Hey!

I'm polychromatic, otherwise known as Polytetral on osu!. I am a designer for several osu!mania tournaments, part of the tournament committee, as well as a player who had participated and staffed in tournaments from 2018 through 2022.

Since I committed to quitting osu! tournament gameplay (minus 1 SV gimmick tournament in 2023), I've had the privilege to design Promotional Videos (PVs) and original/custom song artworks for a few significant things that have shaped people's impression of my works. This includes World Cups, impressive-looking community-run tournaments through different gamemodes (Resurrection Cup, Circles in Seoul, and the titular Global Taiko Showdown series…), as well as smaller works here and there to help out organizers who i had befriended along the way.

If you asked the player me from 6 years ago, I would not have imagined osu! reaching a state where people are willing to step up and contribute to the creative pool, be it composers, illustrators or designers. Having lived through this era from sunrise to sunset, I experienced what it was like to feel inspired (or even spited) by other designers to contribute and hone my design abilities, creating the "side job" / hobby I have today. I have many people to be grateful for when it comes to getting me started on my journey as a graphic designer on this web, and many of them are people I have met through osu!. I think it is safe to say that I have some part of the osu! community to thank for all the opportunities I could get to improve in my creative craft.

However, I do have my complaints and woes with the osu! community when it comes down to the treatment of designers (and by extension, creatives) in some of these tournaments, and a lot of this boils down to a simple lack of perceived gratitude and care tournament hosts and players/viewers have towards the work created, and sometimes, apathy, towards the workload of designers when deciding how many assignments to create and how much time the designers would have for the tournament.

I'll start by prefacing that I existed as a player in the year 2018. Back then, original / custom songs were pretty much unfathomable. People were simply playing a tournament because it seemed fun, and was an easy way to connect with competent and committed individuals who shared the same interest in a gamemode/keymode. Some of my closest friends in the osu! community came from this period of time, we genuinely had banter over funny things, competed against one another, and simply had a good time. These people moved on to organize tournaments, and so did I. In the making, we also supported each other as staffs in these endeavours, and the tournament scene thrived a lot. People were happy playing and watching tournaments even without original / custom songs.

Fast forwarding to recent years, a custom grand finals tiebreaker has become indispensable to many tournaments. Even the small ones who may not necessarily have the means to achieve them, go out of their way to have a custom song, and get artworks done for them. Many large-scale tournaments have also responded in kind by increasing their quantity of custom songs, presumably trying to not only increase the diversity of the talent pool, but also to prove by numbers that they are still above the rest in some way.

To me as a new designer, this wasn't necessarily a bad thing. Having more works to put under my belt of experience is something that is welcomed, especially since I didn't exactly start out trained in graphic design, and didn't have a portfolio to start with. I didn't want people to pay for work that I couldn't even guarantee the quality of. I had to discover not only my artistic flair, but also my working style with clients (tournament hosts), and many tournaments were eager to pick me up, be it friends or strangers. Needless to say, this was a painful but important phase of my growth as a graphic designer, but I learned a lot of new techniques and improved my output as time progressed. I'm still not that good, but relatively confident now that I've done some World Cup work for some big artists (recent one was a PV for [Yooh](#) in CWC2025 - quite proud of it).

As I worked on my portfolio over the years, my output did indeed improve and I started charging for the works I made for most tournaments. It was at this point, however, that I started to feel as if designers were present, only to make sure there was a nice cover for songs that were the only things that mattered for the tournament. To an extent, I even felt that the designs were present, just to make sure that people would not complain there wasn't a showcase video for the original song, or worse still, to fulfill the vision of an organizer who simply wanted those to be there, just for the showcase to feel flashy, watchable and whole.

There isn't anything wrong with wanting a showcase to have flair and to prove that a production is good. But more than often not, wanting the showcase to be good is the ONLY thing that some of these organizers want, and the tournament feels more than often not just an excuse to have an audience for the music repertoire. In the pursuit of this, there are notable (and not so notable) tournaments who have tried to organize a large number of custom songs, and have arguably lowered their cost of production (maybe even doing everything for free) to make the tournament feasible for themselves.

I have seen scenarios where people end up delaying pools due to negligence on caring for the mappooling end, ditched for the design when they can't even afford it themselves. I have even seen situations where some artists were paid handsomely within the same tournament as someone who made both the music and design, only to be paid with almost nothing until the issue was pointed out.

In more insidious situations, free work would become a condition for us to operate under, and was often weaponised as a means for designers to "help" each other, even if no one actually meant it. Sure, you were allowed to not work on designing a song if you were busy. But you'd end up having to deal with a pang of guilt for not providing the final puzzle piece to realise someone's blind vision, and only doing it would ease your guilt, so you gaslight yourself into actually working on the design, even if you don't feel respected.

At the end of it all, most people don't even see your hard work. PVs are thrown around like it is just a 7-second interject to the showcase, just something that people will forget in the next instant, because another custom song will soon follow. Song designs are just thrown onto social media, shared, pinged, done and then dusted, unless it is an artist of noticeably larger presence.

As a designer and tournament host/committee member who has been through all of these above situations, I will say that all of these disappoint me at a very existential level. In all

cases, I had felt that my work was never actually respected as a creative work, but rather something that had to exist tangibly for the sake of keeping the pride of an upper management. One may also call me cynical and on the edge, but on certain occasions, I even feel that the respect was only given simply for good show, and sometimes even used as virtue signalling or a means of gaining reputation among other creatives.

In other words, I do my absolute best to ensure the visuals are good and it is indeed a great learning experience for me, but at the end of it all, I usually never feel the satisfaction of contributing creatively to a project. More than often not, I get paid (if I was promised), post the commission on Twitter/YouTube, get upset that social media never recognises my work as something likeable, and then call it a day. Things go into the void, and life goes on. No recommendations, no feedback loop, nothing. (well yea usually. I sometimes get the usual likes and comments from my closer friends, or someone referencing my work - they're the real goats)

That being said, I am aware of people who have been spiritually uplifted by the opportunity to create works for World Cups, tournaments and the like, and I absolutely respect their attitudes. I don't even mean any offense to the hosts or other designers I might have pointed out in this document. I sometimes simply just want to speak my mind out loud without doing the namedropping, and this might even be the most cynical or most burnt out designer you have ever seen in the osu! ecosphere, if at all.

This is probably by far the most loaded and messiest of an opinion I have on the designer ecosphere, and I can tell you that even if other designers don't articulate this, they have felt this to some degree in here or in the real world. Willing to do a lot of work, but never really doing their work in a manner that respects the sacred aspect of personal creation, and ultimately being used as a pawn in the reputation of an organization/tournament. It is the most heartbreaking and debilitating thing to ever exist in the osu! community, and I don't wish for anyone else to ever feel the same thing as I did, ever.

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Extending this beyond the reach of a designer, I have also noticed that some of these tournaments, despite being reputable in production, have also historically been dehumanising and oppressive towards staff and players. Key staff who fail to care for other aspects of their tournament (stream, gameplay, etc) and delay showcases/matches indefinitely, as well as cases of disrespect and impatience towards newer staff members, even if these staff do not mean to impede on them. Situations where rules are not considered to be changed due to self-interest rejecting the need for any valid check and balance, and hosts being angry at each other for very petty reasons that do not even concern them, the only qualifier for argument being their need to win an argument. Why are we not just simply running a tournament where everyone can put down their weapons, talk nicely and just smash keys?

My opinion is that the evolution of the osu! tournament community and its customs culture has, to some extent, diluted genuine care for creative vision and healthy staffing/gameplay. Sensationalising the numbers and the names have become problematic for smaller artists, and completely eclipses the work of mappers who simply make the map because it was

composed by a legendary artist. And from my own experience, I can see that this does more harm than good to the competitive scene. It robs away any sense of ingenuity or thought process that happened behind the scenes, and dehumanizes everything that the staff or players do to keep the tournament running normally. Why are your staff or players not equally as important as the composers you engage with?

With all of this being said, I just want to use my thoughts as a staff/designer to urge tournament organizers to start showing more due care for not only the designers, but also just all the staff who have worked tirelessly for your vision, and all the players who signed up and showed up every weekend to be in your game.

If designers ask for feedback, give them your cleanest 2 cents possible and don't leave any specks. A "good" can be considered apathy to some, especially if they like to read between the lines like me. Even just saying "I noticed detail in this, what/how did u end up doing this?" is a great way to connect.
If players care to give feedback, at least acknowledge and mention if it is feasible to implement their feedback, or if you disagree, respectfully.
If staff members are doing good, let them know that their efforts are being recognised, even if you aren't able to pay for it.

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With this, I rest my case.

From here, I will most likely only work on tournaments that can at least pay me, as working for free has only left me in a spot where I can only find refuge in the act of doing, and gets me nothing but my own disgruntled attitude, and a tournament organizer who gloats over everything they have amassed in numbers.

I hope that one day, my inherent distrust in other tournament organizers may be relieved, in one way or another. Until then, I will need to work on a mania tournament running in the next 3 months, and I will most likely use it as a motivator for me to learn what it feels to enjoy designing for others again.

Until then.