

In-Sight Publishing
Ask A Genius 114 – Frillery and Foolishness¹
Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner
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[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: We've talked for 20 minutes trying to select a topic. We settled on entertainment. I'm going to be 57 in a couple of months. And I remember the 60s. There was a generation gap, which was largely between the young, people under 30, and everybody else. It was an entertainment gap. Younger people had their own entertainment, and there was a political gap. Younger people were pissed off about the Vietnam War and the stiff boringness of standard society.

Then older people, many of them, were the silent majority. Nixon voters. People got dressed up in a suit and tie with short hair and went to work every day. Of course, those were extreme characterizations. There were plenty of people who were older who loathed Nixon. And in the 70s, especially as the 70s moved on, there were people older than 30 enjoying the sexual revolution.

My mom's been married twice. My first stepmom was married three times. My dad was married three times. I have four siblings or ex-siblings. Basically, nobody has the same two parents. Things got loosened in the 70s. The silent majority did not dominate for the entire decade. Anyway, you had this gap at the end of the 60s and early 70s, where there was the standard world of entertainment, which was much smaller than it is now in terms of options and in terms of what there was to know. You only had 3 broadcast channels, not including the local PBS.

You had no Internet or social media, and no video games. So people were pretty much familiar with the standard entertainment, but because there was no Internet for people to inform themselves. You needed to be young. You need young friends to be well versed in Hippy entertainment and entertainment on the other side of the era gap. Every era until the current era has had divisions in society that we reinforced by a scarcity of information.

¹ Four format points for the session article:

1. Bold text following and including "Scott Jacobsen:" or "S:" is Scott & non-bold text following and including "Rick Rosner:" or "R:" is Rick.
2. Session article conducted, transcribed, edited, formatted, and published by Scott.
3. Footnotes & in-text citations in the interview & references after the interview.
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For further information on the formatting guidelines incorporated into this document, please see the following documents:

1. American Psychological Association. (2010). Citation Guide: APA. Retrieved from <http://www.lib.sfu.ca/system/files/28281/APA6CitationGuideSFUv3.pdf>.
2. Humble, A. (n.d.). Guide to Transcribing. Retrieved from <http://www.msvu.ca/site/media/msvu/Transcription%20Guide.pdf>.

That includes the generation gap of the 60s. Now, everybody can have access to whatever they want whenever they want, and there's a lot to have access to, and the world of entertainment is super fragmented. Dozens and dozens of TV channels and a few other hundred that are not-so popular. Thousands of streaming TV shows and movies, and a whole world of video games, and all sorts of bubbling topics of the moment on social media.

So everything has been blasted apart. At the same time, people could more fully inform themselves about what's going on because the information is more readily available. So nobody under 80 doesn't know who Justin Bieber is to some extent. So the world of entertainment—I haven't seen statistics, but I would bet we spend more of our time being entertained in one way or another than any other group and at any other time in human history.

We can look at what entertainment does for us. I think it does three things. Entertainment informs, represents, and empowers; good stories, compelling stories, tell us how the world is and people are. So there's information there. We, as generalists, as general exploiters in the world, which is what humans have evolved to be, we love information, especially the tough, nasty, semi-taboo information. It is not multiplication tables. It is "who is secretly gay?"

[Laughing]

That's more 10 years ago, when gayness was less accepted—10, 20, and 25 years ago. It is that kind of secret stuff that is juicier. And then entertainment empowers via wish fulfillment, and entertainment represents; in that, you pick who and what you are a fan of, and you empower through your shared connoisseurship with your tribe. You find other people who are into what you're into via social media and sometimes in real life.

You band together to support the entertainment providers who speak to you, and it's mutually empowering for both the entertainment people and for the entertained. And we can talk about one more thing about entertainment. Entertainment is important. It is, of course, frivolous bullshit, but at the same time it is important. In that, when you look at bad versions of the future as seen from the past, they were sterile and uninteresting.

They were sterile and unentertaining and not filled with the entertaining ephemera that our world is filled with, which is unlike the *Star Trek* world that is pretty blank. The worlds of *Minority Report*, *Blade Runner*, *Idiocracy*, where every square inch of your visual space is filled with advertising or something trying to grab your attention, which is closer to the way we're finding the world than the way *Star Trek* presented the future.

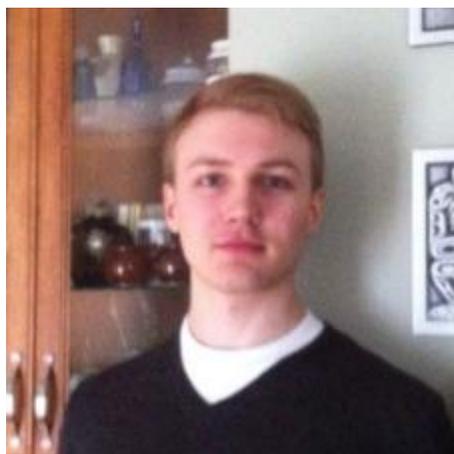
The world is never going to grow up and give up entertainment as our technology becomes powerful, then our frippery and foolishness and entertainment will also grow more powerful and sophisticated, and it performs a function. It informs us in a nice way, in a way that we enjoy. We know stuff via entertainment without having to have gone through the formal learning process, which means the formal learning process is in trouble because it is less fun than learning via crap.

[End of recorded material]

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