Maximizing Critique:
Improving Communication for Everyone Involved in Critical Feedback

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Artist, Harmonix

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® March 14–18, 2016 · Expo: March 16–18, 2016 #GDC16

UBM

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NEW YORK
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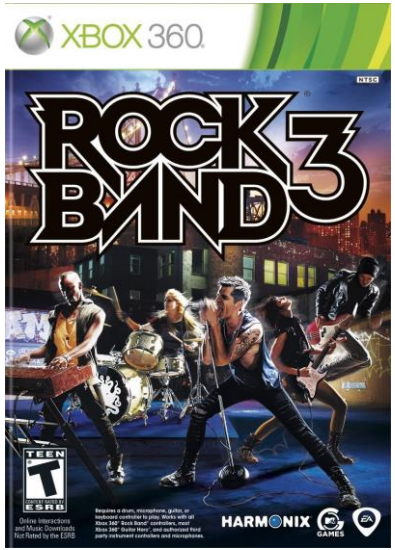
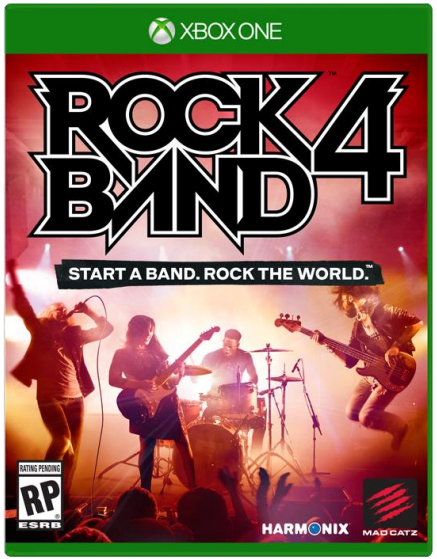

XBOX 360
ROCK BAND 3
HARMONIX

XBOX 360
KINECT
REQUIRES KINECT
Disney
FANTASIA
MUSIC EVOLVED
HARMONIX
Disney


XBOX ONE
ROCK BAND 4
START A BAND. ROCK THE WORLD.
HARMONIX
MAD CATZ

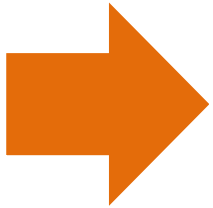
HARMONIX
Music VR

CRIT

?

Criticize	vs	Critique
Personal preference		More objective
Judgmental		Analytical
First response		Reflective

Strategies for improving both sides of the **feedback loop**:

Giving  **Receiving**

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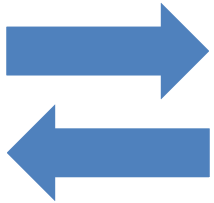
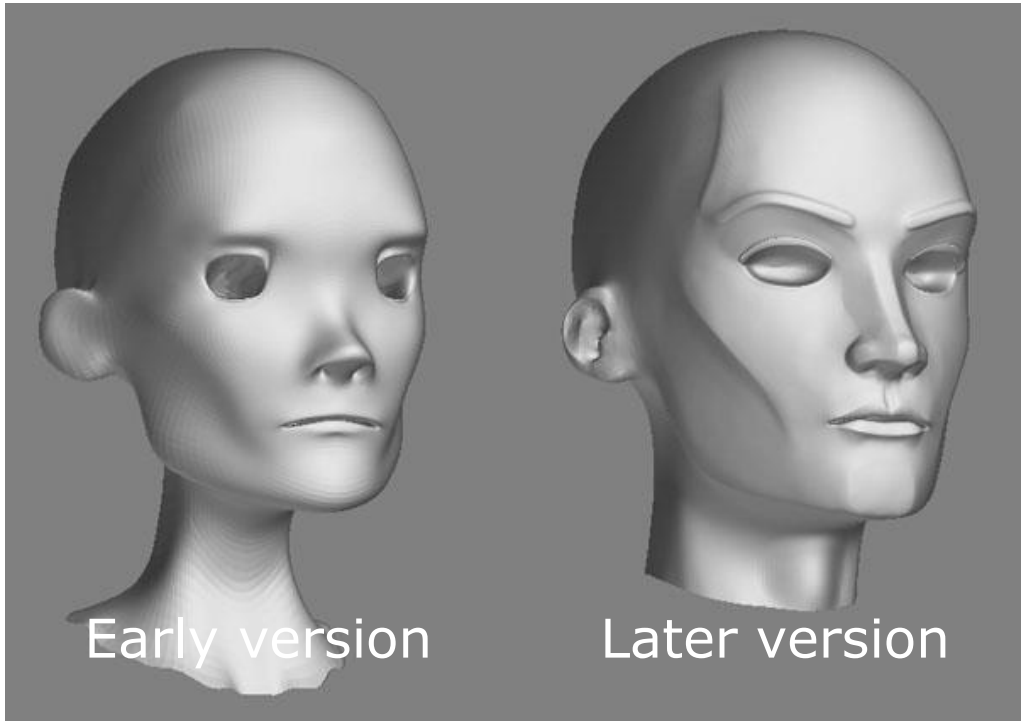
Giving  **Receiving**

Goals

- **Align work** with the art direction
- Leave room for **creative problem solving**
- Encourage **team spirit** and cohesion
- Develop and open and honest **desire for feedback**
- Become a more **valuable team member**

Strategies for **Giving** Feedback:

1. **Define problems** before solving them
2. **Describe Reasoning** behind judgments



Rock Band 1 Head Style

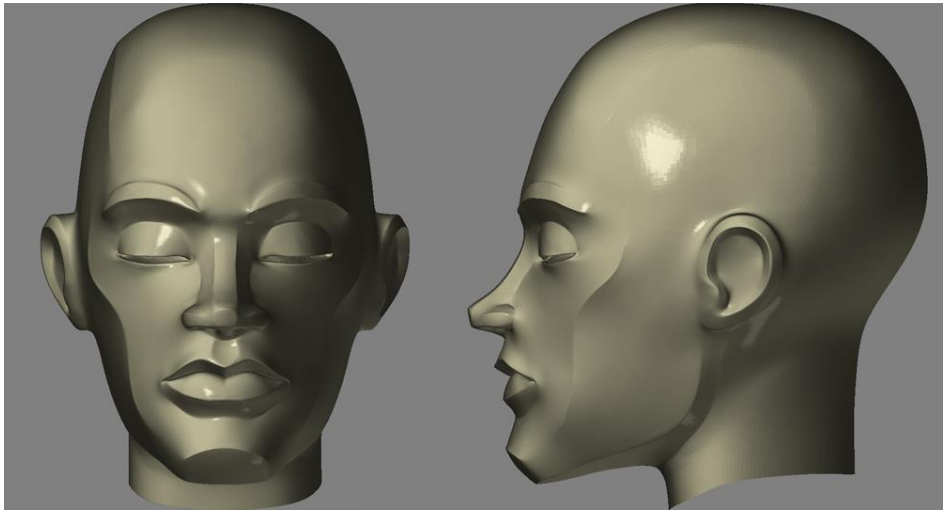
Less effective **Solution focused** feedback:

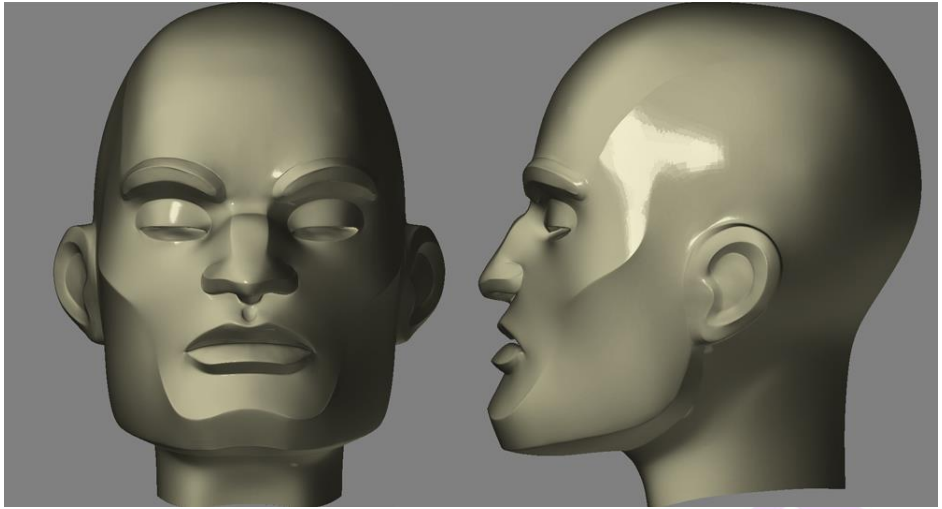
"The head should be more anatomically correct."

"Add more hard edges."

More effective **Problem Focused** feedback:

"We need to create heads that are more anatomically correct but still united by a common, iconic style that fits the Rock Band world. How can we do that?"





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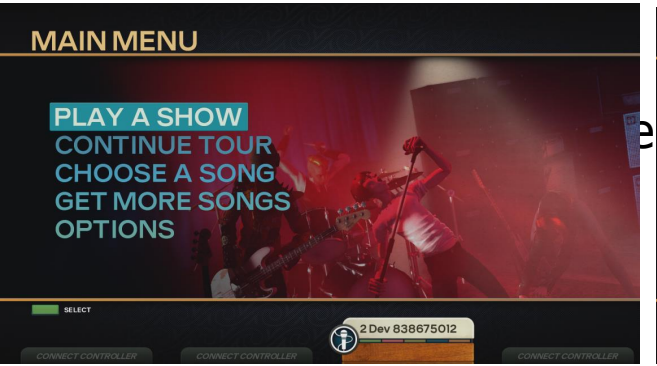
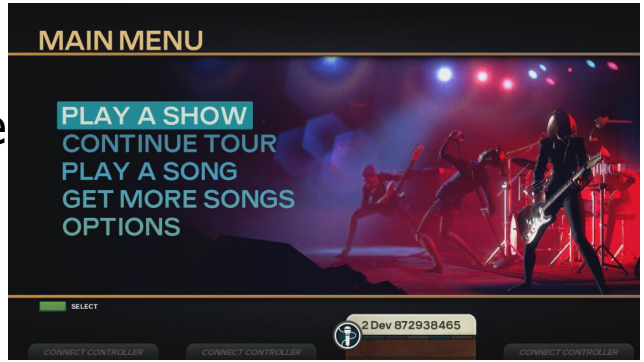
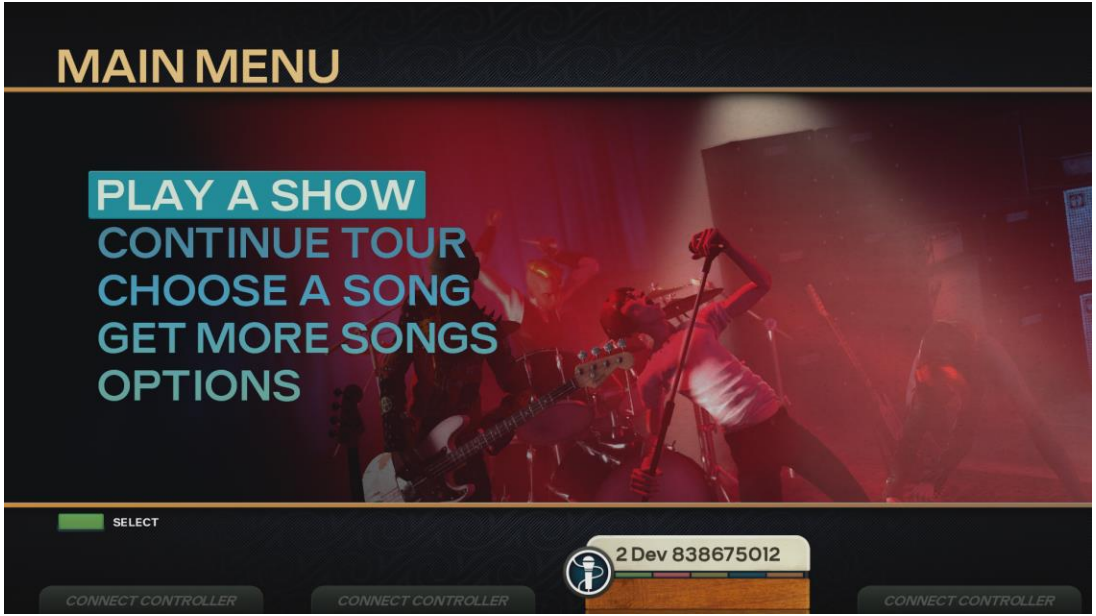
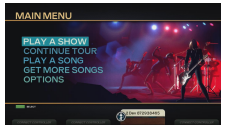




Rock Band 4 Main Menu Screen



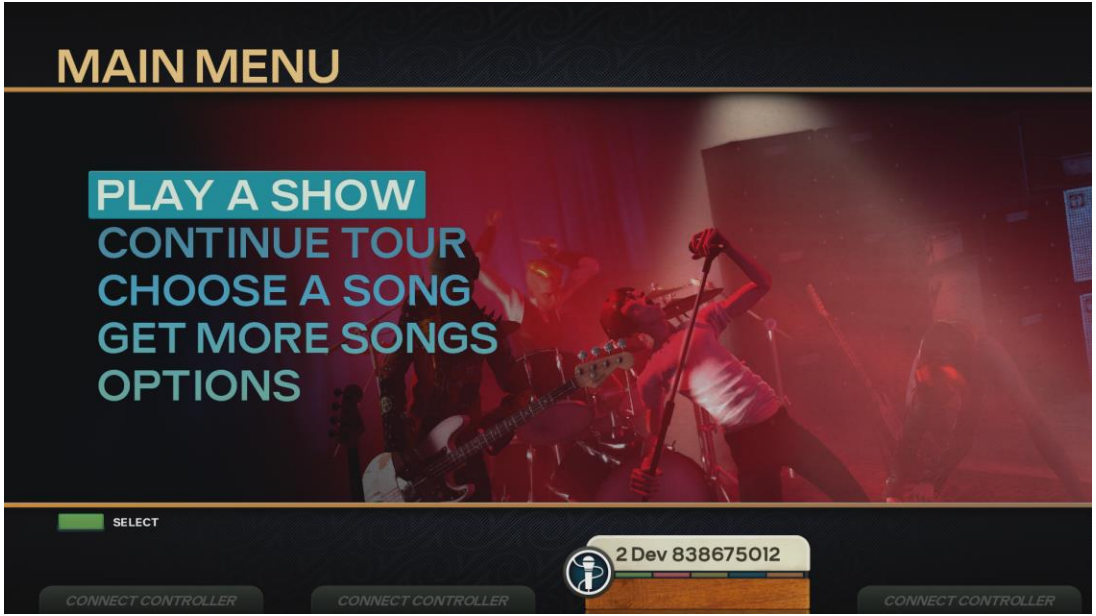


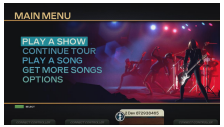
Less effective **Judgment Focused** feedback:

"The composition sucks."

"The composition is weak."

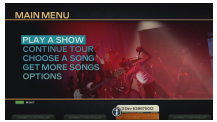
"Why did you compose the band that way?"

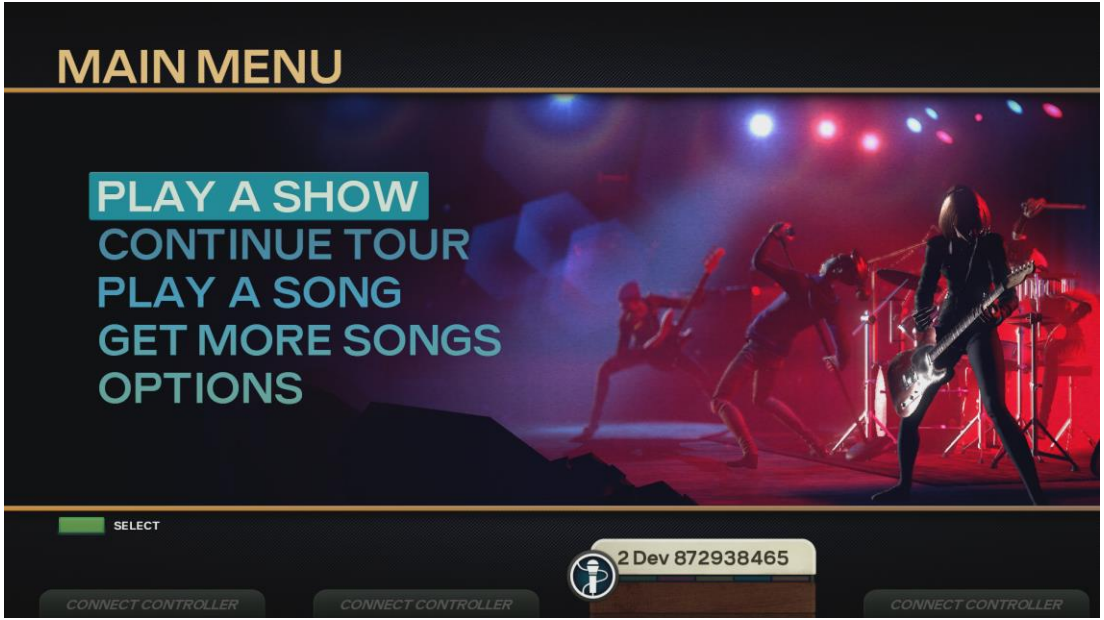


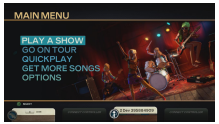


More effective **Experience Focused** feedback:

"My eyes aren't lead from primary to secondary focal points. I find myself just stuck looking at the shape of the light on the singer's shirt."







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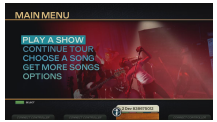
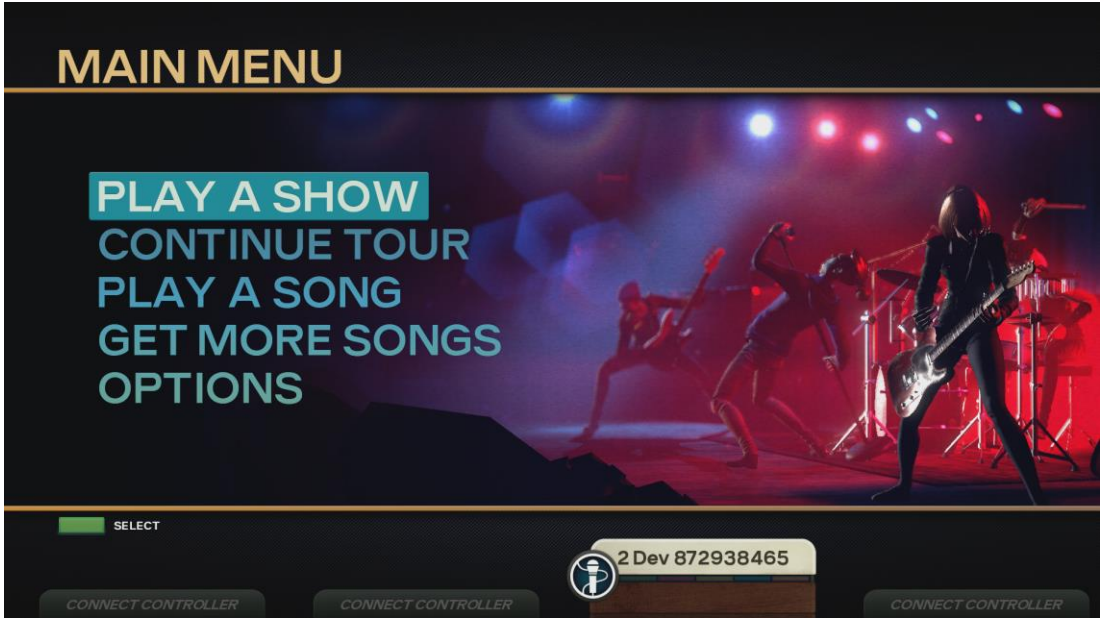
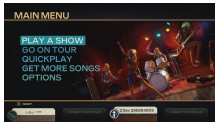
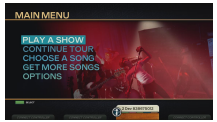


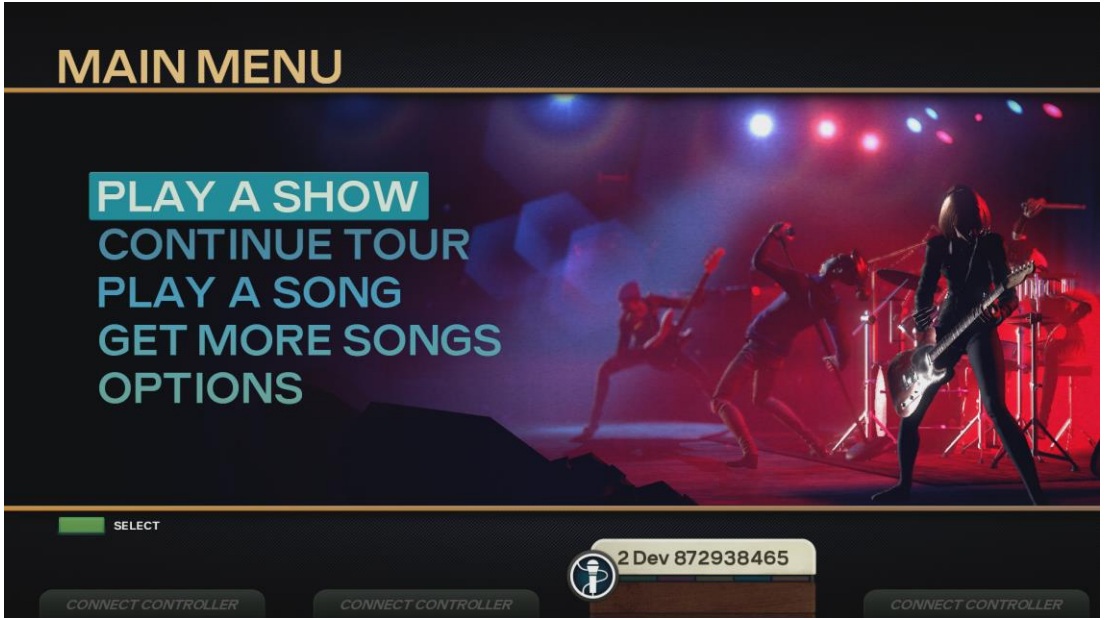


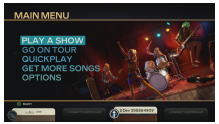


Less effective **Judgment Focused** feedback:

"That's a poor use of camera angle."

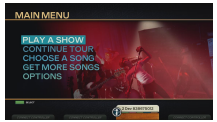


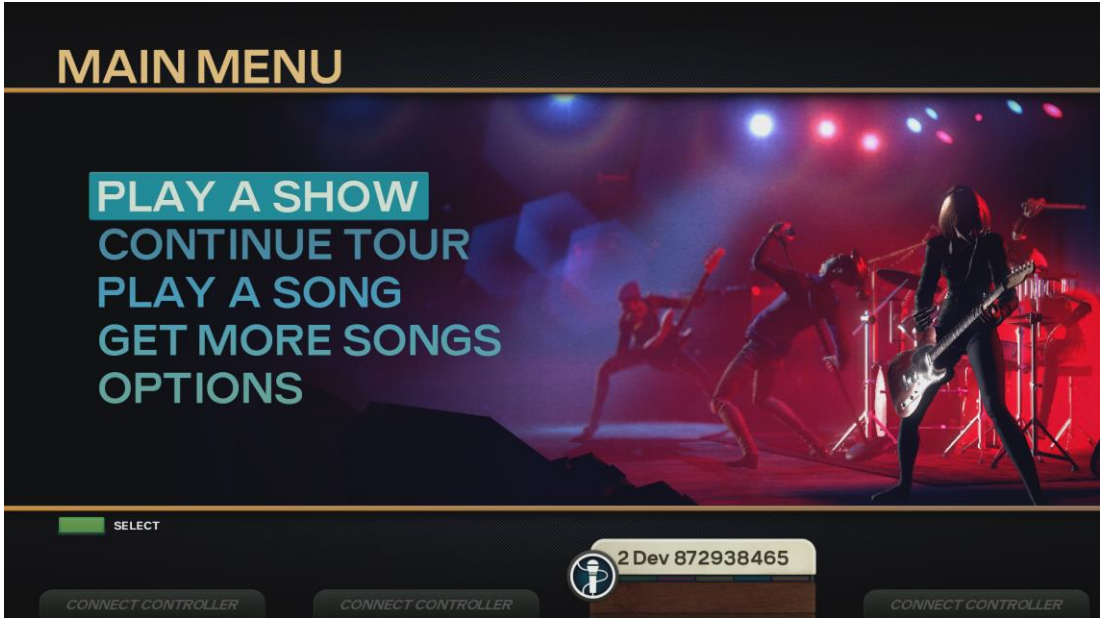


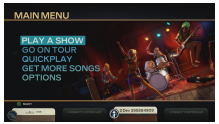


More effective **Reason Focused** feedback:

"The composition as a whole should feel as energetic as the characters. Adding tilt to the camera might help. What are some other ideas?"

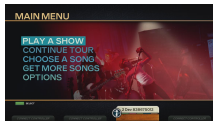


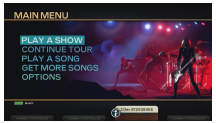


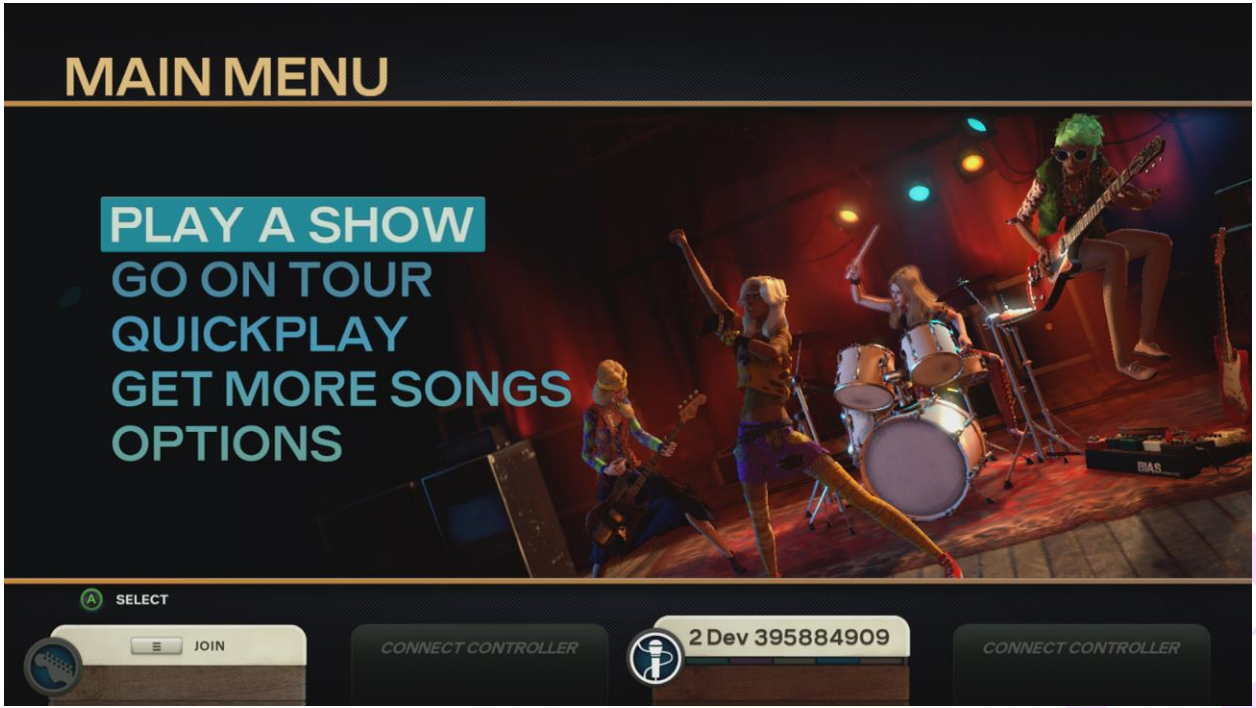


More effective **Reason Focused** feedback (tighter deadline):

"The composition as a whole should feel energetic. Adding some tilt to the camera will help."







Describe **Experience and Reasons** behind judgments

Strategies for Giving Feedback:

1. **Define Problems** before solving them
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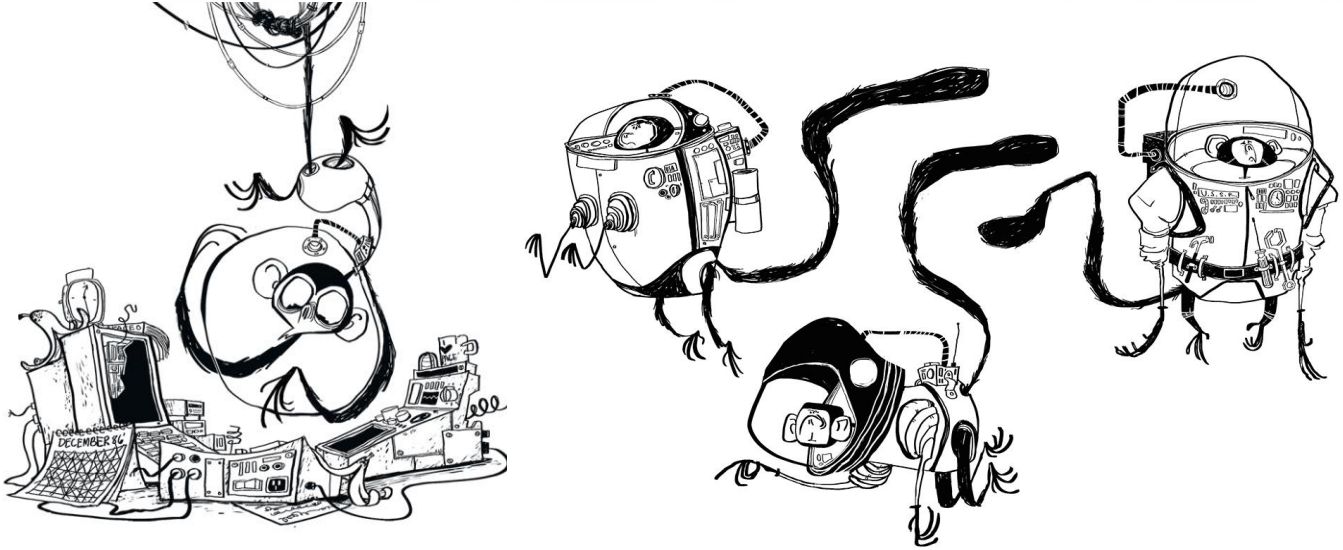
Both strategies involve **two steps**:

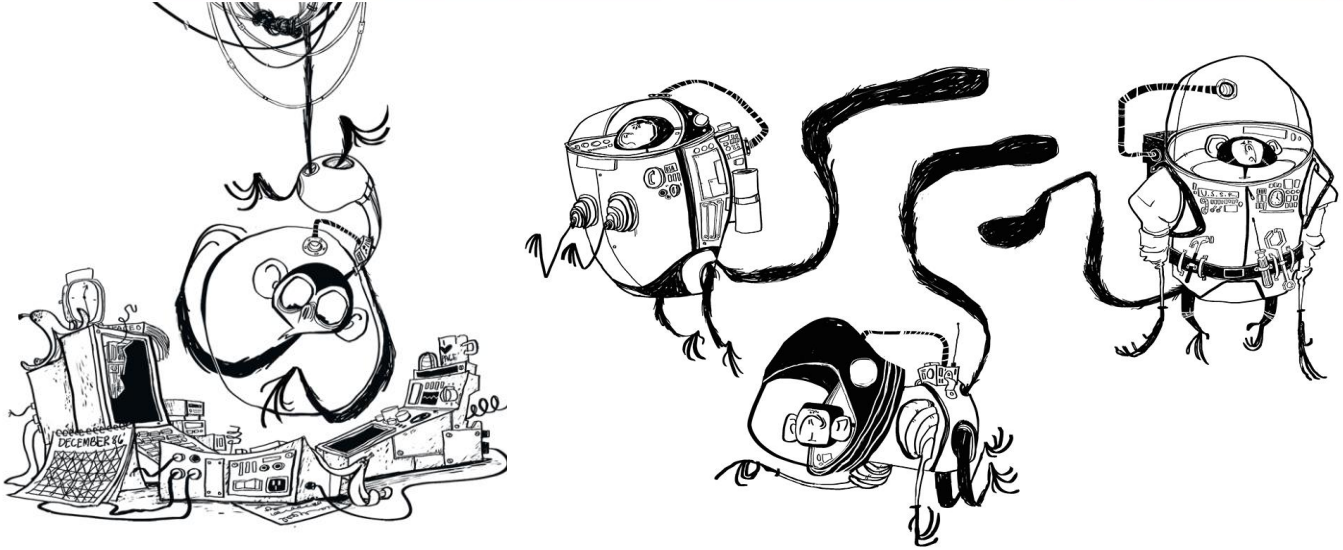
1. **Recognize** your first response
2. **Reflect** and **Rephrase**

Strategies for **Receiving** Feedback:

1. **Ask questions** that encourage critics to:
   - **Define problems** before solving them
   - **Describe reasons** behind judgments
2. **Frame** the critique
3. **Look for themes** in the feedback

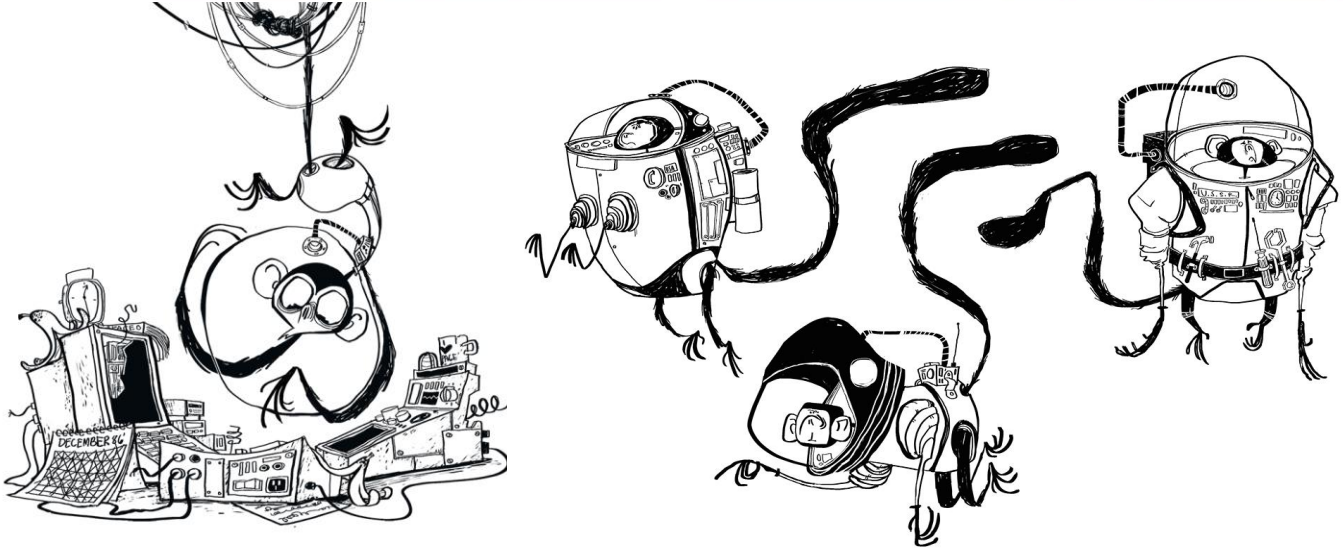


Monkey Character in *Disney Fantasia: Music Evolved*



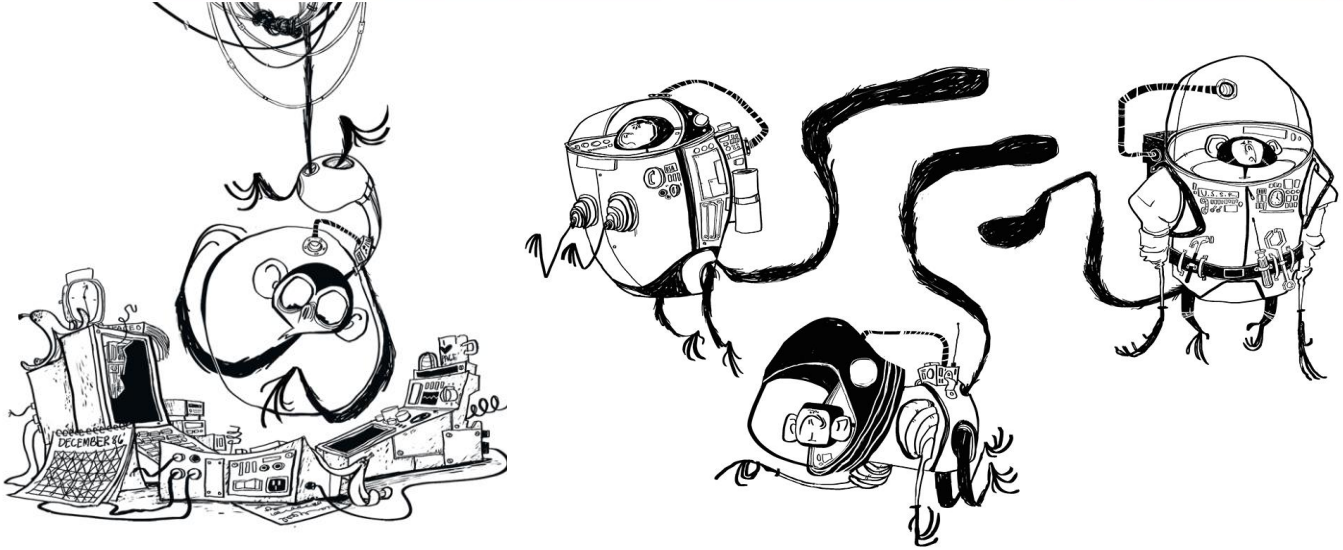
Poorly phrased **Solution Focused** feedback:

"Make the monkey older."



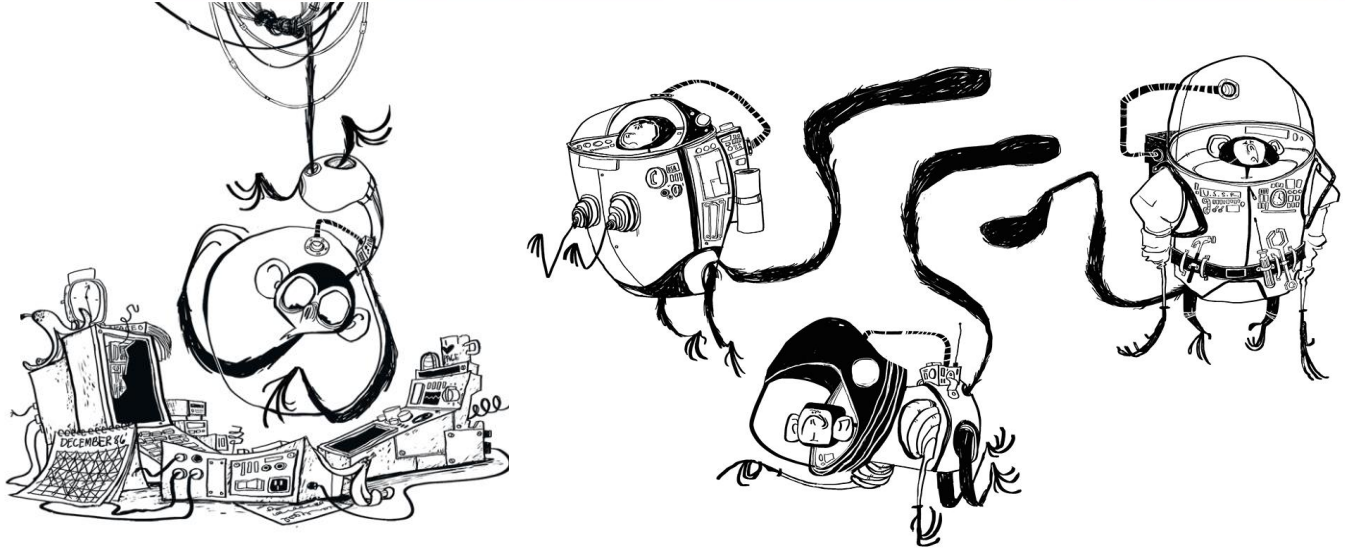
Questions to **Reveal the Problem** behind the solution:

"How would an older monkey fit into this scene more successfully?"



Poorly phrased **Judgment Focused** feedback:

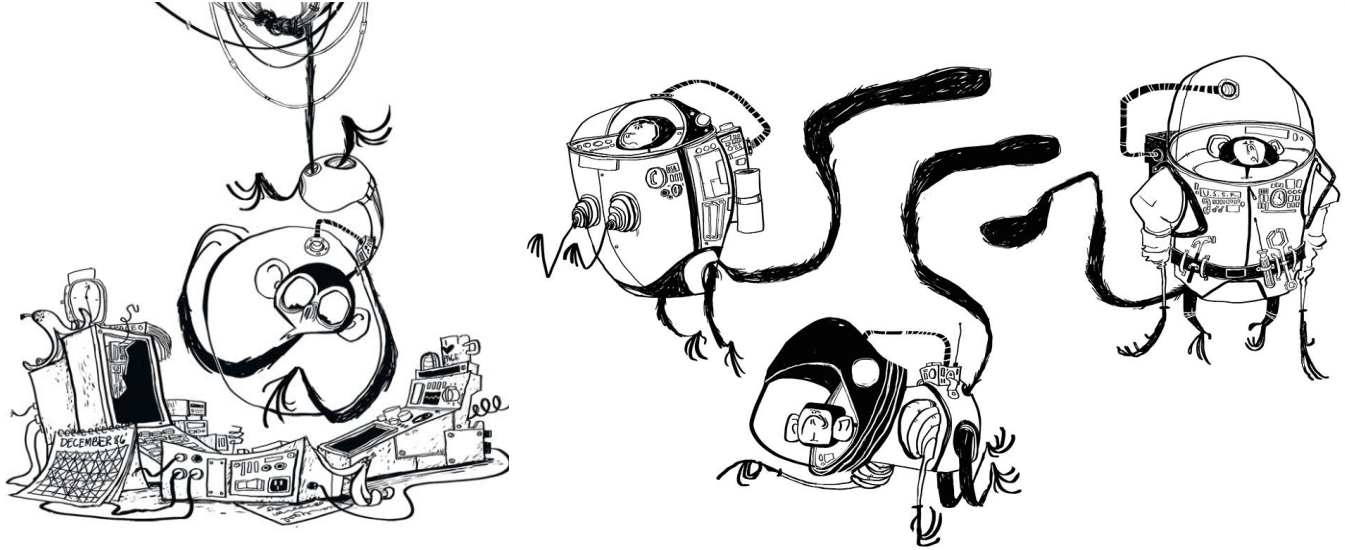
"The monkey is too goofy."



Questions to **Reveal the Reasons** behind the judgment:

"What feelings do you think the monkey should evoke in this scene?"

"Why are those feelings important here?"



Poor feedback **transformed**:

"We need a monkey that fits into a narrative based on sadness, isolation and an attempt to connect."

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Strategies for **Receiving** Feedback:

1. **Ask questions** that encourage critics to:
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2. **Frame** the critique
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The Haven in *Disney Fantasia: Music Evolved*

Frame the discussion:

"We need to give this scene an iconic look using the elements that already exist."

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The Nation Scene in *Disney Fantasia: Music Evolved*

Poorly phrased feedback **Collection**:

"Move the volcano back."

"The area between the city and the mountains is boring."

"Make the background trees smaller."

"Add some flying creatures in the forest."

Common **Theme**:

"The space feels shallow and lacks excitement."

Strategies Recap:

Strategies for **GIVING** feedback

- **Define** the problem don't solve it
- **Describe** the reasons or experience that lead to judgments

Strategies for **RECEIVING** feedback:

- **Ask** questions
- **Focus** the critique
- Look for **Themes**

Takeaways:

- Clearly define **GOALS**
- **Critique** don't criticize
  - All criticism is potential critique
- **Recognize, Reflect and Rephrase**
  - Our first reactions are often poorly phrased

Continue the conversation:

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Wrap-Up Room:

West Hall, Level 2, Overlook 2022