

THE ANDREW HUSSIE & AUSTINADO JOINT Q&A

This is an edited text interview that was done between
DECONRECONSTRUCTION Founder Austin Van Landingham (Austinado)
and *Homestuck* Creator Andrew Hussie (Andrew Hussie).



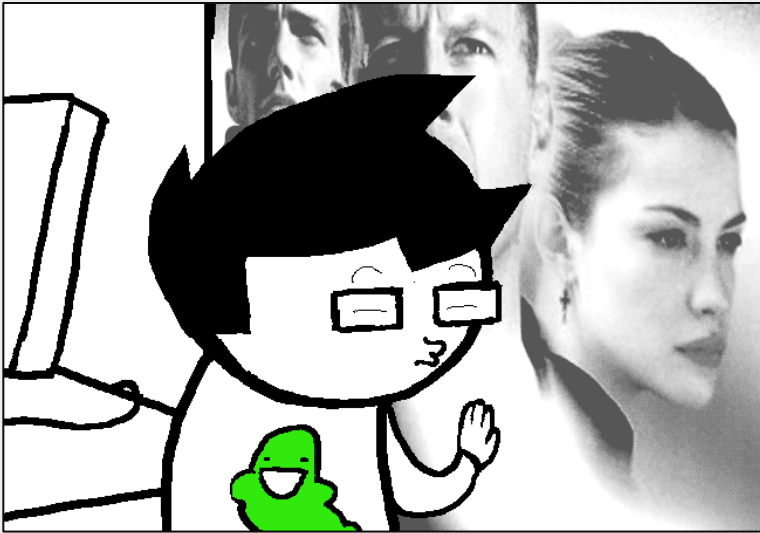
Art done by Victoria Lacroix.

It was earned as a reward for the viewers of our twenty-four
hour 13th anniversary livestream who donated \$8,550.65 for
Palestine relief charities on 3/22/24.

Typography and graphic design done by ValantWynn.

AUSTIN: HOW DO YOU FEEL NOSTALGIA AND OTHER FICTIONAL INFLUENCES AFFECT THE DIRECTION OF YOUR NARRATIVES?

AUSTIN: Your works fed off of not just the internet culture of the time, but various films, video games, novels, celebrities, etc. as well. Are these influences a launching point, or are they woven in over time?



John: Tell Liv Tyler you love her before impact.
(<https://www.homestuck.com/story/223>)

ANDREW: I can at least speak to the way Homestuck treats these references. These cultural references are significant in building early character profiles because the fictional media we consume is so important in shaping the modern human psyche.

The influences were both a launching point, serving as prompts for gags and conversations, and also woven in over time. More pile up as we meet new characters, and learn what they care about.

AUSTIN: It's just such an effective way to get to know a character without needing a scrap of dialogue. There's a character named Arcjec in *Vast Error* who's very tied to superhero media, and it practically defines everything about him and his trajectory in the story.



Arcjec: Overdramatically turn and glare at the picture on your dartboard.

(<https://www.deconreconstruction.com/vasterror/9>)

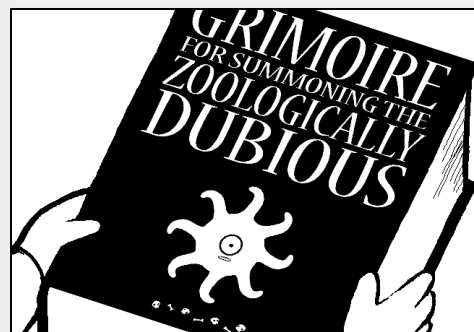
ANDREW: It's actually funny to think about the early Homestuck action if it was completely stripped of these references.

Like if John's walls were totally blank.

If Dave wasn't riffing on shitty movies, if he didn't make comics spoofing gamer bros...

...or if Rose wasn't writing novels based on popular wizard media.

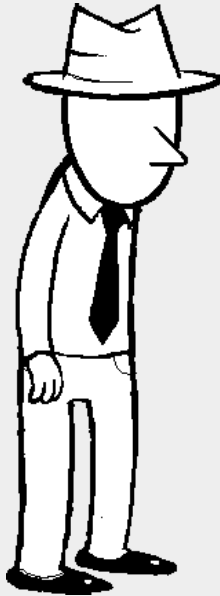
Dave: Go online and view sites indicative of your interests. (<https://homestuck.com/story/325>)



Rose: Examine book on desk. (<https://homestuck.com/story/227>)

What else would they be talking about? These references seemed to be the lifeblood of their early motivations.

AUSTIN: Honestly, I'm struggling to imagine it. There's never anything better to talk about, especially as a teenager. Your whole life revolves around finding new and annoying ways to mitigate boredom.



A sprite of John's father,
Dad.

Almost as if the world of Homestuck represents the dry, bleached bones of a skeleton, and the animating flesh is composed of references to real world media, and character arcs heavily grounded in the human relationship with fiction.

ANDREW: The aesthetic of the early acts is notable for that. Its sense of vacancy. The faceless father, the empty streets, the cookie cutter houses, and narrative refrains bringing attention to that vacancy now and then. Seemingly the only thing anchoring this abstract, lifeless version of Earth to our reality would be these incongruous references to media and celebrities.



[S] John: Take bite of apple.
(<https://homestuck.com/story/246>)

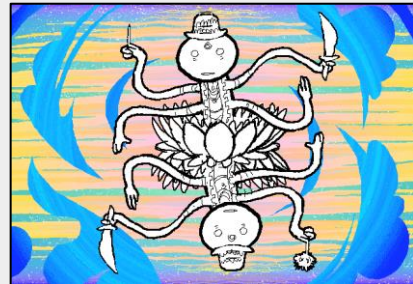
AUSTIN: I don't want to alarm you... but I feel like we may or may not have accidentally made two very similar stories.

AUSTIN: Speaking of your stories: Many of your projects have had you front and center juggling various creative and management roles, but you definitely haven't *always* been a solo act despite this.

DO YOU FIND COLLABORATION AND PEER REVIEW REWARDING? STRESSFUL? MAYBE BOTH?

ANDREW: In the early days, I was much more of a solo act, with things like *Problem Sleuth*. As *Homestuck* rolled on, influence became more distributed among many collaborators and fans. In the post-canon era, virtually all the work is done by teams of fan contributors, and my direct influence is minimal. There are different benefits to all these modes of creation.

GPI: Fondly regard creation.
(<https://www.homestuck.com/problem-sleuth/1665>) (2009)



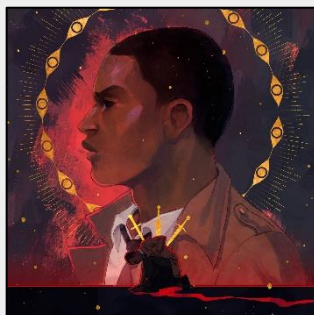
(==>) (<https://beyondcanon.com/story/627>)
(2024)

I think some preferred the solo energy I was bringing to the earlier work, which I understand. But I always felt this perspective was missing out on one of the better features of *Homestuck*'s legacy.

As it transitioned to being a work heavily driven by contributors and fans, it became an engine which started launching the careers of thousands of new creators.



Syn7ropy by Shelby Cragg



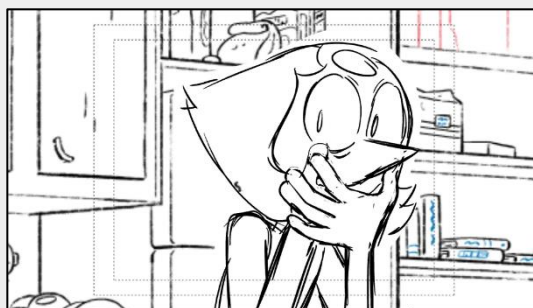
EL PASO, ELSEWHERE PART ONE: THE SCORE by Robert J! Lake



UNDERTALE by Toby Fox



A Prototype for the Official "Jack Frost" Plush from Fangamer by Eyes5



Storyboard from Steven Universe's "A Single Pale Rose" by Danny Kilgore

AUSTIN: I've seen it firsthand. We've shared some overlapping collaborators, but also in just consuming these incredible works that have obviously been inspired by what you've made. Like growing up, I originally came up from the *MSPA Forums* and then transitioned to *MSPFA* (*MS Paint Fan Adventures*). The amount of talent on display that's just driven by pure love for the format was what made me want to take the leap into this line of work in the first place.



MSPFA's Community Groupshot from 2017, Which Includes Vast Error

ANDREW: I've lost count of how many people went on to do great things after originally honing their skills through involvement with Homestuck, whether that means through fanworks or official channels.

AUSTIN: The ones that got onto *Bluey* weren't even trying to hide it. They wanted you to know what they're all about and brainwash their children to do the same.



A Frame of "Kids" from *Bluey*.

ANDREW: There are a few big names out there, but it's also important to recognize the many creatives working in the under-appreciated rungs of industry who also got started through Homestuck. I'm always hearing from people with stories like this.

AUSTIN: Shoutouts to managers, producers, editors, programmers and musicians.*

* Editor's Note: You're Welcome.

ANDREW: So to get to the part of the question of if the collaborative style is stressful or rewarding.



A Frame of "The Magical Red Jewel (aka Tyler Gets Fired)" from *Smiling Friends*, with *Homestuck* easter eggs.

I think the rewarding parts greatly outweigh anything negative about it.



(==>) (<https://beyondcanon.com/story/589>)

Especially when I look at the intensely collaborative environment of the post-canon period, with the Epilogues, HSBC, and the many related official projects and fanworks, the big question for me has less to do with, "Is my vision as an artist being well served by all this?" and much more to do with, "Are new waves of promising creators launching their careers through this work?"

And given the passion I see going into these projects, I feel very confident that's exactly what's happening all over again.

AUSTIN: I reckon we're powerless to stop it even if we wanted to.

ANDREW: So, first I have to preface any questions I ask here with the admission of the fact that I don't actually know much about *Vast Error*. I hardly ever read fanworks.

AUSTIN: Harsh, but fair.

ANDREW: If I see one that seems interesting, usually what I do is sample it a bit, click around, look at the art, and read a few pages to pick up the vibe.

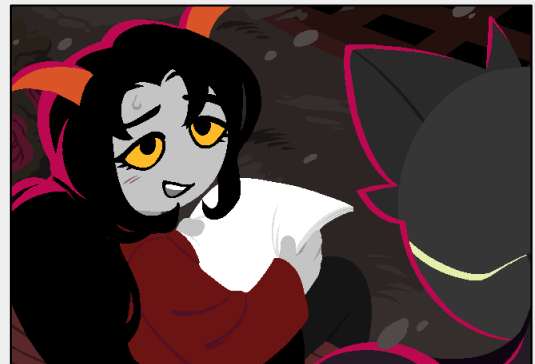
AUSTIN: Not too different from the other people who don't
read what we write then.

For legal purposes, this is a joke.

ANDREW: My stance is that if the creator is having a good time, putting passion into it, and bringing their unique touch to *Homestuck*, then it's successful. I never liked the idea much of bringing the same harsh critical eye to fanworks that I use to judge mainstream media, because the point is for the fans to build their skills and experiment with whatever wacky ideas they're working through at the time. So I don't let myself get too pulled into these works, and trick myself into picking things apart like characterization and other choices. The whole idea is that those things can be altered however you want.



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(<https://www.deconreconstruction.com/vasterror/1663>)



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(<https://www.deconreconstruction.com/vasterror/1700>)

AUSTIN: That's really brave of you. Depending on who you ask, there's so many unnecessary details to get mad at.

ANDREW: But that said, I know the *Vast Error* team has been at this for an impressively long time, for a fanwork that's still updating regularly. I always see the characters everywhere, and I think the designs are really strong.

AUSTIN: You can thank people like Heather, Xamag, Eddie and Tyson for that side of it.



Heather
(@sparaze)



Xamag
(@xamag_draws)



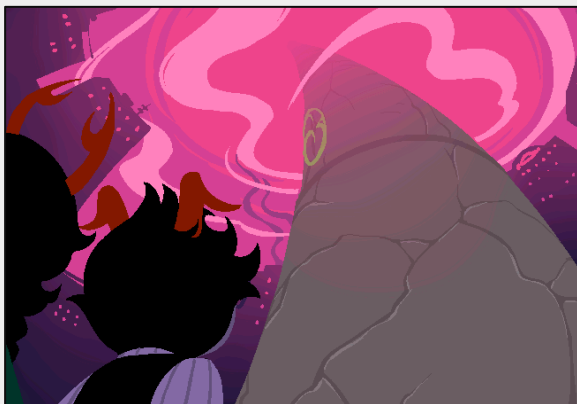
Eddie
(@eddieDraws)



Tyson
(@fireworkcat25)

My whole deal for the past thirteen years has just been making sure it's written in a way that's fun for me and my collaborators, and that it's put out there into the world.

ANDREW: I know a little about it, in the sense that it's only loosely derivative, such as importing trolls into the world, but otherwise diverges from *Homestuck*'s canon and concepts very significantly.



=====>
(<https://www.deconreconstruction.com/vasterror/959>)

AUSTIN: That's right, yeah. Honestly it wasn't even intentional at first! We just kept having so many ideas that drifted further away from what we knew about the comic at the time that we decided to just put our own spin on the rules while still having certain connections with the guidelines you drafted.

ANDREW: So on that note, I'd ask:

WHAT WAS THE THINKING BEHIND WHAT PIECES OF
HOMESTUCK TO KEEP, AND WHAT TO CAST OFF
WHILE BUILDING SUCH A DIVERGENT NARRATIVE?

AUSTIN: A lot of those choices ultimately came down to what we wanted to touch on with worldbuilding. *Vast Error* wound up having a very fleshed out world as opposed to the loose building blocks you gave to *Alternia*. And this was before any knowledge from *Hiveswap* came to light, so we had to scrounge up thoughts about troll culture ourselves or from fan perception.



A sprite of Arcjecz Voorat.

The second half of that statement wound up being the key element we followed. Since so much of the comic and how we opted to make Repitonian trolls act plays with these age old popular fan consensus about *Homestuck*. From the fact they're more like gray humans to the cyberpunk hellscape, they have an actual spectrum of blood shades, their romance system revolves around soulmates (or OTP's if you're old).

It's a big hodgepodge of retrofitting and destroying canon
and fanon into something completely unique.

AUSTIN: On the subject. This is less of a hardline question and more something I'm curious about your opinion on given the nature of *Homestuck*'s efforts.

WHERE DO YOU FEEL THE INFLUENTIAL LINE BETWEEN AN ORIGINAL WORK AND A FAN EFFORT RELATED TO THAT WORK LIES?



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(<https://beyondcanon.com/story/9>)



Dirk: Stop making Homestuck.
(<https://beyondcanon.com/story/11>)

ANDREW: With typical media, the line between fanwork and the source is usually pretty strong. With *Homestuck*, it's a lot blurrier, especially as the post-canon era yields more content. That was by design, and much of my motivation for pushing things in that direction was covered by my earlier answer, where I came to view *Homestuck* as a great environment for demonstrating the potential of fan creators, giving them opportunities to develop their skills and bring their interpretations of the material into higher levels of visibility and legitimacy among the fandom.

AUSTIN: I certainly can't complain about it.

ANDREW: The more creators that get pulled into involvement with *Homestuck*, the more likely I think it is that these people will later go on to make cool things happen with their own work or in the industry, as has already been the case so often. This has also been my thinking in expanding the licensed fan network since I became more empowered to do things like this recently.

AUSTIN: I'm really looking forward to seeing how those efforts spread over time and how new opportunities can blossom out of it.

ANDREW: Who knows, maybe with a little more attention, DCRC could become a major studio in the future?



A screenshot of Chordiod: First Breath, recently published by Deconreconstruction as of 2024.

AUSTIN: Did Apollo give you that gift of prophecy, or did it come built in?

Also, follow up:

DO YOU FEEL THE APPEAL AND SUCCESS OF A FAN EFFORT IS (OR SHOULD BE) PURELY DICTATED ON THE THOUGHTS AND CONCEPTS OF THE ORIGINAL WORK?

ANDREW: I have the least strict guidelines for judging fanwork possible. I don't think they need to adhere to much about the source at all. They can stay very close, or drift so far away as to be almost unrecognizable. Essentially I view every fanwork as being in constructive conversation with the source material, or more specifically, a critique of it. Even fanworks coming from a great fondness for the source reads as a form of critique to me, as long as you accept that critiques can also be very positive.



Artwork of Murrit Turkin as their
Pureself, the Thief of Time.

AUSTIN: It's always a give and take. There's always pieces of the whole that someone will prefer more than the other, even if only for some superficial reason.

ANDREW: But the negative critiques some fanworks represent, such as fix-it fics and the like, still carry a great undercurrent of positivity, because the fan cares enough to bother.



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(From Act 8)

(<https://mspfa.com/?s=14278&p=221>)

ANDREW: Fanwork always represents the most constructive form of criticism, because the creator is putting their money where their mouth is. Think your favorite character got the shaft? Didn't get enough screen time, or died unjustly? All you have to do is take the source to task by showing what could have been.

AUSTIN: I worked on a good few at the start before *Vast Error* took off. I can confirm this has always been the case.



Jane: Raise the dead.

(From *Burning Down The House*)

(<https://burningdownthehou.se/story/666>)



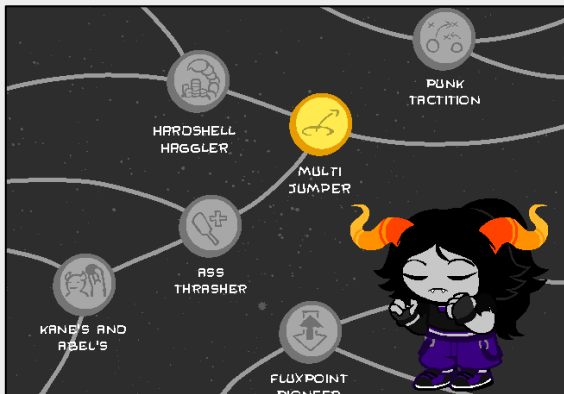
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(From *Homestuck: Act Omega*)

(<https://mspfa.com/?s=16414&p=256>)

ANDREW: I also have a follow up:

WHAT CAPTIVATED YOU ABOUT THE THINGS YOU KEPT IN *VAST ERROR*? WHAT WAS THE ALLURE OF THE NOVEL IDEAS YOU GUYS CAME UP WITH THAT DISPLACED THE CONCEPTS *HOMESTUCK* IS BEST KNOWN FOR?



Taz: NEW TECHNIQUE UNLOCKED!

(<https://www.deconreconstruction.com/vasterror/2460>)

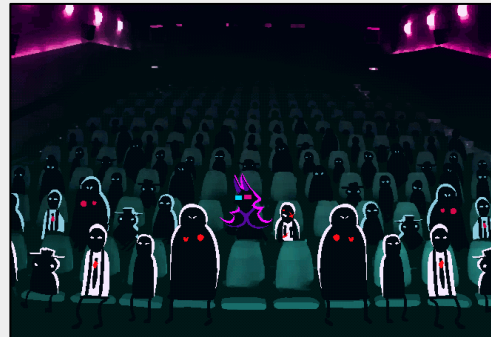
AUSTIN: It was to create something new. To show how far you can push the envelope in a completely different direction while still retaining the core elements of a work and expanding on them from a new perspective. Making fanwork that comments on the nature of fanwork itself. It comes from wanting to take new and old ideas alike and showing how they can be explored in ways we can't even imagine.

I know the term "metatext" is thrown around a lot these days, so bear with me. But if *Homestuck*'s metatext is that it's a story about being inside of a story, then I'd argue *Vast Error* is a natural response to that.

It's about the conflict of interest between being tied to the original story and the stories we want to make with it. What does it mean when you take these elements from a story and bring them to their natural extremes?



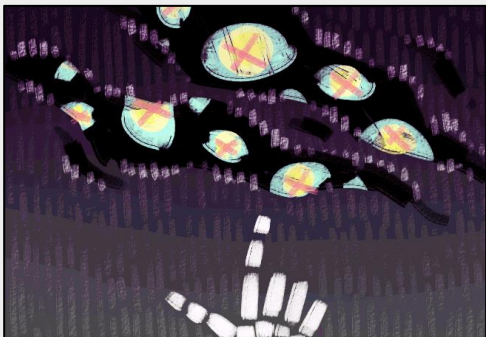
(<https://www.deconreconstruction.com/vasterror/1333>)



(<https://www.deconreconstruction.com/vasterror/1335>)

Do these diversions from the source deserve to exist just for the sake of it? Is it fair that you get to create a world and then these screaming masses you don't recognize get to decide what it means for you? Can there be a balance?

(<https://www.deconreconstruction.com/vasterror/1004>)



(<https://www.deconreconstruction.com/vasterror/1006>)



It's a lot of questions that all have pretty vague answers. In fact, the narrators of *Vast Error* all have extremely different thoughts on that topic. But it's what came to mind when we decided to put so much time and effort into doing this, and seeing countless others try and do the same.

I'd like to take you to task myself, actually. Humor
this:

If you were to throw all of your prior
creations and efforts into an endless void
and start anew at ground zero, would you
want to do anything differently? Where do
you think you would take yourself?

ANDREW: Hm.

AUSTIN: Yes. Hm.

ANDREW: I'd probably just make Homestuck again, but this time
with more Vriska.



Select shots of
Vriska from [S]
ACT 6 ACT 6
INTERMISSION 5
(<https://homestuck.com/story/7449>)



AUSTIN: That was a test, Andrew. You passed.

ANDREW: IS THERE A PLAN TO FINISH VAST
ERROR? A ROUGH TIMELINE? WHAT DO YOU THINK
THE DCRC TEAM WOULD WANT TO WORK ON IF AND
WHEN IT ENDS?

AUSTIN: We've never been good with
timelines. We wouldn't be here
after thirteen years if we knew
everything that was going to
happen and how. Which I guess is
both a pro and a con of utilizing
your format. No offense.



Cover Page for
Vast Error.
([https://www.d
econreconstruc
tion.com/vaste
rror/1](https://www.d
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Teaser Image of
DCRC's Next
Major Project,
Revealed During
the 13th
Anniversary
Charity
Livestream.



As for the second part... We've
got a few ideas. None of which are
any less ambitious and especially
not more short-term. You cursed me
to enjoy excessively long media,
and now I fully intend to pay it
forward and make others suffer
just like I have.

Okay, I'm running out of smart things to say. But it is my cross to bear that this question reaches you. So finally, and perhaps even most importantly:

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE HIT LONGEST-RUNNING ANIMATED PRIMETIME SITCOM *THE SIMPSONS*?

ANDREW: Yes. I've been waiting for this. It's about fucking time we start getting to the good shit.

I think I remember it was around the early 2000's when a consensus started settling in, that this show had worn out its welcome, and it was time to pull the plug. At that moment, the cosmic background radiation of the universe offered a deep chuckle.



A Sprite of the "Morning of 4 ft. 2" from *Vast Error*.



A Sprite of "Bart Simpson" from *Snowbound Blood*.

The Simpsons had barely begun limbering up for its reign through this epoch. Anyone with the eyes to see has always understood these yellow avatars are not really characters so much as an irreducible aspect of manifestation. A cyclic force of nature predating the pilot episode by billions of years.

You don't fuck with *The Simpsons*.

It's impossible to criticize. Doing so is like fully submerging yourself in a bathtub and trying to complain about the water. It requires oxygen to express grievance, and our entire supply was replaced by *The Simpsons* long ago.



A Photo of *The Simpsons Ride* in Universal Studios Florida.
(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Simpsons_Ride)

AUSTIN: Andrew, you haven't fully realized it, but I think this is going to be the start of a beautiful and exceedingly distant amount of mutual respect.

> ANDREW AND AUSTIN: END THIS Q&A.