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# Use Of The Concept Of Nostalgia By Creators Of Animated Content

Humans are predisposed to resist change, but, regardless of that fact, our world is rapidly changing and recent generations have borne the brunt of it. This makes them all the more susceptible to nostalgia. With the rise of technological advancements and inescapable political turmoil, they can't help but collectively yearn for simpler times. This type of nostalgia is restorative, and comes with the belief that life could still go back to the way it was. On the other hand, reflective nostalgia accepts when this is impossible; it "thrives in *álgos*, the longing itself, and delays the homecoming—wistfully, ironically, desperately," in the words of Svetlana Boym (2010, adapted from 2001). Nostalgia is paired with melancholy, and Julie Beck (2013) explains that it was even considered a sickness in its initial discovery. Today, it is viewed as a "Poignant and pleasant experience" according to Routledge (2016). It is bitter-sweet and generally sought after, which is where animation can play a role.

It appears that the mere act of watching cartoons can induce nostalgia. Although animation originated with the purpose of entertaining adults, it now makes up the majority of children's visual media, which likely causes adults to associate it with being young. The animations normally take place in entirely drawn or created worlds, so there's more scope for illogical, and imaginative scenarios, like the ones children invent at play-time. Additionally, modern creators often capture the essence of classic animations, making them reminiscent of particular shows the audience has seen before. In an interview with Vulture Magazine (2015), the creators of Rick and Morty disclosed their influences. "I definitely think the DNA of The Simpsons is in my subconscious. There are also certain things I pulled from Ren & Stimpy, particularly the little 'W'," says Justin Roiland, referring latterly to a signature facial expression of characters in the show. It might not be entirely intentional, but small details like these give a modern show familiar qualities, which can be comforting for a nostalgic viewer.

In addition to the intrinsic nature of cartoons, many aesthetic choices can be made to further induce nostalgia in the audience. Some animations tackle it very literally, in the form of flashbacks. In Avatar- The Last Airbender (—), flashbacks use sepia tones to reflect the 'golden days', and the story is halted in its tracks to accommodate the characters' sudden and overwhelming feelings. Inside Out (2015) depicts memories in the form of glowing orbs, which the characters can interact with. Their posture when gently cradling said orbs realises the way humans cherish childhood memories, and compositionally the orb becomes the focus, mimicking an all too common fixation on the past. In these cases nostalgia is likely collateral to story telling, but never the less, hits one in the feels.

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More deliberate artistic choices can determine the era in which the animation is set. Harvey (2017) comments on “the references, music and images that pay homage to some of our favourite thrillers” in *Stranger Things* (2017). Nostalgia is obviously personal, and different for each generation, but currently, appealing to Millennials seems to be a primary focus of creatives. Spratt (2016) says that “Millennials are the most nostalgic generation ever” and recognises the escalation of retrospective hashtags and prompts to review old pictures from social media. Because of this, it’s no surprise that younger generations are now growing up with 80s music and vintage dungarees.

Creators can source other familiar things and explore them with a new perspective. Fairytales are frequently revisited because they are drilled into people from a young age and can be easily manipulated to deliver a new message. Forsyth (2016) agrees that in twisting original tales, “we see the story in a new way and understand new truths about what forces can shape and misshape a human psyche.” “The memories attached with fairytales make them nostalgic”, says Laight (2018) and animation can bring such tales to life, especially when used in Live action films in the form of computer generated imagery. Then again, Laight stresses another use of nostalgia- in grounding otherwise implausible scenarios. He states: “J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series is equally adept at creating a magical world out of nostalgia and familiarity,” and explains that the school setting provides a means to communicate with the audience in-and-amongst extraordinary adventures. In the same way, animations which revolve around childhood will prompt audiences to feel nostalgic.

Some creators incorporate well loved characters (usually in marketing) to appeal to their audience. Others go so far as recreating entire feature films in a new medium. Lisa Hill (2017) explored Disney’s reasoning behind their live-action reboots and claims that nostalgia has expanded their target audience. She refers to the studio’s “Play on nostalgic ideals of childhood,” and states: “they appear to have tapped into an altogether new, inter-generational market with this live-action offering.” Revisiting animations from the past seems to be one of the main ways in which creators of animated content utilise the concept. This method also allows studios to recycle material, simplifying their process, while speaking to a wider audience.

There was speculation after a tweet went viral, stating that Walt Disney’s will actually required Disney classics to be remade every 10 years. Dan Evon (2018) squashes this claim, explaining that no such requirement was made (and suggests that the rumour points to a marketing tactic). It would seem that playing to the audiences’ nostalgia, for the reasons mentioned above, is the real intention of Walt Disney Studios.

When it comes to what actually entices audiences to go and see reboots or sequels, other factors such as loyalty and mere curiosity come into play. Murdoch (2016) suggests that Millennials have too much choice in media, making them unreliable in terms of loyalty. However,

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she refers to television which is often inconveniently distributed between different viewing platforms, unlike film. Moreover, loyalty to Disney films or other favourites like Wallace and Gromit- A grand day out (1989) or The Snowman (1982) is rooted in early exposure, and is an entirely different matter. Curiosity leads fans to put aside scepticism to see whether modern versions and sequels hold a candle to those of the past.

Creators risk a potential backlash though, from the more dubious audiences. 'Another childhood treasure trampled over in pure pursuit of low-hanging franchise fruit' states Louisa Mellor (2015), voicing the opinion of many, ahead of Clangers (2015) CBeebies reboot. As it turns out, the series has been well received, owing to the careful recreation of the characters and their salient charm. On the other hand, Teen Titans Go! (2013) was received poorly by fans of Teen Titans (2003) because of drastic changes in the tone and animation style. In this case, nostalgia may have prompted the creation of the new series, but it doesn't appear to be the main focus. Nostalgia Critic (2018) compared the two versions and commented on how the creators have dealt with criticism within the new show. In one example, a character stresses that "clowns are for kids" echoing that Teen Titans Go is for kids, not sentimental grown-ups. While the Clangers reboot is also aimed at children, it does allow parents to revel in happy memories and share an aspect of their own childhood with their children.

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