

Meet Scriptic for interactive phone-first drama and entertainment

As part of our quick fire questions series - or QFQs - we spoke to Nihal Tharoor, Founder & CEO at Scriptic about their recent investment news, interactive phone-first media, leveraging GenAI tools and a move towards user generated content.

Temps de lecture : minute

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My cofounder, Benedict Tatham, and I launched *Scriptic* in 2018 (back then it was called ElectricNoir Studios), after working together as creative partners for about three years by that point. We'd always wanted to create something of our own, and we saw there was a massive opportunity in the film and TV industry to develop shows purpose-built for the most interactive medium there is - our phones. I wrote the first season of *Dead Man's Phone*, which deals with the subject of racial bias in the police force, while Ben oversaw creative and artistic design. It became so popular that the show was nominated for a BAFTA in 2020 - it has since also launched on Netflix under the name *Scriptic: Crime Stories*.

Tell me about the business - what it is, what it aims to achieve, who you work with, how you reach customers and so on?

Scriptic is a studio developing a dynamic catalogue of interactive phone-first shows which we produce through a creative collaboration between human writers and generative AI. We create immersive, phone-first

interactive shows that sit at the intersection of film and games, and put audiences in control of the action. Our flagship show, *Dead Man's Phone*, launched on Netflix as *Scriptic: Crime Stories* last year. It's also available on the Scriptic app, which has so far reached over 1.5 million organic installs, alongside a host of other shows across a broad range of genres.

We have an entire production team of creative professionals who work on script writing, producing, directing and editing our shows, and also leverage a host of cutting-edge generative AI tools to help with the production and the creative process of developing new content.

How has the business evolved since its launch? When was this?

Since launching in 2018, we've developed 7 shows, as well as grown and expanded the team to include more creative, tech, and games professionals. We play around with genres - so far we've tackled crime, comedy, romance, horror and court-room drama. We saw an early untapped opportunity for the use of AI in developing games and shows, and continue to be strong believers of its potential in the entertainment industry. And, we're always looking to explore new categories. We've also expanded to begin onboarding external writers as part of our UGC strategy (more on that below!).

Tell us about the working culture at Scriptic

One of our key tenets at Scriptic is our commitment to 'generosity of spirit'. We define it as playfulness, kindness, and curiosity, and it's essential to our culture because we believe it best sustains the kind of creative environment where we can build high quality narrative products. They're traits that we want the team to be nurturing in themselves and others, so as a remote-first company we also make sure we meet up

regularly and connect in-person to strengthen our teamwork. For our last company meetup, we went to Alton Towers and then a beautiful country hotel in the Peak District.

How are you funded?

We're funded by VCs and angel investors, and monetise our shows - first episodes are usually free, and then we charge for follow-on episodes. We've actually recently raised \$5.7M in a second close of our seed round, led by BITKRAFT Ventures with participation from Tower 26, the Amazon Alexa Fund, and a range of additional and returning investors. This brought our total seed round to \$8.2M - we previously raised \$2.5M from Vgames, Moonfire, and angel investors including Unity founder David Helgason and Twitch co-founder Kevin Lin.

What has been your biggest challenge so far and how have you overcome this?

Although we very much followed the latest technological developments and gaming news, neither of us had gaming backgrounds when we founded Scriptic, so we made it our mission to hire the right talent from across the gaming and entertainment industries. We've now got team members with experience at studios like 2k, have held leadership roles at King, and experience managing IP for the likes of Disney and Marvel. Equally important, we had to go through a lot of trial and error before finding the best ways of using generative AI to help produce our shows.

How does Scriptic answer an unmet need?

We realised there's an unmet need for phone-first entertainment - we're always on our phones, so why not use it as a principal medium for new content? Our shows are created to be experienced on our phones - *Dead*

Man's Phone puts players in the role of a homicide detective, using a victim's phone for clues in order to solve a crime.

We're also able to deliver on this unmet need through the use of generative AI. We're one of the first entertainment companies to leverage Generative AI tools in a production capacity and use it to help produce some of our content. We're proving that GenAI can be used in story media, blending text, images, video, and audio into one seamless interactive experience. We leverage GenAI tools, like ChatGPT or DALL-E, to help produce content efficiently without compromising on the quality of our output.

What's in store for the future?

So many new things are in the pipeline! Over the next year, we will be rolling out a user generated content (UGC) offering - we want to put our AI-enabled creation tools into the hands of external creators and storytellers, starting with a curated pool of writers. We'll have a cloud-based curator suite which will give users one central service which wires together generative language models, diffusion models, and audio synthesis models, allowing them to create high quality and seamless interactive experiences in a short space of time. Our aim for the future is to give anyone the ability to easily build compelling phone-first dramas, ultimately helping them be the director of their own show. Of course, we'll also be continuing to release more shows, and looking into collaborations with existing IP holders.

What one piece of advice would you give other founders or future founders?

Don't underestimate the cumulative effect of just clocking in every day and working towards your goal. It can be daunting to be faced with ever-

growing to-do lists, meetings to attend, documents to review, but every effort you put in will compound. You don't need to make massive strides everyday, just commit to the regularity. With time you look back at where you first started and see how much progress you've made - and that's a wonderful feeling.

And finally, a more personal question! What's your daily routine and the rules you're living by at the moment?

It's by no means a revelation, but regular physical exercise is super important for your mental health. Particularly during those stressful periods, it quietens the mind which can otherwise be racing late into the night! Being aware of your diet can also make a world of difference - when your mid week calendar is full with work and networking events, options like alcohol-free beer are an awesome way to pace yourself and keep yourself in good form - definitely a cheat code I've been using lately!

Nihal Tharoor is the founder & CEO at [*Scriptic*](#).

Article by Nihal Tharoor