thing. Uh, one click import update your photo, change, your, you know, your icons update the tax, change the buttons. And all of a sudden you've got like a landing page or something that you could

Speaker 1 00:57:00 Use for.

Speaker 2 00:57:02 So, so these are the things that keep me up at night, just coming up with new ideas. Like that podcast thing was something just the other day I was listening to something and I was looking at the screen and I was like, I bet I could build that in blocks. So there you go.

Speaker 1 00:57:16 I mean, have you been building like for the podcast block, how much are they involved PHP code or was most of that just mess tweaking with the UI and messing around.

Speaker 2 00:57:24 That took me like literally 30 seconds to build. I looked at it and I said, it's, it's two columns image on left, heading paragraph. Those are buttons. Like, and then you just upload MP3, which I just grabbed a sample, something. And then you just wrap it in a group and then just hit copy. And then just, I added

Speaker 1 00:57:43 To this, you were super stoked and excited at the place WordPress is at right now in terms of theme design with Gutenberg and blocks. And it's just going to, it's probably just going to get better from here on out.

Speaker 2 00:57:55 That's the perfect way to end it.

Speaker 1 00:57:58 Awesome. So, uh, I wanna thank Brian Garner for, for being our guest on the show, man. I, this was awesome. It was everything I thought it was going to be and more definitely check out. It's a, what's the URL. If people want to check out for us,

Speaker 2 00:58:11 For us wp.com, there you go. Very

Speaker 1 00:58:13 Easy. You'll probably do it right now and you're listing on their iPhone or anywhere else. You can, you can check it out. Uh, you can find show notes for this episode and all other episodes and WP mainline that con just click the podcast link. And they're all right there. You can subscribe to the show and a myriad of different services around Spotify, Amazon, apple podcast, uh, just you name 'em, we'll probably there. Uh, and by the way, uh, don't forget if you enjoy this show and you enjoy the content that we produce here. Think about going to WP mainline.com and clicking the subscribe button. I'd very much. Appreciate it. Be awesome. And you can follow me on Twitter at Jeff Rowe, J E F F R zero and John,

Speaker 2 00:58:56 Uh, Twitter and github@jjorjj.blog, which is running frost.

Speaker 1 00:59:01 Oh, sweet. Another live testimonial. Awesome. I'll have to check that out after the show. So until next week, everybody have a safe, enjoyable weekend. And we'll talk to you again soon. Say bye John.

Speaker 2 00:59:13 Bye everybody. Bye. Goodbye. <inaudible>.

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