

TFEO InCo Transcript

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nova, sawa, laughter, characters, people, audio drama, voice, writing, sound, thought, season, story, episode, clip, figured, world, repeats, sit, nice, differentiate

SPEAKERS

ItMe, Hatov, W. Keith Tims, Nova, Sawa, Automated Broadcast, Jeanne

W. Keith Tims 00:04

[Preroll Promo]

W. Keith Tims 00:41

[Theme music plays.] Hello, and welcome to The First Episode Of, a podcast about audio drama and the creative process. I'm W. Keith Tims, writer and podcaster, creator of The Book of Constellations. In this show, I listen to the first episode of an audio drama, then have a discussion with the creators about the show, their methods, their struggles and successes. Today we're discussing the first episode of InCo.

Automated Broadcast 01:07

[Begin clip from InCo. An automated message plays on repeat over a spaceship's speakers.] D class ship ID number 273647975 located in zone 278 dash nine a delta, there is a package available for pickup. (repeats constantly)

Automated Broadcast 01:37

(suddenly changing) If you don't hurry he's not gonna make it. ...seven eight dash nine a delta... (original message resumes)

Nova 01:37

What the fuck? Of all the... (picks up comm) Look, lady, this is a secure channel. I don't know how you got it but I'm not that kind of transport. (message repeats) Fucking droids. (hangs up comm, flips a switch. Message repeats) That was the off button, right?

Nova 01:45

What the fuck? Where's his suit? Lady? (picks up comm) Hey babe, sweetheart. You're fucking with me right? I'm not exactly dressed for a goddamned space walk. Where's the deployment ship? Where is your ship? (message repeats) Shit. [End clip.]

W. Keith Tims 02:01

InCo is a sci fi micro fiction drama, written, produced and performed by one person who goes by ItMe. It's about a disgruntled information courier named Nova, Hatov, the boy she ends up fishing from the inky void of space and a rudimentary health android called Sawa. Thrown together they navigate a world that either cares too little or too much about who and what they are. With a story that spans several worlds and dozens of characters all voiced by ItMe alone, InCo has 96 episodes released as of this recording each five to 10 minutes long. In the first three episodes, we meet Nova, an information courier who is running from a difficult past. While she repairs her ship she discovers hat off a teenaged boy floating unconscious in space and rescues him against her better judgment. Hatov turns out to be a prince. And his situation becomes the mystery that drives the story. We also meet Sawa the ship's health android who just wants to help these two difficult people and does her best. I spoke to ItMe remotely from her home.

W. Keith Tims 03:13

Why don't you tell us a little bit about yourself and your creative backgrounds and what your history is in terms of your creative work.

ItMe 03:19

Oh, my creative work. I didn't really do anything until writing this. I did write a book before that. But it got rejected because the world building was too sloppy. And I ended up over here eventually.

W. Keith Tims 03:31

What was your book about?

ItMe 03:33

It was a fantasy book. It's kind of embarrassing to talk about. (laughter) I got to like the second stage a lot where they ask you for a full manuscript I got nothing but rejections. And the one person who completely read it all the way through is like, yeah, it's a really good idea. But world building is really bad.

W. Keith Tims 03:49

It's hard to deal with. So your immediate thought was to jump into podcasting?

ItMe 03:53

Well, my thought was to try something new approach from a different angle, a project where I could try to focus on the world building itself without, you know, getting bogged down with the fact that I'd written this book for two years, and it wasn't getting anywhere. I got the idea when I was watching Ad Astra. The movie with like Brad Pitt. Yeah, I fell asleep during it like six different times. And I was like, you know, it'd be great if they added some humor. (laughter) So I got the idea for inko while I was watching that, and then the idea for the podcast itself I got when I was listening to Alice Isn't Dead. Yeah. And I thought I could do that. Maybe.

W. Keith Tims 04:34

Do you have any background in the arts prior to these, writing these things you've done?

ItMe 04:40

I went to college for biomedical engineering, I was about as far from this as humanly possible.

W. Keith Tims 04:45

So what what made you switch?

ItMe 04:47

So I had a project in Biomedical Engineering and as a black woman, I was often belittled and people laughed in my face quite frequently, and I got the idea that either it was going to kill me or I was going to kill someone. (laughter) So I decided maybe I should try a different career path.

W. Keith Tims 05:07

That's a pretty big transition. You have the idea of InCo. Tell me about what happened next. What was your process to sort of jump in? You're doing all this by yourself, which I think is astonishing, coming from nothing. How did you decide to just throw yourself into the fire, so to speak? I mean, that's a pretty big jump.

ItMe 05:25

Oh, yeah, there was no waiting because I figured if I waited too long, I would chicken out or I'd come up with some sort of excuse as to why I shouldn't do it. Because I had no experience in podcasting. And I had no background, I had no idea what to do with sound design. As a matter of fact, my first like seven blog posts, were just begging for sound design tips, and I never got any. So I started off with a world I think I wrote about three planets first, the ones that Nova visits most often, and I developed like their background, the weather, their socio-economic stuff, then I decided to work on the characters themselves. And each of them got a character sheet that was like a full page that just gave like, your likes or dislikes, five different attributes or so and how they sounded when they were angry, because I have to voice everybody. So I can't have them all get angry or emote in the exact same way, or else there'll be a lot of bleed through and it'll be hard for listeners to differentiate, especially in high tension scenes.

W. Keith Tims 06:20

What are your inspirations? I mean, you said you were watching a sci fi movie when you have the idea for this. Are you a sci fi fan?

ItMe 06:26

No. (laughter) Actually, sci fi is one of my least favorite ones, ironically enough. They have this small habit of when a character gets injured there's science to fix it. And it used to drive me absolutely nuts as a child. And I know that it's science and you know, fantasy it's just called Magic. But at least fantasy allows itself to call it magic.

W. Keith Tims 06:52

Right? I think it was it was Arthur C. Clarke, or someone who said a sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic. Right. But yeah, so you're not a sci fi fan at all. And yet you picked sci fi. Why?

ItMe 07:05

Because I was watching Ad Astra and you got to the pirate part and there are space pirates on the moon. And I could not make it make sense. Because I couldn't figure out where they were hiding how, we were getting materials why they were on the Moon, who was sponsoring them. It was driving me nuts. I was like, I have to make it makes sense. So I figured you'd need a lighter cargo. What's lighter than you know, apparently, I mean, if you're attacking a car, you're going for scraps or people or hostages what's lighter than that? I was like, information has no weight, and it's infinitely valuable. And if you want it to do anything in space that you know, you need it to actually have a base and space information will be the lightest, easiest, most valuable thing have.

W. Keith Tims 07:48

Thus, Nova became the information courier or InCo of your show. What is InCo in your own words? What is the show mean to you?

ItMe 07:57

InCo at its heart is just a story about what people who are left behind. You know, when people die or somebody decides to leave to go better their lives and you're not in that picture anymore? What do you do with you know what's leftover? And Nova obviously hasn't really handled it well, and neither has Hatov and they both find themselves in a situation where they have nobody to rely on but each other and they start moving forward.

W. Keith Tims 08:22

Why did you want to tell this particular story at this particular time?

ItMe 08:27

Hatov's roughly based on my little brother, and I thought it would be cool if he could be the hero of his own story. But he also had to have a lot of character development and a lot of flaws before then. So I introduced some a way that I did, because that's how it felt when my brother was born. He just wasn't there. And then all of a sudden *click*. There's a child!

W. Keith Tims 08:46

How far apart in age are the two of you?

ItMe 08:48

16 years.

W. Keith Tims 08:49

Wow, that is a big difference. Is this a personal story? And the reason I say that is that a lot of people, they say that writing can be personal. And especially if you're doing it all yourself. How much of you is in this story? Is it coming from a personal place?

ItMe 08:59

Oh, there's a ton of me in here. It was not intentional. And I did not realize until recently how much I did. Especially with the newest arc but also less obviously in the beginning. A lot of his story is me trying to understand what's happened in the last few years. Last few years have just been rough in general. (laughter)

W. Keith Tims 09:22

You're talking about with the pandemic and...

ItMe 09:24

With the pandemic and life in general. I never really had the time to process it. So when I started writing was story. I thought it was literally just you know, me doing a little sci fi story just because I thought it would be fun. It would be something new. And I ended up finding out a lot about myself while I was writing it because a lot of your problems reflect my own problems like never having gotten to mourn something that you just kind of hold on to it. And just festers and you never quite address it. And going through the process of trying to address it now has left me feeling kind of lost. Right now. A lot of my relationships with people have started to change. And with that, I haven't been able to keep everybody who I wanted with me at the time. And I mourn the loss of those relationships, because as I didn't even realize, when I was writing this, I did the most aromantic thing ever. And I sat down, I said, I'm going to write a story of absolutely no romance because I don't want to deal with it. Right. (laughter) And I did not realize at the time, but I was aromantic. (laughter) And I realized recently, and I was sitting there, and I was like, I think that's way I deal with relationships tends to reflect that whether I knew it or not, I like very intense platonic bonds. Yeah, whenever like a relationship with my relatives changes or relationship with a friend or a former friend changes it's very hard on me, emotionally speaking. And I never knew that I should actually have sat there and just dealt with the emotions, I tend to just push past it, because it's easier that way. You don't have to think about it. Giving Nova that space and having her stuck there and having to deal with everything happening forced me to deal with my own emotions and figure some things out and start actually working through it.

W. Keith Tims 11:09

Yeah. You mentioned earlier that you were a Black woman. Do you consider this to be a story about people of color? Is that something relevant to you?

ItMe 11:18

Well, they're people of color, but I figured so far in the future, nobody would frickin care anymore.

W. Keith Tims 11:22

Right? You can't you don't really bring it up. It's not like it's something that is pointed out.

ItMe 11:27

I think I've mentioned it a total one time in the entire series.

W. Keith Tims 11:31

Yeah, Sawa, the health android, when she's describing Nova to Hatov mentions that Nova has dark skin. But that's about the only thing I remember.

ItMe 11:42

That's the only thing in the entire series. Um, so matter of fact, I thought I was taking a really big gamble when I switched the cover to one of a black woman on it, because I was worried that people would scroll by and they just wouldn't click on it. But I wanted it so bad to just have a little bit of rep. Just like visually, it's about people couldn't forget that she is indeed a black woman. When I was a kid, there wasn't a lot of them. I liked I was an avid reader, I was that kid who went through like six books a day as a child. And I did read some sci fi though, of course, I was more attracted to this fantasy. And there wasn't a lot of representation in there. But I didn't realize that there was a void. My solution to that was literally to just start writing my own stuff. And then just say, you know, that's their story. I'm not in it, but I can write a story with me in it. And so naturally speaking, when I saw this, I was like, of course, he's gonna be Black.

W. Keith Tims 12:31

Is that part of why you thought you could do all this yourself? Because you're writing it yourself. And you're gonna tell your own story. And I say that with respect, because I know it's tough to do everything yourself, the voices in the editing and the writing.

ItMe 12:44

I chose to do this myself, because I spent five minutes thinking about how much effort it would be to get a group of people to do this and have the timing and the recording sessions, the script readings and everything. And I was like, I can't handle that. I think I can do it by myself, because it will just be easier.

W. Keith Tims 13:05

Did you have that idea that "I'm going to do this myself" in mind as you begin to write the project?

ItMe 13:09

Yes.

W. Keith Tims 13:10

So how did that inform the way you wrote the show?

ItMe 13:13

It made Nova way more profane, actually, because I had to differentiate her voice from Hatov's voice really quickly, very easily. And so Nova got all the cursing and Hatov got none of it. And then you have Sawa who has what I like to consider an aggressive customer service voice.

W. Keith Tims 13:33

(laughter) You know, Sawa. I swear it's the weirdest thing because she gets on my nerves and yet I laugh every time. So I think you found that nice, that balance between the two.

Sawa 13:47

[Begin clip.] Yes, Nova?

Nova 13:48

He does not get the bed.

Sawa 13:49

But recovery rates are noticeably faster when...

Nova 13:51

He does not get the bed, Sawa.

Sawa 13:52

I will treat him to the best of my ability!

Nova 13:54

We are literally going to land on Noria nine days. I've taken out every single sweater, heater, blanket and jacket I own. Make do Sawa. If I find them on my bed he will be considerably harder for you to patch.

Sawa 14:07

Permission to create a makeshift nest?

Nova 14:09

Granted.

Sawa 14:11

Understood!

Nova 14:12

Stay on battery saving mode. I'm not made of fuel.

Sawa 14:15

A newer version with better energy saving capabilities...

Nova 14:17

I like you just fine, Sawa. And newer models require newer model money which...

Sawa 14:21

It says you have 60,000 Imperial units in the bank!

Nova 14:24

Stay out of my bank accounts! God, Sawa! If I find you touched any of that money, I will scrap you.

Sawa 14:31

Understood!

Nova 14:31

Don't do it.

Sawa 14:33

Understood!

Nova 14:34

Don't!

Sawa 14:34

Understood!

Nova 14:35

God, this is why it's so much nicer when you're off. [End clip.]

W. Keith Tims 14:37

Just the way she says "Understood." Just like... ahh! (laughter) How did you come up with your voices? From what you've said it doesn't sound like you had much of a background in voice acting.

ItMe 14:48

Nope. I had no background I did have like some history and plays when I was like nine to 13 but I never did any voices or anything like that. I thought Hatov would have an accent because technically speaking Nova's listening to everything through a translator. And since he's speaking his non native tongue I felt maybe the accent wouldn't come through. And that's how Hatov kind of got his voice. His was based purely on how I said his name when I first read it because I don't choose anybody's name. I only chose Nova's. I randomly generate all their names. So when I saw Hatov, I was like, Hatov! And I was like, so what kind of voice would go with that? What kind of accent would that be? And I built out from there.

Hatov 15:29

[Begin clip.] She's not what I thought she'd be.

Sawa 15:31

She's the captain of this ship.

Hatov 15:32

Why does she want you turned off?

Sawa 15:34

She is unable to perform hyperspeed jumps while I'm active. There's not enough power for both to occur simultaneously. Would you like to turn me off?

Hatov 15:41

No! No, I'm, I don't... I'm not ready to be alone.

Sawa 15:47

Noria is known for its snow, underground cities, cozy atmosphere, warm blankets, and strong liquor.

Hatov 15:47

I've never heard of it.

Sawa 15:47

If you have documentation, your free to explore the planet. Nova's left behind a coat and a heat mask for your use.

Hatov 16:01

I do not have any documentation.

Sawa 16:04

There is extra documentation in the top drawer of the captain's desk.

Hatov 16:08

Why are you telling me this?

Sawa 16:09

It is my duty to care for the crew. This includes assessing and caring for mental health. You seem upset! Protocol indicates that fresh air may help! [End clip.]

W. Keith Tims 16:18

You do little short episodes. They're like five to 10 minutes each. Can you tell me why you chose the short format?

ItMe 16:25

Because I was doing everything myself. I didn't know if I could handle doing along like a longer format 20 to 30 minutes per episode, because I knew that I wanted it to be very sound design heavy. I wanted it to feel like you were in that location. And so since I didn't know what I was doing, I figured anything from about five to 10 minutes. And I originally planned to release every two weeks. And I was like, if I do that I could probably manage from initial recording to output.

W. Keith Tims 16:52

But you're doing it weekly now, right?

ItMe 16:54

Oh, yeah. I actually do each episode in three days, now.

W. Keith Tims 16:57

How far out have you written InCo?

ItMe 17:00

Oh, it's all done.

W. Keith Tims 17:01

Oh, it's all finished. So it's just a matter of recording and then producing.

ItMe 17:04

Before I start each season, except for the first season because I didn't know what I was doing, I have the entire thing outlined in the entire script written down and the only thing I'm doing during the season is rereading and adding like little, just tweaking, really.

W. Keith Tims 17:18

Sure. Polishing and that kind of thing.

ItMe 17:20

Mm-hm. Especially since it's a mystery of sorts. So you have to add some hints retroactively.

W. Keith Tims 17:25

Yeah, you gotta, you gotta put those little breadcrumbs for the audience to pick up on and, follow. You mentioned being very heavily involved in sound design, building the world sonically. The other thing you do is you decided not to use a narrator. It's all just as if you were plopped into the world and you're just picking up on what's happening that must have presented some specific challenges from a storytelling standpoint.

ItMe 17:49

I thought the narrator actually made it harder. When I was writing Nova or going through the initial plan. I did question whether or not I should have a narrator or do one of the recorder gimmicks. I did sit with

that for a while because, of course it's common. It's really cool. It comes across as like, I mean, it's it's a really nice narrative device. Um, for my purposes, I thought it was too hard for me to drum up drama, especially with like, the way I like to have certain episodes end with a lot of tension. I thought it would be weird if I had to, like say, drop somebody into like a dungeon or something right? And how people believe that they are genuinely in danger while you're sitting there taking the time to record. I figured I'll just plop them in there and I'll never explain why they hear this and see if anybody asked any questions.

W. Keith Tims 18:39

And do they?

ItMe 18:40

No!

W. Keith Tims 18:41

Which is, I think is a testament to not only you know the quality of the sound design but it's also a testament to trusting your audience that your audience is smart and they can figure things out.

Nova 18:51

[Begin clip.] You haven't done this stupid yet, Nova. You have time to turn back you do have a stupid yet. (zipping up spacesuit) You have quotas to meet you... (voice becomes muffled as she moves into an airlock. Airlock door whirrs). ... why the fuck did it have to be a kid? Why the fuck did it have to be a kid? (airlock siren blares, outer door opens, we hear Nova's heavy breathing in her space suit as she drifts into open space)

Nova 19:20

Please don't be dead, please don't be dead, please don't be dead. (pause. Airlock door reopens, air hissing, Hatov gasps for breath.)

Nova 19:39

Yeah! Serves you the fuck right! What the hell was that? What were you thinking? Were you even thinking? Hey, Hey, wake up. Come on. I'm... I don't do this. So if you could just... come on, come on. Come on. Come on. Come on. Come on. Shit. [end clip]

W. Keith Tims 19:58

So you're in your third season now? Is that right?

ItMe 20:01

Mm-hm.

W. Keith Tims 20:01

How has the show evolved and changed into the third season?

W. Keith Tims 20:04

How'd that make you feel?

ItMe 20:04

Each season, I like to do a paradigm shift. So rather than more of the same some, I'll either introduce something, a new person, a new concept, a new general idea that you have to wrestle with. So the first seasons, basically, where's Hatov from? What's going on with the Galactic Union and whatnot. And then the second season shifts because you find out what the glass of unions been doing. And I introduced a new character, you meet Nova's boss, and she does stay there for the majority of the season. And that changes the relationship between everybody involved. And then the third season, you finally get to go to Hatov's home. And that's also a really big shift. That's the biggest one so far. And each season, I add more characters, as I'm less afraid to start doing weird voices. But writing for the first season, I still didn't know how to finish anything yet. I'd never really planned for it to go that far. But as I started going on, I started having more fun. Started getting some feedback, not a lot. The first episode only got 10 views for like three months.

ItMe 20:05

Oh, that was depressing. (laughter) Hands down. Oh, you put a lot of work in anything. Yeah, shove it out, and nothing happens. And you just kind of yep, there it is. I also didn't do any, um, what do you call it? Marketing? Yeah, I didn't know that was a thing. (laughter)

W. Keith Tims 20:37

You really were just sort of jumping in and...

ItMe 20:49

Oh, yeah, feet-first. I, I believe in baptism by fire. It is the only way I get anything done.

W. Keith Tims 21:28

I saw something on the website, it said you wanted to write a story with morally gray characters whose greatest strengths came out when they were at their most vulnerable. Can you talk to me about why you want to write stories like that?

ItMe 21:41

Well, morally gray characters happened because I hate goody two shoes. That's just me. Because I look and I'm like, But why? And they're like because it's morally correct. And I just sit there I'm like, but it's not easier. And I do not understand why you would not go the easy way to get the same response. But I do see why people do it in real life. But just like in TV shows as a child, especially where they tried to drill good and bad and you know, black and white morality. It used to drive me absolutely nuts. I actually really, really liked Avatar: Last Airbender, the not the Ozai thing, because that was clearly a black and white issue. But the spirit world where somebody called it blue and orange morality, where you weren't quite sure what people were functioning on. But you knew that they had a code of conduct somewhere in there. Nova is not a good person. (laughter) She's done some things, she's done a lot of bad things.

W. Keith Tims 22:35

Well, she contemplates leaving Hatov to just die in space for a brief moment. But she's weighing like, I got my own things to worry about not this kid.

ItMe 22:45

And I wanted her to be believable in that aspect, too. I wanted people to understand where she was coming from, and that in her world, everything has its own weight and its own price, right? And in order for her to start moving, or try something else, she has to exchange it for something of equal or greater value. That's just how she functions as a person. Hatov is a bit of a, it's a bit of an outlier in that, because she does actually like him. And you get to see how she starts to change your code of conduct to fix that, or at least to accommodate him so that she can actually help them out a bit more, as you usually would. And then the part where the greatest strengths come back when they're at their weakest is that Nova is a very hard character. So is Hatov in his own way, but I wanted them to actually get to know each other, and I want it to like form a nice bond there. In order for them to, you know, coalesce in that way to have a decent friendship or believable connection, They needed to open up. And that means being vulnerable. And I wanted to forge a relationship where they choose to be vulnerable with each other.

W. Keith Tims 23:46

What do you struggle with creatively?

ItMe 23:48

Bleed through, I have at least that I've counted as of last season 38 named characters. And they all have to talk in different ways. They all have to emote in different ways. And we all have to be compelling in their own way. And in order to do that, I need them to be: one, instantly, like, you need to know what your thing is within like 30 seconds of meeting them, right? Because I only have about five minutes to work this, especially for a one off character. And they all have to speak differently and in their own tonalities or whatever, in order for people to be able to differentiate them when you're hearing it because after all, it is still all me. So writing that is actually a bit of a challenge. I always want to risk of my characters all sounding alike, especially in written word. I actually have to go back frequently and touch things up. A lot of Hatov's lines that I wrote down cannot be used as they're written because it sounds too much like Nova. So I do have to adlib quite frequently to make sure he's still speaking with his own affect, or else we'll just blend together.

W. Keith Tims 24:51

That's really got to be a challenge. You know, when I was doing Book of Constellations, I basically had three characters that it had to do and a few side characters there but even then I really had to differentiate between them carefully. You know, I put on my southern accent for the narrator, Simon. And then I actually did a little tiny little post-production technique for Rael's voice just to give it just a little bit of a weird edge. But yeah, I would catch myself like if I was shifting from one character to the other in the middle of narration, sometimes the character that I was just speaking, carried over into the narration, which then bled into was supposed to be Simon. So.

ItMe 25:28

No, it's a struggle, especially in like the earlier days too. Now I can hop from Nova to Hatov to Sawa fairly easily. In the first season, there's a moment where Nova locks Hatov to a cabinet and the vocal performance there, the pure outrage was the first time I actually was able to differentiate the character so neatly. And it just sounds so cool. And I was so proud that it turned out so nice, because it was just him shouting that she locked into a wall and her just calmly going like, yeah, what are you going to do about it? And I had never, it was, I think it was like the first 15 episodes. So I still haven't had Hatov's voice quite down yet. And it was the first time where I felt I could actually manage to keep this up. Right now I have a lot of people who have this stupid accent. I didn't anticipate that we were actually gonna get this far when I started. I couldn't change Hatov's voice three seasons in because Nova got a better translator. And so I had to stick with Hatov's voice. If Hatov had to sound like that when everybody on that planet has to sound like that. And so I've been struggling with differentiating a lot of particularly with femme characters, which has been really weird, because I've been getting this weird sensation that I am somehow performing feminism in a way, you know, performing femme poorly. (laughter) As far as I know, I am a girl right now. And the more I do this, the more quiet times I end up questioning it. I'm like, Am I just performing femininity? It doesn't even sound right. It sounds like I'm making fun of them. And I'm more comfortable with Hatov's voice and it's just been really weird.

W. Keith Tims 27:09

Judith Butler said that all gender is performance anyway. So.

ItMe 27:12

Yeah, I didn't realize that was a thing until I was stuck in my house for two years. (laughter) You don't understand my dad once said, Girls don't do that. And I looked at him dead in the eye, like the age of eight. And I was like, but I'm a girl. And I'm going to do it. And that was my cop. That was like my understanding of gender performance right there.

W. Keith Tims 27:30

How do you measure success?

ItMe 27:32

That is a great question. Because that is the one thing I am really bad at. I never came up with a metric of success in this piece. I think I'm sitting around 50,000 downloads recently. We're just about to hit it.

W. Keith Tims 27:46

Congratulations.

ItMe 27:46

Thank you. And I'm getting like kudos, some people offer me Kofis. And I get letters of people saying this is so nice. And I get reviews. And I was sitting there I was like, When will this be successful? You know, I never came up with a metric that would say I am definitely here. Here's where I want to be. And the way, but my personality is that I will always consider where I am to be far from where I want to be.

And so I do struggle with impostor syndrome because of it. And I sit around and I wonder, Am I good enough to be here. And I'll talk to other podcasts and like, man, they have their stuff together, look at how, you know, professional and nice they are. And then next thing you know, somebody will offer me a seat on a panel. And we'll be like, Hey, you're really good at podcasts. Do you want to come here? And you know, talk with us about how we, you know, do things I was like, I don't know what I'm doing. I've only been here two years, but like you're one of the best in the business. I was like, since when? (laughter) Since I never bothered to measure I always feel like I'm not doing well enough. So I'm always pushing for the next best thing and the next thing which leads to you know, general dissatisfaction with my product.

W. Keith Tims 28:57

If you don't have a clear metric of success, what keeps you motivated? Why do you keep coming back?

ItMe 29:02

The weekly deadlines.

W. Keith Tims 29:04

Is that it?

ItMe 29:05

Yeah. If I don't finish by the week, I feel like I missed something. So I just keep going from week to week to week to week, when weekly deadlines for InCo are really the only thing keeping it going at this point.

W. Keith Tims 29:17

I mean, you still love doing it? Don't you?

ItMe 29:19

Oh, yeah, I do. I do enjoy it. I especially love how it comes together. Hearing it go through me just repeating a line like anywhere from like three to 10 times trying to get my intonation right and trying to make it sound like I'm actually talking to somebody else to putting it together having a conversation and having a conversation and a location, you know, and everything that's really cool.

W. Keith Tims 29:39

What are some lessons you have learned about creating audio drama that you can share with people who might want to create their own?

ItMe 29:46

I think a lot more people could probably benefit from considering how they want to use sound because it's limited to sound and I know that I use sound to set location but you don't have to do that you can do it to emphasize movement or emphasize a certain word or whatever, you can do it to emphasize your character's headspace, or how you're feeling. It affects so much. And I think people should really sit

down when you start doing audio drama. And just think about how you want to use sound and how that'll affect your character in general.

W. Keith Tims 30:17

There's so many things that you can do with it in ways that don't immediately seem obvious. I mean, absolutely, you can create a soundscape and you can land the characters in the world and give realistic sound effects. But you can also use tone and music and sounds which are non diegetic to influence how the audience perceives the events that are going on. I think it's a smart insight that you've got the medium, which has limitations, but instead of limitations, embrace the strengths, what are the things that it can do? What's next?

ItMe 30:49

InCo is going to be done in about 60 episodes or so.

W. Keith Tims 30:52

So a while to go.

ItMe 30:54

Yeah it's a while to go, I'll be here for about another year, if I'm lucky. I did not expect it to take this long. When I first started it, I thought I would probably give up. There wasn't a lot of feedback. There wasn't a lot of incentive to keep going. But I did it for me because I actually do enjoy these characters. And then other people started falling in love with them too, which has been really, really nice recently. So I do it for those people too, because I think we'd like to see how it ends.

Jeanne 31:20

[Begin clip.] Hey, Nova, still running that death trap?

Nova 31:23

Still alive despite tremendous odds. Yep. Have you been giving my ID to new clients, Jeanne?

Jeanne 31:24

What? No, Nova. You have your route. You need to stick to it. You need to build up trust.

Nova 31:33

Trust, I know. I know. It's just... Jeanne, are you absolutely sure, like, not even by mistake?

Jeanne 31:41

Nova, what's going on?

Nova 31:42

I-I was radioed. But here's where it gets weird. They called my private line. You know, my private-private line? They seem to think I'm a cargo ship, a real cargo ship. They wanted me to transport...

Jeanne 31:58

Well what do you expect? You're piloting that heap of trash around. Not everyone is crazy enough to put a hyperspace engine on any hunk of metal they lay your eyes on.

Nova 32:04

I thought my ID was wiped from records.

Jeanne 32:07

It is. But I just can't erase everything. Older sheets have all the directories. Your number might still be there.

Nova 32:12

Damn it, Jeanne!

Jeanne 32:13

Oh please. I would like to take this moment to remind you of our rules, Nova. I don't mind a bit of private smuggling but you are not to take on an entire load. I trust you turned them down. [End clip.]

W. Keith Tims 32:24

InCo is ambitious. All the more ambitious for being produced by a single person. It relies on tight plotting, careful sound design and well crafted characters to realize its aims. And the result is engaging and immersive short bursts of story. It's also a great example of what can be accomplished by one person in the audio drama medium. You can find InCo on most major podcast platforms, or see our show notes for a link to its homepage. [Begin closing theme.] The First Episode Of is written and produced by W Keith Tims. All opinions expressed in this show belongs to the people who expressed them and not necessarily to anyone else. The theme song is "Mockingbird" by David Mumford. The show's web page is thefirstepisodeof.com If you're an audio drama creator and would like to be on the show, send that email to thefirstepisodeof@gmail.com If you'd like down to earth sci fi audio drama, check out my show The Book of Constellations wherever you get your podcasts. Keep telling stories! It's the only way we're gonna get out of this mess. Until next time.

W. Keith Tims 33:42

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