

# The Old and the New – Does Any of It Really Matter?

☒ I recently wrote an article about my disdain for Hollywood remakes and someone commented and said “I strongly suggest you step out of your age-ism and try really hard to recognize that the world we live in is not the one you grew up in.”

Well, clearly I’m aware that the world we live in is not the one I grew up in. I’m not blind. How “ageism” (correct spelling, by the way) has anything to do with my opinion that Hollywood, whether it’s movies or television, has failed to come up with original ideas is beyond me. Summer blockbusters all seem to be formulaic adventures and, worse yet, television shows, particularly sitcoms, feature men who are immature doofuses. It seems as if every show that’s even remotely original gets cancelled pretty quickly. But what has that got to do with ageism?

I’m really not sure what this person was getting at, but anyone who really knows me knows that I don’t live in the past. Yes, there are many things from the past that are worth preserving but I’m also glad that some things from the past are long gone.

I recall as a legal secretary having to use carbon paper to type an original and three copies of a multi-page Last Will and Testament without any mistakes on an electric typewriter. Or an original and two copies of a letter on onionskin. Not good. Computers – good.

Black and white movies. Good. Movies in color. Also good. 8-track tapes. Not so good. Digital music. Good.

Disco (Dick Clark’s favorite music by the way) and music from the early 60s. Great. Rap. Terrible. Frank Sinatra. Very

good. Pitbull, LMFAO, Ne-Yo, and Usher. Also, very good.

Diagramming sentences taught me about sentence structure: subjects, verbs and objects, prepositions and adjectives, gerunds and adverbs. Good. I doubt this is even taught in school today. Far too many people can't differentiate between "your" and "you're" (one of my pet peeves) or "its" and "it's." Not good.

Face to face conversations with people are a thing of the past from the looks of all the people sitting silently next to friends yet texting others. Not good.

Email. Good but not appropriate for every occasion. Letter writing. An absolute must for some occasions.

I often overhear young people talking today and many can't even formulate a simple sentence. Here's an example of an answer given by a 12-year old being interviewed in a legal proceeding when asked "would that be the truth?" which required a yes or no answer. "Well, yes...I mean like you have to say a different question if a question is like that it can be an opinion or something but I mean like you know like a question like if something ever happened or something like that." Six times she used the word "like." It's as bad as saying "you know." Not good.

There was a time when finding yourself pregnant and unmarried was a very big deal – not in a good way. Today, with no societal stigma attached, it's not a big deal. The fact that 40% of babies are born to unwed mothers is not a good thing for society, not good for the baby and not good for the mother.

A sense of shame kept us on the straight and narrow. Modesty was once an admirable trait but from what I see nowadays, I doubt whether women even know the meaning of the word.

I was taught discipline and personal responsibility at a young

age. Good. I don't believe ethics and these virtues are emphasized enough today. Not good.

Just because something is old doesn't make it great nor does it make it bad and the same applies to something that's new. The person who commented on my article also suggested, "Leona needs to get unstuck, or she may miss something truly marvelous."

I really don't know what she meant by that either, but a recent death in my family has made what's "truly marvelous" crystal clear to me. Remakes of old Hollywood movies and the latest electronic contraptions are not important.

Utilizing technology like Skype, which was inconceivable not too long ago, to see my grand nieces and nephews across the United States is "truly marvelous." Good. Recognizing how precious life is and that you're "here today and gone tomorrow" is what really matters. Good. Spending what little time we're given on foolishness is a waste of that precious commodity. Not good.

That I get.

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## **Some Movies Should Be Untouchable**

☒ So, I turn on my computer the other day and what do I see on my news page? Hollywood is remaking "The Thin Man" with Johnny Depp in the role of William Powell. My jaw dropped because the six Thin Man movies are some of my and my

husband's favorites. (He has them all on laserdiscs.)

Now, I have nothing against Johnny Depp. I like him very much, but he's no William Powell. This only goes to show what a barren wasteland Hollywood really is. There are no new ideas, so Hollywood continues to pump out formulaic adventure movies and remake after remake after remake.

Now they're trying to figure out who should play opposite Johnny Depp's Nick Charles as Nora. The "shortlist" of actresses includes: Amy Adams, Emily Blunt, Isla Fisher, Eva Green, Emma Stone, Carey Mulligan, Rachel Weisz, and Kristen Wiig. Sorry, girls, but with the exception of Rachel Weisz, I've never heard of any of you or seen any of your movies but I'll be willing to bet that none of you will have the class and sophistication portrayed by Myrna Loy. But I doubt that's what Hollywood will be looking for.

I'm probably sounding like a real old fogie, but I'm fine with that. Certain things should just be left alone and classic movies are one of them.

No matter who they cast, the couple will never be able to duplicate the dynamic chemistry between William Powell and Myrna Loy. I don't know if they'll be setting the movie in the 20s but I have read that it will be based on the novel by Dashiell Hammett. Although there was a lot of drinking and smoking by the main characters, I'll be curious to see if political correctness will allow those characteristics to be incorporated into the remake. I'm not sure if they'll be able to capture the same charm and elegance of the original but I'd expect to see a lot of unnecessary violence and gratuitous sexual situations.

Earlier in the week, I read we can expect yet another remake of Stephen King's "Carrie." It wasn't enough that the 1976 movie starring Sissy Spacek was an excellent movie. No, someone had to make a video in 1988 and then a television

movie in 2002.

Another example is that of my husband's favorite movie, King Kong, from 1933. Hollywood couldn't help itself when it decided to remake it in 1976 but couldn't stop there. No, it went on to make the laughable 2005 version.

So, what's next? Can we expect a remake of Casablanca? Citizen Cane? Gone With the Wind? West Side Story?

For many years now, I've thought Hollywood was pathetic in its rehashing of classic movies and the making of endless sophomoric comedies appealing to who knows who. So, who exactly is the target audience for The Thin Man? If it's young people, why aren't they encouraged to see the originals? The lovely thing is, it's my money and I don't have to pay exorbitant ticket prices to see a lot of garbage. I just wish that movie people would leave well enough alone.

I don't get it, but if you do, God bless you.

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## **Creativity Is In Short Supply**

☒ It seems like every time I turn around, someone is remaking a movie or a tv show. Superman, Batman, Charlie's Angels, Bionic Woman, Hawaii Five-0, the Green Hornet, and The Munsters, to name a few. The original 1933 King Kong is one of my husband's favorite movies and "creative" Hollywood has already made two hideously bad remakes. If they're not remaking something, they're using the same formula you see time after time in movies, particularly in adventure movies. Actually, I wouldn't mind seeing a remake of the 50s television shows, Father Knows Best or the Donna Reed Show,

where men were depicted as educated, hard-working, respected members of their families instead of the low-achieving buffoon types commonly seen in sitcoms today.

So where is the creativity? Over the Thanksgiving holiday, we were discussing the lack of any novel ideas coming out of Hollywood and my nephew presented us with the following scenario and challenged us to guess whether the story was from Stars Wars or Harry Potter. He called it “theStar Wars/Harry Potter paradigm.” (I’d like to thank him for writing it all out for me because I’d never be able to repeat it here on my own.)

It’s the story of a young boy, orphaned at a young age by a mother who died for him. He lives with his aunt and uncle who do not appreciate him. He longs to break out of the life he leads and is forced to work for his aunt and uncle. He meets an old man who has magical, mystical, supernatural powers that tells him that he himself has those same powers. Coincidentally, this very same man was the one who hand delivered the newly orphaned baby boy to his aunt and uncle’s house in the first place. The old man takes him away from home and will teach him how to use his new found powers. Meanwhile, an evil force (pun intended) is threatening everyone and the main villain, who also has the same magical powers as the boy and the old man, has a very close connection to the young boy. Along his journey, the young boy meets two people who would become his best friends – a male and a female. Eventually, the old man is killed by the villain and the young boy and villain have their inevitable clash.

Now, I hadn’t seen Star Wars in over 30 years and I was never into the Harry Potter series, but even I could see the similarities.

My nephew pointed out the striking parallels: Harry Potter/Luke Skywalker. Dumbledore/Obi Wan Kenobi. Voldemort/Darth Vader. Ron Weasley/Han Solo. Hermione

Granger/Princess Leia. Vernon and Petunia/Uncle Owen and Aunt Beru. Lilly Potter/Padme Amidala.

With a few minor plot differences such as the redemption of Anakin/Darth Vader at the end, the themes are the same. He concluded that both stories were loved by so many people because they're basically the same story even though Star Wars came out in 1977 and the first Harry Potter book was published some twenty years later.

So, as I said, "everything old is new again." It just seems like there are very few original ideas.

When you look at the highest grossing films of the 2000s, the majority are prequels, sequels or remakes. I'm not sure what it all means. I, myself, would like to see more successful movies with original themes, but I must be in the minority because I've only seen about five of the movies on the highest grossing list.

I see a startling lack of creativity in the movie industry as compared to the music industry when you consider there are only eight notes and there have been millions of songs written.

While I may not always be aware of patterns and formulas in movies and television, I definitely notice the re-making of clothing styles— they're basically the same style, just called something different today.

The most obvious to me are 60s bell bottoms; now they're called wide leg or flared. Hip huggers from the past are called "low-rise" today. I have to say that I don't ever remember seeing muffin tops the way I do today even on young women. I'm sure it's because women in the 60s would never have worn something with rolls of skin spilling over their waistbands. Shoulders pads so popular in the 40s, were the rage in the 80s – I'm waiting for their return any day now. Platform shoes were popular in the 30s, 40s and early

50s but achieved their height in popularity in the 60s, 70s and 80s. They're back. Pea coats popular in the 60s are stylish today. I hadn't seen the 60s bodysuit until recently.

Winged eyeliner popular on movie stars like Audrey Hepburn and Marilyn Monroe is popular again. Today's slim-fit suits for men look very similar to those worn by tv stars of the 60s like Gene Barry and Tony Franciosa.

Well, maybe there's not much you can do with a pants leg or a man's suit, except add a button here or there, so the styles just get recycled every few decades. But I expect more from the pinheads in Hollywood. But, then again, if someone is willing to see the 11<sup>th</sup> Halloween movie, maybe Hollywood is just making what the public wants to see.

I just don't get it, but if you do, God bless you.