

A Quick Pre-PALISADE Update

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AUSTIN: Hey, everybody. This is not PALISADE 01, as I am sure folks are hoping for, but the feed has been dry for a few weeks, and I wanted to quickly hop on and say hello and give everybody an update.

The short version, which some of you who are More Civilized Age fans may already know, is that we had an unfortunate delay with PALISADE because of an unexpected medical situation earlier this month. Everybody's fine, everyone's home okay, you don't have to worry, you don't have to freak out. We know that you love us, we know that you care about us. I promise that we are good. But it does mean that our PALISADE recording schedule has been a little bit derailed.

The good news is that this weekend, we are finally recording the first full session of the season. We had already recorded some material that will probably end up as a Patreon thing at some tier, I'm not sure. There's stuff in there that's changed, and not in like a fun 'here's how it changed' way, more like, a like, 'that ability doesn't work the way you thought it does, so let's ditch that', or like, 'this thing would be a spoiler to say in this—at this point, so let's not mention that outright'. So there will be some stuff that makes it up there and some stuff that doesn't.

The delay also, in some ways, let us spend a little extra time dialing in on some other elements of the season. You know, Jack had a couple extra weeks to work on the theme, and the theme is just so good. It's just—I cannot wait for y'all to hear it. They literally sent over the final mix to me and Ali and the rest of the crew yesterday. It might be one of my favorite pieces they've made, not to hype it up too much. It really hits, like, some of my personal taste vectors really well.

We also have some new cover art coming that'll get, you know, deployed with the first episode, we don't want to show that too early. And it'll be from a new artist, who we have not worked with before, I think at all, on Friends at the Table. I've worked with her before professionally, but not on a Friends at the Table thing. I'm thinking. I don't think we have.

Craig Sheldon, who had been doing our art, our cover art, for years and years now, told us actually about three years ago—I want to say it was either Twilight Mirage or Spring in Hieron—that he needed to step back and focus on his day job stuff, which, I mean, he, I think, runs like a whole creative animation company at this point. He's like Creative Director, he doesn't 'run it' run it. But Creative Director, pretty much up there. And he's like, you know, 'I have to stop doing freelance stuff and focus on the main gig'. And he told us that, and then did two or three more covers for the show anyway.

So we've known for a while that his tenure as the Friends at the Table cover artist was going to be coming to an end, and we will announce the artist that we do work with and link out incredible—it's just such good—it's so good, we'll show off some—we'll share some high-res versions of the art, too, when episode one drops. So look forward to that.

I'll also say that we got to use this time working once again with Annie Johnston-Glick, aka [@dancynrew](#) on Twitter, on a map for Palisade just like we did for Partizan. That will be embedded in the first episode so people can see that, and we'll also tweet that out, obviously, share that in the various places. It's so good. Annie literally just sent me over some options for various finishing touches as I'm speaking into this microphone. I cannot wait for y'all to see this thing. It is like, truly next level in terms of its like, detail and characterization, and the sense of Palisade as a place, and kind of some of the bigger feelings of what the space should feel like as this sort of like, fantasy/sci-fi melding thing that's happening. Very excited to share it.

And frankly, I was also able to use this delay to get my own head around this setting, and prep NPCs and giant mechs and figuring out plot hooks and reading playbooks, you know, fan playbooks, and suggesting that people check those out, and, you know—I gotta tell you, going from a few years ago when I was, you know, a full-time journalist and critic, and then got to come home and be like 'ooh, now it's time to get on my worldbuilding grind', like, 'now I'm gonna like, set up in a café'—it was also pre-COVID, right? I think I've talked about what COVID did to my ability to prep for this show and how hard it has been to have lost some of those spaces over the years, and that rhythm, that rhythm of like, 'go into the office and then like, on the way home, go to the café and set up with a laptop and like, do that work'. Losing that has really made it hard.

And now that what I do professionally, which, maybe people don't know this, but I work at a company called Possibility Space now, where I am effectively like the worldbuilding director. That was the title I interviewed for, they gave me the title IP Director, which is such a bad, like, suit-sounding name, title, I hate it. I hate 'IP Director'. Except, sometimes, you get to elbow your way into conversations you wouldn't if you were just Worldbuilding Director. You know, Worldbuilding Director, that's like, okay, like, 'go build your stupid little world'. IP Director means that I get to be in conversations and say things like, 'I think it would be bad for the IP if we did x'. And they go, 'oh, yeah, [MUMBLING], it would be bad for the IP'. So I do my best to use that title well.

My point being, now that I do that in my day job, it's hard to then be like 'alright, I've done 8 hours of worldbuilding and writing and, you know, and research, [CHUCKLING] time to do 6 more hours of writing and research and worldbuilding'. So, yeah. So while I do wish we could have kicked the season off a few weeks ago, frankly it is probably better that I had some extra time to do better work before we kick things off in a big way.

While I have you, a couple other quick announcements. I would love to keep this under 15 minutes. I really would. That's, I think, a realistic—I guess realistic of me to say 15 minutes. I was gonna say 10 and I thought, [INHALES] 'Austin. Say 15'. So I've said 15.

First of all, we've been making an effort to do more streaming over at [Twitch.tv/FriendsAtTheTable](https://www.twitch.tv/FriendsAtTheTable). In honor of PALISADE starting up soon, Dre has been hosting a weekly Mecha Monday stream where they, I think, are currently playing *Armored Core 4* with a guest. I say I think, but I was on one of those streams along with Art, I know Keith has been on one, I think Ali—Keith—Art was on one with me, I think Art may have been on another one, I know Keith has been on one, I know Ali's been on one. I also know that like, Keith and Dre did some *Fortnite* the other day. Piccolo was there. I think Ariana Grande maybe was there. I—you know.

We've continued our game of *Wilderness*, and that I know for sure is up on the YouTube. [YouTube.com/FriendsattheTable](https://www.youtube.com/FriendsattheTable). But I think the archives for Mecha Mondays may have been eaten. But my, you know—I am running *Wilderness*, I can vouch those streams got saved, those are up, YouTube.com/Friends underscore—FriendsattheTable, sorry. YouTube.com and [Twitch.tv/FriendsAtTheTable](https://www.twitch.tv/FriendsAtTheTable), the full thing. One word.

And I just realized, another thing that's up, looking at it now, is the delightful Let's Play of Keith, Art, and Jack playing through a Bluff City: America's Playground-themed *Pokémon* hack that was made by mousewifegames as part of this year's Secret Samol—which, also, just, quickly, Secret Samol happens every year and shoutouts to everyone who takes part in it every year. For people who don't know, Secret Samol is a fanwork exchange, like Secret Santa except for fanwork, for things like fanart and fanfic, and fangames, and a billion other things, poetry, like, there's all sorts of cool stuff that comes out of it. And what happens is you put in a prompt and say like, 'I would love to see Orth and Ibex dancing', for instance. And then someone pulls that out of a hat, so to speak, and—or, I think they get assigned? I think they get assigned. Maybe they can just choose it. I don't do it, because I make the show already once. It's not fan—it's not fanwork. If I do it, it's not fanwork. It's just work. So [LAUGHS] it doesn't count. But, in any case, you get a prompt, you then make something according to that prompt, and then on Secret Samol day, everything gets shown at once, and it's incredible, everybody posts the stuff on Twitter and Tumblr and everywhere else.

I actually said this over on Cohost, which I'm [Cohost.org/Austin](https://cohost.org/Austin) over there. There's no underscore on Cohost, there's just a hyphen, which the show is [Cohost.org/Friends-Table](https://cohost.org/Friends-Table). I'm not gonna be Austin 'Hyphen' Walker after being Austin 'Underscore' Walker for so long, you know? But I said this over on Cohost, but—I'm not gonna make 15 minutes, who the fuck was I kidding? On Cohost, I posted recently about how in this era where Discords have really taken over for small niche fandoms like ours, which is like—you know, I'm very grateful for how successful we are, but I say it a lot because it sometimes maybe doesn't feel this way from the outside—we are super small compared to the big actual play shows. And again, I say that knowing that many people put out actual play shows that are still as small as we were in our first

season, or smaller, and that's—that is the nature of the beast, how that shit works. It sucks that good shows don't get as much attention as they deserve. There are many shows smaller than ours that are very good and that don't get even what we get, let alone what the big ones get.

But for that size of a show, or my size of a show, our size of a show, that community has now moved from big public spaces like Twitter and Tumblr—I mean, they're still there to some degree, but not like it was in like, 2017, right? It really exists in these smaller closed-off communities, which is for many good reasons that's happened, but it means that there's not like that weekly buzz when an episode drops, right?

[10:04]

So like, I was talking to somebody recently about how I was like, oh, I wish I could have seen the reaction when we dropped that last Road to PALISADE, to see what the reaction to like, the, um—I guess I can spoil—I'll just say the intro, [LAUGHING] the last intro to The Road to PALISADE, I thought was really good. I was like, really proud of that one. And I was like, damn, five years ago, there would have been like—the hashtag would have been bumpin'. And I'm sure the Discord was bumpin', but that stuff just isn't—we're just not there, right? And so we don't see any of that.

So what Secret Samol does, like, the most important thing for us, is it gives us a chance to like, really feel the love in a real way, like when everybody came out for the National Network of Abortion Funds stream last summer, and it was like, oh, right, we have all these people who love the work that we do, and who really support this thing, and like, really go to the wall for it for us. Like, that means a lot, and so seeing Secret Samol is so rejuvenating every year. Seeing all the fanwork, seeing everybody, like—you know. We have poured a lot of love—we have poured a lot of love into these characters—there's a sentence—and these settings and these worlds, and the stories that we've told. And it feels so good to see that other people have that same response or love the work that we've done, you know?

And then also, frankly, because I genuinely think I've seen more people get into the show because they've seen some fanart or read a fic or like an excerpt from something, and been like, 'yo, what is this from?' You know, I think as much as it is good and I encourage people to be like 'hey, you should listen to Friends at the Table', fanart can kind of do that in an organic and curiosity-led way because people will just see a picture of 'your favorite character here' and be like 'oh, that character looks sick, what are they from?' and run with it from there, right? So, again, thank you to everybody who took part in Secret Samol, thank you to everybody in the past who's done it, thank you to the organizers, it really does mean a lot to all of us to see all of that great work.

Also, speaking of trying to promote the show more, you may have noticed that we are trying out some more things across various social media platforms. We're on TikTok now, which I think is [TikTok.com/@friends_table](https://www.tiktok.com/@friends_table), or just the account friends_table. That is thanks to Sylvi and Keith,

who are working closely with Art to kind of figure out how to, you know, promote the show and get in front of more people. I think we've tapped out the Austin Walker Twitter and podcast reach at this point. People know about the show, and they know whether they like it or not. How do we get it in front of people who are not just like, old GiantBomb fans or Waypoint fans or Great Gundam Project fans, you know, et cetera?

And also just like, you know, Twitter seems like it's collapsing. How do we make sure our reach doesn't fall apart if it does? So, look forward to more posts on places like Cohost and TikTok and probably Instagram eventually. We don't have an IG set up because—I think just 'cause we don't have the—someone already has FriendsAtTheTable and Friends_Table, so we've got to figure something else out on that platform. Again, it's—I'm recording this at 3:35 A.M., so apologies for rambling.

So, look forward for more posts, to more posts, from Keith and Sylvi. Thank you to Keith and Sylvi for taking that up, and thanks to Art for managing that, it really means a lot. And also, look forward to specifically, I think, an up-to-date post about where to start listening to us. I made a post on Cohost on the Friends at the Table account there a few weeks ago, just broadly, about where a good place would be to start, but I hope—I think that we're gonna replace the old flowchart that's on Twitter, because it is just hopelessly outdated at this point. It served us well for as long as it did, but it's time to retire it and put some new things out there, you know?

I will put all of the links to all the places that we are below, and I think at 14:50 something, I think that that's it. That's not it. I still have like two or three more things. One, new Bluff coming. In the next week or so. I have to do the intro, which is hard, because—real Bluff City heads know this already, which is—I do the intros to Bluff as a character from the next Bluff City game, right? So if there's a—if there is a—if Hect—the first time Hector Hu showed up, it was for an intro, and then Hector Hu was in the next Bluff City game after that, right? That's how it always worked. The finales of the given seasons are a little bit different—or the first season, there's only been two seasons—is not from the next episode of the thing, da-da-da, but you get what I'm saying. So that's already like an added 'hm, how do you do that?'

Two, the next game—so there's one that's recorded. The one after the one that's recorded is tonally very different [CHUCKLES] than the one that is recorded. So how do I get a character from that, which we haven't recorded yet, into the right space for a song that has some very unique traits, you will see when you get there. Or you'll hear when you get there. Hopefully very soon.

Second, as we get back into the swing of things, but before we get deep enough into the season to do a bunch of Drawing Maps questions, Q&As, I would love to do some more old-fashioned Tips at the Table. If you have questions about playing in tabletop role-playing games, or setting ideas, or advice to how to run a game or play a different type of character than you normally do, or any of that stuff, send that to tipsatthetable@gmail.com. That is, I believe, a \$5 Patreon

backer bonus, that's a podcast that goes right into the podcast feed. We haven't recorded one in forever, because we switched to doing Drawing Maps and then we were on hiatus, and then life, da-da-da, but I really want to get some tips in because it's just fun to do those, and we've had enough time now that I think we would probably get some fresh questions.

I've also said this a lot before, but I expect just to restructure the Patreon sometime this year. We really struggle to stay up-to-date with it as it stands, or the opposite happens, like Live at the Table, we have been good through March since last year. Right? And it's not even March yet as of me recording this. Sometimes you rocket past a date because you get a bunch of stuff done at once. And also just, you know, we built that Patreon back in 2017, right? We would—what we built it for is like, the common wisdom of a different time. At the time, it was like, 'put a thousand different tiers up there that have a bunch of different things, because that's—that way you get people who have a couple extra bucks in their pocket', and contrast that with like, the A More Civilized Age Patreon, which is like, it has one tier. It's a \$5 tier. And it's doing fine, you know? We have a lot of great supporters who are just like, 'yeah, here's \$5, I want to get one extra podcast a month' where we do a Q&A, much different setup.

I don't think we would trim this all the way back to that, but we would love to trim it down to something we can consistently get out, we can definitely get it out month-to-month, everyone will know it's there. I would love to roll in our streaming stuff into that because it's fun to do livestreams, just generally, it's fun to livestream video games, it's fun to livestream talking about fish, it's fun to livestream just talking with each other about whatever, Googling around and talking about shit, but it's hard to justify doing that when it's not a Patreon backer bonus, you know? And it's another place where it's like, it would be great to be able to reach some new fans that way, for instance, right?

So, you know, expect us to try to rework it. It's hard to just like, snap your fingers and change a bunch of stuff, you know, this is income for—in some cases, primary income for people on the cast, and the idea of being like 'alright, we're gonna just change it all around' is very scary, because it means you could be potentially messing with someone's rent. Right? There's stuff we just won't change, like Ali and I have both been working on postcard series for the next year for this—honestly, it's going to be more than a year's worth of postcards at this point, because we're back on those, but we have the art for, I think, two full sets at this point, one of which is for *Realis*, the game that we announced last July as part of the National Network of Abortion Funds stream. I have incredible art for a *Realis* postcard set that's written—that's like, ready to get printed. I think we're probably gonna wait to send that out for a little bit. I know Ali has another set that looks incredible, that's kind of a—I don't want to spoil exactly what it is, but it's more of a wide-reaching thing, not a single-season thing. So if you are waiting on postcards, those postcards are in production. The art is complete and it's sick as hell, so look forward to those.

And yeah, so yeah. I think it's—we'll try to move to some sort of set-up on the Patreon that encourages us to do more livestreaming of various types, it's just so much easier to be like 'hey, let's play some *Wilderness*, let's, you know, talk about fish', than it is to be like 'alright, I need

four people to get together with your real busy schedules while you're doing—while you're moving across the country, or while you're teaching two cour—you know, it is wild right now in terms of where our schedules are, and so we're gonna have to rework that at some point.

I'm looking at my last little notes. Oh, so, okay. Mentioned National Network of Abortion Funds charity stream, I mentioned A More Civilized Age, well, one of the stretch goals during that stream was a *Star Wars* tabletop role-playing game that we would play, it was a promise that we would do a one-shot with the More Civilized Age folks. It would be me and Ali, Rob Zacny and Natalie Watson, the people who do A More Civilized Age, which, if you don't know that, we do a show about *The Clone Wars*, and also we did an *Andor*, like, mini-season along with *Andor* as it was dropping, and it was a blast, and if you liked that show, you should go listen to A More Civilized Age. I think we did a pretty good—I'm like, genuinely proud of our coverage of that show. I think we did something really special, which is not how I ever feel about anything I make, genuinely. So, go listen to that.

[20:16]

But we had the stretch goal to play a *Star Wars* role-playing game together, and we ended up getting Jess Levine from—who made *going rogue*, who also made *I Have the High Ground*, which is not explicitly a *Star Wars* thing necessarily, and neither is *going rogue*, right? It's a science fantasy, science espionage, you know, sci-fi espionage, no dice no masters/belonging outside belonging game, derived from Riley Rethal's *GALACTIC 2E*, which itself, of course, follows *Dream Askew* and *Dream Apart*, by Avery Alder and Ben Rosenbaum. If you enjoy *Star Wars*, or if you enjoyed our game of *Orbital*, which was also a no dice no masters/belonging outside belonging game, so if you like that system and what we did with that, you should go to amorecivilizedage.net and give the episode of *going rogue* 2E—sorry, *going rogue*, not 2E, *GALACTIC 2E*, *going rogue*—a listen.

It was a blast, Rob and Zacny—Rob and Zacny. Rob Zacny and Natalie Watson get to role-play, so I get to role-play with them, and that was very fun, it's just like fun to do that with people who you know super well, but you've never seen do any sort of tabletop role-playing games. So doing that with such character-focused and kind of scenario and setting and, you know, the sort of, like—so focused on telling a good story, and focused on character goals, and what people are focused on in bigger picture ways than just like, 'here's my blaster ability' or whatever. It was so fun to see Rob and Natalie like, step up for that stuff. It was a blast. Also, I get to play both a bright-eyed naive rebel and also a hardened cynical clone trooper, and I don't know that there is anything better than that. That was a blast. So, go listen to that. That's amorecivilizedage.net. You can also just find that in your various feeds.

Alright, I didn't make 15 minutes, but it looks like I might make 25 minutes. That was longer than it was supposed to be. Who could have guessed that I would run longer than I intended? I think that that's it. We will be back probably in a few more weeks. I would love to say we'll hit

February, but between the aforementioned medical stuff and an upcoming work trip that's gonna take me out of town for like a week, I don't want to make any promises that I will have to break. Things you learn as a child with divorced parents. Don't make promises if you're gonna break 'em. Just don't. Say 'I would like to do that, but I can't promise it'. Alright, that is it. I hope that everyone is well, and thanks as always for your patience and your support. I will see you in PALISADE. Peace.