

TFEO Out of the Ashes Transcript

Sat, Jul 08, 2023 10:18AM • 29:09

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

ashes, story, eruption, audio drama, people, laughter, characters, wrote, season, clip, episodes, writing, sound, epic, put, happened, thought, episode, walters, tims

SPEAKERS

Dr. Walters, Lena, David, Announcer, Tanya, W. Keith Tims, Cameraman, Driver, Vincent C. Davis, Pilot, General

W. Keith Tims 00:00

[Theme music.] 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, and have a discussion with the creators about the show, their methods, their struggles, and successes. Today we're discussing the first episode of Out of the Ashes.

Announcer 00:37

[Opening theme from Out of the Ashes.] (wolf howls, spooky organ music, sinister laughter) I assure you they exist. (operatic, mournful vocalizing)

W. Keith Tims 00:56

Out of the Ashes is an epic horror fantasy created by Vincent C. Davis. The story takes place after a science experiment gone wrong causes the Yellowstone supervolcano to erupt and plunges the world into darkness. And then, all the mythical creatures we thought were just stories appear in the wake of the disaster. Monsters are real, the shadows can hurt you. Magic is everywhere. Out of the Ashes explores this world through the experiences of a group that must learn to navigate this new world or be lost to it. Davis wrote a series of prologue episodes that introduce the characters and set up the world, the first three of which will form our discussion. I spoke to Vincent remotely from his home in Camden, Delaware.

W. Keith Tims 01:44

Tell me a little bit about yourself as an artist, and how you came to make Out of the Ashes.

Vincent C. Davis 01:50

I got my start as a theater major, actually, at Clark Atlanta University. And from there, I did a bunch of musicals. I actually started musicals back in high school, and just wanted to keep it going, because I

enjoyed it so much. And from there went to college. I majored in theater. And then before I got in college, the way that Out of the Ashes started is there was a writing competition for a scholarship. And I wrote the ending because it was a short story, I wrote the ending for Out of the Ashes for that scholarship.

W. Keith Tims 02:24

So background in theater, why did you want to get into audio drama?

Vincent C. Davis 02:28

I got into screenplays and I started writing scripts. And so I wrote like two or three scripts, I was doing plays at the time, and I really wanted to get into movies. But you know, it's so hard, with everything trying to get into movies, and TV shows and all of that. And I had these scripts just sitting there. And then eventually I listened to my first audio drama, which was We're Alive. After I listen tonight, you know, a lot of people have that thought, well, I can do this, like I have this script just sitting here. So after I listen to it, then I had that thought, and I was like, You know what, this would actually be a lot easier to do than, you know, the whole movie aspect and still trying to you know, get it out there as far as like getting agents and all that other stuff. And the medium was a little for, I thought just a little bit easier to go for. Because you know, you have creative control when you continue to do what it is you want to do with that.

W. Keith Tims 03:28

Oh, yeah, yeah. It's a lower bar of entry, you know?

Vincent C. Davis 03:31

Yes, exactly.

W. Keith Tims 03:33

And because you do retain your creative control, and you don't have to answer to a studio. I mean, you don't get studio money either.

Vincent C. Davis 03:40

Exactly. (laughter) That definitely does hinder some things when moving forward. But yeah.,

W. Keith Tims 03:48

Tell me about Out of the Ashes, what the story means to you. Tell me about it in your own words.

Vincent C. Davis 03:53

So one of the biggest things for me is that whenever I read lore, or something from around the world, I got this big book of mythologies, a couple of them actually, then also, I was like an avid watcher of like Supernatural, the TV show. And so from doing all of that, and reading all of that, and watching that show, for me Out of the Ashes, kind of like fills a void that I wanted from the show, I wanted there to be more of a world aspect to it. So for me Out of the Ashes, scratches that itch for me as far as like bringing in the lore from all around the world and bringing it together and showing that, you know, out

from all of these stories, there's some sort of truth to it. But what if from instead of the story that we know this happened.

W. Keith Tims 04:46

You do have a lot of different supernatural elements. We don't really get a taste of that until the fourth episode of the prologue where Dr. Walters encounters a poltergeist but we got poltergeists and I think you've got vampires?

Vincent C. Davis 05:01

Yeah, the military people encounter the vampires. Everybody's has their own stories. What they encounter first the military people encountered the vampires, David and Chris and his friends and his family, they encountered the werewolves and of course, like Dr. Walters, like you said, has the poltergeist going on with it?

W. Keith Tims 05:16

Yeah. That's really an interesting approach. Do you bring in mythology and creatures from other cultures?

Vincent C. Davis 05:23

Yeah. So this season, the season finale, there'll be something from other from another culture. And then season three, it really has a ramp up with being in a different country.

W. Keith Tims 05:35

I'm curious. You said it scratches your itch in terms of the epic scale, right? What is it about monsters and supernatural that appeals to you?

Vincent C. Davis 05:45

I enjoy the stories. For the most part. Whenever I hear about something new. And I read the story, then I always wonder, like I said before, I always hear there's a grain of truth in every story, it always sparks my interest to know well, what is the grain of truth in this story? Likew here did this story originate from? One of the major things that happens with me whenever I hear about one of these stories, eventually, I always have like this weird dream about it. And it's weird, because you know, a lot of people when they have a dream that wake up, and it's just kind of like out of their head, they forgot it. And I always remember exactly what happened down to the smallest details.

W. Keith Tims 06:29

Yeah, you said that Out of the Ashes came from a dream?

Vincent C. Davis 06:32

Yeah, out of the ashes did come from a dream. When I originally wrote it, I had this recurring dream about my mother, actually, one day, I would wake up, I would hear something in the kitchen, and I would get up, walk down the stairs, and I could hear the eerie music. And as I'm walking down the stairs, and this music is going, I go into the kitchen, and I see my mom behind the counter. And when I call out her

name, nothing happens. And eventually she would look up at me, I would feel something like I actually felt something in my body that made me realize this wasn't her, then I would have to run away. But every once in a while she would catch me and I would get electrocuted. And I could feel the shock running through my body. When I originally wrote the story that was the ending. Now that's not the ending to the series. But yeah, that was the original ending of it.

W. Keith Tims 07:30

You call it an epic on your website. And epic stories are stories that take place over time, the either the main character or characters, they go through a series of trials and events, usually to sort of reveal who they truly are. So then we've got a series of characters that you write, and we meet them in the prologue. It's Dr. Walters, Dave Rockwell, and then Tanya. We have shifting perspectives. We have events unfolding over a long period of time. I mean, this definitely is epic. In that sense. I'm thinking of like The Stand, or I'm thinking of Walking Dead, or Dune, you know, something like that. What attracts you to this epic style?

Vincent C. Davis 08:09

I think you said it best. It's like an over time type of thing. And it reveals different personalities and different things that happened within people. And as the story unfolds, with Out of the Ashes, we'll actually see more of different personalities being revealed with a lot of people within the story. Each season brings on a lot more characters, a lot of different people that reveal different things about the main group of people within the story. The thing that really attracts me to it is just the the idea of all of this lore and the trials that everybody has to go through to stop what's really going on.

W. Keith Tims 08:52

You could have written a story that takes place did the same thing, but kept it to one perspective, right? But you chose instead to shift across these different perspectives. That's kind of a challenge, right?

Vincent C. Davis 09:02

That's it is yes, it definitely is.

W. Keith Tims 09:05

you must really find something valuable in that perspective to set yourself up like that, what drew you to that particular kind of writing?

Vincent C. Davis 09:12

I really liked the idea of telling the story from... this like, a world thing. So I wanted to bring in like different lores from around the world. But everybody's going to have a different perspective of what each lore is and how they approach each thing. And so when I did start writing this full on story, I wanted it to showcase not just one perspective, but the the fact that there could be someone that is a medium, somebody else could have like a pyrokinetic ability like Danny in the story or someone else could have a skeptic personality and don't believe any of it and continually just say Oh, this isn't real. I wanted to Make sure that I had a way to touch on all of that. Like you said it is definitely difficult, because when I'm writing the scripts I am... when I write it, and I'm writing an interaction between

different people, I have to put myself in not just their personality, but in like a dark space to understand how they're reacting, and what they're going to say to these different things.

W. Keith Tims 10:26

I think it's also challenging from a writing standpoint, just from keeping all the storylines going together...

W. Keith Tims 10:32

...and keeping them organized. I'm also thinking like, that's a lot of different characters to cast and a lot of different actors to work with

Vincent C. Davis 10:32

Yes.

Vincent C. Davis 10:38

Exactly.

W. Keith Tims 10:38

How do you approach those challenges?

Vincent C. Davis 10:40

So I didn't have any background in audio drama or anything else like that. The first go at it was difficult. But now during this season, I got this big board that I have a bunch of thumbtacks on with papers sticking up in it. When I'm writing the season, I will do like a murder board I guess some people call it where I have everything up there. And then once all of that is done in the season's written, I take it all down and then I put up everybody's characters are different scenes up there. So that way, I know what I've gotten so far. Who, what else I need from other people or anything else like that. So that way, I tried to stay as organized as possible.

W. Keith Tims 11:21

Well, let's say you've got plans for several seasons, right?

Vincent C. Davis 11:24

Yeah. So I have plans for at least six seasons.

W. Keith Tims 11:28

Wow. How was it working with actors? I assume you're working remotely?

Vincent C. Davis 11:33

Yes. It's been a challenge. Just because, you know, with the pandemic going on, everybody has lives, continuing their lives and work, you know that so I just try to work ahead. So whenever I need something, or we're on like episode nine right now, I try to be done episode 11. So that way I can finish get started on other things. But yeah, it's definitely been a challenge. I know, with the next season with

the new characters that I have. I'm trying to get more of local actors in order to be able to control more things as far as like the sound and everybody having like the same sound quality.

W. Keith Tims 12:15

You do a voice in the show?

Vincent C. Davis 12:17

Yeah. So I play David in the show.

W. Keith Tims 12:20

We meet him in the prologue. He's a businessman. He's got a wife and child. We meet him just after some sort of big presentation, and then the eruption of the super volcano.

Driver 12:30

[Begin clip] (Cell phone ringing, traffic, car honking) (yelling urgently from another car nearby) Oh come on! Get moving! (More frustrated honking.)

Lena 12:40

(Cell phone picks up.) Hello?

David 12:40

Hey, are you okay?

Lena 12:43

Yes, we're fine.

David 12:46

Oh, that's good.

Lena 12:48

What should we be doing right now? I've looked at the effects of the supervolcano eruption and it's not good.

David 12:54

We prepared for this for years. Just go down to the bunker. Hold up there until I get home. I won't be long. (wind suddenly gusts, thunder)

Lena 13:02

Dave? Dave? What's all that noise? I can hardly hear you!

David 13:09

Lena, get in the bunker. Now! I just watched two tornadoes forming in the street! [End clip.]

W. Keith Tims 13:18

Apparently, he's prepared because he and his family have a bunker.

Vincent C. Davis 13:21

So he was like a doomsday prepper before everything happened since he was like a high level executive before he was able to afford a lot of things. And a lot of people thought he was crazy beforehand, but now he's like, super prepared for everything.

W. Keith Tims 13:35

We also meet Dr. Walters, I mentioned her before. She is the lead scientist of project Tempestus which we don't know much about, at least in the prologue, but we know that it involves some sort of satellite. It's this satellite that causes the eruption and causes the monsters to appear. She is opposed to the satellite, she knows it's dangerous. And she's trying to do her best to stop it, but it's out of her hands and it's too late. But then after the eruption, she is on the road, trying to figure out a way to help make things right.

Vincent C. Davis 14:07

Yes.

General 14:08

[Begin clip.] It has been decided that Project Tempestus will go online today, at mid day, despite your request.

Dr. Walters 14:16

What? General, I strongly recommend that you reconsider.

General 14:20

Why is that? You said it yourself. The project is going remarkably well. Right?

Dr. Walters 14:28

Right. It has been but there are contingencies that have not been tested, and a machine with potentially catastrophic results should not be rushed into.

General 14:39

Doctor, you estimated three years for project completion. And after many requests for extensions, we give you five. The satellite will go online today and if we come across any problems, you will just have to fix them as we go.

Dr. Walters 14:55

Just fix as we go. You talk as if this is just a car that may need minor repairs. This is a complex piece of machinery that is going to control nature itself.

General 15:07

This is not up for debate.

Dr. Walters 15:10

I will not turn this satellite on. [End clip]

W. Keith Tims 15:12

Who's the voice actor on that?

Vincent C. Davis 15:14

Claire Dodin. As she was actually one of the characters, one of the main characters in We're Alive. So when she actually contacted me asking to be a part of the cast, I was like elated at that. (laughter)

W. Keith Tims 15:29

So we meet her. And then we also meet Tanya, who is a reporter, she's with her crew out at Yellowstone who's reporting on some events that are happening out there just prior to the eruption, but she says that she's psychic, and that she senses that there's a bad thing about to happen. The crew manages to narrowly escape, just as the eruption goes off.

Tanya 15:50

Okay, pack it up. We're on the first night out of here.

Cameraman 15:56

Don't you want to try and get an interview with one of the scientists?

Tanya 15:59

No.

Cameraman 16:01

Or some footage of what they're doing in the tent?

Tanya 16:03

No, I have a bad feeling. I'm picking up on some energy that's not right. We need to leave this place as soon as possible.

Cameraman 16:12

So more of your psychic magic ESP stuff.

Tanya 16:16

Call it what you want. (they get into a small plane)

Cameraman 16:21

You know, Bill isn't going to like this.

Tanya 16:24

It's us I'm worried about right now. [End clip]

W. Keith Tims 16:28

A couple of questions about this. These three characters I assume become sort of pivotal in the main storyline. And this is your way to introduce them.

Vincent C. Davis 16:36

Yeah, so Dr. Walters as far as Tempestis goes and it's funny because Tempestis is actually a god or harbinger of weather. So that's why Tempestis was named the project was named that. She later on in the story gets exposed to poltergeist but then we find out something special about her in the first episode of season two, and then Tanya, yeah, she has like a psychic moment, she feels things, but then we find out that there's more to her in season two as well. So she's not just psychic, but there's way more to her. And then David, we won't really find too much more about him in his background until way later in the series.

W. Keith Tims 17:19

Are the characters, then, they are also starting to manifest special abilities or magic or something.

Vincent C. Davis 17:25

Yes, many of the people in the main group do have an ability or a heritage that provides them with something to help in the overarching storyline in the final fight of the series.

W. Keith Tims 17:39

You did like seven prologue episodes. Tell me about your decision to start with kind of a zero episode thing, before you launch into the main storyline itself.

Vincent C. Davis 17:50

I really wanted to do that to tell everyone's story before they came together as a group to get into the fight of the over arching story. I felt like it was the best way to do it. So that way, everybody could feel some sort of emotional connection to each one of the characters.

W. Keith Tims 18:12

We definitely do get a good sense of who these three people are. Someone said that you redid the first episodes?

Vincent C. Davis 18:20

When I first put it out, there was a lot wrong with it. That's like I said, I had no background in anything. The pacing needed to be corrected the music, the sound was kind of like off, I had to pretty much go back and redo everything.

W. Keith Tims 18:37

How did you react to that process? How did you feel about that?

Vincent C. Davis 18:39

You know, at first I was a little hurt. But then I sat and I thought about it. And I was like, you know what? I'm not really surprised about it. So I really just sat down. I went to the library, got some books on sound engineering, watch a lot of YouTube, I learned a lot.

W. Keith Tims 18:56

Yeah, well, I think it's a learning process for all of us, right, especially in the indie space. There's stuff that I had no clue about when I was starting out. And so I was I had to learn a lot. And so it was watching YouTube videos and asking questions. Yeah, figuring it out. But I think that's, that's actually kind of nice about this space, too, is that if you make a mistake, or if you learn something, or you think I can do this better, and I want to do it better now. Yeah, you can go back and you can make those changes. You can you know, you can you can fix them. And that takes some stamina, it takes some it takes some focus to be willing to go back and say, I'm going to redo this and then actually follow through so good on you for that.

Vincent C. Davis 19:36

Thank you. Thank you. Yeah.

W. Keith Tims 19:38

How is the show evolved and changed since the beginning, not just the very first ones, but even these first episodes that you've redone?

Vincent C. Davis 19:45

And I can say they've grown in the sense that I've actually been growing like I've been I've actually been learning so much more about myself and how to actually put together these stories and make it sound cohesive as an audio drama. Since the first episodes even now, whenever I listen to him, I'm like, Ah, I wish I would have like written more here and had them say more or do more right here. But I think it's it's good and well, in my eyes, I think it's good to kind of just leave it the way it is because it shows that growth. Especially now with the writing and how everything's going now it shows that growth and people can kind of like grow with you and see the changes that you've made. So now, whenever I've write, I've write more than what I actually need. So that way, when I do go to editing, I'll be like, You know what, nah, this doesn't sound right. I'm glad I'm able to just cut this out instead of being and then saying, instead of saying, Oh, I actually need this now. So and then going back and having them rerecord.

W. Keith Tims 20:48

You got a grant to do some of this?

Vincent C. Davis 20:50

Yes, the grant was through the Delaware division of the Arts where the state I live in, when I applied and got it, it was in the middle of the pandemic. So when they told me about it, and why they were

giving it to me, they said it was a great medium since no one could go to theaters at this point. When they got it to me, that was a huge help, because I really wanted to start paying the actors.

W. Keith Tims 21:16

That's, you know, that's actually pretty smart. Because I don't know, maybe I'm wrong here. But I don't know that a lot of people consider grants as money for doing this. You know, we think Patreon and crowdfunding and things like that.

Vincent C. Davis 21:30

Yeah, I've actually I think I told someone about it that was asking me about it. One of my co workers is asking because he was thinking about starting an audio drama that was telling them that, you know, grants are a great way, especially with the Division of the Arts in wherever you're at. And this goes for anybody, wherever you're at that division of the arts, wherever you are. They have money that they're willing to, like give out to people to do things like this, whatever artistic outlet is out there. They're always looking for something new. So it's a good thing to try.

W. Keith Tims 22:00

Well, I mean, theaters do it right. So.

Vincent C. Davis 22:02

Yeah, exactly.

W. Keith Tims 22:03

What do you struggle with artistically speaking?

Vincent C. Davis 22:06

Well, two things. One is that I actually started trying to create my own sound effects. Because there's always something new that I need to try to do with the sound and the soundscape and get trying to get people into the story. But luckily, I have friends who are in the music industry, and they are continually giving me things because they love the story. So they're continually giving me things to help me out with that. And then the second thing is perfectionism. (laughter) I, whenever I'm working on an episode, I tend to be such a perfectionist, I almost don't want to be putting out the episodes because I'm like, ahh, this doesn't sound right. Or this doesn't work well, or something like that. And eventually, I just have to tell myself hey it's fine. It sounds good. Put it out. It's okay. (laughter)

W. Keith Tims 23:00

That can be a never ending hassle. Because there's always something to improve.

Vincent C. Davis 23:06

Exactly. Yes. Yes. I listened to it probably about 40 times before I put it out there. And after a while, I just get tired. (laughter) Tired of listening to us. I'm like, You know what, it's fine. Now. There's nothing else I can really do.

W. Keith Tims 23:23

I can relate to that. I mean, I don't think of myself as a perfectionist. But I do. Like, there's certain things that I'm like, Okay. I don't often nail everything perfect. But there's like, I need these things to be perfect. Yes. And I listened to my own stuff a lot. And I listened to it after I publish it a lot. Because I'm like, wait a minute, it's out there. Or then someone will say something about one of my episodes. And I'm like, I need to listen to that. (laughter) Because I want to understand what they're talking about, but yeah, at some point, you just got to say, Yeah, it's fine.

Vincent C. Davis 23:54

Yeah. And that's, I have to do that to myself a lot. Because, like I said, so many different things in these new episodes, that it's just like, alright, this, it gives the the atmosphere that I want, it's not going to be the greatest thing because I don't have all of the professional sound equipment and all of that. So just put it out.

W. Keith Tims 24:17

How do you measure success?

Vincent C. Davis 24:18

You know, when I first started, I guess I did what, like everybody, or a lot of people do is the numbers, right? Always looking at the numbers, but now it's more so a feeling like I've gone more internally with my success. Like if I am happy with what I'm putting out there, then I feel like I'm successful. And then if there are people out there who are interacting with me and saying that they are enjoying the show, that just makes it even better. Now every once in a while I still look at the numbers. (laughter) Now as long as I'm happy with it, and I'm telling the story that I want to tell the episode sounds good to me, then I that's how I feel like I've become successful with it.

W. Keith Tims 25:05

You got seasons coming, you've got a lot of storylines, you've got shifting characters and shifting perspectives. You've got actors to work with. That's a lot of work.

Vincent C. Davis 25:13

Yes, yes.

W. Keith Tims 25:15

Tell me what keeps you motivated, what keeps you coming back.

Vincent C. Davis 25:17

I thoroughly enjoy writing. And I didn't realize that how much I enjoyed it until I got the notebook with this story in it. Because the that notebook had, I think it was like seven stories in it that I wrote. And the whole notebook was filled with these stories. Once I started writing the scripts for Out of the Ashes, I realized how much I enjoyed it like going to these different worlds and writing these different personalities, and telling these different stories and bringing it all together for one whole story. Even though it's so many different people. I think that really is what keeps me motivated. Just the idea of

being able to share this with the world. Whenever I have a conversation with my wife about the world and what we're here for it's Oh, it always comes to that fact that everybody's here for something. And I feel like one of the things that I'm here for is to be able to tell the stories that I have. I just got a message from someone on Instagram who said they found me from some website and was just praising the story and saying how much they loved it and they can't wait to hear what happens with the story and stuff. And so just again, interacting with everyone and and learning about so many other things that are out there. Because you know, the most fun I've been having is learning about this whole world of audio drama, and all of these different stories that are out there and all of the creators that are out there. It's so much more fun when you can interact with other people that are doing the same thing that you're doing.

Pilot 27:05

[Begin clip.] (plane in flight) What the hell was that? Oh, God, look out the starboard window.

Cameraman 27:24

What's going on? Where's that giant cloud coming from?

Pilot 27:27

I think... Yellowstone just erupted! (rumbling outside, engines whine, plane going down, alarm rings)

Pilot 27:37

Brace yourself, it's about to get rough! [End clip.]

W. Keith Tims 27:55

Out of the Ashes, epic scale and ambitious storytelling will resonate with fans of shows like Supernatural or the Walking Dead. Davis is also attempting to explore the common elements of human mythology, borrowing freely from fable and story to find out what scares us. You can listen to Out of the Ashes on most major podcast platforms, or see our show notes for more information. [End theme music.] The First Episode Of is written and produced by W. Keith Tims. All opinions expressed in this show belong 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 an email to thefirstepisodeof@gmail.com If you like down to earth, sci fi audio drama, check out my show The Book of Constellations wherever you get your podcasts. Keep telling stories is the only way we're gonna get out of this mess. Until next time.

W. Keith Tims 29:02

(c) 2022 W. Keith Tims / Alien Ghost Robot / thefirstepisodeof.com