

*"It's not about how you start, but about how you finish".*

Throughout my life I have always looked up to role models, people who are at a point in life where I strive to be. I have always wanted to create videos for as long as I can remember. I never wanted to be a director, I never wanted to be an editor, I never wanted to be a cinematographer, I never wanted to make Hollywood films, I never wanted to make short films, I never wanted to win awards, all I ever really wanted to do was create videos on YouTube. I have always looked up to online content creators and have never made that a secret. I don't know much about directors and haven't seen the majority of the films that filmmakers should study, and to me, I still have no interest in watching them. However, if you were to ask me about a viral online video, I'd know it like the back of my hand. I believe I am so fortunate to not be touched by the film world, not to be inspired by a Hollywood blockbuster, I believe being inspired by online content gives me a completely different prospect that most people wouldn't have.

Being inspired by these creators have allowed me to understand what motivates them, the reason why they do what they do. It has also more importantly allowed me to understand how they got to that point in their life, and the process of getting there, watching their journey transfer from the traditional world of film into this new online age of film making. Seeing the passion and the risks that these people have taken to get to the stage they are now motivates me to an extreme amount, and backs up the saying, *"if they can make, I can make it"*. In this essay, I will explore three online content creators who I admire greatly, starting by looking at Casey Neistat and how he's progressed to the person he is in today's society.

Casey Neistat is probably the biggest inspiration I have when it comes to filmmaking overall. He is one of the original YouTube content creators and has been making online films years before YouTube was a thing. He was one the first people to make videos for the *New York Times*. He currently has over 11 million subscribers, and over 2.5 billion views, and is one of the biggest creators on the platform. It's not just his work that I can relate to, it's his life, the fact he didn't have the best start in life, he was dealt poor hands which meant society instantly left him to the gutter, but as I started, *"It's not about how you start, but about how you finish"*. I can easily relate to Casey's struggle of a poor childhood, going through situations a lot of my peers couldn't even begin to understand. His progress up until this moment has been a rollercoaster. Although he failed multiple times over the



years, he still carried on taking risks, and always did the opposite of what people told him to do and I really admire this. Casey came into film with no education or knowledge and was still able to win awards at Sundance and work on high end features and commercials, to then still having the guts to pack it all in to make videos online. This is something I very much look up to and can see myself doing in the future.

Casey likes to do things that makes him happy and puts that before anything else which is something I can completely relate to as back in 2008 he stopped making features because he realised it's not what made him happy. I was given the opportunity to edit two feature films last year, and although I learnt a lot from this experience with time management and working as a freelance, it made me pretty unhappy. Therefore, I realised that right now this wasn't quite for me but doesn't mean it never will be. Then, this year I worked for Interrail during my studies and got the chance to travel around Europe for work. I was convinced this was exactly what I wanted to do, but now, after having done it I realised just like Casey it's not what I thought I wanted. Everything gets put into perspective when you compare watching something you think you want to do and when you actually physically go out and do it yourself. Casey's advice for the future, when you've finished college and unsure what you want to do in life is to just *"get a job you really hate, so you know what you really want to do"*. For me this is a great piece of advice. If you know what you dislike in a job, then you're learning more about yourself as an individual. I've been working since the age of thirteen in normal jobs, and this trip around Europe was supposed to be my escape from that. Instead, what it did show me was the side of filmmaking I am now really passionate about. Casey started his career working for companies making puff pieces online, then transitioning into the film world but is now creating online content. This is a similar route I wish to take which is why he is one of my biggest inspirations.



Starting off with low expectations and unfortunate circumstances is a story I always gravitate to because that's how I relate. Dan Mace is a South African award-winning filmmaker, and is now an online content creator, but the path to both of these was an abstract one. Dan has accumulated over 19 million views online that has now allowed him to create his own small online content business. Like myself, before Dan ventured properly into the film world, he travelled for a few months, which like me put things into perspective. Travelling allowed Dan to meet and connect with individuals that have inspired him to create some of his online films, something I can relate

to whilst I travelled. In South Africa there isn't many film opportunities, so like most things, you have to make your own opportunities, this is very similar to the situation I am in. Where I come from, which is up North there are limited opportunities, and while here in Wales, I still feel that the odds are against me. What Dan did to counter this is he created a small commercial business, which ran out of money pretty quickly. Now I think the route Dan took to get where he is will be different to my own, however the process and the idea behind it I believe will be similar. Dan did whatever it took to make a film, he would work for free, pull favours or just make it himself, but as long as the film he wanted got made. Additionally like Casey, Dan worked on film sets just to meet people to help him create his own films, and even though I don't aspire yet to work on film sets, I do aspire to work for a company which will put me around likeminded people, and collaboration between people is something I am looking to pursue into the future. Like Dan, I know working for a company won't be the end goal, but for now it's something I have to do in order to reach my ultimate goal. However, I completely understand that it doesn't happen overnight, but I am willing to do so. It is also the learning factor I know I need. Dan had no film knowledge when starting out, fortunate for me I do have that. However, it's the idea of working in the real world in situations that couldn't be scripted like film school. This is real money, real people and a real film which has to be the best it can be, and I think for myself I can draw inspiration from Dan's career.

Additionally, I am always drawn to someone who loves to hustle, and is different, very different.

Sam Kolder is a huge inspiration of mine when it comes to the online content world. Like the other two, Sam has absolutely no knowledge in film, however his journey is different to theirs. Sam is an online Travel filmmaker who had opened new doors to this sort of genre with his online hit of "*KOLD – My Year 2016*" with over 4.9 million views. He went from high school and took the money he would spend on



college to travel the world and to film it. He would then put it online, which was a huge risk. When Sam first began this, there was no genre of Travel Filmmaking online quite like what we see today, so there was no guarantee that this would work, fortunately it did. Now this particular genre is extremely popular, and we see more and more people following this trend each day and then posting it online. Even though Sam's career arch will be very different to my own, it doesn't mean I can't look at his path and apply it to my own. He took a huge risk to go ahead and travel the world for a potential return of nothing. However, it's something which made him happy, and I respect and admire that. As previously stated, I thought adopting Sam's lifestyle of travelling the world and filming it would also bring happiness to my own life. But I was wrong, instead what I got out of it was much greater, a clear focus to concentrate on what makes me happy, and like Sam, it was a huge risk. Sam is now a very well-known travel creator but has also moved across to working for companies through advertisement creating the adverts for the equipment he now uses like DJI, the largest drone company in the world. His unique style incorporated into an advert creates very distinctive piece of content that has allowed him to pick and choose who he works for. Although I know I have to work for a company to begin my career, I am still determined to create my own personal online videos as a bit on the side as I want to create a name for myself. I want to get my name out there and create professional content in order to have the opportunity to work with companies rather than working for the companies. I aspire to be like all three Casey, Dan and Sam, however I want to create my own journey with my very own content.



Over the last year I have learnt and failed more than I have in the last five, and ultimately that has cleared my vision in what I am searching for in the future. After looking at the people I have discussed in this essay, each one of them inspire me in many ways, not just within their career choices, but also how to live life to its full potential and do something which really makes me happy.

Casey, Dan and Sam have all ended up in different places at different times in their life. I once used to want to be where they are, but now I'm happy just to be where I am right now. I don't want to become these people; I want to become the best version of me. I can look and adapt their path to success to myself and to take their values and apply them to my own situations. The main thing I have learnt from these creators is the importance of three things, hard work, passion, and happiness. And without those three things, the path you're on right now, isn't the right one for you. Happiness I believe is the key to the success for whatever I want to do, as long as I'm happy doing what I'm doing, it means I'm going to be willing to work hard because I'll love what I do, and through that will be the passion for the craft. Ultimately, for me, *"It's not about how you start, but about how you finish"*.