

Episode 43: Matt proposed with a movie trailer

Today is February 14 and in most places around the world that means a special holiday – Valentine’s Day. If you didn’t realize that’s what today is, you might be in a bit of trouble with your special someone by the end of the day.

And since I knew I would have a new episode coming out on Valentine’s Day, I wanted to find a story that is related to love and romance, but would still be unusual and interesting enough to be an episode here on What Was That Like.

Then I came across Matt’s story of how he proposed to Ginny, and I knew I had to put this one on the show. You know how when you go to the movies in the theater, and before the actual movie comes on, you see the trailers to preview other movies? Well, Matt created his own custom movie trailer. And he got the movie theater to show it, right there in the theater. And Ginny, his girlfriend, was in that theater. And she had no idea what was about to happen.

Now, I’m going to tell you something right now and I hope you follow my suggestion. You need to watch Matt’s video BEFORE you listen to this episode of my show. Seriously. You can see the video in the show notes for this episode, which is at WhatWasThatLike.com/43. Just go there and watch it, and do it BEFORE you listen to the rest of this podcast episode. Everything that Matt and I talk about will make SO much more sense if you do that. Matt’s video not only shows the movie trailer that he made as part of proposing to Ginny, but it ALSO shows her real-time reaction as she watches it herself for the first time.

And actually, if you’re a member of our private Facebook group, you saw that I went in there a couple of days ago and posted the video so that everyone in that group could watch it ahead of time and be fully prepared for when this episode went live. Just one more reason you should be in that group!

Anyway, I think you’re really gonna love this conversation I had with Matt. I get a big kick out of talking with creative people who like to do things that are way outside the norm. And Matt is definitely outside the norm. His creativity with this proposal made this video go viral, and he and Ginny were invited out to Los Angeles and appeared on the Ellen show (in addition to a TON of other media appearances). Ellen even paid for them to honeymoon in Jamaica.

So I had a great time talking to Matt, as you’ll be able to tell. And if you’d like to join the other listeners who support this show - for as little as a dollar per month – just go over to WhatWasThatLike.com/support.

So happy Valentine’s Day, and here’s my conversation with Matt.

Scott

Was there ever any doubt at all? Or were you just you were 100% sure that she was gonna say yes?

Matt

Well, to be honest with you. I’m more of a person that wants to be proactive instead of reactive. I’ve definitely been putting feelers out leading up to the proposal. There was one big task that I told her. I told her, “When you’re 100% ready to get married, what I want you to do is I want you to give me a list of 20 people. If we were going to elope somewhere and we had to put 20 people on a plane to go to our wedding - you would want these 20 people at the wedding - I

want you to give me that list. So, I was waiting for that list to come, whenever that may be. It actually happened on Valentine's Day - February, 14 - on the same day that this was airing 9 years ago. She gave me this list while we were down in Miami. There's actually a video of it when she actually gave me the list. She let me go through a scavenger hunt to find it. It was her gift to me. As soon as she gave me that list, I knew that it is go time. She was gonna say "Yes", so I was ready to make it happen.

Scott

That is awesome. So, you knew it was "game on" at that point?

Matt

Yes, sir.

Scott

Well, let's talk about how you came up with this. Your wife's name - or then girlfriend's name - is Ginny. How long before you get this idea to make this thing happen?

Matt

There's actually a really funny story and romantic gesture behind it. I grew up knowing Ginny. Me and her brother actually went to school together. We lived less than 2 miles apart from each other. The problem was when I was a senior in high school, she was a freshman and she was my friend's little sister. We really didn't talk much in school. Then, we reconnected. I actually went and joined the service. When I got out of the military, I was putting on promotions at local bars and restaurants and happened to run into her. Well, fast forward a little bit. On our second date, I did something that was pretty over the top. I had my own house. I told her that I wanted to cook dinner for her. So, she came over to the house. I was bringing her in. It's rare for a bachelor pad to actually be really clean and neat, so I was really proud of myself at that time because the house was really clean.

Scott

You even went to clean the house - that's a serious thing right there.

Matt

Oh, it was serious for me to sit there and clean the house the way that I did. I wouldn't have done that just for anyone. So, I took her around the house and made sure that she notices that the dishes were clean, everything is bare, and the lights are up. Well, I found out that she really loves scratch-off lottery tickets, so I told her, "Hey, come back here." I took her into my guest room. I had some scratch-off tickets. I shut the door, and she was doing the scratch-offs. It took her about 5 minutes to do all of them. Then, I jokingly said to her, "Well, are you ready for dinner?" She was like, "Well, yeah." I said, "Well, that's a good thing because I reserved the nicest table in the place for us." She started laughing. When I opened the door, all the lights were dim in the entire house. There was music playing. We went around to where my dining table was. The dining table was set like at a high-end restaurant. She was looking at me and she was like, "What is going on here?" because in her head, she was thinking, "I've been with him the whole time. How is this possible? I just saw that table. There was nothing on it. I just saw the light. Now, they're turned down and there was no music playing.

Anyway, I pulled out the chair for her and she sat on the chair across from me. I went and sat down. I looked at her and said, "Well, would you like some wine?" She said, "I would love some." So, I clapped my hands to the side. About that time, my buddy who had enlisted to come

help with this, Dave, came walking around the corner wearing a 3-piece suit with a towel draped over his arm. She knew him. She knew this guy and she literally fell out of the chair laughing. Like, she fell to the ground laughing, dying, and seeing this guy dressed up the way he is. Now, she had figured it all out.

Here's the really important part. She got back in her chair and she said, "Oh my gosh, Matt! I feel like I'm in the movies!" I said, "No, don't you worry. We're gonna make the movies jealous." If you notice, the title of the proposal is, "Making the movies jealous." So, that literally happened. That was our second date. Well, that night, when I went to bed, I dreamed about the proposal. I literally dreamed of the movie theater, I dreamed of making it, I dreamed of asking her parents and her being in the seat - I dreamed it all up. The next morning, I called and told my mom, "Mom, I met the woman I'm gonna marry." I told her about the dream, and how that all came about was just pretty wild.

Scott

You said you told your mom. Did she not live locally or does she not know Ginny already?

Matt

No, she did not. My parents are divorced. So, my dad's side of the family - where I lived in high school - lived up about 35 minutes away from where my mom lived. So, we're not really far apart and I would see him very often. It was just the fact that you can call your mom and tell her you met the girl.

Scott

Sure. I'm sure your mom was excited about that too.

Matt

She was. Then, when she met her, it was a match made in heaven, I guess, you could say.

Scott

So from the time you dreamed it until the time it actually happened, how much time had elapsed by then? How much time did you have to make it happen?

Matt

Well, from that second date, we only dated about 7 months before we got engaged, which we know is fast. I was definitely not anticipating it moving that quickly, but it was just kind of that thing of "When you know, you know..." I can tell she was feeling the same way and we were, kind of, talking about it. Then, that's why I told her, "Well, look, I'm not gonna push you by any means. But when you're ready, I want that list." As I said, that list happened on our second date. Actually, she gave me the list about 2 months after we started dating, which is crazy when I'm saying that out loud. I've never really thought about the timeline, to be honest with you. Our very first date was the day after Christmas. Our second date was right before New Year's. Then, she gave me the list on Valentine's Day. So, wow. That's crazy.

Scott

Wow. Then, the actual movie theater event was in May - like, three months later.

Matt

Yeah. So, right after that, I went into planning mode. I mean, I already knew what I wanted to do, but I just didn't know how to pull it off because I wasn't a videographer and I didn't have that

kind of equipment. Funny story behind that... I was really active on social media, of course, because I had a local promotions company. So, I started asking my friends, "Hey, does anybody know anybody that makes videos?" A girl that I went to school with messaged me and she was like, "Hey, my husband actually makes rap videos." I was like, "Okay, well, let's check out his work." It was crazy because, when I watched his work, I could see the talent, but all his videos were rap videos. I was like, "How is this guy going to transition from rap videos to a marriage proposal?" The good thing was I pretty much had the whole thing planned - I knew what I wanted. If you talk to him - we've done countless interviews now - people would ask him, "How is Matt as a client?", he would be like, "I've never had anybody come to me and say, 'This is what I want. This is how we're gonna do it. Let's roll with it.'" And he loved it because he said, "Normally, I'm the one having to pull information out of clients, but he knew what he wanted to do."

Scott

You had the whole storyboard laid out for him already.

Matt

Yeah. We had so much fun making this video. I mean, it really did take about 3 months to make it. We filmed everything in about a month. Then, there's the editing. I would go over and watch him edit this. The amount of detail that he puts into his work is just phenomenal. I mean - just every little detail from syncing up the audio and everything - I never realized how much it took to make a video. I mean, 30 seconds of video could take 2 hours to do, or even more.

Scott

Again, I would encourage people - before you even hear the rest of this interview - to go and watch this video. Anybody that sees and is familiar with video production is going to know that this is definitely a production because you've got multiple scenes, multiple locations, and different camera angles. It's like a multi-camera shot, but you probably only use one camera, did some retakes, or did things over and over again. So, this was your friend Mike. He helped you make the film. He kind of put what you already had in your head into action. What did Ginny's dad think when you propose this idea to him - because he's in the video at the beginning?

Matt

Right. He was a big part of it. So, there was a tense moment of me thinking, "What if I thought he liked me, but he didn't like me that much? What if he wasn't comfortable doing this in the video - because that was extremely important?" Ginny always told me, "The day that I get married, I hope the person asked my father for permission." We're from the south - we're in Georgia. That's just kind of the way we're raised. I don't see it as being an old sexist tradition or anything like that at all. I see it as being respectful. I have a daughter now. Ginny and I have a daughter and I would hope that the person that wants to marry her would ask me as well. So, it was a tense moment, but he's such a fun and loving guy and he was pumped about it. He was like, "Yeah, man. Let's do this! This is gonna be so fun." What a lot of people don't know is this theme of me talking to him is that the church camp that she grew up in, which is right in between our houses almost - it's called Shingleroof Campground in McDonough Georgia. So, it was important. There are aspects of that video that are important to her and me, and I did that on purpose. I wanted to put a lot of thought and a lot of meaning even into just the small details.

Scott

So, when she was watching that, did she recognize the location aside from the people that were on it? Did she know where that was right away?

Matt

When I went back and asked her about that, she said that the first thing she heard was the "Marry Me" song by Train. We had all talked about how we loved that song. We were like, "Oh, this is cool to have at our wedding if we get married one day." So, if you see her in the video, and if you notice— I put subtitles in there. We had to watch that video - I don't know - 150 times just to be able to get the exact wording right because we were reading her lips. We know that when you watch the video, it's going to be hard for anybody to read lips, so we did the subtitles. When you see her, she was like, "Oh, that's the song that Matt and I like!" Then, she heard my voice and you would see her head, kind of, snapped. Like, "Wait a minute... Who does that sound like?" Then, the song started playing. Then, she started to see the images of the campground and it started playing with her mind where she was like, "Wait a minute..." She was looking to her brother for confirmation and, of course, he was in on it. He knows but he's just playing dumb. He's like, "I don't know what are you talking about. Just keep going." Then, the really powerful scene - the one that that I wanted and envisioned, and Mike was fantastic at capturing it - is her dad and I talking neck down. All you see is our hands and neck down - that's on purpose. Like, I wanted to build it up.

Scott

Yeah, I gotta tell you that one of the brilliant components of this is that gradual reveal because, as soon as she heard that voice, she could tell, "Wait a minute. Who is that? That's somebody I know, but it was still neck down and still kind of blurry." But as you guys kept talking, it was more and more of a reveal. I mean, you can see that she finally fully realized when she saw her dad's face that wasn't blurred. That seems like that was the point, right?

Matt

Exactly, yeah. That's actually one of my favorite scenes of the whole video. I mean, when it pans up and blurs really bad on his face, then it comes into focus, and it's her daddy's face looking right at the camera, that's when she loses it. When you see her in the hidden camera, she loses it right then. That's one of the best parts of the whole video, I believe.

Scott

Was it just you, Mike, and her dad involved in this? Were there other people working with you?

Matt

As far as the video goes, it was just me, Mike, and her dad making the video. Of course, Mike's wife was in on it - she had to help us out with some things.

Scott

With other people being involved, did you have any concerns about her finding out about it ahead of time?

Matt

We definitely had concerns that she would find out. Because of that, we kept it to a very minimum, and it was the only people that had to know. We kept secrets literally right up to the day before the proposal. We have people inside the theater there to watch it. The people that were on that list - if you think back to that list that she gave to us - knew that something was coming. They had a date that they were supposed to block off, but I didn't even tell them what was taking place on that day. These were random people, so they weren't talking to each other either. So, literally, it was almost like a pop-up thing. They'll say, "Hey, watch for this to come

up. Be here on this day, at this time.” I had a secret Facebook group and told them, “Hey, block this date on your calendar. This is something you're definitely not going to want to miss. It's going to be in this general vicinity.” I said, “I'll give you details as it comes along, but just block this date off.” That way, I made sure that the people who needed to be there were there.

Scott

That's the other thing I wanted to ask you about because it looked like when she turned around. She was surprised at who was in the theater. So, we'll talk about that. How did you start creating the film? I mean, the idea was in your head, but did Mike kind of map out the various locations? Or did you pick the location? How did you guys just get started creating this thing?

Matt

Well, I went over to his house, met him face-to-face, and told him everything I wanted to do. We started talking through text messages and email about the storyboard and all - it was crazy. It felt like Mike and I had been friends for years. We worked so well together. I mean, I never worked with another creative person like that. It was just so smooth. It felt effortless. It felt like it was just meant to be. Everything we did just worked out. I mean, there were very few retakes. We almost did all the filming in two days. The first filming we did was the filming with her dad at the campground. Then, we did the car chase scenes, or what it's being called.

The funny part is - when you think about it - the movie theater. The movie theater is a phenomenal story in itself because this was a smaller regional movie theater chain called Great escapes. That was our local theater. I walked in there, asked to speak to the manager, and told him what we wanted to do. We told them, “Hey, we're gonna have to film some in the lobby, we're gonna have to film some in the halls, we're gonna have to play this in the theater, and we're gonna have to record. There were just so many aspects that had to take place in the theater. The first thing we had to do was get buy-in from the theater. People ask me all the time, “God, I bet that would be super expensive for him to rent out that theater.” Here's a secret. It didn't cost me a dime - not one cent. Well, the only thing I did buy was the popcorn that you see at the movies. I literally bought that small popcorn and that was all they charged me for.

Here's, kind of, a God moment right here that was crazy. The theater was an older theater. As I said, it wasn't like a big national chain. So, to be able to play our video, I was gonna have to purchase a home projector from, like, Best Buy or Walmart. We're gonna have to put it up in the projector room next to the big one and play it before the theater, before the movie, because there was no way to get it on film - they still have film. So, we had worked all this out. The only bad thing was it just didn't look as good as it should because the projector was not as powerful. It's got a long throw. It's kind of blurry. We were a little bummed about that, but there was nothing we could do about it. Not kidding you - even the manager had no idea about this - but the day before the proposal, the movie theater got bought out by Regal. Regal shipped them brand new digital projectors that same day and they installed those projectors that day before the proposal was to take place. Then, we were able to literally take Mike's laptop computer, plug it up to the projector, and play it through the same projector that the movies play through. That's why it looks so real in person.

Scott

It looks perfect. Yeah. It's incredible.

Matt

It was, yeah. It couldn't have gone better. We were really slick about it. The one thing you don't see in our version of the video that we posted was that the first trailer we played was actually "Hangover III" because that was a real trailer that was in the theaters at that time. We played that trailer first to, kind of, throw her off so that she just didn't go immediately into our trailer. So, when it plays, it's playing as it would look exactly just like a real trailer.

Scott

It does. Yeah. And she wasn't suspicious at all when it comes up. It's lucky. What if she would have said, "Oh, that's still a preview. I'm gonna go to the bathroom."? So many things could have gone wrong that day, but they didn't.

Matt

I'm glad you brought that up. If you think back to the beginning of this interview, the first thing I said was, "I'm a big person about being proactive, and not reactive." So, when I talked about the amount of detail that went into this, all of that was planned. I mean, we had a timeline of when she was going to get there - the moment she was going to sit down, the moment the lights would go down, the moment the video would start. The reason for that is Ginny is never on time. She has one fault - she's perfect, except she is never on time for anything. She'll be late for her own funeral. She's bad about it.

Scott

That got to add to a lot of stress when you're planning something like this, right?

Matt

Extreme amount. Because when you watch the video, you learn that it's not just us in that theater. There are random people in there because they're really there to watch a movie in that theater. There's an actual movie going to play. We were just doing it at the beginning of it. The funny thing leading up to that was Ginny always told me and her friends, "Well, if you ever do propose to me, the day I do get engaged, I just hope I have pretty nails." because she knows that she'll be taking pictures with the ring and all that. She wanted pretty nails. I knew that we were gonna have an engagement party at my house on the day of the proposal, so I called her over and I asked her, "Hey, we're just gonna have some friends over" and asked her if she would come to help me clean my house. So, she came over. She was actually helping me clean the house for her own engagement party that she didn't know is taking place.

Scott

That's awesome.

Matt

To set it up - I work sometimes on the weekend and have dinners with clients - I told her that I have dinner that afternoon. Her brother randomly called her earlier that week and said, "Hey, I want to go see this movie. It's Fast Five." She was like, "Oh, this is great! We haven't done that in so long. So, we knew that she would be down for that. I knew that date was going to be available. I have to make sure she gets her nails done, so I had went and bought her a gift certificate to get a manicure done. While we were cleaning the house, I started a fight with her on purpose - like I got mad at her. I can't remember what it was about, but I was like, "Would you please go for a little bit? Just let me do this. I've got it right here. Actually, I got a certificate for a manicure. Go get your nails done before you go to the movie with your brother." She was like, "Okay, great. That's great for me." So, she went and got her nails done.

Scott

It must have killed you to be fake mad at her.

Matt

Right. It did, but it was for the greater good, so I was okay with it. I knew there was that pot of gold at the end.

Scott

The end justifies the means. Okay, I get it. That's right.

Matt

So, as she was leaving, that's when I dress up - I put my suit on - like I'm going to a real client meeting and made sure she saw me in that before I left. She went to get her nails done. I went to my "work meeting". Then, I went to the theater and, of course, put on the same outfit that I had on during the video.

Scott

Of course. We don't want any continuity problems.

Matt

Exactly. So, everything is timed up. Her brother was picking her up an hour before the movie starts. If you notice, in the movie, there's a hidden camera on her. The hidden camera is a Canon PS-- I can't remember which one it is. It's a big DSLR camera, so it's not very small. I had to enlist a friend of mine to sit in the back row of the front right before the riser started to go up. He has to drape a coat over the camera in between those 2 seats to hide it. We have these two seats reserved that Ginny has to sit on. Her other brother was actually in a wheelchair, so this worked out well. He's in on it as well. We had the seat where the wheelchair would be right next to her. Charlie, her other brother, was sitting to her left and Ginny was sitting on the chair in the middle - that's the one that the camera was focused on.

Scott

That's excellent. I wondered about that too - "How did you somehow force her to sit in that seat?" But it was logical. She had to be on the landing because of the wheelchair.

Matt

Exactly. Right. I had the theater create some reserved signs. On the way, Charlie pretended to call the theater and told them, "Hey, we've got a wheelchair with us. Can you reserve 2 seats?" I went, "Yeah, of course." But everybody's in on it. We had those signs on their seat the entire time. Mike and I were up in the projection room and we were watching the theater, and I was in contact with their brother. I saw them when they pulled up. I was running into the projection room as soon as they come into the theater and sit down. The moment they sat down, we had control of everything. Right before she walked in, we lowered the lights lower than they normally would be because we didn't want her to see anybody in the theater. If she just happened to look up into the seats, we didn't want her to recognize anybody.

Scott

So did all of the people that were behind her come in before she did or after?

Matt

Before. We made sure that everybody was at the theater at least an hour before the showtime.

Scott

Okay. All right. By that time, of course, they knew what was going on.

Matt

Exactly, right. Yeah. So I told them, "Be at the theater at this time. I'm proposing to Ginny." and everybody was super excited. They're really pumped. Then, when they got there, I gave them directions. "Hey, it's going to be timed down to the minute of when she walks into the theater. All of you, make sure you're looking down or dropping down, or whatever it is. Just make sure you don't make eye contact with her where she would recognize you."

Scott

Right. Otherwise, that would have killed it.

Matt

Exactly. So when she walked in, the lights were down lower than normal. Before she even sat down, I started the video. It started with the "Hangover 3" commercial or trailer. So, that allowed her to get seated and all. I made sure to tell Charlie, "Do not let her get up for Coke or popcorn, or go to the bathroom. Make sure she sits there." We did it so fast where there was one trailer, and then we hit her with a proposal trailer.

Scott

Wow. You guys really thought of everything. That's just so amazing. On that day, did anything at all go wrong?

Matt

I try to think about that. When Mike and I started planning this whole process, what we realized was this isn't like a movie where you can do as many takes as you want. A proposal like this or a wedding - anything where it's one shot, one kill type situation to where it's like, you've got to get it right the first time because you can't do a redo because it's not going to be as authentic. It's not going to be as real. It's not going to be as emotional. So, we really tried to make sure that we even thought about, "What are we going to do if this happens?" We did so many test runs at the theater leading up to the day that it was pretty much like clockwork for us. We knew everything was going to work. The only thing that threw the wrench in was when they got those new projectors - that made it even easier for us. We would literally just hit play and it would run.

Scott

Yeah, that was a nice surprise.

Matt

That's super nice. There's a funny story - I guess this is one thing we didn't plan on - which kind of turned out pretty cool. At the end of the video, when it was time for me to actually walk into the theater for the continuity purpose and propose. Mike and I were outside. We're both very high-energy people. I was so excited. I got all this emotion and energy running through me. I was jumping up and down outside the door about to walk in. Well, of course, all these other people who were going to other theaters were seeing this guy jumping up and down, and going crazy with a camera on a dolly, and they were like, "Hey, what are y'all doing?" We told them, like, "Hey, I'm about to propose." This crowd formed. There were probably 20-25 people who were, like, "Do you mind if we walk in behind y'all and watch it? I was like, "No, I don't care. Come on in. Just just be quiet and follow behind us." So, when I was coming and proposing,

there was a live video. She said, "Yes." Everybody's quiet. You would hear one guy - who people talk about on the YouTube video more than anybody - said the word, "Bravo!" Right when he said "Bravo", everybody started clapping. Well, that guy who said "Bravo" was one of the guys that followed me in. That's something we didn't plan on, but it's a really cool part of the video

Scott

Wow... An uncredited cameo there for him...

Matt

I would love to find that guy. That would be so cool to actually meet him. I'm sure I probably did afterward while we were leaving. I mean, I was so high and we were ready to get out of there because, again, a real movie going to play in there. There were 25 family members and friends there for the party and 75 other random strangers that saw the whole proposal and stayed for the movie to play afterward. I didn't want to be too intrusive, so I made sure we got the hell out of there as fast as we could.

Scott

Right. We already talked about the trailer itself. I really love the part where it gradually revealed who's talking - you and her dad - then, you went to the lobby of the theater, ran to the front door, looked around for the way to the theater, "Which way do I go", then you paused and decided to go buy popcorn on your way to propose. I mean, I love that comedy. How did you come up with that?

Matt

Yeah. I'm so glad you brought that up. I definitely have to give that credit to Mike. That's the one cool thing when you're able to go back and make some changes. The first time we did the shot of me coming to the theater, I walked in all calm. Then, when we went back and looked at it, we were like, "Why would I walk in when I ran away from the church? I appealed out and came in fast." So, we reshot the whole thing. Then, when I came into the lobby, Mike straight up said, "Oh dude, how funny would it be if you bought popcorn, and you made her wait even more?" I was like, "Dude, that is so genius! I love it! Let's do it!" I mean, the music that was playing is high-energy, but then I stopped and looked around. People would be like, "What is he doing?! Go propose!" Then, I walked over, got in line, the elevator music started playing, and I was buying popcorn. I love that part. I'm so glad. That was definitely a Mike moment.

Scott

Mike is brilliant. But it's not just stopping to get something. You stood there and contemplated "What do I want?" You were looking at the menu. Oh, that is so great. After that, you got your popcorn. Then, the video went into slow motion as you were running around the curve and spilling popcorn. Then, it went to the side-by-side shot as you're, kind of, jogging down the hall. If you put all that together, I tell you, Mike knows what he's doing.

Matt

Oh, yeah. Mike's phenomenal. I mean, this is what he does. We're right here in South Atlanta, and Atlanta has become the Hollywood of the East. Yeah, he's brilliant. I mean, this whole video, kind of, led to some other things for us.

Scott

When you were walking into the theater, she knew exactly what was gonna happen, and it did happen, and she said, "Yes, of course!" which is what everyone was counting on. Then, this whole thing went viral. When I look on YouTube, this video now has, at least, over 34 million views. Did you have any idea that that might happen?

Matt

No, we had no clue. I mean, I didn't even know what a viral video was at that time.

Scott

I'll bet Mike knew what a viral video was. Yeah.

Matt

The only thing I remember him talking to me about was how crazy would it be if this video got 1000 views. I remember thinking, "Oh yeah, that'd be cool if 1,000 people saw it." The whole reason we even put it on YouTube was that the video was too big to put on Facebook. I wanted to post it so that people who couldn't be there at the proposal could watch it. What was wild was he posted it, I believe, on a Monday at 8:30 AM. When he posted it, I was at work. I got a call at lunchtime from the local Atlanta ABC affiliate. They were like, "Hey, is this you on this video?" I was like, "Yeah." They were like, "We want you to come to our studio tonight. We want to do a story on it." I was like, "Are you serious?" They were like, "Yeah. It got, like, 50,000 views." I was like, "What?!" Then, I looked it up. I was at work and I pulled it up. Sure enough, I had, like, 50,000 views in just a few hours. I was like, "What the heck is going on here?!" So, I called Mike and Mike was like, "Holy shit, dude! This thing is going viral! It's just blowing up!"

What was wild about it was, I think, the person that tweeted that and really sent it over the top was Alyssa Milano. She tweeted out the video. When she did, it went from 50,000 to 2,000,000 views by that night. By the time we went on the news, it was in the millions. So, the next day, it was crazy.

Then, the very next day, I was at work. This is kind of a cool story. I was selling insurance and school systems. I was doing for teachers. I was doing health insurance, disability insurance, and all. I just so happened to be working in the elementary school that I went to as a kid. There was in a town 30 minutes away from me and I was sitting there working and talking to a teacher. Then, my phone started ringing. When I looked down, it says LA - it's an LA area code. So, I didn't answer it because I thought it was a telemarketer. Well, the same number called me again, so I picked it up, and he was like, "Hey, is this Matt Still?" I said "Yes." He said, "This is Chris Cucci from the Ellen DeGeneres Show." I was like, "Ha-ha. Very funny" and hung up on him. Then, he called me back right immediately and the first thing he said was, "Don't hang up. I'm dead serious. This is Chris Cucci. I'm a producer. I'm one of Ellen's producers. She has seen your video and she wants you to come to be a guest." So, my jaw almost, like, dropped onto the desk. The person I was talking to was, like, "Are you okay?" I was like, "This is Ellen on the phone." They started freaking out and were like, "Are you serious?!" I showed her the video. It's, like, the whole school watched it at a meeting and all of that. It was just crazy that Ellen wanted us to come out there as guests. That's really when some crazy stuff started happening.

Scott

It's not just Ellen. I mean, you are on CNN, Today Show, and all these major-- and that's commonly what happens when something like this goes viral. All of the media outlets want to have you on because that's the big news right at the moment. How soon did you go out to be on Ellen's show?

Matt

Well, you bring up a good point. All the media outlets want to have the big story on. Not only that, all the biggest ones like "Good Morning America", "Today Show", and Ellen. They not only want to have them, but they want to have you first. So, it's almost like a battle of "If you do this show, then we don't want you. You got to pick one of us." So, Ellen wasn't going to fly us out to be on the show in two weeks. They were gonna fly us out on a Friday and then fly us back on Saturday - it was two weeks from then. Well, literally, a few days later, "Good Morning, America" called us at night at, like, 9 o'clock. They were like, "Hey, we want you to be on the show in the morning." U was like, "What are you talking about? It's 9 o'clock at night." They said, "No, you and Ginny pack a bag, go to the airport, get on a plane, and fly here. We'll cover all your expenses and you're gonna be on the show live in the morning." I was pumped because I've never been to New York, and I still haven't been to New York.

The reason why we called the producer from Ellen was that he told us, "If anybody calls and wants you to be on their show, just let me know first." So, we called. We didn't know what we were doing. I told him that Good Morning America wanted us and he was like, "No. If you go 'Good Morning America' in the morning, then we're going to have to replace you because your show is not going to air for another two weeks. We haven't even filmed you. You've got to choose." Well, my wife and I always love Ellen, so we chose Ellen. Well, he called me and he was, "Alright, here's what we're gonna do. We're gonna fly you out this Friday. You'll be in LA for a week and we'll cover your expense. Then, we'll film on the following Friday. So, they were pretty much hiding us by bringing us to LA so that we couldn't go on any other shows, and it was just a blast. It was like a great little trip for me and my fiance.

We got to go out with Ellen, and then we ended up going. We weren't on the show - we went to the Jimmy Kimmel show because they wanted us to be on it. We told them we couldn't be on it, but they still liked us. So, they brought us and we got to hang out in the green room. Then, we got to go on the roof with Jimmy Kimmel's people, like, right across from a grommet theater. It was a phenomenal experience and trip. Then, of course, we got to go and be on Ellen. So, it was a really, really exciting time. It was an exciting 15 minutes.

Scott

Yup, your 15 minutes of fame. It lasted a few days, so that's good. All of this fame and notoriety was because of a video that was created. At that time, were you thinking, "How can we leverage this? How can we turn this to our advantage?" You turned it into a business, right? Is that because Mike was already in the business and it brought him more business? How did that work?

Matt

We weren't anticipating and expecting-- we didn't want to turn this into anything other than what it was, which was just our story of love - our proposal. What ended up happening was we started getting all these emails and messages from people all over the world, literally. I mean, we did shows in Hong Kong and Australia, and most of them were all radio shows or internet interviews, but it was just amazing to see people telling us that our love story was an inspiration to them. We would get messages from older couples that would say, "Hey, we've been married for 30 plus years and just, kind of, going through the motions. But when we watched your video together, it reminded us of how we felt when we first met and when we first fell in love, and it has, like, completely changed our marriage." When we got emails like that, it was just a game changer. It was life-changing. It just felt amazing.

So, what happened was people started asking us for help on their proposals - they started asking for advice and all and Mike was like, "Man, you know what? We should do this as a business because we can really help people, and you love doing it", which I do - I absolutely love it. I love being creative. I love doing heartfelt stories. I love making things unique for each individual couple and making it just weren't about them. You'd be surprised at how many people wanted to just straight up copy my proposal. If you Google "Marriage Theater Proposal", you'll see probably about 50-100 people do this now. There are some that make their own little twist, but there are some that are just straight-up copycat - using the exact same words that I said and all. People always ask me, "Does that bother you? Do you get mad about people copying?" I tell them, "Absolutely not. Imitation is the highest form of flattery. If somebody was touched enough to take what we did in our special moment, make it their own, and do that. then that's awesome." Like, I cheer those people on. I'm not a person that gets jealous or, like, "Man, I can't believe they copy my proposal." I don't feel that way at all.

When we started talking about doing this as a business, we were actually approached by a couple of producers from Hollywood and they said, "Hey, look. We actually think that you could do this as a TV show." and I was, "That is like a dream come true". I guess you could say, it's a dream that I didn't even know I had because I didn't know that. As somebody that grew up in Georgia, I never thought that I would be on TV. I've always been out there at the front of the crowd. I love doing presentations and speaking in public, and this was just, kind of, the best of everything because, not only was I going to be able to do that, I was going to be able to do something that was so positive in a world where all the TV shows were about nothing but negativity, pretty much. So, it was super exciting that the producers wanted us to do this. I mean, they flew us out to Hollywood. We spent a week out there with them. We went and met with a couple of big production houses while we were there. There was definitely some interest and they actually flew a crew over here. We filmed a pilot episode - a really basic one - that we've never released. It's actually on our YouTube channel, but it's unlisted, so you can't really see it unless I share it. We helped a firefighter do a real proposal and it was a blast, and we've done a bunch since then. Unfortunately, at the time when they were trying to pitch that show, the shows that were popular were "Honey Boo Boo", "The Kardashians", and "Jersey Shore". The shows are about not as positive as what we were putting out there. Unfortunately, it never got picked up.

Scott

That's a shame. Yeah, all those shows that you just mentioned are, like, the most superficial, ridiculous, stupid shows. Yet, something like yours that's really going to inspire people-- but that's Hollywood, though, right?

Matt

Yeah. It was not the right time. Again, that's not why I did the proposal, that's not why Michael helped me do the proposal. That was just, kind of, a great God thing that came from it - just something that was really positive that could have happened because of it.

Scott

So what is the service that you guys offer if somebody comes to you and says, "Okay, I'm thinking about proposing"? You do more than that, right?

Matt

Yeah. Well, it's actually Michael's full-time gig. Michael started his own production company - it's called M3 Creative. Then, I am just like a consultant and a side business partner. I help him with the creative aspects of it. I mean, what he does and what we do is we can do pretty much anything and everything from the proposals, to the actual wedding films, to daddy-daughter dances, and to surprise prom proposals. I mean, it's anything and everything that you could do as a surprise. I mean, Michael now even does movies and TV shows - that's all part of his big aspect. The parts that I helped him on-- we still love doing those proposals and wedding videos just because those are always just positive, uplifting, and loving.

Scott

Have you guys done any video of someone in the military coming home and surprising their spouse or their family or anything like that?

Matt

I did, actually, on my own. We didn't do this through the company. I personally do more lower-budget films. The videos I'm making are really all I post now on my social media sites and on our YouTube channel - they're usually more personal videos about our family. I was coaching a kid softball team - my daughter's softball team - last year, and two of the daughters have a dad who was deployed overseas. I found out from the mom that he was coming home one game, so I came up with a way to surprise the daughters and got the other team involved. It's actually a really cool video that you can check out on our YouTube channel. I allowed all the girls to dress up as a princess, a superhero, or anything they wanted for the game instead of wearing, like, our softball uniforms. I had them go out into centerfield and was giving, like, a speech. At that time, I had the other team come out, form a tunnel from home out of the second base, and put their dad standing on home plate. I was like, "Oh, who is that?" and had the two girls turn around. When they turned around and saw their dad, they took off running. Both these girls, I think, were wearing Princess uniforms and it was just so touching seeing them run through the crowd and all the fans cheering. They ran into their dad's arms and it's just that. Those are the videos that do it. What I love doing is those types of videos.

Scott

Yeah. I love watching those too. That's the bad thing about YouTube - you started watching a video like that and then you get all the suggestions of similar videos on the side and, before you know it, 2 hours have gone by, but it's certainly a great thing. What is your YouTube channel? Do you have a regular URL?

Matt

It's [YouTube.com/MattandGinny](https://www.youtube.com/MattandGinny).

Scott

Okay. I'll have links to all that in the show notes for this episode. This is incredible. You and Mike are someone, obviously, that knows how to make memories. When you were making this proposal video, you must have been thinking in the back of your head, "This is a video or film that's going to be in our family for generations and talked about for decades."

Matt

Yeah. As we were putting it together, and as all the editing started to come together-- I mean, as you said, it's got 34 million views. I'd be lying if I said that probably a million of them aren't straight for me, but I still get choked up every single time I watch it. Like, this feeling never changes. My wife and I aren't perfect by any means. We're not like this perfect movie-time

family or marriage. There are definitely ups and downs, but anytime that I'm feeling down about our marriage or upset or mad or something, I'll watch that and it just melts away and brings back all those feelings. It's just like those emails that we got from the people - they've been married 30 years. That video does it to me every single time I watch it. If I'm ever in trouble, I just copy it, send the link to Ginny, hope she watches it as well, and hope--

Scott

--it gets you out of the doghouse, sometimes.

Matt

Yeah. Or at least gives me a bone.

Scott

This happened back in 2011. So, you guys obviously got married. Now, it's more than just you and Ginny. You got a whole family.

Matt

Yeah. We've got a 7-year-old daughter who is amazing. Her name is Irie Virginia Still. Irie is a word in Jamaica that just means "Everything is positive, everything is uplifting." She got her name because when we went on Ellen, Ellen sent us to Jamaica for our honeymoon. While we didn't get pregnant on the honeymoon, we waited an entire 26 days afterward. So, we put a lot of time into it. We joked and love that word so much because everybody said it. We love the meaning. We're like, "If we get pregnant, let's name our kid Irie." So, it just stuck and she is every bit of the word. So, we had Irie. Then, 5 months ago, we had our son, and his name is Oakes. We wanted him to have a name just as powerful as Irie, so with our blended families and how large our families are, I wanted something that had something to do with family roots, and the roots of an oak tree are some of the strongest and deepest in the ground. So, that's where his name, Oakes, comes from.

Scott

Is Oaks plural?

Matt

Correct. O-A-K-E-S.

Scott

Okay. So, Irie and Oakes - those are two very original names. Well, the creativity never ends with you.

Matt

It can. Then, it would just get too boring.

Scott

That's right, yeah. Well, it's kind of fun. I mean, I can picture either one of you - you or Ginny - doing something to surprise the other one. Even though it might be a surprise at that moment, it's not really a surprise that you did it because that sounds like you both have that personality.

Matt

Yeah. In terms of the interviews, they always ask Ginny. I'm much bigger with surprises and she would actually tell people that she doesn't even like surprises, which is hilarious, because why

would she have married me? I never do anything the easy way. Like, it has always, kind of, been over the top and I tried to make things fun.

Her dream vehicle was a Chevy Tahoe and I was able to buy her one from a buddy of ours, so I made a video of her doing a review of a vacuum cleaner, where I ended up surprising her with a Tahoe in the video. My mom thought that she was in on the surprise of the Tahoe for my wife but, then, we turned around and surprise her during the same video and told her that we were pregnant. So, I love doing the surprises to where you think you've figured it out and then it comes up being something totally different.

Scott

I love that. Is that on your YouTube channel also?

Matt

It is. It's on there.

Scott

Definitely gotta go watch some of these videos because the only one I've seen so far is the trailer. So, yeah, I got some viewing to do. Well, Matt, this is an awesome story. I love the fact that it's coming out on Valentine's Day today, February 14. I really appreciate you sharing it with us.

Matt

I appreciate you letting me share that. It's always a great thing and a great feeling to spread positivity and love.

Scott

Well, I hope you enjoyed this Valentine's Day episode as much as I did. I'd love to be able to plan ahead for every episode that happens to fall on a holiday, but I can tell you that just ain't gonna happen, but this was a fun one. There's something else fun I did recently. In our Facebook group, I asked this question, "What are you usually doing while you listen to podcasts?" and I got a variety of answers.

Maggie is cleaning houses since that's her job. Lisa is driving. Santana is either cleaning someone's house, taking a bath, or driving. Kobe usually listens to 8 different podcasts at work while making airbags overnight. Bethenny listens while she works from home or at night while falling asleep. Marcy listens while driving an 18-wheeler. Sherry on also listens while she's driving for work. Povey listens while she's driving her kids to practice or while she's at her kids practice. Zach listens while he's flying. Susan listens while she's delivering mail on a university campus. Travis listens while he's driving, walking, cleaning or cooking, but not while he's exercising - that's when he needs music. Faith listens while driving. Crystal listens while driving, biking, hiking or cleaning. For Megan, she's either running or sitting in the hot tub. Teresa listens while running, cleaning, driving or when she's falling asleep. Jenny listens while doing housework or computer work, or while she's sleeping. So, some of these people might be sleeping right now as they're listening to me talk. If I were a mischievous person, I could say something right now and plant some kind of subconscious thoughts in their heads. Wait a minute... I am a mischievous person, but I won't do that.

For me, I listen to podcasts while I'm driving, riding my bike, or on the treadmill at the gym. But wherever you are right now, while you're listening, I'm glad you're here. When you hear your alarm clock go off, you will immediately begin to bark like a dog. See in two weeks.