

How To Be A Creator
by Hunter Barella

The school bell rings, grab your backpack and dash out the door towards home. It's almost time. Dive through the front door and slide into "home" base, nerves waiting on edge as you stare at that big black box. At the click of a button the small machine whirrs as the blackness fades into color. The only place you ever felt yourself as a child was right here. Plopped on the floor in front of the television watching the adventures of your larger than life icons: Spider-man the young new protector of New York, the powerful yet inexperienced teens of the X-Men, and of course the world's greatest detective Batman.

Every afternoon spent playing in front of the TV with your hard, plastic, made in China figurines on the floor of the carpeted loft. A special place untouched by adults and the rest of those that lacked imagination where you and the select few of your secret club could protect the world, fall in love, and in some cases even betray each other for the fate of the universe. All pretend ofcourse.

As the years go on, you all grow up. Some join sports, ditch toys for Halo 3, seek out fake popularity among their peers rather than just being themselves, move away or just move on. It hits you hardest when Chase, your best friend since you moved into the suburbs begins to leave you behind in pursuit of being one of the "cool kids". Soon that secret protected club of imagination is just you. The only one who refuses to let go because that spark of creativity still shines inside you, just much dimmer than before. Do you try to rekindle what's left? Or let it burnout like everyone else? You're about to enter high school and one of the tallest kids at that. Maybe it's time to let those embers become ash.

Now you're one of them. The halls blasting the Chainsmokers "Closer" and Drake's "One Dance". Surrounded by a cast of best friends, episodic storylines that either involve complicated teen romance, fights about insecurities and rumors, all while trying to maintain grades and play the part you're supposed to. A main character at the center of your own teen drama. "You're a mature young man now," your parents say. They congratulate and celebrate all your achievements from making first chair in the marching band to acing straight A semesters. Beloved by all and the tent pole of your friend group, it must be nice to have it all, right?

But your mind begins to wander, dig deeper into what comes next after this hormonal heaven. "What the hell am I gonna do for a career?!". Those fears lead to experimentation in those last two years of ignorant teenage bliss. You've tried the norms: Business, Math, History, Science. You have an affinity for English but you don't care for writing essays on "gun control" or "why Americans are the most obese people in the world". Creativity has always been your strong suit since childhood. Being able to hear a song and play it in a matter of minutes, the stacks of papyrus covered in layers of Crayola depicting your favorite heroes you used to watch after school, but music is boring and you can't cut it as an artist. That girl's art over there is one-hundred times better and detailed than yours and that guy's ability to improv Jazz landed him first chair in the Honor Band. All hope is lost, guess you'll just be another pencil pusher in a cubicle like the rest of your families lineage before you. It couldn't be that bad, could it?

That day, you see them. A small group of students who look like they're having the time of their lives. One's got a camera mounted on some kind of metal rig and the others stand in front

laughing between takes. This is it. You've found it. Your new passion. This is what you've been waiting for! Filmmaking! You enroll in the class, your last chance before college. A career of directing short films and making friends knowing full well you'll be the next Alfred Hitchcock or something and ascend the chain to Hollywood royalty!

That's how you wish it went anyways. It only took two years until you realized that this wasn't what you were looking for. The long nights spent on set, the assholes stuck in your group projects that do nothing or whose creative vision is "far superior" to yours. Looks like that Hollywood director life wasn't for you after all, just like all the other kids that won't cut it before and after you put the camera down. You really thought this was it. Spent over five grand on video equipment because of that urge inside telling you what to do. All you wanted was to be great, show the world you're special and that you can make things happen. So, what's the plan now? Five grand in the hole and a second year student at community college with no ambition, direction or enthusiasm.

Laying on your bed that's two sizes too small, still living in your parents house watching some animated show about guys with spiky hair shooting energy beams at each other you wonder, "how did I get here?". How did you end up in a position so low. It seemed like you had it all back in highschool: master musician, everyone's best friend, class clown, and overall scholar etc. But the truth slowly comes down to the fact that those were all just temporary titles everyone else gave you. You never really enjoyed music, everyone liked you because you were too nice, you made everyone laugh because you desperately wanted attention, and the only

reason you tried for the grades is because it's what your parents wanted. Come to think of it, the only time you were truly happy was sitting on the floor in the loft. Watching your favorite heroes, and creating your own stories with your cheap hunks of plastic, just you and the power of your imagination. The limitless fun you could have only stretched to the ends of the mind. The good ole' days. But you're an adult now, you still have to grow up, right?

Then it hits you like a runaway locomotive with no brakes going mach-20 down the countryside. Sitting on that bed watching anime the question comes to mind "someone gets paid to write this right?". The years you spent hating all your failed attempts at finding something you wanted to do, this was the one part that kept pulling you back in. You quit game design because you hated coding, you quit filmmaking because you hated directing idiots around and worrying about aperture, sunlight, and coordination with an entire team, and you never enjoyed English because writing persuasive essays was stagnant, you wanted more. The things you loved about game design and film was writing the stories, describing events in a herculean fashion in English was the best part, not writing and researching facts on "why video games cause violence". As the revelation unfolds, feet hanging off the edge of your small cramped bed, with a leap of joy you spring up and race to your computer. Opening that chrome flat metal contraption, you create a document and begin to type. An idea you had for a series but never had the budget to make. You crack your knuckles ready to begin.

At first it's a bit daunting. You've written scripts for short films before but you've never written longer than fifteen pages. How do you conquer something as massive as the lore of Lord of the Rings in a single script? It doesn't matter. Your fingers move across the keyboard like a

jumpy seismograph searching for an earthquake. As you write and organize your sci-fi universe that you've dreamt about off and on for God knows how long, your fingers begin to pick up the speed and so does something in your heart. Those embers of imagination begin to smoke, sizzle, then erupt into a sweltering blaze like a phoenix from ashes. You've found your place. All the time wasted not pursuing what always made you happy like the child you used to be, creating your own stories and heroes like the ones you used to watch growing up.

A week's gone by and your computer is riddled with documents detailing: episodes, stories, characters, world's and love triangles that may or may not be incorporated into your work. You spend the days writing or at bookstores buying and reading stacks of novels, guides, comic books and screenplays for inspiration and instruction. The works of Geoff Johns, Brandon Sanderson, Jeff Smith, V.E. Schwab and others all glaze over your eyes as you learn the in's and outs of each mediums style. After a bit of practice you realize that writing novels aren't for you, screenwriting is your trade by choice and it seems to suit you the best. But just imagining your heroes isn't enough. You want the world to see them in their entire godly and epic being.

Two sketch books later, a metric F*** ton of art instructional videos by DrawWithJazza, and copying your favorite artists you've begun to get a basic understanding of human anatomy and comic art. Post a few to instagram just to let the world know you're still relevant. A couple likes here and there, and comments from friends that support you. Nothing you do is that impressive, there's still a long way to go but this is the happiest you've ever been in years.

Just because things are good doesn't mean that they'll always be this way. The crushing looks of doubt and annoyance from your girlfriends parents when you tell them what you hope to

do with your life, your Mom telling you that your life's work is just a hobby, and your grandparents casually dropping other career suggestions while you try to show what you've done. Being a creator isn't easy, it's not flashy, or even commendable. You sit behind the scenes of all the big names whether they be actors or fictional characters who get all the credit, but you rest easy knowing that without your gripping stories and fantastical worlds you create they wouldn't be anything, and that's enough. As long as you stay true to yourself and refuse to lose that raging fire that burns inside you, that feeling of pure joy you had as a child with just you and your imagination. You know you'll always be truly happy.