90 Facts about the '90s - mental_floss - List Show (Ep. 236)

List Show
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Hi, I'm John Green, welcome to my salon, this is Mental Floss on YouTube, and did you know that in 1999 people believed that Furbies contained computer chips so they could record words and repeat them? Now, that wasn't true, but the National Security Agency still banned people from bringing their Furbies to work. Now don't ask me which NSA employees, you know, had Furbies in the office because I don't know, but regardless, that's the first of ninety facts about the nineties I'm going to share with you today in this video brought to you by our friends at Geico.

(Intro)

Jennifer Aniston didn't love her *Friends* haircut, the Rachel - in fact she called it “the ugliest haircut I've ever seen”.

Alanis Morissette has said that she was embarrassed by the backlash to her song *Ironic* although she notes it is ironic that a song called *Ironic* is not filled with ironies.

Napster launched in 1999 and within two years it had 26.4 million users.

And if you think that's a lot, AOL Instant Messenger launched in 1997 and gained 53 million users in less than 10 years. Nowadays there are fewer than four million active users. Wait, there are four million active users of AOL Instant Messenger?! Seriously?! How many of them just left their away messages up for the last ten years?

But speaking of outmoded technologies, 61 million people were using pagers in 1994.

In 1992 during a *60 Minutes* interview about Bill’s infidelity, Hillary Clinton said, "I'm not sitting here as some little woman standing by my man like Tammy Wynette." Hillary later gave an apology to the singer.

The 90s book *Who Moved My Cheese* sold a couple million copies in China, where it inspired books like *Whose Cheese Should I Move?* and *No One Can Move My Cheese!* Especially weird when you consider that cheese does not really have a place in Chinese cuisine.

By the way, when *Beauty and the Beast* was released in China, Jackie Chan voiced the Beast.

You may remember that choker necklaces made a comeback in the nineties. Throughout history they've had different implications, like during the French Revolution, some women wore red ribbons around their neck to pay tribute to those who had been executed. In the 1800s it was a way to identify prostitutes.

Doc Martens were invented by Claus Martens when he needed a low-impact shoe after a ski accident.

Miss Cleo was the spokesperson for Psychic Readers Network Inc, who later got a five million dollar fine from the FTC for making deceptive claims, you know, like about being psychic. The amazing thing is that they didn't see it coming.

Anyway, NC-17 became a legitimate movie rating in 1990. The first NC-17 movie was *Henry and June*.

Slap Bracelets were invented by a high school shop teacher who was playing with steel ribbons.

Billy Crystal has said he only regrets turning down one role in his career: Buzz Lightyear.

Another movie role that could have been: Julia Louis-Dreyfus as Mia in *Pulp Fiction*. She had to turn it down due to her *Seinfeld* commitment. We don’t really have a joke about that, but we do have Quentin Tarantino on our wall!

Speaking of which, Larry David made a "no hugging, no learning" rule for *Seinfeld* scripts. Basically, he didn't want the characters to have sentimental, *Full House*-y revelations.

We now associate PowerPoint with Microsoft Office but in the 90s, it was originally developed for a Mac.

The voice who announced "You've Got Mail!" whenever you received an e-mail was Elwood Edwards. He recorded the saying in his living room on a cassette deck.

Jeff Hawkins developed the Palm Pilot's look by cutting a block of wood to the right size and using a short chopstick as the model for the writing utensil.

The Rembrandts can thank the television program *Friends* for their only hit, *I'll Be There for You*. The song was co-written by the show's producers.

Justin Timberlake's mom came up with the name NSYNC which was the last letter of each band member's name. What?! Mind blown!

The Backstreet Boys, on the other hand, were named after a flea market in my hometown of Orlando, the Backstreet Market.

In 1993, a Russian astronaut brought his Game Boy to space. He was allowed to bring only one game, and he chose Tetris.

90s kids will no doubt remember Anthony Hopkins' distinct voice for Hannibal Lecter in *The Silence of the Lambs* - he called it a combination of Truman Capote and Katherine Hepburn.

The mascot on Warheads candy has a name: Wally Warheads.

Many *Power Rangers* shows were filmed in New Zealand, but the show itself was banned there for violence until 2011.

Speaking of which, pogs were banned at many schools in the 90s because people thought it was gambling. Little did they know pogs are worthless.

Seven Yankee Stadiums could fit in the nineties' greatest architectural triumph - the Mall of America.

Ice Ice Baby was originally a b-side and the song only caught on when a radio DJ in Georgia played it, possibly by accident.

In Australia, bucket hats are known as giggle hats.

There was originally an entire song in *The Lion King* about eating bugs.

And by the way, young Simba was voiced by Jonathan Taylor Thomas.

And if you want to hear a very 90s sentence, Jonathan Taylor Thomas won the first-ever Nickelodeon Kids Lifetime Achievement Award for his work on the sitcom *Home Improvement.*

eBay was originally called AuctionWeb.

Stephen Chbosky got the idea for *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* format because he once wrote an anonymous letter to professor

who gave a seminar at USC.

Michael Jordan got rich off of Nike Air Jordans, but he wanted to wear Adidas. In fact, he brought them his Nike contract and said if they could come close to matching it, he'd sign with them. But they didn't. But it worked out all right, 'cause they got the support of this guy!

Also, it's a myth that Michael Jordan was cut from his high school basketball team. He was put on the JV team, which was still probably a mistake in retrospect, but yeah.

Another 90s myth: that the Taco Bell Chihuahua commercial stopped when the dog died. In fact, they stopped when we collectively realized that those commercials were unbelievably annoying.

Chuckie from *Rugrats* was based on the lead singer of Devo.

The Hubble Space Telescope launched in 1990. According to the Space Telescope Science Institute, it was able to lock onto a target without deviating more than the width of a human hair seen at a distance of one mile.

Chris Wiggs invented the Polly Pocket after making a doll house for his daughter in a powder compact.

And you can blame graffiti artists for the popularity of JNCO jeans - the company hired them to paint murals to advertise the jeans in LA.

To get the sound for the T-rex in *Jurassic Park*, the crew slowed down a recording of a Jack Russell terrier playing with a rope.

Carmen Sandiego has a middle name, Isabella, so we know who she is, but do we know where she is?

Pepsi tested around 3,000 variations for Crystal Pepsi, which was still not enough.

Britney Spears' cousin played her love interest in the *...Baby One More Time* music video.

Art student Deidre LaCarte created the Hamster Dance web page in 1998 to increase traffic to her website. Which she did. By the way, the Hamster Dance web page still exists.

In 1997, people sold Tickle Me Elmos online for the reasonable price of $1,500.

Saved by the Bell started as a show about a teacher in Indianapolis called *Good Morning, Miss Bliss*.

And Tara Lipinski started out as a roller skater before she ever went on ice.

When the Hummer was released in 1992, it weighed 10,000 pounds and got less than 10 miles to the gallon.

Another popular 1992 invention: light-up sneakers. LA Gear sold around five million pairs annually for the first few years and they are still very popular among four-year-olds in my house.

Execs at Warner Brothers weren't sure about *The Matrix,* considering that writer-directors Lana and Andy Wachowski were unknowns, so they created a 600-page shot-for-shot storyboard to convince the studio to make the movie. We did the same thing to convince Mental Floss to let us make their videos, but it was just- just a one-shot.

Mattel sued MCA records over the song *Barbie Girl* by Aqua for copyright infringement. The case went to the US Court of Appeals where judge Alex Kozinski said "the parties are advised to chill."

Speaking of court cases, the psychic Uri Geller sued Pokémon because he believed that the character Kadabra, who also bent spoons with his mind, was based on him. The character has since been retired.

R. L. Stine, who wrote the *Goosebumps* series, also wrote the novelizations for *Spaceballs* and *Ghostbusters 2.*

The toy Bop It was inspired by the games Simon & Whack-a-Mole.

Sabrina, the teenage witch, lives in a fictional town, Westbridge, but its zip code is the real zip code for Salem, Massachusetts. She also lives at 133 Collins Road, the same address from *Dark Shadows*. By the way, Sabrina's cat is also named Salem. Our cat's name is Puckle.

The Thighmaster was invented by Joshua Reynolds, heir to the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company. He also invented the mood ring.

And speaking of innovators, 90's boy band Hanson has their own beer brand called Mmmhops.

80 members of the crew for the movie *Titanic* got sick on the same day. Some were even hospitalized due to hallucinations. It turned out that someone had spiked the lobster chowder with PCP.

Justin Reardon came up with the "Whassup" Budweiser commercial and for his hard work the company gave him a $250 bonus and a baseball bat with the motivational saying on it.

Nirvana once received the following fax: "We really dig Nirvana. *Nevermind* is the best album of the year. Let's get together soon, love, Metallica." P.S., Lars hates the band. Unclear whether the band in question was Metallica or Nirvana but regardless, probably true.

The first Google server's storage rack was made out of Legos.

The Doug Funnie character originated in Florida grapefruit juice commercials.

Super Soaker inventor Lonnie Johnson shot the water gun in the middle of a meeting with the president of Larami toy company.

The Macarena was so popular during the 1996 Democratic convention that Al Gore made the following joke: "And if I could have your silence, I would like to demonstrate for you the Al Gore version of the Macarena," at which point he stood completely still.

Producer Deborah Forte of Scholastic Entertainment says they were inspired to create the *Magic School Bus* TV show after learning that many girls and minorities were opting out of science at young ages.

In the original *Sonic the Hedgehog*, the SEGA logo and sound at the beginning took up 1/8 of the ROM cartridge for the game.

Amy Heckerling, who wrote and directed *Clueless*, sat in on high school classes to get a feel for how real teens talk.

Hermione Granger's last name was almost Puckle. Hey Puckle, I can't help but notice that your initials are H. P.

The Coca-Cola company released Surge to compete with Mountain Dew. While the drink was in the creation stages, employees called it

Mountain Dew Killer.

The princess Beanie Baby raised over 15 million dollars for the Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Fund.

David Lynch and Mark Frost once tried to make a biopic about Marilyn Monroe. That project fell through, but they ended up making *Twin Peaks*, also about a beloved blonde who died tragically young, resulting in secrets being revealed.

32% of the original iMacs were sold to first-time computer buyers

Mike Myers got the inspiration for the *Austin Powers* film after hearing the Dusty Springfield song, *The Look of Love*.

Destiny's Child were originally called Girls Tyme.

Bridget Jones originated in a newspaper column in *The Independent.*

The most remembered slogan in beverage history is Got Milk?

Will Smith knew that people would call him by his *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* character name for the rest of his life, so he named the character Will Smith.

While Tupac was in high school, his friend got shot while playing with the gun. Tupac then broke his first rap, which was about gun control.

My Girl made Macaulay Culkin the first child actor to be paid a million dollars for a film.

While the Nintendo 64 was in development its code name was Project Reality.

Back in 1997, a band called Kara's Flowers performed on *Beverly Hills 90210.* They're now called Maroon 5.

Simon Cowell wanted to sign the Spice Girls back in the day but he approached them too late, which he calls his biggest regret. Not his, like, 13 marriages.

Marilyn Manson originally performed with friends like Madonna Wayne Gacy and Olivia Newton Bundy.

Tamagotchi comes from the Japanese words for egg and friend.

Lois Lowry wrote *The Giver* when her father was beginning to lose his memory.

And finally I return to my salon to take you to the very end of the 1990's when the United States spent around $100 billion dollars to prepare for Y2K.

Thanks for watching this episode of Mental Floss on YouTube, which was made by all these nice people and brought to you by our friends at Geico. Thanks again for watching, and as we say in my hometown, don't forget to be Uncle Jesse!