

# **STELLAR FIRMA**

## **SEASON SEASON 3**

### **Q&A**

#### **Content Warnings**

- **Spoilers for all of Stellar Firma**
- **Discussions of: death (inc. mass death), food, smoking**
- **Mentions of: guns, drugs & alcohol, canon-typical trauma, COVID-19 pandemic**
- **SFX: occasional beeping-**

TIM: Hello, and welcome to the Stellar Firma Season 3 mailbag. My name's Tim. And this crazy cat over here is called...

BEN: Ben.

TIM: There he is. They call him Jazzy Ben.

BEN: I'm very— Yes.

TIM: Old Fun Ben.

BEN: I'm very, very fun. Um. Yes.

TIM: What crazy capers have you been getting up to recently?

BEN: I... ate an apple?

TIM: Uh huh. Kid, did you eat the core? Or did you discard that for safety reasons? **[Ben begins repeating the word 'no']**

BEN: I, you know, cyanide.

TIM: **[laughs]** God, you can't keep him down. Um, so we've received your questions. **[both brothers begin laughing]** I'm gonna do a sort of a radio presenter voice. We've received your—

**BEN:** [in a terrifying bubbly voice] Hullo, everybody!

**TIM:** We've received your questions via the... internet. Um, and, we've got a little selection here that we're gonna scroll through and try and let you in on a little insight on the crazy, oh gosh, what a bunch of, um, you know, how it's made and stuff. It's mostly microphones and Zoom.

**BEN:** Mmmhmm, mmmhmm.

**TIM:** Um, scoop. Scoop? [BEN: Scoop?] Skype. I was trying to say Skype but also Zoom, so I said scoop.

**BEN:** Scoop!

**TIM:** It's just sc— You know what? When we're making Stellar Flrma, the secret is scoop. No more questions.

**BEN:** Tim texts me. He's like, 'Hi Ben, scoop me.'

**TIM:** [laughing] Um, 'Ben. Scoop?' And then I just get an emoji of, I don't know, Bruce Willis doing a thumbs up. I don't know.

**BEN:** There's an emoji of him? That's a gif now? Is it an emoji or a gif?

TIM: I don't know gifs. I don't know— Is a gif— I'm very— Look, I'm 28, but I'm also incredibly old. **[they laugh]** I am both of those things. Um, so we're gonna take it in turns. I'm gonna let Ben take the first reading of a question.

BEN: Right. So the first question we have is from B.N. Mara, and the question is: "With the between seasons content, crossovers, and the album, you've explored quite a lot formats within the Stellar Firma universe. Given unlimited time and resources, is there any format or story you would still want to try out? Uh, not in the 'what can we expect in the future' sense, but more along the lines of 'this sounds absolutely ridiculous, and is technically impossible, but sure would be fun.'"

TIM: I did have a thought.

BEN: Oh!

TIM: Not technically— Yeah, I know, it's shocking, isn't it?

BEN: A whole thought?

TIM: A whole— Well, you know what? Let's say I've got three quarters and see what happens towards the end.

BEN: Okay, okay.

TIM: I was thinking not technically impossible, but it'd be really cool to do proper, like, animated episodes. I think the show would suit animation quite well.

BEN: Yes.

TIM: Cos it's like a one-room show, but with a lot of speculative thinking of elsewhere, and—

BEN: Yeaah. I think also it's the only kind of format that could keep up with the vastly varying descriptions we give of the characters.

TIM: You'd need things to be fluid. You'd need a background to be able to change and change back without it being strange. I think animation's your friend there.

BEN: Well, quite honestly, the animatics that I've seen, fan-made animatics, are all fabulous.

TIM: Yeah. So just like, full 35 minute versions of those, please.

BEN: Yes.

TIM: But for new productions.

BEN: Yes, absolutely.

TIM: If anybody knows Laika, put them in touch with us.

BEN: So wait, hang on a minute. You're going stop motion, not drawn?

TIM: I didn't think that until I said Laika, cos I was trying to remember an animation house. But that would be cool.

BEN: Stop motion would be— Actually, yes, unlimited time and budget. Stop motion! Because it's just a really fun format. It's a fun medium.

TIM: Imagine *Trexel and the Two Strings*, come on. **[Ben groans]** That'd be good. 'What are these strings for? Who are you? Are you some sort of metaphor for death? Augh, piss off!' You know, it'd be great.

BEN: **[laughing]** Yeah, I mean, to be honest, I don't have a different answer. I think that would be fab. I'd really like to see that, and that has crowded anything else that could have been in my brain out of it, as I'm now like 'stop motion Stellar Firma pleaaase.'

TIM: Would that be classed as a full thought, Ben? Would you allow it?

BEN: I think that's a thought and a half, to be honest.

TIM: I can't believe the show's over and I've just hit my stride.

BEN: Yeah, that's it. **[laughing]**

TIM: That, and also — and this is totally out of our control in terms of being able to do, would be livestreams. I'd love to do some live stage performances because, oh. Ooh, it would be fun.

BEN: Ooooh, Live improv. Ooooh.

TIM: How do you feel about that, Ben?

BEN: Mmm. Mixed?

TIM: I think you'd be good.

BEN: Mixed. I mean, the, um—

TIM: You know the character too— Well, you know the character well enough for I think it not be an issue.

BEN: Yeah yeah yeah. The, um, oh no, what was the name of it? Um, Outpostcon. The Outpostcon panel we did. That was fun.

TIM: Yeah yeah yeah! It would essentially be that, except, you know, in a hot sweaty room in Brighton.

BEN: Yeah, also, we did a panel for Outpostcon, and I don't know if you can access it like publicly?

TIM: It's on Youtube.

BEN: It's on Youtube?

TIM: It's on Youtube, mate.

BEN: Oh well in which case, we did one for Outpostcon, so go... take a look.

TIM: Go take a look. Can't tell you how to find it. Google 'Outpostcon,' and, I don't know, 'Stellar Firma,' and you'll probably find it.

BEN: I would assume it would have the name of the thing we're doing.

TIM: You hope so. I've definitely— It's linked to on the discord every now and again, and I'll watch it when I'm feeling down. Cos we did an excellent job.

BEN: Oh, good. Good.

TIM: This one is from... no name.

BEN: I think that's from many people.

TIM: I, yeah. Or, it was just anonymously submitted, but there's just like an all-lowercase, in brackets, [no name.]

BEN: They've been stricken from the record!

TIM: So, um, "In the season 1 Q&A, you mentioned that you knew how the story would end. Did that change as seasons two and three went one with all the twists and turns? Or did it serve as a guiding point for the entirety of the production? What was it like to see where the story went, and how the initial proposal changed from planet designing to sales to complains and so on, in comparison to what you expected when you first started out." I apologise for how poorly I read that. There were many subclauses, and my face got away from my brain.

BEN: The broad strokes were the same, and I need to remember that all the episodes have aired now, so there is no spoilers anymore, cos they're all out there.

TIM: Spoiler away.

BEN: Um, so, definitely from my part, it was quite similar except that I was definitely advocating for, um, David to just be like 'sod this' and explode the whole station? And just kill everyone?

TIM: Yeah, yeah. Ben is a very harsh advocate for that ending. And you know what? I had sympathy for that ending. I liked it, I was on board, **then**

we pitched it to the network, and they said “Do... Do you... Hey, guys, hi, um.”

BEN: Is the “protagonist murder everyone” ending really—?

TIM: “Do you want to finish your comedy show with a genocide? I’m not sure you do. I think you think that will be good,” and they did have a point. I think they did have a point.

BEN: I’m a big fan of like, bleak, punchy endings. And we knew, obviously—

TIM: You’d like all plays to end with a gunshot and then cut to black.

BEN: Uh no, I’m not a student production of anything.

TIM: “I’m gonna smoke on stage and say the word [BLEEP] because I can!”

BEN: Yeah, well, you’ve just been bleeped out, so you can’t say that word.

TIM: Oh, I’ve been censored!

BEN: Yeah, that’s it. Um, quick, get a column about how you’ve been silenced!

TIM: **[laughing]** Give me this microphone and this television show. “Let me speak!”

BEN: Yep.

TIM: Do you think when I said ‘cigarette’ they had to bleep it out as well because of, uh— no?

BEN: Nooo. I think we can acknowledge the existence of smoking— We’ll do a George Lucas and just call them death sticks.

TIM: Death sticks.

BEN: Care for a death stick?

TIM: What about this? What about this? “Mere-juana. Bennies.”

BEN: Do you want a puff tube?

TIM: Lewd... lewds.

BEN: Lewds?! That is a different thing, Tim.

TIM: Quaalude.

BEN: No, a lewd— Well, okay, now lewd mean— Anyway, we're getting off topic. But there were two significant changes, cos the broad strokes were the same. Which was first: Trexel blew himself out of an airlock, [TIM: Yes.] not an escape pod, and took— Everyone died. [TIM: It was very deathy.] So the same people went out the airlock, but everybody died, and then David was like, "Self destruct Stellar Firma," and everyone goes boom.

TIM: Yeah, but we warned off the "everyone's dead." And you know what? That was also a certain amount of— Whilst we very much built Stellar Firma as a three season arc, when we got to the end of it there was a certain amount of, like, "I don't want to murder all these people necessarily! We might want to do something with them at some point in the future."

BEN: Yeah, maybe.

TIM: Maybe. Maybe not, who knows. You can't do that if they're all dead. So there was very much a "this story sits on its own, we could stop now and never do anything again and I'd still be very happy with what we've done," or, "two years time we come back to it and do something, who knows." Open to discussion.

BEN: And kind of to the second part— cos basically, "how was the ending?" Basically the same, but we made it a little lighter, and, I think in retrospect, better. [TIM: Yeah.] Hopefully. Unless it came out and everybody hated it. [TIM: Yeah.] At which point it was terrible, and I never wanted it to happen, and they throttled me creatively.

TIM: And we were against those changes. We wanted to kill them all and they wouldn't let us. It's not that we had the meeting and agreed.

BEN: Unless you did like it, and then we actually went to Rusty Quill and suggested it ourselves. But the second part of that question is also like, “What was it like to see where the story went and how the initial proposal changed in comparison to what we expected?” And like I think it— It was interesting. Obviously the proposals changed mainly to keep things fresh, cos we got to the end of season one— And I think we’ve spoken about this before. We got to the end of season one and were like, “Well, we’re running out of ideas. Let’s reframe the problem.”

TIM: Yeah. Because especially in improv, it’s not like the characters changed, or what we were doing really changed, but there was just a little bit of change in perspective that allows you to do more, be silly in a different way. Cos at the end of the day, we’re taking briefs and we’re coming up with ideas. But when you could be like, “Right, this is a bit more salesy, that one’s about war,” it’s just— It just keeps it fresh and fun and means that you don’t get to episode 50 and think “Oh god, what have we done? I can’t remember.”

BEN: And you can only ask, like, “So what’s the gravity like?” so many times before you’re like, “Look, we’ve answered the question basically every way this can be answered.”

TIM: And Bryn is unhappy with every answer we come up with.

BEN: Oh, yes, absolutely.

TIM: I can’t believe that man.

BEN: Yeah, and like also, I think the one thing that is noticed, or Tim sort of, um, got on when we were planning out season three, I think you will notice that seasons one and two? You know, the characters are pretty consistent, and then season three went, “Ah yes, a narrative. We should... have one of those.”

TIM: “Let’s develop these characters.”

BEN: Yes. **[laughing]** So I think they went through a little more change.

TIM: Yeah. The show was conceived in a very sort of “this will be fun in a quite low production, heavy thing,” and then towards season three we were like, “actually we can do more with this, we can do more with the characters, we can do more with the plot.” Partly because we were coming to the end, and it’s suddenly like, “Oh gosh, here’s the last chance to do it. To do a lot of that.”

BEN: And also to a certain extent, thanks to you lot. People listen to it, and it’s like, “Oh, well, we should put in, you know.”

TIM: We should put in more effort into this, cos people seem to like it. Someone’s done an animatic. Let’s step up our game!

BEN: Absolutely. Actually, this is good that I’m reading this out, cos it’s kind of a question for you, I wasn’t really involved. “Did you have to convince Alex to let you do the album, or was he onboard straightaway?”

TIM: He was onboard after I’d announced it. **[Ben cracks up]** Ummm... yes. So, it was something we were sort of joking about. We were like,

“Oooh, wouldn’t it be,” and then I mocked up a demo, and I released it, and I got a message from him saying, “Right, so this is happening then, is it?” And he was very very helpful, and very onboard, and thought it could be a good thing, but then was very much a “I decided it was something I would tell people we would do,” and then he was like, “Well, I suppose we should now.”

BEN: Definitely an asking forgiveness rather than permission kind of moment.

TIM: The tail somewhat wagged the dog on that on. But, uh, yes. I worked on it on my own, doing demos for all but one or two of the songs which came to the end. So I had sort of demos and all of them, and then Alex said, “Would you like some money to do some production value with this?” And that’s when we got Doctor Beaver and Joe involved, and went to a lovely studio and recorded everyone. In a race against time for lockdown as I remember.

BEN: Yes, yes, I think we were like the last weekend before lockdown. We were like, “Just get it done!”

TIM: “Just let me in the studio!” All worked out, all worked out. But yes, he was very supportive. Iris! “At what point did you know that you wanted Bathin to be a voiced character, and how did you pick Travis McElroy eventually?”

BEN: Yes.

TIM: Picked! Yes, cos we were like, “Get me Travis!” We demanded as we stamped on a cigar in an office.

BEN: No, I think — and correct me if I'm wrong, Tim — this was basically a pretty much purely opportunistic thing.

TIM: Oh, yeah.

BEN: Travis tweeted that he enjoyed the Magnus Archives. Both Tim and I, you know, are fans of some of the McElroy's stuff. Like we both listen to MBMBAM.

TIM: I love a Monster Factory.

BEN: Monster Factory's a lot of fun. I heartily enjoyed Amnesty and Balance. You know, we were like, ooh, we could maybe have the McElroys as a guest star! That would be very helpful for publicity, given their profile weight compared to ours.

TIM: It's no small thing. We are a relatively small production.

BEN: Absolutely. So there's, you know, there's solid advertising and the ability to reach a larger audience by including people.

TIM: I didn't intend initially— I sort of thought Bathin would remain unvoiced and wouldn't turn up.

BEN: Yeah. Well, it's cos Bathin was an offhand joke from a submission.

TIM: Yeah. Bathin has taken on a lot more importance than I ever intended.

BEN: Yes. I suppose, actually, for the second question: that's one thing where the story changed. Like, Bathin was just like a, "Oh look here's a hunky poster boy."

TIM: I think so much of what has become popular and quote unquote important to the canon has all been like, "Oh, oh! That's the thing that everyone— Okay, well let's write in more of that."

BEN: And also, I think vastly more of Bathin's character's exists in fanworks than it ever does in, y'know.

TIM: If you actually add up all of the details [BEN: Oh, there's nothing.] of Bathin, it's about three lines and a lot of yelling BATHIN.

BEN: Yeah. Pretty much, pretty much. From Nix. "Was Hartro helping out the main gang always intended to be a season three plot point?" Where did that idea come from?

TIM: Jenny is fuuun to work with.

BEN: Yes. Yes, Hartro is very good. And I think— Was it? Did we plan it in the third season, or was it the case where we just had an episode with Jenny in it, and we were just like, "We need to do this more, because there's not gonna be enough like, review episodes, y'know, before we stop."

TIM: Yes, yes. There's a certain amount of 'we wanna get Jenny in for more stuff,' the dynamic of the three of them together is so much fun.

BEN: Ah, yeah.

TIM: But we can't just book book— Like, for two seasons, it's been every review, and we— Yeah, you can't just be like, "It's reviews every week now! Every day now." So, yeah, we just decided to have her in for a run, and it was a lot of fun, those records. Almost like 90% of the bloopers come out of those records.

BEN: I think that is my favourite section of the show, to be honest.

TIM: I'd agree. I'd agree.

BEN: Definitely the best part, I think, of season 3. Obviously, you know, different episodes have highlights, but as like a run, having Jenny on and doing a, um— What's it called? A three hander, right?

TIM: A three-hander?

BEN: Yes.

TIM: As opposed to, Ben?

BEN: A two-hander.

TIM: Correct. Now, you're a theatreman.

BEN: OOooh. They call me Ben Theatreman.

TIM: Do your best toast impression. Umm, uhh, can you hear me, toast?

BEN: I can hear you, Clemfandango!

TIM: Now can I do it?

BEN: **[softly]** Can you hear me, toast?

TIM: I can hear you, Clemfandango!

BEN: Oh, yes, of course, it's Matt Barry, so you have to be like, "ClaaaAAAAaaaAAMmm...."

TIM: I'd like a cup of teaaa. I'm sort of a horse sometimes. Eh.

BEN: That's just Trexel at that point.

TREXEL: **[tired demogorgon noise]** Shut up. Look, no one should know that Trexel is 30% Matt Berry, 20% Brian Blessed, and the rest is me!

BEN: It's a solid reci— That's a very distressing but fun cocktail.

TIM: In short, Jenny was loads of fun to work with, so we found an excuse to work with her more.

BEN: Basically.

TIM: Ben! Next show— three hander with Jenny? Done, sold.

BEN: I mean, I'd be up for it.

TIM: In the books. That's how we decide things here. On the Q&A.

BEN: Depends— Well, it's like with the album, we just announce it, and then Alex has to agree.

TIM: Yeah yeah yeah, yeah. We'll call it "The Ben and Jenny Show, Featuring Tim."

BEN: No no, not 'featuring,' 'feat.'

TIM: Feat.

BEN: Feat time.

TIM: And I'll be sort of moodily in the corner, spitting out rhymes.

BEN: Tim, you need to read this one now, thank you.

TIM: Oh, thanks, Ben. This one's from Strawcup. Um, "To what extent does the soundscaping and other audio editing add to or differ from what you have in mind when recording the episode?" Uh, does it help to make the more chaotic nature of the improv more cohesive?

BEN: Yeah, I think it's a process thing. So I think it's more for to answer. But I can definitely give my opinion on that second part.

TIM: Cos you are very much divorced from the process in that you're involved in the recording, and then you basically hear the episode when it goes out. [BEN: Yes.] Whereas I hear it at a couple of different stages? So how does it compare to what you think is going to happen?

BEN: Oh, I don't have anything in my brain. Unless we're like, unless wer—

TIM: At all, ever.

BEN: No, unless we're doing a specific gag about like, you know, you getting electrocuted in the doors, right? You know, that, that is like— "Oh, yeah, there'll be like an electronic buzz kind of coming out of that." But from the listening point of view from when we record it, I think it absolutely does help us hugely to make the improv cohesive. Especially, you know, because standard audio drama stuff, but it massively helps to underscore

the action. And that's really it: it gives you a sense of space and placement of the characters.

TIM: Movement and interaction.

BEN: Like, for example, one thing I didn't expect is when David's got their own room, we've got that like muffled sound to tell you when characters are in like the Business Warfare room, when characters are in David's sort of—the clone room. And that was really nice. Not that something I expected at all, but it massively helps to know where characters are.

TIM: Especially with the remote record. Cos it's hard from this side to sort of know how much it affects— You know, being in a studio together and being able to sort of gesticulate and do more stuff. And like, a little bit of in-room foley? To “we are always all in separate places,” sometimes three of us, and it can very easily end up being a weird, null space in which we are interacting, obviously Maddy most of all in the last series and a half, but Ed and David before then, just giving those things a bit of heft and a bit of weight. I think a lot of like, slapstick is completely impossible to sell without it. And there is a fair bit of slapstick in the show, and I always like put it in, and know that Maddy or Ed and David before, will be able to sort of get the rhythms in there. And to be honest, most of the time I don't really have to do much on that. I just say, “Here it is,” and every now and again I'm like, “move that a little bit forward,” or, “Oh, I've heard a little mistake here,” but nine times out of ten, especially in the last season with Maddy, she's absolutely nailed it. So well done, Maddy. Double award winning, I'm looking up now the two sound design awards she won. I'm just looking across—

BEN: One for Ben? Two for Ben.

TIM: One for the show, one for I.M.O.G.E.N., and one for Ben, is there—

BEN: Yeah, there's two there.

TIM: What, two? One's from 2019, one from 2020. Just checking if there's any more... You know, naught for two. Okay.

BEN: It's a good bit, and you're gonna dine on that for a long time.

TIM: Um, next question.

BEN: Uh, right. So this question is from Quinn. "I feel like the satirical, political, pointed commentary on the 21<sup>st</sup> century society element has become more overt over time. Was that always intended in a 'hook them with comedy and then make them stop and think' kind of way, or did it just develop naturally?"

TIM: I think it's a very natural development. I think there was a certain amount of, early on, we were just trying to make a— "Right, does this work? Does this thing work? Right, comedy, gah." And then more of— Cos like, loads of that stuff is just the kind of stuff me and Ben yell at each other anyway.

BEN: Yeah.

TIM: And I think when relaxed and calmed down a bit, a lot more of that had room— Cos we were having fun.

BEN: And I think also like, it was always, always there, because I think anyone who pretends that, well, to be honest, any kind of fiction is apolitical, but especially, you know, sci-fi we are doing, this is obviously a sci-fi—

TIM: I'm just gonna stop you there, Ben. You really need to hit the 'a' in 'apolitical' because you just said, 'Anything that's a political,' and it didn't entirely come across that's what you were saying. A political what?

BEN: Yes, a-political. Not political. You know, the, um...

TIM: You have a master's in English, and you can't speak.

BEN: I don't have a master's in speaking.

TIM: Well, English is... oh, my argument's fallen apart.

**BEN/TIM:** Wheeee!

**TIM:** [cracking up] What was that?

BEN: I dunno! But it's like, a story anyway. It's a sci-fi story. It is a story about a corporate dystopia, and it's also a story where included the idea of clones. Which in and of itself is like—

TIM: It's a can of worms.

BEN: It's a can of worms! And to not address it and just be like, 'ha ha ha, clones are just a fun thing we don't need to examine any further!' is just cowardly, pathetic, and grossly irresponsible.

TIM: Well, I mean, we were hoping to be all of those things, but alas, we were brave, righteous, and really cool. Sorry, guys.

BEN: I realize the— I'm not pretending we got it perfect, or even got it that right. Gave it our best shot.

TIM: I think we got not wrong enough the people were okay with it.

BEN: Yeah, yeah, and that's really all that I aim for.

TIM: And I also think that there was, um, I do genuinely think this is part of it, I was listening throughout most of the production to a podcast called "Revolutions." And it went from the French Revolution to the Russian Revolution during production, and I suddenly had a lot more facts about early communists.

BEN: I do enjoy how, yes, there's a lot of like weird Trexel pulls about sort of, you know, the Red Bolsheviks or something, and it's like, oh wow, that's a really obscure name you've pulled out there.

TIM: You know what? Let's talk about the Mensheviks. They don't as much. Known as the 'minority,' cos Bolshevik means majority and Menshevik

means minority? I think, I can't remember if it's that way round. Stuff like that. It's a good podcast, listen to it.

BEN: I have a podcast recommendation if you just wanna be furious about everything.

TIM: Oh, yeah.

BEN: Um, "Behind the Bastards". It's very good.

TIM: Oh, yeah, it'll make you real cross.

BEN: Makes you very cross. But it's good information, if a little bit American centric, but, you know, they're American. As if everything else on the internet.

TIM: As is everyone, actually. If you check, everyone's an American. It's weird. This one's from Moose! Moose asks, "Now that the series has come to a close, what's your favourite memory from recording Stellar Firma?"

BEN: Never having to record with my brother ever again.

TIM: It's gonna be a great memory, never having to remember that ever again, isn't it?

BEN: Yes.

TIM: Do you want an emotionally open and honest answer, or do you wanna keep on this masculine bull[bleep]?

BEN: I have a terrible memory, so I don't have a specific favourite memory?

TIM: Wow. Wow. Wow.

BEN: I... No, what! That's just, you know.

TIM: Three years, wow.

BEN: That's my brain falling apart, to be honest.

TIM: Like a wet cake.

BEN: No, I just really enjoyed all of it, to be honest. Like, it's just fun. It's just been really fun.

TIM: Enjoyed all of it. It's like a crap best man speech. "You know what I love most about Mark? All of it. Anyway, to the bride and groom..."

BEN: I mean, you spent most of my best man speech complaining, so....

TIM: And it was an excellent best man speech. Highlight of the wedding? That's not for me to say. That's for the people to chant. They're like, "Tim should get married to the concept of being great! That's what should happen," they all chanted.

BEN: So how about your memory, Tim? Your specific memory that you're definitely gonna come up with?

TIM: I have one. I really enjoyed it when Erin came in to record, and just immediately sat down and started discussing how they had farted so badly they had to leave all of the doors and windows of their car open while they went to a shop. And then I said, "We are recording this," and they said something along the lines of like, "I don't **[bleep]**ing care." That was one of the— Yeah, that, and probably a recording with Jenny, when were doing the— I think this might have been in studio? Or was it over Zoom? It was one of the training sessions, and it was either the chicken, grain, and fox one, or the D&D one.

BEN: The Planets and Protagonists episode is, was great.

TIM: The recording of that, cos we were all three of us in this studio.

BEN: Having a bunch of fun.

TIM: Having a bunch of fun. And it was very much like, "Cool, I'm being paid to do this, this is awesome."

BEN: This is from Noblessejess. "Looking back on the series, is there anything you would change?"

TIM: The actor that plays David.

BEN: He's talking about me.

TIM: I'd like to get— Who would I like for David? I'd like Gilbert Gottfreid.  
"Trexel!"

BEN: "I'm a clone!" Mine is the actor who play **[mumbles]**.

TIM: And who would you get to replace them?

BEN: Actually, I think you could do a good thing of a Matt Berry/Richard Ayoade vehicle. You know, really going back to like the Channel 4, sort of goth in dark place sort of Mighty Boosh era— Which was on BBC but not, you know. But that sort of thing, I think you'd get a good one out of.

TIM: I think a weird Hollywood adaptation with Matt Berry and Richard Ayoade would be a lot of fun.

BEN: I don't think either of those actors have the clout to get a Hollywood adaptation. They very much exist in the "Fun on British TV." Matt Berry with a little bit of, um—

TIM: When he directed *Submarine* and got a little bit more profile, he was in that awful Ben Stiller comedy, which isn't his fault. He was quite good in it.

Called *The Watch* or something. It was like the local neighborhood watch. I think it might have been called *Neighborhood Watch*.

BEN: Oooh, yes, I remember that.

TIM: And that was like a big production that didn't do very well. I also don't think he particularly enjoyed Hollywood because it's awful. Is there anything you would change? Umm, pff.

BEN: It might give you a bit of thinking time. Like, being honest, I don't know yet. I don't think I've had enough space from it to start to be able to break down— Like broadly, I'm quite proud of what we did? I think it was pretty good. It definitely wasn't perfect. So I'm sure there will be stuff, "Oh we could change that," but I don't have anything specific at the moment.

TIM: I thought it was perfect... Uh, no. Yeah, I think I'm in a similar boat. It seems a bit of a cop-out answer, but like currently I'm just, I was just focused on getting it over the line.

BEN: Yeah.

TIM: And I'm sure in a year's time I'll be like, ahh, I wish we'd done this, or I wish we'd done that. I think I wish we'd maybe— Maybe what I'd changed is something that'd be impossible to change. Which is, having done a season before we did the first season? Just so we could work out some of the kinks? But how the hell's that supposed to work?

BEN: I've thought of something as well. Having more guests.

TIM: Yes, absolutely. You'll notice we got more guests towards the end, cos it makes it more fun.

BEN: And also, cos it was pointed out, "Hello, Stellar Firma is an awful lot of just two white men shouting? Uhh, can you mix it up a little bit?" and we were like yes, yes, that's a good point.

TIM: Cos as much as we made all the ancillary characters either women or nonbinary or what have you in the end, in the end of the day, it was Tim and Ben Meredith yelling for 90% of the show.

BEN: Yeah. Yeah.

TIM: This one is frommmmm... Raspberry Heaven. "What was the process for creating the songs for Cabaret Night at the Cosmic Lounge?"

BEN: Uh, well, I can answer this question!

TIM: Ben, please.

BEN: So, I was like, "Tim! Bring me songs of David 7!"

TIM: Yeah.

BEN: And then Tim went away and brought me pictures of Spider-Man? I didn't want that. I wanted songs of David 7. **[Tim laughs]**

TIM: I got a cigar stubbed out on my arm so many times.

BEN: It's why I keep one lit next to me at all times. I don't smoke them, I just need them for stubbing out on Tim's forearms.

TIM: No, you've actually got a little vacuum pump, just to sort of like suck air and just gently keep it alive. It's very elaborate for what is quite a cruel joke.

TIM: Yeah, it was very much I started messing around on Garage Band, and needed a thing to focus on— Cos obviously there's a load of singing in the show, loads of Trexel singing in the show, people are like, 'oh, you should do songs.' And then I was like, oh, I could try to make songs, oh, I'm awful at it, but I can sort of hammer it into some sort of shape and, uh, and then big daddy, daddy production dollars Alex turned up, and uh, we took those demos to a production team that I know, and I do improv with. I am performing with both of them in the Fringe. One on the desks, one on the guitar. And we sort of, yeah. Hammered it into shape. They went away and did a huge amount of instrumentation, a bit of rewrites— Yeah, it was a lot of, it was a lot of fun. You know what? I would like to do another one if we can. I think there's a possibility that we can do some more of that, either directly with Stellar Firma or with something else, because again, there's a lot of I did so much of it on my own without knowing what the hell I was doing, and then later, bigger boys came in and like, took me by the shoulder and said, "Okay, step away from the keyboard. We're gonna sort this out for you now because this is all wrong." Yeah. That was, that was roughly how it happened.

BEN: Uh, so, this question is from Sandyxandy, or Sandy Xandy.

TIM: I think go with Sandy Xandy.

BEN: Sandy Xandy.

TIM: It's a lot of fun.

BEN: "How are Enola, Harry, and Akteraks doing?" We know how Harry's doing.

TIM: Yeah.

BEN: Harry is locked in a...

TIM: If you've listened to the finale—

BEN: Oh, that's true! This has been written before people know. So we do now know—

TIM: You know what's happened with Harry and Enola. Enola's got a post-credit sequence. If you're listening to this and being like, "No they didn't," listen to the after the credits, and give us our dues, because there is a post-credits sequence that I wrote. Akteraks? Couldn't tell you. Evacuated. Evacuated in some form, I imagine.

BEN: Yeah, Akteraks would have been evacuated along with everybody else. I mean, unless, unless she had too much work to do and wouldn't leave her desk, and then... burst.

TIM: And then died, yeah. And then died.

BEN: Maybe, maybe. I mean, Akteraks was alright. I think she did have one of the more overtly evil jobs.

TIM: Yeah, yeah. Just because she was a bit—

BEN: But seemed like a decent person, just doing their job? Now obviously, “I was just doing my job...”

TIM: We get into a banality of evil very quickly.

BEN: Yeah, yeah, exactly. I mean, I don't know. For living in that system, she was probably no better or worse than most of the people in Stellar Firma.

TIM: Yeah, but people sure wanted to wife her, and we'll always have Paris. Here's a question from Moose. “Is there a new project you're working on, or is it a fully fleshed production of Time Bots™?” Now, I don't know when this is coming out, but I am hoping to do a little Time Bots episode. Only a small one, but we did— The concept of Time Bots tickled us greatly, and we think at least a trailer for that would forthcoming. Um, but in terms of sort of like, yeah, what next, because there are definitely plans to do something, we're not planning to finish this and, you know, shake hands and all walk in three different directions. Yeah, there's definitely a couple of

ideas that we're working on. Probably, you know, it's going to have a not too dissimilar format in terms of small group improv, cos that is a format that we really like, and I am certainly not scripting things. So unless they provide me with a writer, and— And at that stage I'm just being cast in a different thing. We are working on it, Moose.

BEN: So I've got a question here from Daniel. "How often did you have to stop and redo a scene because someone forgot Stellar Firma only serves slurry?"

TIM: Hundreds of times, and we still missed it a load of times.

BEN: Yep, yep. It's just fun talking about food. It turns out— There you go. That's something I would change.

TIM: We would change that. Just let them have food.

BEN: We could just have food. The slurry was like a fun one-off gag which we then were like, like a millstone around our necks. I should have said only clones eat slurry, and then everyone else can't.

TIM: Yeah, could have been. Cos we ended up having little exceptions, like the clients had food, and so you could steal food from the client kitchens. And in David 7's café, he sold muffins, but the muffins were just slurry compressed into the shape of muffins.

BEN: We kind of— Slurry's applications kind of grew and grew. I mean, fundamentally, it's like, it was just gonna be like a gray goo in a bowl. And then we were like, well, that's boring. You know, especially since we've got

alcoholic slurry that's just drink. And also the inconsistency of, 'we only eat slurry,' [TIM: And also alcohol.] but there's SO MANY varieties of normal alcohol.

TIM: Why? Who could say?

BEN: Yeah, you can't get a roll, but you can get whisky.

TIM: Yeah. And pink gin. What's going on?

BEN: Hm. And cocktails. So many cocktails.

TIM: Yeah, so, I'm glad that we had that question, because it gave us an answer to a question earlier that we didn't have an answer for. That bloody thing. Have food, please. Uh, Nix has asked, "Was Trexel's empathy arc always an intended plot point?" No. In season three, we knew that we needed to give him a little bit of— am I using the word 'pathos' correctly?

BEN: Uhhhh... yes?

TIM: Yeah. But we, we wanted to very much straddle the line, because we didn't want to, and hope we didn't end up doing, was giving Trexel a redemption arc. [BEN: Yeah.] And if you've listened to the final episode, he did not sacrifice himself, he made a mistake. Y'know, he is not a good person, but y'know, having some thoughts for other people's feelings that he did not like, change and get better as a person because people don't.

BEN: Yeah, and like, that's it. I really don't like narratives where it's too clean. Where everyone is like, oh, we've all learned a lesson, and we're all fine. It's just not how real life works.

TIM: No, Trexel's very much a product of his environment. And, you know, in-universe time, six weeks or so with a clone would not change a whole lifetime's worth of learnt behaviour.

BEN: Yeah, and, sure, you can discuss like, you know, how much is Trexel a product of his own environment. Obviously he went through some extremely traumatic experiences as a child.

TIM: The meat pile with the note saying 'earn it.'

BEN: Yeah, exactly, like, lots and lots of stuff like that. So, you know, that's a question, that's like, nature vs nurture, which is not a question that I think anyone really has an answer to.

TIM: It's probably, accidentally, the deepest question we have asked in all of Stellar Firma, and we didn't intend to ask it.

BEN: Uhh... I don't think it's that fair to us to say that we didn't intend to ask it, because it's a character thread that we found interesting. Like sure, we didn't sit down and go "What is the brief of Trexel's character," but, you know, that's the fundamental thing about Trexel is like— To be honest, it's that you get to shout with his funny voice is really the point of Trexel's character.

TIM: Ben, come on. Don't, don't **[unintelligible]**.

BEN: Tim, Tim, we built a show around exactly that.

TIM: And I hope to build many more. Look forward to new characters, such as Drexel. 'Hello, I'm different!' Crexel. 'I'm also a different person! I've got a hat.' I think we'll take one final question. Um, and this is from Antony. Antony says, "I know you said you started Stellar Firma was the excuse to make time to regularly spend together. Has doing the recordings from home sort of sucked the fun out of it, or are you still getting what you wanted from it— spending time together, presumably weekly, and now that it's over, are you going to be looking at doing other projects together." I know we've answered that last one, but I think an interesting point on the first one— because yes, the whole point of starting Stellar Firma in the first place is because we're awful, awful people who are terrible at keeping in contact with each other, despite the fact we like each other a reasonable amount.

BEN: But we need projects and deadlines.

TIM: We needs projects. Because if it's like, 'oh, I'll just go spend time with Ben,' I realize it's been six weeks and I've forgot to text him.

BEN: Yep, yep.

TIM: So, yes, and that was really, really fun in the early days. Um, but I don't know about you, Ben, but I think... Quite apart from sucking the fun out of it, once we got used to it, recording remotely has actually worked really well.

BEN: Yeah.

TIM: And given everything that's going on, a nice excuse to be forced under even more difficult circumstances to spend time with each other. Cos both Ben and I despise the Zoom hangout. I don't, ugh. I think we're not alone in thinking it's very, very difficult to just be like, 'Let's just get onto Teams or Skype or Zoom and just have a chat.' It gets very quiet very quickly.

BEN: Not a smalltalker. Not a smalltalker.

TIM: Neither of us. We do big talk. We do massive talk. Um, and so, having a project to, you know, drape over that format means that we come, we have a catchup, we have a chat, we mess around, and then we do the episode, and then we have a bit of a debrief, and then the streaming as well. Very similarly. So I think although it's not quite the same as you're getting in a studio together, given everything that's going on, I'm really really glad we had Stellar Firma as a thing to do before the world went weird. Um, because without it, I think we probably wouldn't have spoken all that much in the last year. And that would have been very sad.

BEN: Probably not. And like, yeah, and there's definitely like— It definitely at all hasn't sucked the fun out of it. And there is definitely like, with all performance, being in the room with the people obviously gives it an element which you don't get online, which is the physical element.

TIM: I think Luc Besson calls it the Fifth Element.

BEN: Ahhh. That was what it was. It was... tables. Fire, water, earth, air, and tables.

TIM: Tables. Tables for Ben to hit on his microphone.

BEN: Shut up. But no, I think, like, and it's been really good that it worked remotely. Not only because it let us finish Stellar Firma, but also means that, you know, any future projects that we have, kind of doesn't matter where we are.

TIM: Helped with guests, as well. We're in Brighton.

BEN: Really helped with guests. Cos you can get people who don't live in Brighton.

TIM: Yeah, and it was like, what are we supposed to do? We're two of us in the recording studio, and we Skype the third person? What a ridiculous thing, that would never work! And then we had to, and Rusty Quill were like, "Right, we've bought remote recording kits that we will mail to people," and all a sudden, Annie's from the US, and Jenny recorded from home.

BEN: Y'know, and Maddy.

TIM: Yeah, Maddy.

BEN: We got Alex in externally.

TIM: There is a whole story because we didn't realize until afterwards two of us were on cardioid mics, one of us was on a dynamic mic, and that's

part of the reason that Maddy has a vocal effect on her. Which actually, again, a wonderful example of constraints creating better ideas. The idea of re-recording was so onerous to everybody, because re-recording improv and trying to make it vaguely the same is possibly the worst thing you can ever, ever do. And so having to think, well, what can we do with the vocals? And then that whole sort of, Vice-Admiral Fun sort of broadcasting over a hologram from an empty studio somewhere deep in the bowels of the ship.

BEN: It's the same thing for, uh, Akteraks. Because Annie doesn't have a dedicated recording space.

TIM: Had to record it in a cupboard.

BEN: So she used a cupboard, which was quite echoey.

TIM: A cupboard, and a cupboard in which the laptop wouldn't go. So she set up the laptop, started recording it, and then closed the cupboard door with cables.

BEN: Just alone with a microphone.

TIM: So could just hear us, but couldn't see us. It was a very strange.

BEN: But then we had, you know, the fun image of Akteraks just, on a little TV screen on wheels.

TIM: Just an iPad on wheels.

Ben: Oh, which is a lot of fun.

TIM: And we wouldn't have written that. We sort of just— We're forced into being better.

BEN: Yeah, cos I think that was genuinely one of the ones where we were talking to Annie before the recording, and she was like, "This is about as good as it's getting." We're like, okaaay.

TIM: We'll just have to see how this goes. Cos, in fact, we went to go record first time, and it was like, very, very, bad echoey room. And then we went a second time with the cupboard solution, and it was a little bit better. But it all worked out! People loved her.

BEN: Yeah, yeah, very good.

TIM: Okay, well, I think that's all we've got time for. Unless you have any others that you're burning to answer, Ben?

BEN: Ooh, ooh, we've got one that I think is just for you. And it's just a little coda.

TIM: Oh, lovely.

BEN: A little final question. “How many of the jokes about people who work in marketing are about Callum?” And this is asked by... Callum, the chief marketing officer of Rusty Quill.

TIM: Well, I don't think anything was some sort of pointed jibe. But I think we all know that the art of marketing has a few foibles that we like to wryly poke fun at. No, this wasn't some sort of character assassination attempt.

BEN: I mean, you know, we have to remember, of course, Tim works in recruitment. Which is another one of those industries—

TIM: I work in recruitment. I work in sales, mate.

BEN: You don't.

TIM: I am very lucky to work for a very nice company in a nice part of the business. I am aware of other recruitment companies where it's like working in the seventh circle of hell, because that's sales.

BEN: Well... Trexel's Ten-Step Program for Ultimate Sales Domination is based on...

TIM: Directly cribbed from actual sales training I have been through. Not all of it, you know. At no point did somebody say “pretend you're dying to get them on your side.” But not as far away as you'd want, um, from some of the things that are taught. I'd say, I hasten to add, not with my current company, they're a nice bunch, but, uh, in previous jobs, and in previous trainings. Little bit of that. Little bit of soul destroying sales training. So, you know, mostly, as with well, I suppose most of Stellar Firma, it's just a way

of yelling into the void, I've found. I don't know about you, Ben. A cathartic yell into the void.

BEN: Well, I didn't get to do much yelling. But more sort of screeching into the void, I think.

TIM: Yeah, so the honking into the void for Ben.

**[they honk questionably at each other]**

Ben: Things are bad! **[kind of a high pitched ghost honking]**

TIM: I'm not a ghost, but I could be!

**[they do a strange warbling ghost honk at each other]**

BEN: Goodbye, everybody! Gooooodbyyyyye!

TIM: Oh, well, as Ben's already... **[laughing]** Said goodbye, I think we shall finish it there. So thank you so much for joining us for this Season 3 Q&A. We will see you all another time. Bye!

**[Ben ghost honks menacingly]**

TIM:

---

---

Created by Tim Meredith and Ben Meredith

Produced by Katie Seaton

Executive Producer: Alexander J Newall

Featuring: Tim Meredith, Ben Meredith,

Editing: Maddy Searle

Music: Samuel DF Jones

Artwork: Anika Khan

Mastering: Jeffrey Nils Gardner

