

8.13.25 Inside J!

[00:00:00] From the Alex Trebek backstage at Sony Picture Studios, this is Inside Jeopardy.

Sarah: Hello and welcome back to Inside Jeopardy, your exclusive and official podcast destination for all things happening in the world of jeopardy. I'm Sarah Foss. I'm joined by a very special co-host, special guest.

Ken: Am I co-host now?

I think so. This is exciting. Ken Jennings podcast co-host. I'm delighted to be here.

Sarah: Well, thanks for doing this. Happy to be here. You know, we're here, believe it or not, season 42. Kicking it off here on the Alex backstage.

Ken: Hard to

Sarah: believe.

Ken: 42 years.

Sarah: Yeah.

Ken: You and I were here for at least half of it.

Sarah: At least.

Yep. And you know, it's funny 'cause I was thinking back to the first time we had an interview. 2009. Do you remember it? Is that right? You came to your house? Were you at my house? Yeah, I came to your house.

Ken: She didn't even call first. She just shows up. Yeah, just showed up. No, you

Sarah: immediately made me take my shoes off.

I remember that.

Ken: We are a shoes off house. Thank you for remembering. I

Sarah: was wearing some nice heels. I wasn't prepared for Barefoot with Ken Jennings, but it happened. But here we are all these years later [00:01:00] and um, you know, we like to start off with a bang. So we did three tape days, 15 shows we didn't wanna ease you into a new season.

We really wanted to just. Just jump right in. Right. It's been a busy

Ken: week. I'm on a book tour and then I had 15 shows to host, but it was great. I love being back at Jeopardy.

Sarah: Yeah. And everyone is very excited. We won't give anything away, but obviously we ended season 41 with Scott Riccardi, 16 game Champ being defeated by the giant killer Jonathan Hug and Doubler.

Ken: You have to wonder like how long is that player gonna, he could beat Scott Riccardi. He must be a strong player. Exactly. What's, how's that gonna play out next season? And he had a summer

Sarah: hiatus. To prepare

Ken: to, to study, to prepare. Have we even seen his final form? It's a great question. I don't know if I've ever remembered like a loss like that happening at the very end of the season like that.

No.

Sarah: You'd think we planned these things. I think you lost right at the end of November sweeps and people thought for sure. We planned that like we were

Ken: in

Sarah: cahoots.

Ken: I did not plan that. There were no cahoots. Uh, I actually would've liked to have won that game. Sorry. Sweeps.

Sarah: Well, you came back. You always have a lot of mail when you return.

Any fun gifts, any unique [00:02:00] letters, anything waiting in your dressing room?

Ken: Uh, there was some fun fan mail. Uh, somebody sent me a cartoon, a political cartoon from the Orlando Sentinel that he'd done in the nineties that Alex Trebek had loved. 'cause it was a jeopardy joke. Alex had loved it and had bought the original art.

But then recently going through his files, he found the pencil sketch and he sent it to me. So now I have the original of a cartoon that Alex had back in the day and somebody else sent me, this is even better, like, I think a 1962 record of Johnny Gilbert's, uh, vocal stylings and his band. Wow. Uh, and the back calls him Johnny Tiger Gilbert and has a very good looking picture of Johnny.

Sarah: We're learning new things all this time. I never knew he was Johnny Tiger Gilbert. I think from now on, he's Johnny Tiger Gilbert on the X. See, it just proves that we have the nicest fans because that's the kind of, they send you gifts,

Ken: they send me stuff. You do not have to send me anything. I'm doing great.

But, uh, these were lovely, lovely little bits of memorabilia.

Sarah: Alright, well, as you mentioned, you are on a book tour. You've had a very busy summer, so let's start with the book tour. New book out [00:03:00] connections.

Ken: A complete connections. It's a puzzle. I've been writing a trivia puzzle. I've been writing for. Well over a decade so long ago that it started out in Parade Magazine.

Do you remember Parade Magazine? I remember it, yeah. In the Sunday paper. So they had an idea that I would do a trivia column and they would call it connections. 'cause it's a joke.

Sarah: I love it.

Ken: And I never actually loved the name, but I thought it would make me very hard to fire. And so for over a decade I've been writing these trivia puzzles and now there's a complete book of all of them.

'cause most of them have been lost in the bowels of the internet over the years.

Sarah: So of all your books, this one you could say was the easiest 'cause you had kind of prepared all the material already.

Ken: One would think that it was all ready to go, but instead there was like a year of editing and making sure the stuff was still accurate.

'cause some of these trivia questions were now like 12 years old.

Sarah: I'm trying to keep track. Is this book 14?

Ken: This is my 14th book if you count the kids' books. Yes. Which I do.

Sarah: The genius guy. Absolutely. I like, I like to pad

Ken: my stats. Yeah. So it's book number 14.

Sarah: I have to, you know. Thank you. Because when my children lost their school last year, you were the first one.

To donate books signed by you. Their school burned down,

Ken: [00:04:00] which

Sarah: was

Ken: so

Sarah: sad.

Ken: But, uh, the library, their library is now just my books apparently. Well, no, actually lots of other people

Sarah: donated books, so it's just not your books.

Ken: Imagine, imagine

Sarah: you gonna, the library, all they have is

Ken: my books. You'd be like,

Sarah: signed.

I felt very proud bringing them in, like, you know, I know Ken Jennings.

Ken: Happy to do it.

Sarah: Uh, I also, I've been seeing you everywhere. I don't know. Happy Gilmore too. There you are. Cameo.

Ken: Wasn't that fun? That was fun. Happy Gilmore too. Came and shot a little cameo on our set.

Sarah: Yes.

Ken: Um, we had, we had Adam Sandler on speed dial suggesting joke alternatives, right?

Yeah.

Sarah: You would do a take and the director was here and then Adam would be like, let's take this. Let's try this. 'cause they wanted to have lots of funny reactions to people not. Getting Who is Happy Gilmore.

Ken: Right. The premise is that, uh, nobody on Jeopardy can remember Happy's name and he's watching at home and he is bummed, which is a real thing, by the way.

I hear from people when we mention them in a Clue Uhhuh, and then nobody gets it. Right. Like there's still some hurt feelings out there.

Sarah: Yeah.

Ken: But Happy Gilmore was a very big movie to me when I was in college. We must have seen that a hundred times. And I could not be [00:05:00] more honored to be a, a tiny cameo in, in the sequel.

Sarah: Is that one of the like I've made it moments.

Ken: It really is because you see Alex in these movies and, you know, white men can't jump and in TV shows. I actually have a Kevin Bacon number now. What? It's my first feature film. Okay. Uh, this is cool. Christopher McDonald plays shooter, or Gavin obviously in the Happy Go more movies.

Mm-hmm. He's also in Beverly Hills Cop, Axel F with Kevin Bacon himself. So my Kevin Bacon number is Amir two.

Sarah: That's pretty cool. I'm so

Ken: lucky.

Sarah: And you've. Had celebrity jeopardy with his wife as well. That's

Ken: true. Kira's been on celebrity Jeopardy. But I don't think that gets you a bacon number.

Sarah: It doesn't get you a bacon.

No.

Ken: They're very strict about how they adjudicate that. I'm not

Sarah: up, I'm not up on my degrees of bacon. Alright. I've also seen you, uh, who wants to be a millionaire? Just earning money for charity. It's

Ken: just

Sarah: the kind

Ken: of thing I like to do. I like to get back Sarah when Jimmy Kimmel twists my arm. Yes. Uh, that was a lot of fun.

How fun did this come about? It was a lot of fun. I'm a big fan of Matt Damon. Um, Jimmy Kimmel came up to me at a cancer fundraiser. And he, he kind of pigeonholed me and he said, Hey, wouldn't this be [00:06:00] fun if we could like get a real Alister to play millionaire? 'cause they'd have you in their back pocket, you'd be their partner.

And I thought, that does not sound like fun. That sounds like a lot of pressure because now it's all on me. 'cause the celebrity's like, oh good, this is money in the bank. And then like, that's a lot of pressure. That's a lot of money for charity, you know? Yeah. On my shoulders. But Jimmy's always been lovely and he's the nicest guy in TV and I said.

Absolutely Jimmy and I just hope he'd forget about it. Mm-hmm. But instead he told Michael Davies and Michael remembered, and suddenly like two or three days in advance, I got this call saying, Hey, Matt Damon can actually do this. If you can come down this weekend. And so I cut a vacation short and was on plane.

Yeah. You traveled by

Sarah: boat, by car, by plane. It's true. I literally had to get on a

Ken: boat to get here in time. It was, it was touch and go.

Sarah: And I met you with a suit.

Ken: That's right. I didn't even have a suit to wear. I came rushing in late. Matt's like looking at his watch. Uh, he, I'd been waiting so long He had that big beard.

Yeah,

Sarah: he had grown a beard. It was such a long wait. But I will be honest. Backstage you were saying, you know, yes, I'm good at jeopardy, but with millionaire. [00:07:00] It can be any question. So you genuinely didn't know if you were gonna be able to hit that million.

Ken: Millionaire is harder than Jeopardy in one way, which is in jeopardy.

If you don't know a factor, a clue, you can just wait. Wait for the next one. Yeah. Wait for the one. You know, it's the smart strategy. Don't buzz in, just don't buzz in on Millionaire. You gotta swing it every pitch. So it's like the home run derby, you're just like bang, bang, bang. And I just thought, if we get to one, we don't know.

Uh, this is gonna stop us and I'm gonna feel bad and maybe Matt Damon will be angry at me and. And from the Bourne movie, he is like, that's a, he can kill you with a phone book. You know, I, I don't wanna piss off Matt Damon. Um, but luckily the one we didn't know Jimmy came through. It was great. Ask the host paid off for us.

Sarah: Yeah. And poor Brad Rudder, he was a phone of friend. You did call him. Cutting room floor.

Ken: Brad was my phone a friend because I was like, we need somebody smart from Jeopardy. And we, uh, we tried to figure out which Jeopardy masters we could track down. Brad was available. Hooray. And we called him on the last question when we'd already done 50 50.

We knew it, so we called [00:08:00] Brad and he confirmed what the answer was. Mm-hmm. But apparently it was a little anticlimactic. They did not include it on the air. I

Sarah: think Brad wanted you to say, just remember I helped you win a million, but you, you kind of did know it. When those four responses came up, you told Matt, I don't know if this is good or not, but I I kind of already know this

Ken: one.

Yeah, we knew it and then we went to 50 50 and it got even easier. And then Brad agreed, like, I have never been more sure of a trivia fact in my life than, yeah, than when Brad gave us the, okay, so sorry Brad. It wasn't us up to us. A, B, C. Cut it.

Sarah: I was pretty impressed with Matt Damon, though. I mean, obviously you were there, but he was definitely contributing and whether it was what his daughter had read in school or, you know, his trips with the grapes, he knew a lot.

Yeah. He,

Ken: he knew about New Year's Customs in Spain. Yeah. Because he had a brother or something who lived there, his wife I

Sarah: think.

Ken: And, uh, he knew all the lyrics to 1999 by Prince. Yeah. Which didn't actually help. It was very entertaining. It

Sarah: was, yeah.

Ken: Um, smart guy.

Sarah: And now a quick word from our sponsor. If you've shopped online, chances are you've bought from a business [00:09:00] powered by Shopify.

You know that Purple shop pay button you see at checkout, the one that makes buying so incredibly easy? That's Shopify, and there's a reason so many businesses sell with it because Shopify makes it incredibly easy to start and run your business. Shopify is the commerce platform behind 10% of all e-commerce in the US from household names like Mattel and Gym Shark to brands just getting started.

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And did I mention that iconic purple shop pay button that's used by millions of businesses around the world. It's why Shopify has the best converting checkout on the planet. So if you [00:10:00] wanna see less carts being abandoned, it's time for you to head over to Shopify. Sign up for your \$1 per month trial and start selling today at shopify.com/jeopardy.

Go to shopify.com/jeopardy shopify.com/jeopardy. And now back to Inside Jeopardy. All right, well, we're gonna tease that there's one more. Keno. Can we call it that? Instead of a cameo, it's gonna be a keno. That's terrible. But yes, coming up season two of Platonic, we won't tease too much, but you're gonna be in it.

Ken: The Seth Rogan, rose Byrne, apple TV Plus Show, platonic. They actually also a Sony

Sarah: show.

Ken: They actually came and did a whole sequence here on our set. That was a lot of fun.

Sarah: Yeah. And if you didn't know, Ken is a great actor. You're gonna really know,

Ken: you will really find out that I'm not a great actor. No, you're, after watching this, you're gonna find out

Sarah: just how great he is, because you were fantastic.

I haven't

Ken: seen it yet. I don't know what it, I don't know what it's like. I, I've

Sarah: seen You're good.

Ken: Is it funny?

Sarah: Yeah. Okay. It's good. Pla And I [00:11:00] was here when you shot it and I was laughing out loud.

Ken: I I love that. We have a laugh track

Sarah: here. LOL. All right, so August is obviously busy. Do you have more to do with the book?

Does the tour continue?

Ken: Yes. Uh, LA tonight. As soon as this podcast is over, I'm running over to a book signing. And then tonight as we film this, not tonight as you're watching it, no, sorry, you already missed it last week actually. You already missed it. LA Yeah. And then Seattle and then I'm good. I have a couple weeks off.

'cause we're not taping again till September.

Sarah: Yeah, but September's busy too.

Ken: September's very busy.

Sarah: Yeah, we've got the Emmys and you are nominated once again for outstanding game show hosts. Congratulations. Thank you. It's a real one. Are you feeling, you know, even more optimistic than you were last year when we were at the Emmys?

Ken: I would say I was not that optimistic last, last year, if you recall.

Sarah: No, that's what I, that was it. You no

Ken: speech. Uh, pretty sure somebody else would win and yeah. Pat Eck won. Yes. Um, this year, uh, you know, Colin and Justin and I are both nominated. There's two Jeopardy nominees. Mm-hmm. Which is amazing for the show.

But maybe not ideal for me and Colin, we're gonna split the Jeopardy vote. Yes. So we'll see.

Sarah: We'll see. And obviously Jeopardy is up for Outstanding [00:12:00] game show and all of our spinoffs cannot also be nominated, so we're kind of the umbrella of Jeopardy. But they did allow us to nominate both of our hosts, so that's

Ken: cool.

The concept of Jeopardy is up for outstanding game show. I mean,

Sarah: we have to pick the show to submit the episode for. So that is syndication. I feel like we represent all the, we're

Ken: a very good jeopardy. I just wanna say I

Sarah: feel

Ken: so Colin's great. Yeah. Like all the Jeopardy are great. That celebrity host celebrity is pretty

Sarah: good.

Master's pretty good,

Ken: but like this like flagship Jeopardy. Solid show. Sarah.

Sarah: Thank you. I rarely miss it. Mothership.

Ken: The mothership. That's right. You

Sarah: rarely miss it. Thank goodness. 'cause I don't know what we would do if you weren't here and then right after the Emmys. We're heading to Chicago inside Jeopardy, live on tour.

Ken: We have a live event in Chica, and this has not happened yet when the podcast comes out. Is that right?

Sarah: The podcast is coming out in August. Okay. So no, it has not happened.

Ken: So I should, we should plug this. We should plug this. We're gonna be in Chicago,

Sarah: Chicago Theater, September 12th. You'll be there.

Ken: We're gonna do an Inside Jeopardy podcast, is that right?

We are.

Sarah: And then I'd say with surprise guests, no, we have, we could talk about the [00:13:00] guests. Oh,

Ken: that's amazing.

Sarah: W Kamal Bell, our celebrity Jeopardy champion and fan favorite Zahir. She's coming down from Canada,

Ken: crossing the international border to be on inside Jeopardy. That's, you know, how much she loves us.

Sarah: It is true. That is how much she loves us. And people have seen how much fun these events are, so now they wanna be a part of it. I'd say the highlight for most people is the game. Hosted by you. It's really a chance to feel what it's like to play Jeopardy with Host Skin Jennings.

Ken: After the podcast, we do a kind of a live jeopardy in the room where everybody can play along on their device, um, which is a lot of fun.

People say it feels like playing Jeopardy, and that's not an experience you can have anywhere else. I enjoy doing it. Um, because mistakes are very low.

Sarah: Yeah.

Ken: Here on this set, Sarah makes me redo stuff when I screw up in Chicago. You know what? It's probably fine.

Sarah: It's probably fine. I don't even have a earpiece.

That's right. I can't even tell you. You couldn't even

Ken: tell me if I screwed up. No, I have to. I would know though, in my heart

Sarah: you would know if you said answer instead of response or something, you would know.

Ken: It's the kind of thing I do.

Sarah: Well, tickets are available. You can go to [00:14:00] ticket master.com if you wanna be there.

You wanna see Ken, me J Michael Davies, the whole team's gonna be there. Thanks for a great first week. It was so much fun. It's actually three weeks, but it's a first week of taping.

Ken: It was a week for us. Mm-hmm. Three weeks for viewers and some great shows surprises. It's gonna be fun to watch.

Sarah: Yeah. But before we end, you know, there's so many highlights of Season 41, but once in a while we get a little fun.

Ken Outtake. So I want you to take a look at the Season 41 Ken Outtake reel.

Ken: Well, we have a blooper reel. Welcome to Jeopardy following a ah. Sorry. We're gonna do that one more time today. Marks G, today Marks game two. I think we can do that even better. Paint it black and back. Two. We gotta toss it. What is black

or blank? I think I was supposed to say [00:15:00] blank there. What a sclerosis. Correct For correct. For. Correct. Three consonants in a row for 2000, please. How big do you want to go? That's what she said.

Even that doesn't, that does not even make sense. That doesn't even make sense, right. Guy Tyler, but it's med via Dmitri. I can't even say it now. Dmitri. Damn it. Sorry. Lemme do that again. It was a technical thing.

Technically I wasn't very good. He very is a here from what? Sorry, ask that again. Sorry. I don't know why I stopped. Sorry. I think you said you were planning a honeymoon. It's, is that you? No. What do think of that was? That was Ryan. Yesterday's chap. Big news. You just found out that you're going on a honeymoon.

Johnny: And then my [00:16:00] boyfriend flew out from Maine too.

Ken: All the way from Maine. You got to see the win. Congratulations. Kara's main boyfriend, not Kara's main boyfriend. That sounded wrong. Kara's main boyfriend, your main man. Do you ever say that? That's fun. Sorry, we're just gonna keep doing this till I actually do it, right?

Johnny: Yeah. Catching it. Hop.

Ken: Sorry. I'm tall. People love tall people jokes, huh? It's like their favorite thing. We will pause for a quick commercial break Back where? The moment I say Back with a moment. One more time. One more time. Scott's in third place at the moment. We don't see that very often. We'll see how that develops at.

No, I promise we're gonna get to this commercial, you guys. This is gonna happen. You three make your wagers. We'll come, right,

let's do it three times. It's all gonna start right after this. [00:17:00] Three, two, and here's the clue. Ping book covers. Ping

Johnny: Ping. Are you available for sound effects? I'd like to know

Ken: any other questions for me while we have a moment.

: You ever finish a particular episode and at the end you realize, boy, this contestant don't know.

Ken: I do remember I lost to this lovely woman from Ventura named. Nancy Zer, who knew final jeopardy when I did not. And do you know what she thought? She was like, that guy don't know.

Ah, the one that makes me laugh is like accidentally hitting the p boob. Yeah, because Alex had the button on the flick turn that goes. P

Sarah: And your face, I mean, you're like a 4-year-old who just.

Ken: I mean, that's the only one that got trouble. Like, I literally surprised me. Like it's like a electro shock or something.

Sarah: Yeah.

Ken: Um,

Sarah: but no, that we scoured, you know, 230 episodes. That's all [00:18:00] we could find of outtakes. You're that good.

Ken: Well, like the thing I like about watching blooper reels is there's always other people around in the scene to laugh at. Here, I'm the only one on stage, so it's just me being annoyed. It's like uhhuh five minutes of me being annoyed at myself.

So that's kind of funny in its own way, I guess.

Sarah: Yeah, I think it says a lot about you, though. You are a perfectionist. You like to do things correctly and you don't like messing up.

Ken: Well, we both saw Alex host the show. This is true. And that's not a guy who needed a lot of retakes.

Sarah: Yeah. But I also wouldn't have dared to ask him to retake the things that I asked you to do.

So it's just, let's be honest, you know, Alex did it his his way and we were just fine with that. And, you know, for you, I just,

Ken: I think he would've enjoyed the bloopers too. But, uh, yes, that was, that was fun to watch.

Sarah: All right, well, thanks for joining us on the Alex Trebek stage. Here's to a great season,

Ken: season 42.

Here we go.

Sarah: And we'll see you in Jeff. It will back with a moment. Alright. Okay. One more. Done. Okay, here we go. Uh, well, [00:19:00] thanks for joining us on the Alex Beck stage. Here's to a new season, a great season, season 42.

Ken: I'm excited.

Sarah: All right. And we'll see all of you in Chicago for inside jeopardy. Live on tour.

Ken: Back with a moment.