Jazmin Ornelas

Dr. Jennifer Wilhite

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The Animation Creep

Recently, in the year 2024, The Animation Guild went on strike to receive better wages, protect their jobs, and more. According to Michigan Daily writer Lin Yang, 2024, "According to Cartoon Brew’s layoff tracker, there have already been 11 notable companies with layoffs this year and 20 last year. Pixar had its biggest layoff in May, with the studio cutting 14% of its animators" (1). Studios were laying off a big portion of artists/animators due to different factors, one in particular being AI. So in response, many different animators within the guild decided to go on strike and make their cause public to bring attention and support from their audience.

In order to go about advertising their cause, there was an influx of short animated videos and even just informational videos that were uploaded to YouTube and spread through social media platforms. That promoted their cause and even provided information to the audience. This digital campaign allowed the animators to reach a wider audience and garner support for their cause. In particular, a channel by the name of Jellybox uploaded a YouTube video on May 27, 2024, called "Animation is under attack!" This video reached a lot of people and was very prominent when it came to bringing attention towards the strike. The video uses visuals and emotional appeal, or pathos, to effectively convey the message of the animators' struggles.

The video features many things, such as how in the beginning the video showcases multiple characters from different kids and even adult cartoons all interacting with one another in what seems to be a party, the gray in the back indicating more cartoon characters. To which then a person wearing a green shirt shows up and mentions how "now that the strikes are over, no negotiations can come between me and my friends!" referencing the writer and actor strike that happened months prior. Right after saying that the characters, except the green guy, disappear, a character with a pink suit appears and begins to explain how "movies and TV still have a big fight ahead of them." The green guy in this video represents someone who just regularly watches cartoons being the viewer. The viewer (green guy) is unaware of what is happening within the animation guild and only knows the general negotiations from the writer and actor strike. The character in the pink suit is shown as a representative of the animation guild that is educating the viewer. I wanted to point out a couple of things about the characters: the pink character is wearing a suit, has sleek and pulled-back hair to show that he is part of the cause, has an old TV reporter or salesman voice, and looks like a businessman, causing the viewer to trust his word more as he seems more educated in it. Meanwhile, the green guy is wearing casual clothes, with more natural and messy hair; he is the viewer, or in other words, he represents us. As the video progresses, it successfully creates a connection with the audience due to the green guy wanting the same thing as the viewer: for animation to be saved.

Continuing on with the video, as the pink character is talking and mentioning how the guild is under attack, it shows the guild's logo looking scared as it is surrounded by weapons. This draws in the audience in a humorous way that also makes the audience upset, as he mentions they're under direct threat, as claimed by the video "greedy corporations." We then see a scene of a character that represents an animator in a small home working as a big hand (the greedy corporations) removing various things from the animator, such as money and the house, and eventually gets replaced by a robot. The narrator then goes on to explain how these companies are paying animators less and less to the point where they can't hold a stable pay or even afford rent, according to Maximillian Alvarez. "Hollywood studios are making billions off of underpaid animators, 2022, shows and movies that received high grossing that are animated; the animators struggled with gross pay inequity." Animation writers make a minimum of $2,064 per week, while WGA weekly minimums range from $4,063 to $5,185—that comes out to TAG writers making 41 to 52 cents on the dollar per week compared to live-action writers" (1). This shows the vast difference in what animators get paid compared to other writers and even actors. Also, another article written by Katie Campione, "Animation Workers Sound Alarm On AI & Shrinking Staff Positions As Guild Resumes Talks With AMPTP," 2024, takes the word of a fellow writer that is being affected by the reduced payment. "As one veteran animation writer explained of their own situation, "In 2021, all that year, I was staffed on a show, and in 2022, all that year, I did freelance. I wrote 19 scripts for seven different shows. I made 33% less in 2022…The math isn’t mathing” (2). This shows from an animator's perspective how they are getting paid less and less each year. Another issue the scene brings up is the animator being replaced with the evil-looking robot, or as claimed by the video, "soulless AI." This is an attempt to turn the audience against AI in the animation industry. However, AI does have a big factor in play as it advances; it is replacing things more and more, especially due to its wide generation capabilities.

The video then asks for the public to support and shows what seems to be a meme format of the green guy trying to take out AI in a violent way. Showing how he is convinced in helping out however he can. They use this to show extreme measures, which then the pink character stops him as he says it isn't necessary yet and instead offers a different solution, now talking to the audience to follow the account and stay updated on how to help out The Animation Guild. Then at the end, the pink character asks, "What side are you on?" In general, this whole scene relieves and offers an easy solution to the audience; however, the last question creates a sense of urgency for the audience, pushing them to take action or simply make a decision. Also by posing the question, the pink character challenges viewers to reflect on their values and choose a side in the ongoing struggle for fair treatment in the animation industry.

In conclusion, the advertisement uses emotional advertising and animation to effectively spread awareness to gain public support on the struggle of the animation industry. They use different methods to create a connection with their audience. Not only that, but it is also visually appealing and short, causing the audience to view the video. fully.

How I used AI

I used AI to help me generate a couple of ideas, correct my grammar and punctuation.

Works Cited

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