

How The React Grift Works

By DarkViperAU

So how does the react grift work? A great question, I am glad I asked it. It is actually somewhat complicated, requiring a greater understanding of the content creator economy than a viewer really needs to know. It is totally understandable for a person who doesn't produce content online to not know the minute details so I will start with a simplified model of the online content creator marketplace. Keep in mind that 'reactors' are not reviewers, analysts, documentarians, expert critics, or video essayists. They are people who present their first experience of a video as content, doing so with no idea if they have anything of substance to contribute as they haven't seen the content before. In other words they present their 'reaction' to something they have not seen instead of putting actual effort into making something after the fact once they know they have something of value to add.

(diagrams are not finalized)

In the online content creator marketplace you have your content creators spending various amounts of labour making content. Videos that take 5 hours of labour to make, 50 hours of labour, 500 hours of labour, and so on. They then put it out publicly attempting to bring to themselves a certain amount of eyeballs and success has a moderate relationship with how much effort was put into the content. Each content creator can only make a certain amount of videos or livestreams a month. Even working 8 hours a day, that would mean only 240 hours of labour can be put into content by yourself.

Most people don't really understand that this space is not infinitely large. It's size is defined by the finite amount of people engaging with the marketplace. Each is shown a limited amount of impressions of videos which expose them to content that they may or may not click. These people (viewers) also represent a certain amount of money for the creator in the form of merch sales, ad watches, patrons, direct donations, and so on. Content creators are in a tug of war against each other, ultimately attempting to gain enough of these limited eyeballs to sustain themselves in their career. Important to understand here is that the exposure is always 100% assigned, no additional exposure

is created when a new content creator enters the arena they merely get a share of what is already being given out. To be more clear, when you go to YouTube there is never an empty space, each impression space will always go to someone. So any time a content creator releases a video, any impression it gets would have gone to another content creator had that video not been made. This is fine however, as you are not 'stealing' impressions from anyone as in theory all content creators are equally deserving of those impressions. Like when you get a job, technically if you didn't take that job someone else would eventually get it, but that would be the case for anyone getting that job and another person shouldn't be more deserving than you to get that role.

Shown in diagram 1: <https://imgur.com/a/zspQdDF>

Now where does reacting come in?

A reactor will take the labour of others from within the market without their consent and use it to compete with those same labourers. They take a video that took 500 hours of labour to make, spend 20 minutes watching it, and put it back into the market as something "new" containing 500 hours and 20 minutes of labour. They will have spent none of the time or money that the original creator did, but will end up with a competitive compelling product. They then do this maybe 3 times and in 1 hour, producing content with over 1500 hours of labour but with none of the normally required expense.

Obviously normally no individual can create content consisting of 1500 hours of labour in an hour by any other means, thus no non-reactor can complete. The reactor is able to bring forth higher quality content far faster than anyone else on the market. The result is that they take a greater portion of the pool of exposure for themselves than what their 1 hour of labour would normally be able to pull unassisted. The more a reactor takes from the finite pool of exposure, the less there is for anyone else. This means that less original content creators can sustain themselves and they have to stop creating.

Indirectly the reactor gets all the merch sales, ads revenue, and direct donations that would normally go to other creators absent their theft. This is the same process that happens whenever a new talented content creator enters a space, but a reactor is different as they are not using their own labour or labour they have paid for. They are instead just stealing the hard work of others and with only a tiny fraction of the effort the

original creator made to reap even greater rewards. The reactor justifies this to their audience by giving a tiny fleck of their stolen exposure back to the non-consenting unpaid labourers. With an understanding of how the creator marketplace works, you can see that this exposure would have been given to the labourers anyway had the reactor not taken it with their stolen content.

Shown in diagram 2: <https://imgur.com/a/vwISTft>

The astute among you may have realized that this is similar to how capitalism works. Common in capitalism is for one person to bring together a massive amount of labour under their ownership, taking the revenue generated by that labour for themselves, and then giving a portion of that revenue back to the labourers. The difference between 'react capitalism' and 'traditional capitalism' is that labourers consent in a normal company to have their labour used this way, even if the circumstances of society ultimately compel this consent. Traditional capitalism also pays the labourers in actual money which can be exchanged for goods and services hypothetically enriching their material circumstances. In react capitalism, the reactor keeps all the profit for themselves, does not ask for consent, and gives nothing more than a small portion of the exposure that their enterprise is stealing for themselves. This exposure again would have gone to other creators anyway if they were not in the market with their stolen content.

Quite the scam aye? Unlimited free non-consensual labour, maximum profit and exposure, and only a tiny amount of effort required on their part compared to the labourers they take from in their infinite unpaid labour pool. Content creators will pick the cotton for the reactor and the reactor doesn't even need to feed them. With this understanding, you might be able to see why large content creators have such a hard time not creating react content. Exploitation is really really profitable and beating your competitors is far easier when you have no labour costs and spend a fraction of the time to get the same product.

You can likely also see why actual content creators hate reactors, enough that there was a huge movement in 2016 to call them out. Unfortunately, the rise of livestreaming has brought forth a new brand of exploiter ready to fill their bellies with the free labour.

Creating actual content takes time, energy, and creativity. If you do it all yourself you will quickly get tired, burn out, or run out of ideas. The exploiter class (XQC, Hasan, Pokimane, MoistCr1tikal, etc) will use this unpaid labour to avoid this expense and therefore draw the maximum viewers and revenue from actual creators. They will of course then upload this stolen content to their YouTube channels as well to further maximize profits that would otherwise, again, go to actual content creators. Each of these creators earns on average 20 million dollars a year on the backs of unpaid writers and content creators, who do not even get asked whether they want to be unpaid interns in these enterprises of exploitation.

You might say "But I have heard of X content creator who is fine with reactions!". What you are ultimately asking is why do people participate in react-capitalism even if they hate it. The answer is that everyone in the content creator marketplace is affected by react content, regardless of whether or not they give up their content to their overlords. As long as reactors are around, you are still losing out as they will use their free labour to steal away exposure from all original content including yours. At least if you join them by giving them unpaid labour, you can get that small flake of exposure back. It is similar to people working in an Amazon warehouse. They might hate amazon, but they do need a job, and getting that small flake from amazon's massive revenue is better than getting nothing. Even if you say "no one is allowed to react to my content", you still are losing the same way we all are as reactors will just move to the next person's unpaid labour with absolutely no consequences to their profit. In the same way that if you say "no I won't work for this exploitative business" they will just move onto the next worker and not care. It takes a huge movement to compel labour exploiters to do anything, online or not.

The idea of reactors being benevolent overlords seeking out poor downtrodden content creators to give exposure to is of course a convenient lie. Ignoring that absent the existence of react content more exposure would be going to original content big and small, reactors also do not seek out tiny content creators who can't catch a break. They find videos that are already doing well in the algorithm, and are already successful, thus those who do not need their exposure. Reactors are not seeking out content to give it

any sort of boost, they are seeking out content to bring themselves the maximum amount of profit for the least effort. Any benefits they claim to bring others are merely justifications so they can continue their theft, not because they are acting with the goal of benefiting others. In the same way that Amazon may be paying for people's rent, but if they could NOT do that and still get the labour they would do so in a heartbeat. Reactors are reacting for themselves, their profit and brand, nothing more.

A reactor can't make another person's content good. If your content is bad no amount of reactions will save it. If your content is good, then it will get exposure naturally and so you don't need reactors. A reactor can't make your career, only you producing good content can do that. It is therefore amusing when reactors blame the content creators when the magical "boost" to viewership they are meant to experience never materializes. It is as if, for reactors, it is the content creator being stolen from who is responsible for making "good" content specifically for the reactor and they have failed in their duty. If the degree of "benefit" (returned stolen exposure) a creator gets is solely dependent on the quality of their content, then it shows just how redundant reactors are. This would be the case regardless of whether they existed or not, making the reactors just the middlemen growing fat and lazy on the labour of others.

The worst part of the modern discourse on react content is people conflating different forms of content as all "react content". This results in the exploiters being able to hide themselves in the ambiguity, shielding themselves from criticism. Reactors are not reviewers, analysts, documentarians, expert critics, or video essayists...they are people who present their first watch of a video as content in some media. Their 'reaction' to something they have not seen before. The other content described previously I define as 'response' content. Response content is where you see someone else's content and feel that you have something of significance to add to their work. This can take the form of review, analysis, adding your particular expertise to give additional information, or altering their content to create some new form of expression. To achieve this, you take the relevant parts of the original video and make your own video, splicing in parts to give your own work context. This new content is a transformation of the old content, in

that you could not recreate the original video just using the response video. Reactors on the other hand do not transform content nor do they act with the knowledge they can have something significant to add. For how would they know? They haven't seen the content yet. Reactors use the entirety of the heart of the original work thus the original work has not been transformed, merely added to. You can quite easily recreate the original video using the reaction with nothing lost. A react video generally consists of something unedited, usually just paused at various points to make statements that could be entirely addressed by the rest of the video but the reactor is unaware of this because they haven't seen it yet. No amount of pausing a video and speaking has ever resulted in a reactor putting even 1/100th of the effort of the original creator they are stealing from. Reaction content is different from response content, but reactors hide behind those who create this forms of content to avoid criticism.

If you believe a person's goal with react content is to add value to something, why wouldn't they watch it all in order to have an entire understanding of what is in the video? They could then respond to it only using those parts they believe they can add something insightful to. They don't do this because it would take effort. Reactors are lazy people more interested in free labour and generating profit for themselves than creating valuable content.

Many of the reactors have stolen fortunes so significant that they could actually make amazing original content by paying talented people to make it for them (or for the rare reactors that once had talent they could maybe make it themselves I guess). They don't do this though obviously. Why would you fly out and get permission to look at the 'most amazing houses in the world' when you can steal the footage from the people who did spend the time and money to do that? Reactors know that making original content is a suckers game, there is no original content video they can make that will have as good a return on investment as react content. The investment is zero and the return is effectively unlimited. React content therefore funnels money to those who are specifically the least likely people to spend it making amazing content for us all to enjoy, while making the rewards for people actually making original content smaller. If you

have ever thought 'content on YouTube has gotten worse', it is in a large part the reactor's fault.

Perhaps you have seen reactors say "I am just stealing from large companies, so who cares?" Ignore that people rely on these companies for employment, as I have outlined previously, what they are actually doing is using content they didn't create to pull exposure and revenue from original content creators exclusively for the reactor's gain. Hasan, Pokimane, MoistCr1tikal, XQC etc are multi-million dollar companies and generate revenues that eclipse most of the companies in the world. Giving them more money to throw on their piles of cash that they won't even use to produce content is not an improvement. A dollar given to an anime studio has a damn higher chance of making quality content than giving it to any of them.

More importantly, the legal position of platforms like YouTube and Twitch are balanced on a razor's edge. All it would take is one significant legal challenge from a company to set precedent that could destroy this delicate balance and make all our careers impossible. XQC, Hasan, Disguised Toast etc, were recently gambling with the careers of tens of thousands of people in order to stream hundreds of episodes tv shows, cartoons, and anime. It doesn't matter how unlikely such a legal challenge is, the odds are not zero as YouTube's history has shown. We have been lucky to make it this far and these multi-millionaires had next to nothing to gain but they risked everyone else's livelihoods anyway. They drew massive unwanted attention to the space, whose consequences may have yet to unfold, for literally no reason than for their own glorification. They have enough money to live the rest of their lives, so give no thought on how their actions impact others. They personally will be fine, so why care? These people are monsters.

Now we come to the issue of consent. While reactors dismiss the idea of paying workers for their labour, or giving them a say over who can profit from it, they will also attack the idea of informed consent as a concept. Stating that they will steal as much of a person's labour as they desire before the person finds out and tells them to stop. In other words, if you feel pressured to not cause a fuss about someone stealing your

content (perhaps due to fearing the powerful reactors and their audience will threaten your livelihood with backlash) or if you are not knowledgeable enough to say no (you don't know another person is out there exploiting your labour) or if you physically can't say no (maybe because a reactor has spiked your drink at a party) a reactor believes they can do whatever they want to you. Consent to reactors means they can do whatever they want to you unless that you have explicitly told them no. Going to a party with a reactor must be a scary thing. Besides, a person unironically saying that all other content creators should contact them personally to tell them whether or not they can steal their labour is the most egotistical thing ever. Like, literally the world revolves around me kinda thing. As if all content creators have an obligation to watch every one of a reactor's streams in case their content happens to be stolen that day.

The reason reactors stop stealing your content if you find out isn't out of respect for you or content creators in general, their whole existence revolves around disrespecting them. They stop because they fear a copyright strike. That is it. You have found them stealing from your house and they stopped because they worried you'd call the cops. They obviously don't give back anything they stole, but they then go next door and start stealing from your neighbour. There are never any consequences for a reactor when they are found stealing, so they just keep doing it.

Not to ruin the party, but react content is still not good even when consent is given, it is just at that point less objectionable. When a reactor asks for consent they are implicitly saying: "I have a lot of money, influence, and power, what if I took your labour for free in order to give myself even more? I will use your labour to farm exposure and money for myself and some of it might trickle down to you!"

This turns non-consensual unpaid labour into consensual unpaid labour, which isn't exactly a great improvement. This is the 'Trickle Down Theory of React Economics'. If the people at the top get bigger, if only they didn't have to pay for labour, you will see some benefit...somehow. Any day now.

You must already have money, influence and power for people to willingly give you free

labour. Without these qualities, actual content creators will not give you permission. It is therefore only possible for the already successful to use their current success to consensually short cut their way to even more success with unpaid labour. React content is therefore a tool for the already successful to produce content far faster and easier than everyone else in order to corner the market, crush down other content creators, capture any new viewers entering the market, and to keep new content creators from being able to find sufficient exposure to make a career. But they would have consent technically...so less bad.

But what about fair use! Fair use law, like 1984 and the constitution, are things that people cite fairly often but have not actually read. In summary, fair use law was largely written in 1976 and has the goal of allowing a person to use **portions** of another person's work to achieve a different purpose from the original work to target a different audience. So, not react content. No where close. React content is the least fair use content available online but, more importantly, what is legal is not necessarily good by any standard. Just because slavery was once legal it didn't make it good and certainly even if this labour exploitation was legal it still wouldn't make it any less exploitative or something that should be tolerated. What people wrote down in 1976 in America has little bearing on what we today should consider justifiable, this is made especially clear given that what most people consider as "fair use" isn't actually covered by it.

We all have different ideas as to what is an appropriate use of another person's content and thus what should ultimately be considered 'fair use'. For viewers in general, their standard for acceptability is whatever their preferred content creators are doing. For content creators in general, it is whatever they are currently doing or that they might want to do in the future. We are all biased in this assessment, I can only leave the question to you as to whether you think making millions of dollars reposting other people's content for 1/100th of the effort is a social good, fair to all involved, or actually makes the content landscape better.

You might say "but my favourite reactor only does this sometimes!". I am sure anyone

doing bad things doesn't exclusively do bad things and your time spent not doing bad things does not make your bad things any less bad. Many reactors were once actual content creators, but became rich and lazy.

Is this not the same as making content about video games? No. Take a video of a person on a ride at Disneyland. You may quickly notice that the video of the ride does not fulfill the purpose of the ride. You can't say "I rode the ride at Disneyland" because it isn't true. If you watch a video of a person playing God of War, you can't then say "I have played God of War" which is its purpose and value. This is because you haven't, it isn't true. However, if you watch a person watch a video you can say you have watched the video because...you did watch it. You just watched it with someone else fulfilling the video's purpose and value.

Videos of games do not **usually** compete with the video games themselves, as watching a video is different from playing a game, which is why game companies beg people to make content from their games for free advertisement. Videos of videos on the other hand...are just videos and compete with videos because they are videos. A video of a video extracts all the value of the original, unless it is transformed to be distinct from the original which a reactor can never do simply by pressing the pause button. All a reactor can do is add to something, they can never transform it. A reactor extracts all the value from the original video for a fraction of the effort it took to create.

Reactors are all bad people. They explicitly exploit the less fortunate for their own gain. Rich "professional" reactors are much worse, as they have all the ability to act with greater consideration for how their actions will affect those around them but actively choose to harm others anyway. They know what they are doing but just don't care. They may seem like nice people but you'd be a bit nicer if you were making millions of dollars reposting other people's hard work for massive profits. If you meet a reactor at a party, I suggest covering your glass or outright tell them you don't want them to fuck you, because they seem keen to take a person's silence for consent.

If you are still not convinced after all this, consider this:

Scenario 1: I want something to use in my livestream so I hire a guy to make me something. He spends 100 hours making a video for me, and asks for \$1000. I tell him to go fuck himself, and just take the content and use it to gain profit and exposure on Twitch and YouTube. As you can imagine, I would be skinned alive by the person I took the content from as well as by the public sphere.

Scenario 2: I want something to use in my livestream. I see a guy who has just made a video. He spent 100 hours making a video, and it would normally cost me \$1000 to buy a license to use it. Without asking, I take this content and use it for profit and exposure on Twitch and YouTube. As you can imagine, nothing would happen to me. I would just be Hasan, Pokimane, MoistCr1tikal, and XQC.

Why is the second scenario **better** than the first? If you defend reactors, you must consider it to be so.

The moral of the story is that if you don't have the ability to make content, this doesn't give you the right to steal other people's labour to compensate. As a rule for life, if you can't think of a way to do something morally, you shouldn't be doing it. No reactor thinks "Gee, this guy took 500 hours to make this video and I reuploaded it in 20 minutes...this is clearly not exploitative". They don't care about you, or anyone else, they just want to use you for your unpaid labour.

For those who have had their content reacted to, do you not think this has gone far enough? Does our space need people making tens of millions of dollars reposting content? Do you sit for hours staring at your editing software to be the unpaid intern in another person's enterprise? If you tell them to stop, they are still stealing from you by moving onto their next cash cow. They don't respect you, they laugh at you. You have the power to stop them by taking down their channels. If you won't do it for yourself, do it for all the people they invisibly steal from everyday, and for all those people who have had to quit the career we love due to the reactor's greed.

Addendum:

The following doesn't really fit into the main body but is relevant to the landscape of react content and my criticism of it:

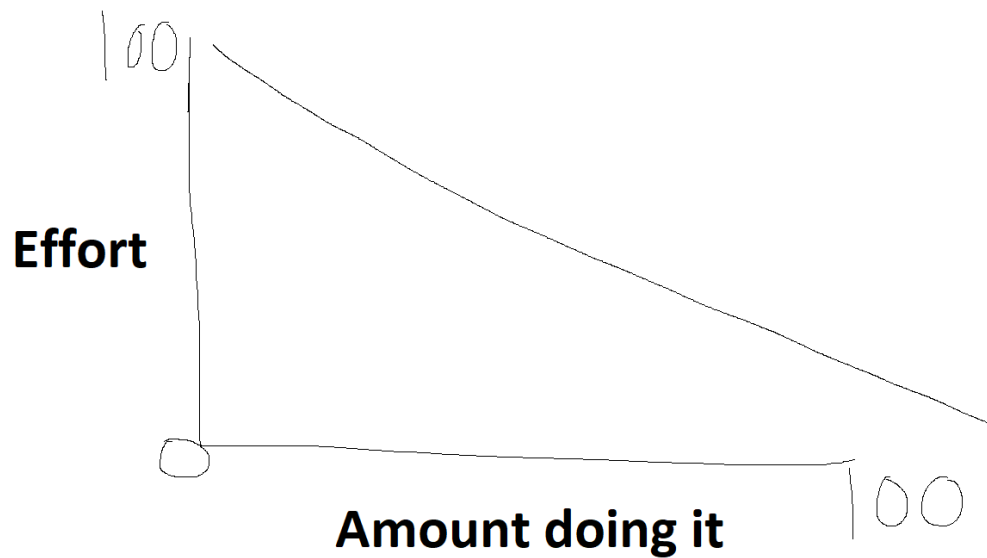
- Ludwig made a video titled 'I made a secret YouTube channel to prove it's not luck'.

While this video is logically flawed in endless ways, the part of relevance here is that his suggested method for success was creating unpaid content about a millionaire reactor, for that millionaire reactor, and then paying money to that millionaire reactor for the privilege of having them use your content to enrich themselves. I think this highlights how bad things have gotten quite well as this method was actually accepted with praise by viewers. It is especially terrible as a few hundred people going from Twitch to watch 1 second of a video before going back to Twitch is a terrible way to get ahead. The algorithm learns nothing from that engagement. It is strange for a millionaire to tell others the best way to live is to give his millionaire friend money.

- Second, the reactor 'AtrioC' seems to have grown tired of the effort required to find the best videos to steal. So he promoted a dedicated website made for people to put and upvote other people's hard made videos. This means he can quickly know which to use to farm for maximum ad revenue, subs, and donations on Twitch, before reposting them to YouTube for ad revenue and exposure. Streamlining exploitation of labour, the market works.

- Lastly, reaction content has a distortionary effect on the creator market that was not touched on in the main body. Content that takes less effort and time to create tends to have a lower quality than content that takes a lot of effort and time to create. Therefore, those who make low effort content have a much harder time standing out and capturing an audience because there are far far more people doing it compared to content that

takes more effort.



This means that those who are both willing and able to make high effort content are traditionally rewarded greatly for it. They can't produce as much content as other creators, but what they do create is most rewarded. React content breaks this system by being low effort content that contains high effort content within it. Therefore, their content competes with the high effort content for none of the effort. The rewards reactors steal often come from the hardest working who normally gain the most due to less competition at the high end. Reactors are therefore the laziest workers, stealing labour from the hardest workers, making it more difficult for the hardest workers to get sufficient revenue to continue to create content. Reactors change the landscape to be one where, if you want to be competitive, you need to release as much garbage low effort content as possible. You can't ever keep up with the reactor's theft, but it is the best chance you have, as anything good you make will just be stolen.

- Some people have asked about my mediashare streams and how they came to be. I have streamed over 15000 hours in my career, as well as having made 1500 videos and over 7500 clips. I have passionately hated mediashare streams that entire time, to the extent that some of my oldest footage has me complaining about how Sodapoppin's

mediashare streams put Twitch in jeopardy of legal challenge. I however became resigned that reactors would never be beaten, and as I once said to Xanderal "You will either join them, or be crushed by them". You can understand the logic of this if you had read up to this point. If this was what was needed to keep my job then I didn't want to be left behind. So I decided to allow people to play clips on my stream when I was learning new speedruns, like putting my toe in the water. In my mind at the time, I considered this different to react content but whether this was out of bias or good reason I am too close to the matter to judge. I believe there were 15 streams in total which had my original content, my speedrun learning, as well as portions of other people's videos which never constituted the entire product (many of them were just memes of me). I considered this at least within the spirit of what fair use should enshrine, even if it made me uncomfortable. While I do not think this is the same thing as what I criticized frequently, it was close enough that I have never liked the content spawned from those streams so I removed them from my channel rather than argue to point individually with each person I spoke to. I also believed it ran the risk of someone copyright striking me for a few frames of their video in retaliation for saying their favourite content creators are bad people. Basically, on one hand I consider the content distinct enough that it isn't what I am criticizing here, on the other hand, it was clearly close enough and I believed that I would inevitably end up down the dark path of react content. I am happy I didn't end up becoming that in which I despise, and I argue everyone should despise.

- People confuse demand for a creator and demand for reaction content. The endgame of YouTube is to generate a demand for you specifically, a group of people who will watch you do effectively anything in part because they like the familiarity. Eventually you get into a position where you make serious money on **any** video you make, so you just need to make as many videos as possible to meet this demand for "you" as an entity. Creating original videos takes too long, and you can't just release the same video of your staring at a wall everyday. You need something 'new' feeling, but the 'same' because it has you in it. React content does this perfectly. You are always there to get your base audience, but you always have something new in there as well, and you can never run out of ideas because you can just steal them.