



On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 302: Jon Evans (Or How To Make A Cosy Murder Mystery Audiodrama)

Show Notes

Episode Summary: Jon Evans (he/him) shares how he developed Gather The Suspects, what future projects he is working on, and why he is passionate about creating art from a modern Welsh perspective.

Guest Information:

- [Gather The Suspects Twitter](#)
- [Gather The Suspects Instagram](#)
- [Gather The Suspects Podchaser](#)
- [Gather The Suspects Apple Podcasts](#)
- [Gather The Suspects Spotify](#)
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EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

**‘On Their Way’ Theme Song composed by Bajio Alvarado
(It’s light and energetic. It puts a little pep in your step)**

Jade Madison Scott (JMS): Hey, there everyone! I’m super excited to be back with y’all. Today we have Jon Evans who created Gather The Suspects.

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JMS: So, Gather The Suspects launched earlier this year and it immediately caught my attention because how could something described as a “post-apocalyptic Welsh cozy-murder mystery” not immediately make all of your ‘cool show’ signals go off. And talking to Jon about his inspirations and how he crafted such a fun-loving mystery series was illuminating to me as someone who both enjoys his show and is in love with the cozy murder mystery genre, and I hope it’s the same for you. Alright, just like last time a bit of Gather The Suspects is about to play so let me give you some context, Kara and Veronika break into the apartment of a suspected killer. There you go. That’s the context. Okay, let’s get into it. Transcripts can be found at wgcpredictions.com and remember this is a WGC Production.

‘On Their Way’ Theme Fades Out
‘Gather The Suspects’ Clip Fades In

(Footsteps)

VERONIKA: (Whispering) should we shout to let them know we are here?

KARA: (Whispering) What? Like, "Hello, it's the crazy people who have broken into your apartment!"

VERONIKA: (Whispering sarcastically) Haha! No, in an ‘Alex may be lying somewhere hurt, unable to get up’ kinda way.

KARA: (whispering) Ok, Ok. (shouting cautiously) Er... Hello? It's us... Kara and Veronica...

VERONIKA: We just wanted to check everything is alright? [*Long pause*]

KARA: Hello?

VERONIKA: (whispering) In a horror movie this would be the moment the killer jumps out...

KARA: (whispering) Shush! That's not going to happen – No one is even here.

VERONIKA: (whispering) Ok...So, why have you grabbed hold of that golf club by the door?

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KARA: (whispering) Just in case 'no one' does decide to turn up. Ok. A quick look around and we are out. You take a look in the bedroom and I'll look in here.

‘Gather The Suspects’ Clip Fades Out

JMS: Jonathan is a writer and audio creator telling stories about Wales from a modern Welsh perspective. Jonathan released his first series, Gather The Suspects in March of 2021 and remains amazed he wrote something that people found funny. As well as his work in audio drama, Jonathan runs a copywriting business where he helps small businesses tell their stories and navigate the dark art of search engine algorithms. Hi, Jon, how you doing?

Jonathan Evans (JE): Hi, I'm good. Thank you. How are you?

JMS: I'm also doing, I'm doing quite well. I'm glad that you're here.

JE: Yeah, good to finally talk.

JMS: Yeah. So, I'm going to launch into the first question that I ask everybody: where exactly do you come from and where are your roots?

JE: Uh, so at the moment I'm a Welsh man living in England, uh, but my roots are very firmly in Wales. Um, I think we tried to face, uh, trace our family tree back once and it just went for generations within Wales. So, it was quite boring. Everyone else has these branching out over the world, but no. Welsh miners, farmers. Yep. As far back as we can.

JMS: All right. And, and what exactly is it that you do in your own words?

JE: Um, I kind of, by day, uh, as I said in the introduction, I'm a copywriter, so I run a writing business, but then, uh, the other half is I am an audio creator.

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JE: So, over the last year I've been looking to create more and more audio shows and content based on Wales and telling the stories of Welsh people.

JMS: Hm. And what exactly is it about Wales that moves you to want to create shows about modern Welsh living?

JE: Well, I think it's the element of the underdog almost. Um, I mean, we... we're the small neighbor as far as is concerned next to England. Um, outside of probably Europe not a lot of people know much about Wales, um, or could even point to it on a map.

(Jon and Jade Laugh)

So, it's something that, particularly since I moved to England, um, you know, that part of my heritage is....it's something in Wales, we call it hiraeth. Um, there's no kind of direct English translation to it really, but it's, it's almost, uh, it's, it's more than nostalgia, but it's, it's that kind of longing for something that may not exist, but exists kind of in your mind and in your heart.

JMS: Mhmm.

JE: And it's something that kind of is quite important in the Welsh culture. And I think very much, you know, being away in particularly over the pandemic where I couldn't go back home, I think it was really important for me, you know, to, to kind of embrace that part really.

JMS: Hmm. Interesting. We're going to put a pin in that, cause I'm going to circle back to how well, how Welsh culture and your heritage sort of influences your work. But I'm going to ask you first about your show. So, this is how I have found out who you were. I listened to your show, Gather The Suspects, which is a post-apocalyptic, cosy murder mystery. Can you just sort of talk to us about how exactly the idea came to your...to your mind and then how you sort of worked to develop it?

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JE: Yeah, no problem. So, it actually started as a fusion of two different stories that I was working on. Um, so on the one hand I had a cosy mystery, uh, that was still based in an apartment block and it was called Gather The Suspects In The Kitchenette.

(Jade Chuckles)

It was very much a standard, a standard murder mystery. And on the other hand, I was working on, I'm not going to say it was a dystopian novel, cause it wasn't really, but the whole premise was that society had fallen and Wales was under, under the power of it, a benign dictator. And I was kind of seeing where that went. And I really, I was really struggling the problem with the cosy murder mystery of "there's police. Why wouldn't they just come in and solve this crime?"

JMS: Mhmm.

JE: "Why are these guys taking it, you know, kind of running with it?" And that's when I kind of said, well, actually, you know, I could combine the two, you know, because in this world that police force has collapsed

(Jade Laughs)

And then bring it in. So, yeah, it was almost a fusion really of the two that came up.

JMS: Hmm. And, and I know you mentioned that, I heard you say that the dystopian, um, the dystopian part was originally a novel. Do you write novels as well as audio dramas or-

JE: Uh, well, I think, try to write novels-

JMS: Okay.

JE: Is probably the best way of putting it. I mean when I do novels, and it was a completely different way than I wrote Gather The Suspects in that, you know, I'll sit there with a blank page, I have an idea and then I'll try and write it and then I'll get halfway through and I'll be really bored of it and then I'll scrap it and then I might go back to it again in sort of a few years.

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JE: But I think with Gather The Suspects, I planned out, meticulously, almost every scene before I wrote anything down.

JMS: Mhmm.

JE: And I think that was such a different way of writing for me, but yeah. I mean, it completely worked and something that I'm not sure I could do that level of planning to finish an novel, but, um, yeah, it's, it's something that potentially in future.

JMS: Okay. Okay. And, and you've already started talking about it kind of, but could you also just kind of go through what your writing process was like for Gather The Suspects? Cause, uh, mysteries are just really interesting because like everything adds up. So, can you just talk about, like, what it was like writing the six episodes that make up the series?

JE: Yeah, no problem. So, I mean

(Jon Pauses and Jade Laughs)

I was fleshing out the idea, literally sat in the bath.

(Jon Laughs)

And the whole overarching thought I literally did in the space of about one hour of...with my phone, just going “yep, that, this is what I know is going to happen, and this is going to be how we get to the end. “And then, as I said, it was, the trickiest, as you said, how that end bit actually works. And I think there's a bit of reverse engineering goes on in that if you could work out that ending piece first and how it's going to fit together. And I...when it's your own work, sometimes it's quite hard to tell and I've spoken to other people who've listened to it and I'm like, “did you spot this bit in this scene?” “Did you spot this bit in this scene?!”

(Jon and Jade Laugh)

Because you are, you're doing that reverse engineering. You go “alright, well, I know this is how it's going to happen. And I know this is, you know, how are they going to have done it?

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JE: So, how can we plant clues in each of those scenes? So then that made it easy to go back to the scenes and go, right “well, this scenes going to be about X. I know we need to have this question posed at the start of this episode, which is going to need to be moved along by the end of the episode. And there was literally a case of plotting out scene by scene. This is roughly what the action is gonna be, and we pretty much stuck to it for the production.

JMS: Question! When you were writing this, and I know I kind of heard it, but I just want to clarify, when you were writing this, did you intend for the audience to be able to figure out who did it at the end?

JE: Yeah, I think, I think you can, I think there are enough clues, um, that, that you can. And I think, uh, before I, you know, before I even showed it to any of the cast or anything like that, I did the old thing of run it by my dad.

JMS: Mhmm.

JE: Cause you know, he reads a lot of murder mystery stuff. It's like, if he can get it then...yeah. And then, but the other thing was, I didn't want anybody getting it too soon.

JMS: Mhmm.

JE: So, you've got the balance of, well, I don't want anyone getting it in episode two. But then equally you don't want anybody when the payoff comes going “well, that was, I didn't see that.”

(Jon and Jade Laugh)

“Thought just came from nowhere that wasn't in there at all.” So, yeah, it is that balancing act. And I think, I think my dad managed to guess it midway through episode five. It's like that. That's, that's probably quite good. You know, you've got your suspicion and then, then move on. So yeah, it, it, but it is definitely a balancing act.

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JMS: Uh, if it's any consolation I didn't get it until episode six. So you did-

(Jon Laughs)

You laid clues but I didn't see it like that. Um, now one thing that I really appreciated about Gather The Suspects was the characters. They were all, like, so distant. My personal favorite is Jack, but, um, they were also distinct and interesting in particular and they added to the world in such a unique way. And since you've plotted the story so carefully, I want to know, did you come up with the characters first or did you come up with the plot first?

JE: Aht, characters? Cause I mean, the characters were already in that original story that I was plotting out on the other side. So, I already had the idea of Jack. Um, I kind of knew Jack's character and kind of how that would work in terms of the humor. Um, and I knew he needed somebody to play off, which obviously then would be Kara, uh, and kind of what their relationship would be like. I think Geraint probably arose a little later. Um, I think originally he was a little less involved and was more or less just there to pay their rent.

(Jon Laughs)

To dig them out of trouble. But yeah, I mean the, the, the two central characters certainly were...were they're from that kind of original, original piece. Um, um, there were some others as well, that would that pretty early on. I think the Hampson's, uh, were pretty much one of the first characters I wrote. And were pretty sure that I wanted to kind of work out my Brexit frustration, somewhat.

(Jon and Jade Laugh)

It seemed the perfect opportunity was to insert them into it. I mean, yeah, a lot of the characters were written. And although the words are the same as the words I wrote, it's absurd, the characters evolved a lot when we started, you know, working with the cast and, you know, hearing how they were delivering things and just their different takes, you know, and the characters.

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JE: I mean, Jack in my head, when I wrote it is completely different than Jack is now, but James did such a good job, he's such a good actor I didn't, you know, I kind of let him take it the direction that he wanted to, and I think it works really well.

JMS: Well, this is an intriguing concept. How exactly have they changed when, when the cast got it? Like, what was your idea? And then what was different?

JE: I think Jack and Kara in my mind were more similar in kind of, you know, that the spiky delivery piece. And I think it works much better the way there's now because they are two completely different characters. And a lot of that is done to the way that James took Jack you know-

(Jon Laughs)

And made him almost a bit sillier in some ways, you know, in the way he was delivering things. And I kind of made it less serious, you know, in, in a way. You've got Kara who is more serious and kind of direct. And then you've got James who is a bit more madcap

JMS: Mhmm.

JE: On the other side. And I think that dynamic definitely changed when we started working with the actors for it. Hmm. That is interesting. How, like, it just brought a different sort of vibe. He might've been Milton Jones almost, the comedian. And I noticed that you said earlier also that the way that you wrote it wasn't necessarily the way that the characters interpreted it and that's sort of changed how you wrote later. Were you writing these episodes concurrently as they were being recorded? Or did you have the whole series done and then they brought it in and you did revisions?

JE: Yeah, no. So, I had the whole series done. Um, I think by the time I finished the writing I only had, uh, Bethen cast, um, as Kara-

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JMS: Mhmm.

JE: And then the rest were cast after, but I mean, it has, but there's no doubt it's changed how I'm writing the second series. I'm currently writing it based on how they took it. But, yeah, as I said it's less about the words that I wrote than performances that were potentially different takes on what I had, but I mean, I think they're infinitely better, you know, the way that they came out really.

JMS: And how exactly long did it take you to finish writing the series?

JE: I probably started about this time last year, actually.

JMS: Oh!

JE: Uh, and then I finished it...I was supposed to finish it in August and I finished, I think in October-

(Jon and Jade Laugh)

By the time it actually finished. And then we cast over, I think we finished casting by the end of November and then recorded over Christmas.

JMS: And I know that, um, from listening to the credits at the end of the show, I know that there were at least two people involved. It was you as the writer and director, and then, uh, the other person's name is escaping my mind at the time, but they were, uh, they were over at the sound and the music and such, uh, how big was your team for this production? Was it just the two of you guys?

JE: Yeah, it was, um, so I was very lucky. So, I obviously did all the writing and everything upfront. Um, I had no idea how I was going to make it.

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JE: Uh, I've always been kind of what it does, people who will just go for it and then work out what to do at a later date today when it comes to actually filling in the details. Uh, and I mean, I had no budget either. Literally. Uh, I mean, most of the cast I had already knew in some way shape or form before this, but I came across Luke actually on Reddit, um, which was really lucky. And it was, he put a post up on the audio drama subreddit saying that I'm looking for some experience, I've done these couple of, um, you know, one-off audio dramas before. Anyone want me to work on their stuff?

So, I popped in through a message. You know, we, we clicked really well and he was obviously based in these to the US, so, you know, timelines were a bit difficult with me in the UK and him in the US but I mean, it worked quite well, you know, I do stuff in the day handed off the evening, and then by the morning, you know, it was ready to pick up. So, yeah, it worked generally quite well.

JMS: And so like listening to your timeline, this was essentially all produced during the pandemic. So, it was all produced, uh, during quarantine.

JE: Yeah.

JMS: It was probably recorded remotely as well, yes?

JE: Yes. Which was probably the most difficult bit of the entire thing.

JMS: Oh, do share!

(Jon Laughs)

JE: To start off with, because I had no experience, I had nothing to kind of lean on really in terms of how I was going to do this.

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JE: Um, it, you know, it was always going to have an element of trial and error at the start. But I think, as I said, you know, the cast were either people I knew or people that I'd recruited from various places. So, I mean, we...we had some of our cast in America, um, we have one cast member, Tien, um, who plays Mr. Khan in Australia-

JMS: Mhmm.

JE: Which, which obviously isn't, it is, is another, uh, difficulty to sort of line up, uh, things like table reads, but Tien, he had you know, he used to do 5:00 AM, table reads his time and then spend the day at work straight afterwards.

(Jon Laughs)

You know so there's a lot of commitment there. Um, you know, to do it and yeah I think knowing what I know now about production, I would have handled it differently at the start, and I think anybody thinking of starting, you know, an audio production, if, you know, if you are doing it remotely, there's a lot of good collaboration tools, which at the time I probably...wasn't available or wouldn't have know how they worked. Which now, you know, I'm more comfortable with them. There are ways you can remote record, um, quite successfully and a lot easier, um, than doing it. So, I mean, most of the cast lines are recorded in isolation with them sending in takes and then me putting those takes together requesting retakes of certain lines or certain bits where the audio quality wasn't quite good enough and that kind of back and forth.

And it was only...me and James recorded all of his lines for Jack, for example, together, um, using Soundtrap, uh, so we could both collaborate and talk while we were recording them and I could give him more direction. Um, I think doing that process and going through it I definitely would have done more of the recording that way

(Jon Laughs)

In future. And I think going forward, yeah, we will, um, do more on the remote side.

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JMS: And that's one thing that you would have done differently. What are some other things that you would've done differently since you know, more now than you did before you started production?

JE: Well, and I think, as I said, we had a basically no budget, um-

(Jade Laughs)

Making it. You know that there's a lot of people that I didn't ask to do things because I was too, no, "I haven't got any money to pay them. I'm not going to bother them. You know, there's a pandemic on, they've got their own problems." You know, I'm not going to be like, "oh, come and do this with me for free." Uh, and then, you know, I've spoken to them since. They're like "you should have asked me; I'd've been happy to help out." And I think, yeah, I think don't be afraid to kind of ask the question. I think, as long as you're honest, upfront, and you know, you say this is the situation. This is what we're looking to do then, you know, the worst someone can say is "no, I'm not going to do that." I think that's probably the other big lesson I've learned is yeah just, you know, ask for help a bit more, I think, and use your contacts a bit more.

JMS: And then you also mentioned that there were some collab tools that you learned about afterwards that you would like to use more of. And you mentioned one in particular, uh, that you use with James and recording. Were there other ones as well, or is it wasn't just that one?

JE: I guess CleanFeed is quite a good one. We didn't know about CleanFeed at the time, but again, given that none of us had any experience going to do it. We were like, maybe it's not the safest option. Uh, but you know, I've been trying it myself since, you know, different things. And also I've got people doing, you know, that I know that they're doing other audio projects using it at the moment, ah, you know doing quite well with other audio projects and you know, they really recommend it. Yeah. Um, as well. I mean, Soundtrap is, I think it's from Spotify and it's, it's quite basic, but I mean, it was...we got cast members of different technical skills.

JMS: Mhmm.

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JE: And you know all you have to do is, same as Zencastr, you send them out a link and then they can just sign straight in, um, and you can record them. So, yeah, it's, it's easy really.

JMS: Alright. And one thing that you've mentioned repeatedly throughout this is that it's your first time doing, like, a project like this, doing an audio drama like this. So, I wanna know what exactly drove you to do audio dramas?

JE: I mean, audio has always been something that I've always just always enjoyed. And I think, you know, from being a kid and listening to tapes in the car. Yeah. And I mean, you know, when I was really young kid, you know, all the way through to when I was a teenager, I discovered BBC Radio 4 and, you know, listened to all of those audio dramas. It's just always been something I've kept up with. Nothing with my writing. I, and I think Neil Gaiman said he, you know, he, he never had a career he just had a list of things that he wanted to write.

(Jon Laughs)

That that's, that's generally always been, you know, the way I've kind of viewed it is that, you know, I've never gone "oh, I'm a novelist or I'm a poet." You know, it's always just been, "I'm a writer. Here's what I want to write." But you know, by the time you get, my time is up. Um, but audio is always that first step. Um, you know, that first one I really wanted to do, um, and one of my friends from school was actually in Oblivity-

JMS: Oh!

JE: I'm not sure if you're familiar with that one. Um, so he's at Lowell in Oblivity and I was chatting to him and, you know, he was telling me about the way they do it. And I thought I could, you know, now I got a bit of time, you know, I could actually just do it and kind of see where I can take it. So, he put me in touch with him, the, you know, the guys who write and direct Oblivity so I could get some more information off them about sound design and things and then yeah, I just decided to do it.

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JMS: So, besides asking from asking people that, you know, and like using these, the community that you've built, uh, how do you learn about, um, other elements of, of building and producing audio dramas? Like what do you go to learn?

JE: YouTube?

JMS (Laughing): Okay.

JE: It sounds like a cliché, but I mean, Most of what I can now do on most, um, doors is, is because of just watching YouTube videos and kind of listening and you will watch a lot and then you'll listen, you'll try the production. You're like that doesn't work, but, you know, there quite good people. I, I can't think of any off the top of my head to recommend-

(Jon and Jade Laugh)

But yeah, too busy is a really good place just to go and, you know, because you can actually watch them do it as well. And the steps that they're taking, you can rewind it and, you know, follow along with them. But yeah, it's the complete DIY way of trying to do audio drama really.

JMS: All, alright. I mean, that's, that's useful. That's useful.

(Jon and Jade Laugh)

Um, alright. I'm going to bring it back to Gather The Suspects. Uh, just some things that I noticed that I just want to ask you about, cause I like the show and if the creator is here, why not ask?

(Jon Laughs)

Throughout the show you kind of have mentions of other, like, massive murder mystery, cozy murder mystery projects, like Jack mentions like Poirot and there's mentions of Christie and Magnum PI the Midsomer, uh, Midsomer murders. So, like what exactly are your mystery influences and, and like what influenced this project in that way?

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JE: So, I mean.. I have literally just come off probably about a six month binging session of all of the Agatha Christie audio dramas from the BBC.

JMS (Laughing): Oh really?

JE: Yeah.

(Jon and Jade Laugh)

JE: I was just hooked...and I think prior to that I really, I mean, I've, I've watched a lot of issues on TV and read probably a lot of Agatha Christie, but outside of that, and probably Wilkie Collins as well, my, my actual mystery knowledge, was sort of fairly lacking and I think I literally listened to them so many times and I was trying to work out the beats and you know, how they were structuring their episode and kind of the perfect length and how they were leaving episodes and moving onto the next one and...yeah. So, I mean, that was probably the biggest one on the mystery side. I think a lot of what influenced it wasn't so much on the mystery side it was more the rest of the stuff that was happening at the time. And as I said earlier, you know, the Hampsons are probably the best example of that. I was just trying to work through some of the things that were going on in a humorous way, I think.

(Jade Laughs)

JMS: Okay. Another thing that I, I kind of, picked up on when I was listening to the series was like the sort of theme of the tyranny of crowds. Uh, there's even a quote by Terry Pratchett that, uh, Kara quotes, uh, Kara quotes, when she says “the same crowd that coronates you is the same one at your execution.” And like, that's kind of like a general theme throughout, throughout the six episodes. So I want to know, like, what about this theme spoke to you and, and, uh, and, and what about it made you wanna like, include it in the work?

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JE: And again, I think it goes back to that, just trying to work through kind of what was going on with the world at the time.

JMS: Got you.

JE: And I think I was at a very very cynical place, and I think lock-down probably didn't help, but I mean, there was a lot happening particularly sort of in America, um, with, with Trump, um, and everything, but here as well with Brexit and...I, it was just fascinating to me watching the way that people were going along with things and being manipulated and, you know, the Q-Anon Stuff and being part of this thing that was almost bigger, more important than life, regardless of if there was any truth in it, you know, whether or not they believed it. That was what was most important to them at the time. And I think that had a big influence on particularly on the committee meetings and kind of-

(Jade and Jon Laugh)

Yeah. How crowds can behave and the kind of dynamic, um, within them, really.

JMS: Alright, and, uh, another thing. So, like right after, massive spoiler alert, but right after they find Linda's body, they have like this chase scene where they have this nice light jazzy music going in the background.

(Jon Chuckles)

And that music stood out to me because like it's so clearly, um,.....it fits so well, that's what I'm saying. It fits so well with the vibe of the characters. It fit so well with the design of the show and the dialogue. And I just wanted to know, and I know that you said, uh, that Luke does more than sound design stuff, but I wanted to know, like, how did you communicate such a clear creative vision to make all of these elements sort of work together in a way that is very cohesive?

JE: Mmmm. I mean, it's funny that you should pick out that particular, uh, instance because there was a lot of debate around that because as you probably know, there's no other music apart

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JE: from the beginning and end theme all the way through the show apart from the chase scene where we put the drums in

(Jon Laughs)

And I think we probably went through at least 10 different volumes of drums before we picked it out. It's there. If you're listening, you can hear it, but we don't want it too intrusive-

JMS: Mhmm.

JE: Because I think it would be a bit dissonant with the fact that there is no sort of, yeah. Music and the rest of the show. Um, another example of how, you know, how we had to figure things out almost as we went along. So, episode five, I mean, half of episode five is them watching a VHS of an eighties comic standup show.

JMS: Yes.

(Jon and Jade Laugh)

JE: That was the last thing that was written. I mean the, the, it was in there in the script that Jack, Kara, and Geraint's dialogue was in there, but the comedy show wasn't in there that was literally written probably the day before me and James actually recorded it as the last thing. Um, even then we didn't really know exactly how that was going to work and how we could get that sounding like we wanted it to. Yeah, it was just calls with "do you think this works?" him sending stuff back going "yeah, this is what I've done. Do you think it sounds right?" Yeah, just a lot of back and forth really.

JMS: Alright. I appreciate good communication. So, one thing that I also noticed, not noticed. I follow you on Twitter. I read, but you're working on-

(Jon Laughs)

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JMS: You're working at a Halloween special and you're also working on season two. So, let's go in order. Could you talk about the Halloween special nights and what you're intending for that and how that's going?

JE: Yes. So, the Halloween special is we're moving out of the Christy-verse and into the Scooby Doo verse.

JMS: Ooh!

JE: And I think the characters will work, you know, in the, in that kind...of it's a subtle change. Um, so they're gettin' a dog, for example. Um, but yeah I just, I've read actually one of your tweets about holiday specials. Um, and I think I have the same, but for Halloween specials. And I think it's just growing up with, with terrible sitcoms and I I think, you know, they all have Halloween specials that don't necessarily fit the timeline or the continuity of the rest of the show, but, you know, there's always something going on and I think it was a chance to do something that was a bit different. So, try out a few more sort of dramatic elements and some horror elements in there. Um, but without losing, you know, the essence of the show, really and kind of what made the first series sort of successful. And that is currently spiraling quite rapidly.

(Jon and Jade Laugh)

So, what was intended initially to be probably two half hour episodes to be released around Halloween is probably at three at the moment.

(Jade Laughs)

Um, so yeah, it's going to need either some hefty editing or, will, actually become the second season at the moment. I'm not entirely sure which, but it needs to be finished by the end of this month.

JMS: Okay.

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JE: Essentially, so gives us enough time to, to record it. The second series? I mean, I actually had the outline of the second and third series planned when I was on the first series. So, I kind of knew the situations and kind of what they were. So, after I finished the first season, the first thing I went...or I did was go back and flesh out the second season and kind of work out well, okay, this is what we know what we want to happen. How is that going to happen? Um, so that...well, I was intended to be a bit further down the road with that one as well-

(Jade Laughs)

But then obviously the Halloween one, as I said, it's spirals slightly, which is taking the pressure off slightly a bit. But, um, yeah, but I mean, it's, it's being written at the moment.

JMS: Since this is like the second season and you've already done the first one, uh, have you found that there's any sort of difference between your writing process for the second season and your writing process for the first one?

JE: Writing process, not so much. I think it's been a lot easier writing the characters, now [that] I've got a first season of actors doing those characters. You know, it just makes it a lot easier to flow. I needed to put through it and I think the second series is still as tightly plotted as the first season, the Halloween episode, not quite so much, which is probably why it's, it's still going.

(Jade Chuckles)

Um, yeah, but no, I mean, it's still very much the same process. It is just, you know, the way the characters, the understanding of them I have now is so much better than I did. And almost, you know, I've got feedback from a lot of people who've listened to it and you kind of know what works, what didn't work, where you need to tighten up on certain things and I think that helps.

JMS: Okay. Well, I'm excited and, uh, I'm interested to see, like, the new environment because it happens in an office and I don't know how that's going to....anyway, we're gonna move on!

JE: Oh, yeah. So, so that is something that is different because I've been having to work in a subplot into the story.

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JE: So, obviously Gather The Suspects season one is very self-contained in that it all takes place in that one building. Whereas in series two, you've got Jack and Kara and Veronika and Maciej, Veronika and Maciej, two of my favorite characters I actually wrote, play a much bigger part in this, because obviously it takes part in the office where they all work.

JMS: Mhmm.

JE: But then obviously you've got the other plot still going on back in Prosperity Heights where the elections are brewing for the residents association.

(Jade Chuckles)

So, just trying to fit those two sort of elements in different locations together, as well as, has been had been a bit more tricky.

JMS: Oh, how so? How has it been tricky?

(Jon Laughs)

JE: I think it's just, I've never written this up before-

(Jon and Jade Laugh)

It's just having to work out the beats and kind of making sure that, you know, there's enough in both without one detracting from the other and the other one's supporting that one. With the subplot probably setting up the main plot for season three, if you see what I mean? But it's just, uh, it's just a different dynamic really. Um, and I think one of the things I probably did write myself into a slight hole with is obviously I used Kara as a narrator.

JMS: Mhmm.

JE: Which works really well. And obviously it's a play on the way that, you know, some of the Christie books are written with, um, Hastings and, uh, people are that doing the duration and,

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JE: You know, acting as that, that kind of foil, which I really liked, but then it's more difficult for a subplot because nowhere in the first season, does anything happen without Kara being there-

JMS: Mhmm. And so in the subplot that's not the case?

(Jon Chuckles)

JE: This is the thing of the moment. She might be and there's a bit of rejigging going on where I, yeah. It's something to work out, I think, whether or not she needs to be there. You know, it's one of those writers dilemma's at the moment.

JMS: All right. Well, Godspeed on that. I wish the best

(Jon and Jade Laugh)

JE: Thank you.

JMS: One thing that I am curious about is....this is your first project, but you also mentioned at the very beginning of the interview that you wanted to work on more projects as well. So, so I wanted to know what is, what else is floating around in your mind?

JE: So, I-

(Jon Clears His Throat)

We talked about novels earlier. This one actually came from a novel that I was writing probably at the start of the pandemic and I got bored of and put to one side, but I think the story is right I just don't think I wanted to write it as a novel. And so it's another audio story and it's a Southern Gothic style story set in the South Wales coal fields during, it's called the 1905 revival.

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JMS: Okay.

JE: Um, which is a religious revival. And it's quite hard to explain it if you have not had that background. I mean, Wales is very non-conformist, um, in terms of its religious style, whereas England, you know, you've got Church of England, Anglicism, and it's almost another branch opposite of Catholicism, in other words you've got these grand bishops and things, in Wales is very much small churches, you know, small chapels traveling preachers come around. And even now to this day, you know, it's still very much those small chapels with, with traveling preachers, um, at this is a time of great social change. So, you had the Labour party and the Social Democrat party, you know, bringing unionism essentially to the coal mines and...the revival started, some people believe, as a reaction to that, you know, where they were trying to say, "stop worrying about all that stuff and start focusing on God again."

JMS: Mhmm.

JE: And, you know, thousands, tens of thousands of people converted overnight. You know, you had mass conversions happening. The churches were full to bursting. Um, so I just think it's a really strange time, you know, that must have been. I think, to set a story, you know, something that even, you know, a hundred years after it happened, you know, you still has marks on the valleys where I grew up, you know, and you can kind of see how that would change things, you know, for some of the people live there. And I think it, it works pretty well for Southern Gothic style story set as well, you know, with the fire and brimstone traveling preachers.

JMS: Uh-huh.

JE: Yeah, so I'm working on that one at the moment. Um, we've already got a couple of cast members in there. And then, uh, I'm also working on a time traveling comedy-

JMS: Okay.

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JE (Laughing): Where a girl travels back to the miners' strike in 1984, which is called 19-Katie-Four-

JMS: Oh.

(Jade Laughs)

JE: Which is a bit separate on the road at the moment.

(Jon Laughs)

So that one's a bit more in development, uh, you know, a bit in development down the road. But I mean, *The Dust Of The Earth*, which is the other one is, is being actively written at the moment.

JMS: *The Dust Of The Earth* sounds really, really interesting. I don't know much about Wales, which is my personal ignorance, but that sounds like a really fascinating, fascinating setting and I can't wait to see what characters you come up with to fit into it.

JE: Yeah. And I think it's, it's one of those things where you go down the research rabbit hole. I spent months just reading all this stuff just in awe. And, you know, there's these preachers that, you know, overnight just went, "ooh, there's lots of money to be made there. I'm going to go train as a preacher" and then became really famous, and really powerful, like, overnight in these communities, and then either went mad and disappeared-

JMS: Okay.

JE: Some of them believe that, you know, God was speaking to them directly and you know, it was just such a, such a strange time. I thought this would make a great place, you know, to set a story.

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JMS: So, after hearing some of your ideas. I have a question. I have a question, which is perfect since we're in an interview.

(Jon Laughs)

So, Gather The Suspects is a post-apocalyptic cozy murder mystery, the...you said it was Dust Of The Ashes was the name?

JE: Ah, *Dust Of The Earth*.

JMS: *Dust of The Earth*. Thank you. *Dust of The Earth* is a historical fiction. Uh, 19-Katie-4 is a, um, time-travel comedy. There's a lot of genre here...a lot of genre, do you have any intention or any will to do modern stories or...or, what's up with that?

(Jon Laughs)

JE: Uh, yeah, and I think.... I mean, I, I , and this probably goes back to why I haven't finished a novel-

(Jade and Jon Laugh)

I trained as a philosopher, you know, at university, and I think I spent so long thinking that I had to write something that had a message or was profound and, you know, said something and then sort of spoke to people that I just never finished anything because I mean, one day maybe, yeah, I will have that thing where that, you know, it must be said, but I think I just had so much fun genre fiction that I thought, "yeah, why not?"

(Jade and Jon Laugh)

It's like the serious stuff could wait, you know, for a few years. I'll get some more years' experience and then kind of go back to it. But I think, at the moment, yeah, genre fiction was where I was having most fun really.

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JMS: Mhmm. That's interesting. It's interesting hearing that you we're, um, educated in philosophy. That's a, that's a very fascinating thing, especially since like that, coupled with the fact that you do research for your shows. It's just interesting seeing, uh, or thinking about how that might all, uh, impact your process. Have you given any thought to, like, how your background as a, uh, a philosopher has impacted your....impacted your process?

JE: Yeah, it does. And I think it sounds pretentious-

(Jade Laughs)

But you can't...I think, you know, it affects kind of everything in your way of thinking, you know, and how you do things. But I mean, as I mentioned it, you know, I, I run a writing business and very much everything I do has that kind of grounding and research and, you know, the way you have to think about ideas and putting different ideas across. So, you know, it's, it's something that beats across my, my fun writing, as I like to call it, but also the, you know, the, the, the other kind of paid stuff as well. But I think, yeah, I, I mean, most of the...my opinions and things like that were kind of forged, you know, at that time and, you know, the books that I was reading and the philosophers that I was studying and you know, it, can't not really have an impact on how you view the world, really, I think, and I think that as much as anything comes across in the writing that I chose to do really.

JMS: Mhmm. And this is just sort of a general question, cause I find that with writers, when like you read or consume their entire body of work, you tend to see, like, particular themes that come across things such as sort of consistently happen. Like Martin Scorsese says, like, every director makes the, makes the same movie, just, like, with different, different characters and things.

(Jon Chuckles)

And I think it's the same thing with writers. So, I want to know. Have you noticed any consistent themes across your works? And if so, like what are your thoughts on that or them?

JE: It's obviously hard to say when I've only got one thing-

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JMS: Well-

(Jon and Jade Laugh)

JE: But I do think, I do touch on it, and I do think there is an element of cynicism, but I hope that it's tinged with humor, um, and enough kind of optimism that it's not just pure cynicism.

JMS: Mhmm.

JE: And I think, one of the biggest, and you know, you mentioned the quote earlier is Terry Pratchett. Um, uh, you know, that's been a big influence on kind of how I view how you can tell a story, but also still say something. You know, you can tell a funny story, you can tell a genre fiction story and it can still have that message and I think, yeah. Hopefully we'll, you know, we'll sort of come through, but yeah, I think almost that weary cynicism, which is bad at 35-

(Jade and Jon Laugh)

JMS: Okay. Okay. Weary cynicism. Weary cynicism is Jon's trademark-

JE: But with humor.

JMS: But with humor. Tinged with humor. Tinged with humor and optimism. Um, all right. One thing I do want to ask you about some of the business aspects of, of running your show. So, one thing that I saw when I was scrolling through your Twitter was on June 16th, you had a tweet that said, "I have a love, hate relationship with social media. I mean, it's destroying society as we know it. But on the other hand, promoting shows on MSN messenger would be a lot more work."

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JMS: So, I just want to kind of know, I just kind of want to ask based off of that, like how do you navigate using social media to promote your show when you don't necessarily like being on the platform yourself? Forgive me if I'm being presumptuous.

JE: No, firstly, I, I put a load of work into that graphic that went out with that one-

(Jade Laughs)

And I hid, if you look at the usernames and that are hidden in that thing, there are loads of shows and it got about by four likes. Obviously social media is part of my day job as well as a copywriter. Uh, you know, I have to be on social media and kind of do it. And I think if you are going to do a podcast, I think to a certain extent, yeah, you can do one, and release one and kind of sit back and let it be, you know, do as you wish. But I think to get this seriousness you do kind of have to promote it as you would anything, you know, really, um, if you're doing it and I think I have periods probably with social media, where I'll get really into one and am posting all the time and then I'll get really sick of it and I'll delete it and not look at it for ages.

Um, I, I do think.....on the whole, it's probably not been the best thing for human kind. I, I'd say, I think that it probably, probably wasn't as, as tongue in cheek, um, as it, as it maybe made out, but, you know, there are good things that, you know, you could do with it. Um, I just don't think it's particularly the most healthy thing. And I think particularly as you understand more about how social media works and how it actually drives behavior, rather than, you know, the users driving the social media, you know, which, which was the original plan, I think it, but you do see that more kind of insidious nature with it.

Um, and then obviously, you know, you have the mental health aspects of it as well. You know, projecting things that aren't realistic. The main place that I promote my business business is not Twitter, it's LinkedIn, which is probably where my biggest love-hate relationship comes in. And, you know, that is really, you know, everybody's giving it the big I-Am, you know, because they're trying to sell their business and look at me.

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JE: And I, yeah, I, I, I do it yeah, as much as I have to for the business, but most of the time I hide from it as much as possible, but I do actually enjoy Twitter funny enough. And I think particularly the audio drama community is really friendly.

JMS: They are!

JE: You know you don't get the aspect you do in other parts of Twitter, you know, it is generally very supportive and I think in no other aspect of my life could you post something and then a load of people who are technically in competition for listens will be so supportive. And so like, "this is amazing, let retweet all this." And I think that aspect has been great. And, you know, I, I realize why I've done so much on Twitter as opposed to things like Facebook, I guess.

JMS: Okay. They are very friendly. It's a very sweet Twitter community.

JE: Um, definitely though.

JMS: Do you have any, like, marketing strategies for offline promotion?

JE: No. Um, for the very fact that offline tends to cost money.

JMS: That's true. That's true.

JE: We just don't have the budget. Um, I, I just, one of those weird things...in the offline....I mean, I did have an offline strategy at the start and it was very much to try and target, uh, particularly the media and the traditional media within Wales.

JMS: Mhmm.

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JE: Uh, it, it just didn't happen. I think at the time we released it, you know, work started picking up and then, you know, with the social, I mean, you know, how much social media you have to do to kind of keep, keep things sort of going, it's almost the second job, isn't it?

JMS: It is.

JE: Um, yeah, I mean, we, we just, didn't in the end for, for the first season, uh, you know, for it. But I still think there probably is scope to do one, um, for the second season, and hopefully, you know, that there will be crowdfunding and things, hopefully in pace ahead of the second season.

JMS: Ooh, let's talk about crowd funding. So I saw, I don't know where I saw it, but I did see it. that Gather The Suspects now has a Ko-fi? Kofi? You can buy them a Kofi. Buy you guys a coffee. Am I correct? Is that, is that up and launched or-

JE: It is. Um, we never talk about it-

JMS: Okay!

JE: But it is, we do have one, uh, I mean, this is one that conversation, I was with some other creators and before I launched it, you know, "do we go down the Patreon route?" And, you know, we're, we're a six episode series. We can't go and ask somebody to pay a monthly subscription and, you know, keep giving every month where you'll get six episodes and then nothing for potentially a year.

JMS: Uh-huh.

JE: And then, you know, another six episodes. Uh, so it was always, you know, how, you know, how do we look at that, that sort of crowd funding piece?

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JE: And I mean, I think we do mention, uh, our Kofi account on...in our credits? I think it's been awhile.

JMS: I listened, I didn't hear it from there. I found it on your Podbean. There's a link. There's a link to it, but yeah.

JE: Yeah. So I think, yeah, it might be an a episode, but yeah, we don't really. I think the main way we're going to do it is look at an actual crowdfunding campaign, um, for a second, which has, you know, “these will be the tangible benefits, you know, that you will get, um, if you give us some money to make a season.”

JMS: And how, and how will you, uh, like what's your marketing, uh, grassroots ground plan for, for that, like how you plan to get that out there and like, what are your....cause crowdfunding takes a lot of work. So I just, I'm looking for tips personally, this is a personal thing.

(Jon Laughs)

How, how are you going about promoting that?

JE: Uh, so there are a few things that are in place. At the moment I'm actually, I've been lucky enough to be put in touch with somebody who's a crowdfunding expert.

JMS: Ooo.

JE: Um, so we're talking to her about different things that, that you know, that we can do. Um, it will involve me having to be a lot more visible on some platforms than we probably are at the moment.

(Jade and Jon Laugh)

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JE: Uh, I think somebody who seems to be quite good at promoting their, their, their stuff is Spaceships-

JMS: Yes. Yes, they are.

JE: Podcasts. You know, they, they seem to do it quite well. And, you know, the, the stuff that they give away and that, you know, is how they kind of release bit by bit and things. Yeah. I think is probably good. Would follow, but yeah, I think really it's, it, it, it is going to have to be that almost blitz of the period that it happens, uh, which will obviously take a lot of preparation in terms of messaging, uh, scheduling, uh, before it actually goes live.

JMS: Mhmm. Okay. And all right, so. I mean, that makes sense. I wish you the best. I hope you get all the funding you need to pay all your cast and crew and do all the marketing and just be as successful as you as you'll be. But, um, we're kind of winding-

JE: Yeah.

JMS: Oh, go ahead.

JE: Uh, I mean, for us, it was always, I mean, because you know, the, the cast, they're amazing, you know, and they, they did the first season of the kindness of their hearts, but we were aware, you know, when we'd be doing season two as well, there's not going to be a pandemic on, you know, theaters might be open again, people will have other priorities and, you know, it would be really nice, you know, to be able to pay the cast, um, the rest of the production, you know, we're quite happy kind of doing things as we do, but, you know, I think it is important when we can to kind of get the cast money essentially.

JMS: Most definitely. It's always, it's always good to pay your people.

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(Jon and Jade Laugh)

JMS: Uh, okay. So we're, we're kind of winding down the interview. Now we got 10 minutes left and I got a couple questions left for you, Jon. So, first questions first, uh, what exactly are you listening to? Like what podcasts are on your listen list cause it's always just good to shout out other people and just spread the love.

JE: Yes. Uh, you could probably see....I always have a list on Sundays.

JMS: You do!

JE: I think I do a lot, I do most of my listening late at night and sort of that, I think there's probably if I lease one new series a week, but at the moment, I think my big favorite is Haunted House Flippers-

JM: Okay.

JE: Uh, which is about a married couple that inherit, a old house, uh, which they decide to do up, uh, to live in, and it's, it's a spooky comedy, essentially.

(Jon and Jade Laugh)

This is a, there's a very similar dynamic in the main couple between Jack and Kara, you know? There's the bickering and there's the back and forth. Um, and yeah, I just, I just love it, and I really look forward to kind of every episode that comes out, um, the other one is Midnight Burger.

JMS: Oh, okay. Yeah.

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JE: Uh, which is just fantastic. And it's about a burger joint that travels through space and time while the universe tries to destroy it, uh, and that it's...you know, I've seen people mentioned on Reddit recently, you know, that, that it's almost reached our kind of modern classic stage already, you know, which is a huge sort of achievement. But I think, yeah, that's a really good one, um, to listen to the other one, Call Of The Void. Which has, obviously got quite big as well, but yeah yeah, just a very good story. Um, a Lovecraftin style horror story.

JMS: All right. You, you're very into horror. Are you gonna do a horror series in the future?

JE: No. And I think probably they are the only horror one's I listen to. Which I think is a bit strange. I mean, my audience is very skewed towards sci-fi comedy-

JMS: Mhmm.

JE: Generally. Uh, it just so happens there's not a lot of sci-fi comedies currently on my radar, but most of my favorites series of all time, things like, We aFix Space Junk, MarsCorp, are all really kind of in that sphere really.

JMS: Okay. Alright. I'll put those on my list. I'm looking forward to them. Okay. So then we come to my second to last question. So Jon, you're very clearly on your way. I mean, you, you made a really, really good show Gather The Suspects is great. Um, you made a great show. Uh, you're going to make a great second season, a second and third season. You've got shows coming down the pike with, like, really interesting concepts. And I just want to know, like, since you're doing all this stuff and you're climbing up the ladder, how will you know when you've made it?

JE: Ha, well, when someone pays me.

JMS: Okay!

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(Jon and Jade Laugh)

JE: No, I think... As I've said, it's always been, I've never had to create. It's always been a list of things I want to write. And, you know, there are a list of few more things within audio that, you know, I want to do, and I kind of want to experiment with and kind of work out. And I think once those are done, well, we'll kind of see where I am. Kind of see what the next step is really.

JMS: Okay. All right. Well, will you tell the people where they can find you?

JE: Yes. So, uh, well, I mean, we're available across all, uh, all podcast apps. Um, but we are, I, you can ask me for my website address now, which I don't know. I think it's GatherTheSuspects.Podbean.com? Obviously we've got quite good SEO. So if you type in gov the suspects we do appear first.

‘On Their Way’ Theme Fades In

JMS: And look at that the second episode of the third season of On Their Way is finito! On Their Way was created, hosted, and edited by me, Jade Madison Scott. The theme was composed by **Bajio Alvarado** and the logo was created by Amaka Korie. If you'd like to help us continue to make podcasts you like, you can support us on Patreon for as little as one dollar a month. In addition to helping us out, you'd also gain early access to episodes and exclusive content so that's a win-win in my book. You can find the link on our website, wgcproductions.com. You can also show us some love by following us @withgoodco on Twitter and Instagram and telling your friends about us. Next week our guest is Bex Goos who you might better know as Potato Lady Podcast Reviews! As always I appreciate you for listening, and please take care of yourself and take care of each other.