



On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

Show Notes

Episode Summary: Listen as Trevor Van Winkle (he/they) shares what he has learned about the audio production process through the development of the smash hit, The Sheridan Tapes, as well as on how they are navigating their new show, The Tales of Echowood.

Guest Information:

- [Homestead On The Corner Linktree](#)
- [Trevor Van Winkle Twitter](#)

Calls To Action:

- [On Their Way is supported by listeners like you. Help us continue to make podcasts by subscribing to our Patreon and, in return, receive early releases and exclusive content.](#)
- Follow us on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).
- Tell your friends about us!

EPIISODE TRANSCRIPT

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

Jade (JMS): Hey everybody! It’s me, Jade, and I’m glad to welcome you to the new season of On Their Way! So much has happened in WGC land since the last time we talked so let me give you a quick rundown. 1. We launched a patreon to help us become more sustainable, 2. We wrapped recording for a new project that’ll launch in the early 2022, and 3. We released our very first audio drama, Retribution: A Mini Series, back in June. It was a delight to make and release



On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

JMS: and it spurred me to dedicate this season of On Their Way to all of the creators in the audio drama field! Our first episode, the one you've got on right now, this one is all about Trevor Van Winkle who is the creator of the production company, Homestead on The Corner, and the mind behind The Sheridan Tapes and Tales of The Echowood. And we have a treat for you. In a few seconds this music is gonna fade out and the trailer for Trevor's latest show, Tales of The Echowood will fade in. But before that I want to remind you that transcripts can be found at our website, wgcpredictions.com and I want you to remember that this is a WGC Production.

**'On Their Way' Theme Fades Out
'Tales Of The Echowood' Trailer Fades In**

(Ambient Forest Noise With Steady Footsteps Through Dry Underbrush. A Deep Breath)

Grael: Ash and oak and iron and thorn, stone and rune and land forlorn. Last thin chance of vein hope born. Heed thee now my call.

(A fire erupts.)

Waste and want and fallen leaf. Broken branch and depreate thief. Famine, Fire, grant relief. Heed thee now my call.

(A mysterious wind settles across the land.)

Sun and stars and hearth fires cold. Dragons, giants Gods of old. By their power make me bold. Heed thee now my call!

(The roars of ancient beasts call across the clearing)

Heaven high and caverns deep. Castle, ruins, broken keep. Ancient power I now reap. Heed thee now my call.

(The air sizzles with power and Grael's voice steadily gains an echo)

All that was and may yet be. All I know and can not see. Desperate words now set I free. Heed thee now my call!

(All the noise reaches a climax and then it quickly fizzles out leaving only the sounds of a peaceful clearing touched with rain.)



On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

Grael: You who walk the woods at night. You with vision more than sight-

(‘Tales of The Echowood’ Theme Fades In. It is a haunting melody sung by a high voice.)

You who may set worlds to right, heed thee now my call.

Trevor Van Winkle (TVW): Homestead On The Corner presents, Tales of The Echowood. A 10-part fantasy miniseries from the creators of The Sheridan Tapes. Staring: Sam Tayle as Grael with original music by Jesse Hagen. Help us bring this project to life and get great rewards by supporting our kickstarter at EchowoodPod. com. Episode one premieres August 2021 on all podcasting platforms. Follow us at EchowoodPod on Twitter and Instagram for news and updates and visit EchowoodPod.com for more information and additional content. I’m Trevor Van Winkle, this is Homestead On The Corner, and you’re listening to *Tales of The Echowood*.

‘Tales Of The Echowood’ Trailer Fades Out

JMS: Trevor Van Winkle has been telling stories for as long as he can remember. Raised in southern Oregon, he was instilled with a love of books, film, and music from a young age, producing short films with his friends and family members throughout middle and high school before attending Biola University, where he majored in Cinema and Media Arts with an Emphasis in Production. Shortly after graduation, he moved to Mammoth Lakes, CA and self-published his first novel, *The Gräzland Tales*, then began producing *Homestead on the Corner* in 2019 with the help of actors from the local theatre community. Following the beginning of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, he created the spinoff series *The Sheridan Tapes* largely as a way to keep himself and the other members of the Homestead team busy during lockdown. Trevor Vanwinkle has been telling stories for as long as he can remember raised in Southern Oregon. Hey there Trevor. It's wonderful to talk to you. How are you?

TVW: I'm doing well. Thanks, Jade. How are you?



On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

JMS: I'm also doing quite well. Yeah. So, I'm just going to hop into this with the first question that I ask everybody that comes on this show: where are you from and where are your roots?

TVW: Yeah, I think it's kinda the same answer for both questions. Um, pretty much born and raised here in, uh, Medford, Oregon, uh, Southern Oregon area. Kind of was a smaller town for a while, has definitely grown in the, you know, decades since. And currently I'm back there, you know, was living in Mammoth Lakes for a while working in the local theater community. Um, but obviously that was heavily impacted by COVID and I ended up moving back here just for a little while to kind of, you know, get my feet back under me and keep doing what I'm doing with the podcast.

JMS: Mhmm, and could you just sort of explain to me and my audience, what exactly it is that you do when it comes to podcasting?

TVW: Yeah. I'm an independent writer, creator, producer...My first show was a show called Homestead on the Corner, which was sort of a mix of writing lessons and standalone interconnected, short stories that I kind of did as a way to kind of test the waters with audio drama and fiction. See what I liked there. And then, uh, when the pandemic started. I couldn't really bring people into my, you know, recording studio, which was just my apartment, um, safely at that time. So we switched the format up, went to an ongoing serialized story. Um, that was more of a found footage style so everyone could record in their own homes over zoom and [be] safe that way. And, uh, yeah, that was the show called the *Sheridan Tapes*, which is now just wrapped up its second season. Um, has been a huge success. I'm so happy with how it's turned out and the reception its had, and we're currently launching a new show called Tales of the Echowood on Kickstarter. And by the time this comes out, this should, it should be, uh, into the first couple of episodes released of that. So, really excited for it.

JMS: Okay. So you said a lot right there and we're going-



On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

TVW: Yes, I know.

JMS: And we're going to get into much of the different stuff that you just said.

(Jade Laughs)

Okay. So let's start with, like, the first big thing that stood out to me. So, what exactly spurred you to start your own production company? Cause like that's a big step. So, what made you think this is what I want to do and once you decided that, how did you go about creating it business wise?

TVW: Basically when I was in middle and high school, like I said, in my bio, I made a whole bunch of short films and film projects with my friends and, you know, family members, uh, in college, I did productions as, you know, a film student. That's something I've always kind of loved to do, the creative production side along with the writing. Towards the end of college. I started writing my first book, the *Grazeland Tales*, um, self published that. Learned a lot from that experience. I'm proud of how it turned out, but it wasn't exactly what I, you know, love to do necessarily. Um, It didn't turn out quite the way I wanted it to in the end. Um, but that kind of spurred me to be like, I want to get back into the creative production side.

I've made all these connections with actors in the local theater community, with a whole bunch of people I really enjoy working with, and around that same time, um, one of my best friends, uh, Amitola Lomas who plays Maria Sol on the *Sheridan Tapes* and a whole bunch of other roles, um, in *Homestead on the Corner*, uh, she introduced me to first off, *The Bridge*, which is an independent podcast run by Alex Brown and Rebecca Mahoney. Uh, and then *Wolf 359*, which everyone knows [is] Gabriel Urbina's space epic, basically. Um, I kind of fell in love with the medium through those shows and a whole bunch of other ones I listened to around that same time.

On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

TVW: So, I was really excited about the medium. Really excited about how open and accessible it was and how...the kinds of stories you could tell with basically no budget, if you were willing to put the time into getting the good performances, building the soundscapes, you know, just doing solid production work, which was a skillset I'd already developed through my film production work. So, it was kind of mashing those two together, the writing side and the production side in a way that gave me a lot of creative freedom that you don't necessarily get when doing, like, independent short films. You know, you can do bigger things now with the technology available, but it's still limited by, you know, I am not made of money. I can't, you know, build gigantic sets and vast sprawling worlds and kind of tell the stories I want to tell in a visual medium, but through audio it's a lot easier to do that, a lot less expensive to build those worlds, and you're able to use the same kind of relying on the audience's imagination that you do have in, um, writing prose, but having an, a creative production that you can hear and experience in real time. So, yeah, that's kind of how that started.

And then from a business side, it kind of became a business by accident. Um, I was doing it kind of for fun, doing it as kind of a way to creatively tell stories with my friends. And then it's like, okay, people are liking this, let's start a Patreon and see how that goes. You know, let's start reaching out to advertisers.

Um, it's still very kind of, in terms of the business side, it is very much kind of, it's just a sole proprietor proprietorship kind of, you know, independent, um, you know, self-employed type thing, but, um, that's kind of how that started and we've slowly amassed support through that and I do want to turn this into my full time...well, in terms of hours, it kind of is my full-time job, even though it doesn't pay like one quite yet.

(Jade Laughs)



On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

TVW: Um, which, you know, I'm sure every, anyone involved in creative production understands that-

JMS: Yeah.

TVW: But it is growing. We are, you know, getting advertisers now. We switched platforms over to Acast for the Sheridan Tapes, um, which has had a lot more support than our original platform. And so, yeah, we're, we're building it, trying to get it to the point where it can support itself. And we're pretty close to that point. The Kickstarter is really supposed to help with getting there for at least, uh, Tales of the Echoood, and, you know, our future projects potentially.

JMS: And to just sort of continue down on this business, this business vein, I'm going to get to two things. I'm going to get to your Patreon strategy, but we're going to start with the Kickstarter for Tales of the Echoood, because that's going on as we're recording right now, it'll be over by the time this episode comes out though. But when it comes to that kick-starting process, well, you're trying to raise, if I remember correctly, \$3,000 for your show. One-

TVW: Yeah.

JMS: How did you determine that that was the number that you needed to, to create your show and then two: how did you and the, and the team sort of go about creating this Kickstarter and what methods do you take to promote it? Cause you're almost there you're at 70% from last I saw.

TVW: Yeah. Yeah. We're, we're, we're getting close, you know, it definitely has slowed down since the first week, but that's just the way Kickstarter generally goes. So, yeah. Um, that number was reached...we basically built out a whole variable budget at all kinds of different levels to what we could do if we raised certain amounts of money and where would be kind of our ideal zones to, you know, to make this thing happen.



On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

TVW: Um, a lot of that was based on the, um, payment for our amazing composer, Jesse Haugen, who's done a lot of the music for our Homestead On The Corner and all the music for the Sheridan Tapes. He's a full-on professional composer for film, television and internet projects down in LA. So, he is very much a professional professional in this field. So, you know, he's the one who generally gets paid the most out of our team. Um, but he absolutely deserves it because his music makes the show in every case.

JMS: Mhmm.

TVW: But a lot of that was based on, “okay, he sent us a full list of ‘this, this is what I can do for this amount of money, this amount of money, this amount of money and this amount of money.’” And we kind of laid that out on a spreadsheet, along with what we want to pay our actors and what we want to pay, you know, our crew and you know, what additional fees we would have for hiring live musicians, for getting, you know, stock sound effects and things like that. We'd need to raise the production value and kind of got it like three or four main levels, right? This is where we can kind of....you know, that \$3,000 is where we can do this without just paying for it out of our own pocket. And actually, you know, giving people, you know a decent payment for their work. Here's where it's kind of Goldilocks zone where it's like, we can do a whole bunch of really exciting things. Here's where we can pay everyone totally what they should be paid, which is a very high number, which is one of our stretch goals.

JMS: Mhmm.

TVW: But we built that out and then set it at kind of that lowest goal, just because, you know, Kickstarter is all or nothing. We didn't want to set it too high and then, you know, get up to that \$3,000 level and realize, oh, we can't actually make the show now. Um, cause we didn't hit our final goal. Just because it's our first time doing a Kickstarter, it's kind of, you know, untested waters for us. So, we just set it at that lower level and then have the stretch goals to hopefully push on past that in the final stretch and hopefully get some exciting things going with that.

On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

TVW: Um, you know, we attach those stretch goals to some bonus episode type things, um, that we'd be able to do if we reach them. Uh, and then in terms of developing the rewards and, you know, how we would promote it. Um, I did a lot of that work with my co-producer, um, Virginia Spotts.

JMS: Mhmm.

TVW: Uh, she did a lot of research into other successful Kickstarter campaigns. Uh, the main one we kept coming back to is the Kickstarter for Unseen. Um, just because it's in a similar vein, um, same kind of genre and not entirely, but similar genre, we kind of compared what we were doing to what they were, you know, producing and, you know, the way they ran their Kickstarter and promoted it. Cause they had massive success with that, as well as other Kickstarters and just kind of general advice from Kickstarter support and, you know, people who run those all the time. Um, and yeah, just kind of built it out from there. Kind of by going back and forth through a couple of iterations, and you know, finally launching it.

JMS: Okay. That's very interesting....and, so that's one part of the, of the scenario, cause that's just Tales of [the] Echowood, but you guys also have a Patreon which is relatively successful. You have 76 patrons, you bring in \$281 a month. Like it's, it's, it's bringing in funding. So I wonder how did you go about building that Patreon community and, and making that-

TVW: I-

JMS: Yeah, go ahead.

TVW: Like our main thing is basically we don't have different tiers of our Patreon....You could pay what you want for it, um, to join in on the community and you get everything that's available on there.

On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

TVW: Um, we tried to keep that as open as possible because we know a lot of our listeners are, you know, are young and, you know, they don't have a whole bunch of disposable income to throw around, to support creative projects. But if we leave it open at the \$1, the \$5 a month level to get, you know, everything that they want, then yeah they'll be able to contribute. They'll want to contribute. Um, So I think that was a big key to getting that many patrons, um, supporting us. Additionally, it was, you know, a matter of creating value for the Patreon so it's not just, you know, chucking money in and not getting anything out of it.

We do, you know, every, all of our episodes go up at least 24 hours early, uh, on the Patreon feed for, you know, the people who are really passionate about the story and want to get, you know, access to the episodes. First, that's kind of the big draw. We do a kind of a weekly behind the scenes podcast with myself and Virginia, just talking through the episodes: what we were excited about in it, kind of how the writing process went, kind of a, you know, like a weekly behind the scenes sort of feature for every episode, as well as kind of a, a look into how the creative production lifestyle works for us and, you know, what's coming up next kind of as a way to engage with people directly.

We also do, um, live streams on there, you know, kind of AMA live, listen party type things. We try not to burn ourselves out by, you know, [putting] out things, you know, every single day on Patreon, which is kind of what I tried at the start.

And that was just too much on top of everything else I was doing, but we do try to make sure we are providing value and making sure that's a thing that people will want to contribute to, um, in a way that feels, you know, good for us and, you know, gives people, uh, enough incentive to support the show beyond just the desire to see the show keep coming out every week.

JMS: And I actually want to talk to you about those live listening parties, because I thought that was a really interesting and novel idea. How did you and Virginia come up with that? And like, how do you go about creating those and making them engaging for the audience?



On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

TVW: Yeah, I'm trying to remember where the idea initially came from, because it feels like we've been doing them sort of forever. I think it initially started kind of during our, um, hiatus period between seasons one and two, we were trying to think of ways to keep people engaged. We'd been doing like basic AMA live streams, just me on camera, answering questions about the show to people who, you know, logged on, um, which was, you know, reasonably engaging.

Um, and then we're kind of like, okay, we're getting into...we're not releasing any episodes currently, what can we do on these live streams? And I think, I think it was Virginia who had the idea of what if we did like, uh, listened to these together kind of thing, like a communal listening experience that's followed up by a, you know, Q and A period. Um, so people can interact with one another, comment on the episode in real-time in the chat, and, you know, kind of have that fun of, like, watching a movie together, except with listening to a podcast together. And then bring them all back together for questions and answers at the end. I think that's kind of how that got started.

Yeah. And then in terms of making that work, it's, you know, relatively simple and low key, it's just, we create video versions of the episodes we're going to listen to just with the basic after effects template, um, I have built for that. And then I just use, um, OBS (open broadcast software) to stream it onto my YouTube channel as an unlisted, uh, live stream

And share it out on Patreon and yeah, just make sure we promote it beforehand through both. You know, our Patreon feed and through our social media on Twitter, Instagram, um, just to make sure people are aware of it and we'll, you know, log in. When it's going. So, we aren't just talking to one or two people, you know, it's, you know, we bring as much of the community into the live stream as possible. Um, again, trying to create that sense of community and connection between us, the creators and the people who listen.

On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

JMS: And I just have one more business question and I promise we'll get onto other things. I'm just curious.

TVW (Laughing): Okay.

JMS: Um, so you also have advertisers,

(Jade Laughs)

You also have advertisers. And so I'm just interested to know, like, when did you know that pursuing advertisers was the right step for you and your team? And then what was the process like for getting your advertiser and then how do you maintain those relationships?

TVW: We wanted to get advertising on the show for quite a while. Um, just because, because the show is so complicated and takes so much time out of our daily lives to make it happen, we pay our actors, we pay our composer, we pay for hosting and web services. It can get quite expensive and you know, the Patreon really, really does help to cover those kinds of hard expenses, but we needed it to grow beyond what a Patreon, you know, could supply reasonably. And so we worked for a while trying to get our own advertisers and build our own relationships with them. Um, we were a platform called Podbean originally, which worked reasonably well up to a point. And then kind of once the Sheridan Tapes began to grow, we started having technical issues with them, um, in terms of, you know, server capacity. I don't think they had quite the technology that was needed for the number of requests they were getting for downloads on the Sheridan Tapes. Um, and we start experiencing slowdowns and people not being able to download episodes.

Um, so about the same time both of those were happening, Acast Open became available to, you know, anyone to sign up. We had seen, you know, other podcast networks, namely the Rusty Quill Network, having a lot of success with, um, advertisement and developing their own shows on that platform. So, during our second kind of mid-season break, we moved the podcast over to that platform and signed up for their advertising program, which...it works a bit differently than it does when you're approaching specific advertisers.

On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

TVW: Acast has a whole team working to build relationships with advertisers and kind of across their entire network, um, apply ads that are relevant to the shows based on their demographics, based on the type of show it is. Um, and so we've been working with them for the past couple of months now, and they kind of handle the advertising side, which is honestly really great for us. Neither myself, nor Virginia are really “business people”. We tried, you know, approaching advertisers directly, Virginia tried to take that role over and it kind of just made her miserable.

JMS: Mhmm.

TVW: And so we've been working with Acast in order to have them kind of handle that side of it. The ads aren't as tailored as maybe we would want them to be, but it is working and we are now....we have a source of passive income off of that, um, which is really going to help us keep the show going and, you know, pay all of our people and make it feasible financially for all of us to continue to putting all the time energy we are into production. So, yeah, that's kind of how we reached that point with, uh, advertisement.

JMS: Okay. Thank you for sharing that. Um, I never know what to say when I do these transitions. Anyway, we're going to switch gears.

TVW (Lighthearted): Yep, just switching gears

JMS: Just switching gears, we're going to go into your work with the Sheridan tapes, which is, as of now, like, sort of the creme de la creme of, like, cool podcasts that came out doing COVID. I mean, it's already reached half a million downloads. Like it's a, it's a big deal. So, I just want to, like, straight up. What was the writing process like for the show? Cause, like, the writing really stands out as being like, like when you initially listen to season one, it's like “oh, this is intricate. I'm interested to how it goes all together.” And then like, by the end of season one, like it's all clashing together.



On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

JMS: And then season two, it just continues to like, be like this sort of great cacophony of like plots and characters. And so I just want to know, like how was it writing something that was like that complex and that built it up in such a way?

TVW: Well, basically the writing process started with quite a lot of experimentation, um, basically right before the COVID pandemic started and everything locked down, um, I was on vacation with my family and we kind of got the news that, okay, this is bad. We're locking down. We, you need to come home and I kind of realized just how much would be shifting and changing as a result of that. So, I kind of started racking my brain for “okay, if we can't bring people into the studio, if we can't keep doing the short stories we've been doing, if we have to change the format and try something different, um, what would that be and how can we make that work?”

And I landed on the idea of a found audio podcast as a way to kind of preserve the level of production value we had while, you know, maybe not having as much control over the recording conditions and technology of our actors. I have been really interested in doing a long form, uh, kind of ongoing series with a lot of characters and a lot of intricate plot lines for a while now. Actually we kind of tried to develop one with, um, again, Amitola Lomas and then another artist, um, who we used to work with on Homestead On The Corner. Unfortunately, that kind of fell apart. We all got a little bit too busy before it could actually, you know, come to fruition, but that kind of desire to do more of a serialized story was still stuck in my head.

I'd also been developing ideas about some of the characters we've featured in some of those short stories. Mostly, um, the writer and a Sheridan, who we introduced in a little standalone horror story called Disquiet (first season of Homestead On The Corner). I had kind of developed like a, a mini series idea for, you know, kind of the ongoing adventures of Anna Sheridan. Um, you know, there would have her facing off against all kinds of strange and supernatural threats and-

On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

JMS: Oh, that makes sense!

TVW: Yeah. Yeah. That was kind of focused specifically on her and just had that, but it just didn't have that structural hook to it that, um, I kind need to get into a story to, you know, write it, especially for a long form story.

JMS: Mhmm.

TVW: And then kind of like, as I was thinking this through and kind of listening to my old stories, just kind of as a refresher, um, I hit upon the idea of combining her story with the story of Sam Bailey, who was another character we introduced in a standalone kind of piece, and then I kind of hit on this idea of what if Anna's missing and this detective character is searching for her and going through kind of her old records of her experiences with the supernatural. And then I had kind of a structural way into the story that I really liked.

Um, I began writing a whole bunch of kind of experimental scripts, just trying out different ideas that I thought might be interesting. I wrote basically the first seven episodes kind of in a white heat of inspiration. Most of them like on the way back from that trip, like when I was in the back of the car, just driving.

Kind of at that point, that's when I slowed down to like, okay, I like where this is going. I've approached all the actors and all the people I want to be a part of this, and they've all said, yes, this sounds really fun. I now need to kind of step back and look at this thing as a whole and figure out where it's going. That took a little while to figure out, figure out kind of what the ultimate direction of this series would be. In fact, you know, the big thing I didn't figure out for a while is “what's the answer to the mystery?”

(Jade Laughs)

Which I know you're never supposed to do when writing mystery stories, but that took a while to hit upon.

On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

TVW: Um, and I obviously, I can't talk about that yet because we're only in the second season, but yeah, it's, that took a little while and then kind of figuring out the structural format of it. Eventually I had a couple of breakthroughs. It's like, "oh, okay, this is going to lead to this and this and this." And it really was, like for that first season, very organic and kind of laying the track down as the train was racing down the hill, but I was really proud of how it came together in the end.

There were, you know, a lot of plot ideas like who Sam Bailey was? What his history was. You know, I had a lot of those ideas in place before, but they, you know, morphed and evolved the roles of these other characters in the story definitely grew from what I kind of initially conceived of them as, as the actors came in and brought them to life and brought new elements. And yeah it kind of grew and evolved from there.

An episode that really kind of solidified what kind of series this was going to be though, was the first episode I wrote after that kind of initial run of, you know, those experimental scripts was over, which was episode eight, which I can't now I can't remember the title of, cause I named them quite obtusely-

JMS: That Still Hour.

TVW: Yeah. That Still Hour, yes. That was the one that really kind of solidified,, "okay, this is the kind of horror story we're telling. This is the kind of emotional tone we're going for." And then everything kind of evolved out of that. New characters were introduced, new ideas came in, um, new layers and complexities came in, but yeah, I was really, really proud as well of how that, you know, first season came together. Like [it] starts out with all these kinds of strange, not really connected at all stories, that, you know, are kind of out there and then they slowly all interconnect and then pull down and into this climax. I was really, really happy with how it turned out.

On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

TVW: And then in terms of writing season two, that one was much more planned. My co-writer and co-producer Virginia Spotts came in at the start of the second season and we spent quite a lot of time hammering out our structure and figuring out what's this part of the story going to be about, how are we going to tell it, how are we going to structure it? You know, we had a full on, you know, episode by episode breakdown of how the whole thing was going to go before we started writing anything, which is something I definitely did not have for season one-

(Jade Laughs)

But we kind of needed it because we were two people working on the same story with our own ideas and we had to have something to keep us kind of attached to that centerline of the story. So that was really, really helpful and a lot of changes were made between seasons two and one.

JMS: Um, in terms of structure, you know, focusing more on the different characters and having a whole bunch of parallel plot lines that kind of slowly intertwined, um, again kind of a, not the same structure, but similar idea in terms of starting out with kind of standalone stories that slowly coalesce into something bigger, which is really, uh, that's, that's how I like to write stories, honestly. I really do enjoy kind of weird structures and, you know, a feeling of things kind of slowly coming together and being pieced together from a whole bunch of things that didn't seem to have any connections at the beginning.

JMS: Mhmm.

TVW: So yeah, that's kind of how the writing process went between the first two seasons.

JMS: Hmm. And that's interesting because, like, one thing that stood out to me when I was listening to the show was definitely the fact that it did kind of go “monster of the week” in the beginning, and then it sort of spiraled into like, the monster is here and like, this is what's and this is what's going on, but not even quite like a complete revelation, but I want to talk about something that I heard you mention. You said that you're only on season two, how many seasons do you have planned out for the show?

On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

TVW: It's planned for a four season run of exactly 100 episodes. I like series that end on a neat round number and that's kind of, yeah, that's how we're planning it. And we have kind of a very loose outline for seasons three and four that will bring us to the final, you know, series conclusion. But....so we're now at the halfway point, basically in the story with episode 50.

JMS: Okay. And I want to also talk about....like two, two more things...three more things [that] deal with this. So, first things first, the show sounds really good. From the underscoring to like the actual recording of it, the editing is particularly, uh, particularly stand out. Like, what is the post-production process for this? How long does it take? Like, what are the typical tools that you use for these things? Like what's that process like?

TVW: Yeah. Thank you for saying that cause, you know, I'm the editor on this show-

JMS: Mhmm.

TVW: And I do try to make it sound as professional as possible because I'm a bit of a perfectionist, um-

(Trevor and Jade Chuckle)

So production wise, everyone is recording in their own homes, uh, over a zoom call when we can. So everyones, you know, at least seeing and hearing one another, so we can act and react off one another and get kind of the best performances we can. Most of us are using fairly inexpensive USB microphones. Most of them are using a blue snowball, which is kind of, I bought a whole bunch of those at the start of my production just cause they were cheap, but they got good sound quality and, you know, we could get them to people easily.

Again, we record over zoom as live, basically, um, to try and get, you know, connections between actors and characters as strong as we can in real time. Everyone kind of records independently on their end, just to make sure we have the best audio quality we can get off of everyone's machines just because I'm recording off of zoom or something.



On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

TVW: So then they send all those recordings in; generally through Google Drive or WeTransfer. Uh, I then assemble those recordings, sync them up, clean up, any background noise, cut out the whites, you know, kind of the empty space around their lines and get it all into kind of a sequence in Adobe Audition, which is the main tool I use.

I have a step that's either called the pre edit or the sort-clean-and-organize, which is just bringing everything together into a sequence that has all the different scenes and takes labeled. So, I can find them easily. Um, everything is, you know, synchronized and lined up, um, pretty close to what it will be in the final edit.

And then I go through there, find the best takes, bring them into a final mix sequence. Uh, and generally build a kind of a mix that's just the dialogue and just the music just to kind of get the timing and the feel of it right. I take that kind of listen to it on its own.

Uh, make any tweaks I need from there, then go into the soundscaping and foley and sound design stage of it and build up kind of the world behind that and any specific kind of action we need, um, in the sound design to make the story work. Any supernatural elements, um, you know, building up from a library of sound effects that I've built over time through, you know, either buying stock sounds or packs of sounds off of things like HumbleBundle and things like that. Uh, most of our sounds do come off of FreeSounds.org, cause there's a lot of great stuff on there. You know, you do have to sift through quite a lot of it, but, you know, that's where we built up most of our sound effect library from.

And then the music is composed by our main, like I said, absolutely incredible composer, Jesse Haagen. Uh, he basically does kind of a stock music approach for this series where he writes, you know, in kind of blocks of about five to six different cues for different things that we need, um, usually kind of specific functional or emotional moments or, you know, for this series, we did, uh, character specific cues.

On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

TVW: I kind of go through there, take the bits of those, um, cues that, you know, I need for specific scenes, lay them together kind of sometimes splice and loop them to get around, to make them work for the specific scenes. But yeah, that's kind of how we run our post production process on the episodes. And it kind of has to take no more than a week because of how we've set up our schedule and usually how tight our turnarounds end up being.

Yeah. That's, that's generally about the timeframe. Uh, this season at least we were not recording and editing week by week, we recorded in bigger blocks of about four to seven episodes each. Um, just getting it all done at once and then editing, you know, after the fact. Like we wrapped up recording for the final couple of episodes...God about two months ago, I think, roughly speaking? But keeping it in blocks and, you know, because of how we structured it, because this season was, you know, a whole bunch of, kind of...these individual character's arcs, we could record a whole bunch of episodes, you know, kind of all at the same time without burning out any one of our actors cause you know, they just kind of had to record their main episodes and then a couple of lines for a few other ones.

JMS: Mhmm.

TVW: So, they only kind of had to, you know, record one, maybe two episodes per block. Um, while we were getting, you know, four to six done at the same time in terms of getting recordings in the can.

JMS: So that seems like a very time-intensive and laborious process. Like it takes, it takes a lot. And again, like back to the other show that you're now working on Tales Of The Echwood, I just have a question like, how are you planning to sort of balance the amount of time it takes for the Sheridan Tapes and presumably also for Echwood since they're created by the same team?

On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

TVW: You know, Echowood is kind of created specifically to fill the hiatus between seasons two and three, cause we're gonna be taking, uh, you know, a much longer break between seasons than we did, um, between seasons one and two, just because our team really kind of needs it. We need a little bit more time to develop the story for season three, but we didn't want to go completely radio silent. And this was kind of an idea for a series I wanted to do for a while, but in order to make that possible, we've decided to kind of scale back the intensity of the production process.

It's going to primarily be a one actor storyteller show, um, with a few other voices coming in here and there, but a much simpler style, kind of, much more kind of scaled back to what, you know, kind of the Sheridan Tapes was at the beginning of season one, where it was a much simpler production while still kind of maintaining that level of, you know, production value and depth to the storytelling.

Because it's scaled back to primarily one actor and we're doing a every other week release schedule instead of, you know, every single week that will make a lot of difference in terms of how heavy the workload is. And at the same time, we'll be able to start work on the writing and kind of pre-production process for the Sheridan Tapes: Season Three.

You know, it's kind of a slower pace to start with, but as we can wrap things up for, you know, Tales of The Echowood, picking that up towards kind of the end of the year and getting started on our writing process again for, uh, you know, the next season.

JMS: Hmm. And could you just sort of talk to me and the audience about what exactly Echowood is about?

TVW: Yeah. So it's a storytelling fantasy anthology. It's set in the same universe as the Sheridan Tapes, but in kind of this different pocket of it.

On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

TVW: And just so people are aware, that original podcast I've talked about, Homestead On The Corner, you know, it had a whole bunch of different stories that were all different genres and different styles, but it was all set in a shared universe, which is also shared with, you know, the Sheridan Tapes. So there's this kind of strange interconnected world with all these different sides to it, and one side of it is from a story called Return To The Echowood, um, which is kind of a psychological fairy tale fantasy type, uh, story that we told in season one, um, that featured Sam Taylor as a character named Grail, who was kind of this immortal trickster fairy Sprite type character who had basically with a, another character in the series created this strange fantasy kind of parallel world called the Echowood that was sort of a reflection of both of their minds and both of their kind of ideas.

There's a lot in there that kind of comes into Tales of The Echowood. But now, basically this is after that story. Grail is at this point kind of alone in the Echowood living in this, you know, isolated inn at kind of the edge of the world and this traveler from our world wanders into that inn and is very confused about where they are.

Um, they've kind of just appeared in this fairy tale world and have no idea where they are and so Grail takes it upon themselves to tell the stranger what they need to know about the Echowood in order to survive and figure it out and figure out why they're there. And so it's kind of this mix, again, it kind of a mix of, you know, a mystery behind what's going on in this world and, uh, an ongoing kind of, you know, fantastical story with all these different, um, standalone narratives that, you know, slowly weave together again. Yeah, that's kind of what the series is about. And I can't get into a whole lot without spoiling things-

JMS: Oh, of course. Of course.

TVW: It has a lot of very, very interesting elements that I'm super excited to bring to life on that one, and I'm just really excited about the crew we have for this one cause it's, uh, Sam Taylor, who plays Dr. Ren Park on The Sheridan Tapes, phenomenal actor, uh, amazing guy.



On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

TVW: And then, uh, Jesse Haagen will be doing a much bigger and much more ambitious score for this one. I'm just really excited to kind of cut him loose on this series.

JMS: Echwood has a, and correct me if I'm wrong, it has a 10 episode run, no?

TVW: That's correct. Yeah. And currently planned is kind of a one one-off one season kind of limited series type thing.

JMS: Well, you sounded so excited describing it. Do you have any intentions of possibly expanding it in the future? Especially since it takes place in the same world as the Sheridan Tapes?

TVW: I have thought about that. Um, because of the way it will be structured, it's going to be kind of an anthology of anthologies. If that happens, it'll be, you know, the next season would be with a different storyteller and a different character in the Echwood. But currently, you know, we're kind of holding back on that. It is one of our stretch goals. If we hit kind of our, you know, if we hit our highest level of funding, then we'll begin work on developing a second season. But right now I'm kind of treating it as its own kind of standalone thing that could continue if, you know, we had a really compelling idea or if there was a high demand for it, but right now I'm kind of treating it as like its own story with a beginning, middle and end that will take place in those 10 episodes. Which, you know, I love serialized storytelling, but I do also like shorter form, things like that, that are, you know, kind of self encapsulated and yeah, a little bit shorter runtime.

JMS: Alright, I'm going to go back to like a Homestead On The Corner as a general thing because it's not just audio dramas, you're also a small press publishing company and a book of yours Selkie, is actually coming out August 1st, 2021st, no?

On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

TVW: Well, uh, that was an initial plan at the beginning of the year, but then season two happened and it was much bigger and much more complicated than any of us anticipated, even though we were expecting it to be difficult. I personally did not have time to work on that.

You know, the first draft is still done. It's still sitting there. Um, and I did some like initial work for like how I would gonna restructure it for that publishing draft, but, unless I get a whole lot more time, um, somehow in the next couple of months, it's probably not going to end up coming out this year. Uh, we haven't announced officially that that's, you know, kind of been canceled or postponed, but that was yeah kind of a plan for the beginning of the year. Um, that kind of had to be kind of pushed to the back burner because of, um, everything else we were working on.

We had a very, we had a very ambitious plan at the start of the year, and then life happened, um, as it tends to. Um, so-

JMS: Oh, then that brings up a general question. Like, how do you deal with those changes? Because I also am an ambitious, ambitious person as well. And I know sometimes, like, navigating changes can be kind of difficult. So, like, how did you go about navigating changes in the larger plan of your production company?

TVW: Yeah, that...it's difficult for me, um, to kind of let things go. It's definitely getting easier, um, just because I've kind of realized as I'm, you know, I'm still not terribly old, but I am definitely older than I was. Um, my body will tell me much, much sooner than it did before, when I'm pushing myself to the point of burnout and trying to be too many things to too many people.

JMS: Mhmm.

TVW: So, it's gotten a little bit easier to say now “okay. I need to, you know, I've, I've, you know, worked through these things.

On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

TVW: A lot of this came from, you know, Virginia's encouragement and kind of, you know, helping me through these things. So she's been through all of these same cycles that I have that, you know, these are deadlines and goals you've kind of set for yourself. It's okay if you have to step back from them for a little bit, in order to focus on something better or more important, um, and, you know, still putting in the work, still doing the things you've said you will do, um, you know, the important parts of the big things is making sure you're doing those well, but it's kind of in the realization that if I try and push for, you know, trying to do 10 things in a year, I can only give each of those, you know, 10% of my, you know, energy at most, um, without, you know, the other suffering.

So kind of learning to scale back my ambition a little bit, but still making sure I'm, you know, I'm doing good work. I am making sure what needs to be done is done and making sure I'm actually able to enjoy what I'm doing has been kind of the way I've been able to balance some of those things that would have really disappointed and kind of thrown me for a loop in the past.

JMS: Okay. Alright, Uh, oh, I had one more question. I just wanted to ask you, cause it was a, it's a bit of a milestone. So in June of 2021, the Sheridan Tapes reached half a million downloads. And I mean, that's, that's crazy. That's a lot of people, that's so many people.

(Jade and Trevor Laugh)

And, especially since you guys launched in like April of 2020, like that's so many people and I wanted to ask you, uh, what does, what does that milestone mean to you and does it at all affect like how you come at your, how you come at your work?

TVW: Um, yeah. I mean, it obviously means a lot to me. Um, like a lot of creative writing people, um, I've spent a long time working on projects that I, you know, poured my heart and soul into, um, and had about three people read. Knowing that there's an audience that's this big and this excited and this passionate about the story I'm telling that is a huge encouragement.

On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

TVW: You know, with how much work you put into things like this and how frustrating and aggravating it can be at times it's easy to think like, am I actually doing the right thing? Is this even worth the trouble of doing it? You know, is it worth all these long hours I'm putting in? But you know, knowing that there are these many people who are excitedly waiting for the next chapter who, you know, loved the series, love the characters, love the work that we do. Um, that's just really encouraged me to push past, you know, points where I might've otherwise, you know, been like “this is getting too hard, I'm going to just move on to the next project.”

So it does, it, it means the world to me that there, you know, that, you know, there've been half a million listens to this show over the course of basically a year and a half. And you know, our amazing audience and all the people who do fan art and fan fiction, and just expand this world and share in the story we're telling, um, that absolutely...I, I never...I always hoped I would tell a story like this, but it's yeah, it's absolutely mind boggling to think that that many people, you know, enjoy what we do, and that really encourages us to, you know, put in the time it takes to get this right. And to, you know, make sure we're telling the right story and producing it in the right way, and yeah, just putting in our best, um, you know, day by day.

JMS: Mhmm. And like, like you mentioned, the Sheridan Tapes fandom has fan fiction and fan art and they're really engaged and they take the extra step of like being a patron and they like, um, they're really, again, like they're really engaged and excited about your show and your team's work. So, I want to know, like what kind of marketing did you do, uh, to get the show, to get the show out there like that?

TVW: That's the really weird thing, basically. None. Um, We didn't have an advertising budget. We don't have anyone on our team who's really experienced in the advertising field. The extent of the advertising I did was basically through my own personal social media channels. Just spamming out, hey, this is the show we're making, you know, you should come and listen to it. I swear. It's good. Come on, listen to this please.

On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

TVW: Um, which is what I've always been doing for my books and for my other projects, and have met with middling success because you know, my social circle is not the biggest, um-

JMS: Mhmm.

TVW: But really the way it grew, in the end, was just really organic just through, you know, people kind of stumbling onto the show by themselves, getting excited about it, sharing it with someone else who, you know, listens to it and gets excited and, you know, maybe draws a piece of fan art and, you know, gets people like, “ooh, that looks interesting. What's the show about?” And then they listen and then it just keeps growing and growing like that. And that's really been...we've, we've honestly been able to see that kind of growth happening in real time on Twitter as kind of you know, our, our super fans, you know, the ones who are, you know, the most passionate about this show, we see them like sharing it out and other people kind of being like, “should I give this a listen or like, okay, fine, you convinced me.” And then, you know, a week later they've listened to the entire thing and they're like, “oh my God, when's the next episode coming out?”

“I'm joining the Patreon.” So, that's really been how it's grown and that's the thing I'm probably most proud of is that the story didn't grow because we had a-listers in our cast or because we, you know, paid, you know, a million dollars to put ourselves on the side of a billboard. It just grew because people like the story we're telling and enough to tell other people about it.

JMS: Mhmm.

TVW: Um, and it has this draw to it that's is really compelling to, you know, people who like audio fiction and who like horror and like mystery.

On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

TVW: Um, so that's, yeah, I'm really proud of how it's kind of grown that way without, you know, necessarily being directly advertised or, you know, having a marketing strategy as such beyond just tell the best story we can, um, which is super encouraging, um, to me, at least as a writer, that what I came up with as a way to basically get us through the pandemic and tell, you know, still telling stories has grown to this level kind of just on its own strength. Um, and through the passion of the people who listened to it. So, yeah.

JMS: Yeah! Okay. So we're kind of winding down at, that's a beautiful, that's a beautiful way to like transition. So, we're kind of winding down our interview. Uh, but before we get to the very, very last question, I did want to ask, uh, what podcasts are you listening to right now that like really excite you and that you're really into?

TVW: Yeah. Yeah. Um, I've been listening to a lot of horror podcasts, obviously, cause, you know, that's a genre I really love. And what I write a lot of the times, the ones that are most exciting to me right now are a, The White Vault, which is heading into its last season, um, I believe later this year, and then, um, Old Gods of Appalachia, which also just wrapped up its second season. Um, absolutely stunning anthology series um, yeah. What else am I listening to? I mean, obviously in terms of horror, the Magnus Archives, um, was a huge inspiration for The Sheridan Tapes. Um, but that's, you know, wrapped up I'm, I'm going through my list of podcasts now to remember cause I listen to quite a few.

JMS (Laughing): Uh-huh.

TVW: Oh, uh, Apocalypse Songs, um, it's a really short, like five episode mini-series, um, from...one of the team members is James Cain who voiced Peter Slate in our series. Um, absolutely stunning little series. Um, I definitely recommend you check it out. Wooden Overcoats for something completely different. Absolutely love that show. And then obviously, like I mentioned before, The Bridge, Wolf 359.

On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

TVW: Um, yeah, those are some of the big ones that really inspire me and that I really enjoy listening to over and over again, just for inspiration and just for a good story, you know?

JMS: Alright, I will add them to the list. You said Wooden Overcoats and Apocalypse Songs? Those were those last, last two, right?

TVW: Yes. Yes.

JMS: Alright. To the list they go!

(Jade Laughs)

Okay.

(Trevor Laughs)

This is the last question, we've come to the official end of the interview and...I mean, like traveling, like you're doing really, again, like this podcast of yours, the Sheridan Tapes started in, uh, April of 2020. It's been a year and some change you've just finished using two you're working on season three. You have like a spinoff series coming out. Uh, your production company is doing really cool stuff. It's almost self-sufficient, which is a really big deal. Like you're clearly on your way to success on your way to greatness just on your way to, like, prosperity in general. So, I just want to know how will you know when you've made it?

TVW: Uh, I think the big mark for right now is when, what, you know, what the show makes can A. pay everyone involved. Um, and B. cover my own, you know, cost of living. Um, I can do this as a, you know, even though I'm putting the hours of full time job, I'll kind of know I've made it when I'm actually making enough to just make a living off of writing and creative production and the stuff we do with Homestead on The Corner which we're getting, I don't, I won't want, I wanna say we're getting close, but we're getting there slowly and, um, yeah, that's kind of the mark where I know that this is something I can continue to do long term. It's just the reality of, you know, a lot of podcasting production is done on, you know, people's own dime.

On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

TVW: It's done in free time and, you know, kind of as a hobby, but you know, when it requires this much time to, and, you know, energy and, you know, work to do, I think when it actually starts paying like a real job is....and I, I don't want to say real job as in know, dismissive of all the amazing work that people do. I want to say that it's in terms of just from a practical point of view-

JMS: Mhmm.

TVW: I can make a living off of doing this. That's the point where it'd be like, "yes, okay. I've made it. This is something I can keep doing," because I want to keep doing stuff like this, the rest of my life. Um, this is what I love to do, what I've always wanted to be doing. Um, and when it reaches that point, that's I think when it will feel like, "yeah, we've made it."

JMS: All right. Sustainability is a very worthy goal. Okay.

TVW: Yeah.

JMS: Okay, so can you tell the people where they can find you. And your work?

TVW: Yep. Um, for myself, I'm on Twitter and Instagram at Trevor_VW. The Sheridan Tapes is, uh, @SheridanTapes on Twitter and @TheSheridanTapes on Instagram, uh, you can find all of our social media links and all of our shows at homesteadonthecorner.com, uh, and also at thesheridantapes.com is where you can find stuff specifically for the Sheridan Tapes. Um, besides that you can find Homestead On The Corner, The Sheridan Tapes, and Tales Of The Echo Woods on all podcasting platforms, wherever you listen to your stuff, and, um, yeah, I think that's, that's about it!

‘On Their Way’ Theme Fades In



On Their Way Show Notes & Transcript:

Episode 301: Trevor Van Winkle (Or How To Make Hit Found Footage Audio Drama)

JMS: You have just finished listening to the season premiere of On Their Way Season 3. 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, wgcpredictions.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 Jon Evans, who is the creator of the stellar Welsh Post-Apocalyptic Cozy Murder Mystery Series, Gather The Suspects. As always I appreciate you for listening, and please take care of yourself and take care of each other.