

CHRIS DEALS WITH IT

episode notes




EP 78 - A Creative Process: Part 4 - Editing

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 www.ChrisKreuter.com/CDWI

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This is part 4 of a multi-part series about the creative process. We'll cover my thoughts on how this process applies to creating & publishing works, and how it applies to games, fiction writing, other creative endeavors, and our professional careers.

As always, the views expressed on this podcast are mine. What works for me isn't likely to work for you exactly the same way. The usefulness of these various pieces of advice will depend on your project, experience, tools, and more that I'll get into.

The goal of this series is to share my frameworks, mindsets, strategies, and experiences that have led me to this point of my creative journey. This is an ever-evolving process, as it should be for everyone.

EDITING:

1. Why and how we should refine our work
 2. The critical service editing performs for your audience
 3. Getting & receiving feedback
 4. The importance of testing groups
- Editing IS an act of creation
 - It's a critical service to the audience
 - Put in the work to make it as impactful as possible for them.
 - Respect their time & attention by putting in those extra layers of effort
 - Evaluate how much agency your player, reader, listener, watcher have
 - Are you leading them by the nose?
 - Do you have to because of the format of the work?
 - How much can they integrate their personal experiences?
 - Example: Designing a role playing game will have a very different level of agency compared to a YouTube video.
 - Are you going for quantity or quality?
 - This scale is different for everyone
 - Do you just want to say you wrote/made something, or to make something great?

- Are you being honest with your works' flaws? Or identifying where the quality of the work isn't up to the task & needs editing
- Being clear on the stakes can help you level-set how much time you spend editing
- Seek out opportunities to get feedback:
 - Playtesting, focus groups, table reads, rehearsals, beta readers, open mic nights
 - Would your project benefit from sensitivity checks?
 - There are services & organizations out there that you can pay to ensure you're representing appropriately
 - Bounce the work off trusted friends/family/experts
 - Good practice for refining your ideas & pitching down the road!
 - But be wary of doing this too early: Talking about a potential project can steal your momentum/desire of actually starting it.
 - Frame all feedback: Take it all with grains of salt
 - Ultimately: It's your work!
- Seek out (or create) a group of like-minded developers/artists/writers/game designers/etc...
 - Ex: Our NYC Playtest group was one of the greatest creative exercises of my life
 - Regular meetings at NYU's Game Design lab encouraged rapid experimentation and fantastic networking
 - Got exposure to other developers' methods, tools & thought processes
 - Giving & receiving constructive critique
 - Articulating our design choices & objectives

- Forged an incredible network of friendships that extended far beyond the group
- Dealing with problematic personalities → Helpful in sales!
 - Not everyone in life will be responsive to your project or pitch
- Be prepared to throw out drafts
 - Most of my novels requires 4 or 5 drafts: Each taking multiple months.
 - Then waiting for feedback from multiple beta reads to get it to a finished novel.
 - The ability to throw out portions of works (or entire prototypes) to further refine them is a superpower.
 - This can become a powerful reflex not just in game & product design, but other areas of life
 - For example: Two decades of writing has helped me recognize when professional e-mails doesn't strike the intended tone, and to maximize clarity & impact.
 - Sometimes you have to have a "puke draft" for an e-mail, not just a novel

Episode 78 Quote:

Rick Rubin's masterwork on creativity, *The Creative Act: A Way Of Being* is filled with incredible advice, including this one that's perfect for today's topic:

"The editor's role is to gather and sift. Amplifying what's vital and whittling away the excess. Culling the work down to the best version of itself."