

MUSIC: On The Rocks by Ovani Sound

SFX: Cargo Ship Ambient Humming

Anna

Good whatever to wherever the hell you are! My name is Anna-Maria and this is sci-fi's finest: your semiregular sci-fi pod fix of what's going on in the science fiction sphere of audio drama! Wooh! Round of applause!

SFX: Fast clapping and slow clapping overlapped

Slack

Why are we clapping?

Anna

Because we made it to episode two without your jailbreaks on the log system getting picked up by HQ.

Slack

That was never a concern.

Anna

Mhm. By the way, couriers, don't worry about listening to us in order. The news is topical, and the pilot reviews are stand-alone.

On today's agenda, we'll be catching you up to speed with currently releasing pods, reviewing a pilot episode in the pilot's seat, and delivering fun space facts from space. Aaaaand we have some special news regarding a certain camping opportunity, as well as something related to... panelling.

Slack

I swear I secured the panelling back onto the control deck...

Anna

Um, didn't know that you were mucking about with the control deck?

Slack

Oh, er, nothing.

Anna

Somehow I don't trust that, but I don't care enough to press you. Onto the pods!

Exciting news everybody! We have a premier! Before I Forget Again from A Million Bugs Productions released 14th august 2026 and features a star-studded cast. including well known names such as Fay Roberts and Billie Hindle of Magnus fame. Described as "a queer time

travel workplace comedy podcast about an agency called the V.A.S.M. and the idiots who work there.” I don’t know about you guys, but this sounds kinda like it was tailor-made for me. I’m very excited. Check their socials on tumblr @before-i-forget-again-pod. That is at before dash I dash forget dash again dash pod.

As for current releases, Apollyon’s miniseries Chronicles updated with the episode Jane on August 5th 2026. If you’re unfamiliar, Apollyon is a speculative science-fiction story about a future in which a virus ravaged the world and wiped out seventy-five percent of the population. This left most of the remaining quarter under a singular governmental agency comprised of scientists and politicians working to keep the world as safe as possible. Which is really alien to me, as someone from the Afforest and servicing all the individual nations upon nations on planets, asteroids, stations, and any kind of flattish surface one could build a life on. I really like stories that convey experiences so wildly different from my own. You should check it out by heading over to apollyon.observerpictures.com.

SFX: Click

MUSIC: End.

Anna

Alright, folks! We’ve got a transmission scheduled to come in from...

SFX: Extended glitch noises

Anna

Slack, it’s super glitchy.

Slack

Ah. Another one of *those*. Let me see.

SFX: Typing. Glitches stop.

Slack

My inquiries turned up a... forest in a place... called... America. Something about camping?

SFX: Click

MUSIC: Lo-Fi Mellow-Colli Main by Ovani Sound

Anna

I love camping! Getting away from all the high-tech nonsense and being one with nature for a lil’ while... Have you ever gone camping, Slack?

Slack

One time. I do not recommend. You should enjoy asteroids with gravity stabilisers, not canvas and oxygen tank and harness.

Anna

Not what I had in mind. Anyway, let's see—

SFX: Transmission incoming bloop

Anna

Here they are! This is Anna Maria receiving from Valdivian Courier Vessel number 838145813957, is that Camp PodCamp?

Flint

Sure is. I'm Flint, one of the counsellors at camp.

Anna

Nice! And if I read the brief right, you're here to tell us about an upcoming podcast creation event, right?

Flint

That's right. PodCamp is a collaborative podcast creation event, taking place in September. Get ready to pack your bags and be placed in a cabin team with fellow creatives for a whirlwind weekend of podcast-making.

Anna

A weekend? How does that work?

Flint

Each team will have 96 hours from event start to write, record, and edit a one-off episode following a randomly chosen theme. Think, stories to be told around the campfire on a weekend in the woods. We're looking for seasoned podcast creators who strive for a bit of a challenge in their craft.

Slack

That sounds like an interesting challenge. Um, I want to hear about the experience from a camper, you know?

Flint

Sure. Fox? Tell the two nice space ladies about your camp experience in 2025.

Slack

I don't know about, nice.

Anna

Slack, shush.

Fox

Oh! Uh... camp is... intense. Fun! I didn't know my cabin mates before arriving, but we quickly became friends and came up with a super cool story based on the theme. Like when I signed up for camp I said I could voice act and write, so I was assigned as voice actor. I had suuuuch fun bringing the story to life that my cabin mates wrote up. Also! Also! Chatting with the other cabins campfire at night about our process and how far we'd come, it just really felt like being amongst my own. I highly recommend it to anyone who considers coming to camp this year. I'll be there! Oh, but I have to go now. Bye!

Anna

Wow. Hey, couriers, if you're interested in attending the virtual podcast creation event PodCamp, I'm reading here that you can head over to [podcast dash bookclub dot com](https://podcampdashbookclub.com) and check out the events tab. You can also follow the event on tumblr at [pod camp staff](https://podcampstaff.tumblr.com) and make sure to join the PBC discord community via the invite link on their website! Didn't catch that? All details will be written in this episode's description. And thank you so much for calling in today!

Flint

Sure thing. See you at camp.

SFX: Transmission end bloop.

Anna

Ugh. Slack and I would absolutely attend if we weren't swamped with deliveries. But, I don't know, maybe in another universe, we're both taking part in the mod team cabin and helping to organise the event.

Slack

If only.

Anna

Speaking of community events, did you hear about Audio Dinners?

Slack

I went to restaurant one time that did "sonic flavours." I found the experience lacking in the satiation department.

Anna

Well, I really doubt you'll be lacking for any satiation with Audio Dinners. They're a new project run by the creator of Cassette Tapes from August and they do virtual panels for audio drama fans and creators. They've recently been collecting participant suggestions for their first panel on creating compelling characters in audio dramas. I had a lil' chat with the organiser, Blake McMillan, and it sounds awesome. Head over to [at august tapes](https://at.augusttapes.com) on tumblr if that's piqued your interest.

Slack

I think I will. Compelling character, hm? I think you're a compelling character.

Anna

Aw, Slack, that was like, almost nice.

Slack

Compelling me to go to other side of room and do logs for another E.S hour.

Anna

And there it is. Don't think I don't clock you. It's time for the pilot review, and you know I need silence for that. Convenient, hm?

Slack

No comment.

Anna

Whatever. Love you too. Now, couriers, it's time for the pilot review, from the pilot's seat!

SFX: Two clicks

MUSIC: Lo-Fi A Drive at Dusk Main by Ovani Sound

Anna

This episode was suggested to us by members of the PBC after pinging the rec giver role. It's... drum roll... Midnight Burger! Chapter 1: The Transdimensional Haboob. I went into this one with limited info and I know what some of you are thinking... has Anna-Maria been living on the dark side of a moon? It's true! I've had Midnight Burger recommended to me both on the networks and IRL, and even at uni. But all I knew was "it's good you should check it out" so that's what I'm doing.

Immediately, I was confused. Now, hold onto your thrusters, that's a good thing. When you enter a pilot and are presented with questions, the due course of action is to listen for answers. However, such a thing cannot be executed without some finesse, otherwise listeners will just turn off the transmitter or switch channel or flip out the cassette. Midnight Burger, thankfully, has a pseudo audience stand in by the name of Gloria. I say pseudo, because she does have a fully developed character and personality, but she's a regular person experiencing extraordinary things, and she asks all the questions the audience is thinking. I'm going to call her the looking glass.

Another clever aspect of grounded confusion which Midnight Burger runs with is the familiar unfamiliar. We're in a diner, there's a radio playing, it's a job interview. But the diner is in the middle of nowhere Arizona, the radio is delivering religious homily, and the music is oooold. I'm talking the sort of tunes they play back on Frontier. Questions are asked and answers are

subversive. The job interviewer haplessly bamboozled that the job ad even exists, a lone patron requesting a cigarette because she can't hope to start, not quit. Oh, isn't it just brilliant that the main character is an only child and all immediate family has passed away? Oh, sorry, my condolences. Each question only sprouts more questions, and Gloria is just as confused as you are.

But there's the shape of something. In the absences, the omissions, what people do say and what they clearly don't begins to outline the holes in the jigsaw, and you start to create a picture with the negative space. Something bad is going to happen to Gloria soon. Even the radio chimes in with a foreshadowing moral. And for those of you out there still missing that life you feel you're owed...

See, here's the thing. In my humble opinion, and by the first of S. S. Van Dine's laws, a good mystery, whether it be the prevailing genre or simply the hook of a show, requires that the audience has equal opportunity with the "detective" whomever that may be for solving the mystery. And *Midnight Burger* gives you the pieces to figure out where it's headed. And it is equal parts satisfying and enticing to hear the story flow in ways both expected while also delivering developments that are interesting and original.

And what would you know? This diner? It's the only constant in the universe and it travels between dimensions and through time.

But it's not just the set-up that makes this pilot so great! It's also the characters, their personalities and how they're used. There are four characters, and I have a feeling if I wanted to draw up a four corner character diagram John Truby style, I could. They're all opposed to each other and approach the events of the story differently, while still working together. Each have their own method of understanding and explaining their situation which is inherently tied to their identities and backgrounds. Like Leif, the cook, using kitchen based metaphors to explain how he can get them to travel through time. Or Ava, the holder of multiple doctorates, who tells us it all gets very theoretical after a point, and the culmination of her life's studies have brought her here. They are not only characters in that they have personality and do things as the plot demands, no, they are each set up to oppose and provide separate and distinct perspectives on the same mystery. They also happen to be delightfully loveable in their own unique ways too.

I could go on and on about how this pilot used the medium to its advantage also, achieving feats many struggle with when taking away the eyes of the majority of the audience. A lot of it is tied to Gloria, the audience's looking glass, and how her lack of knowledge allows other characters to direct her and explain visually dependent situations that the characters who are already embroiled in the situation likely wouldn't comment on otherwise. But there's a lot of physicality to it, the characters take actions, but also explain them in ways which don't feel like they're delivering stage directions purely for the audience's sake.

And the atmosphere? Perfect. Old radio sermons and crackling old-timey tunes suit the end of times theme of being hunted by a cosmos personified far too well. I'm unsure if that's a product

of a plethora of other Dooms-Day Esc. Stories also using the same conventions such as Fall Out and Outerworlds. Or if that Cold War, post-world war two nuclear fear and all the music, technology, and culture surrounding it is just so ingrained into certain audiences such as myself, the vibes are set the moment you turn on that crackly radio. Regardless of its roots, pastiche or no, it achieves its atmosphere superbly.

Like I said, I could exalt the virtues of this pilot for an hour more, and it would be deserved. But I'm on something of a time limit enforced by a never-ending quota of deliveries to deliver. On a final note, Midnight Burger, you also get bonus points for reminding me of home.

So, as your ear doctor, I'm going to prescribe a healthy dose of at least one season of Midnight Burger. To cash in said prescription, head over to www.weopenatsix.com to find out where you can listen to Midnight Burger.

And now? Onto the space fact!

SFX: Two Clicks

MUSIC: Lo-Fi Neon Lounge Main by Ovani Sound

Anna

Okay, I'm actually prepared this time, by which I mean: Slack is prepared.

Slack

(Distant)

What?

Anna

You prepared a space fact.

SFX: Footsteps

Slack

I did not prepare, I simply thought for two seconds about my sad life in these four square feet and remembered there are wonders through pilot's viewing deck.

Anna

Such as?

Slack

Supervoids.

Anna

Ooooooooooh no I hate those. Don't talk about those. They don't need to know.

Slack

I do the space fact? I get to *pick* the space fact.

Anna

That's... fair enough. Um, tap me when you're done, I'm gonna fish out the ear defenders from storage.

SFX: Footsteps

Slack

You are so dramatic.

Anna

(Distant)

I am the queen of drama.

Acorn

Meooooow. Meow.

Anna

(Disant)

And Acorn is telling you to get on with it.

Slack

Voids is what you think it is, it is nothing. They are worlds of darkness, and they are not static. You cannot enter, and you should not wish to. Well, maybe you could, but you wouldn't, not after I tell you this. They are unfathomably large, dwarfing thousands of galaxies. If you were inside, there would be no sign that anything exists at all. Only the unending black and dark matter. And the void galaxies, so alone, cut-off from the universe. We will never know them, and they never know us.

SFX: Footsteps

Slack

Somebody make fiction podcast about this, I want to listen.

Anna

Isn't the empire right up against one? And that's like, why they're expanding, or whatever.

Slack

It is just a poor excuse for conquest. They are not risk at all, not now. Not until we all are, and we are all nothing. What happened to ignoring me with ear defenders?

Anna

I got morbidly curious. I only know voids in relation to empire superstition. And like, I'm not even from the empire, so...

Slack

Of course, you'd be blacklisted from Valdivian if you were.

Anna

Yeah, so, curiosity got the cat. Or, em, the, uh, Acorn, as you understand it.

Slack

Your expressions confound me.

Anna

... Yeah, you're not alone.

SFX: Two clicks

MUSIC: Lo-Fi On The Rocks Main by Ovani Sound

Anna

With that though, we're at the end of this episode of Sci-Fi's Finest! Remember to check us out at scifisfinest on tumblr to keep up with all things science fiction audio fiction, send us your recommendations, and any upcoming podcasting events! Anna-Maria, and Slack, wishing you a lovely day-night-whatever, signing out!

SFX: Click. Music stops. Ambience fades out. Silence.

CREDITS

Scifi's Finest is brought to you by Valdivian's Finest and its related podcasting productions. The news on podcasts is real, but the characters and setting are not. If you'd like to know more about Anna-Maria and Slack's lore, head over to our tumblr at valdiviansfinest and our website, valdivian.carrd.co. That's, uh, card with two Rs. This episode was written and edited by N.V. May. Anna-Maria was played by N.V. May, and Slack was played by Natalie Valentine. With special guest Quills as Fox. A big thank you to the PBC is in order, without them, this podcast would not exist. Hear you next time, Courier.