How the COVID-19 Pandemic Has Impacted Online Video Creators

COVID-19 has had a massive impact on each of us. There's only so much you can do whilst stuck a home, and we're pretty sure we're all over our bake-every-delicious-treat-in-existence phase.

Many of us have turned to online video to help pass the time, watching hours of YouTube videos and TikTok clips, and it's left us wondering: how has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the creators who make online content? We checked in with Thomas Ridgewell, Alayna Fender, Evelyn Ngugi and Hannah Witton to see how they're navigating the current climate.

A lot of occupations have begun working remotely over the past year, which isn't necessarily the easiest (or best) option when it comes to video production. As a result, creators have had to change direction in regard to the content they were planning on releasing in 2020 and into this year. "COVID-19 forced us to focus almost entirely on projects that could be produced remotely, resulting in around 30 minutes worth of cartoons being made," shares Tom. "I'm happy with what we've achieved, but live action sketches – my bread-and-butter content – have largely fallen to the wayside."

"I had been crowdfunding for a new series I was about to begin production on, *On The Fringe*," says Alayna. "We were going to go into various groups and explore what it was like to walk a day in the shoes of folks living 'on the fringe'. COVID completely wiped out our chance to shoot this."

This change in the way creators approach their content, as well as the delaying of some projects, has tested everyone's ability to adapt. While the majority of creators haven't noticed much of a change, as their content is regularly filmed within the confines of their home – "If anything, it made me want to create less. Nobody wants to be on Zoom calls *and* spend hours staring at a screen to edit," says Evelyn – others have found they miss the inspirational benefit of working with others. "We adapted to remotely shooting our unscripted content pretty seamlessly, but it definitely sucked the joy out of the experience for me, leading me to eventually wrapping up the series entirely," reveals Tom. "Instead of having fun with my friends and feeding off their in-person energy, I was now playing pretend to an empty room."

This state of mind permeated the online space when COVID-19 began to spread, with many creators sharing via social media that they were struggling with their creativity in such a restrictive and uncertain time. As with Tom, Alayna has found herself struggling while working solo, "As someone who does her best work when collaborating with others, trying to continue to create content in isolation has been a challenge." Hannah, on the other hand, found the lockdown initially helped her creativity, sharing that she found herself "craving making videos because it took me back to the reason I started it as a hobby: connecting to people when I felt isolated". However, as the pandemic has

continued, she admits she's beginning to miss the experiences that inspired her ideas. "I need stimulation and my world isn't very stimulating right now," she says.

If there's one thing the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us all, it's the importance of comradery and how much each of us appreciates the companionship we have with those closest to us, from teammates to the online communities that have come about as a result of the variety of content available. "I definitely value community differently now, and [this year] I'll try to focus on fostering more community in my local area IRL versus only online," shares Evelyn.

"There's definitely been a feeling of comradery with my team – my editor and [my] assistant," explains Hannah. "I also feel responsible for creating work so that they can do their work and get paid, so I value every single video and podcast I make in the sense that I'm grateful I get to do this. I'm grateful I've built a career for myself that can all be done online, and working remotely with my team is something we're already used to and have the processes in place for that."

Others are noticing the effects of not having that interaction in their lives. From production crews and editing teams, to friends with whom they're able to brainstorm ideas and the creativity in-person events spawn, creators have been missing working with their creative partners, "I felt the deepest sense of camaraderie with my creative peers at in-person events, like Buffer Festival," says Alayna. "Each year, I have found the inspiration I take from Buffer to be invaluable and have felt the effects of not having access to the festival this year."

As for advice for those who feel they're unable to make their visions a reality due to the pandemic?

"Try [your] hand at making a cartoon," suggests Tom. "There's plenty of artists and animators out there who could use the work, and you can do the whole thing safely and remotely." This is one way to spread one's wings, creatively speaking, and experimentation can actually do the mind good, as Hannah explains, "Experiment with what you can make with what you've got. Creativity is an interesting beast and sometimes giving it limitations means you come up with stuff you never would have if you had unlimited time, resources [and] locations."

However, if you feel you need to take a break, don't feel bad. "It's okay to take the L! There's so much pressure to adapt and pivot ASAP, but sometimes you just need to call it quits, take a nap and re-evaluate on your own timeline," reminds Evelyn.