

CHRIS DEALS WITH IT

episode notes




EP 79 - A Creative Process: Part 5 - Out In The World

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This is part 5 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.

OUT IN THE WORLD:

1. Dealing with the logistics & emotions of releasing your work.
 2. Handling the critique of others (and ourselves).
 3. How the work we create levels up our skills for future work.
 4. The importance of acknowledging others that aid your creative journey.
 5. Understanding the financial realities of your project.
 6. The role of gatekeepers: Their benefits & the realities of self-publication.
 7. Marketing & promoting the work.
 8. Having a healthy mindset when assessing the impact of your work.
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- Congratulations, you made a thing! It's time to put it out there in the world.
 - This project is a part of you
 - By releasing or performing it, you're sharing part of yourself with the world.
 - Our works can be imbued with our best ideas, experiences, feelings, hopes, and fears.
 - There will inevitably be flaws in your work
 - Critics gonna critique
 - Not every work will resonate with everyone - and that's totally okay!
 - **Accept the fact that we're fallible, imperfect humans trying to represent imperfect, limited versions of the human experience.**

- Depending on the project, your work may not be finished: Bug fixes, product recalls, printing issues, software updates, DLC, etc...
 - Be wary of spending too much time polishing a cannonball.
 - Don't use it as an excuse that prevents you from starting your future projects!
 - At some point, you need to ship!

- Your work is also a product of who you were when you made it
 - Each project will level you up in different ways
 - They become stepping stones, or landmarks, leading you to future, hopefully better work
 - You grow as a person because of, and between, the works you create
 - Resist the urge to overcredit past versions of your work:
 - Look at them lovingly as snapshots in time.
 - **Are you the same person you were ten years ago?**
 - **Are you the same person you were one project ago?**
 - Book 3 of the Rainy River Bees series featured better writing than Book 1.
 - But when I went through a second edition printing, aside from fixing a few glaring typos, I didn't edit the original text. Primarily out of respect for the writer that wrote it.

- Be sure to appreciate everyone who helps you along the creative journey:
 - Acknowledge their contributions (or their support/inspirations) in the work itself if possible (back of the book acknowledgements, in the Playbill, end credits of a game) - people love seeing their name in print or on the screen!
 - Thank them personally: Provide them free copies or tickets if possible - Although many are happy to support your art, find a balance between the

starving artist and showing your appreciation for their contributions.

- Make them feel like part of the process - part of the 'in group' around your creativity.
 - **If you treat people right over a long enough timescale, things tend to work out for you**
 - Reciprocity: Helping other creatives helps you develop your own skills, strengthens your network, and improves your ability to receive feedback.
 - A big tenet of the NYC Playtest group was putting in time in exchange for taking time
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- How much pressure is there for profit from the work?
 - Depends on the budget spent to make it - do you have investors?
 - Could you utilize crowdsourcing to help publish & distribute your project?
 - Will you use creative commons licensing? Permitting remixes, inspired/derivative works; etc...
 - Are you using such content & providing proper attribution?
 - How much of a long tail does a work have?
 - How much money do you expect to make from your work? **Have realistic expectations, especially when you're unknown, just starting out.**
 - When in doubt, ask some pros!
 - Will you (or did you 😞) end up with a ton of inventory?
 - Be sure to discuss the tax implications of your creative business with an accountant.
 - Establishing your creative endeavors through an LLC can provide financial and legal benefits, depending on the type of work you're creating
 - Certain expenses used in the creation of projects can reduce your overall tax liabilities
 - **With this advice: Discuss it with a licensed professional!**

- You can ignore gatekeepers - it's easier than ever to put your work out there in the world
 - May limit the audience for your work
 - Recognize that gatekeepers (publishing houses, agents, reviewers, etc...) do serve a role!
 - It'll be near-impossible for your work to reach the masses without them
 - *not to say that it can't happen!* 😊
 - Try to avoid distributors & middlemen who insist on DRM (Digital Rights Management) - These are digital locks on content: By insisting on these tools (Such as Audible, owned by Amazon), distributors take control of the art & businesses of creators & their investors. This results in creators becoming commodity suppliers for a distribution channel that calls all the shots.
 - Print on demand is amazing now - with quality comparable to professional printers.
 - ***Be wary of vanity presses & pay-to-play schemes!***

- Consider the marketing & promotion strategy
 - This will depend on if you're self-producing or working with agents/producers
 - What's the signal you'll send out to get heard above the noise?
 - What differentiates your work from prior art, or industry trends/expectations?
 - Do you need to go narrow/niche or wide?
 - Will you have (or need?) a social media strategy?
 - Are there contests taking submissions?
 - Who do you have in your network that can help?

- In the words of podcaster Jordan Harbinger: *You need to dig the well before you're thirsty.*
 - Can you develop some transmedia strategies to promote yourself & your work?
 - Ex: Integrate partner brands/products into your work (Rink Rat wheels in Rainy River Bees 3)
- Be patient: Initial commercial or critical failure doesn't necessarily mean it was a failed project
 - Commercial failures can also be seen as learning experiments, leveling up moments
 - It's possible the original work struggled to find the right audience.
 - In the future, it might be possible for the work to be reformatted into a different form factor, with a different graphic design, or targeted to a different audience who may appreciate it?
 - Epigo & Masquerade Games may not have been successful financially. But the skills developed through those projects were as valuable as a masters degree in many areas: Graphic design, publication, marketing, iteration, rapid prototyping, writing, distribution arrangements, convention logistics, and many more.
 - With distribution agreements: Understanding the mindset & challenges of the producer has paid huge dividends in my day job that involves the distribution of goods.
 - Be sure to do a post-mortem analysis of your projects: Crystallize these lessons learned, can you improve your systems, techniques, craft, and detection system to avoid future pitfalls?
- There's going to be a certain amount of ambiguity with your work
 - Will it end up being something notable / End up as a resume piece?
 - What internal narrative will the work have? How will it evolve?

- The gaming industry is similar to that of writers: Hard to have fixed contracts & steady, reliable work - you're judged by the quality of what you produce!

- A project can serve multiple ends
 - Elements of projects (or current ones) may be repurposed or added upon to create different things
 - What might flop in one arena could be a smashing success in another.
 - From the start, I planned my lecture to a class of college students into content for this series of podcast episodes: Increasing the return on the work I put into the lecture, while also allowing it to reach a wider audience.
 - This is also the reason I write detailed episode notes (scripts) for most episodes of CDWI: They are something I can leverage for a future book project.

- Have a healthy mindset when assessing the impact of your work
 - One of my best friends, author Carlos Hernandez, once told me something vital: *"Writing is my best thought"*
 - If all our creative effort did is clarify how we think about something, or helps us process something - that might be enough depending on the project!
 - Everyone's calculus on that is going to be different: Knowing what counts as a win, up front, can be a huge benefit when you're putting work out into the world, and dealing with the reaction to it.

Episode 79 Quote:

Today's quote is courtesy of author, philosopher & civil rights activist Howard Thurman:

"Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive, and go do that, because what the world needs is people who have come alive."