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SPEAKERS

Gregory, Melissa Avery-Weir



Gregory 00:21

Hello, and welcome to the Future Proof Podcast. We do this every month to talk about what we've been doing and what we're working on. I'm Gregory Avery-Weir.



Melissa Avery-Weir 00:30

and I'm Melissa Avery-Weir.



Gregory 00:32

And you Melissa ran a game for some people recently, didn't you?



Melissa Avery-Weir 00:38

I did. We talked about it a little bit last month. But we--or I wrote of and, and streamed a story called "Still Waters Run Deep" and our system Rosette Diceless. This was streamed on Twitch. I had three players. It went really well. It went really well. The sort of the final kind of in the moment setup for the stream didn't go very smoothly.



Gregory 01:09

There's always technical difficulties for that sort of thing.



Melissa Avery-Weir 01:12

Yeah, so we started late, and ran a little long, and did not finish. So the one shot has become a two shot.



Gregory 01:23

But you'll be doing a--it's not on Halloween? Is it on Halloween that you'll be doing this?



Melissa Avery-Weir 01:28

It's on the 28th. So it's it's pretty close. It's the final Sunday of October.



Gregory 01:33

Which is appropriate because it's a southern gothic horror... thing. Yep. And it turned out, it turned out well, like I, you know. I was super nervous and like, I don't know, some mixture of imposter syndrome and rustiness and a whole bunch of other things.



Melissa Avery-Weir 01:50

But yeah, I was really worried. Like, would it be interesting? Would it feel like I was forcing people to do one option, or--I don't know it's, it's whatever. It's a role playing game. I worried--



Gregory 01:59

You did great.



Melissa Avery-Weir 02:00

--I worry about all these things.



Gregory 02:01

When you run tons of stories,



Melissa Avery-Weir 02:04

Not tons. Not enough!



Gregory 02:06

You run tons.



Melissa Avery-Weir 02:09

But it was exciting. People really got into it. People understood the system well.



Gregory 02:14

Yeah.



Melissa Avery-Weir 02:14

And I think I succeeded in not having a boring rules dump of--



Gregory 02:20

I think so.



Melissa Avery-Weir 02:20

10 minutes of--



Gregory 02:21

At least on stream, I think it was, it was good.



Melissa Avery-Weir 02:24

Yeah. And even even before the stream the way I was able to kind of highlight important parts about people's characters in a way that they didn't have to just stare at their character sheet and go, "Uh, where's what?"



Gregory 02:37

Like, look at your superlative trait. That's the big fancy thing you can do.



Melissa Avery-Weir 02:41

Exactly.



Gregory 02:41

Skills are interesting.



Melissa Avery-Weir 02:43

Yeah. And it helps them think about how their character concept, you know, like, "I'm playing a cop and I have, you know, more than just being, you know, 'deductive mind' really good with clues," or whatever. They also had a couple of other traits and skills that were twists on the traditional idea of what you would think of as a cop doing so. And then there was, there were components I didn't even really think about until we were in play. And that was like, biases of my own as I laid these characters out. Like, okay, a cop from the 70s. Well, really from the 60s. And then the person was like, "Yeah, it's a woman. So let's talk about what it's like to be a woman and cop in the 60s," right? And I was like, "Oh, yeah, here we are." Yeah, so we got some, some good role playing out of that, too. So it was a ton of fun. And I'm nervous about the next half, of course, because that's me nervous. It went well.



Gregory 03:39

And if you've got a RPG stream, or know someone who has an RPG stream that you think would like a one shot or possibly two shots run for them, let us know. Hit us up at info@futureproofgames.com.



Melissa Avery-Weir 03:53

Yep.



Gregory 03:53

And we can run that one. Or we could talk about--



Melissa Avery-Weir 03:56

Thinking about something else. Yeah, and we will least link to the first half of the stream in our show notes and probably also embedded in the post. Yeah. So you've been working on something a little more futuristic.



Gregory 04:13

I have been programming an artificial intelligence. Yay! Sort of. So we've got this--we've may have mentioned it before. We have a chat bot named Lita that you-- the actual library is called Lita but ours is also named Lita.



Melissa Avery-Weir 04:30

Yeah.



Gregory 04:30

And it's just a little thing for us to be able to say like "Hey, Lita, are all our sites up?" And, "Lito, when's our next PR event?" for like sales and stuff. And we've been having some... a little bit of trouble lately, just keeping up with--we switch off eat every other day, who's in charge of like, responding if sites go down and reblogging stuff on Twitter and stuff like that. So to help with that, we thought that we'd get Lita to give us a little "Good Morning" post and say, "Good morning. Hey, so and so is on call."



Melissa Avery-Weir 05:08

Yep.



Gregory 05:08

That's--It's weird. It's a, it's... Lita is written in Ruby, which is something that I'm not particularly familiar with it all.



Melissa Avery-Weir 05:15

Me, neither. I--it was, it was a tough conversation when we picked Lita because I was like, "we don't know Ruby, like we're committing ourselves if we want to add plugins to learning enough to script up something."



Gregory 05:28

But we were also kind of like, "Yay, learning Ruby."



Melissa Avery-Weir 05:30

Sure.



Gregory 05:31

But it's, it's an interesting tech because it presents itself as an AI, like when you're actually interacting with it, it feels like you're chatting with a computer. But when I'm writing was actually just "every morning at 8am, go talk to Google Calendar and find out some information and then post it in Slack." Like it's not



Melissa Avery-Weir 05:55

Right. The hardest part is going to be interacting with Google Calendar.



Gregory 06:00

It's not even a rule system. It's just a script.



Melissa Avery-Weir 06:02

Yep. But we have a rule system for other things.



Gregory 06:05

Yeah, we've got we've got it hooked up to Dialogueflow, is that what it's called?



Melissa Avery-Weir 06:09

Dialogueflow. It can interpret when we say, when we say, "What's our next PR event?", it goes out of several things it determines we mean PR event. It means we want the next one, and kind of chews that up using some, some AI stuff that Google has written. And then once it tells us, "it means calendar stuff and give me one in the future," then, you know, we do the the work of getting calendar stuff, but--



Gregory 06:34

We wrote code to do it.



Melissa Avery-Weir 06:35

Yes.



Gregory 06:36

We were only had to do it once.



Melissa Avery-Weir 06:38

Yeah, so AI stuff is so much more modern now.



Gregory 06:44

Yeah, it used to--you, like years ago, when we first learned AI and pseudo AI stuff.



Melissa Avery-Weir 06:51

10, 11, 12 years ago.



Gregory 06:51

You didn't have this sort of, like, library and plugin stuff you could connect to. You had some very basic libraries were actual, like library as libraries. We had to compile them into some app.



Melissa Avery-Weir 07:05

And a lot of it was for image recognition stuff. Because that was really popular research at the time.



Gregory 07:11

A certain amount of natural language processing that was decently primitive compared to some of the fuzzy logic stuff that is going on now. Yeah, Microsoft and Google have really commodified that stuff. Like there's just two competing immense libraries for speech. Natural language processing is no longer a thing. If you just, if you have fewer than a few million requests a day, just do it for free through them. Yeah.



Melissa Avery-Weir 07:40

So that's, that's interesting and strange.



Gregory 07:43

So I'm looking forward to finishing that. At the moment, I think this morning, it said, "Hey, good morning. I don't know how to tell who's on call today yet."



Melissa Avery-Weir 07:51

"Maybe you should check."



Gregory 07:54

It's you know, it's weird having to deploy it to test it. But, you know, it's only internal, so.



Melissa Avery-Weir 08:00

It's, it's one of those things where as much as I love my clean DevOps worlds, in some cases, sometimes it's just, you just have to push the code and work in production.



Gregory 08:12

Yeah.



Melissa Avery-Weir 08:12

Which, yeah.



Gregory 08:14

So what about your forays into the world of cloud services?



Melissa Avery-Weir 08:22

So I don't have a ton of experience doing cloud stuff, with full-on like hosting websites on the cloud. I did some of it like five years ago, and then haven't really messed with it since. But I have free Azure money. Azure is Microsoft's cloud solution. Competitor to Amazon Web Services. AWS. Yeah, I'm, which is actually previously more familiar with Amazon. But I have like a ton of money with Azure. And so we were looking at ways we can cut some costs on sort of our monthly hosting bill. Where we have some applications that just can't be put on shared hosting.



Gregory 09:10

Yeah, we need to be able to install packages. We need to not have them get shut down if some memory goes out. You know, like, we can't have the thing that lets us know, if our sites go down on the same service as our sites are. Because of that service goes down, we won't know.



Melissa Avery-Weir 09:24

Exactly. And so we have a couple of things that cost us, you know, 10, 15, 20 bucks a month on their own as like a single site, which is for us expensive. We just aren't bringing in a ton of

money to cover that, plus all the other stuff we do. And so we took kind of one of our most expensive ones, which is actually our build server. We use Jenkins to, to automate all of our, all of the builds that we can. And so I was like, well, let's move into Azure. So I spun up a new VM--actually, okay, I found a guide on how to on how to install Azure, or how to install Jenkins in Azure.



Gregory 10:11

Which in my experience is the way you do any cloud stuff.



Melissa Avery-Weir 10:14

Sure. So it was fire up a virtual machine there, get stuff installed a certain way. And then at that point, I just moved over a backup and then struggled mightily to actually get our stuff building from it. But it probably took... I think it took five hours. Probably an hour and a half or two hours of that was fixing one problem. So the bulk of it in less than four hours. So that was not bad at all.



Gregory 10:42

Yeah, in terms of like, migrating something to a new technology... Right. That is so quick and easy.



Melissa Avery-Weir 10:48

And so that saving us money. It's running really smoothly. We now actually have the ability to scale that. Jenkins, it turns out kind of just has a plugin that's like, "Hey, you're on Azure? Okay, I'll make a new little server for you when you run a build." It's not fast, but it's, it's handy. So that's been a lot of fun. It felt satisfying, because the first time I tried this with a different site, it did not go well because I tried to use very Azure specific stuff.



Gregory 11:14

So as part of as part of Lita stuff, I ran into some resource limits on Digital Ocean. We've got a tiny little 512 megabyte box that we're using, and just, you know, installing all the gems we needed for this new feature was causing Docker to get killed due to "out of memory" issues. And so I for the first time, I think, for the first time set up a swap space.



Melissa Avery-Weir 11:40

Yeah.



Gregory 11:40

And so we've now got a gig of swap space on that box that only ever get to us when it's spinning up.



Melissa Avery-Weir 11:47

Did you ever run Linux as a desktop?



Gregory 11:49

Well, no. I've only ever used it in like servers and for development.



Melissa Avery-Weir 11:55

Yeah, yeah. So on a differently creative front, we are back to writing Headless Swarm.



Gregory 12:02

Yeah, we've talked about that Job Editor, who we were creating to help make this process much, much, much smoother.



Melissa Avery-Weir 12:08

And oh, my God, it's so much better.



Gregory 12:10

Yeah, you've been working with that half of it. I haven't seen any of the stuff you've written yet.



Melissa Avery-Weir 12:14

Oh, well, I'm working on it still.



Gregory 12:17

So this next job that we're writing, which is sort of a chunk of story in this in a season is called "Burn, burn, burn."



Melissa Avery-Weir 12:22

Yes, it is one of my favorite NPCs that I came up with. His name is KernelPop.



Gregory 12:32

Which is excellent. He is from Indiana.



Melissa Avery-Weir 12:34

Yes. He's from Indiana. Somewhat inspired by a friend of mine. Actually, rather inspired by a friend of mine.



Gregory 12:42

But he is attending a computer security conference, cyberwarfare conference, and runs into some trouble from the dastardly OnyxHorde. And the players job is to help them out.



Melissa Avery-Weir 12:55

Yeah, and one of the great things about about KernelPop is that, you know, he's in this kind of elite hacker group and has worked for the evil corporation that's involved, but he's also quite self-effacing and maybe not amazing at his job.



Gregory 13:13

He's, he's good at the things he's good at.



Melissa Avery-Weir 13:15

Yes.



Gregory 13:16

But he's a huge dork otherwise.



Melissa Avery-Weir 13:17

Absolutely. So that puts an interesting spin on someone who is, you know, kind of undercover at this at this conference.



Gregory 13:25

He is, he's not the cool stylish hacker. He is probably closer to what most gray hat hackers and activists are in real life, which is--



Melissa Avery-Weir 13:34

He's also an older character.



Gregory 13:38

Yeah.



Melissa Avery-Weir 13:38

So I don't know--probably, almost assuredly we haven't talked about this here. When we design characters for Headless Swarm, we try to make them on at least one axis, not a standard stereotype of a hacker.



Gregory 13:57

Yeah.



Melissa Avery-Weir 13:57

So we've done things with characters with multiple bodies. We done things like KernelPop,

who's, I mean, I say "older," I mean, 40s or 50s, right? Like a seasoned professional who's had a, had an extensive career. We have, of course, LGBT and, and women and, you know, like, all these sorts of things to sort of break the mold. So, so KernelPop is dorky, yes. But also kind of, closer to making a dad joke or two, than just being socially awkward.



Gregory 14:32

And so you've been doing the story and writing writing kind of emails and stuff back and forth, and I've been working on puzzles.



Melissa Avery-Weir 14:39

Which, how's that going?



Gregory 14:41

Uh boy, it's, it's, I haven't done it in a while.



Melissa Avery-Weir 14:44

Yeah, I feel really rusty on my far too. So.



Gregory 14:47

Yeah, and it's, it's fun. It's, I'm, I'm definitely hopping back into my old standby of having the puzzles kind of shaped like interesting things. Yeah. Which is something I tend to use for inspiration, like, you know, this is a thing for a convention. So you know, in in the cyberpunk world, yes. That means that all the the systems kind of resemble stuff from a conference.



Melissa Avery-Weir 15:16

Yeah, yeah.



Gregory 15:16

So I've got, you know, the line, the ticket management system looks like a line folks stand in order to get your badge and stuff like that. Just don't go that route I did with the body

camera. I don't remember.



Melissa Avery-Weir 15:30

So this was a, this was one of the early jobs in this in Headless Swarm. And you were--



Gregory 15:39

This was, this must have been "Black Echoes," right?



Melissa Avery-Weir 15:41

Yes. Yep. And so you were looking through police footage archives, police server archives to try to find the footage of how this murder occurred. And so I decided, I this was a body footage--body cam. So I did what looked like a camera eye. And it was, 1) an incredibly difficult system to play. Also an incredibly difficult system to design because it was hard to flesh



Gregory 16:07

It was just a hard shape to--



Melissa Avery-Weir 16:09

It was a hard shape to get kind of a circular thing with this, another circle in the middle. And it was... I mean, I probably spent four hours, maybe longer, designing that puzzle by itself and revamping, recutting. I think ended up keeping the hardest version out because it was too hard for sort of what we want to be accessible. I think I kept that and put that somewhere else. Or maybe?



Gregory 16:33

I think you used it as an extra feature.



Melissa Avery-Weir 16:36

Yeah, so that was just... when representational puzzles can indeed go too far.



Gregory 16:43

I'm perfectly happy to let it go abstract anytime it gets too tricky so yeah. But that that won't be coming out as soon as we finish it. We're going to try and build up a little queue so that when we start actually releasing stuff we won't have long gaps if something goes on, or if we have unexpected work we needed to do.



Melissa Avery-Weir 17:01

Yeah, so I think that means we're probably looking at something like December.



Gregory 17:06

Possibly, yeah. Depends on how quickly this ends up going. And hasn't gotten quickly yet.



Melissa Avery-Weir 17:11

Not yet.



Gregory 17:12

But hopefully it'll pick up.



Melissa Avery-Weir 17:13

We'll get our legs under us.



Gregory 17:15

Yeah, so that's about it for this past month. You can--if you want to check out our stuff, you can go to futureproofgames.com. If you want to check out Exploit: Zero Day which is the activist game we've been talking about, you can go to exploitzeroday.com. You can follow us on Twitter at PlayFutureProof on Facebook as "Future Proof Games" as well.



Melissa Avery-Weir 17:37

You'll, you'll find our schedule there of when the game is going on.



Gregory 17:42

Yeah.



Melissa Avery-Weir 17:43

We've also been doing a little bit of Twitch streaming which you'll find information there. We've been busy bees.



Gregory 17:50

Yeah.



Melissa Avery-Weir 17:50

So social media is a good way to keep up with us.



Gregory 17:52

Definitely. And if you've got any questions or comments or suggestions for us, hit us up on our blog or in social media, or just email info@futureproofgames.com. Our theme music is Juparo by Broke for Free, which is available under Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 license. Thanks for hanging out with us.