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HEADER: STEP #2

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YOUR INFORMATION:

STEPS #4 & #5

Film Theory 550

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TITLE: STEP #6

Redefining Traditional Cinema

STEP #7

As odd as it may seem, throughout history, progression in technology has always been approached with skepticism. Despite the many restrictions advancement can break, it seems that this is often met with resistance. More often than not, the world eventually embraces the developments; in cinema, this is no different. Cinema began as a new art form with a vast space for improvement. It has moved from a means of capturing images to a process of telling stories through multiple layers of visuals and sounds. Just as any technology allows, experimentation has led to a variety of results. In the case of digital cinema, it would seem that films have made a full revolution. No longer is digital the interloper; it has become a widely accepted tool that has created fantastic worlds unimaginable to most. Specifically, digital cinema has thrust children’s and family films into another realm, one that is highly competitive with long-established cinema. This all began with the birth of John Lasseter’s 1995 film, *Toy Story*, a vision that used digital animation and early techniques such as those used in *Man with a Movie Camera* to create a story that produces a complex illustration with not only the visuals, but the actual narrative itself. *Toy Story* fulfills the idea that digital cinema redefines traditional cinema as it manipulates traditional animation and children’s narrative to engage a wider array of audiences.

John Lasseter’s manipulation of animation techniques using digital tools creates a level of engagement that had not been matched. Previously, animation was left with 2-dimensional images that encased the audience in a world that was undeniably fantasy. *Toy Story* creates a 3-dimensional realm from scratch. Computer animation allows the creation of a larger number of visuals permitimg details to be heightened. The toys not only seem real in the narrative but also literally come to life for the viewers—thus, the story becomes more believable to the audience. Woody, Buzz, and the others take on identities and truly feel genuine. This creates an element of reality that previously had not been accomplished, especially for children. Using computer animation has become the norm despite the question of its authenticity as conventional cinema: “…the very distinction between creation and modification, so clear in film-based media… no longer applies to digital cinema, since each image, regardless of its origin, goes through a number of programs before making it to the final film” (Manovich 1064). Digital technology redefines what can be done with cinema allowing film to evolve as an art form.

Another development that aids in engaging a broader audience is the manipulation of the narrative element to make a connection to audiences of all ages. *Toy Story* presents a simple tale with relevant material that enthralls children. However, unlike animation of the past, this family film includes hidden adult language and references that make it more appealing to older generations. Many popular children’s films pre-*Toy Story* were based on fairytales and children’s stories. With a powerhouse team scripting this original screenplay, including Joss Wheden and Joel Cohen, the film was able to bring a captivating story to life with fresh language paired with innovative technology. “To infinity and beyond,” is one the most quoted lines from a children’s film and has had a significant impact in pop culture history. It is difficult to find a children’s film preceding *Toy* Story that can compare to this experience. This became the trend for films of this kind—*Finding Nemo, Wall-E, Up, etc.* These are films that were able to contend with traditional films in terms of box office numbers and cinematic awards. Further, the film is able to expand on symbolic efforts in animation by creating a cinematic experience that is thick with symbolism, which takes on a much deeper tone than many children’s films of the time. The 3-dimensional visual elements help to produce symbolic elements that extend beyond color.

Also displayed throughout the film is the manipulation of image to create a layered meaning. With employment of 3D technology, the montage in film can produce multiple meaning; using digital cinema allows audiences to enter a fantasy world on an authentic level. From the opening scene, it is clear this film is different. The toy soldiers look real and take on an authentic mission marching through the hall, sliding down the rope, reporting orders; the montage feels genuine because it seems like it was shot on location. Only in the world of digital technology could toys coming to life become so believable. After watching *Toy Story* as a child I questioned whether this happened with my toys; watching this film as an adult, it makes me wish things like this really could occur. This is the note of a truly captivating film; even though the brain imparts that it is unlikely this is possible, the film moves the viewer to question this concept. In a 2D world, Sid’s toys would have been weird; thanks to digital cinema, the toys, with their mixed body parts, become truly creepy and eventually the viewer pities their deformities. It is this use of digital cinema in *Toy Story* that allows multiple layered images to push narrative and create alternate meanings not readily available in animation.

While the process of digital cinema may not be any easier, the result seems to be much more believable and, arguably, a higher quality. There is definitely a progression from movies such as *The Lion King* to *Toy Story*; the digital aspect allows for a more organic representation of reality. The manipulation of visual and narrative elements is the ultimate sign of progression in cinema during the ‘90s. By moving back to avant-garde techniques, *Toy Story* ultimately created a new tradition in children’s film. Essentially, Lasseter and his team has taken editing in traditional cinema to a new level. Creating an alternate reality as opposed to filming on location does not relegate the quality or veracity of the movie. Progression of this sort had redefined cinema, marking it as a traditional method of creating quality films. Just as this was innovative for the time, cinematic tools will continued to be updated and invented; as technology is updated, it can only be expected to move cinema into a new direction. This constant evolution is what makes cinema a true art form.

Works Cited

STEP # 3

ALPHABETICAL ORDER

STEP # 2

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STEP # 4

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