

You're listening to Imaginary Worlds, a show about how we create them and why we suspend our disbelief. I'm Eric Molinsky.

Last year, I did an episode about a Norwegian show called Beforeigners. The premise was that people from different eras of history were suddenly showing up in modern day Oslo – like the Vikings. The show used time travel to explore issues of immigration and cultural identity. I loved it. And a lot of my listeners told me after they heard that episode they immediately binged the show on HBO Max.

There is no HBO Max anymore. After the Discovery corporation bought Warner Media, they rebranded the site as Max and purged it in a massive attempt to save costs. Beforeigners wasn't just canceled. It was taken off the site. And this is happening to different shows across the streaming platforms. The studios are removing shows for tax purposes, and so they don't have to pay residuals to any of the talent.

Residuals is one of the many reasons the actors and writers are on strike. But it's been brutal for fans too. Last year I did another episode about the show Paper Girls. And I remember right after it dropped on Amazon Prime. I saw a community of fans building in real time as they watched the episodes -- falling in love with the characters, doing fanart, predicting what would happen in season 2. But Paper Girls got canceled very quickly. It's still on Amazon Prime, for now, but Paper Girls and Beforeigners both ended on huge cliffhangers.

And personally, I'm still not over this. I'm still mad that we will never get to see what happened to these characters.

This was not supposed to happen. For years, the streaming sites were operating under the idea that more content would bring in more viewers. They wouldn't even reveal what the ratings were because short term term ratings didn't matter, so they said. People could discover these shows weeks, months or even years later. And when these streaming sites launched, they had a lot of sci-fi fantasy shows -- I assume because sci-fi fantasy fans can get very engaged if they like a show. Their excitement can drive social media traffic and word of mouth.

That's how Stranger Things became a surprise hit. But that wasn't happening to enough shows. They flipped back to the old model. If the ratings don't hit their expectations within a certain amount of time – the show is gone.

So, we did a call out and asked you to tell us about the cancellations which really affected you. We got a ton of responses, and we're going to hear from some of them. By the way, this episode has a bunch of spoilers, although many of the people we talked to were happy to spoil endings that left them hanging.

The classic example of a show that was gone too soon was Firefly, the Western in space by Joss Whedon. I've talked about Firefly in several different episodes. And the fans have always been vocal about the show's cancellation. When I asked for suggestions, I expected a lot of people would mention Firefly. And they did.

What surprised me was that even more listeners wrote in about a different show – Carnivale.

Carnivale was on HBO from 2003 to 2005. It was about a traveling circus in the Dust Bowl, Depression era. There was also a big supernatural element. The hero, Ben Hawkins, has the power to restore life, but he's tormented because it comes at a cost.

WOMAN: You have the gift

BEN: I tried

WOMAN: But to restore a life you must take a life

BEN: Yeah, I know God damn it, I know.

The villain is a self-righteous preacher named Justin Crow, who is secretly an avatar of Satan.

JUSTIN: The worm reveals himself in many guises across this one great land, from the intellectual elite cruelly indoctrinating our children with the savage blasphemy of Darwin to the craven Hollywood corrupting them in the darkness of the local Bijou.

I really enjoyed the show back then, but I thought most people had forgotten about it. Apparently not – and definitely not for Anton de Groot.

ANTON: When I was watching it, I remember I was living with a group of friends. Uh, we were just, uh, we'd all just graduated university, uh, all from, from the theater program together. And, um, I was living in a big house. I think there were five of us all together, uh, just in Northwest Calgary. And, uh, I remember we made an event of it. We were made sure to have the night off, and we were going, we had the DVD set and we were going through, and we were watching it week by week, just altogether as a group. And

because HBO was harder for us as students to get up in Canada, right. So we didn't, we weren't party to knowing exactly what was on the program at the moment and didn't think to look it up on the internet, per se. So, <laugh>

Why did you like the show so much? Like, why were you such a fan up until this, this, this cliffhanger not knowing the show was going to get canceled?

ANTON: I'm such a huge fan of world building and like mythology and world, world building. What I was finding with that show is, you know, it's grounded in those, um, the, like the Judeo-Christian mythologies. And I, I don't myself have a religious practice or belief per se, but the stories of it are so rich and so interesting. And the characters that they developed within, within it just had such depth. And they themselves were figuring out about what was going on in the world as the audience was. I felt that in a way that we were kind of going along the ride with the characters, and that made me very much, very sympathetic to them. And that as well. I'm a designer, so my, I love really great production design. So the, the design that they had in that, like just that particular era in American history, I just is just a rich visual. I think it was just a perfect confluence of all of these things that I just really love and just really speaks to me.

Yeah, I did too. I love that 1930s depression era, like Americana. You know, it's kind of the beginning of a sort of mass produced American culture, but it's kind of like paved on top of a much older, even 19th century kind of PT Barnum, you know, wild west kind of world. I feel like you, in the thirties, you kind of have both worlds simultaneously kind of still existing. And that part about it with a little bit of the kind of like John Steinbeck kind of like, you know, um, class political social commentary and magic <laugh>, you know, and exactly the devil.

ANTON: Absolutely. In that kind of, in that sort of world, like the stakes are so high, right? Like it's capital G, good capital, E, evil.

Before it was canceled, season 2 ended on a big cliffhanger, which I'm about to spoil. The good character, Ben Hawkins, finally has a showdown with the show's villain, Justin Crow. Good triumphs over evil. But Ben has a love interest named Sofie. And we discover that Sofie is actually Justin Crow's daughter. And it's implied that the satanic entity inside of her father has migrated to her.

That's a hell of a cliffhanger, literally. I was mad when I found out it would never be resolved. Anton still has trouble wrapping his head around it.

ANTON: It was almost like, it, it was a sense of disbelief, truthfully. It was, it just mattered so much to me and to, you know, my, my roommates at the time. And we, we just couldn't believe that they would choose to let this story go. It just given how the buildup worked, how the characters, the world that was, was created, it baffled us. We just couldn't understand why. And of course, you know, we're not party to those

decisions in the boardrooms by any means. And, but, uh, just for us who were caring about the story, it just, it felt like, it just felt I like a seriously missed opportunity.

And then how long did you, like how long had did this sort of rattle in your head where you sort of couldn't let it go

ANTON: It's still a rattling in my head, honestly. And every once in a while, especially when I'm talking to people, introducing them to, to the show that comes out immediately, I inevitably mention that it ends on such a cliffhanger and e even to this day, it still irks me.

This is where headcanon comes in. I did an episode last year about headcanon. That's when fans come up with theories, filling in blanks, creating unwritten fanfiction in their minds to fill in plot holes or fix storylines that never got resolved. Anton came up with his theory for how the show would've ended.

ANTON: It goes back to the clues that had been seeded throughout the entire series. And I think what goes back to the very beginning of the series in the first episode when the character Sampson played by Michael J. Anderson is just, you know, speaking in a dark void, just delivering a monologue that sets the tone in the world. He says, um, and so it wasn't until the day that a false sun exploded over Trinity and man forever traded away wonder for reason. And just knowing where this took place in the timeline, we know that research into the atomic bomb was coming up with World War II about to be on the horizon here. To me, that was the biggest clue. And that, in a way, I feel like they spelled out the ending in that moment. So for me, my head canon used that as the clue and that ultimately was going to come down to the physical space of Trinity. And after an enormous battle of probably unspeakable damage between Ben and Sophie, that the two of them come together in a moment of understanding as just the light of the bomb obliterates the two of them. And this war comes to an end when magic ends on Earth. ***That actually makes sense because this whole story is leading up to World War II, and World War II ends with the atomic bomb, but it kind of mirrors Ben's powers, to do good, to give a life he has to take a life, which torments him, and the atomic bomb ends World War II but at this horrific cost.***

ANTON: Yeah, that's what I, yeah, that's what I figured. <laugh>.

Wow. Was there anything that you personally related to in terms of like, the themes of the show?

ANTON: Yeah, I, uh, I, I'm a theater maker. That's what I do for, for a living. And the idea of show business, <laugh> has always kind of like, run with me and seeing how the, the, the family of the Carnivale come together and all the other characters that like the, the supporting characters that become so important in the story as well. And just this, this family coming together supporting each other. It reminds me a lot of, uh, the work that I do and the my friends and my colleagues that I, um, care about and that I

work and support in my own way, and they work and support me. And that kind of like coming together of a bunch of misfits, um, from all over the place, uh, it really, really resonated with me.

BREAK

I've had an experience lately where many of my favorite foods have gotten discontinued – my favorite flavor of yogurt, my favorite salad dressing, my favorite type of espresso beans were all discontinued. The restaurant next to where I live took four items off their menu. They were my favorite dishes but apparently I was one of the few people ordering them.

It's a bummer, but it's very different when a show is canceled. The job of everyone on a show is to get you to get hooked on the story. If you don't feel an emotional attachment to the characters, they haven't done their job. So when a show is canceled, it can feel like a world has ended. It can feel like a group of friends have suddenly disappeared. It's one thing to go through emotions as an adult. But when you're a kid, that can be harder.

That happened to Lisa Urban. In the early 2000s, she was a fan of Danny Phantom. It was a cartoon on Nickelodeon created by Butch Hartman, who did Fairly Oddparents and a bunch of other animated shows.

Danny Phantom is a teenage superhero who is part human and part ghost. Actually, the opening credits explain it pretty well.

THEME SONG

Lisa discovered the show when she was a young teenager. Her family had just moved into a new town. She was settling into a new house.

LISA: And there was one day when I was sitting in my bedroom with my small little TV and I was slipping channels and I stopped on Nickelodeon and the TV show Danny Phantom happened to be on. And I remember, oh, I just need some background noise. Let's just put this on. And as I'm watching this episode, I'm getting really intrigued by the character dynamics, specifically the main character Danny and his powers as well as his sister and his friends. And so I watched that one and then the next episode came on and it was the Ultimate Enemy that was an hour long special that was about his future.

DANNY: Tucker, Sam, go!

DARK DANNY: Go? Where are they going to go?

LISA: And several other ghosts and enemies made appearances. And it just really got me hooked because I was very curious about all of this lore that I had never seen before from the first season and up to that point.

Why do you think you connected with it so much at that age, at that point in your life?

LISA: The show was definitely geared towards teenagers to begin with, which was something that Nickelodeon didn't do as often back then. And I really also really liked the animation style, the way the characters were drawn. And the action made me want to draw these characters and draw things in that style a lot more. And furthermore, he um, Butch Hartman really knew how to write the stories and him and his writing crew did a really good job of telling very thought out stories in a 20 minute span and continuing those stories throughout the seasons and not just forgetting that something happened in the last episode, but building upon it and building upon it as the seasons went. It was just really great to have that experience and know that what I saw yesterday isn't just going to go away.

What happened with the show?

LISA: Season two ended in 2006 and season three did not get its air dates until the fall of 2007. They had created all the episodes and they were ready to go. And Nickelodeon just stalled and stalled. I stalled to air them. They started airing overseas and a lot of us who were fans at the time were getting on YouTube and even some of the not so friendly video sites to find these episodes and predict what might happen. And then when Nickelodeon finally did air season three, they aired five episodes over the span of a week in July, five episodes over the span of a week in August, and then the finale on like a Saturday night. And then they just called it done. Fans were really upset, but Nickelodeon just would not budge on making more episodes. There's a lot of theories why I, I was 15 at the time, I didn't really read into it that much. It just kind of got canceled and the finale was not what people wanted.

How did that make you feel that time?

LISA: It felt like I was losing something. Um, the show had become such a big part of my life in only a couple of years and then to have all of those episodes just kind of hit at once and then it just went away. I was sad, you know, there were going to be no more stories, no more character arcs, no more chances for Danny to go ghost and save the ghost world. And a lot of questions were left unanswered.

It sounds like this still really stuck with you, like even as an adult you still kind of can't quite shake this.

LISA: Yeah. You know, it ended and some people just kind, it did definitely fade from people's consciousness, but the really strong fans are still out there and we're still doing

things. I was creating fan art years after the show ended. I actually just posted a, my last fan fiction I posted like two years ago and I'm in my 30s.

So the fan art or fanfiction that you did, was it a kind of head cannon, imagining where the story would've gone?

LISA: Um, I didn't do a lot of head cannon because I was not, even though I'm an art teacher and an artist, I wasn't that creative. Every time I tried to develop my own characters it never went very well. But I really got into the fan, the fan art. Um, I got on Deviant Art and there was a huge, huge fandom there of other artists posting their fan art for Danny Phantom. And that was kind of like the place to post it. So I started doing a lot of stuff in the Danny Phantom style that I was posting on there. In terms of fan fiction, I never really created new characters, but I have written a couple of stories that were alternative universe stories and I always kind of had an idea of what I wanted to write, whether it was good or not, but it was always nice to have that place to put it.

Have you met people through the online community of fans who went through the same experience you did?

LISA: I wish I could say yes. Um, I actually haven't. I met a lot of people online, but I've never met them in person. Um, I did have several people that I considered my friends when I was on Deviant Art that we would do collaborations with or that we would share our images and our stories with a couple people who I followed very avidly who had amazing head cannons that they were doing for these characters about like when they grew up and if they had kids. And the same with the fan fiction. I had several people I would follow avidly because they wrote amazing stories. There is one girl that I met through fanfiction who I never met in person, but we've exchanged emails and we've exchanged, we've actually exchanged physical packages. She was my beta reader actually on the last story that I wrote. And then we just became really close. And so we were exchanging messages that way and it was, it was great to have somebody even at this age and this long after the show to still talk about the show with

So what kind of fanfiction did you come up with?

LISA: The first one I ever published was actually a crossover of Danny Phantom and the Toby McGuire Spider-Man movies. At the time I thought it was great. Currently I don't think it's so great, but it still gets likes to this day on fanfiction.net. And then I wrote a couple other ones that were, were just solely Danny Phantom related in kind of an alternate universe, like in the same city. But characters were different and things were different. Um, I do want to let fans know that there is a, they actually just came out with a graphic novel that continues the story and it's not written by Butch, but it is produced by Nickelodeon. It's called A Twist in Time and it continues the story. And I really like what happened. I was able to suspend my disbelief and believe that what was happening could be a episode of the show or a couple episodes of the show. They really expanded the characters and I think they also did some really good fan service

because they did refute a few things that the fans did not like about the finale and kind of reversed a few things without giving any spoilers.

Adults can also get hooked on cartoons meant for kids. I've done that with several animated shows about superheroes that I know my 12-year old self would've really loved.

Patricia Miranda co-hosts a podcast called Old School Lane where they discuss animated shows – some she loved as a kid, others she discovered as an adult. And they did a deep dive into The Owl House, which ran on The Disney Channel from 2020 until this year.

PATRICIA: The Owl House is about a 14 year old girl named Luz Noceda. She is seen as like the crazy, awkward and hyperactive teenager that nobody really seems to understand, and she's told by the principal and her mother that she needs to go away to a normal camp so that she can be able to act, quote, unquote, normal around her peers.

LUZ: Don't worry mom, I won't let you down. No more weirdness. That doesn't count, right?

PATRICIA: She sees an Owl digging through her trash and flying away...

LUZ: Tiny trash thief!

PATRICIA: To an abandoned house across the street when she follows the Owl and opens the door, she is transported to a world known as the boiling aisles filled with witches, creatures and magic. She meets up with a witch known as Edalyn Clawthorne, a.k.a. the Owl lady.

EDA: I am a respected, feared

GUARD: Busted! Eda the Owl you are wanted for wanted for misuse of magic and other misdemeanors.

LUZ: Woah, Witch criminal.

PATRICIA: She decides to stay in the Boiling Isles because she wants to learn from Edalyn to become a witch, as opposed to going away to this normal camp. It's fantastic. A lot of people were able to fall in love with it within their own unique way. The magic is really creative. I think that the, uh, character growth is really phenomenal.

Why did you relate to it? Why did you like it?

One of the reasons why it resonated with me was because I related to the character of Luz Noceda. She was a young teenage girl who was very awkward and who even though that she was very interactive with a lot of people in her own unique way, people didn't seem to really gravitate towards her because they thought that she was really weird. And as somebody who was that at that age, I really related to her. She didn't have any friends. And even though that she tried to be very creative with her presentations, not a lot of people seem to understand on why. And so she was a bit of a loner, and I really enjoyed that. I had never seen any representation like that in any show that I grew up with.

The show also got a lot of praise from critics and fans for having openly queer characters.

AMNITY: Do you want to go out with me?

LUZ: No! I was so ready!

AMITY: Sorry, sorry, you can say it!

LUZ: Amity Blight, do you want to go out with me

AMITY: Yes!

LUZ: Okay!

Patricia isn't queer herself, but she's thrilled that a show like The Owl House could exist – at least for a while. You might remember in 2021, I did an episode called Cartoonish Gender where I talked about the difficulty that Disney has had with queer characters. Their brand is supposed to be quote “family friendly,” but that term that's become highly politicized.

PATRICIA: There was a bit of obstacles and hurdles that the people behind The Owl House had to do in order for them to represent these characters. But at the same time, knowing that this is a Disney show, um, Disney has reputations of cutting off gay characters so that other countries that did not allow representation of queer people can be able to go through, or they have to cut their losses knowing that these movies are going to be banned and may not make them as much money compared to if they didn't show that representation. So The Owl House took a lot of risks knowing that they were probably going to be scrutinized. They were probably going to get a lot of notes from public relations saying that you can't do this, or standards and practices, and they just went for it and there was no apologies for it.

The show was canceled after three seasons. According to the show's creator, an executive at Disney decided The Owl House didn't quote “fit the brand.” Patricia

says that could've been because of the queer content, but The Owl House was also a highly serialized show. Disney cartoons tend to be more episodic.

PATRICIA: The Owl House was really complex, and I think that Disney, when they saw this, they were fearing that maybe it might be too complex for our younger audience. However, when the show was wrapping up, I think that the people who were working on Disney channel animation, they realized a little too late on how huge the show was and they should have had more of it.

How did you feel when it was canceled?

PATRICIA: Yeah, I was pretty devastated when I heard the announcement all the way back in 2021. I just thought to myself, why would you do that? Uh, if you have a show that is massively popular that millions of people are tuning into both kids and adults and it has everything that they want, like, why would you get rid of that? It, it, it's really sad. Um, I'm sure for a lot of people they say, oh, what's the big deal? It's just a show. Get over it. There's going to be plenty of other shows. Sure. But if you could relate to a character or a story arc that hits at home, it's even more of a reason on why you should feel sad that it's going to be going away. It's like a part of you is gone too, and you're probably not going to be able to find a similar substitute.

BREAK

Sometimes a show you discover as an adult can bring you back to your childhood. That happened with Aimee Biggerstaff. She got sucked into the Gothic fantasy drama Penny Dreadful, which drew from classic horror fiction. She particularly loved the character that Eva Green played. She was a monster hunter named Vanessa Ives, who had dark supernatural powers.

VANESSA: If we're to continue, you must know how dangerous this is, how dangerous I am.

She also liked the character that Billie Piper played Lily Frankenstein. She's an undead Bride of Frankenstein character. Although she goes in a very different direction from the classic Frankenstein films.

LILY: You mustn't be here. There is nothing here for you.

VICTOR: I must save you from all of this, one way or another. You're my responsibility. I created you.

LILY: I need no man to save me, and I think in a way, I created you more than you created me.

Aimee started watching the show around the time it debuted in 2014.

AIMEE: I would just plop down on the couch, and I fell in love because, you know, a thing scratches an itch, right? Like the monsters and, and the, the witchcraft and like the creepy dolls and like everything that you'd want out of, like that kind of genre, I feel like. Right? It was like showing me the narrative I wanted to see when I was like younger, right? I like wanted to open up the book and I wanted to read about, you know, I would read Edgar Allen Poe and all these beautiful gothic dark things, but like, for some reason as like an adult, I was like, oh my God. It was like, I felt like that kid again, like reading, you know, Dracula for the first time and feeling like this weight to it that I feel like I was lacking in, you know, other things. I was in a pretty, uh, you know, lovely religious family and so everything was tidy and, and wonderful and, and this like filthy gothic horror was something that was so satisfying to me and it really made me feel excited. And so having that moment later on in life, I think I connected really hard just having that feeling back.

Wait, that's interesting. So you, you grew up in like a religious family that the, your love of Goth was, you know, it wasn't like your parents being like, oh, that's cool you do you, it's like this was really much a very much, you going in a direction that you were craving that you weren't getting at home.

AIMEE: Yeah, I never really felt like, I didn't feel like I could wear black, or I couldn't, you know, like it wasn't that kind of an environment as, as wonderful as my family was. It was definitely not a space that I felt like I could occupy. You know, I was queer and I didn't know the language. And I think there was a lot of those narratives that I think we find in those stories, I'm going to be hyperbolic, but you know, I'm a hard on my sleeves person and you can't explain what you like about things sometimes. But I, I plopped down on the couch to like watch what I imagined would be like a couple episodes maybe. I was catching up and up, it was like the last two episodes, and I didn't see it coming. I, I remember sitting there and just being like, no, and just saying no, no, because it felt, it felt so fast. It felt like, yes, it was three seasons, but as a fan, I just felt like that's not how that would go down. That's not how this story would end and it, it really broke my heart. Like, I remember being so upset and, and I didn't have anyone at the time that was also watching it. I, like, I couldn't find anyone to, to like echo my pain <laugh>

She found some people online, but she felt like they were all just screaming into the void. And she wasn't satisfied with any of the explanations that she found online either. I imagine the show suffered the same problem that a lot of sci-fi fantasy shows do -- a high production budget with a potentially limited audience. The showrunner said that he wanted it to end at three seasons, but it didn't feel that way to Aimee or many other fans.

So what was this ending that felt like it was rushed into production? Spoiler alert: the character that Eva Green played, Vanessa Ives, was killed by another character on the show.

AIMEE: It's this, they play it off as this very like honorable death kind of situation where she's finally getting the escape into, because she was very Catholic in the show. And I think to some degree I related to the religious aspect of that, even though I was not Catholic. And so there was this moment for me where I was like, no, this isn't where she goes. She doesn't come back to this moment. Like she doesn't, like her escape isn't kind of denying the darkness that she had. because it was this, the thing I loved about her, right? She was like kind and like vicious and like beautiful and like powerful, but also like complicated and sad. I didn't feel like there were the signals of the stories being tied up we're getting closer to her, like finale. I think I was also very upset because Vanessa Ives powerful gothic queen, you murder her, right? Her story is what felt like swept away in a, in a disrespectful way. Lily this character that I feel like is so refreshing to see. It was such a, a wildly complicated character. They knocked her down a little bit. I felt like, you know, it was like they put these two powerful women and they kind of just like threw them out at the end. It made me so angry because it was like, oh my God, you made me feel like I was watching narratives that aren't typically, you know, these strong female characters all the time in these, in these genres, right? And this is still a very male dominated show, but it was like those two figures were so incredibly beautiful and rich. And then it felt like, oh, of course, of course you just didn't see that they were great. And at the end you just kind of treated them like how I have grown to expect female characters to be treated.

Of all the listeners who emailed us, there was one person whose story, I think, perfectly summarizes what it's like to be left hanging after getting emotionally invested in a group of characters.

Trever Mobbs was a fan of the show Stargate Universe. It was one of several spin-off TV shows from the Stargate movie, which came out in 1994. Stargate Universe ran from 2009 to 2011.

TREVOR: It starts with them fleeing an attack through a Stargate, not having control of where they're going, and they end up stranded on an alien ship on the other side of the universe. And straight away they're, you know, struggling to do things like have air and water and all of that. So, you know, it's very much a sense of they're stuck in trying to survive. Um, and I think maybe part of the reason it got canceled was because people who liked Stargate in general might not have liked the tone of this show. People who

liked darker shows might not have thought that they liked to Stargate show. So it kind of, I think maybe fell in the cracks.

So how did it end?

TREVOR: In the second season? They start getting pursued by these drones everywhere that they go. And I, I can't help wondering whether the writers of the show were looking for metaphors for, you know, the fate of the show itself. But in the, the season two finale, they uh, come up with this slightly crazy plan that the only way they're going to escape the drones is for everyone to go into hibernation for three years and basically travel in hyperspace for that long until they can escape. Uh, but there's a catch. One person is going to have to stay behind, not go into hibernation. It's even worse than that. They will have two weeks in which to fix a problem. If they can't fix it, they will have to kill themselves to get everyone else a chance to survive.

Wow.

TREVOR: And one character volunteers. So the very last sort of scene of the show is, is the last couple of people going to hibernation and saying goodbye to him. And then, you know, all the lights, all the power turns off as much as possible. And it's just him standing alone on the bridge gazing out. He has a slight smile on his face. I had a chance to re-watch the scene because it's on YouTube, but I was not prepared for that as an ending at all. I was just so shocked because I couldn't think of anything more lonely than that. I mean, you are already stuck billions of light years from every other human being and then everyone else is gone and you are left on your own like that. And I was just completely devastated by it. I mean, I can remember just crying and wailing and I had a nightmare about it that night or the next night. because I just couldn't think of anything more lonely. <laugh>, if it, if they'd all died, I wouldn't have found it so distressing. I mean, it would've been very bleak, but it was just that idea of one person being left so alone, you know, even years later I can remember just that emotion of, of the loneliness. I think that's probably one of my biggest fears and it just resonated.

Yeah. Has that always been a fear of yours?

TREVOR: I actually, thinking about it now, it's, it's probably a worse fear now as I'm getting a little older and thinking about, you know, I live alone and, uh, you know, thinking about what's going to happen as my family gets older and I don't have, you know, a partner or, or kids of my own and who's going to take care of me as I get older. Things like that. So when the show ended, which is I think over 10 years ago, I already, I did live alone, but I was obviously younger and I might not have been as conscious then of being afraid of loneliness as I am now. But clearly it, it pushed my buttons. Yes. <laugh>

In talking with everybody in this episode, there is a kind of, I mean, this almost feels kind of trite compared to what that character is going through and what your existential fears are. But when a show is canceled, you know, very often it's like, well, the ratings were low and, you know, the production budget was high typical

for sci-fi films or TV shows, and you're like, but I was watching it, but, but what about me? You know, and sometimes you go online and you realize, oh wow, there really weren't that many people watching it. And it's sort of like, it, it almost feels that sense of loneliness of like, I was watching that show and it's like, sorry, that's not enough for us.

TREVOR: Yeah. Well it's also interesting with the, the scenes that are on YouTube, of course you see lots of comments on there of people saying how sad they are that the show finished the way it did. But of course, you know, that's, that's self-selecting. It's only the people who are hunting for that scene to watch it again and remind themselves. And most of the world just probably moved on not caring about it.

Yeah. Did you, uh, come up with any like head cannon to sort of even resolve it in your head as to, at least in my mind, I've got to come up with something or that just never feels satisfying?

TREVOR: No, for me it never felt satisfying. The fact that he has a slight smile is you're supposed to maybe think, oh, he's going to make it and therefore they're all going to make it. But you know, they set up the situation as being incredibly desperate that even with all of this they say, you know, that they might not, none of them might ever wake up from the hibernation. I also think, to be honest, I have a perception that American shows tend to avoid being really dark and tend to avoid having bleak endings. I was a fan of the X-Files and I remember there were some X-Files episodes that deliberately left things unresolved in a way that I really enjoyed. And I think, um, I do remember some reaction of some, some American fans seemed to really dislike having things that weren't all neatly wrapped up and everyone was happy at the end.

As an American, I just can't leave things there -- feeling unsatisfied and frustrated. In the next episode, we're going to hear from fans who feel quite satisfied and happy even if they know they're kind of alone.

No one knows when the Hollywood strikes are going to end. We're going to run out of new stuff to watch pretty soon. There are all these critically acclaimed shows and movies some of us never got around to watching – but there are also unsung gems that our friends and loved ones have been trying to convince us to watch for years.

I have been on the opposite end of that conversation many times, wondering if this show or movie is so great, how come I have never heard of it before? Or why did it do poorly at the box office or in the ratings? In the next episode, we'll discover why we're wrong to ignore these recommendations.

That's it for this week, thanks for listening. Special thanks to Lisa Urban, Aimee Biggerstaff, Patricia Miranda, Anton DeGroot, Trevor Mobbs and everyone else who wrote in. And special thanks to Chris Stevenson who suggested this topic. If you liked this episode, you should check out my episode Imaginary Deaths from 2018, where I talked with listeners about the deaths of characters that they never stopped mourning.

My assistant producer is Stephanie Billman. If you like the show, please give us a shout out on social media or a nice review wherever you get your podcasts. That helps people discover Imaginary Worlds.

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