

Ask A Genius 59 – Judd Apatow, Comedy Writing, Medicine, and Computers
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Scott: So if this is the methodology without technology, we're talking about a large number of independent talented people, who specialized in joke writing, coming together to make better comedy. And this is Apatow and others.

Rick: He's a writer with some other writers and some added quips and stuff from dozens and dozens of other talented people. If you watch Netflix, or if you watch an Indie Comedy on Netflix, it might not be that funny, but could have benefitted from this kind of thing.

A well-developed movie these days, whether it is an Apatow comedy, where every line has been workshopped to be the best possible line. Or a \$200 million Marvel super hero movie, where every point in that movie has been workshopped to make sure it best takes advantage of the technology that has been developed for the super hero movies, such as CG, and that it makes a plausible presentation of the ridiculous mythology and backstories that lead to this point in the super hero universe.

A \$200 million Marvel super hero movie has been workshopped a zillion times. If you look at an Indie movie, you have a \$2.5 million budget. Only 2 or 3 people have ever gone over the script. If you look at the movie, it had the potential to be a more entertaining movie, but it just didn't get worked over enough. We can assume analogously that people in the future will network more and more intimately to add value to more and more areas of endeavour.

The stock market is one of the biggest laboratories for technological assault and technology aided understanding of value and trends, but it is still people sitting at a bank of screens. In the future, that may be one of the places where the 'traders are sitting at a bunch of screens' model is changed into a more efficient form of computational exploitation of being the first to understand what's going on.

Or being the best at what's going on in the corner of some financial market, but you can imagine different relationships among people and machines being helpful, like medicine. Studies of doctors show that doctors make a lot of wrong diagnoses and guesses, and mistakes.

Mistakes that are overlapping. Somebody treated by 6 or 7 doctors is likely to have mistakes in treatments or medications. If your entire medical team can be jacked into, or intimately computationally linked into, a treatment gang, that will lead to better outcomes.

I read Michael Lewis's book about human error and risk prediction, or risk-based behaviour. That includes doctors going off their gut instincts. They aren't that great.

If you throw certain diagnostic tasks over to a computer or some kind of diagnostic machine, even though the diagnostic machines don't have the same quality of input or experience, the rubric base, the rule-based diagnosis coming out of a machine will in a lot of cases be more accurate than the human diagnosis.

We're going to become half-robots linking up to each other in all sorts of ways to take advantage of external computation, which will become a misnomer as the external computation becomes more and more intimate.

It will impinge of the type of art that we like, type of science that we do. I notice *Captain America: Civil War* came on Netflix. We have talked about how if you showed one of these super hero movies to somebody in the 60s or 70s they would have a hard time reacting to it.

Because they weren't used to such a quick visual presentation of information, so wouldn't be able to follow it. I noticed with this movie that the ability to compute it is so apparent that we can react to super-violent interactions with fairly real physics in real-time!

If you were watching *The Six Million Dollar Man* in the late 70s, there was a lot of slow-motion as Steve Austin did his super power high-jump over a wall with his bionic legs. The action slowed down so you could really appreciate what was going on. Also, so, probably, it would eat some time.

(Laugh)

But *Captain America*, somebody gets hit with a car in real-time, they go, splat-pada-doom-da-doom, in real-time! It is exciting to see that stuff in real-time. And it is due to the CG that let's that stuff be simulated persuasively.

And it is a collaboration, external computation working with our educated brains, so we're able to understand a quick little interaction that takes less than half of a second to present information that would not have been picked up by somebody 40 years ago.

A fight in a super hero movie would have made zero sense, in a contemporary super hero movie, to somebody in 1972.

Scott: What about the reverse? Somebody travelling to the past and working on a mechanical loom. Modern people would suck. It doesn't seem better/worse. It is experience with rapid visual presentation of information or with physical manipulation on a loom.

Rick: Humans in general are attracted to helpful information. A byproduct of that is we're attracted to information in general, like rap music. Rap music has to be the most informationally dense genre. Some might argue symphony music is more informationally dense.

Scott: Yea, but symphonies require the ability to read the musical notation, oftentimes other languages, rap is more easily accessible with the use of spoken word rather than instrument, mostly. So, there are some fundamental differences. It's apples and oranges, to a degree.

Rick: Part of that is the love of information thing. Rap hits you with all sorts of salacious or insidery references or information – bam, bam, bam, bam, bam – and you are pleased as the

information flows into you. It is rewarding to you. It is a reward system thing – ding, ding, ding, ding, ding. You are hip to this, hip to this, hip to this, hip to this, as the information flows into you.

Back to super hero movies, people now have to sit through most of the credits. You see 2,000 people make the movie in the credits. If you see the movie, now, you see much of a movie consists in people interacting with the movie in hi-tech ways, like a team of CG people in South Korea building the wire frames of your characters, fleshing them out, and animating them. Even though, you have never met them.

I am sure the amount of computation that goes into a super hero movie has to be millions of times the total computation that went into WWII. WWII was partially fought with primitive computers. There were radar sites, or there were bomb siting machines on bomber planes.

That would help people zero in on their targets. They were really elementary computers. The amount of computation going on in a bomb site computer was probably among the most sophisticated of the era, and would probably be dwarfed by a home thermometer now. The thing connected to your thermostat that has your heater go on and off depending on the temperature.



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