

Hey y'all. So I've been wanting to put out a new episode for quite some time now. There's lots of tape from conversations I've had that I've been slowly shaping into bonus episodes while I settle on the theme of season 2.

But, well, life often doesn't care what your plans are.

[sigh] So I'm going to give you a short bonus episode about the WGA/SAG strike that I was able to put together with the help of Shanda. And at the very end, I'll give you a short, personal update so you'll know why I've been so radio silent.

Now, let's talk about the strike!

[music fades out]

[Shanda trying to get audio]:

Look at all the fans (hear cars honking in support)

[fade into Kripke quote]

Kripke:

Hey it's the supernatural picket and we're here to support sag in WGA and fight the billionaires

That voice you just heard is none other than Eric Kripke. The creator of Supernatural.

On Thursday, August 31st, cast, crew, writers, and fans gathered at the WB lot in California for a Supernatural family strike. I wasn't able to attend the strike myself, but roped fellow fan Shanda Bear, @shandataber on Twitter, into collecting some tape on my behalf.

Shanda:

So I'm Shanda. I went to the Supernatural picket at Warner Bros last Thursday. I had a great time. This is my fourth picket I've been to, so I'm a huge supporter of the WGA and SAG-AFTRA. I think that it's really important that all of us support people who bring us the entertainment that we love.

Obviously, Shanda is an old hand at these, but Thursday's picket seemed to bring lots of new folks and fans to the line.

Kaylee:

Hi my name is Kaylee there is no us without writers and actors so I'm just out here to support the people who make my life more fun

Rhiannon:

My name is Rhiannon, I'm here at the supernatural picket and I love seeing everyone as the cast and crew and supporters. Come support everyone and I hope the writers and actors come to a fair deal.

As well as writers from the show, like Ben Edlund

Ben Edlund:

We believe that humans should reap the benefit of human endeavor, not robots and not corporate committees.

And actors, such as Misha Collins

Misha:

Hi, it's Misha Collins here. We are... And Adam Hello Hello, Richard out posting up to support the Screen Actors Guild and the WGA and working people around the world. (cuts in) against corporate tyranny! (I think "Ash" was the interruptor?)

As you can tell from these recordings, it was quite the crowd who showed up to protest against the AMPTP, that's the American Motion Pictures and Television Production, and their unwillingness to come to the table with a fair deal.

As Shanda shared, after her time on the picket line.

Shanda:

It's crucial, not just for WGA and SAG-AFTRA, but this is going to represent many other unions out there that are going to fight for their rights for fair wages and fair contracts. So we need to show support for SAG-AFTRA and WGA. We need to make sure that they get the contracts that they are needing. Because so many people are affected by this. It's not just the wealthy actors, the big-name actors. It's everybody else: the cast, the crew, the people you don't know the names of. The writers who write these wonderful scripts that you don't know the names of. It's everyone whose involved in production. And so it's vital that we show support.

[music here]

So, perhaps we should go over the demands of WGA: that's the writers guild of America and SAG-AFTRA, which stands for screen actors guild-American federation of television and radio artists.

What are they fighting for?

Well to start, the WGA have been striking for longer because they're contract with the studios was up for renewal first. Labor negotiations often have many different aspects and pieces that they are negotiating over, just like when you get a job offer and try to negotiate for better pay and more vacation days or better 401k contributions (\*aside\* if you get any of those at all)

For the WGA, there are pages of discussion points but the major three that the studios completely ignored and a big reason that they voted to strike. Those three demands are:

1. Minimum room sizes: meaning requiring a certain number of writers be brought onto a project to share the work of writing, bouncing ideas off each other, and workshopping together
2. Basic residuals from shows on streaming: meaning that as long as shows are still being watched, writers get a portion of those profits. And finally
3. Guaranteed protection against AI. No computers writing crummy scripts that human writers then get paid a pittance to punch them up.

The last demand is something that I actually did a whole episode on in my other podcast, Carry the Two. I'll link to it in the show notes if you want to hear more from my interview with screenwriter Caitlin Parrish.

SAG-AFTRA, because of their different roles, have different demands. Although they also have demands around AI, particularly centering on ownership of their appearances, voices, and such.

These demands are important, not just to actors and writers, but to everyone in the industry. If actors are replaced with 3D renderings, there's no need for costume designers or set decorators, or hair and make up. If writers can't get fair compensation and guarantees that they will have enough people on a project to get the job done, what makes us think special effects teams wont be treated the same way? With too much over time on tight deadlines and minimal pay.

These strikes matter for the sustained health of the industry as a whole. Which is why it's so important to support them. And if you live near one of the picket locations...

Shanda:

Those that can attend the picket, attend the pickets. It's so worth it. Everyone there is really nice. You get to walk the picket line and talk to so many people. And you find out what it's like from their side, from their point of view. Something that you really don't get to do very often.

And for those who have only seen pictures and video on instagram and tiktok, the point of pickets is to make any ongoing work harder and slower for the AMPTP. It also builds solidarity and raises awareness for people who might just be driving by.

In terms of what the experience is like on the ground, Shanda can better explain:

Shanda:

You walk the picket line. We did the first hour, which was great. It was very hot, so I did have to take a break. And during my break, I was able to interact with the cast and the crew. So that was great. I really appreciated the opportunity to say... to meet Eric Kripke, to meet Ben Edlund, to see Misha Collins again. See Richard Speight Jr again. They're wonderful people and I know some of them are out there supporting, marching all the time. I've seen Richard Speight Jr out there a few times on instagram and twitter. I've seen Rob and Ruth, last time I was out on the picket line. I saw them. So they are not just posting stuff online. They are out there. They're right there with everyone else - marching.

And besides all the names you might recognize, there were oodles of fans who turned out to support the people who created the show they love.

Take Valeria for instance:

Valeria:

So many shows right now get canceled. because they didn't find their audience yet. And I have so many people and I know so many people who got into the show way into it. Just the thing about the changing industry that so many shows cannot be made now, because they're not allowed to dream.

Or a fan named, perhaps coincidentally, Dean:

Dean:

supernatural fandom is exceptionally valuable to me as a person has shaped me, the community that has developed because of it there is honestly incredible that it's connected with so many connected me with so many of my best friends, but I'm really not sure where I would be without this fandom experience.

These pickets, outside WB and other studios and offices, are on-going. But like everything SPN Family does, Thursday's picket felt unique.

Shanda:

Thursdays' was special. It definitely was, because, you know, we are fans and we got to interact with the people that bring us so much joy. I hope that they felt the love. I really do. Cause I know that was the intent for everybody.

And for those fans, like myself, who weren't able to make it. Shanda wanted to recognize their support as well.

Shanda:

And I'd also just want to note one other thing. The fans that couldn't attend, they were all right there to support. They gathered funds to buy snacks for everybody. I'm not sure how much was actually raised. But a few of us did buy snacks. I was able to bring in donuts and another person brought in fruits and vegetables. And I know another person brought in other snacks and sunscreen and band aids and things like that. So that came from the kindness of the fans around the world.

SPN Family knows how to take care of family. And I'm glad to hear that remains true.

[music interlude]

Ok, and I know I promised you a personal update. My original plan was to release the Family Business Beer Company episode next and I had already organized it out with interviews and tape from the brewery.

That one is still in the works, now with an added special surprise.

However, on August 14th, while my husband was riding home on his motorcycle, a driver fully pulled out into his lane and stopped, causing him to crash. It didn't matter that he had right-of-way. It didn't matter that he was wearing full protective gear. You know: helmet, jacket, gloves, everything. It didn't matter that he did everything right.

That crash damaged his spine, pushing two of the vertebrae completely out of place and severing his spinal cord. That single, small moment took away his ability to walk or stand or even wiggle his toes.

He was taken to an intensive care unit and had surgery the next day to realign the vertebrae and fuse his spine. He spent about a week in the ICU before he was finally transitioned to an in-patient care facility where he will live full time until early October. Even when he's able to come home, he will need to go in for intensive physical therapy at least three days a week.

Oh, and our apartment is a classic 3-story walk up which is inaccessible in his wheelchair. So we get to move during all this craziness as well. Joy.

So yes, I've had grand plans for bonus episodes and even a few potential interviews lined up - I've been too busy at hospitals and calling lawyers and trying to sort through health insurance and our messed up American healthcare system.

But we have found so much support from our communities in the weeks following the accident. Fellow SPN fans reached out to offer condolences and help share the gofundme. Even Billy Moran from Loudon Swain messaged me to ask for the link directly so he could help share it.

When I was reporting on the fellowship of community and support I saw in SPN family, I didn't ever expect to become the beneficiary of it. I knew SPN fans are, almost as a rule, big hearted. I just didn't think I'd need the help and support that I've received.

So for those of you who reached out: thank you. You truly cannot know how much it has meant to me.

The other SPN connection I wasn't expecting was in the hospital itself. In the last bonus, you heard how some fans found Supernatural when they were facing a difficult personal moment, often in a hospital. Well the first morning I agreed to scan tv channels in his ICU room to find something to watch, we of course stumbled across a Supernatural marathon. Season 6, as I immediately clocked it.

There was something so comforting in seeing familiar faces in a time of such high stress and exhaustion and worry. I wonder if SPN fans develop such a strong para-social bond to the characters and actors because the show is so ubiquitous to be on a channel somewhere, almost all the time. Like chicken noodle soup when you're sick, you can be in a hospital waiting room or a hotel almost anywhere in the US and still likely stumble

across the Winchester brothers, fighting monsters and providing distraction from our own hardships.

At least, that's how I felt.

And that's why I think it's so important we as fans support the WGA and SAG-AFTRA strikes. As Kripke recently told a Deadline reporter, he hasn't received ANY streaming residuals from Supernatural streaming on Netflix, even though it consistently ranks in Netflix's top ten. If writers and creators aren't paid for their labor, how can we ever expect them to be able to take risks and create new shows?

Art gets us through hard times and helps us express difficult moments in our lives. So we need to make sure those artists get paid. I know many of us are in financially uncertain circumstances. That's certainly true for me. But if you do have a few spare bucks, I'll link to the Entertainment Community Fund to support the striking workers.

Solidarity

[outro music continues]

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And a very special shout out to Shanda for recording audio for me at the strike! I couldn't have made this episode with out you!

*In Defense of Fandom* was made possible through an unhealthy obsession, and your support via ko-fi. If you're not already supporting the show and you'd like to, you can find a link in the show notes to our ko-fi. Your support is deeply appreciated.