



TRANSCRIPT: THE NINE WORLDS PODCAST, 2017 EPISODE 02

HOSTED BY

MISHA ANKWELL, HEAD OF BIFROST CABERET

MATT DILLON, NINE WORLDS CONTENT PRODUCER

ADDITIONAL VOICES

JANE ENSELL as the GEEKPLANETONLINE ANNOUNCER

Performance Notes

Misha's voice is soft and traditionally female. She has a fairly neutral southern English accent.

Matt's voice is deeper and traditionally male. He has a tempered southern English "estuary" accent.

The announcer has a slightly harder, traditionally female voice. She speaks with received pronunciation.

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PODCAST BEGINS

[Serene Music Starts]

ANNOUNCER

You're listening to a GeekPlanetOnline community podcast. For more free entertainment, including podcasts and videos, visit us at GeekPlanetOnline.com.

[Serene Music Ends]

[Theme Music Starts]

The theme music is fast-paced and upbeat.

[Theme Music Ends]

MATT

Hello, conventioners, and welcome to another Nine Worlds Podcast, here on geekplanetonline.com. I'm Matt, and I am joined as ever by Misha -

MISHA

Hello!

MATT

Hello!

MISHA

[LAUGHS] I always feel like I should say more, and then it's just like, "eh, 'hello' works".

MATT

"Hello" works indeed. So, with only a few months to go until the Nine Worlds 2017 Convention, everything is now at the planning stages, and we're all busy buzzing around like little buzzy bees, getting everything sorted out. So we thought, what better subject than this week's episode, than Grand Designs, or Great Plans, or things that aren't copyright infringing.

MISHA

[LAUGHS] Is it copyright infringement just to acknowledge that Grand Designs exists?

MATT

Well, I think, I think it is if we rip off their title wholesale.

MISHA

[LAUGHS] Yeeeeaaaah...

MATT

I think that's the case.

MISHA

Minor details.

MATT

There are no minor details in the planning of a convention, my friend.

MISHA

[LAUGHS] Yeah, don't come to Bifrost, I - I'm all about minor details. It'll be chaos. [LAUGHS] I'm joking, please come.

MATT

Now we've received a little bit of feedback, here at the podcast, after our first episode, and people have been asking to know a bit more about you and I, in terms of what we do for Nine Worlds, and what the Nine Worlds convention is. Now, I'm guessing that most of the people listening to something called the Nine Worlds podcast are at least passingly familiar with the Nine Worlds Convention, but just in case you're not, Misha, can you, uh, give the listeners a little bit of insight into what the Nine Worlds Convention is or what it represents?

MISHA

I can certainly have a go! Nine Worlds is... it describes itself as a Geek Fest, it's a kind of friendly, fun, inclusive convention of all things nerdy. So, you know, you get your conventions that are specifically Doctor Who or Star Trek or whatever - we're a bit of everything, y'know, like Doctor Who? Come along! Like singing along to Joss Whedon? Come along! Like having, I mean, I think a person, I'm still not sure at this stage, but someone dressed as No-Face leading a conga at two in the morning to the sound of Eurovision? Come along!

Does that describe it well? I feel like that's either a very good description, or a very bad description.

MATT

I think you described it very well. As Misha says, there's lots of sort of varied fandoms and activities represented at Nine Worlds, and it's entirely community-led. So the people putting on the convention are also the people providing the entertainment, as are the people that are visiting the convention. You can come along to Nine Worlds and you can actually bring your content with you. We recently did a call for content, which is now closed, so almost everything you're seeing at Nine Worlds 2017 will be staged and put on by people who are coming to see other people doing just the same thing, which is kind of a wonderful thing, I think.

MISHA

Yeah, and, uh, we're still looking people for the Bifrost, so if you, y'know, fancy singing, dancing, doing all sorts of, you know, fun, on-stage things, please do send me an e-mail. Um, link in the show notes, but bifrost@nineworlds.co.uk.

MATT

Yeah, I'll link that in the show notes as well so everyone can see that. So, a little bit about us, and what we do for the convention. So, my name is Matt Dillon, I am the Editor-in-chief of geekplanetonline.com that hosts this podcast, but also this year, for the first time, I am a Content Producer for Nine Worlds. So my role will be to organise all of the approved content for this year within a specific boundary. In my case, I'll be producing all of the panels for this year. So I'll be organising all of the people that have volunteered to put on panels, chasing them up, running around like a headless chicken come crunch time -

MISHA

[LAUGHS]

MATT

- weeping in the small hours of the morning when nobody's returning my calls or emails, that sort of thing. My pronouns are 'he' and 'his', and I identify as cismale. Background-wise, I am the Editor-in-chief of geekplanetonline.com, I have been running geekplanetonline.com either in full or in part with other people since 2008. I am the veteran of umpteen-gajillion podcasts. I often refer to myself as 'Podcasting's Survivor Girl' 'cos I'm normally the first one in and the last one out -

MISHA

[LAUGHS]

MATT

- everyone else gets bored and goes away, I'm normally the one still flogging the dead horse on a show or something. I probably shouldn't describe it like that, I'm not, uh, doing myself any favours.

MISHA

[LAUGHS]

MATT

I am also a massive video games nerd and, er, collector of vintage video games. I was a Trekker since I was a kid, I'm a Doctor Who fan, there's a variety of fandoms that I claim to be a part of, and I am proudly, proudly, fiercely Hufflepuff.

MISHA

[GIGGLES]

MATT

So that's me. Misha, what about you?

MISHA

I am Misha Anker. I joined Nine Worlds last year to run, slash produce, slash wrangle, I think is the best word, the Bifrost Cabaret and Disco, featuring last year such excellent acts as, uh, the lovely Alex Watts, who we're hoping to have back this year. We had Playing Rapunzel, who was lovely, we had all sorts of exciting people. We had sci-fi author and DJ extraordinaire Mike Brooks do the sweariest song I've ever seen anybody have to sign, it was... it was a thing of beauty. And we had a, an excellent lady dressed as Deadpool doing a poledance. Tha-that's the kind of thing you get from Bifrost, and as... earlier mentioned, later on into the disco, No-Face led the conga, so...

Oh, God, how else do I describe myself? I'm very bad at this [LAUGHS] I am... go with 'she'/'her' declensions thereof, or variations on 'Oi! You! That one there - you!' I will respond to just about anything. I have two cats and a wife, I identify as cisfemale. Fandoms, I suppose... very, very fond of Doctor Who, got a lot of love for just generally... I love a bit of sort-of silly sci-fi, like, I really like, you know, sort of Hitchhiker's Guide, Doctor Who... I've gotten back into Night Vale recently. Been involved in several attempts to do a podcast before, but never one that's actually made it past the first episode, so this - this is already some kind of new record.

MATT

Mmm, don't count your chickens.

MISHA

[LAUGHS] What else? Yeah, I like things, basically. I like being enthusiastic and, yeah. I like the sort-of fan culture and I've got a long, long-held deep soft spot for fan, fan fiction. I come from the deep dark days of the internet when it was not a cool thing to do and you didn't talk about it, so, uh... yeah, that tells you something about me.

MATT

It does! So, that's us, and that's Nine Worlds. What we prefer to do with these shows is to sort-of dive fairly quickly into the main topic of discussions, and certainly as episodes move forward, you're going to see us doing that. We don't like to feel like we're advertising at everyone, the podcast is here as much to celebrate Nine Worlds and the things it stands for, as well as it is to fill people in on news and things surrounding the convention itself, so... It's really it's just a little bit of fun and, uh, a way to reach out to other members of the community for them to reach out back to us.

Speaking of which, we do plan to have guest on at some point, we're just getting the podcast up and running. I know that in past years we had another show, and this year it's sort of fallen to me to make the 2017 version of the podcast, I guess you could call it, uh Misha and I working together on that. So yes, uh, at some point- hopefully for the next episode, we should be getting some more diverse voices onto the show, now that we're established and, uh, it's just a question of timing and finding people that are free, really. People that are involved with the con that are free, so...

OK, I think that's enough about us and Nine Worlds itself. There'll be, of course, convention news at the end of the show. Misha is now going to introduce our topic, and bring up our first example.

[Sound effect: rewinding vinyl record]

Note: this sound effect is used as a section break. It will henceforth be referred to as [Section Break] in this transcript.

MISHA

We're talking, uh, Grand Plans, not designs. Great Expectations - no, that's not... [LAUGHS] I think that's out of copyright now, isn't it? It's probably fine...

MATT

Yeah, you're fine, you're fine. Public domain, you're fine.

MISHA

I'd like to dreadfully say that because I've been putting my kitchen back together, as you do, that I'd sort of forgotten about this, but my first Grand Plan thought was Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy -

MATT

Oooh, ok.

MISHA

- and there are two Grand Plans from that, but mostly- I think both you can attribute to Ford, but I might have to check. One that is definitely Ford Prefect's is, "Drink lots and dance with girls," which is a brilliant plan. I do actually, the other Grand Plan in it is attributable more to Zaphod Beeblebrox, "Let's find somewhere to have lunch." And... I - I think they count as Grand Plans, not just because lunch becomes The Restaurant At The End Of The Universe, travel through time, but because there's something very... very beautiful about how Douglas Adams can hinge, essentially, hundreds of thousands of words of story on some very simple, human-level, 'let's have some lunch, and then let's get drunk and go dancing.' Like, it becomes this sort of overarching... not arc, I suppose, because arc would ascribe a lot more logic to The Hitchhiker's Guide than there is, but... but yeah, it's a good plan. It's a plan I can get behind.

MATT

I suppose it's also fair to say that from the moment he leaves Earth, Arthur Dent is searching for a cup of tea.

MISHA

Yeah, you know, that's, that's a plan I think we can all feel a sense of affinity with, of just... "Why is this happening? Why can't I have a cup of tea? There's no cups of tea, everything is awful." It's like a Monday morning, but on a grand scale.

MATT

This is very true. Now, The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy's an interesting one, at least from my perspective, because, famously, it's the trilogy in five parts, so when it comes to plot arcs, and I don't know what your feeling is on this, it's kind of a mess because it was planned to be a radio series, and then Douglas Adams decided to explore it in books, and then it was supposed to be a trilogy of books, and then it rapidly became four books then five books.

MISHA

And then it stopped suddenly, and then there's the book written by Eoin Colfer of which we must never speak because I love his other work but- well, we must never speak of it, so...

MATT

[LAUGHS]

Yes, and then of course, subsequently got adapted into a new series of the radio show, some sort of thirty-odd years since the last one.

MISHA

Yeah.

MATT

And, uh, much the same sentiment - I am a big fan of Dirk Maggs' other work, but when it comes to his revival of Hitchhiker's Guide, it's like, [BIG BREATH] "Please just let it go?"

MISHA

And that's before you get into the fact that no two versions of the story have fully the same plot. I think the recurring theme if Ford Prefect's lets-get-drunk-and-dance-with-girls, and I think that therefore counts it as a Grand Plan. [LAUGHS]

MATT

[LAUGHS]

MISHA

Narrowly.

MATT

Was it the radio series your first came to, or was it the books, or one of the LPs, or...

MISHA

I actually went, I went in entirely the wrong order. I went books, TV series, film (of which we must never speak), radio series. I knew the radio series existed -

MATT

Mmmm.

MISHA

- but I didn't get to it until much later, because, um, this was slightly pre-the-internet and Amazon being quite so ubiquitous, and it was just harder to find on cassette.

MATT

Mmmm, yes.

MISHA

I think I must have been about ten or eleven when I read the book, it was on my parents bookshelf and I knew nothing at all about it, I just thought, "That's a pretty cover, I'll read that. I like sci-fi." Because they had the cover that, um, I mean depending on which version you see, it was sort of pink and orange and blue, and it was all multicoloured, it just said The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy, I thought, "That sounds great". And for a long time, I didn't realise that there was any more to it than that one book. [LAUGHS] And then I found the telly version, and developed a terrible painful adolescent crush on David Dixon, which was really... not even stopped, but just upsetting when I suddenly realised that wasn't what he looked like anymore, 'cos at this time it was about 2005, and I thought, "Oh dear."

MATT

[LAUGHS]

MISHA

"Oh, he's not that pretty now." Oooh. And I'm still heartbroken by this.

MATT

He was the replacement Ford, am I remembering right?

MISHA

He was the replacement Ford, because Geoff McGivern, who I also think is excellent, did not have the right 'look' for Ford. I think was the, the logic given. And to be fair, David Dixon does exude that brilliant sort of otherworldly massive-eyed something's-not-quite-right-but-you-can't-put-your-finger-on-what... but yeah, oh, a very formative adolescent crush. [LAUGHS]

MATT

[LAUGHS]

MISHA

Oh, David Dixon.

MATT

Oooh. I g- I was impressed when I watching the TV series at just how close to the radio series it was, there were only a couple of parts that were recast.

MISHA

Yeah.

MATT

Unfortunately, one of those was Trillian, and -

MISHA

Yes.

MATT

- yeeeeaaaahhh.

MISHA

It was... oh, I've forgotten who it was that did it.

MATT

Sandra Dickinson?

MISHA

That was it, Sandra Dickinson, because... she was, or is, Peter Davison's wife. Yes, that was it, because it was an ongoing thing, when David Tennant and... um, Georgina Moffett?

MATT

Georgia Moffett.

MISHA

Georgia Moffett? 'Cos when they had their child, that was the thing that people say, "Oh yes, y'know, it's the grandchild of Trillian and the Doctor", and the nerd world got very excited.

MATT

The nerd world got very confused, there's like, "Hand on a minute. So, the Doctor's daughter married the Doctor-"

MISHA

"But she's also the Doctor's daughter also-"

MATT

"The mother of the Doctor's daughter?"

MISHA

Yes.

MATT

[LAUGHS]

MISHA

And that poor child will probably grow up to an accountant, or something really boring.

MATT

[LAUGHS]

MISHA

It's the only answer.

MATT

People are very fond of bringing up the whole, you know, Doctor's daughter paradox thing when it comes to their relationship. Like, the thing that got me was... and I thought this when Guy Ritchie,

like, married Madonna, it's like, how weird must it be, like, in Guy Ritchie's case, he grew up like the rest of us did in the 80s, with Madonna posters on his wall, fancying the pants off her, and then one day he marries her.

MISHA

Yeah. I... Yeah. [LAUGHS]

MATT

And, like, David Tennant grew up idolising Peter Davison...

MISHA

And now it's his father-in-law. It must be very, very strange.

MATT

Right?

MISHA

Yeah.

MATT

Yeah. Like, when he first got the part as the Doctor, like, the papers were very fond of pointing out that he once got like a 'D' on a school assignment, What Do I Want To Be When I Grow Up, he's like, "I want to be Doctor Who" and they all laughed at him, and it's like, hahaha, look at him now.

MISHA

Yeah.

MATT

But it's like, if you were to show 10 year-old David Tennant-

MISHA

Yeah.

MATT

"Ok, dude, strap yourself in, right, you're going to be the Doctor."

"No way!"

"No, no, you are. And, you're gonna marry the Doctor's daughter".

"Wait, what?"

"And, your favourite Doctor's going to be your father-in-law."

"No, seriously, what?"

MISHA

Yeah. [LAUGHS] Like, I know on a small scale, I... not naming names, because the person in question, I think if they knew, would probably be a little bit embarrassed, but a comedian that I became aware of when I was about 19, and had a bit of an awkward crush on, I subsequently became, like, good friends with, and so I can never tell them this, and then we were at the same birthday party, and just like, y'know, two in the morning, having a few drinks, having weird conversations, and just a little bit of my brain was going, "Oh, if you could go back and tell the 19 year-old you what you're gonna do, she wouldn't believe you." And it was that same kind-of disconnect of just like, "I did not expect this to be how the world would turn out."

MATT

It is really weird, isn't it?

MISHA

It's deeply strange.

MATT

You know, I've had lots of moments like that, doing what I do for podcasts and, I mentioned on the first episode that I got to interview Joe Michael Straczynski, now, I got into Babylon 5 a little late, you know, I didn't see it on the first TV run, I caught it on the Sci-Fi Channel repeats. However, I was hooked on that show from the moment I started watching it, and I - I idolised him, and then one day, I'm talking to him.

MISHA

Yeah.

MATT

And it's not quite the same thing as becoming friends with one of your, uh, you know, one of your heroes, or somebody that you look up to, but it's... yeah, it was like, "Wow."

MISHA

Yeah. It's deeply strange.

MATT

It is deeply strange, and it becomes surreal.

MISHA

It's a true fact. One of my now-best friends I met because I nerded out to a mutual friend, and was like, "You can't possibly ever tell him, but..." we- we're mates now. It's, uh, lovely, lovely Liam Welton, who I think at this stage is something very important in Failbetter Games, but at the time was just like, "Oh, he just does the coding." And our mutual friend Paddy, I - I played... Failbetter's Fallen London before I knew anything about any of them, and I thought it was really cool. So I said, "Oh, Paddy's really cool, I know he's your mate but I think he's awesome. Don't tell him!" And he did. And I could have killed him.

MATT

[SNIGGERS]

MATT and MISHA

[LAUGHS]

MISHA

And then we met later on at a party, and he didn't really know anyone else, and we got chatting again, and he's "Oh yeahyeahyeah, you're Paddy's mate, you like my game," and it's like, "Yes, I think you're really cool." And then in a recurring theme of my life, because I'd had a few drinks, and because Liam had long hair, I French plaited it, um, and now -yeah, the rest, as they say, is history.

MATT

[LAUGHS] Well, just as long as you didn't write any fan fiction about him.

MISHA

Not about him.

MATT and MISHA

[LAUGHS]

MATT

There you go, conventioners, there's a callback for you, all the way back to, y'know, last week.

MISHA

All the way.

[SECTION BREAK]

MATT

So, oh, gaming, there's a segue, as...

MISHA

Yes.

MATT

Talking of Grand Plans. Now, I've chosen to interpret Grand Plans as arc plots.

MISHA

Ooh.

MATT

And I'm not gonna talk about Babylon 5, which I'm sure anyone that knows me from The Babble On Project is expecting me to suddenly go into a diatribe about the beautiful arc plot that is Babylon 5. But, needless to say, it's a beautiful arc plot, and you should all go and watch it. I'm going to talk

about something that is almost as good as Babylon 5, in my heart. And that's Mass Effect. Have you played any of the Mass Effect games? Is that something you're in to?

MISHA

I... don't know anything at all about Mass Effect. Apart from, and I'm only semi-confident about this, that a friend of mine provided the voices for the most recent one. But now I'm gonna have to check that I didn't imagine it, or that it is not some other game.

[SFX: The "pause game" tone from Super Mario Bros.]

[Music plays, distorted and slightly tinny as if coming from an old-fashioned telephone]

The music is a bright, cheesy, "easy listening" version of the level 1-1 theme from Super Mario Land. It's geeky "on hold" music.

ON-HOLD ANNOUNCER

Please hold, the podcast will be with you as soon as possible.

[The music continues]

ON-HOLD ANNOUNCER

Have you bought your tickets to Nine Worlds yet? Find out more, at www.nineworlds.co.uk!

[The music continues]

ON-HOLD ANNOUNCER

Has anybody seen my trousers?

[SFX: The "un-pause game" tone from Super Mario Bros.]

MISHA

Okay, right, I'm ready, I can do my correct name drop. In Mass Effect: Andromeda, my friend Bec does some of the voices.

MATT

Cool.

MISHA

That's all I know about Mass Effect.

MATT

I haven't actually played Andromeda yet, being a huge Mass Effect fan I pre-ordered it, but I didn't get the chance to play it because I'm still in the middle of Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild -

MISHA

Yeah.

MATT

So I decided to that, and while I was finishing Breath of the Wild, reports started coming in about all of the bugs that had emerged and in some cases it was game-breaking, and I sort of thought, "Ok, this is going very much like Fallout: New Vegas," but like Fallout: New Vegas - 'cos gamers on the internet get angry about everything - everyone's getting angry about it now, but in six months' time, they'll drop a massive patch that'll fix almost everything, and then it'll be hailed as a sort of misunderstood classic.

MISHA

Yeah.

MATT

Just like Fallout: New Vegas is now. So, I thought, "You know what, I'll leave it. I'll wait for that patch to drop." Because it will, it will. That's how the video game industry works now, things are shipped in unfinished states and then you're expected to download five gigabytes worth of patch file to make the damn thing functional. So, I'm just letting that one bide. But, um, I'm, um... A lot of people I know have played it and are really enjoying it, just as many people are enjoying it as not, so.

But the original Mass Effect trilogy is what I'm referring to here, this, this great, glorious, three-game long arc plot.

MISHA

Yeah.

MATT

So you were saying that you, you don't really know a lot about it, other than name-dropping.

MISHA

I've heard of it, as one of the games that people who do games play. But I have been quite out of the games loop since PlayStation 2 was new and shiny. And I mainly use that to play a game called G1 Jockey 4, so, uh.

MATT

[LAUGHS] Yes.

MISHA

All I'm saying is, G1 Jockey 4 - great game.

MATT

To fill you in and, if anyone's listening who's not played Mass Effect, if anyone's listening who's not a gamer and might be interested, I, I'll drop a brief explanation. And if you already know this, I apologise profusely in advance, just, y'know, go and make a cup of tea, come back, and I'll be done describing Mass Effect. It's all fine.

So, Mass Effect is a science-fiction video game trilogy set in the future, it's a role-playing game, made by Bioware, who are the studio responsible for Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic, if anybody's familiar with that game. And it promised, at least at the time of its first, uh, its initial release, or the pre-release of the first game, it promised to be a sort of choose-your-own-adventure game. But in video game form, where the choices that you make along the way will impact the outcome of the game. Now, a lot of people are quick to point out it didn't kind of turn out that way, but I would argue it kind of did. And the way each game works is this. There is usually a definitive starting point and a definitive ending point, but it's everything that happens in between that can be completely unique, and there are so many different choices to make along each... the route of each game, that everybody has a completely different experience.

But where Mass Effect proved itself relatively unique, was, when you pop in Mass Effect 2, it scans your drive for Mass Effect 1 saved games, and it gives you the choice to import a character from Mass Effect 1. So you say, "Ok, take my play through from Mass Effect 1." And every significant choice you made throughout the course of the previous game has been recorded in that saved file, and that gets imported into your next game. And there may be different consequences, so because you allowed a certain character to die, another character might be hostile to you, whereas otherwise they would have been friendly, for example. And it changes the balance of the game. No, the balance is the wrong word. it changes the events of the game. But like the first game, Mass Effect 2 has a set start point and a set ending point, and again it's the journey along the way. And so does Mass Effect 3.

What's really interesting is, a lot of choices you make in Mass Effect 1, the outcome of these, or the consequence of these don't become apparent until Mass Effect 3, so you might think you've got away with something for two entire games, and then you play the third one, and then you sort of get slapped in the face with the consequences of what you did.

MISHA

Hah, the long game.

MATT

Absolutely. So, why am I bringing this up as a type of Grand Plan? Well, it's got a huge arc plot, everything is connected, and the arc plot concerns... a future where mankind has discovered the ruins of an ancient civilisation on Mars, a race that they've dubbed the Protheans, and amongst these ruins are technology, and the technology has been retro-engineered and it's enabled us to start travelling around the stars in starships a little bit ahead of schedule, in effect. So unlike the Star Trek future, where humanity went charging into the stars and met the Vulcans and formed the Federation and humanity is at the forefront of exploration, at the forefront of galactic events, and Babylon 5 is also guilty of this to a much lesser degree, but mankind built the Babylon 5 station, so mankind is suddenly at the centre of all galactic politics, for example. In Mass Effect, we are the youngest race, and most of the other races think we're a bit too rash, but because we've discovered the Mass Effect technology, we've been brought on to the galactic stage, whether we like it or not. And, into this mix of galactic politics, there is an army of synthetics, synthetic life forms called the Geth, who are suddenly, after decades of just keeping to themselves on their own little planet, suddenly venturing out and attacking other worlds. And your character is sent to investigate this, and then from there, this whole sprawling plot involving dozens of different races and... ancient prophecies, and all of this wonderful stuff, unfolds from there. [PAUSE]

And it's absolutely astounding. Just the level of detail that goes into this. Every race that you encounter in this game has their own backstory, their own politics, their own biology, that's the other wonderful thing as well about Mass Effect is that... the aliens are truly alien. It's not Trek-style bumpy foreheads, or... they're mostly like us, except for this appendage or that. The Turians, for example, who are very sort of, they look sort of armour plated, and fair- and fairly sort of reptilian, I guess, I would say... mmmmm... yeah, repili- yeah, I, I think it's fair... mmmmm... chitinous, maybe. Maybe more insect-like, maybe slightly more insect-like, but... They can't eat our food, for example, they're not sort of carbon-based life-forms, amino acid-based life-forms the way we are. So they have a, yea- and it's and it's just there as background detail, the fact that they can't share a meal with humans.

MISHA

Yeah.

MATT

And everything has been thought out, and everything has been plotted out, and then when you stop consider that, in terms of character development and galactic events, repercussions for all these different player choices and the different combinations thereof have to be plotted out.

MISHA

Yeah.

MATT

That's really clever stuff.

MISHA

Yeah, that is impressive.

MATT

And I realise that, um... I'm probably not doing, especially describing it to someone who's never played...

MISHA

[LAUGHS]

MATT

I'm probably -

MISHA

I dunno, it sounds cool.

MATT

I mean, it's absolutely wonderful. I mean, in terms of, sort of plotting, design aesthetic... (PAUSE) what-have-you, the writers have drawn from Trek, they've drawn from Babyl - there is so much Babylon 5 in Mass Effect, which is la - ah, I suspect largely why I love it as much as I do. There are shades of Star Wars, and Firefly, and... uh, Space Battleship Yamato, and all of this sort of classic stuff, and there's also shades of pulp sci-fi... and just a wonderful voice cast, so well-acted, and ju - just so sort of sprawling. And it's the sort of universe you just get lost in. And when you consider that

you have to, as a player, you have to inhabit this universe for, what, maybe 150 hours of gameplay, if you sort of average out, each game is roughly 50 hours of gameplay.

MISHA

Yeah.

MATT

And all of that is scored and designed and realised in 3D, and voice-acted... it is still one of the most ambitious, if not the most ambitious, event in video gaming history, and it's played a large part in bringing video games closer to other forms of entertainment.

MISHA

Yeah.

MATT

So, uh, yeah, Mass Effect would be, would be my choice. And I don't really know what much more to say. [LAUGHS]

MISHA

[LAUGHS] That's fair. The end of that, yeah. It sounds exciting.

MATT

Yeah, but I often think, and I don't know what you think about this, but I often think that games like Mass Effect, you know, of course it set the bar pretty high, and lots of games and publishers are kind of working on their writing in a similar fashion now, but I think it's a lot more difficult than, say, plan-plotting ah, a fantasy saga. And I'm sure that most of the fantasy sagas are made up as they go along. I, you know, I've spoken to enough authors who don't sit and plan things out meticulously before they start writing. To know that it's at least a coin flip for any given author -

MISHA

Yeah

MATT

But at least, even if you are planning out those novels, at least it's...

MISHA

There's a start and an end point.

MATT

Yes, at least it's a set tale, a set exercise that does not change based on the reader. The reader can only infer differences from it.

MISHA

Yeah.

MATT

They cannot control the outcome, whereas with a video game, of course, it's very active entertainment, it's not passive entertainment. I don't think there's anything like that. Maybe immersive theatre?

MISHA

Yeah, I suppose there is to an extent, although even immersive theatre, unless it's very avantgarde, is guiding you towards the same end point. Whereas...(PAUSE) I mean, I don't really know Mass Effect, I know if you eventually come out to the same point and it's the journey along the way, or whether... that is in some way different.

MATT

I... Uh, that's a controversial... well, the question's not controversial, the answer is controversial. So, when Mass Effect 3 was released, there was a massive backlash because the very early... press releases when the first game was in development, and comments from people that were no longer involved in making the games, 'cos the games started off as, uh, I mean they've always been under Bioware but they started off as a Microsoft Studios project. Microsoft Studios then ended up selling the franchise to EA -

MISHA

Yeah.

MATT

- who then developed it from there, so you've sort of have a change in management.

MISHA

Mmm.

MATT

And some of the development team have left and gone on to other things. But it sort of promised, you know, "Oh, we'll have 30 or 40 different endings, depending on the choices you made." And what actually happens is... irrespective of your choices in the game, the end of Mass Effect 3, it's presented in dialogue -

MISHA

Yeah.

MATT

- I don't want to spoil the game for anyone who's not played it, because it's a long, beautiful, involved journey and I adore the ending, but the ending essentially comes down to a long conversation.

MISHA

Mmm.

MATT

There's a lot of dialogue, and there are choices to be made in that dialogue, and you will see a slightly different end cut scene, depending on the choices you make at the end. But the endings are v - largely the same, apart from a few details.

MISHA

Yeah.

MATT

And... as I mentioned earlier, gamers on the internet like kicking off about pretty much anything. I described it as a massive backlash, it wasn't even that massive, but unfortunately the vocal minority got the attention.

MISHA

Yeah.

MATT

And a campaign was mounted called Take Back Mass Effect, in which... and this is something that maybe you and I can discuss, actually, 'cos I'm sure you'll have an opinion on this when I describe it. They were demanding that the writers of Mass Effect go back and change things.

MISHA

Right.

MATT

Like, "We don't like the story you've told... tell a different story." They demanded, effectively they demanded a patch that changes the ending, or provides different endings.

MISHA

Yeeeaah.

MATT

And... my opinion on that, is that I think people are missing the point of the games, which is, although it might not have always been intended that way, again, because there was a change in publisher, there was a change in, in team... From the second game onwards, it's been about, it's not been about the outcome, it's been about the journey, and every game prior to that, the first two games, they each have a set start point, and a set end point. But the point of the games, and certainly the enjoyment of the plot, does not come from the start point and the end point, those are just punctuation in the plotting, in my opinion. It is about that journey, and it's about the different twists and turns and... so forth, like, the outcome of the game may not be affected, like the ultimate outcome may not be affected based on who lives and who dies -

MISHA

Yeah.

MATT

- for example. But, you might have grown attached to a character that then subsequently dies due to choices you have made.

MISHA

Yeah.

MATT

And I don't care who you are, that's... that hurts.

MISHA

Yeah.

MATT

And it's about that emotion generated. But, this campaign kicked off in a fairly large way, and demanded that Bioware made the changes. Now, I want you to... just put a pin in that. I'm going to tell you what the outcome of those protests and those demands were, but put a pin in that, because I really would love to hear your opinion on what they were doing. And then I'll fill you in just quickly on the outcome, which was, what I consider to be one of the finest high-level trolls in the history of fandom, which is that, "OK, here's a press release. We are going to be releasing a two gigabyte patch, free of charge, it's called The Director's Cut, and it will give you a different ending."

MISHA

I mean, it's completely mad. It's just... it's a game. Duh.

MATT

OK. But... When you went and played through, so I went and played through, well I went through and played through the last hour of the game again, w - with the patch applied...

MISHA

Yeah.

MATT

The ending is exactly the same, just with more detail.

MISHA

[LAUGHS]

MATT

It is one of the finest middle fingers-up to self-entitled fandom. I refuse to believe that wasn't deliberate. I don't think they tried to give people what they want and failed a second time, quote unquote. I think that was very much, "No, this is the story we wanted to tell, we told it, you can have some more detail, you can spend half a day downloading your 2.5 gigabyte patch from our patch servers, and then it's gonna be exactly the same."

MISHA

Yeah.

MATT

"Go to hell." Right? But yes, let's rewind to where we put that pin, and let me ask you your opinion of this act, and this demand.

MISHA

It's, yeah, it's completely mad, I think, is the only way I can describe it. It just... it's not how games work. You just, you get a game and it... daaah. That's what I think.

MATT

Do you think that... that's a fair request to make of any form of entertainment, from the creators of any...

MISHA

Yeah. I just can't imagine why you would set out and think, "Yeah, this seems like a valid... thing... I demand the world sorts itself out to be the way I want it."

MATT

Yeah, I mean, that kind of what they were asking for. Because, I mean, my view on this as somebody that... has done writing, somebody that has written a novel, self-pubbed, somebody who has written journalism, produced podcasts, you know, somebody who has told stories -

MISHA

Yeah.

MATT

- that's the story I wanted to tell, and that much story might be for you or it might not be, and you've got every right to enjoy it and then dislike how the ending, or, or any given point of it, and you have every right to put your money where your mouth is, and not to purchase future projects from me, or what-have-you. What you don't have the right to do, as a consumer, is to tell me that my creative work is wrong and I need to change it in accordance with your wishes. Because for every person that does not like that creative work, or that particular plot point, or what-have-you, there will be another who loves it.

MISHA

Yeah. It's just... you can't just demand the world remoulds itself around you.

MATT

Mmmm. Do you think that there has been, because certainly I do, do you think there has been a rise in self-entitlement, in the internet age of fans and fandom in particular?

MISHA

I think a bit, just because people can get hold of the makers and say, "Here is what I think, Maker. I demand you respond to me, and also do what I want." Yeah, it's just silly.

MATT

I mean, you're a Doctor Who fan, and of course, Steven Moffat famously quit Twitter -

MISHA

Yes [LAUGHS] I don't blame him.

MATT

- due to the deluge of... the wall of opinion that would flood him after every episode aired.

MISHA

Yeah. It's... it's a lovely thing, but it's also a terrible thing, sometimes.

[SECTION BREAK]

MATT

OK, well, we've been talking for about an hour now, so I think that's around the time to bring the podcast to a close.

MISHA

I think so.

MATT

So, this would normally be the point where we would bring you some convention news, but things are still in the planning stages. However, I thought it might be useful, since we can't tell you what's going on at the convention just yet, I thought it might be useful to talk about some of the specifics about what went on last year. This being said, I thought, and – (TO MISHA) I'm going to put you on the spot here - and say, I think Misha should go first. So, in our next episode, I'll talk about some of the panels that went on last year, but I thought, Misha, you could tell us a little bit about some of the acts you had in the cabaret last year.

MISHA

Oh, I can certainly do that, because that's the bit I can remember! Last year, we had an exciting range of people, both people who volunteer themselves, and people I reached out to and said, "You, come here. You'll enjoy this. Be on the stage." I've previously mentioned lovely people, some of whom are returning. We had, we had the lady who danced as Deadpool, she was astonishing, it's one of the weirder things I've ever had to try and set up was, uh, Deadpool pole dance.

MATT

[LAUGHS]

MISHA

We had sci-fi author Mike Brooks with his swearsy guitar, we had musical comedian Jay Foreman - never have I seen a man look more delighted upon learning the set of signs, because we had our BSL signer for his song about caterpillar sick. Somewhere there's a video, I will try and find it to link in the show notes. If I can't, I'm very sorry, because it's hilarious. We had Playing Rapunzel did us some

songs, they're lovely, lovely ladies. We had two excellent magicians, including Daniel Barker, who once, when we first met, accidentally set me on fire. That is a story for another day. And, er, of course, the entire convention... absolute panic when he set a card on fire using his creep magic skills.

MATT

[LAUGHS]

MISHA

We had Midnight Iris, excellent, amazing, steampunk burlesque... thing... dancing, it was getting on towards the end of the night by that point. We had Anil, excellent poet, we had Athos, who was also a poet. Basically, there were loads of people, and they were all excellent, and if I haven't mentioned your name, and you're listening, I'm really sorry - it's not that I've forgotten you, it's just that I am on the spot. But if you go to, I think it's www.nineworlds.co.uk and I'm pretty sure there's a page of last year's Bifrost guests so you can look them all up.

MATT

Of course, we, we're also forgetting the infamous Bifrost Disco.

MISHA

Oh, the, the very infamous Bifrost Disco, in which, yeah, last year, No-Face led a conga, that was, that was a thing. Incredible, insane, bonkers DJ-ing last year, courtesy of Elaine and Mike, who are both, I believe, returning this year - you heard it here first. Uh, we're hoping to get more people in, if you're interested, please do, please do come. Yeah, there, there was a conga, there was a lot of dancing, there was... quite significant amounts of cheesy 90s pop. It was great fun. Hang around long enough, you will see me drunk and dancing.

MATT

Hooray!

MISHA

It's usually around about midnight when I've had a couple of hours to wind down from running the cabaret, and a few gins, like we did last year, uhm, I think Jamie McKelvie bought me a gin. A lot of people bought me some gin, and then, and then I went dancing.

MATT

We shall share a gin together, my friend.

MISHA

It will be lovely.

MATT

And toast to successful Nine Worlds. And if you head over to nineworlds.co.uk/2016, you will find a list of stuff, all about the 2016 show, including links to the Bifrost Disco playlist on both Google Play and Spotify, so if you want to have a listen to the sort of music that was playing and people were dancing to, you can find it there.

MISHA

Thank you, you're so much more on the ball than me.

MATT

[LAUGHS]

MISHA

I couldn't even get the website to open.

MATT

I want that on a t-shirt.

MISHA

[LAUGHS]

MATT

“You are so much on the ball than me!” - dash - Misha Anker.

MISHA

We should get it printed.

MATT

So that's a little bit about the Bifrost Cabaret last year. In our next episode, I'll tell you a little bit about the panels last year, and then hopefully by the episode after that, we'll have some news about upcoming content so we can start talking about that, but hopefully that gives you an idea of some of the fun entertainment that's on offer at the Nine Worlds Convention. And there are still tickets on sale.

MISHA

There are.

MATT

There are indeed. If you head over to nineworlds.co.uk, you can buy your tickets from there. Once again, as we said in our last episode, children accompanied by a ticket-holding adult go free, so if you've got kids, and you want to bring them for a day, or for the weekend, it's not going to cost a penny for them, just for your own ticket. But tickets are still, at point of talking, and this actually ends on the 30th of April, tickets for the, the full three days are available at £99. And that early rate ends on the 30th of April after which it will go up. So, if you are listening to this on release date, which would be Friday the 21st, you've only got a few days to get in there at that early bird rate. And I suggest you do so, 'cos there's just so much to do, and so much fun.

MISHA

Yes. It'll be great fun.

MATT

It will indeed.

MISHA

There will be disco.

MATT

There will be disco and gin. You heard it here first.

MISHA

Disco and gin.

MATT and MISHA

[LAUGHS]

MATT

You heard it here first, folks.

MISHA

Gin first.

MATT

Ok, well that brings things to a close for another fantastic Nine Worlds podcast for 2017. I have been Matt Dillon.

MISHA

I have been Misha Anker.

MATT

And we will catch you for another episode. Bye bye!

MISHA

Byyyee.

[Theme Music Starts]

ANNOUNCER

You have been listening to the Nine Worlds Podcast, the official podcast of the Nine Worlds London Geekfest Convention. For tickets, news, and other updated, please visit nineworlds.co.uk. The podcast theme music is by Jonathan Coulton, and is licensed under Creative Commons. Find this, and many other tracks, at JonathanCoulton.com. This has been a Wafflehaus production for GeekPlanetOnline.com and Nine Worlds Limited.

[Theme Music Continues, Then Fades Out]

[SECTION BREAK, LEADING INTO OUTTAKE]

MATT

And also about the bass, mostly about the ba - she's not about the bass at all. Well, maybe she is, I don't know, I'm putting words in your mouth.

MISHA

[LAUGHS]

MATT

Let's not talk about Meghan Trainor, because she's awful.

MISHA

[LAUGHS]

MATT

[LAUGHS] There's an outtake for you at the end of the episode.

MISHA

[LAUGHS]

END OF PODCAST