

A Moment Behind the Scenes with Aarav and Christian (Nikhil Pai and Micky Shiloah)

JENNY CURTIS: Hey, Jenny Curtis here. This week, we're sharing an excerpt of Chris Porter and I sitting down with Nikhil Pai, who played Flight Director Aarav Patel and Micky Shiloah, who played the tenacious reporter Christian Yancy. We're jumping into the complexities of the dynamic relationship between Aarav and Christian in a conversation we affectionately call 'Earth's Perspective'.

JENNY CURTIS: So the only time we're actually on Earth in an episode is the opening press conference to the pilot where Aarav and Christian kind of get into it. How does that set the stage for who these characters are?

NIKHIL PAI: Well, I think that Aarav is looking for any opportunity to make known that things aren't as peachy as the head of NASC would like to make it seem. And so he is trying to use the questions that are being asked to get people asking more questions about it. Because if everything is being swept under the rug, then what he needs is like, what I feel he needs, is like public outrage in order to uncover and maybe get some tech to have any sort of corporate responsibility.

MICKY SHILOAH: Yeah, and Aarav is really looking for the truth. And that's exactly what Christian Yancy wants. So they both are kind of on the same mission, which I think is why they connect.

JENNY CURTIS: They're disruptors.

MICKY SHILOAH: They're disruptors. They sure are.

NIKHIL PAI: Truth seekers. Truth seekers, as you said. Yes. Yes.

CHRIS PORTER: So episode one basically began with an extended conversation between Patel and Yancy, arguing at this press conference, as we just pointed out. And while Patel has had a few communiques with the Aeton in a couple of episodes, Recovered Audio Asset number four, has brought you both back together. And we realized that there's a lot more going on with these two men than we first thought. There was more happening in that press conference scene than was let on. What kind of a headspace is going on for the two of them?

MICKY SHILOAH: Well, I think Christian is still searching for answers at this point. And this conversation he has with Aarav is very eye opening and he realizes that he knows more. And NASC in general knows more than they are putting out.

CHRIS PORTER: One of the questions between these two is who's in control at any given moment? Because I think they both think they are themselves, which is not necessarily true. But in this particular Recovered Audio Asset, we do, in fact, learn that Patel was playing Yancy a little bit. He was using this as an excuse to be the disruptor.

NIKHIL PAI: Mm hmm. I'm going to respectfully disagree with our writer. Yeah. You know, it's just like I like going into this conversation. I feel like Aarav was desperate for something, and there was so much desperation with a lot that he does that he has to resort to means that he wouldn't otherwise resort to. So he is in control. I think that he's trying to—

CHRIS PORTER: That's actually an excellent point.

NIKHIL PAI: Totally manipulate—

CHRIS PORTER: He manipulated him. But it was from a point of desperation I think you're totally right.

MICKY SHILOAH: He has so much on his shoulders that relies on him and I think he's using him and he manipulated him in a good way.

JENNY CURTIS: Well, so here's the thing. We recorded this in the pandemic. Right? And also, just because this is how you get clean audio recording, actors have to record separately. So you were each in the booth alone. Well, I mean, you were recording with me, so obviously, obviously an amazing scene partner. Yeah, but we thought it might be fun to finally hear you guys do this scene with each other. So we've provided you with this script, since we're talking about Recovered Audio Asset Four, let's just hear it with you guys finally interacting with each other. They are across the table from each other.

NIKHIL PAI: This is so exciting.

JENNY CURTIS: Chris, can you set the scene for the world they're in right now?

CHRIS PORTER: So remember, most of the phone lines and communication lines are down. And this is very much just sort of a shout into the wilderness of, they're hoping that someone else is out there with a working phone, as from a point of desperation, as Nikhil just said, he has some information that he needs to convey and information that he's unable to secure himself. So he has to make this phone call to Yancy, having sent some sort of ability that he might be able to pursue this line of questioning.

JENNY CURTIS: And one of our favorite directions, my favorite directions, is that this is a very dark and stormy, thriller-esque conversation.

NIKHIL PAI: Oh, yeah, that's right.

JENNY CURTIS: Go.

CHRISTIAN YANCY: This is Christian Yancy. Hello?

AARAV PATEL: There's a man and I want you to speak to.

CHRISTIAN YANCY: Who is this?

AARAV PATEL: How do you have a working phone, by the way?

CHRISTIAN YANCY: How do you have a working phone?

AARAV PATEL: Our building is basically a Faraday cage.

CHRISTIAN YANCY: Sounds nice. I just use aluminum foil.

AARAV PATEL: And the phone lines?

CHRISTIAN YANCY: That part isn't quite legal. I'm tapping into your phone lines. I'm assuming this is NASC calling...Mr. Patel?

AARAV PATEL: We're using international contact lines for emergencies and critical information.

CHRISTIAN YANCY: Yeah, And everything you use to monitor that phone line was wiped out by the flare. So here I am.

AARAV PATEL: Did you try to call CimmTech?

CHRISTIAN YANCY: Multiple times.

AARAV PATEL: And?

CHRISTIAN YANCY: Always went to voicemail. Voicemail was always full. You're right. No one is there. Can I call you Aarav?

AARAV PATEL: No. I don't particularly like you.

CHRISTIAN YANCY: This call is going well.

AARAV PATEL: But there is someone that I want to talk to.

CHRISTIAN YANCY: So talk to them.

AARAV PATEL: They don't want to talk to me.

CHRISTIAN YANCY: The enemy of my enemy is my friend.

AARAV PATEL: And I'm sure this man wants to talk to someone.

CHRISTIAN YANCY: Or is it the friend of my enemy is my enemy?

AARAV PATEL: Murray.

CHRISTIAN YANCY: It's Christian.

AARAV PATEL: The man's name is Murray.

CHRISTIAN YANCY: And what's his connection?

AARAV PATEL: He used to work for NASC.

CHRISTIAN YANCY: There's a lot of those people.

AARAV PATEL: Then he quit to work for CimmTech.

CHRISTIAN YANCY: No shit.

AARAV PATEL: Then he quit CimmTech and went into hiding.

CHRISTIAN YANCY: No shit.

AARAV PATEL: He lives in the Dakotas. I'll text you his number now that I know you have a working phone.

CHRISTIAN YANCY: I'll call as soon as we hang up.

AARAV PATEL: Let me ask you, what's stranger? The fact that no one picks up at CimmTech or the fact that they still have a working phone?

CHRISTIAN YANCY: Aarav, I'm sorry I got under your skin at the press conference. Just looking for answers.

AARAV PATEL: Mr. Yancy, you didn't even remotely get under my skin. You gave me the opportunity to make a statement that Miss Bryant wouldn't approve of, and in a way that would make it seem unintentional. If anything, I should thank you.

CHRISTIAN YANCY: Wait. What are you saying?

AARAV PATEL: I'm saying there's a lot at stake. There's a lot of cards to be dealt. There are a lot of hands left to play. Call Murray.

GROUP: Yay!

JENNY CURTIS: So Bill Curtis, who we cannot have hop on the mic today, but he is standing in the control booth and just gave you guys a standing ovation because this is his favorite Recovered Audio Asset.

MICKY SHILOAH & NIKHIL PAI: Thank you, Bill.

CHRIS PORTER: There were two fun stories because if we wanted to share this, one was that, please say aluminum. Micky.

MICKY SHILOAH: Aluminum. I can say the word.

JENNY CURTIS: In the recording process, we got a little stuck on that.

MICKY SHILOAH: A little stuck on that word. I don't know what happened, but it was like aluminuminuminalumun.

CHRIS PORTER: The other thing was one of Aarav's last lines, which in the booth, Aarav actually said, Hey, can I switch the order of this? And we said, Yes, that's actually better than what's on the page. So the way that he just read it was the original script, but he changed it to.

NIKHIL PAI: So the original is: 'Let me ask you: what's stranger, the fact that no one picks up at CimmTech, or the fact that they still have a working phone line?' and I believe that I changed it to 'What's stranger? The fact that CimmTech has a working phone line, or the fact that no one picks up?'

JENNY CURTIS: Yeah, I like that.

CHRIS PORTER: And we didn't argue.

JENNY CURTIS: In the booth, Mikhil flipped and he was like, is that okay? That seems better and really good. Yeah, that's fine.

CHRIS PORTER: That's good.

JENNY CURTIS: But like, that's the really fun part of recording with actors who come with opinions and make the show better. Yeah, we all have to have opinions. I don't know if you guys actually have an answer for this, but was that at all different for you reading with each other?

NIKHIL PAI: 100%.

MICKY SHILOAH: Yeah. It was different. Like, I don't know, it felt way more intimate. There is something interesting about it.

(PLAYBACK FROM SHOW BEGINS)

CHRISTIAN YANCY: Aarav, I'm sorry I got under your skin at the press conference. I'm just looking for answers.

AARAV PATEL: Mr. Yancy, you didn't even remotely get under my skin. You gave me an opportunity to make a statement that Ms. Bryant wouldn't approve of, and in a way that would make it seem unintentional. If anything, I should thank you.

CHRISTIAN YANCY: Wait. What are you saying?

AARAV PATEL: I'm saying there's a lot at stake. There's a lot of cards to be dealt. There are a lot of hands left to play, call Murray. (PHONELINE GOES DEAD.)

(END PLAYBACK)

MICKY SHILOAH: I don't remember what it was like recorded before. That must be different.

CHRIS PORTER: Well, like one of the themes that's absolutely come up because we recorded this in the middle of a pandemic, where everyone had to be isolated and had to be alone, is that a lot of that actually did boil through into the performances of people at the time. So just because of that, have you ever been in a situation like that - a part, You know, it could be the pandemic, where you are trying to reach out to a friend or a family or some sort of support system, and you don't even know if you can access them.

JENNY CURTIS: If so, did you use that in this show in any way? Did you use any real life influences to get into your characters?

CHRIS PORTER: And the answer could just be, Yeah, it could be now, and you're in a pandemic.

JENNY CURTIS: It could be You're a fucking actor and you did your job.

MICKY SHILOAH: I'm a fucking actor.

NIKHIL PAI: I mean, that seems like a process question for me, and that is not particularly one of my processes.

JENNY CURTIS: What was your process for Aarav.

NIKHIL PAI: Imagining the circumstances of the situation? Yeah, I mean, just going back to it, I think it's very different actually interacting with an actor in any sort of live situation. Yeah, because everyone has their own cadence to things, everyone has their own feel for it. And that's

kind of the delicious, you know, process of being an actor is that you get to, you get to play. Yeah. With whatever people give you.

MICKY SHILOAH: And also like the way that you would say something to me, it could totally change the way that I deliver back to you. Acting is reacting, people

JENNY CURTIS & CHRIS PORTER: We just had that conversation.

MICKY SHILOAH: I said, that comes, but it really is like as annoying as that saying it sometimes it really is true because just this conversation, I felt different things and I'm the same as you. I can just imagine the situation and I'm like, okay, who is Christian Yancy? Who am I? Is Christian Yancy in this situation?

NIKHIL PAI: Yeah, I think that part of what we do is we prepare as much as we can beforehand and then come in and then get thrown a set of different circumstances sometimes or get thrown in the same circumstances, and then we just deal with it. I mean, that's part of the preparation, that that's the boring stuff.

JENNY CURTIS: That is not boring to me. I love that. I have a whole show about preparation.

MICKY SHILOAH: I think it's fun because also I don't really get stuff like Christian Yancy. He's, he's way more interesting to me than a lot of the things that I would necessarily get. And I get to kind of be this guy with an attitude. I don't know. He's like abrasive. So for me, my process I guess, is just at home in my own mind, living in sort of who he is. And then I guess I forget about it, then come here and we talk and then it'll sort of bleed in.

JENNY CURTIS: So there it is. A bit of the behind the scenes stories, the process of the actors and an in-person reading, and that's just part of the conversation. Check out the SOLAR Panel on our Apple Podcasts Premium Channel to hear more.