

AI: a creative's right hand, or a poisoned chalice?

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After a slow and steady release, complete with errors, amusing party show and tells and “there are two Rs in strawberry”, Artificial Intelligence has steadfastly asserted its ongoing relevance (Patterson 2024). As an emerging playwright, academic and musician (or more simply, creative), I've watched this relationship develop with interest. Will AI be able to assist me in streamlining extraneous processes like; editing music, creating schedules, marketing shows and thus allow me the freedom to focus on the heart of my work? My finding is multi-faceted and morally ambiguous.

The world of aspiring creatives

At a recent arts workshop I was in conversation with an employee of a government supported arts company. When describing my role, I offered my tried and true “writer, director, producer, musician, actor... I do everything.” I may have been expecting congratulations or perhaps advice on how to engage support and diversify the workload, but what I received spoke to the general sentiment of the industry today; “You have to do everything, don't you.” When examining the ongoing inclusion and use of AI in our lives and the effect this relationship has on creative fields, this expectation is very important to recognise.

Arts funding is a constant topic of discussion within the field, with producers responsible for sourcing funds as a prerequisite to any production (Nani 2025). I worked as an intern (aka volunteer) for a government-fund supported touring company, working on analysing their audience feedback data to be used in their application for repeat funding. While that round was successful, the following year it was not, and the company went into liquidation within six months. While this is one specific example, it is representative of the state of the field. These specific opportunities are so limited, and so easily taken away (Convery 2026).

In a radical solution, Ireland has recently introduced a state funded ‘artist wage’ that provides a basic income for creatives to live on, but a similar initiative does not yet exist in Australia (Carroll 2026). Topically, Timothee Chalamet recently commented that opera and ballet were dead artforms as they would not survive without assistance (Dalton 2026). While inflammatory, these remarks also invite a deeper reflection on how art is valued and questions markers of success. For men with equivalent longevity across fields, Mozart died penniless, while Shakespeare lived comfortably on compensation from the crown. The markers for their success have not traditionally been founded in how each man supported himself, and yet, as a society that is what we are demanding artists do. If your art is of value, the people will pay to see it. With historical examples of, Van Gough, Emily Bronte, Fanny Mendelssohn, Jeff Buckley, this concept is inherently flawed (Thomas 2021).

More generally the arts sit outside our liberal societal structures as the core values are misaligned with the concept of productivity found in Protestantism, particularly the Puritanical model embraced by the U.S. that has wide reaching consequences (Weber 1930). This is a much larger topic area than this article is able to prove, however this backgrounding informs the psyche of value and success in the arts and sets the stage for the entry of AI.

A levelling of the playing field?

With an understanding that the artist is responsible for all facets of creation, including marketing and delivery, AI makes many tools openly accessible to individuals. I have dipped my toe into the world of content generators to the tune of: “make me a poster of...” or “create a media release for this show” but have ultimately never used the outcome. This is personal preference, as what emerges from this process still feels overly general and somewhat soulless, and I find this runs counter to the body of work I am creating and communicating. However, I cannot deny the amount of time this process is potentially able to save. Which, in an industry where one is expected to “do everything” is incredibly attractive. Using AI integrated software, I have been able to edit videos, smooth transitions and integrate captions to create a professional-looking product, competitive with industry standard. Thereby, generative AI assistance allows fledgling creatives the ability of producing necessary content in a way that enables greater contribution to the industry.

However, I can't help but feel resentful around this normalisation of sub-standard content. If I compare my work on graphics and video edits to professional standard, they are decidedly mediocre, created from a place of general disinterest, necessity. While there are things I have learned about these forms that interest me and my skills have undoubtedly improved, I have never studied this content, I cannot attest to why one specific colour or font communicates the overall message of the performance. These decisions are, in my opinion, best left to those who have studied, practiced and worked in the field. There is no question around the quality of content, AI remixes, reproduces 'generalisms' in new contexts. Human creativity invents, draws specific links and re-interprets afresh. The nuance of this conversation to me regards not the comparative quality or potential integration of AI content, but the support structures around fostering continued creativity and invention.

When I edit together sub-par content in graphics or short videos, I think about friends and family generating song lyrics or chord structures and laughing, but genuinely claiming, “with some edits, I think this would pass.” Sure, enough it would pass, as solidly mediocre content. These same friends agree with this principle, but I wonder with this overproduction, just how much content we have to wade through to find something special. An excellent solo musician may have sub-par video content and sound mixing, which detracts from their overall appeal. An innovative video editor may be pushing generic scripts that undermine the story. In an industry constantly needing to justify its own existence in order to seek funding, inevitably decisions will be made on the relative value of different kinds of creatives, and short cuts taken to minimise costs, in so doing, accepting this mediocrity as necessary in certain fields. Thereby, are the methods we are using to assist ourselves, on another level undermining our very existence.

I cannot deny the benefits of accessibility and the time saved from AI software. It is undoubtedly the future we are walking toward. I view this with excitement, intermingled with an element of dread. My negativity pertains not to the software itself, but the extent to which it is validated and accepted as a baseline. The software is valuable, but not inherently supportive. Creatives still need ongoing support to work with AI to break new ground and deeper explore humanity. Without these protections our work is placed in competition with AI, rather than empowered by it.

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