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# “Betwixt Odysseys: A Hellenic Soap Opera with a Godly Twist”: A Critical Retrospective

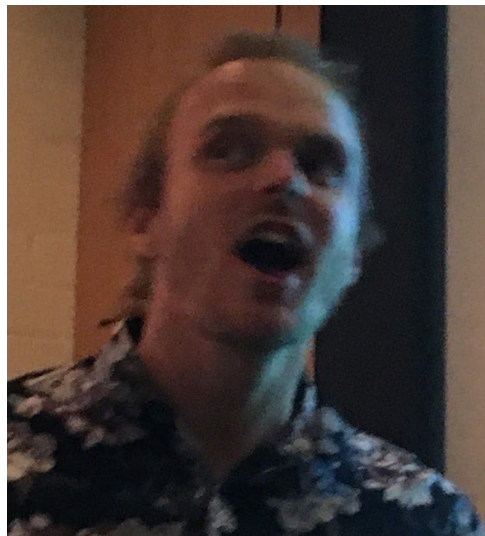
Matthew Alger



Australian  
National  
University



# Betwixt Odysseys: A Hellenic Soap Opera with a Godly Twist



"Showrunner/screenwriter"  
Adam D. Rains.



Adam presenting his talk at the  
Seminars.

- Seminars talk
- Reminiscent of 2017–18 "Golden Age" Rains
- 12 minutes + questions
- "High hopes" — Karlie

# Outline

- Themes of the talk
- Audience engagement
- Examination of the Kickstarter framing device
- Literary devices and their link to theme
- Reflection



# Themes are important

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"Comedy without purpose is not comedy at all."



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# A criticism of shared universes

- Central thesis: “shared universes are bad”
- Introduction to shared universes in Adam’s talk is bad on purpose
- Examples of universe sharing undermining existing canon



Adam uses intentionally bad examples of shared universes.

# What is a shared universe?







# A play-by-play review

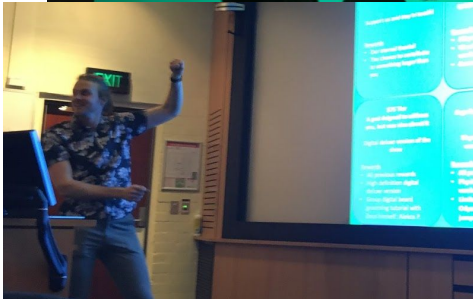


Christine L. @AstroOrca · 3m

TED talk on Mythology @ ANU right now, by @AdamDRains #stromlo2019



1





# Chekhov's gun

*"If you say in the first chapter that there is a rifle hanging on the wall, in the second or third chapter it absolutely must go off. If it's not going to be fired, it shouldn't be hanging there."*

— **Anton Chekhov**

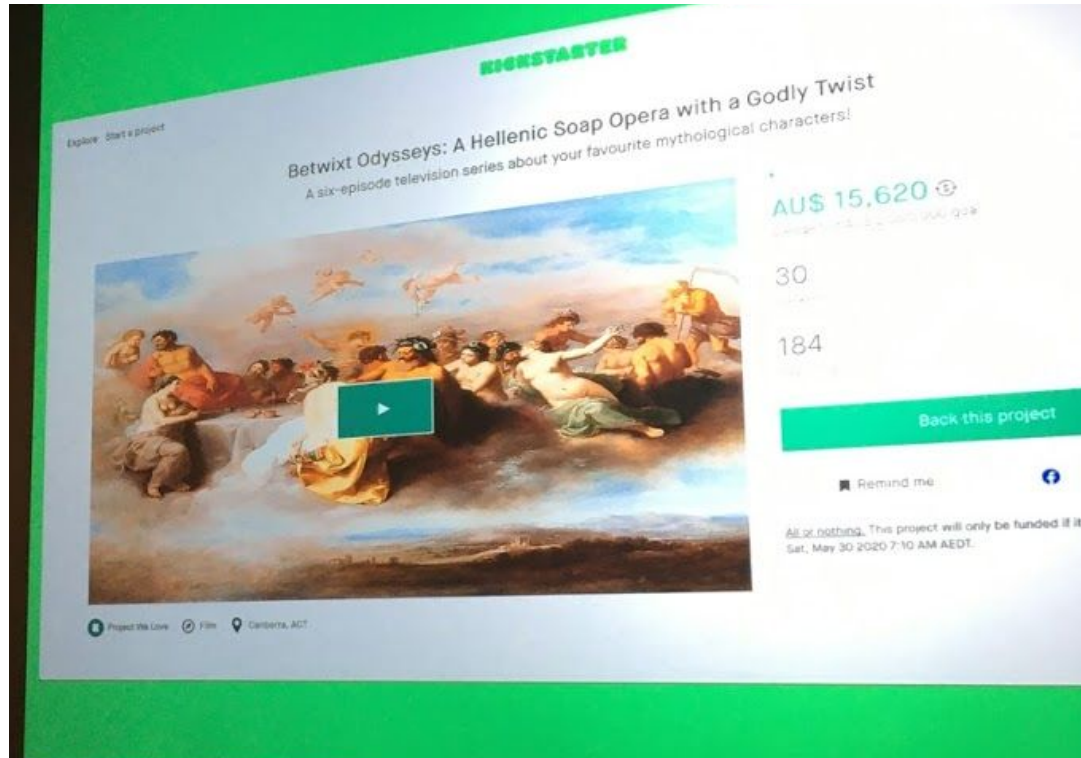


# Audience interaction

- Rope conduit for audience engagement
- Audience lives vicariously through one audience member
- Demo



# Comparison with a Real, Successful Project



# Comparison with a Real, Successful Project

## Grilled Cheesus



Your prayers have been answered! Feast on the Goodness. Everybody loves cheese! Please come support us on Kickstarter.

Created by

Rob Corso and Meg Sheehan

---

**286 backers** pledged \$25,604 to help bring this project to life.

 **Last updated** May 28, 2012



# Outline comparison

## *Betwixt Odysseys*

1. Introduction and pitch
2. Backstory
3. Cast & episodes
4. Goals, rewards, and stretch goals

## *Grilled Cheesus*

1. Introduction and pitch
2. Backstory
3. Description and mockup
4. Goals, rewards, and stretch goals



<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/852445514/grilled-cheesus/>

## Why Crowdfunding is Bad for Business (Opinion)

# Crowdfunding under criticism

## The Telegraph

Home Video News World Sport Business Money Comment Culture Travel Life  
Film TV and Radio Books Music Comedy Art Theatre Photography Dance Opera

HOME » CULTURE » FILM

### Kickstarter: can crowdfunding save culture?

Kickstarter began as a way for small investors to 'bring creative projects to life'. But are the wrong people getting rich? Co-founder Yancey Strickler explains

Inc.

## 3 Reasons Not to Crowdfund

Yes, crowdfunding is cool. It's democratic. It's disruptive. And it's a bad idea for a lot of start-ups.

in f t



By Ari Zoldan CEO, Quantum Media Group @arizoldan

The Startup

TOP STORY SUBMIT

## Read This Before You Even Think About Crowdfunding

Or you'll probably have a bad time.



Charlie Gentles Follow

Aug 6, 2018 · 5 min read



THE NEW REPUBLIC

## The False Promise of Kickstarter

By BERSEPHONE JONES | November 16, 2012

Add to Pocket

*Fund me, I'm useless.*

# Forcing a critical audience

## How To Avoid Backing Bad Crowdfunding Projects

David Nield

Oct 9, 2019, 7:00am · Filed to: [crowdfunding projects](#)

Share [f](#) [t](#) [in](#) [jd](#) [w](#)

The screenshot shows the HACKADAY website header with a navigation bar containing links: HOME, BLOG, HACKADAY.IO, TINDIE, HACKADAY PRIZE, SUBMIT, ABOUT, and a date indicator for November 26, 2019. Below the header, the main article title "WHY KICKSTARTER PRODUCTS FAIL" is displayed in large, bold, white letters on a dark background. The author's name, "by: Bob Baddeley", is shown at the bottom left of the article section, and "68 Comments" is indicated at the bottom right.

The screenshot shows the Fstoppers website header with a navigation bar containing links: Articles, Tutorials, Community, Groups, and Contests. A search bar is located on the right side of the header.

## The Kickstarter Plague: Why You Should Stop Paying for Crowdfunded Photography Gear

by Alex Cooke

ESTABLISHED ORIGINAL

Fstoppers

## Avoid These Common Kickstarter Pitfalls

## Classic Hacks: How To Avoid Kickstarter Regret



Hayley Williams | [t](#)

Sep 7, 2018, 7:00am · Filed to:

[Australian Stories](#)

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ars TECHNICA

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BIZ & IT —

## The ugly afterlife of crowdfunding projects that never ship and never end

Even projects crowdfunded to excess enter tense, never-ending development hell.

CASEY JOHNSTON · 10/27/2014, 4:00 AM

Emerging Tech

Don't get burned! How to back crowdfunding projects the smart way

By Drew Prindle March 14, 2019 4:58PM PST

Inc.

## When Kickstarter Campaigns Go Bad

What happens when supporters do their part, but you can't do yours? Here's how to avoid upsetting your new fans.

[in](#) [f](#) [t](#)



By Erik Sherman Contributor, Inc.com [t](#) [@ErikSherman](#)

The screenshot shows the CD website header with a navigation bar containing links: GADGETS, CLOTHING, HOME, GAMES, ACCESSORIES, and CRO.

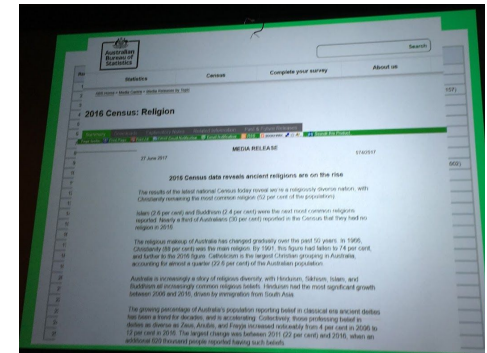
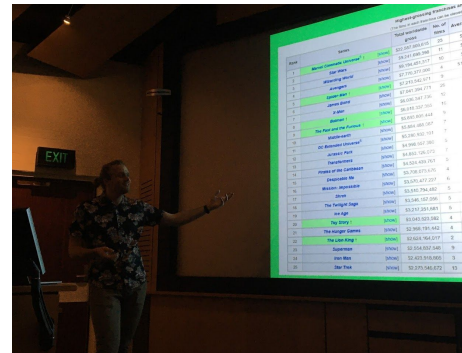
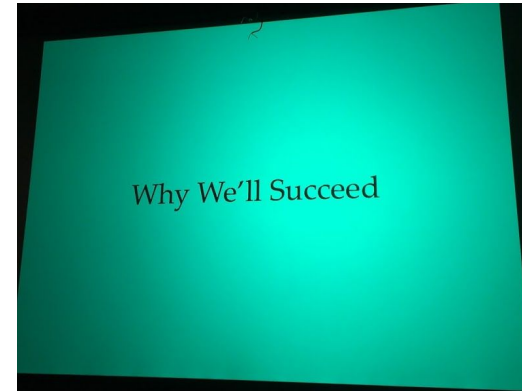
## HOW TO TELL IF A KICKSTARTER CAMPAIGN IS LEGITIMATE

JANUARY 5, 2019

RESOURCES 7 MIN READ

# “Success”

- Capitalists and the census — hated by socialists and libertarians respectively
- Appeal to numbers intended to be taken cynically in the context of the Kickstarter
- Surface-level reading of source material

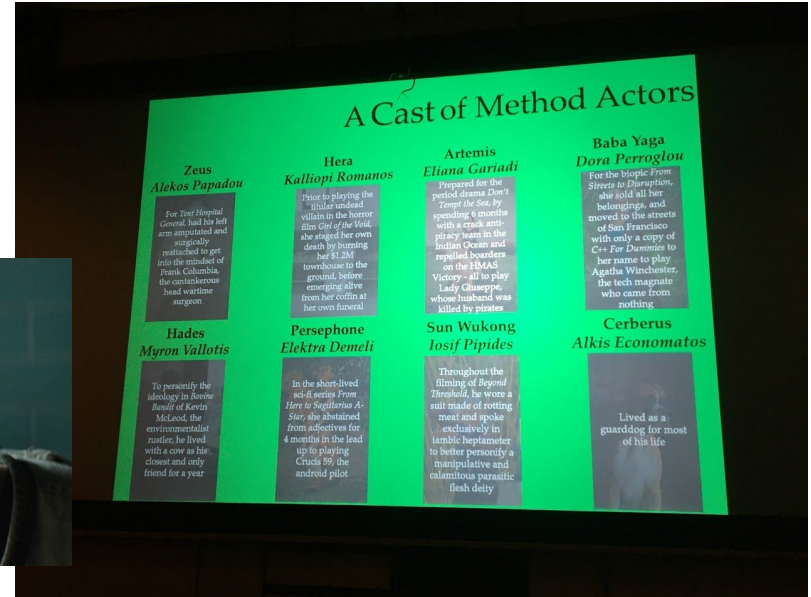


Cold cynicism underpins Adam's happy-go-lucky talk.



# A cast of method actors?

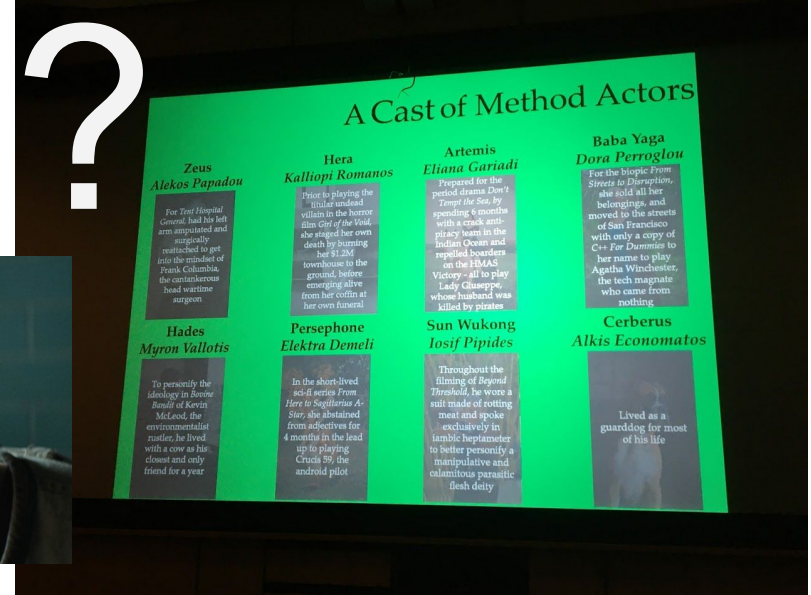
- Draws a parallel between contemporary method acting and shared universe fiction
- Distaste and contempt



Method actors are not in vogue.

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# Easter eggs reward audience attention

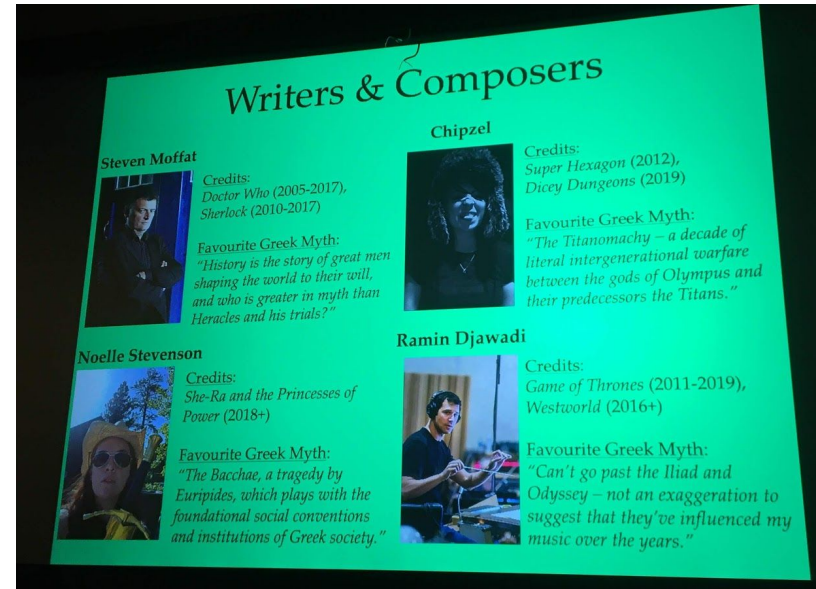


# Easter eggs reward audience attention



# Directors and writers?

- Conflicting direction and writing styles emphasise main theme
- Taken to extremes with combination of chiptune and orchestral music





# Shared universes undermine themes

- Each of the traditional stories has an interloper who defeats the purpose
- Episode summaries and live reading aim to hammer this point home

And Now For an Exclusive Live Reading

	Title	Director	Writer	Composer
1	Red Fruit, Red Sky	Taika Waititi	Neelke Stevens	Chapel

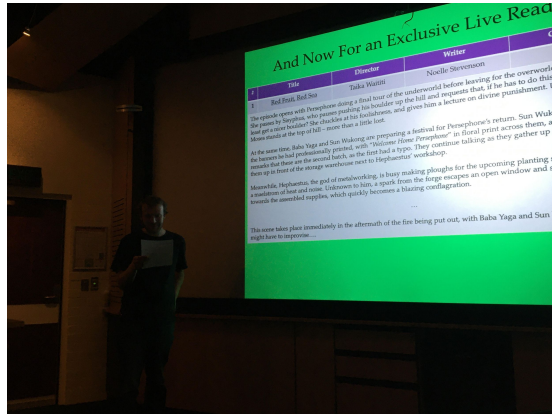
The episode opens with Persephone doing a final test of the underworld before leaving for the overworld. It is the plan of Hades, who passes making his brother up the hill and requests that, if he has to do this forever, could be at least get a new title for the character as he has been, and gives him a lecture on divine punishment. (Unbeknownst to her, Hades is at the top of the hill - more than a little bit.)

At the same time, Baba Yaga and Sun Wukong are preparing a festival for Persephone's return. Sun Wukong proudly shows the plan to Persephone, who passes making his brother up the hill and requests that, if he has to do this forever, could be at least get a new title for the character as he has been, and gives him a lecture on divine punishment. (Unbeknownst to her, Hades is at the top of the hill - more than a little bit.)

Meanwhile, Hephaestus, the god of metalworking, is busy making ploughs for the upcoming planting season, his workshop a constant of heat and noise. Unknown to him, a spark from the forge escapes an open window and slowly descends towards the assembled supplies, which quickly becomes a blazing conflagration.

...

This scene takes place immediately in the aftermath of the fire being put out, with Baba Yaga and Sun Wukong realising they might have to improve.

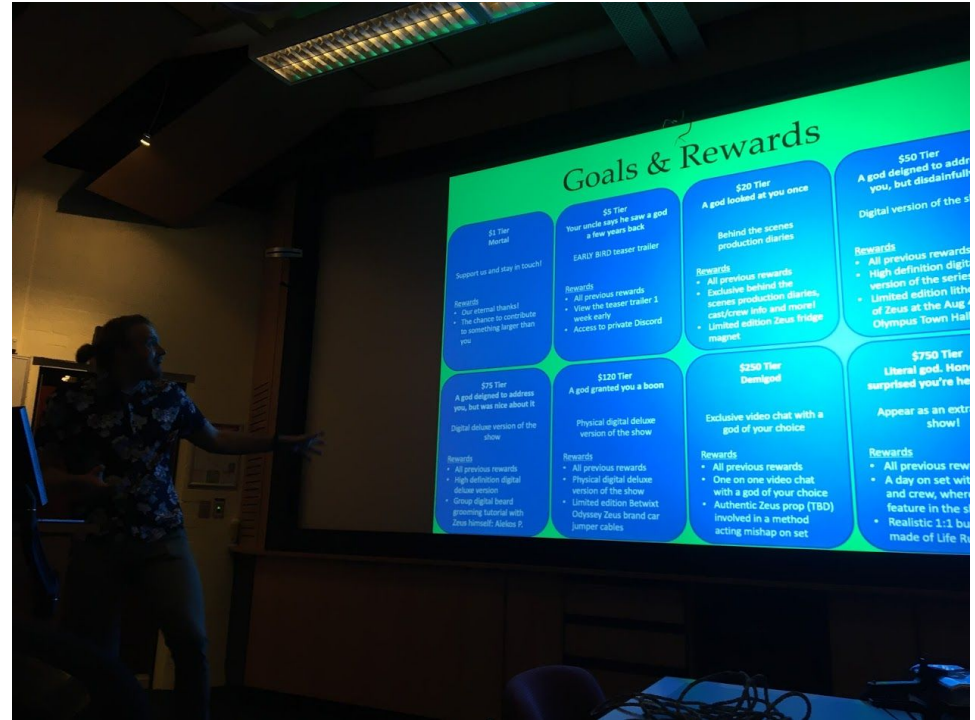


1	Red Fruit, Red Sky	Taika Waititi	Neelke Stevens	Chapel
2	Funerary Fuss	Gwen Williams		
3	Monday Memory Madness	Taika Waititi		
4	Medusa in the Meadow	David 'Davo' Davidson		
5	Dog Days	Jennifer Kent		



# Goals and rewards

- Shallow backer rewards parody Kickstarter to highlight central thesis
- Repeated Zeus-themed merchandise undermines Zeus' minor secondary role as God of Anticonsumerism



# Summary

- Audience interaction drives engagement with talk
- Theme conveyed through tropes, parody, and literary device
- Analogues between objects of contempt and shared universes
- Intentional undermining of presentation highlights the undermining of canons shared universes bring
- Highly critical talk with modern relevance



Thank you for listening!