The following is the full transcript of Remarkable Episode 13: Keith Arem on How to Break Through the Noise with Technology and Creativity

In this week's episode, I'm excited to share a lengthy discussion I had with a professional musician, film director, published author, and talent director.

He's best known for his work in sound and audio, and his list of clients includes Activision, Ubisoft, Sony, Electronic Arts, Microsoft, Fox, and Disney.

He has recorded and produced over 600 commercial releases, including each of the following video game series: Call of Duty, Saints Row, Ghost Recon, Spiderman, Tony Hawk Pro Skater, Persona, Rainbow Six, and Titanfall.

During our conversation, we talk about his background and how he got into his line of work, and we get to hear his perspective on what it takes to make a name for yourself as an artist and creative.

He talks in depth about how to put together a great team for your creative project, the 3 elements of a strong team, and the key components

needed when producing a drama or story-based show.

We also talk about how to go about finding voice talent, how to build an audience early, and how to break through the noise and get noticed.

He's the Founder and President of PCB Productions, founding member of the band Contagion, author of three highly successful graphic novels (Ascend, Infex, and Dead Speed), and Director of the recent feature film, The Phoenix Incident. I'm excited to welcome Keith Arem.

Dave: Keith, welcome to the Remarkable podcast.

Keith: Thank you very much for having me.

Dave: I really appreciate your time and I'm really excited about this. Just to give our listeners a little bit of background - I got connected to you through a mutual friend of ours, Jay Posey, who is an author extraordinaire, and also works over at Redstorm, the Ubisoft company. I think you've crossed paths doing some game stuff.

Keith: Many a project with Jay.

Dave: I'm really excited about talking to you. You said you're full of stories, so I'm going hoping to hear some of those good stories. Since some of my audience might not be familiar with who you are, tell us a little bit about Keith Arem. What are your current activities? What do you do on a daily basis?

Keith: Wow, that's a loaded question. I'm one of those guys that's kind of all over the place. My wife sort of refers to me as a shark because if I stop swimming, I'll die. I have to keep myself busy just because I have a really interesting background, a very creative background, and a sense of technical background.

So I flip between creating technologies and then using those technologies in the products that I work on. I've been in the music industry, I've been in the television industry, I've been in the game industry for the past 20 years.

I'm now moving into motion pictures and television as a creator, writer, and director. It's been a great ride because I get to play and create on a daily basis. I get to work with great clients and I get to work with fantastic actors, celebrities, other writers, and a lot of producers and creators.

It's a fun sort of world right now because technology and creative are really merging in a unique way. With distribution changing, with not just the internet but the platforms that are using the internet, it's opening up an amazing time for independent creators.

That's sort of where my career is focusing on right now is working on these high-end projects that I've been doing, and then using those resources and experience to create my own. It's been a great ride!

Dave: Did I see somewhere, or did I read it - did you get into this by way of music? Were you a musician first, or have you always been into audio?

Keith: I started out as a musician. I started as a kid, touring professionally when I was about 14 years old out in Arizona.

Dave: Wow! What instrument?

Keith: It was all keyboards. It was funny - I had an old Apple computer, it wasn't old at the time; it was one of the new things. I had bought a synthesizer - an old Juno 106, which was one of the early midi-synthesizers where you could actually hook up your computer to a synthesizer.

I started up a band when I was 14 and it was very successful for us. We were on all the local radio stations, we played 2-3 concerts a week, and at 14 years old, I was making about a hundred bucks a night, which is kind of fun.

But, at 14 years old, my parents are driving me around and I'm doing these concerts all over Arizona. We ended up being on the local cable access shows and television, all the newspapers, and as a kid, it was just a great experience because I'm going to school and making money.

I would take all the money and put it back into equipment so by the time I was a senior, I figured 'I'm going to go out to California and get a record deal.' And, of course, my folks are like, 'Oh, there's drugs and it's a horrible industry, and you need something to fall back on.'

So, I ended up coming out to California to get my engineering degree at Cal State and they had amazing recording facilities at the studios there, these multi-million dollar recording studios there. I had a massive amount of equipment from touring around with my band for years as a teenager.

So, at 17, I was able to walk into these studios, and at night, after I was done with all my classes, I'd bring all my synthesizers in and start recording demos. About six months into my freshman year, I had a big record deal with IRS Records which, of course, freaked out my parents because they thought it was just a passing phase and I'd turn into some other type of business person, but not a musician if anything.

My parents threatened to cut off any kind of support or help or anything else like that if I dropped out of school, which scared the bejeezus out of me. So, I ended up turning down this big record deal at 17 or 18 years old with IRS. All of the other record companies thought I was playing hard to get.

By the time I was a senior, I had 30 or 40 record deals on the table. It was this amazing time because I had no idea - I had no perspective. I was writing music and we were playing these big concerts all over Los Angeles and we were selling out everywhere.

I had started this band called Biohazard and we were doing great. So by the time I was a senior, it came down to three really big deals. We had a deal with Sony, a deal with Capitol, and a deal with Interscope records. Those are like the top three choices of all the labels.

Capitol had this really cool marketing idea to promote our record. We were going to do this big takeover of the Capitol records building and take the president hostage (it was way before 9/11). It was this interesting marketing approach for a band, especially if you're an independent band on a major label like Capitol.

So we took this deal and it was awesome until we realized that the music industry was not what it's cracked up to be. It was very interesting waters especially when we took the deal because the music industry was just about to get into the internet.

We were using mp3's and other things to be able to distribute tracks to our fans but the record industry really didn't understand what was happening. We met with the president of EMI which was our publisher and we were talking to them about the problems with mp3's and the idea that piracy was really going to undermine the record industry.

We thought, 'This internet thing - it's not really going to catch on; no one's really going to pick this thing up.' We just kind of knew that was the beginning of the end. I kind of used my experience and time working with a major record label like Capitol to really launch my music career.

You learn a lot when you're a musician because you're learning about marketing, you're learning about distribution, you're learning about production. The creative side is great but you create the album once and then you spend a year promoting it, and touring, and all of the other appearances that you're doing.

It teaches you a lot about how the industry works. At 20 or 21 years old, being thrown into that is a bit of a challenge. It was a good education coming right out of school and making my own way.

Dave: What was the name of your band?

Keith: We started off as a band called Biohazard and about a month before we released our album, we were about to go on tour. We found out that there was a local band in New York also called Biohazard, and even though we had already released albums and other things and had thousands of fans around the country, these guys filed a trademark in New York for the same name of the band.

Capitol came to us just before our album was done and we already had the artwork and we had already toured, we had already done all of this work of promoting the band for three years (probably more than that), and they made us change our name about a month before our album came out.

So we ended up becoming a band called Contagion. What was amazing about that is we were immediately on tour and we've got this big album coming out on Capitol records and we start touring and all of these people come out to these concerts and they start accusing us of stealing all these Biohazard songs.

Dave: Oh, gosh!

Keith: Because they didn't realize we had changed our name. We were like, 'Guys, guys, it's us! We had to change our name.' Even to this day there's confusion between the two bands and it's been 20 years.

Dave: Wow, that's crazy!

Keith: Yeah, so, it was a really interesting lesson in branding yourself and understanding how to position yourself in the industry because there's a lot of people out there that have similar ideas and sometimes the person who has the bigger guns wins, and sometimes other people just don't want to go into that fight.

In this case Capitol didn't want to fight the trademark, even though we probably could have won at the time. But it was just a really interesting lesson in having to deal with that.

Dave: I'm probably going to circle back around to the marketing question a little bit and maybe find out what you took away from that, but just to fast forward just a little bit more, correct me if I'm wrong, but I think you've made the biggest name for yourself in the past 10 or 20 years in the video game world. Is that right?

Keith: Yeah.

Dave: Tell us a little bit more about what's your involvement there, what's your company, and what's your role in the video game world?

Keith: My company now is PCB Productions and that's been around since 1999 or 2000.

Dave: Okay.

Keith: Before that, I had been the director of audio for Virgin Interactive and for electronic arts specific. The funny thing is when I was in the music industry, everyone was saying, 'You've got to get into video games.'

Video games were just in their infancy when our album was coming out but we were on these North American tours on our tour busses playing from city to city. The whole time, we were playing video games at the back of our tour bus.

When I got back, a friend of mine, who was one of the senior vice presidents over at Sony said, 'Hey, you know, you really need to get into production,' because I had an engineering degree in audio engineering and had a recording background on Capitol Records and I was starting to score motion pictures.

He got me involved in some of the very first Sega Genesis games that they were involved in producing, but then into the first PlayStation games. I think the first game I did was Battletech and I think I wrote the score within a week.

It was just such a different format that was so easy to learn and I just loved it. I stayed up and did this score and started winning all of these awards and I ended up getting brought in. I ended up doing a game called Earthworm Jim.

All of a sudden, I was just getting project after project and I got hired at Virgin Interactive and that just started my career in the audio side of things, initially just as a composer. I had a background in music, I was composing, but I had an engineering degree, so I was doing sound effects and I started doing movies and I started doing cinematics.

Because I did a lot of vocals for the bands that I was producing and recording on, it was an easy transition to start working with actors. We were working on this huge game at the time back at Virgin - this game called Toonstruck.

Our first celebrity - back then, celebrities in games was a very new thing and they hired Tim Curry to come and to be the main villain on this game. I was going to be engineering this thing and I built all the studios at Virgin and the producer walks into the studio (Tim Curry is about to show up), and the producer shows up and the writer comes in and I look around.

I said, 'Well, who's directing the talent today? Who's directing Tim Curry?' They looked around the room like, 'You're the audio guy.' So that was my very first trial by fire was working with Tim Curry. But it was such a great experience and being able to work with an actor of his caliber.

You're not really directing as much as just enjoying his performance. But it was a really interesting time because you're starting to see how this blending of motion pictures and television and animation and video games was sort of all coming together.

So, my career in games started in music but then quickly began into audio and writing and then directing and producing. After Virgin was bought out by EA and I'd already been with the company for 5 or 6 years, by 1999, I decided to go into business for myself when I started PCB Productions.

Since then it's been almost 600 games now and I've been in the industry since 1993 or 1994 and PCB has been around since 1999 or 2000. We have 5 recording stages here in Los Angeles and we specialize in doing motion capture, facial capture, ADR, voice-over, sound design, music and mixing.

It's been great working on the last 11 Call of Duty games, the Ghost Recon franchise, Spiderman, Transformers, and Tony Hawk. It's been a good ride.

Dave: That's awesome! What was the hardest part about going out into business on your own and getting started?

Keith: It was actually probably one of the easiest decisions I've ever made. So many people I think are terrified into leaving the 9-5 and going into business on their own.

The only difference between working for a company and working for yourself is just a lot of the maintenance of you've got to get insurance, and you've got to deal with having all of your own accounting and some of the stuff that people just dread having to do.

But working for yourself is - for me, I can't imagine really being in house at a company after that, just because it's so liberating. Sometimes when you're in house at a company, there isn't a demand for you to be more efficient because to keep your job you're just doing the 9-5 grind.

As part of a machine, everyone's doing their own thing, but there's no reason to really be completely prepared for something because you're already on salary. There isn't really any reason to really push that. But when you're an independent contractor, every hour, every minute counts because that's a minute that you're earning a dollar or you're doing something.

It's not necessarily because of the money, but it just demands you be more efficient when you own your own company. So what I realized when I was in house working for companies, people would come really unprepared: they wouldn't have their scripts ready, they didn't know what they wanted, and they tried to come to the studio and figure it out.

The moment that they have to hire a studio, then they've got to be really prepared because they're spending much more money because it's not an internal cost. So as a contractor, I was able to really get my clients to be much more efficient with their work; they paid much more attention to what they were doing, and you started to really see the difference in the clients.

Sometimes the high end clients or the super low end clients would be difficult because the high end clients had so much money they would just throw something at it and they didn't know what they want.

Or a really low end client didn't have the money, and they didn't have the experience to know what they want. These kind of mid-range clients that are fantastic where they're super prepared, they have enough money to do something very serious, but they're also frugal enough to make sure that they're going to come in and be very efficient.

So I kind of built my business around that. I started working with companies where we would teach them how to integrate technology to get the best creative performances and optimize their budgets so they could actually deal with the amount of quantity and the amount of quality that we deal with in video games.

The amount of work we have in games is tenfold compared to motion pictures and television, so we have new ways of creating stuff.

Dave: Sorry to interrupt you, but you've mentioned technology, I think twice now. Can you give us a little bit more insight into what do you mean when you're saying "developing technology" to improve the systems and to make the product better? What types of technology are you talking about?

Keith: For us, some of it is production techniques, and some of it is actually physically creating technology elements for our studios.

One of the things, like in voiceover for example (for doing actors and video games), is the amount of content is so much more demanding than in other mediums. An average television show might have three or four hundred lines of dialogue (sentences of dialogue).

And a motion picture might have 1,500 lines of dialogue, an entire hour and a half or two hour movie. The last Call of Duty game we did was about 41,000 lines of dialogue. I'm doing a game this month that's got almost 90,000 lines of dialogue.

We did about 120,000 lines of dialogue in the last Saints Row game. So the amount of content in video games is staggering and the quality has to be just as good or better than motion pictures and television and the recording fidelity is much higher than what we do in television and film.

So you need to create new methods and technologies to deal with that. One of the things that we did is we stopped using scripts in the traditional way that they're used in other areas of the entertainment industry and we created digital scripts using excel databases, which sounds kind of stale and not very creative.

But we came up with interesting ways to sort of keep our scripts organized, way back in the 90's, just so we can deal with the amount of content that we were dealing with.

That has turned into these onscreen systems that allow the actors to read sort of like teleprompters inside the studios, but now as the director, I can control the script and highlight lines and I can give them phonetic pronunciations and I can create all sorts of

new ways to allow the actor to be more creative as they're doing their voiceover recordings.

Because if you come into a studio, it's not like you're on set. You're not in costume, you don't have other actors to work with; you're just reading words off of a page.

For a person, especially an actor, to get inspired and to understand what the other actors are saying and seeing and deliver a very emotional performance, that takes a lot of work and that puts a lot of burden, not just on the actor, but on the production team and directors.

I try to use technology in a way that furthers that creativity and allows the actor to feel more comfortable not just in the studio, but also to get a little more context of what's going on. So some of the technologies we create do specifically that. They allow them to work with other actors; they allow them to move; they're not shackled to a microphone.

Sometimes we can have it so the microphones can move with them. We created a new technology called VOCAP, which is a combination of motion capture and voiceover, and we have a whole stage here where we have actors that can move around.

We can have 6 or 8 actors all performing together and they're all fully wireless so it allows the actors to really move around and perform and lift objects and move off mic and still have a really great performance.

And you start to hear it in their voices. A lot of the video games right now are so cinematic in their nature of how they are written and the demand on the actors is much higher than on the actor behind the microphone. You really want to hear these guys running around and sound much more like a film.

So a lot of the technologies we create are methods to allow the actors to feel more comfortable in this very technical environment of video games.

Dave: I'm familiar with video games from our connection with Jay, but for someone that might not be very familiar with the video game industry, the sheer volume of lines is due to the various scenarios that could happen, depending on how many players on the screen and which options you choose. Is that correct - is that why?

Keith: That's one element for sure. You can actually have multiple story paths where you could go this direction or another direction and you have to record all the different scenarios that the player or the other characters that you come across are going to say.

And then each of these characters in some of these worlds might have their own entire personas where you could interact with them in a variety of different ways.

You could hurt them, you could friend them, you could scare them, they could have all different types of conversations in different scenarios so you need to record all of the different options for all of the different characters.

And the length of the games, especially a lot of the console and AAA games we work on - they have 12, 14, 15 hours of content sometimes. So, it's not just a 90-minute movie, but you really have potentially weeks and weeks of game play in some of these projects. So just the sheer volume that goes into these games is pretty staggering.

Dave: Yeah, it's really amazing how big they've gotten as a production. Do you have any tips for somebody that might be working with voice actors or bringing on talent or maybe somebody that's listening that's got a podcast or an idea that they're trying to

put together a team? Any tips for working with talent or even putting together a team for that?

Keith: Yeah. Talent right now - it's an amazing time to be an actor and to work in this industry just because there's so many new platforms that are emerging.

It's not just the video game console, like a PlayStation or an XBox anymore, but you're seeing stuff on tablets, you're seeing stuff on mobile, you're seeing VR exploding, you're seeing steam and the rise of PC games again which is fantastic.

And so the performances of them all are focused around the different platforms that are coming out. The different platforms have different demands on the actors. Some games are animated, some have narrators, some are sports games, some are action games, and each one has different types of performers for that.

And they're people and actors that specialize in all those different types of things. You have some people that are amazing narrators, you have some people that are great at doing battle chatter or soldier voices in action games.

There are some people that are really good for sports games. Some people are great at animation. A lot of foreign titles are coming to the United States, like Japanese Anime and stuff out of Korea and Eastern Europe now.

So, for people getting in, both on the creative side for writing, for producing, for engineering, for directing, and for acting, it's a really great time. I think the first thing is understanding the landscape and knowing what you like and do things that you like.

Sometimes people think they have to do everything or there's this certain type of work that they have to do, and the truth is, what you gravitate towards is the most exciting.

If you really like Japanese Anime, or you really like first-person action shooters, or you really like sports games, those are the things you should focus on first and find the projects that you relate to and use those as a source of inspiration and start kind of getting familiar with that.

Then going into that work, there's so many great developers right now that have gone from the console space into the mobile, or tablet, or VR space now that there's many, many more small teams creating games the way that games were being developed 20 years ago.

You had a handful of guys in their garage and they were doing a game independently, as opposed to these big, giant teams right now of 200, 300, with multiple studios all over the world.

It's really interesting to see it being very cyclical and going back to the way games were first being created.

Dave: Now, let's say that I was going to put together...let's say I want to do a podcast or like the old school storytelling and I've got sound effects, and I've got multiple people. Any tips, or how would you kind of go about starting to build a team and to find the right people for your team?

What's your take on that, or what's your recommendation for somebody that wants to put together a team to do a project?

Keith: It's a combination, on the technical side, definitely you have to make sure that you have really good engineers. You have somebody that knows how to record, someone who knows how to edit, and someone who knows how to mix.

In the game industry, a lot of people have to wear many, many hats. That's kind of how I grew up learning everything, just because - out of necessity.

The reason that I started directing was out of necessity, but I did sound and mixing and other things just because we needed it done and we didn't have a budget to hire other people, so you just learn how to do that, which is a little different than other industries.

In the film industry, you have a job or a very specific task, and it's nice to have someone focus on that, but in games, and where things are going right now, you really do have to learn a lot.

Starting off building your team, you really need someone who has a good foundation of understanding the basics of recording, understanding how to make it sound good, how to really chop everything up and edit and put it together, and mix it and make sure it's all balanced and sounds commercial.

On one side is building that team, then on the creative side is writing. It has expanded into so many different types of projects, and some podcasts. You see things out there like Serial and other podcasts where it's real exciting to hear investigation unfold through the course of that.

I think a lot of that is the writing, and the structuring, and the producing, and the research. There's a great opportunity for a lot of people to play a part in those types of productions. Then there's the talent, and there's actors who do performances, there's people who do narration, there's people who are hosts.

Each requires their own skill set and to be able to focus on that. I think if you have a team that brings together those three elements, you've got a really strong foundation to create a strong podcast or any kind of production for that matter.

Dave: If somebody's not already entrenched, and you've been in the industry for so long. Let's say I was interested in trying to find some voice talent, how would I go about doing that?

Keith: There's two different worlds right now in voiceover: there's the union world, and there's the non-union world. They both have their plusses and minuses.

The union world is essentially how all voice actors should be working, in the sense that the union is there to protect the actors and it's a collective bargaining agreement which means it's essentially a contract that all actors and all companies abide by.

For working with actors, if you're looking to hire an actor, ideally providing your project qualifies that you would be working with an actor that's part of the union, and to qualify for the union, means that these actors have met the union criteria, and they're generally working actors.

It means, financially that they're paid a certain minimum, that their working conditions follow a certain standard, and there's different rules depending on the industry.

The video game industry has its own union contract, there's a different contract for working in commercials, there's a different one for industrials, there's one for dubbing. So depending on the production and what you're doing, a lot of those actors work for the unions.

The non-union world is sort of everyone else. It's the actors who haven't gotten into the union yet and it's a lot of actors who maybe are in different states that are "right to work" or there's not enough work for the union actors there, there's not enough industry there, but they're actors who wanted to work.

You're starting to see a lot of online companies making opportunities for actors. There's different online services where actors can kind of bid on projects. I don't personally think that's necessarily the best thing for the industry because it does sort of drive the value of the actors down a little bit because they're competing for jobs and they're driving the cost down.

But that's just more of a personal issue because I really feel that the actors bring so much life to the projects.

Dave: Sure.

Keith: Having a minimum working standard for them is a good thing. The difficult part is that the unions, their contracts are sometimes up for negotiation, and sometimes the difference between what the actor union wants and what the clients need, sometimes don't always line up.

Sometimes the people who are breaking into the industry don't know how to navigate those waters and that's why some projects unfortunately have to go non-union. So, for producers, or for people looking to hire actors, most everybody starts non-union somewhere.

You don't just start by being a union actor. You have to cut your chops, you have to cut your teeth on some type of project. In the early days of video games, and the same thing for a podcast, is you hire your friend: your wife, the secretary at your company, your friend who's got a really great voice.

You bring them in and most of them, almost every amazing actor I've ever worked with, always started there. They've always started doing their own projects, doing things with their friends, coming up with voices, playing around and doing things.

Ultimately those actors work so much that they move into the union and they start working on big projects. In fact, a lot of the working actors in Los Angeles, a lot of them came out of the game industry as game testers, or designers, or writers, or programmers.

It's interesting to see people who are working, who just out of necessity, worked on their own games, and then they realized they had a profession working in games as a voice talent. So that's always a great way is working with your friends and finding people that you get along with and start fulfilling those needs.

As your productions grow, then you start going out and doing casting, and you're starting to really look for people who do that for a living. Ultimately you'll start to work with agencies and people who professionally cast actors to do this type of work and it's an amazing industry. There's thousands of fantastic actors out there who specialize in doing all of this.

Dave: I know, based on the sheer volume of projects you've worked on - you've worked with a lot of people. Do you have any interesting stories about working with anybody particularly fascinating or anything crazy there?

Keith: I've had the honor to work on some really amazing games with, fortunately the budgets and the ability to cast a lot of celebrity actors. Getting to work with celebrities in a motion capture or a voiceover capacity is fantastic because it really shows you some insight into their background and their method of how they work.

It gives you an opportunity to work with people that, I think, unless you were on $150 million dollar film, or a very large caliber film, sometimes you wouldn't have the opportunity to work with some of those actors.

Boy, I've gotten to work with everyone from Gary Oldman, Sam Worthington, and Idris Elba to Hulk Hogan, Burt Reynolds, and a lot of great guys. Every project is different. You really meet them in a very personal way and you start to learn a little bit about their life and how they do their work.

It was interesting. One project I worked on, this project I worked on was with Burt Reynolds, and I had worked with Dom DeLuise on that same project I was working on with Tim Curry years ago. Dom DeLuise was hilarious.

Dave: Yeah, yeah.

Keith: He would improvise every line. He really couldn't read it as it was written, but whatever he would say was ten times funnier. So I had all of these outtakes from this recording from Dom DeLuise and I've always kept them.

I've never released them just because I didn't want to get them out there on the internet. But they are the funniest outtakes. He was just the most hilarious guy and even though he couldn't get through his script, everything he did was gold.

A few years back, I was working on Saints Row 3 I think, and we had cast Burt Reynolds as the mayor of this town. Saints Row was a very irreverent game: not only profanity and kind of a racy title but also the writing was just hilarious and a really fun game to work on.

I had heard stories about Burt Reynolds and I had heard that maybe he was difficult to work with, or maybe just a challenge. I didn't know, I just didn't know what to expect. I had seen Smokey and the Bandit and all these other...

Dave: Yeah, classics.

Keith: Classics, right? So I brought with me this recording of Dom DeLuise of all these outtakes. I flew out to Florida and I got in the studio, and instead of me being in the studio and him being in the voiceover booth, I set up my chair right next to him in the studio, in the voiceover booth with him, and had the engineers out in the studio.

And I sat down with him and even though we were on the clock and we had to start recording, I told him the stories of working with Dom. When he first walked into the studio, he's Burt Reynolds, you know?

Dave: Right.

Keith: And he's got his swagger and he's like, 'Who the hell are you?' I was like, 'Oh boy, this is going to be a challenge working with somebody who is this guy trying to direct him on a video game.' I sat down with him and I started telling him the stories of working with Dom.

I pulled out my iPad and I played him all these outtakes that no one had really ever heard before. And he started to cry. It was just the most amazing thing because this is somebody he had been so close to for so many years and here is Dom in all of his splendor, saying the most foul, funny lines that no one has ever heard.

It was amazing and instantly he looked at me and was like, 'Alright, let's go." It was just gold. From that moment on, everything he did was great and we got along great and the session went perfect. He just realized I was connecting with him on a much different level than I'm just Joe Director coming in and telling him what to do.

That was really inspirational for me just to kind of be able to work with people to be able to see that we're all working guys, we all enjoy our work, but also we're friends, and we're people, and you make these connections with people.

When I started working with a lot of the talent, I just want to make sure I'm finding their personality and bringing that, and their creativity, into the project. Because when you're working in a very technical world like video games, it's hard to just turn on a microphone and suddenly be creative.

Just to say that your friend has died and you're going to be pouring your heart out and just start doing that on a microphone, and people are like, 'Oh, they're actors, they can do that.' But they really need to find those emotions from their experiences and part of their world.

To do that in a very technical environment of a video game, where you have no other actor to work with and you have no other reference, and sometimes no picture, and sometimes the script comes in five minutes before the recording session, it's hard sometimes for these actors to just suddenly turn on those emotions and nail it for hundreds, if not thousands of lines of dialogue.

So that was for me...I really realized that that was a great opportunity for me as a director to connect with the actors and direct them in a way that they could relate to.

That's why I started creating these technology platforms and these other different techniques to get the actors to feel more comfortable when they're doing these very emotional lines, whether it's drama, or horror, or comedy, they all require different emotional ranges.

A lot of it is you just need to get the actors comfortable in this very technical space.

Dave: Have you ever had anybody, or had a scenario where you've had to do something to the environment to help with the - I can imagine sitting in a sterile studio, but are

there any interesting tricks or has anybody brought in any props, or have you ever done anything like that to try to help people?

Keith: The reason I created this VOCAP technology was specifically because of this. It's interesting because when you do traditional recording, you have a script on a piece of paper, and the actor comes in on their headphones and they're reading their script in front of them.

You're in this little bubble, you're in this soundproof room in a big giant studio with people staring at you through the glass, and you can't hear anything unless the engineer or the director talks to you over a talk back microphone.

So you're by yourself, you're very isolated, you're reading these words on the page, and sometimes you don't have any visuals to go off of, and it can be really tough on an actor. Especially for an actor who comes from working in motion pictures or television, they're used to having all of those other things.

When I started to realize that a lot of the actors just didn't have that context, and they needed to be able to change that, the first thing that I did was get them off of headphones.

It's amazing because when you listen to yourself through your ears versus through your head, there's a pitch difference, even though you wouldn't perceive that, you sound much deeper inside your head than you do outside to everybody else.

Dave: Yeah.

Keith: The bones in your head conduct the sound waves differently and you feel a little bit warmer and you sound a little bit deeper. A lot of people say, 'Oh, I hate the sound

of what I sound like when I'm recorded. I don't want to hear myself because I hate the sound of my own voice.'

The reason why is that their pitch is always a little bit higher when they hear their recording. They're like, 'I don't sound like that.' But that's really what you do sound like. The problem is when you're working on headphones, you're listening through your ears as opposed to through your head.

You're constantly correcting yourself and you're changing the way you perform. Actors who are really good at it - especially narrators or animated actors - they're really good at using their ear to dial in that perfect sound.

But the truth is that you stumble, you stutter, you slur words, there's a lot of imperfections in the way that voice is delivered.

But in a voiceover studio, there's this pressure to do everything perfectly: to have every voice delivered at the right volume with no popping of your p's, no mouth noise, everything's got to be exactly, perfectly articulate.

That's not the real world - it doesn't sound real. The problem is when a lot of these actors are working on headphones in a sterile environment like a studio like that, it sounds too perfect. A lot of times you listen to video games, and I just listen to it and it just doesn't sound real, it sounds very canned.

Dave: Yeah.

Keith: So one of the first things I did is I got these actors off of their headphones and we created a talk back system so the actors could perform and move around the microphone without being shackled to these headphones.

Instantly that changed.

A brief story: I had this guy that was the mid-weight boxing champion in England. I had seen him in a couple of different movies. He'd been in Ali and couple of other films, a guy named Michael Bentt -amazing actor!.

I was working on The Shield - it was a video game based on the television show, and we had Michael Chicklis, and we had these other guys involved in the show, in the game.

There was a part where there was kind of a gang boss or a drug leader, and I cast Michael as this gang leader because I had seen him in these films and I knew he could play this really intimidating gang guy. But he had never done a voiceover before.

He'd been on camera plenty of times, but he'd never been in a studio before. He came in - he's a big guy, he's a big, buff dude. He's just intimidating because of his size. He comes in and I'm like, 'Okay, this guy's going to be yelling out orders, he's going to be yelling out commands, and you're going to go into battle and you're ultimately going to have to fight this guy.'

So I put him in the booth and I set him up with the script, put on his headphones and we start recording. He starts whispering all of his lines. I'm like, 'Dude, what are you doing?' I'm like, 'Hey, you're yelling at your guys. Your guys are like 30 feet away from you, you're yelling in the middle of a gun fight. I need you to scream at these guys.'

And he's like, 'Alright, I need you guys to go do this.' And he starts whispering again. I'm like, 'Whoa, whoa, whoa, what's going on?' And I talked to him and he understood, but for whatever reason he thought he was loud.

I went in and I realized his headphones were kind of loud, and in his head, his voice was super loud. So I said, 'Hey, wait a second.' And I took off his headphones and I flipped them over to talk back, and I said, 'You know what? Do those lines again.'

Suddenly he starts screaming and he almost blew out the mic and I realized that was the problem. To the actors, if they're listening - especially if they don't have the experience to work on it and they're hearing themselves through the headphones, it is a totally different world.

So by getting these actors more comfortable in a way that they're used to performing - whether it be on camera or otherwise - it completely changed the feeling of their performance, and in this case, the volume.

That was the first stage in understanding what the actor needs. The second thing was their scripts. Reading off a paper script is sometimes challenging because they don't know where you're at, they don't know what the emphasis is - they're just reading words on a page.

They can improvise and come up with this idea, but it's really up to the director to inform them about the emotional attitude and what's going on. And in video games, we're dealing with thousands, and thousands, and thousands of lines. In these early days of video games, we're printing out reams and reams of paper just to get through these scripts.

Dave: Wow.

Keith: That's when I realized that we needed to come up with something much more efficient that was more intuitive for the actors to read and I could control the pacing of it and the presentation of it. So we created these onscreen systems.

What that did is it got the actors out of this bubble of them holding their script and kind of curled up reading the paper and now they're straightening their posture, they're looking up at these screens, they're not shackled to their headphones, and their performances instantly sound much more realistic.

On games like Ghost Recon or on Call of Duty, you'll notice that a lot of people are saying, 'How are you getting these actors to give these really realistic performances?' The real reason is we got them out of that actor bubble. We got them off their headphones, we got them off their paper scripts, and we got them moving.

We started to get them to move around their microphone and to start to add action, and then taking that a step further, we started to give them props. We started giving them actual prop guns and allowing them to move around the room.

We created these headsets where the actors can actually wear these custom headsets we designed and now they can move around and start to add the physicality to their performance. It's lifting something - they can really lift something in the studio, and you hear that in their voice, as opposed to just acting on a microphone.

So all these little techniques are ways that really encourage the actors to be much more natural and to bring out their acting abilities because they're not voice actors: they're actors.

They're using their voice to add in all of those efforts and the breathing and all the emotion to the lines through their voice, when you don't have the benefit of seeing their body or any of the physicality that's there. But your ear can really hear it.

Dave: Yeah, that's really great advice. I think the takeaway there is that regardless of what project you're working on, we tend to get so stuck in doing what everybody else

has done or what we've been doing, but that's a really great testament to trying something new and to kind of figuring out realizing it's not working and then experimenting to try to figure out how to make it work better. That's great.

Keith: There really is no one way to do anything. We've created our own techniques that work for us and we've found ways to sort of make that more efficient and better for the actors and more creative.

But you know, every actor comes from a different background and every performer has their own skill set and things that they like to do and their experiences. So the idea is to work around the talent.

Find what inspires the actor, the performance, and to get what's best from them without messing up the rest of the pipeline and your budget and your technology. You still need to work within the confines of the technology, but do what's best for the actor to get the performance you need without making them feel like they're inside of a box.

When you do that, when you free them out of that box, you get magic, and it's great to see that with actors. I've come on so many projects where I've had to pick up a project where I've replaced the director, or I've come onto a project and they just didn't understand why they couldn't get the performances out of the actor.

It wasn't the actor's fault - it's just the actor wasn't armed with the right materials to really do what they were best at. It's really neat to see those actors take off, especially when it's a celebrity. When it's an actor who hates the voiceover process, who hates ADR, who hates video games and studios, and they think it's terrible.

All of a sudden, they get really inspired and it turns them around and they love the process because they found a whole new opportunity for themselves to work.

Dave: Has any other studios or production houses that do what you do - have they picked up any of your technology, or is that sort of proprietary? Have you tried to keep it close to the vest there?

Keith: For me, I could definitely patent a lot of the technologies that we've created, but I don't really want to go after other studios or be in a situation where I'm suing my competition. I'm not that kind of guy.

Certainly you've seen our script systems in excel and our onscreen systems become pretty standard in the industry right now, and all the studios in Los Angeles have kind of adapted the onscreen methodology.

Dave: That's great.

Keith: What we're doing with VOCAP is sort of an extension of what I do for MO-CAP anyway. It's a little expensive because we generated these headsets.

I worked with Jim Cameron's guys to develop these headsets actually. Some of these guys were working on Avatar with my friend Sam Worthington and we created these custom headsets that would really free up the actors and help them feel very comfortable and allow them to be wireless.

Creating those and the microphones, and the kind of way to power those microphones is a little difficult and expensive. Then you need a space that's soundproof, that's got engineers and room for the actors to move around, and it's also set up for game work.

It's not the kind of thing that a lot of studios can easily do, so people have been experimenting with it and we're trying to help grow the industry for sure. But I think we're the only people that have really done this successfully so far.

Dave: That's really cool. Let's shift a little bit more towards your current projects. I know we talked a little bit before we officially recorded - you've got several things going on of your own projects, so you've kind of made a transition.

It sounds like you're doing both - you're still doing some of that type of production work or your firm is doing a contract with other companies. Tell us a little bit about some of the projects that you've done on your own that you've kind of ventured out into.

Keith: I've had the benefit of working with these amazing clients and these projects for the past 20 years and these big franchises with these amazing licenses. Everything from Spiderman and Transformers through all these other types of big film and television properties.

But all these other amazing teams that have created their own original projects - from the Call of Duty teams to the Ghost Recon guys. All those kind of guys, they're fantastic.

The thing that's amazing is you're in a very creative space, working with amazing people developing, not only technology, but just writing and producing. I had come from a very creative background and loved working on these projects, but I had a lot of original ideas that I wanted to develop as well.

So over the past ten years, I started to write my own stories and produce projects and that started through graphic novels. My first book was a book called Ascend.

Ascend became the top-selling book for image comics and #17 in the country when it was released. It sold out nationwide - we did this big run with Image and sold out nationwide in about five days.

Dave: Wow, that's great.

Keith: I realized that this was kind of fun so I started to create more of these. I created three other graphic novels - a book called Infex, another one called Dead Speed, and then I have one called Frost Road that's just coming out.

Now all of those are being optioned into motion pictures, and games, and for television. So that started to really put me down this path of creating my own content and by pre-visualizing these stories as a comic book or a graphic novel was great because you could sort of flesh out the story, the characters, the environment, the world, the look, the tone of the project.

Then that started to evolve into learning about not only writing and creating and producing your own projects but then it got into the manufacturing the the distribution and marketing of your own projects.

When I was working on my next book Infex, I wanted to have the book to be something that was a bit of a collector's item. The story itself was a graphic novel but I wanted to have packaging in a way that the audience could integrate into the property and be part of the story.

So I started to use a lot of viral and social marketing to develop the characters online. As I was writing the book, I created Twitter accounts for the main characters and developed websites for some of the locations and the people inside the book; and delivered a lot of the fiction of the story online as real characters that could interact with the audience.

Dave: That's cool.

Keith: That was really cool because then we started to generate hundreds of thousands, and ultimately millions of followers that were interacting with our characters and it wasn't a movie or television show or a video game.

It was just these characters from an upcoming graphic novel, but they didn't know what it was. They just knew that it was a fascinating story and they just started to get involved with these characters and it started to turn into what was better known as an ARG (an alternate reality game).

I had these characters that started giving clues and locations, and people would go and find these clues or go to these locations and they would actually get these encrypted files or other things that would lead them to other parts of this puzzle.

Then they would get on these online forums and collaborate with hundreds of thousands of other people to start to decipher these codes. When they would figure these things out, it would take them to the next part of the puzzle and ultimately the next part of the story.

So it was sort of real time storytelling and it was just taking the world and the characters in my graphic novels and developing them into an interactive experience for the audience that was evolving in real time.

As the audience was finding these things, I could see what they were liking and disliking, and I could change the story and modify the characters and interact with them using fiction of my characters, but in a real world setting.

That was a lot of fun because now I'm literally using the power of the internet to tell a new type of story. But in the meanwhile, it's all pointing back to this graphic novel that's going to be coming out.

So I was manufacturing this book to be sort of like a coffee table book: it was going to have a metal cover around it and I had this great printer that I had worked with in the past, doing my stuff for Ascend.

No one in the United States would print these things because the metal was too expensive and too difficult to machine and we couldn't find anything up in Canada. So ultimately we found this manufacturer in Asia that would help design and manufacture these things, but they had to be shipped in from China and from Korea.

When it got to customs, customs held them for a month. They thought that these were laptops or some kind of...

Dave: Oh, man.

Keith: ...these boxes of books and they're all metal. Meanwhile, we're doing this viral campaign for our book and everything's going to be leading up to launching this book at Comic Con.

So our printer is saying, 'Hey look, I promise we're going to get these books to you by Comic Con. They're being held up in customs right now, but I assure you we're going to get them to you.'

So we launch this huge campaign - we've got hundreds of thousands, now almost millions of fans that have been following this graphic novel and this story online.

We get to Comic Con, we've got a huge booth, we've got all of the advertising set up, all the fans are coming to buy this book that's coming out to launch at Comic Con and the printer shows up the day before the show.

He shows up in tears. He's a great guy and I was like, 'What's going on, what's wrong?'

He opens up the first box of books and apparently customs - no way to prove it, but customs was so frustrated and furious that these books had come in and they thought they were mislabeled as electronics or something else like that because of the metal covers, and every single one of our pallets that was held in the warehouse in customs was knocked down.

So when he opens up this book, this box of books at Comic Con, they're all dented; these brand new books that we're about to sell are completely dented. We could only sell one out of every ten of these books.

I'm like, 'You know, I don't want to deal with this. I'm not a book distributor, I'm not a book publisher. I don't want to deal with customs, and warehousing, and taxes, and shipping, and fulfillment. I just want to write a book and get it out to the audience.'

So what was really interesting is that around that time, the iPad is exploding and we're creating all of our assets digitally, and here I am with recording studios, with great actors and sound design and music and editorial staff and animation.

And I've got this graphic novel that really needs to be delivered in a new way. So what I did is I ended up bringing together a small team and using some of our game development background, we created this app that became one of the first interactive graphic novels.

It's called Infex and it's on the iPad. I brought in actors to do all the voices. And not really a book on tape, but to actually act through all of the dialogue, all of the scenes, almost like a radio drama.

But every single panel of the graphic novel now had animation, and sound effects, and music, and a background, and then all these amazing actors. I brought in all the guys from the top video games.

I brought a lot of my celebrity friends in like Lance Henriksen, Michael Wincott, William Fichtner, Roger Cross, Glenn Morshower, and all these guys that are fantastic film and television actors.

They acted out all of the scenes using our VOCAP systems here at PCB, and we put together this unique graphic novel where you're reading the book, but you're listening to a movie.

It's a great hybrid because as you're reading these pages, you're hearing how I intended it to be performed as a film.

That was a great inspiration to be able to see that now not only could we take what has been traditionally been in a paperback form for eighty years, a hundred years, but now it's being distributed in a digital form with all these extra elements, and I'm not distributing it through traditional bookstores which are struggling to stay alive.

I love books, and I love having a coffee table book and something physical that I can lift and hold and have a tangible thing.

Dave: Yeah, yeah.

Keith: But here, I'm creating everything digitally and now I can distribute it digitally.

Using Apple's iTune's, the app store delivery method, I have a whole new way of distributing this book that I can profit higher from because there's no middle man distributor in that, and I'm keeping the quality high.

And I can interact with my audience through all my social platforms and integrate that into the app. So Twitter and Facebook and email and all the web browsers are all built into the app.

The cool thing about that is that now that allows the audience to not just read the book and hear it the way I intended it to be, but also interact back with the characters and with me. I can slowly evolve the story by people interacting with the app.

That, to me, has now established this whole new platform of creating content because it's not a video game, and it's not a television show or a film, but I can integrate all of the benefits of that in a new way of distributing content in a new way for the audience to experience something that they're not just reading on paper now.

Dave: For those listening, that's available now on the iTunes store, correct? It's I-N-F-E-X, is that correct?

Keith: Yeah, correct, absolutely. And right now it's just on the iPad, but we're creating a new version for the Apple TV and we'll do stuff for the iPhone, and I'm now using that technology and that basis of that design to launch my next motion picture.

We're going to be doing television shows that way. My next graphic novel will also use that same idea.

So for me it's a new platform; it's not just a new technology or something that we created just out of necessity for getting this book out, but now this is something that I could see this for education, I could see this for musicians delivering albums.

It's a cool second screen experience for television. I'm delivering this new film that I'm working on right now in this capacity, and definitely for graphic novels, it's a great way to experience a book.

Dave: I want to ask - you've been in the industry for awhile now and you've got your finger on the pulse. Where do you think things are going with all the shakeup in the audio industry and the book industry - and you've mentioned about gaming moving back into small teams.

There's just so much stirring and so much - to use a tech phrase - disruption. From your perspective, where do you think we're headed with all of that?

Keith: Well, it's interesting. Technology is a double-edged sword for what it's done and it started in the book industry. You started to see that desktop publishing where it used to be so difficult to publish something.

Now through computers and desktop publishing you were able to put out your own books and ebooks. What I even did with this graphic novel was a whole new way to change that.

Then you started to see the technology in music change where musicians could record stuff at home and it started in the rap industry where rap artists were creating their own studios and doing these albums that way and then other musicians started to do things at home.

What that did was that provided a much more open environment for creative people to do something that used to be cost-prohibitive. It used to be, like when I got in, you have to go to a multi-million dollar recording studio to do your demo to get a record deal.

Suddenly the technology got powerful enough and the quality got high enough that you could record at home and you could do these demos at home and so there was much more opportunity for everyone, but that also meant that there was much more competition.

What it did in the past was it sort of weeded out a lot of people who unfortunately may not have had the financial means, but if you were really good at - the method was - if your quality was high enough, that you would get those deals.

But the truth is that there was incredibly talented people out there that just didn't have the financial resources to be heard or seen. As soon as the technology opened that up, now everyone could get out there.

The internet, at the same time, provided a distribution method for doing that. So then that started to move its way into filmmaking. Now you had these much less expensive cameras, so independent films could be made much cheaper and you had this flood of filmmakers that came into the film industry.

What that did was it disrupted that industry drastically because now it wasn't like you just had to pitch a story to a financier and get a movie made, now you would actually shoot a film just to get it sold. You really started to see that the book industry has been broken for the past several years, the music industry has been broken as a result of that.

The film industry now is very broken as a result of that, and that's why it's a double-edged sword because it's offered so much more opportunity for people to create, but it's put all of the power into the distributors because it's a buyer's market.

There's such a flood of creative people out there who just want to work that they're willing to do it for nothing.

Like I was saying earlier about the actors - there's so many actors out there who would be willing to take less money than what the unions would provide that unfortunately, that sort of undervalued the profession, and that's definitely what happened in music and it definitely happened to writing and filmmaking. In games, that's also what sort of happened.

You had all these larger console games which are very expensive to produce, and when guys left doing these big games, they started their own teams and they started smaller upstarts, but they couldn't afford to work on a giant console game so they started to work in the only medium that they could really afford to, which was mobile, or tablets, or online games.

So that has created this flood of independent games which is great because there's a lot of amazingly talented people creating independent games, but there's also a tremendous amount of competition because everyone can do it who has that skill set.

That's sort of what's happening right now is that you're seeing all these industries go through this massive transformation because the technology is opening it so that they can do the work and the internet is providing a distribution means for them to get it out to the audience.

It's created what a lot of people refer to as just a lot of noise - not in a bad way, but there's so many people doing such great work that's this high level of noise because there's so many people all doing great work that no one's able to be successful at it.

There's always the saying that the cream rises to the top, and that's true, but what's happening right now is you're seeing an explosion in social marketing and viral marketing.

With all the social media platforms for Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, and all the other different platforms that are out there, now you're starting to see the media, or these different industries rely on social media to break through the noise.

You're seeing actors that are getting cast because they have a million Twitter followers, or they have a giant Instagram following, or they've got millions of people on Vine, or a YouTube channel that's very successful.

Dave: They're going to bring their audience with them.

Keith: That's the goal. That's what these distributors are counting on. They're saying, 'Well, if we cast this actor, or bring on this musician, and they've already generated 20 million views for their music video then we're going to sign this artist because he's already built his audience.'

In the old days, an A&R guy would have to go to a club to see a band perform, and if they could bring in an audience and they could play in front of a crowd, then they would discover that band and bring them out.

Nowadays, if you build your own social following, you now are very valuable because you're bringing your audience with you.

That's what's changing right now is that the marketing, and the social, and the viral element of the creativity is as important as the creative itself because there's such an abundance of creative, great work out there that you need something else beyond that.

That's really the next wave of what's happening. In technology, as virtual reality comes in, as mobile and tablet gaming explodes, as all these different industries converge and people are using the internet to be able to use this as a new means of distributing their content.

Then that allows them to get out to a much larger audience but they need to stand out, and that's why they're leaning so heavily on their social platforms.

Dave: That's a perfect segue to my next question. If I came to you, whether I was going to do a new podcast or a graphic novel or even a low-budget film, what should I do to stand out? What is your recommendation for what can people do to break through the noise?

Keith: That's really what I'm exploring right now. I just did my first motion picture this year called "The Phoenix Incident" and I started about two or three years ago before the film was out, while it was obviously still in production; and I started to build the viral campaign for that film to do what I did on Infex.

To really build out the characters, to build out the world and to start to get the audience familiar with the world that I was going to do. The film was just over a million dollars, it was at 1.3 million for shooting the film.

Compared to a Star Wars or Independence Day, or these giant blockbusters, you're still competing for the same eyeballs, but they're spending $150 million, and you're spending $1.3, something's going to change.

As a filmmaker, I still wanted to be able to take advantage of the technology that I've got here with my creative background, the actors I've worked with, the studio facilities we have, and bring all of that production value into what we're doing.

But I needed a way to break through the noise and to compete with other studios. Not that I'm trying to take on Independence Day in any way, shape, or form, but there's thousands of independent films out there that are fantastic that just end up on Netflix.

They don't get any theatrical support, that don't get any distribution, that are lucky to even get into a film festival. What I started to do is I realized that I needed to build an audience before the film was going to come out.

What I did was I took the subject matter of the film which was all based on real events, and it was based on the largest mass UFO sighting in U.S. history...

Dave: Right.

Keith: ...and this big UFO cover-up with the military that people blamed - there's conspiracy theories that the military was actually covering up this UFO sighting.

I wove our fiction of our story through all of these events, and by doing that, it's already a viral event, it's already a UFO sighting, it's already a military conspiracy, it's already got a lot of controversy behind it, so to weave our characters through that, the audience is aware of some of the background and the history of that.

But now I'm integrating our characters into that. That makes it much more compelling. That's not meant to be a disinformation campaign, but it is meant to build up the fiction of the world.

Years ago, you saw a "Cloverfield" or the "Blair Witch Project" or these other projects where they would build out the fiction outside of the film.

I was really inspired by that because here people are saying, 'Well, wait a second. That's real, I heard about that, that really did happen in Phoenix. There were 30,000 people that witnessed this.

The governor did come out on CNN and said he saw a spaceship. What was the controversy and were there flares and did people go missing? All of these different questions. So I started shooting additional footage for the movie specifically for this viral campaign.

I created back stories for all of our characters, I created conspiracy theories around the military coverup. I shot additional footage for the UFO cover up and I started to leak this online through some of our characters. We had an investigative journalist...

Dave: That's great.

Keith: ...we had about two dozen websites that are out there, that are still up right now and they're very real. That's the thing: there were cult websites, and missing person sites, and news sites, and all these different sites that you could get this information that had no bearing on the marketing of the film.

There was no advertising for the name of the film. This was just building the fiction out. Not meaning to hoax the audience, but to get them sort of intrigued into this conspiracy theory.

One of the things that we did was that we had a character who is an investigative journalist who comes out of Phoenix, and he started to report about this cover up about these missing guys who went missing the night of this massive UFO sighting.

Last year, he released this 14-second clip of this military footage that he had acquired that showed these F-16 jets engaged with these unknown craft flying over the Estrella mountain range in Phoenix, Arizona back in 1997.

He launched this little 14-second clip that came right out of the film, and this thing went incredibly viral. It got 2 million views within the first two to three days, it was on the front cover of the Mirror U.K. as this authentic UFO sighting.

We weren't trying to hoax people: this was just basically building up the fiction of our world. But suddenly, we had millions and millions of views of some of our story that was going to be coming out in this film in the next year.

That was some of the building blocks of some of what we were trying to do to try to get the audience really fascinated and start talking about our movie. That's how you break through the noise is you get people starting to talk about it.

Now that's controversial because some people don't want to feel like they're being hoaxed, some people don't want to feel like that's disinformation. When we're talking about UFOs and military conspiracy theories, our society right now doesn't always necessarily trust the government or what we're being told.

There's Area 51 and Roswell and all these other different, long-term conspiracy theories, that we don't know if aliens have been here and other things. So to say that this isn't real is like calling the pot calling the kettle black. You can't really criticize that, because who's to say what's real and what's not?

Dave: It's really fascinating, Keith. In my own world of digital marketing, I have a lot of interaction with a lot of people that are starting online businesses, and the current philosophy now is to go find out where an audience exists and what they want, and then go produce something for them.

Instead of going into the hole and producing a widget or an app or an information product and then bringing it out to the world and saying, 'Look what I've made for you' and trying to find people to buy it, actually going to an audience of people that are already interested in your area of expertise is.

Or your widget that you want to build and say, what's wrong with the current widgets? What do you want? Okay, I'm going to go make that for you, and then you bring it back to them. I love how you've kind of done that with the entertainment sector. That's really great.

Keith: You definitely have to be very respectful of that audience because I identified three pillars for this. There was the UFO audience; there was obviously the found footage, thriller, horror genre kind of audience that loves these kinds of movies; and then also, I come from the gaming world and all of my cast were the top video gaming actors.

So I had Yuri Lowenthal, Troy Baker, Liam O'Brien,Travis Willingham, Brian Bloom, and all these top video game actors that I worked with on all of my video games for the past 10 or 15 years.

I needed this cast of very good, very believable actors that weren't celebrities, which is tough, because in films, everyone wants to say, 'Who's the star? Who's your cast?' Here I've got great actors, but they're not known in the film industry.

You also have to be very respectful of those audiences because I didn't want the UFO audience to think I'm hoaxing them because I believe that there's got to be life in outer space, and I love conspiracy theories, and I love trying to get the truth behind something and I didn't want the UFO audience to think that I'm just trying to hoax that audience.

I just really want this film to sort of evoke a response from the audience to - I want the audience to research and investigate for themselves, and to really pressure the government and to say, 'Hey, if you don't have anything to hide, then just release your UFO files.'

I think there's even a news report yesterday that was talking about that Obama is talking about before he leaves office is to release all of the country's UFO files and Hillary Clinton's campaign said that if she gets in the office, that she's going to release the UFO files.

So there's a lot of cultural focus right now on getting the truth behind the subject, so it's a very relevant subject. So to have a conspiracy theory in the middle of this you're weaving your fiction and the reality of what's going on in the world into the same project.

By using these websites and your viral marketing campaign, you can pivot every single day and communicate with your audience using relevant topics as they come out in the news to further your narrative.

Then ultimately it's going to come out in a film, or a television show, or a book, or whatever your product is going to be.

But that's the way to kind of rise above the noise is because you're identifying your audience and then you're delivering content specifically to that audience as opposed to this shotgun approach of just hitting everybody, and hoping that 1 out of 100 is going to like what you do.

Dave: That's awesome. I think that's a real gold nugget there to take away.

Keith: It's not necessarily a mainstream approach, but that's how you break in and then ultimately you make that so it becomes a more mainstream product.

I think that's where you're going to see creators work these days now, is that they're going to find their audience, just the way that a YouTube star or a Twitter audience is going to follow someone - now you're going to find a filmmaker or a musician, someone who's going to cater to their audience.

They're going to use the power of the internet and the technology that they're working on to distribute content back to that audience.

Instead of getting hired on a big motion picture because you have a big following, you're just going to deliver content straight to your audience. That's what you're seeing musicians doing; you're seeing authors doing that right now, and you're going to see that with filmmakers and video game makers.

Dave: That's great. I've only got one more question for you, but if it's too long to answer, then just say that we'll have to save that one for another time.

I asked Jay if there was anything I should ask you and he said, 'Ask him about the sushi dinner with the people from Dolby.' Is that a long story or is that something...he said it wouldn't really relate to anything, but it's a good story.

Keith: Not really related to anything we've been talking about, but it is a good story. I have a great relationship with the guys - I hope I don't get them too much in trouble - I have a really great relationship with the guys from Dolby and I've been working with them for about 20 years.

Dolby surround, Dolby digital, and all the different technologies they've done - I've got a great relationship with them working in the games space and now films. One of the main guys that sort of worked with me as a...not just as a representative, but as a good friend and we had worked together.

Dolby will go to all the big audio engineering conferences and other events to sort of get creators involved with their technology because the more people that are creating using Dolby products is great for them because then there's more content...

Dave: Sure, sure.

Keith: ...for people then to buy. A Dolby television, or a Dolby stereo, that type of thing. I've had a great relationship creating stuff using Dolby. And they were in town for the audio engineering convention years ago - this is about maybe 10 or 15 years ago.

This guy took me and a handful of creators out. One of the guys was on tour with George Clinton and some of the guys from a couple of the production houses, so there was maybe like five or six of us. They took us to one of the nicest sushi restaurants here in Los Angeles.

We had this great dinner; my wife was out of town, so I had all night. I could stay up all night and didn't have to worry about bothering her or waking her up.

So we went out to this sushi restaurant and we're having this great time, and the guy from George Clinton's tour is great, and the guys from Dolby are really funny, and we're just ordering beers and ordering sushi.

They start passing around the menus and everyone gets their own sushi menu and what no one realized was that we were ordering not only what we wanted but we were ordering for the table. So we're like, 'We'll get some of this, and we'll get some of this,' and everyone sort of ordered for everybody else.

No one cross-checked their sushi menus. So we handed it back to the guy and we're hanging out and we're drinking and George Clooney goes walking by and there's all these celebrities there, and we're just enjoying the atmosphere and how cool this sushi restaurant is.

About 30 minutes later, this guy comes out with this massive tray - we're talking like 50, 60 pieces of sushi on this enormous tray. It's like a 2-foot by 2-foot tray, maybe even more, and it's just huge - packed - and this is not a cheap restaurant.

It's just this enormous platter of sushi. All of this table looks at this thing and we're like, 'How in the hell are we going to eat that much sushi?' It was just so much sushi. Behind them was three more of these platters.

Dave: Oh my gosh!

Keith: Literally, they brought these platters and just put them onto the table and it didn't even fit on this table with the six of us sitting there, there was just no way we

were going to be able to ever eat even one of these platters, much less four of these things.

We felt kind of guilty because this is some of the most amazing sushi in Los Angeles, and here we are with this unbelievable amount of food. So we're eating and eating and we're feeling more guilty eating it than enjoying it because it's just too much food.

I think we may have cleared one of the platters and at the end we're just bursting and we're like, 'What do we do?' We can't throw it away, and we couldn't send it back, and I'm sure the sushi chef saw the menus and just started adding more sushi because they're like, 'Oh, they're never going to know.'

We had so much sushi that we didn't know what to do with. So this guy who is touring with George Clinton says, 'Hey! George is in town right now. He's recording at Miles Davis Jr.'s house. Why don't we go over there and see if they want it?'

So we're like, 'Uh, okay, that sounds cool.' So we pack up all of this sushi and it turns out to be like four or six thousand dollars worth of sushi.

Dave: Oh my gosh.

Keith: I mean it was these poor guys from Dolby had to turn in this expense report of thousands of dollars of sushi, which is just horrible. So we drive across Los Angeles, and we drive to Miles Davis Jr.'s house and they let us in the gates.

We go up this great driveway and at the pool house, there's all this music coming out of this pool house. We walk over there and open the door and this smoke comes billowing out of this place, and his whole band (George Clinton's whole band), they're just in

this really cool guest house at Miles Davis Jr.'s house and they're just jamming, recording there.

It was like that scene in Animal House when this group of white guys walk into this room with these big African American cool guys all playing, and they just kind of stopped and looked at us, and we're like, 'We brought sushi!'

We walked in and we spent the entire night just hanging out with these guys and they're playing music and we brought all of this amazing sushi and they're there. I just remember sitting there and George is there and he's just baked out of his mind, and it was just so funny.

He's just hanging out there and he's wearing his sunglasses and he's totally mellow. In one hand, he's got his hand in this bag of Cool Ranch Dorito's and in the other hand, he's got four pieces of sushi and he's shoving it in his mouth.

I can't, on the podcast, I think it would be a little too inappropriate to say what he told me, but needless to say, it was the most hilarious kind of experience just hanging out there and having this night of hanging out with the guys from Dolby.

Hanging out with George Clinton, seeing George Clooney, being at Miles Davis Jr.'s house, and I come back at about 2 or 3 in the morning.

I'm just amped up and I'm so excited from all the experiences from the night and my wife calls me in the morning and I start telling her this experience and she's just grinning. She's like, 'You had a really good night, didn't you?'

I was like, 'Yeah, yeah, that's one for the books.' Needless to say, that was our sushi night with George Clinton and Dolby.

Dave: That's funny. I ran into George Clinton - I went to UNC-Chapel Hill and I worked my senior year at a 4-star hotel that was the only 4-star hotel in that area.

There was this place called The Cat's Cradle, which was bands from Pearl Jam, Dave Matthews band, everybody's been there.

George Clinton played there and he was staying at the hotel and I got George Clinton checked into his room and I think he tipped me with a $20 or something. Some of the other bellhops, he would tip people with coloring - pages out of a coloring book that he had colored.

Keith: Oh wow!

Dave: He was like, 'Hey man, here's your tip.' And he would give them a piece of paper out of a coloring book that he had colored.

Keith: Wow! What a cool cat!

Dave: Yeah!

Keith: It's interesting working in the music industry, I was unphased by that because I was on Capitol and we toured with all these other bands and had always been around these other musicians and being really comfortable working in that space.

But it's just kind of cool to be a fan too. To have that experience of someone that you respect and get to see them working and just to be completely out of your element and just seeing them in theirs.

I really appreciated that because I kind of felt that by working at such a young age and professionally touring at 14 and doing all these things, that I never really had that ex-

perience of sort of appreciating from the audience perspective because I was always on the other side of it.

That was one of those nights where I just kind of got to fan boy out and geek out and just enjoy the night and just hang out with all these great guys - just being that fan. That story always has a place in my heart just because I had a really unique experience.

Dave: Thank you for sharing that. We've gone really long, so I'm going to wrap up here. I really appreciate it man. It's been a good time, I could listen to your stories, I would love to talk to you longer.

Where can we go for people that want to learn more about you or connect with you? I think you mentioned you're on Twitter. Where would you like to send people?

Keith: Sure, so for me personally, I'm @keitharem on Twitter, on Facebook, on Instagram. My company is PCB Productions and that's @PCBProductions both on Twitter, Instagram, and also on Facebook.

And then there's also ones for all my projects, so you can go to @PhoenixIncident on Twitter. On Facebook, it's Phoenix Incident, the motion picture official site is PhoenixIncident.com.

That book Infex I told you about, there's infex.tv, which is the website, and you can find it on the app store for iTunes for Infex, I-N-F-E-X.

And then there's a lot of links to some of our viral marketing things, so for Phoenix Incident, some of the viral marketing things I was telling you about some of those hidden

sites. There's one called maricopamissing.com, there was KWBV News was one of the hidden sites.

Dave: Okay.

Keith: There's another one called americancrimes.tv, so those are all kind of fun little roads to see the viral marketing things that we've done and continue to do some of.

We're sowing the seeds for some of the next movies and television shows I'm working on, so I'll send you some links to share with the audience in a little bit and you can start to see some of the early stages of some of the next things that will come out next year.

Dave: Please do. I put together a list of all the links mentioned in my show notes page and it will be supersimpl.com/keith and I'll mention that at the end again.

But I'll have all those links and if you want to send me something when you get other projects going, I'll be happy to update that because as podcasts, those stay out there - it's evergreen who will be picking this up in months to come.

Keith: Absolutely. And you're always welcome to go to my own website which is just pcbproductions.com and get a good kind of sense of some of the other projects we're developing as well.

Dave: That's great! Keith, thank you so much for your time! I really appreciate it and let's keep in touch. Thanks a lot!

Keith: Hey, David, thanks! I really appreciate it!

Dave: All right, take care.

Keith: Thanks, bye.