



📁 INTERVIEW

Interview: Austin Winner Alex D. Reid – Part I

Northern Irish writer Alex D. Reid talks with Arc Community Specialist Victoria De Capua about his 2018 Austin Horror Category win.

🕒 8 MIN READ 📅 SEPTEMBER 4, 2020

Part I: Winning Horror at Austin Film Festival 2019

Victoria De Capua: Introduce yourself.

I am [Alex D. Reid](#). I won the horror category at [Austin Film Festival in 2019](#) with my screenplay *Delirium*. That got me represented with a management company. I've got my foot in the door, and I'm just trying to step through.

Making a lot of transatlantic trips?

Surprisingly not. I'm currently working on feature stuff, which is better for me which means I don't need to be in rooms as much. I can work in my own space and then send things off.

That's interesting because you're told you have to move to LA, if you want to be represented or be in anyway capable of doing the job– much less being successful.

I think I will have to go. I don't think I can stay just where I am forever, but I think when it comes to features you have a little more leeway. If you're in TV you kind of have to be there, there's no two ways around it.

I know you would've had career goals prior to Austin. Walk me through the pre Austin process.

I've been writing screenplay since 2015 and I had no expectations whatever. I never thought I'd ever get to where I am now, where I can email someone who is in the industry fairly easily. My goals up until that point were to keep writing for nothing else than I enjoy the process.

I don't think you can really write for an extended period of time without enjoying the process just in and of itself. You know if you're forcing yourself to do it with the idea, "this will be a big moneymaker" I think you're doomed from the start.

The more you write — it's like a muscle — your skills grow. I think that got to the point where there was a good stage I was at where I was writing consistently competent screenplays. I could turn out a screenplay that was competent in a fairly prompt amount of time — and then, January or February of 2019 I entered in a passion project screenplay to Austin with — again — *zero expectations*.

I think maybe that's one unifying thing here, I had zero expectations, then I was told I was a quarterfinalist, and then I was a semi-finalist, and then when I was told I was a finalist... When I was getting to that final stage, I was like, *oh shit, this is actually getting a little bit serious*. That's kind of where I had to put down actual money to go over to Austin. Because I won Austin I was reimbursed for all of that, but I had no guarantees of that going in.

So you may as well develop your material, take advantage of people who are willing to collaborate with you to do that, and prefer to put all of those cards into one hat instead of putting one card into several hats... would it be better to do that and maybe apply to Nicholls and Austin every year and ignore the whole slew of every other stuff?

I think that's pretty much on the money. I think that's probably the safest way of doing it. Again, not to tire out a metaphor I've already used once, but writing's kind of like running. If you do one big run every year, but if you run a little bit every day then you're gonna be really really good at the end of it. I think it's the exact same situation – even if you write 20 screenplays that no one sees, you're still practicing, it's still a muscle. I wrote *Delirium* in January 2019, and I wrote three or four scripts before I knew that *Delirium* had advanced in the film festival. It's not like I stopped and pinned all my hopes on that one script, because I had again, no expectations — so I kept going.

Keep writing — and you know if you're going to enter into contests, Austin and Nicholls are probably safest. I think they're the least likely to be scam artists. I'm painting with a very broad brush here because I've heard some success from other contests, but I think it's fair to say — those two have the currently standing best reputation.

I think one thing that new screenwriters really can't spend time thinking about if they want to be successful is: “the odds”.

I think the sad thing about this whole profession is that the odds of getting in are incredibly slim, which is why I think you've gotta be passionate about it. You've got to like it. I'll say it about myself, there's still a strong chance that I won't get to the point where I can be a fully working screenwriter day in and day out.

Some professional writers surveyed still have day jobs. Then it's, “wait a minute, they're professionals, they're not supposed to have a day job!” But it turns out that they do. A very large percentage of people who work as screenwriters also work in tech, or they work in the medical field or the legal field.

And I'm doing a PhD starting in September.

Tell me about that.

I'm currently doing a masters program in English Lit. I'm an English Lit nerd, so I enjoy it. I mean, you don't do a PhD to make money. I'm not a fan of closing doors. I want to keep as many doors open as I possibly can before I'm dragged away kicking and screaming when I have to close one. I try to keep everything open as much as I possibly can.

Now you're at Austin. Do you already know by the time you're at Austin that you've won?

I had no idea. I knew I was a finalist, I was one of three. I was invited to a dinner/ceremony and that's where I found out. Even still to that point, I made a distinct point of having zero expectations. I wasn't going to walk out of that dinner being "aw, shucks, I didn't get it" and now I'm gonna be really sad for the rest of the time I'm here. I was determined not to be that person. And, you know, I think it kind of worked out.

It's hard because they get your hopes up.

I met one of the other finalists and it made it worse because he was such a lovely guy. Everyone there was really really nice. But when I arrived, I had no expectation of what was going to happen. The only thing I did know beforehand was that I was going to have a meeting with my prospective manager.

What kind of interactions are you having at this point, and how much of it feels socially weighted and how much of it is actually about the screenplay you submitted?

I think there's already a little bit of a culture shock. My experience of Northern Ireland to Austin, Texas is that over here we wouldn't talk to someone on the street if we walked past them. To be clear, over there I was quite happy, everyone was really, really pleasant.

You know there was the Driskill Bar, that's the "place to be". I talked to [David Benioff](#) and [D.B. Weiss](#) from [Game of Thrones](#), and [Gary Whitta](#) — I don't want to name drop everyone, it feels a bit impolite. There were people that I'd been

following who were there which was a surreal experience in and of itself. Honestly I talked to them briefly, it never came down to talking about the screenplay it was more about being pleasant and exchanging some basic contact information — which to be clear, hasn't really gone anywhere.

Have your people call my people?

I honestly spent the majority of the time talking to other writers who were there as amateur writers. And they were all wonderful, because I get this impression sometimes, I'm sure you know this, sometimes screenwriters can be an opinionated bunch.

[Laughs] a little bit.

I thought I didn't know what I was getting myself into, but everyone was perfectly pleasant. The word "surreal" is really the best way to describe it, because two weeks before that situation I wasn't expecting to be in that situation.

There's no way I could've predicted that I would've been there two weeks before. I was going to say a year before, but two weeks before I wouldn't have known.

Part II: Lovecraft and Exposition in Delirium

Alex D. Reid is also an author on Arcs and Beats: [all posts from Alex D. Reid.](#)

Victoria De Capua



Victoria is Arc Studio Pro's Community Development Specialist. She holds an A.A.S. in Film and Video Communications from Seattle Central Community College, and a B.F.A. from University of British Columbia's School of Creative Writing. She runs several online writing groups, and is one of the moderators on r/Screenwriting, the world's largest online screenwriting community.



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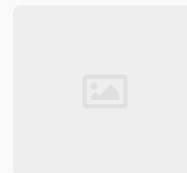


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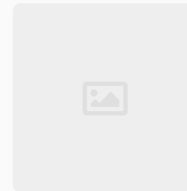
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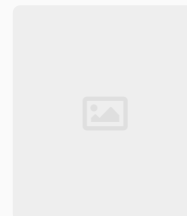
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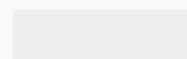
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