

Great Moments in Weed History

S2 E3 - Cheech and Chong

ABDULLAH: This podcast is for adults 21 years of age or older. We talk about cannabis history and advertise cannabis products. If you're not 21 come back when you are.

[Spoke Media]

ABDULLAH: Howdy folks. It's Abdullah.

B: And Bean.

A: And welcome back for a yet another edition of Great Moments in Weed History. On this show, Bean and I who are both accomplished cannabis journalists and media makers go through one of the more fascinating points in the very long history of human cannabis relations. I myself have no prior knowledge of the story we're about to hear. Bean has written and researched it and he's about to tell it to me. Bean, what do we got going on today?

BEAN: All right, well I'm going to need you to roll up a real fatty for this one, like a comically large joint cause I'm about to tell you a story about sort of larger than life weed heroes. Two friends who just took their love of comedy. Tell me if this sounds familiar. They took their love of comedy. They took their love of weed, they turned it into art and they changed the world.

ABDULLAH: I'm pretty excited to hear about this. I mean, there's so many different people that it could be, I'm trying to think of legendary weed duos and there's definitely a handful that come to mind. I'm pretty freaking excited.

BEAN: All right, well I think you got to get started on our J. If you're listening at home or wherever you are and you want to hit pause and catch up and roll something up or pack a bowl or roll a blunt, we'll be right here waiting for you. But otherwise, how do you feel?

ABDULLAH: I feel pretty good, man. I think we might be ready

BEAN: for another

[Great Moments intro]

B: You ready to hear a story?

A: Yeah, man. I'm stoked, let's go.

B: All right, here we go. A lot of famous people love weed famously, but there are really only two celebrities who got famous for their love of weed. After graduating from California State University with a writing degree in 1967. Richard Marin.

ABDULLAH: Oh yeah. Otherwise known as Cheech.

BEAN: otherwise known as Cheech, uh, fled the United States to avoid being drafted into the Vietnam War.

ABDULLAH Right. Wow. I did not know that. A, that Cheech had writing degree and be that he was a conscientious objector. Draft dodger.

BEAN: Conscientious objector.

A: Yeah.

B: Draft uh, there's that term. I don't remember.

Yeah, I forgot what the word is.

Pronunciator: Resistor

B: But yeah. So have you ever seen the celebrity jeopardy episode where Cheech goes on and crushes it?

Trek: Cheech.

Cheech: Who is Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Trek: yes.

Trek: Cheech.

Cheech: What does pillow talk?

Trek: Right.

Trek: Cheech.

Cheech: What is it Never, Never Land.

Trek: Yes.

Trek: Cheech.

Cheech: What is Camelot?

Trek: Yes.

Trebek: Cheech again.

Cheech: Who is Al Pachino?

Trebek: Right.

Trebek: Cheech.

Cheech: What is a Beyster?

Trebek: Yes, you're the winner today your charity will get 50,000

A: Dude, that is so awesome. What a great moment for stoners. That is truly a great moment of weed history unto itself.

BEAN: Yeah, that's almost a mini moment. And a, I think our friends at spoke could probably spicy in a little audio for us of a Cheech just crushing it. So it's 1967, imagine you just got your college degree and instead of starting your life as a young person who came from a, a poor immigrant neighborhood, now your first concern is, Shit. Do I have to go fight this war that I don't want anything to do with. Uh, so he secretly crossed the border into Canada as many people did. And he ended up in Vancouver where he landed a Gig reviewing records for a music magazine. Ah, which is how the man now known as Cheech first came into contact with a local musician and he guesses who that might be.

BEAN: Was it Tommy John, Tommy Chong who was born in Edmonton, Canada. Uh, but he dropped out of high school when he was 16, a tour with rock bands. Now we have these two forces, Chung conium and [inaudible] are using together using the crucible and of life known as British Columbia. And then I think THC, a little trace cbds in this petri dish. Uh, so let's see what happens. Yeah. If something is taking shape at this time, is there a prevalence of of stoner humor, weed related humor in the ether at all? There's stoned people being funny. That's, we're a part of a real long tradition that is 10,000 years stolen. People being funny. But there's, like I said, these are the first people who really got, now that's not taking away from them as performers and comedians and people who they didn't just get stoned and become famous. Right? They did all the things that any performer has to do to succeed, but they were a part of this culture. They represented the culture. They told jokes within the culture and they became like kind of the face of it. And so that's all, you know, a new phenomenon. You know there's, you could look at jazz culture and say somebody like Louis Armstrong, one of the biggest musical icons of the 20th century, loved weed. Wasn't shy about it, but that's not how he became well known. Right?

ABDULLAH: These guys were literally about to use their love for weed to inspire their content and hit it big. Once again,

BEAN: this sounds really fucking familiar and I know you can't see but the, the joint is comically large and come my way and I think you're feeling good about that decision now. Right?

ABDULLAH: I really am man. I appreciate the, you know, the foresight on that one. Cause otherwise I would have rolled a regular [inaudible]

BEAN: size joint. We would have talked about teaching Chong smoking regular sized joint. That's not acceptable. Now, initially, the iconic stoner duo at the center of today's tale bonded over music, like we said, but it was a shared love of Improv comedy and getting high that would make them stars. Oh, okay. Gotcha. So, so they started out doing improv. Yeah. So Tommy Chong before Cheech gets to Vancouver, had already formed a group called City works improvisational group, uh, which teach joins. Ah, okay.

ABDULLAH: Gotcha. So these guys are doing improv. They're performing at little clubs, I'm guessing all over Vancouver, and they've yet to be discovered or strike gold or whatever you want to call it.

BEAN: Yeah. Well, so the good news is they have no trouble booking gigs. The bad news is they are hardly the main attraction at their own gigs as Cheech explained to rolling stone in an interview. So this is Cheech. I'm not going to call him Cheech Marin. I'm going to, we're not like friends, but I'm just going to call him cheat. Yeah.

ABDULLAH: I feel like they're, you know, they're like share

BEAN: prince, you can call me this guys by, hey that one name and it works. Yeah. Yeah. Eponymous a titular, whatever the word is, anonymous. So a Cheech, our friend friend of the podcast tells rolling stone. We started in a strip bar that Tommy's family owned in the worst part of Vancouver.

ABDULLAH: Ah, Yup. There you go. So this I can actually relate to because I host a weed themed burlesque show called marijuana madness. And it's a lot easier than comedy because in between me doing jokes, there's beautiful women dancing in, in scanty clothing. You know what I'm saying? So, uh, it's a great place to work out some material, but, uh, you're certainly not the main,

BEAN: is that happening? Well, that is actually a really, really long tradition. If you get into the history of standup, that was the first place that standup was really performed. Really? Yeah. Was to be in between the acts at burlesque shows and, and even places where there wasn't full nudity, but you know, you're going back to the forties in the 50s. Um, and that's why there's this sort of body tradition to stand up. That's why standups are afforded the ability to say things that other entertainment didn't like. Uh, Lenny Bruce as an example, you know, he was persecuted by the government for his speech. He started out working at these burlesque houses where anything went, you know, you could say whatever you want because the next stack was strippers. But as soon as he was on TV, his shit was too hot. Yeah. And they, and they persecuted him and, and you know, there's just, if you read the old accounts, there's a lot of

great stories of these original standups who were really supported by that community of dancers.

BEAN: Like it went both ways. Uh, and uh, yeah, so they're, they're uh, right in this and as, as Cheech explains, they're working in this strip bar. Tommy wanted to do improv theater, but he also wanted to keep the topless element at the same time in order to preserve the audience that was already there. So what is the audience look like at one of these early cheats and challenge shows? I would guess it's a mix of people with like bell bottoms and really red eyes and people with like trench coats and dark glasses. Uh Gotcha. Fun Crowd. Yeah. You're bringing together your pervs or comedy fans or burnouts, you know, our kind of crowd I had mix.

BEAN: Um, so facing lots of stage time cause this is Tommy Chong's family's club. So they're like the House Act. Okay, Gotcha. So they kind of have the run of the house in a way they can get away with a more crazy shit. Yeah. And, and so they've got lots of stage time and low expectations giving Cheech and Chong the chance to hone their craft and fuse their superpowers, each pushing the other to new Cavita kites. So they fusing their superpowers also performing in a space that was already x-rated, met, no need to self-censor. And in time they become like a local sensation in Vancouver. So it becomes a hit and they, and they decide, let's take this show on the road and they're doing like 300 dates a year club dates for a few years on this sort of low level touring circuit. Wow. So the work continues truly, uh, you know, like once you, you make it past the hometown hit level, it's time to start touring 300 dates a year as a pretty hefty schedule.

BEAN: So this is across Canada and the United States. Yeah, they're going anywhere. People will, will have them and I'm sure pay them enough to do a show and move on. And it's like, yeah, that big fish in a small pond period is like probably this beautiful thing where you know, it's your club, it's your killing it, everybody's psyched and, but if you want to go to that next level, like you said, you go to a place, nobody knows you and you're right back to having to work hard and win him over. And I think this just makes them better and better. It's amazing.

And they're going by Cheech and Chong at this point.

They're going by Cheech and Chong and not coincidentally, this is also the of time where weed is going from very sub cultured to more mainstream. You know, in the 70s it's not like everybody smoked, but a lot more people smoked than in the late sixties. Cheech and Chong proved that there's an audience for this and dragged the rest of the entertainment industry along with them. And they did it in a very, in the UN, you know, ultimately they made studio movies, but from a completely Cheech and Chong place, yeah. You know, they didn't sign up to let somebody else create their vision of Cheech. Chong said we'd do that and they had this to pull back on. We've been doing 300 dates a year. This shit works. You know, they proved it.

Yeah. They tested it out. But at this point in this story, these guys have not been handed the keys to a movie yet. I'm pretty excited. See how the fuck that happens.

Yeah. Well, you know, they always talk about your big break, right. And, but it's always your big break after you worked your ass off for years. Yeah, of course. Which they did, which they did. So finally they make it to Los Angeles for a kind of a high profile performance and they attract the attention of legendary record producer Lou Adler.

ABDULLAH: Oh Wow. No kidding. So Lou Adler, definitely a familiar name. When you think about music in like the sixties and seventies. What's this guy's story again?

BEAN: Yeah, Lou Adler is like a legend in the music business. He's a producer. He worked with Mamas and the Papas. He produced rocky horror picture show and he's like sorta like the quintessential seventies cool guy, record producer. So this is what, uh, Lou Adler says, the first time I saw Cheech and Chong was at the Troubadour, just like a classic club here in La.

Right? Yeah, I've heard of it. It was hootenanny night. You know what hootenanny night is?

No. What is, what pray tell is a hootenanny night.

It's like the precursor to comedy nights and stuff. It was like there'd be music. It was like a variety show, ah, for like people who were slightly cooler than the 1950s

ABDULLAH: wow. That is so severely uncool. What an uncool time. They were like, oh, well we were gonna go down to the barn and there's a hootenanny tonight. And it's like, there's like someone showing an ankle and like, please do it. You don't want, while a guy like plays a jog or something that was the dent of partying at one point a hootenanny. All right, so there's still who nays going on there? A definitely a little bit wilder than the original Hootenanny. Okay. But, uh, so what was this like?

BEAN: This ain't your Grandpa Jebidiah's hootenanny.

A: this is a hootenanny with cocaine.

B: I'm quite sure it was. Ah, so he's saying, I met the troubadour. It's hootenanny night, Tommy and cheats. We're on stage going around in circles, smelling each other's butts, doing their dog acts. And I said to myself, I've got to record these guys.

Okay, nice. That's pretty dope that he saw something in that, you know what I mean? Lou Adler's clearly an open minded guy.

Yeah. And he's there in the crowd. Loves it. You know what I mean? That's the other thing. And the proof is in the pudding.

Yeah. Yeah.

Always. And I think as a performer, that's just that moment you wait for when somebody taps you on the shoulder and it was a real deal and says you got the goods.

Yeah. You got what it takes.

BEAN: It's like you're a star, you know, and he's still like wearing a dog. It isn't so in amazing. So it happens. That's, that's it. The big break. Well that just to record an album. Gotcha. Um, and, and comedy albums are, are, are blowing up now. I mean, that's sort of a new thing, you know, to the idea of a full length comedy album and it's, it's bringing comedy to people. There's really not comedy clubs. There's a couple, but it's not a nationwide thing that you can go to a comedy club and here stand up. So when they start putting albums out, uh, it not only makes people into stars, it creates an audience for live comedy. That idea that you can put out a comedy album and, and chart high on billboard is really new. And you can imagine how, you know, that's a big part of what builds that first comedy boom in America. Why? Wow. No kidding. So, and Chung get their opportunity to take part in this whole thing and they're doing pretty much full fledged stoner humor at this point. Right. It is as full fledged. I don't think anybody has ever fledged their stoner comedy more fuller.

BEAN: If there's a needle from unpledged to fledged they're in the green. Yeah. Barely. It was full of floods. Donor Ism. I mean check out this clip

Speaker 5: Duty time man. Oh, looks like a toothpick man. No, that's not good pay man. Hey it is a two's big man. Oh Man. It's just these are those big,

BEAN: I just thought I'd throw that in there and see like be like what's spoken to put in there. Yeah. I mean I think it'll work. Yeah, I think it'll work. They can pretty much pull any random cheats. A chunk cliff. Yeah, exactly. Quarter boulder man. You can really just cover your eyes and reach into the barrel on that one. And you'll probably pull out something pretty fucking Stoney.

Speaker 5: Mostly Maui wowie man. Yeah, but it's got some Labrador Labrador. It's dog shit. Yeah, my dog ate my stash man.

BEAN: Amazing. Okay. So that was the first album. Was that up in smoke? What was the first piece in Chung album? So in 1971 Adler produced a comedy album just called Cheech and Chong. Eponymous anonymous, uh, features, uh, that featured the acts, best characters in bits, including waiting for Dave

BEAN: It's Dave. Matt, will you open up, I got the stuff with me, Dave. Man, open up. Hey. Yeah, Dave, come on that open up. I think the cops are here.

ABDULLAH: Shout out my Stepdad who tells me the same. He, he repeats that bit to me all the time. He thinks it's the funniest thing in the world. These DSA hippie like back in the day. So He loved Cheech and Chong and he always

BEAN: tells me the Dave's not here, but he's like, hey, it's Dave. Dave's not here, man. Sat out you here. Nice. So he's given you his bonafide. Yeah. Yeah. So the album comes out, it climbs the billboard charts and gets nominated for a fucking grammy yet the fuck Outta here. So the first Cheech and Chong album, self title, the album was nominated for a grammy. Yeah. That is amazing. For best comedy album for best comedy album and it's, or maybe spoken word or whatever the category was. Wow. But then it's almost like, you know, if you have a band that you love and you're like, oh my God, that first album had every single fucking song on it's cause they were working on it for 10 years when no one cared. And then they put all the best songs from 10 years. I've one album total and that's like this, they had been a club act for four years.

BEAN: No one, if you haven't seen him live, you've never heard any of this. And they just drop it on the world all at once. Wow. Fully formed and really, really well honed act. And the timing's just perfect cause so many people are getting into weed. Wow. Look at that. Yeah. And uh, you know, I think you're either going to vote for them or you're not. If you have a vote in the Grammy's, you know, it was like a referendum on a statute of Cheech and Chong and the industry was not. Yeah. They're not quite ready.

ABDULLAH: Grammy voters in 1971 who voted for Cheech and Chong in that category. Shout out you Quincy Jones. I'm looking at it

BEAN: all friends of the podcast. Uh, and so even more successful comedy albums, a follow after this, they sell big, they're popular and it makes them an national sensation. Eyes. They're household names in any house that has a bong and a, even a lot of them, if you don't have to smoke weed to know who Cheech and Chong is. I just find it funny, they kind of made weed humor of that era universal in a lot of ways. You know what I'm saying? And that's, they transcended the, the subculture, you know what I mean? The counterculture and they, they sort of crossed over. Yeah. There's a lot of people who don't smoke weed who think it's funny. There's people who obviously have used Cheech and to try to deride weed culture cause they don't get satire and they don't get that things are being played for comedic effect. And they're just like, I mean, yeah, the most reductive take possible. And if you're already invested in being against weed, yeah. You know, and that's something that goes back and forth. And even in the weed movement, you know, there's always been this strain of it that's like, well, we have to distance ourselves from the Cheech and Chong. Right.

ABDULLAH: And this actually brings up a very interesting point. I think a lot of people use Cheech and Chong as the stereotype of, oh, like that's the stoner culture that, you know, says,

oh, weed makes you slow, or weed makes you dumb, or something like that. And that's what we have to get away from. But I think what they're missing is that it's not like at the time that Cheech and Chong did what they did, it was completely innovative. We just discussed the whole history of how this wasn't a thing. If they didn't generate this first avatar for stoners, dude, it's like having representation in film and television. You know, it's like when I see a brown guy, if I'm a young brown guy and I see a, you know, Brown guy in a film, it feels possible for me in the same way. Imagine being a stoner at a time when, you know, a televised media is, you know, there's all the rage and not seeing someone like yourself, but then suddenly seeing someone like yourself, you know what I mean? For represented in that way as this donor, you would feel that that's your avatar. You'd be like, Oh wow, it is possible. I can be a stoner on TV, you know, Shit. I mean, you and I saw TJ Jong and thought that it's not that. And like, you know, now, uh, that's, you know what we're doing.

BEAN: Yeah. And so now they've got all these successful albums. So what comes next?

ABDULLAH: Yeah. I mean one of the most iconic stoner things pretty much fucking ever up in smoke.

BEAN: Their very first film up in smoke. But you know, we got to take care of a little something first. Okay, cool. Yeah, we've got to roll a joint. We got a, we got to get paid to smoke weed. It's uh, it's our burden in our blessing.

ABDULLAH: Good Shit. Okay. So when we come back, we're going to talk about open smoke.

Speaker 5: [inaudible] at all by cares. Go up in smoke. Okay.

ABDULLAH: Smoke weed.

Speaker 5: [inaudible]

ABDULLAH: okay, we're back. We've learned how Cheech and Chong had their rise and made it all the way to the grammys and now they've got their first film up in smoke. It's about to happen. And I mean this movie is absolutely insane. It completely defies film structure. You know, Joseph Campbell, does this go fuck yourself story? That doesn't make any sense in this thing. It really is just about a journey to find cannabis. It's one of the most fascinating hour and 45 minutes movies that you're ever gonna see being hounded up in smoke. Come to be.

BEAN: Let's do let's Joseph Campbell out the story of teaching Cha. Yeah, perfect. Finally, it's instructs here. I think we know what they're a talisman is sort of a sacred quest is weed and you know their origin stories bring them together in a time and place. They realize there's a bigger journey for them. Uh, they have to go out on the road and now this is sort of the moment that they're really going to take the culture by storm. Cause the comedy albums are only reaching

weed culture and everyone's realizing, Whoa, weed culture is way bigger than we thought, but the movie brings them to the world, you know, in a way that only or movie Cam. So who

ABDULLAH: is crazy enough to give Cheech and Chong a movie deal?

BEAN: Well, that's a good question because Lou Adler is sorta the one who produces the movie. Oh with them. And yeah, as he said, I'm out there pitching in Hollywood of the 70s, the first ever stoner comedy starring somebody, uh, who is Mexican American and somebody who is from Canada and Asian descent. And you know, nothing that is making anybody's cash registers ring except for the fact that there's all these albums backing it up. Right. So when the time came to write a script for up in smoke, Cheech and Chong originally envisioned a kind of like variety show format that would bring a wide range of the vignettes from their albums to life on screen. So when that approach proved unwieldy, they decided to focus on pairing chichis Pedro to pacas character, uh, with Tommy chongs eternally befuddled Anthony stoner better known as man.

ABDULLAH: Right. Oh Wow. Okay. So meaning in this day, Joe, they were each doing a bunch of different characters, but for the movie, they each kind of selected the character that they were gonna be throughout the entire movie. And I mean perhaps had no idea that they were going to cement that character as their persona. Uh, I mean for years and years to come.

BEAN: Well, imagine if they had made the movie about the dogs sniffing each other's butts.

Speaker 7: Okay, well let's go down to some Fifi, man, come on. I'm horny.

ABDULLAH: I got to go cook. I honestly would definitely have watched that. I would pay to see that in a theater. I would probably watch

BEAN: That too. And then when Tommy Chong wrote a song called up in smoke and played it for his partner in crime, they immediately knew it would be the title track. They also decided almost all of the action would be filmed in the moment and on location in east La. The predominantly Mexican American neighborhood where Cheech Marin was born and raised. So this is, this is what he said about it. He said in up in smoke, you get to see parts of La that you never saw on TV. And like what you were talking about being young, not seeing a representation of yourself a year being written out of existence, particularly if you're somebody who's interested in being part entertainment. Yeah, true. And so he says, you go to these neighborhoods that were vilified or not understood or not even shown, which is the worst. The, they didn't even exist, but they did exist in our movie.

ABDULLAH: It is, it is definitely a story that you start, you start out in like Malibu or something, right. And, uh, you know, and you see Chong is like from privilege, but very quickly you exit that world and you enter the world of Jesus. You know, he's Chung's hitchhiking. He tricks Cheech by making himself look like a beautiful woman

Speaker 8: wearing a chick. Yeah, I know. But listen, that's the only way I can get anybody to stop, man.

ABDULLAH: And then after that point, you are in [inaudible] world. You're in like a quote unquote seedy underbelly, but it's filled with kind of fun and Zany characters. You know what I mean? And it's kind of like an inviting place in a lot of ways. You know, it's a community. Yeah, absolutely.

BEAN: And it was never being portrayed at all. And to the extent that it was being talked about, you know, it wasn't from that perspective. And from an insider's perspective, you know, and when we talk about this neighborhood in east la and this community of Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants, you know, it's definitely important to point out that that was one of the earliest communities targeted by the war on Mary Juana as it was called with the age still, uh, you know, back in the Anslinger days

ABDULLAH: and a historically cannabis persecution where the persecution over cannabis has targeted a black people and Mexican Americans, Hispanic Americans by and large. So it's really great that she chose to shoot in his old neighborhood. It's really important to see those parts of La in a movie because you certainly see Hollywood, you certainly see all the landscapes around La. You know, you see a lot of different parts of La and movies, but you rarely see east la, uh, Cheech and Chong up in smoke is one great example. And also a movie that cheats, they call it born in east La. Uh, you know, he definitely strongly represents his background in the work he does. Okay.

BEAN: And so now you've got a script, you've got a location and they managed to get about \$1 million from paramount pictures, which was really a small budget even then for a feature film. But they set out to make a movie, but they just don't make the movie that they actually sold to paramount.

ABDULLAH: No kidding. Okay. So this was it. Straight from the original script

BEAN: straight is an understatement. So this is how they explained it in an interview with high times editor, Ed Dwyer, who is the literal friend of mine and a friend of the podcast was the first editor of high times. I've heard his account of this. Uh, and so in 1980, so a bit after the fact, he's interviewing a Cheech and Chong and the story is they're in a limousine riding around Hollywood, smoking weed. And he says to them, you guys don't go in with a script when you make a movie. And Cheech says, do you go in with a script when you get laid? And a Chung follows up with, we made that mistake with our first movie, uh, up in smoke. We went in with a whole script and the studio Biggie said, change this, fuck that. Do some other thing. So we rewrote the script, but then when we went to make the movie, we just said, fuck it. Burn the script. We shot what we felt like doing and now we're big Hollywood stars.

ABDULLAH: Wow. Interesting. Okay. So that's a pretty ballsy move. You definitely risk losing the ability to ever make a film again, but if it works, you know, you're a fucking legend.

BEAN: It's also from them of just saying, we're not going to compromise on our vision. Yeah. And, and they had the albums, they have the audience. So they weren't, you know, as thirsty as they would have been if they just got pulled out of obscurity to make this movie. This is their, this is their story. They're the heroes of their own quests. Right. That the other thing is they're improv guys. Right. You know what I mean? So they're not, they're not doing this for being lazy. They're doing this because they're saying we need to play to our strengths. Yeah. And there's scenes in the movie that are, are improvised. There's whole subplots in the movie that were just things that happened along the way. So they go with their strengths. Amazing. Uh, so like they said, they become big Hollywood stars, but unfortunately for them, while the film grossed over \$44 million at the box office, off a \$1 million budget and do the math there.

BEAN: And so it was an instant hit hit. They talked about how they tested it in three places and they pick like a college town and then they picked like us squarish town and then they picked like, I dunno, you know? Yeah. And they said it killed in all of them and people laughed at different parts. Yeah. But, and then it was just a hit when it came out. I bet everybody was waiting for it and didn't even know it. And when you talk to older heads, like I, you know, I used to do the high times events and stuff. People who lived through that, when they see Tommy Chong walking into a weird event, like they, they like put a hand on their knee to steady themselves or like, you know, cause it was, they felt like they were part of this thing and, and there were only two people that point to um, yeah man. So weed legends, weed legends, but they only make \$1 million to split between them off of this movie that makes \$44 million.

ABDULLAH: Crazy. So they got a raw deal. Wait, did Lou Adler come out on top of this one?

Speaker 5: Whoa.

BEAN: This is where the split with Lou Adler comes in and there was also, Lou Adler had one idea for how to end the movie. And Tommy Chong basically came in and directed what is the actual ending? The battle of the band. It's a really fucking punk rock moment. It's iconic and when you see that scene and it's like he comes out in the fish nets in a two, two I have the whole crowd is there and it's like now it plays as a period piece. Yeah and you can really enjoy like the fashion and the vibe and and and because of the way they're shooting you can see the Kang out vibe of that. Yeah. It was not a vibe shooting that scene of like, and I remember it was like, all right, well let's do this, let's try that and whatever is happening and you it comes across and it gives you a sense of like what stoned la in the 70s looked and felt.

ABDULLAH: Oh yeah dude. The bands in the lead up. Right. You're cutting back and forth between the action and between the bands that are going on before them at this battle of the bands. All the audio you're hearing is that live audio. You are actually sitting there at a show. That is a really interesting scene. And I mean like this movie in general really, I think it wins

because of that ending. Like the whole thing is pretty meandering and as confusing and weird and sort of stony and you know like what the Hell is going on? The whole movie is when it ends, you're like, you feel so good. You know, you really feel like you, you enjoyed what you just watched. It resonates at this weird level. They nailed it. It's that hard thing to capture. You know, there's very few drug movies that can do that. I would argue that like fear and loathing, Las Vegas is one of those, you know what I mean? But in a completely different way. But Jeez, and John is the first movie to nail that. I think. Let me, uh, drop like

BEAN: the most fun fact I uncovered researching up and smoke on you. So that cop's name, sergeants, the DANCO, I really don't believe that you guys are Supreme Idiots. I mean, how could you let up big green bands that broke through your fingers based on a real cop named sergeants, a Danko from the mounties in Canada who used to fuck with Cheech and Chong when they were living in Vancouver and try to like bust them for weed. Holy Shit. That is fucking insane. He became obviously famous for this and it followed him around for the rest of his life. And I read a couple of his obituaries, which only exist because of this and it's like, you know, he, they took this person who fucked with them over their spirit essence and turned it back on them so hard that the first sentence of his own, uh, uh, obituary was known for her, you know, being mocked and up in smoke.

BEAN: I'm like, God, that is so fucking good. So he becomes sort of a, uh, a national laughingstock of Canada and Cheech and Chong create an entirely new genre film. And here's, so here's what Cheech says about that. Uh, he says, we weren't ahead of our time. We were right of our time. Those determining the position of the culture, thought these guys are an aberration, they'll make a movie and maybe they'll go away. But we didn't go with their plan. We were funny, we were social and we were highly political depending on your inclination and your takeaway from our comedy. Like we're political if you take it that way. And I think it gets into the difference between being overtly political and being subversive when you see these scenes of them fucking with the cops and kind of pulling the pants down on authority that's in a long tradition and that's a really important tradition.

BEAN: And applying it to this oppressive system against weed was both really funny, but kind of pulls the rug out from under this authority and shows it for what it is. So for like example, I'm thinking of the scene where the family calls immigration on themselves. Oh, to get a ride to a wedding. It is amazing. There's so many relevant things like that actually. I mean, of course there's that commentary on immigration was, speaks to like, you know, the East La, you know, uh, vibe. You know what I mean? That this is like definitely still a time when people are being deported for, for bullshit. And so like instead of telling a straight version of why that's fucked up, they just show the inherent absurdity of the situation in a way that is really funny. And, and like I said, subverts authority rather than taking it on directly. Yeah. And uh, I think the best example is every time the cops get stoned, they start to question their own authority.

ABDULLAH: Yeah. They become cool. Like, you know, like the guy who pulls them over, you know, on the motorcycle at when they're in the weed truck and they just sort of like, you know,

he's standing there inhaling a little bit of weed smoke and then he just [inaudible] you mind if I have a bite of you're a hot dog?

Speaker 9: Oh yeah, yeah. Man Day.

ABDULLAH: And then he leaves. You know what I mean? He just becomes cool. Vinnie dances. Yeah. Dances. There's, there's that scene where the DANCO is explaining how they turn weed into a liquid and then back into a solid, and they can form it into anything. I mean it's, it's a really bizarre thing. It's like something between like cannabis extraction and, you know, like turning hemp into like building materials. You have the kind of like predicted the future in some weird ways. Cause when you see that scene of where they're

BEAN: making, you know, uh, this product that they ultimately turn into this entire van made of weed. Yeah. It just, it's, it's like a, an extraction lab and then the idea that you can build solid things, you know, there's a hemp car now, a real hemp car and Hempcrete is, uh, is going to be a big building material. And, uh, the hemp, uh, the farm bill that just passed is gonna make hemp growing legal in all 50 states. I think we're going to see a lot more things made out of hemp. And, uh, you know, it was all there in, up, in smoke for us to see. So for, for Cheech and Chong, uh, more movies followed. But by the mid 1980s, the culture had changed. Reagan and not a friend of the podcast, uh, and the act had grown, dated. I mean, let's be honest. Uh, I don't think yellow beard is on anybody's ass.

ABDULLAH: Yellow Beer, you know, it's over when you do a pirate one. Yeah. Yeah.

BEAN: Uh, they hit one last high note in 1985 by joining forces on a hit novelty song called born in east La. Ah, yeah. I already have born in the u s right. Um, but they suffered a, a pretty contentious breakup shortly thereafter. Oh really? Yeah. Got it. Got it. They feuded a bit, no shit over what, uh, money and, um, just I think they usually disparaged each other, you know, let's put it that way. The, the, the, the friendship went away, uh, or, you know, the business relationship came apart and you know, it's a, it's not an uncommon story. Yeah, yeah. No. And it was, you know, it's hard to go from being huge superstars to not really hiring a market for you. Yeah. So Cheech goes on to some pretty good mainstream acting gigs for himself. He's in a Tin Cup with Kevin Costner movie, the golf movie. Yeah. Yeah. Best movie about golf starring Kevin Costner that I've seen. Uh, Ben, he's opposite Don Johnson. In this TV buddy show, Nash Bridge,

ABDULLAH: Nash Bridges. I was in your trying to think like which like fucking show brand new mass show. Is it the GS baron is in its Nash Bridges? That's right. Yeah.

BEAN: Yeah. So, so Tommy Chong, uh, his biggest role posts, Cheech and Chong is basically like playing a version of himself. Um, that 70 show.

ABDULLAH: Yeah, he was a, he was the boss of Kelso or hide or, I mean

BEAN: one of those guys would whatever. But yeah, you're like, it's like when you're mentioning people I went to high school with it, I don't remember. I'm like, Oh yeah, you're like, I wonder what happened to that guy. I think he killed the trip out with hide. You don't want to know that. The whole thing is awesome. I still, I still hang with Jekyll a couple times a year. I go visit my parents and we'll just get back, you know, get together at the bar. But like 10, 30, 11, just get outta there. Jacko was much cooler. Jericho was way cooler. So the duo finally reconciled in 2003 and they had plans to reunite. But that's when Tommy Chung's bong manufacturing concern. Sean's glass was raided by federal law enforcement as part of operation pipe dream. Yep.

Speaker 10: Actor and comic Tommy Chong says he is linked to the FBI raids today in Newport and Claremont counties, union township.

BEAN: And that was a massive sting operation across multiple states. Uh, that led to the arrest of 55 different people for selling drug paraphernalia. So on the morning of the raid, a dozen heavily armed DEA agents are sent to Tommy Chung's like nice ass house up in the hills where he's sleeping peacefully, uh, to pull their guns on him and drag him out of the house. And the first question any of the cops had is, is there any marijuana on the premises? Then they can move in. They said, Mr. Jones, do you have any marijuana in the house? Yeah. Where is it? Every room in the hose.

ABDULLAH: Good fucking answer, man. That's a real tragedy because after coming so far, you know what I mean? After really taking part in normalizing cannabis culture and you know, it's so tragic that he had to deal with that as a, an older guy. You know what I mean? And, and a guy who had accomplished a lot and you know, made his money and made his mark

BEAN: the good news is, uh, by Tommy Chung's own account. He's pretty well liked in prison. I bet

ABDULLAH: that's the guy who's going to have an easy time in prison.

BEAN: Yeah. I don't think he did the hardest time. I mean he was in prison, no doubt about it. That sucks. And nine months of your life that you don't get back. That's a long time. That's a long, long time for glass pipes. Jeez. But you know, he's written a lot about the time [inaudible] and he tried to make the most of it and tried to learn from the people he was in there with and you know, he came out in good spirits and I think a really nice thing is when he came out, who was waiting for him? Cheech, Cheech, [inaudible] homeboy, his old homeboy was like, let's get the band back together. Is a testament to,

ABDULLAH: uh, the strength of a friendship forged in weed.

BEAN: Yeah, absolutely. Uh, the, the bonds, they grow sticky. Yeah. So He's released that. They get the band bang together. They do a live comedy tour and they start doing all kinds of media appearances together. Um, and like one of my favorites is recently, uh, they went on the late show with Stephen Colbert together, like the talk show. So gentlemen, marijuana has become mainstream now that that's great news, right. Actually to have a laugh at the mainstreaming of cannabis after former Republican speaker of the house, John Baner joined the board of a weed company. Yeah. No, Chris Steel Republicans like John Boehner or intuit Platz Dover man.

ABDULLAH: So let's see your dude. Yeah. That was the most infuriating fucking thing in the world that you know, somebody who had a hand in persecuting so many people, uh, for cannabis is now going to cash in on it. That is a true fucking injustice.

BEAN: A No. A friend of the podcast, no fuck John Banner. But what's interesting is in this same way, so that's why that's the, the reason supposedly that Cheech and Chong are on Steven Kobe or to talk about this development and weed, yeah. And so they go on the show, they go on Coe bear and, and classic Cheech and Chong style. They claim, okay, John Banner Selling Weed now, uh, pot's legal in California. It's not really cooler, edgy. Uh, so we're gonna move on to like more outlaw acts than weed now like stuffed. That's still illegal. Yeah. Like, no, we're into unpasteurized dairy products. Awesome man. Wow. Holy Shit.

ABDULLAH: Fucking great man. I'm so psych that, you know, there's still homies, you know what I mean? Those guys are, are the original we legends man. You know, they, they, they really brought that culture to the entire fucking world.

BEAN: Yeah. And you know, despite the, uh, unpasteurized dairy jokes, in reality, they're stoner humor rolls on today. Yeah. In you man. [inaudible] of modern king of weed ponds. Thank you. I'll, I'll, I'll wear that crown. Uh, so more than 50 years after they first share the stage. And, and here's how Chong summed it all up. And I think this will get to your cautionary tale thing and maybe, uh, alleviated a little Tommy Chong said, whether you like us or hate us, doesn't matter. We didn't do it for anybody but ourselves. When I act, I do a version of me. Can you imagine how much fun I've had being typecast as a stoner? Um,

ABDULLAH: man, dude, that's so real, man. That's so real. And you know what? I'll take it if I'm typecast as a stoner in his life, uh, I'll take it because Tommy Chong is living evidence that is not so fucking bad. It can have its ups and it can have its downs, but in the end you still get to go through life doing exactly what you love and expressing yourself and puffin. Big, big, big clouds of smoke the whole time. Good. Amazing. Well thanks so much Bean that was a really, really fun story. I got the learn so much more about one of my favorite movies. If you haven't seen up in smoke, you should definitely go see it. But either way, hope you had fun. We'll see you next time on. Great moments in weed history. Thanks for listening.

Speaker 5: He thought on his care. All I do smoking great

ABDULLAH: moments in [inaudible] history is a spoke media production. It's hosted by me, David in stock, Aka beam and Abdula. Sayi were produced by Brigham Mosley and Cody Hoff. Marco with help from ray has Mendoza and Kendall Lake. Special thanks to gold digger studio. This episode was mixed by Jonathan Villa-Lobos. Our executive producers are Aliyah Tavakoli, Ian and Keith Reynolds. You can find us on Twitter and [instagram@gmiwhpodcastorshootusanemailatgmiwhpodcastatpokemedia.io](https://www.instagram.com/gmiwhpodcastorshootusanemailatgmiwhpodcastatpokemedia.io) special special set out to our patrons. Find us on [patron.com/g m l w h underscore](https://patron.com/gmiwhpodcast) podcast where you can support the show and receive exclusive stuff.

Speaker 11: [inaudible]

ABDULLAH: Fuck John Banner.