

Universe Creation 101

How to create unique entertainment properties that traverse media platforms



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Jan 16, 2008

[Ep 002: Transcript of Evan Jones Interview](#)

Hello All! More stuff coming to this site soon. 😊 In the meantime, here is the transcript for the [podcast interview with Evan Jones](#), which was uploaded on 23rd October 2007:

[Intro]

Christy: This podcast today is going to be about poetics, about design techniques involved in creating cross media trends, media 360 experiences, whatever you want to call. In exploring these techniques, I'll be speaking with creators from all sorts of independent and commercial sectors. What is interesting is that I find that the best creators or producers are usually people that are thinking across media or multi art way before realizing it's actually an industry trend or there's actually an economic imperative involved in it. One such creator is my first special guest on this podcast. His name is Evan Jones of

Stitch Media.

You may know Evan from his work on the ReGenesis Extended Reality Game that he worked on whilst at the innovative Canadian company called Xenophile Media. I'll hopefully have the folks from Xenophile Media in this podcast sometime in the future, but for now we're concentrating on Evan Jones and his many talents. So, without any further delay, welcome Evan.

Evan Jones: Thanks.

Christy: So, let's start with [Stitch Media](#). I love that on your site, you've got this very simple, yet effective little mantra there basically saying: "We make interactive stuff and we make stuff interactive."

Evan Jones: Yeah. I really love some of the new sites that are coming out and the way that they're branded with a much more conversational tone and so I wanted to be really personal in the way of describing what Stitch Media was up to. Really, it's the reversal of those subjects and objects and flipping the language around to say that really what my strategy is, is to take traditional media sources, books, television, music, and film and to help them become interactive in different ways. Some of those ways involve websites and mobile applications and games, things like that, but really it's about integrating the two and that's where the stitching together comes into the business model.

Christy: We'll get back to actually what you're doing in Stitch Media, but I'd like to sort of go back in time, a bit way back. Now, you did an honours in arts and science specializing in computer science...

Evan Jones: Yes.

Christy:...a post graduate in interactive media and 13 years in a band and doing performance work.

Evan Jones: Yeah. It's quite a ragtag list of work that I've done. I mean I've been in theater and radio and worked in computers for years. I also went over to the [Canadian Film Center](#) to do work in their new media lab. It's been an eclectic level of experience and education, but I think it informs a lot of what I've done because I really try not to think in any one medium when it comes to projects that I'm doing.

Christy: Was there a certain point though...I mean in the beginning was it cumulative or concurrent and then was there a certain point where the sort of light went on about: "Oh, hang on. I can use all of this together."? Or was it always a sort of slow?

Evan Jones: I wish I could say that there was a light switch that came on. At some point, what I think always happens to me is that I look back on things and think that they made a lot of sense, but at the time seemed more like a sort of random way of dealing with things, so just going through life and thinking, "Oh, this would be neat to try out. Let's see what this has to do." Each of those then allowed me to be better informed as I went into the next medium and try my hand in something else. I would say there was a real sort of crisis point that I hit in my education where I was going down a certain path in computer science and getting quite involved in programming operating systems and things like that and realized I was sort of bifurcating my lifestyle. I was going to work on computers and doing software programming and then I was going as a hobby and doing radio shows and theater and music and all these different things. That was a real issue for me: that I was going to have this sort of split personality, a classic Gemini I suppose. It was I guess a bit of an epiphany to be able to work on my thesis that brought those together in my undergraduate where I used neural networks and some of the skills in my artificial intelligence education to work out predictive jazz solos and things. That was really the first time that I saw that I would be able to meld the two together and to make projects that would look at things from an artistic angle and a science of technique.

Christy: That's interesting. How I got into cross media was when I was writing a print story that involved artificial intelligence. This is why I find it interesting that that was an element of your past as well. Then I went to the web and started studying chatbots — okay, it's not serious AI or whatever — and I started programming the chatbot as one of the characters in the novel.

Evan Jones: Great.

Christy: Yeah, and then I thought, "Well, why don't I just make it part of the story?" So, I started rewriting the novel, so the reader goes to the web and interacts with the characters.

Evan Jones: Well, that's really where I started to hit that point as well. When you listen to a song on the radio, it's very hard

for you to be in touch with the musician themselves. It's classic mediation and what I started to deal with was if you're not sitting there live in the music hall and a computer was actually spitting out things like this music, how would that make you feel if you found out afterwards, after enjoying something thinking that there was a real human touch to it? That's what then translated into my work in writing and I started to think about, "Well, if something were being written in an almost automated way, would it still have the same sense of authorship?" In the ways that some of the work that I've done creates characters that pretend to be real or believe that they're real, the ways that they're communicating is no different from a communication that I have with an actual person because it's mediated through a technology.

Christy: Yeah, but now of course what we're seeing with [alternate reality games](#), etc., is that rather than...just short circuiting the whole idea of using artificial intelligence, instead we're going back and using humans behind email programs, blogs and actors.

Evan Jones: Exactly. I mean part of that sense is sort of steering that ship, but through a story line that you've already pre-scripted and being able to admit when things change because of the unpredictable nature of your audience and being able to adjust on the fly. It's almost like improv theater in many ways of being able to just accept. In improv, you never get to say no to a concept. You just roll with whatever is given to you.

Christy: Yeah.

Evan Jones: That's really the way that you have to interact with your audience is that if they decide to latch on to a character and ideal, it's much easier to embrace it than to steer them away from it. That involves sometimes amending the creative to work in that new context. It's also interesting though to mention that I think part of the thing that I've learned and been surprised by is how much if you give people the right sort of framing that you can automate some of that behavior. You can make things auto responsive because you do eventually get a sense of what the audience is going to be expecting from that character and it almost becomes algorithmic in a way.

Christy: Yeah. I mean we look at [chatbots](#) over at [Writer Response Theory](#) and it's something that [Brenda Laurel](#) has talked about as well is the context in shaping the experience with the chatbot. For instance, salesperson chatbots are quite effective because there's a very limited set of expectations of discourse that the person will expect from the actual bot.

Evan Jones: Definitely. There's another good example of a chatbot that it will talk to you about anything that you want as long as long as it's about cars.

Christy: Yes.

Evan Jones: And despite defining the sort of framework of the conversation, you can become much more manageable and much more real. This is just an aside, but the thing that I love to do, a disturbing hobby, is I always find that it's fun to break chatbots in the way that you always break a chatbot is you ask it to come up with a topic of conversation. Any chatbot that I've ever dealt with, they try to find out what you want to speak about and by just being passive and letting the chatbot define the conversation, you'll find that they spin out of control almost immediately.

Christy: Yep.

Evan Jones: It's just because they've been given no context at all.

Christy: Okay. We could talk about chatbots forever, but, yes, we should get back to different things.

Evan Jones: Sure.

Christy: When you're thinking of a project or a storyworld or something that you're creating, how do you conceive of it? Do you think of a world and you think of, "Okay, this would be appropriate for this media," or do you think of the media first and then the characters? How does it come about?

Evan Jones: I think you've really got to start with the story and define the characters. The sort of classic story, I mean people who write books, they don't often feel that they're limited by the size of the page or the shape of the words, the type of font used and all of those technical limitations of the written word, but I think what's interesting is I guess I try to think of the storyline without any context as if I'm almost — it could be an oral history, it could be a written document, it could be a television show. It can come out in all those different forms and then once you've done that to try and look at the way that that story wants to be told. When I was at [ARGFest](#), one of the ways that I described it was each character almost has his or her own way of communicating. If each of those is different, then perhaps you're in a place where you're looking at a

cross-media project because perhaps this one central story is more suited to a one-hour television drama because it's self-contained in that way and is a very visual story, but perhaps another character who, to quote the old cliché, is on the run from some conspiracy or something, they're not going to be wanting to be tracked down by cameras and things. They're going to be speaking in a much more covert manner. They're going to be sending messages through secret websites and things like that and trying to communicate in a way that outsmarts the people that are looking for them. That's just a very, as I say, stereotypical example, but it's really about looking at each character and if they had the choice of telling their own story, how would they do it?

Christy: Yeah...and how would they communicate with other people in their world...?

Evan Jones: Exactly.

Christy: Yeah.

Evan Jones: I mean I've seen some really brilliant projects that are all about cave paintings or something and that's just because the character himself, he or she, that's the only method they have of communicating with the outside world. So, stumbling upon cave paintings later on and finding them on Flickr images or something, even that's a story. It's about seeing almost everything as a possible story vehicle.

Christy: Yes, every application, every technology, even in the organic space if you like, the natural world, anything is a potential stage.

Evan Jones: Oh, yeah. Growing up, we used to have these elaborate treasure hunts that my aunt used to put on and it would be you'd go and find pieces of paper and open them up and they would tell you where to go next. It was the classic A to B sort of treasure hunt, but even things like that was an early way of shaping the type of gameplay that I really enjoy, which is the searching and unlocking of things.

Christy: So, what is it? I speak to people about cross-media and that and sometimes they cite innovative "Happenings" and sort of hybrid art and sort of multimedia theater and things like that. I say one of the pivotal differences that we're seeing now is that: sure, it's multi art form, but it's not pre-synthesized and they're in one tiny space that people have to get up just like your story with the treasure hunt. You actually have to get up and go somewhere else. It can be another location or it can be going to another media form.

Evan Jones: Yeah. When I was last in Australia, I was talking quite a bit about how difficult it is to make that leap. To ask someone to switch media is a very, very big hurdle to get over. I mean you just think of it as a consumer, you're sitting on your couch watching television and it's 10 o'clock at time and you may have a snack in front of you, you're tired after a long day and then someone at the end of the show says, "Go to our website." There's a growing percentage of the population that may have a computer right in front of them at that time and the onus is very low, but I mean just in my mind, it takes an incredible amount of motivation to get there. I think some of your research that talked about the way that you get people from one media to another is really interesting. I guess what I would say is that you have to build up to that moment. To require someone to make so much effort to consume your story or a product, you have to get them to a place where they want to and you have to motivate them up to that point so that they know that — I mean they are invested in that point and they want to make that jump over to a new media. Once they've made that first jump, it's very easy for them to make the second and the third and the fourth jump because they start to understand that this is a story told in many parts, but that first jump is the hardest by far.

Christy: Of course, you've got to reward them once they're there.

Evan Jones: Oh yeah.

Christy: It keeps the process going.

Evan Jones: Exactly.

Christy: What are some good examples then? You are on the spot!

Evan Jones: Okay. What are some good examples? I will refer back to a project that I love while I was working with [Xenophile](#) and it's [ReGenesis](#), just the way that we're able to integrate some of the story elements, interactive story, into the television show. The one I would quote was in the drama itself in one episode, there were many cues that something was going on, on mind and at some point, one of the characters looks to the other and says, "What's the password for the

Intranet, again?” Casually, they mentioned it because they’re in a locked office room and they don’t realize that these extradiegetic cameras are capturing this password and releasing it to the world. So, they give the password as ”carbon” and then 20 minutes later in the television show, one of the characters desperately needs information and is calling and calling all these different characters and then says, “Please send it to my email address,” and she gives her full email address. Later on, there’s a third cue that says, “Send this information out to the field agents. See what they can do about it.” All of those are in-story references to the fact that there’s a world outside of the show and then once you’ve built to that point, at the very end of the show, that same character who’s been featured all the way through the show looks directly out at the user, the audience and says, “I’ve sent all the files that you need. We need your help. Go online,” and they give the URL. When you get online, that same character is waiting there for you in video that gives you your mission of the week and asks you to accomplish what has been a hanging plot point through the show. In that way, you’re rewarded because you’ve become involved in the central team of the show.

Christy: Yep. That’s a great example. You mentioned of the password and emails and URLs, it seems it’s the quickest and easiest, but also the most effective — as soon as a phone number is seen on screen, people will ring it.

Evan Jones: Yeah. I mean it’s been a long time habit; 555 numbers, at least in North America, were designed for that reason. It’s because people for years have been calling those numbers and they created a 555 system so that it would show people that there was no where to call. What blows my mind are a couple of things. First of all, in the online world, there is no 555 number. Everything that you give as a URL or a website or an email address has a potential to exist. It’s fascinating when you find examples of places that haven’t quite figured that out and they give out throw-away email addresses. I have many apocryphal stories of that, productions that have mentioned websites and then find that those websites are not registered and that they actually get scooped up and in time turned into websites that you may not want to associate with your show. I won’t go into naming names there, but I’m sure they all know that that’s happened. The other thing that sort of blows my mind in a different way is that the 555 phenomenon really happened at all. Cross-media didn’t happen much earlier than this. Even in the earliest films, they were using these 555 numbers. The fact that people made the decision to keep people in that medium and they give away numbers that didn’t go anywhere as opposed to saying, “This is a really interesting opportunity.” What if the next time this phone rings we have a recording of Humphrey Bogart answering the phone? We could have been 50 years ago at a really interesting cross-media intersection, but I think we chose one path and now the Internet is choosing another path for us.

Christy: Yeah, the Internet is very much part of it, but I don’t think even if the creators put a real phone number up there, I don’t think there would have been as many people who actually called it. I mean one of the differences now is that audiences have changed.

Evan Jones: Oh, exactly. I mean the word would spread, but it would spread in a much slower format now. The times when you think that you’ve done something very clever and hidden something very deeply, the time it takes for that to become widespread knowledge is just staggering. It’s almost instant to the point where your reflexes have to be very good when things like that go live just because if they go live and it turns out to be an unexpected sort of synergy then you’ve got to be there and ready to deal with that.

Christy: And of course, one of the things that alternate reality game creators have to deal with is not having content online, not having lots of your deep webpages online until it’s meant to be seen.

Evan Jones: It’s the simplest way to deal with it in the world. When I’m working on these projects, I am absolutely paranoid. Everything is locked down except for the collaborators who are working on their private pieces and it’s just unbelievable how people can track down and assemble this information. I have a hundred stories that have surprised me and the way that I finally deal with it is that to my collaborators, I say, “We’re not dealing with a hundred thousand people out there. We’re dealing with one person that is a hundred thousand times smarter.”

Christy: Yeah. [Henry Jenkins](#) and [Jane McGongal](#) have spoken about the idea of this ”collective intelligence” and how these groups of these people show one person who is really clever, but also the scary part — well, it’s not really scary, but basically these groups actually getting together and having these amazing new media literacy and this amazing capacity to team up and to solve all these problems, etc.

Evan Jones: Yeah. That’s pretty intimidating and that’s why what I’ve tried to do with my work has been to set up different tiers of experience so that although it can be engaging at that level and have that almost super-human sort of engagement, it still allows for the people who are busy with other things and need a 15-minute experience. If you can’t allow people a safe entry point, that can be very frightening to know that people are moving at the speed of light and you’re just stepping onto that train.

Christy: Yep, exactly. Speak more about the tiering. As you know I'm very interested in it.

Evan Jones: I know! I think what's happened is that in the work that I've done, it's become very apparent that there are different methods of interaction that go on and levels of engagement and they almost, if you were to plot them on a map, they almost cluster into different areas and you can probably imagine what they are. There are some people who they've heard of something, they thought it might be interesting, they drop in and they have 30 seconds that they're interested. Those are the very earliest people that come to a project are the ones that just sort of flip between websites and if something doesn't capture them in the first minute, then they're gone. There are other people who are browsing around and want to try something for a little while and then you start to go all the way up in the different stages of interaction and all the way up to that top tier that we were discussing earlier where people, they are insatiable at the top. There really isn't a single piece of the storyworld that they haven't been exposed to and want more of. What we found is that it's really interesting to build your project to cater to those tastes and to almost look at it as a series of graduations that we're going to give you an experience that we'll be engaging at this level, the level that you expect, but we'll also use it to build you into the next level. Once you graduated to that next level, the entire story world will sort of blossom for you and open up and allow you to see that there's more under the surface. Once you feel like you've understood that section, you have an opportunity to scratch the surface again and go down deeper and deeper and deeper until you're at a level where people are really so immersed in the story that they know as much as you do in many ways. You can think of a couple of massive storyworlds that have achieved that. The easy ones are the big ticket items like Tolkien's world and things like the Star Wars universe. Star Wars has a great example of it, which is each film is a standalone story, then you have trilogies that are units that can be considered whole units and then you have the entire library of films and then you branch out into the video games and into the extended universe. Even their website alone has such a huge depth of planets and races of aliens and things like that that never really gets used in the films, but is always something that interests the next level of fan.

Christy: At the same time, all of these different artforms provide a point of entry according to someone's media preferences at the time or according to the artform that they prefer to participate in that world with.

Evan Jones: Yep. That's been a really interesting desire with a lot of upcoming productions: has been the way that they don't just have a single point of entry, they have multiple points of entry and all of them are meant to engage the certain type of user that comes through that medium. So, what I've been working on just a little bit is a way that people can interact with the characters of a television show to the point where they become interested in the show and that point of entry is actually through the website to the series. Yeah, I mean there are many ways. It's sort of a new method of looking at finding an audience and engaging them.

Christy: When you spoke before about that huge amount of content for instance on the Star Wars site, there is also the problem of it obviously being too much and obviously in those huge properties, no one can actually get on top of it all and with the idea of the self-containment of basically each element sort of being self-contained and that for people who don't want to traverse over lots of different mediums, that's okay. They feel as if they've got some coherence, some ending, but for when you're actually extending it further across a whole lot of mediums, it seems to be its two extremes of like you have to spend two years with this project or just two hours.

Evan Jones: Right, yeah. Well, I guess everyone who does a project like this and creates a universe, the creator invests so much time in it to make it as well rounded as it becomes. Their ultimate dream is to have everybody love it as much as they do, but that's just not realistic and people may find it interesting, but they're certainly not going to devote their lives to it. If you have people who are willing to devote their lives to it and become that devoted fans, then you're in a very, very small community that you should probably embrace and allow people to go that distance, but you always have to understand that what you're doing is entertaining. Having a story that's able to be consumed in a reasonable way for them is important. It's almost like you take a small bite and then you take a bigger bite and then you eat the whole thing. It's these stages of interests that you're hoping to encourage people to move up the ladder, but the way you do that is by giving them a satisfying experience every step.

Christy: So, what are your thoughts then on length of time and I guess pacing in terms of releasing content or moving through the levels of interactivity?

Evan Jones: I don't think there's a formula for that, but I think you do need to show and almost teach your audience what they should expect from you. I've done projects that have daily updates and I've done projects that don't update except for once a month. All of those have worked in their own ways, but all of them have very, very particularly told the audience that this is how it's going to work. Don't come back every single day expecting new content if we've already told the audience that it's going to be on a monthly basis. You don't necessarily have to make that an explicit statement. You can set it up in the context of your storyline. For instance, if you have a story that involves a dimensional gateway and the gateway only

opens up every 30 days and so every 30 days there's a fresh piece of information because it comes through this magical gateway. It's a way of teaching your audience that they should run on an expectation that every 30 days there's going to be something new and that the rest of the other 29 days are days where they are discussing and analyzing and staying interested in the content they've already received, but it's a serious issue if you do something where if a character says, "This is exactly what I need. I'll go and crunch some numbers and I'll give you a call tomorrow," and then there's no call tomorrow, instead the call is next week and the call pretends like that gap in time never happened. They don't apologize for waiting seven extra days. They just start as if the call did happen tomorrow. That's the sort of experience that users really pick up on immediately. I mean it's so easy for you to think of it as common courtesy in your own life, but in a storyworld those are the expectations that people base their viewership on.

Christy: Yeah. You mentioned that gap between that people are coming up with theories and things like that, but they will also be creating content. How do you get people to create content obviously that's within the storyworld?

Evan Jones: There are really two kinds of user-generated content I suppose is the buzz word. I just led a panel on that and found it to be really interesting to speak with some of the folks at [lonelygirl15](#) who are doing things like that. The two types are stuff that surprises you, stuff that you really didn't know fans were going to do, you know, if they shock you by creating a still-life collage of in-game objects or something and you just never saw it coming. You have to decide what your policy is on that. Is it something where you want people to remix your own project even if it sort of changes the context of some things? How are you going to share that with the rest of the audience because they may be interested in it too? The other type is user-generated content that you commission and you set up a reason for it and you would be specific in what you're asking for. You can do that in all sorts of ways. You can have characters who need a specific item or something. There is one great example of one where they needed to write an [entire book](#).

Christy: [Perplex](#).

Evan Jones: I mean it was unbelievable. They divided the entire book into short chapters and everyone wrote a couple of pages and bingo, you got a book. It's startling. That was a specific example where they said, "This is what we need and you're going to get rewarded for doing it." There are contests that do this.

Christy: What I love with the storyworld reward, the in-game reward of the book being published in real life and being able to buy it, it being reviewed within the storyworld newspaper, and launched within the storyworld as well.

Evan Jones: Oh, exactly. I mean that's perfect example of how it was not only commissioned, but it was already lined up on how they would embrace it because they knew it was going to happen. That's another thing is that you can have a lot of happy accidents where people will do things that you think are wonderful. With one project, someone remixed all the love scenes of one character throughout the entire series and edited it together in this montage that made it look like he was a real playboy. Stuff like that is just interesting and unexpected and wonderful and you have different ways of sharing that, but there is a way for you to actually have a lot more authorship about what you're looking for and then they'll surprise you and they'll give it to you. I think you should never underestimate your user base because they're capable of so much and everyday they're capable of more. I would say go out there and ask for it if it's something that you want to see and don't be afraid of asking for things that are beyond what you might even expect because someone out there will pull it off and when they do pull it off, you have to be ready to congratulate them and show it to the world.

Christy: How about managing communities?

Evan Jones: That's a tricky one. A community is a hard thing to manage. I think in many ways they sort of manage themselves. I think the only advice that I have is that you have to, like I said earlier, set up a sort of system of expectations and sometimes you can do that by bringing in moderators that set the tone for the discussions or you can have even characters that help to define the way that this community is going to work by posting some messages that sort of establish the etiquette and those sorts of things. A lot of communities once the ball is rolling become almost self-maintaining and you have people who really go to that elite level where they start to control or help define what the other expectations are. I guess the one thing I would add to that is that a lot of people and a lot of projects sometimes say "we want community! We want community!" because they know that it's a valuable thing on the Internet, but I've really found that if you're going to begin a community, you have to help it flourish by giving it something to do. A community doesn't sit there and twiddle its thumbs. It needs to feel like it's making itself useful. When people join something, they don't join because of the way that the forum looks or even sometimes who else is on it. They often join because they understand why they're joining.

Christy: And of course, you don't have to have a forum or whatever on your website for people to have communities around your property obviously.

Evan Jones: Oh, yeah. I mean my very first exposure to all of that realm of alternate reality gaming was the wonderful [unfiction forums](#) and the spontaneous community that's emerged there and maintained for years a really strong sense of community. I have met many people through that forum and it's divorced from any production at all.

Christy: Yeah, yeah. It's independent. I mean they're all there sharing the same excitement for multi-platform projects all over the place, yeah. How did you find that about alternate reality games?

Evan Jones: Whoa. I wish I knew. This is going back years now. I don't know if I remember.

Christy: Because you were thinking that way even before you found out what the term was.

Evan Jones: I had always enjoyed projects like that and a lot of people quote all of the seminal sort of concepts for it. I think the very first thing that I had played, I found this project that was about a guy who was using the language of hobos from the Depression Era to communicate with an online audience. He was scratching these symbols sort of virtually into the web and talking about his adventures as he traveled around. I can't even remember the name of the project, but it was a project that ended up sort of ending early and not reaching a conclusion and a lot of people were disappointed, but I saw it and I just thought, "Oh, this is it. This is exactly where I want to be." It was the first time that I had ever seen a story that I felt couldn't have been told in any other way. It was as if the story itself had demanded the Internet to tell it. That was a real epiphany for me and I started just reading everything I could about the genre. I printed out articles and articles because I was afraid that the websites were going to get taken down and I have this book in my office of 500 pages of web articles and things that all were early inspiration. Once that research was underway, I started talking to other creators who had worked on projects and asking them some really pointed questions after I had played a couple of games. Then it was just time to start making the pitch and that's when I met up with my great collaborators.

Christy: I have to mention your site, [mysteryjones.com](#).

Evan Jones: Yeah! As long as you put this caveat on it, that site has not been updated for at least four years.

Christy: Four years, yes.

Evan Jones: So, anyone who's visiting it right now has to forgive me for not touching it in the last four years.

Christy: Yeah, but it was great. Basically, you put this portfolio online and the way you described your talents, I guess in a way, was creating this wonderful character. I have to read this out: "Mysteryjones resides in Cybercity, a place not found on maps but available to visit with any Internet connection. He continues his struggle against confused and complex ideas, helping citizens navigate and create new concepts of online space."

Evan Jones: Yeah. I had an assignment. I was at Sheridan College and the assignment was to create your own portfolio and to introduce a guide who is going to guide you through that website. I started to really get obsessed about these story paths and things and decided to not create a portfolio necessarily but a universe that I could stick my projects into. I had done a lot of work in film noir and really wanted to capture that sense online. I guess I created a metaphor for what I was trying to do. I was very keen at that time on the information architecture side of things and so I created this Cybercity, and Cybercity for me was a completely corrupt urban environment and it was corrupted by this fictional character called the Governor. The Governor was trying to trap people inside Cybercity. He was trying to do it so that no one would leave and he would have the biggest and best city in the world. He did it by making all the roads dead end and mixed into each other and the thing was all twisted around.

Christy: And no maps.

Evan Jones: Exactly, and he banned maps from the whole city. All of that was meant to be a metaphor for the early web and the way that people were doing things like popup windows. Gosh, they wouldn't put their own site maps up so that you would be lost in the different links and there weren't things like that are just standardized now, things like breadcrumb trails and all of those. I mean navigation has come so far since when that was created and that was really the difference was that instead of me becoming Evan Jones, Freelance Web Designer, I wanted to become Mysteryjones, Vigilante/Private Detective, who was exposing the truth behind the sinister ways of the Governor in Cybercity's plans. That's the concept in a nutshell and so I got to be very, very earnest in all of my voiceovers. If you turn your speakers up, you'll hear me in my best impression of Private Dick and really tried to make it in a way I guess tangentially about web design and construction, but ended up with a project that was really a lot of fun and it sort of set the mood and hit a chord with a lot of people who were fans of that genre and Flash I suppose. There are even some hidden puzzles in it if you seek around. People have emailed me many times trying to figure out the combination to the safe in the office.

Christy: Yeah.

Evan Jones: Which is embedded as a clue in one of the scenes and there are phone numbers that are scattered around the experience as well. So, when you get to the office and can look in the filing cabinets and look at all the projects from four years ago, the one thing you can do is call people on the phone and when you call people through that Flash phone, you get a little bit of dialogue that goes on there, sort of the conclusion of the story. I guess it was just one of my early projects and it really showed me that instead of just saying something outright, I was going to be using storytelling to get across my point.

Christy: Which is what you do now and rather than a Flash phone, you use real phones.

Evan Jones: Yeah.

Christy: And real streets.

Evan Jones: It's true. Yeah.

Christy: Where do you think things will go?

Evan Jones: Well, I think as cross-media starts to become more and more... I think it's going to grow in its scope. There are going to be more projects and it's going to be more accepted by mainstream, but I also think on the other side you're going to see cross-media becoming less because the devices themselves are going to be consolidating in a lot of ways. So, people may not literally get up from their television and move to their computer. They may find that they're actually on the same screen and that even though you're getting in one format linear content in another interactive content, you may not have that physical barrier of different devices and have to buy the iPod and the cell phone and all the different pieces. They may start to come together into single devices that allow for different experiences.

Christy: The convergence thing. The thing is obviously with that, at present, there is no substance...there's no structure where you can basically change quite well a screen size, for instance. You can't sit there and — sometimes you do want just a small object and sometimes you want a really large object, a really large screen to be able to share the experience with friends, and sometimes you want a small screen just to put in your back pocket.

Evan Jones: Right. Definitely. I mean there are affordances that are going to remain no matter what. Video didn't kill the radio star in my mind. I think you'll still find a niche for everything, but those niches will be tested in the near future because I think people will start to realize that some screens are more similar than they really realize. As people start to find that they do like things that are portable, but they also like things that are theatrical, we're already seeing an interesting trend of the shared experience of the cinema being somewhat replaced by people with just unbelievable home theater systems. It's pushing at that notion of is it the shared experience or is it the vast experience that is the affordance of that technology?

Christy: It's an interesting world that's ahead of us.

Evan Jones: Yeah. I wish I could predict the future better, but I would be much better off.

Christy: Oh, no. Yeah. I mean basically the area that you're working in is the future for many people. There are more and more people that are moving into this area and it's becoming widely popular with broadcasters and filmmakers, etc., but there aren't many people that are skilled in this area or are native to it. I consider you one of those people who are native to the area. You just think that way naturally and it would be interesting to see where people like you go. You're not new to the area. You've been working with it for a while. It would be interesting too for everyone to keep their eye on people like Evan Jones.

Evan Jones: Well, I wish I could say it was all deliberate, but it's a wonderful experience to do this and the work that I've done and I really appreciate being able to have conversations with people who are looking at this so closely. I think some of the research that you're doing, Christy, is really unbelievable in this area and definitely informs some of my work.

Christy: Oh, you're lovely. Thank you.

Evan Jones: Well, it's great to talk with you.

Christy: Yeah, pleasure talking with you. So, stitchmedia.ca. I'll have all the links to all the things we've been talking about in the show notes as well on the website, universecreation101.com, but for now thank you very much, Evan, and all the best.

Evan Jones: Thank you.

[Outro]

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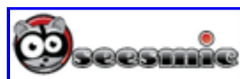
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