

The live-action remake of "Avatar: The Last Airbender" is pointless

COLUMN BY
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OPINION EDITOR

Netflix released the live-action remake of "Avatar: The Last Airbender" and despite being far better than the previous attempt to remake the beloved animated show, it still feels like a hollow attempt at capturing former glory.

The original "Avatar: The Last Airbender" is widely loved and recognized as one of the best animated series of the past few decades. If there is anything consistent about Hollywood though, if something was great enough once, they are more than willing to make it again.

Netflix has recently been following in the footsteps of Disney, who have spent the past few years remaking and releasing classic animated films as live-action films for a modern audience.

The recent releases of "Avatar: The Last Airbender" and "One Piece" to Netflix are just the firsts in a full slate of live-action anime remakes the platform has planned in the coming years.

These projects are unnecessary and feel tainted with the same lack of originality

that has plagued big budget Hollywood films for years.

Instead of giving talented creatives the chance to try something new and exciting, studios and streaming services are keen to rely on previously established content that has already a proven success.

Even ignoring that issue, there are still the practical challenges of adapting an animated series like "Avatar" into live action.

The show is filled with characters who can control fire and water. There are massive war ships that can tear through ice and a flying, six-legged bison. These things are easy enough to achieve in animation through the dedication of talented animators but are far-fetched for even the best CGI available to live-action filmmakers.

Animation allows a creative freedom not yet possible with live action. Animated characters can do things real actors cannot and CGI is simply not to the point where animated effects can be easily duplicated without appearing visibly computer generated and ruining the immersion of the audience.

The "Avatar: The Last Airbender" live-action show is



PHOTO COURTESY OF IMDB
Poster for "Avatar: The Last Airbender," the live-action remake.

good. It would be better if it did not have to live up to the original and therein lies the problem. No matter how good a remake

is, it can never quite capture the magic of the original. The entertainment industry thrives on new creatives

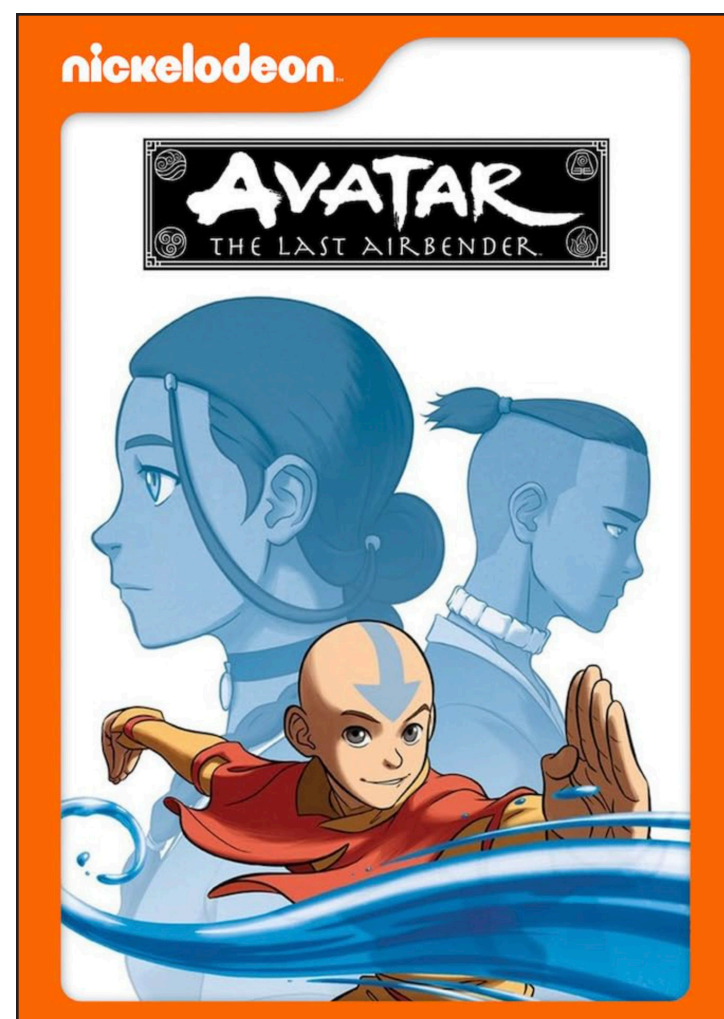


PHOTO COURTESY OF IMDB
Poster for "Avatar: The Last Airbender," the animated series.

with new ideas in order to make successful shows and films. When studios refuse to let stand-alone IP rest and

constantly seek to reboot and remake what has already been done, the audience and future creatives both suffer.

THIS WEEK'S POP PICK

RACHEL RUDD | EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

"THE LEGO MOVIE"



PHOTO COURTESY OF IMDB

Ten years later, everything is still awesome about "The Lego Movie." What might've been seen as an obvious marketing ploy to build the Lego empire was instead a creative, hilarious film with more than enough heart to go around.

Inspired by the stop-motion Lego shorts that came before it, "The Lego Movie" is a love letter to everyone's inner child who dove into a box of Legos and told whatever story they could imagine with whatever pieces they had.

The film was animated using CGI but was extensively stylized to resemble stop-motion. Everything from character models, environments and special effects were painstakingly recreated in 3D animation to look as close as possible to real Lego pieces. Character models even feature scratches, cracks and fingerprints to nail the Lego piece look.

To fully capture the stop-motion aesthetic, the animators at times animated at the industry standard of 24 frames per second, but also used 12 or even eight frames per second to recreate the stiffness of real Legos.

In addition to being beautifully animated, "The Lego Movie" is gorgeously lit. Golden sunlight beats down on the brickly sands of The Wild West, murky waters surround the main characters' eccentrically designed submarine and the viewer can practically hear the buzzing of the cold fluorescent lights in Lord Business's lair.

"The Lego Movie" features creative shot after creative shot. Lord Business's massive black boots dominate the frame as he stomps toward the viewer in an attempt to squash out the camera. When a character dangles off a racing train, the camera pulls back to emphasize that precariousness. Spaceships and cars zoom toward the camera at blistering speeds, making the viewer feel every twist and turn.

All of that would be for nothing if the film didn't stick the landing on its message. Protagonist Emmet, who was voiced by Chris Pratt before it was cool, is a devout rule follower. He lacks any individuality, instead, he's just one piece of the larger set.

As he uncovers the Piece of Resistance, the magic MacGuffin prophesied to stop Lord Business, Emmet learns to embrace his individuality and creativity, while inspiring the other characters around him. The film's simple message of "everyone is special" works due to its timelessness and heartfelt performances from Pratt and Will Ferrell, who voiced Lord Business.

While there are a few things that evoke a sense of second-hand embarrassment, notably Emmet and heroine WyldStyle's beatboxing duet of the film's almost annoyingly too popish song "Everything is Awesome," they aren't enough to detract from the film's fun and lead into scenes that get the viewer laughing again.

"The Lego Movie" remains a timeless classic and is guaranteed to take any viewer, child or adult, on a fun and silly adventure. Its heartfelt story, great characters and incredible animation will lure anyone in, even after all this time.

Official Score: 10/10

MGMT's "Loss of Life" hits all the right notes

COLUMN BY
CAROLINE AVERITT

LIFE EDITOR

If you are looking for an album with '80s-inspired production, lullabies and Welsh poetry, look no further than MGMT's "Loss of Life."

The indie pop duo, Ben Goldwasser and Andrew VanWyngarden, is back six years after their last album release.

With very limited prior exposure to MGMT's music other than their brief moment of TikTok fame, I went into this album not knowing what to expect.

The album ends with the title track, which sums up the album's general themes about both anxiety and hope. It says, "When the world is born and life is ending / Then you learn to love your loss of life / When the morning comes and life is over / Anyone can love, anyone can love."

Despite the bleak sounding title, some of the tracks explore endearing and uplifting themes.

My favorite track, "Phradie's Song," is a beautiful lullaby that says, "I can sing to you / Every night, if you want me to."

I liked this song upon first listen, but liked it even more after reading what VanWyngarden said about the song.

"My daughter is two years old and her name is Phradie," VanWyngarden told The Sun. "It's a song for her!"

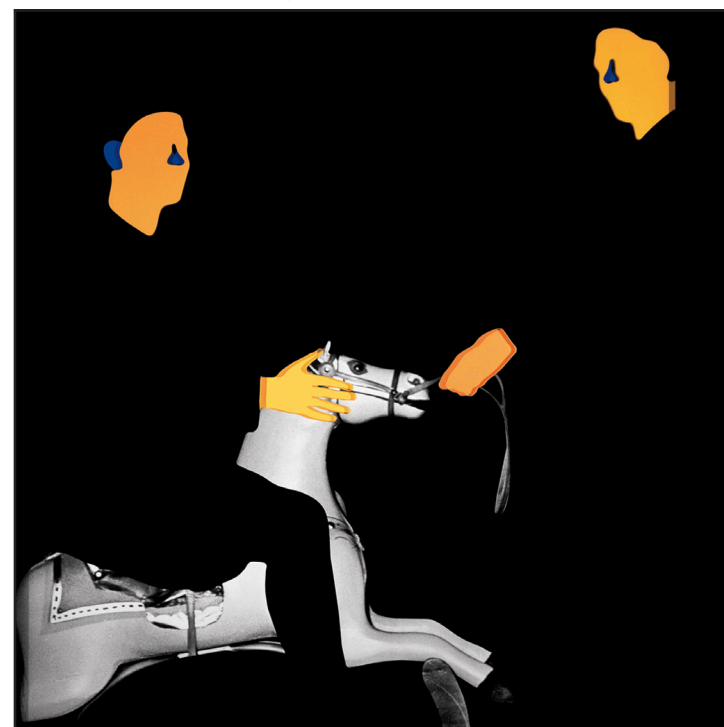


PHOTO COURTESY OF GENIUS

Album cover for MGMT's "Loss of Life"

In terms of production, the album hits notes of '80s alternative, Beatles era psychedelics and indie folk without losing a cohesive sound. While each song feels distinct, all of them sound like they could be played during a dramatic moment of your favorite coming-of-age movie.

There are some interesting moments in the album, but they do not add very much to the overall artistry.

For instance, the album opens with "Loss of Life, Pt. 2," which is a spoken word poem with music behind it from The Book of Taliesin, a manuscript

of Welsh poems from the 1300s. This track could be deleted from the album and nothing would be lost.

As someone who values lyrics over sound, my major qualm with the album is it focuses on style and production more than the words. However, the production was so excellent, it made up for it.

Upon first listen, I did not have much to say about this album.

However, each time I listened to a song, I found myself liking it more and more.

Official Score: 8/10

BLACK HISTORY MONTH AT A-STATE

CAROLINE AVERITT

LIFE EDITOR

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All over the country, people are celebrating Black History Month and Arkansas State University is no exception.

Throughout the month, organizations such as the Multicultural Center and the National Pan-Hellenic Council, Inc. (NPHC) celebrated with events surrounding this year's theme, "African Americans and the Arts: It's Ours to Tell."

Tyler Johnson, a junior criminology major from Newport, Arkansas, serves as president of Brother 2 Brother, acts as chief officer of Evolve, is a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. and previously



PHOTO COURTESY OF TYLER JOHNSON

Tyler Johnson

"It's just a big celebration and just a big old important knowledge at the same time."



PHOTO COURTESY OF TONI JONES

Toni Jones

She said being sociable despite her initial timidity helped set things in motion to express herself unapologetically.

"I love my locs, I love my skin, I love everything about me," Jones said. "It was hard at first to get to love myself, but as I grow older, I'm like, 'OK, there are little girls that look up to me now.'"

Nev Winfield, a sophomore psychology major from Jonesboro, is biracial. They said they do not feel 'white enough' or 'Black enough,' which has

led them to feel like they need to prove their racial identity. "It was really hard to feel like I belonged there sometimes and I was struggling to find my groove, which is why I joined the Feminist Union and Gender Sexuality Alliance," Winfield said. Winfield said they feel powerful as a person of color. "I'm really proud to be a Black woman. I think a lot of people will try to discredit that for me because I am mixed," Winfield said.



PHOTO COURTESY OF NEV WINFIELD

Nev Winfield

A-State's diversity will increase retention for many Black students enrolling. "We use the same flyers every single year with predominantly white students on the flyers," Jones said. "When I came

here, I was like, 'Oh, I don't see not one person who looks like me on this flier.' So, I think updated fliers and updated advertisements will help."

As an ambassador for the Multicultural Center, Jones said she wants people to know there are safe places for them to go. "A lot of Black students I know personally that go here experience racism every single day, but they don't have the confidence to speak up about it," Jones said. She said the Multicultural Center can help give students a safe place and there is always someone there willing to help.

Black History Month

Black History Month began in 1975 when President Gerald Ford issued a message to all Americans, urging them to recognize the important contributions made by African

Americans in the United States. Jones said many people do not learn about Black history in schools, so Black History Month is the best way to learn about it. "Even though we don't really know all of our history, it's a celebration of what we do now," Jones said. Johnson said the students at A-State should support each other all the time, not just during Black History Month. "Even though this month is about us, don't let only this month be about us," Johnson said. "Let us thrive as a community better and be intertwined with each other."

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served as the president of the Black Student Association.

Johnson said he wants the A-State community to support Black students all the time, not just during Black History Month.

"To me, genuinely, the celebration and acknowledgment of the culture that we've been denied that we've had for a long time," Johnson said.

Identity

Toni Jones, a junior exercise science major from Sherwood, Arkansas, is a Multicultural Center ambassador, a member of the National Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and serves as the vice president for Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Jones said she has never felt uncomfortable expressing her racial identity at A-State.

"A lot of Black students I know personally that go here experience racism every single day, but they don't have the confidence to speak up about it," Toni Jones said.

Community

Black students make up about 14% of the population at A-State.

Johnson said because of the small community on campus, the Black students tend to gravitate toward each other.

Jones said more engagement and better advertising on

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Timeline of Black history at A-State

1955: Walter Strong and Fred Turner become the first Black students on campus.

1970: Lt. Col. Frederick Turner, ROTC instructor and A-State alum, becomes the first Black instructor in military science, and C. Calvin Smith, Ph.D., becomes the first Black classroom instructor on the A-State campus.

2009: Ellen Strong, A-State's first female Black graduate, dies.

2009: Smith, the first Black faculty member at A-State, dies.

2021: The ASU System Board of Trustees approves a Student Government Association initiative to name the Military Science Building after Turner.



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Arkansas State University's theme for this year's Black History Month is "African Americans and the Arts: It's Ours to Tell."