

No, Not Everything Needs A Reboot

A case study on Disney Animation's fall from grace

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Prologue: A Brief History

In 1915, Earl Hurd and John Bray struck creative gold when they invented cel animation, a style that would dominate the animation industry for nearly a century. While countless studios and artists tried to make it big by implementing this new technology into their films, no one had as much luck as the man himself, Walt Disney. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (1937) took the world by storm as the first ever feature-length cel-animated movie, and it grossed \$8 million dollars upon its release. This unprecedented success established Disney as the new face of animation, and the world was eagerly waiting to see what the studio would do next. How else would they push the medium of animation forward? After decades of other cel-animated classics such as *Dumbo* (1942) and *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), the answer came. Walt Disney Pictures released *Toy Story* (1995), with Pixar Animation Studios producing the project. Once again Disney revolutionized the world of animation by creating the first ever feature-length CGI movie, and it was met with immense financial acclaim.

Introduction

In the year 2025, 87 years after the success of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, what has become of the Disney-Pixar powerduo? Well, they've released a combined total of 26 animated reboots/sequels in the past 15 years alone; independent of Pixar, Disney has also shelled out 17 live-action adaptations within that same period. The current plan from the former trailblazers has been to rely on rehashing old successes in the name of a "financial stability" that some believe can no longer come from original projects. Instead of anticipating new, groundbreaking stories from Disney, many viewers nowadays prefer to track which properties *haven't* been adapted, and how long it'll be until that changes. Because of audience expectations, market pressures, and leadership priorities all fueling unsustainable business practices, Disney has been dethroned from its former animation glory.

Disney Sequels Aren't A New Thing

A curious point to acknowledge is that Walt Disney himself never created a sequel for any of his projects within his lifetime. However, the concept of sequels is nothing new to Walt Disney Animation Studios: the very first sequel created by them was made in 1990 (*The Rescuers Down Under*). *The Rescuers Down Under* was greenlit by Michael Eisner and Jeffrey Katzenberg – Walt Disney Studios' CEO and chairman, respectively – because of the original success of *The Rescuers* (1977), and the hope was that a sequel would meet similar acclaim. This film came out right at the start of the Disney Renaissance (1989-1999), and unfortunately only grossed \$47.4 million worldwide against its \$38 million budget. Upon noting the financial flop – partly due to the first film's acclaim not carrying over 23 years later, and partly due to this project competing with *Home Alone*'s opening weekend – Katzenberg had all *Rescuers Down Under* advertisements pulled, and Disney tried to move on with itself and pretend this never happened. And as far as theatrical releases were concerned, this wouldn't happen again until the early 2000s. The key word there being “*theatrical*”.

Right as the Disney Renaissance was happening, home video was also on the rise as VHS and DVD became dominant formats for media entertainment. In order to keep Disney a competitive brand amidst this shift, a new branch under Disney's Television Animation division was formed: DisneyToon Studios. Gary Krisel, president of Walt Disney Television Animation, and Sharon Morrill, head (and later president) of DisneyToon Studios worked together to spearhead a new era of content. Everything started with limited re-releases of existing Disney movies on home video formats, a strategy marketed as the “Disney Vault”. Although no specific numbers have been publicly disclosed regarding the success of the Disney Vault, it has been regarded as “an incredibly effective way for Disney to get the most money possible out of their home releases” by Theme Parks and Entertainment. Still, Krisel and Morrill had bigger goals. While the main studio worked on big-budget classics, DisneyToon soon began producing direct-to-video (DTV) sequels. The first one to debut was *The Return of Jafar* (1994), and although it

only cost around \$3-5 million to produce, it made an estimated \$300 million in home video sales (*Vulture*). Production was A LOT cheaper because Morrill worked with an external studio, Saban Entertainment, to outsource a lot of the animation for *The Return of Jafar*. This idea was repeated with the other DTV films, as DisneyToon commissioned work from studios all over the world for a fraction of the cost, and sometimes a fraction of the quality. This seemed like a financial gold mine. Eisner was also fully on board with the idea of more DTV sequels as a way to maximize profits from already successful franchises. Under his tenure as CEO, DisneyToon Studios produced 19 more titles such as *Aladdin and the King of Thieves* (1996), *Beauty and the Beast: The Enchanted Christmas* (1997), and *Kronk's New Groove* (2005). None of these DTV sequels garnered much critical respect, or even matched the financial outcome of *The Return of Jafar* (second highest-performing sequel was *Lion King II: Simba's Pride* (1998)). Eventually the CEO torch was passed on to Bob Iger, as Eisner stepped down on September 30, 2005. Iger had (in a now-surprising twist) always been very critical of the DTV method, believing they made the overall Disney brand look bad. Moreover, the numbers had been showing a decline in profits from these films anyways, so making his case wasn't that hard of a sell. He immediately stopped the production of several straight-to-TV projects, and set his sights on fostering Walt Disney Studios into something much, much bigger. While Eisner embraced direct-to-video content as a cost-effective path to profit, Iger dreamed of a Disney based in quality, prestige, and collaboration.

Bob Iger and the Disney Revival

"There was a perception that there was too much Disney product in the marketplace. And by the way, the combination of lack of quality and too much product is really deadly."

– Bob Iger, *Fortune* Interview (April 2008)

"Making great content is the most important thing we can do as a company and making great feature animation is incredibly important. If you look at the history of the company during the periods of time that we have been at the top of our game in feature animation, the company has really flourished, and it's incredibly important for us to return to those days."

– Bob Iger, Disney-Pixar Acquisition Conference Call (January 2006)

These are two quotes from Bob Iger that really illustrate his mindset and priorities going into his role as Disney's CEO. Just bear these in mind– in the words of Mickey Mouse, they're "a surprise tool that'll help us later".

After ending the DTV/Disney Vault Era, Iger began facing a lot of criticism for the direction he was trying to guide the company through. A few shareholders such as Roy E. Disney and Stanley Gold even questioned why Iger– an internal candidate– was given the promotion over an external connection, going so far as to view him as an "Eisner Loyalist". Other critics didn't buy into his goals for the future, seeing him as "more of a 'technocrat' than a visionary". The hostility didn't stop there, either. Walt Disney Animation Studios (WDAS) and Pixar had been working through an external partnership for a few projects now, but tensions had been building up behind the scenes. For context, back when Eisner was still CEO, he and Steve Jobs (chairman and majority shareholder of Pixar) would constantly get into personality conflicts and disagreements over financial terms surrounding the distribution and ownership of collaborative projects. With Iger's newfound leadership still being associated with Eisner, Jobs was very skeptical over any business proposals Iger would pitch. The pushback didn't snuff out Iger's determination though. While Disney and Pixar releasing major hits such as *Finding Nemo* (2003) and *The Incredibles* (2004) together, Disney was also entering its Post-Renaissance / Experimental era (2000-2009). However, the animation zeitgeist really had its eyes on Pixar. Even in conversations about Disney Animation, the cultural spotlight really shone on the characters from the partnership projects... and Iger wouldn't settle for Disney being the second byline.

So, ideas for a merger began to form. Iger knew he could get John Lasseter (Creative Chief at Pixar Animation Studios) and Ed Catmull (President and CTO) on board, the real trouble would come with getting Jobs to sign off on the pitch. Still, Iger came prepared with a carefully planned approach. He went up to Jobs personally and focused on the future of animation, acknowledging that the market was favoring digital advancements that Pixar was more able to handle; Iger also put attention on preserving Pixar's culture, which meant that Jobs and his current leadership team would still have major creative power over Pixar under Disney instead of just becoming Disney's "satellite". There was even a whole whiteboard brainstorming session between Jobs and Iger, where they dished out pros and cons of the deal. Eventually, after three-to-four months of straight negotiation, Jobs said ten words that changed the world of animation: "You know, that's not the craziest idea in the world." On January 24, 2006, the merger was announced to the public— Disney agreed to acquire Pixar for \$7.4 billion in an all-stock deal, with Jobs as Disney's largest shareholder.

Post-merger, Catmull and Lasseter were put in charge of WDAS, and they truly embraced the values of original storytelling and creative freedom that had made Pixar such a success in the first place. Lasseter also dove straight into getting major theatrical releases back on the usual schedule, furthering Iger's initial projects as CEO. Iger and Lasseter were on the same page, and they worked great together. With hits such as *The Princess and the Frog* (2009), *Tangled* (2010), and *Frozen* (2013) taking the world by storm, Disney was officially in its Revival Era (2009-2014). Iger took Disney from one of its lowest points and, through collaboration and a clear vision, brought the brand back to greatness. It seemed as if there was nothing but success left on the horizon— that this was only the beginning to an unstoppable rise of timeless films and projects.

Well.

It definitely was *a* beginning alright...

The Post-Revival Era: Iger Knows Best...?

After a good run with successful original films, Disney took a look at the film industry around them and decided it might be time to change things up again. As it was, a lot of the biggest projects at the time were franchises– *Harry Potter*, *Transformers*, *The Twilight Saga*, *X-Men*, and so on and so forth. For as different as each of these series were, there was a common link they all shared: legacy and nostalgia. With these inspirations in mind, Walt Disney Studios stepped into its Post-Revival Era (2015-present) by shifting its creative strategy to give a bigger emphasis to familiar intellectual properties (IPs). Now, one might read this and ask themselves: *Wait a second, isn't this the very thing Iger swore to destroy back in 2005?* To which the past six pages of this essay would respond: **YES!!**

So, what's the million-dollar difference now? There was simply more to pull from at this point. After merging with Pixar, Iger had also signed off on acquiring Marvel and Lucasfilm. In a sense, it didn't feel like Disney was rehashing their only available properties, which is honestly how it was during the Disney Vault and DTV period. (Two sequels for *Aladdin* and *Cinderella*, three for *Beauty and the Beast*– including the terrifying Christmas Special??? – it was clear they were picking at scraps) In any case, Iger had worked very hard to cement an iconic catalogue under the Disney name, and now he was vying for a way to reap the spoils of his efforts. To put it in Iger's own words, "Nostalgia is a powerful emotion, and our legacy is full of stories and characters that have stood the test of time" (via a 2008 interview with *The New York Times*). Granted, Iger wasn't just pulling ideas out of a hat. To give him credit, there was a change happening across the entertainment landscape as audiences kept returning to things they already knew. Media analysts, such as Paul Dergarbabedian of Comscore, noted that "the multi-generational component... cannot be overstated," especially as family-oriented franchises created a space for both children and their parents– who often grew up with the originals themselves– to engage with reboots and sequels together. The idea wasn't just to make content

but rather to start cultural events built around shared memories. Iger's main issue with the DTV era was a lack of quality at the expense of quantity, but now he figured that maybe Disney could have its cake and eat it too! Maybe they could just produce a bunch of equally iconic extensions to their classic repertoire if they just locked in!

The Animated Wolves Dressed in Live-Action Sheep's Clothing

On March 13, 2015, Disney released its biggest^{1*} live-action adaptation yet: *Cinderella*. The reboot was met with lots of love and support, both critically and financially: the film received various award nominations, including an Academy Award for Costume Design, and it grossed over \$542 million against its \$95 million production budget. By all accounts, this is just what Iger was hoping would happen. This unprecedented success gave Iger all the confirmation he needed that a future in reboots and sequels was meant to be a priority. And prioritize these projects he did, for Disney's second ever live-action *Jungle Book* reboot would be released in 2016, and not one, not two, but THREE other reboots would come out in 2017: *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin*, and *Dumbo*. (they really won't let those first two rest, huh) These reboots had varied financial turnouts– *Beauty and the Beast* grossed an insanely impressive \$1.04 billion against its \$106 million budget, whereas *Dumbo* only pulled off \$353 million despite having a \$170 million budget. Neither was a flop by any means, but none of the live-action projects so far have come close to having the same cultural impact their originals did.

Moreover, for all the financial security that was seemingly being built up, it was clear Iger was beginning to lose sight of Disney's storytelling core. This is where Disney's most infamous "live-action" reboot joins the fray: Jon Favreau's *The Lion King* (2019). Lord. This audacious remake managed to gross \$1.66 billion globally, cementing a legacy amongst the highest-grossing films of all time. But, what do the actual reviews have to say about this

¹ *Key word is "Biggest", not "first". That honor would go to *The Jungle Book* (1994), and that got followed up by *101 Dalmatians* (1996). If *Cinderella* (2015) was first at anything though, it was being the first live action PRINCESS remake. Also I just wanted to test the footnote feature. Hellooooooooo!!!

record-breaking movie? Surely, with a financial reward that high, these reviews must be simply glittering!

“Somehow both breathtakingly realistic and utterly fake, Jon Favreau’s (technically impressive) computer-animated remake of The Lion King is the worst kind of unnecessary. It’s soulless, joyless, and unimaginative. An empty shell of a film that only occasionally remembers to put the heart back into the machine.”

– David Ehrlich, *IndieWire*

“The animals look real, but they don’t feel real. You don’t connect with them in the same way. In trying so hard to be lifelike, the film loses the essential fantasy that allowed the original to soar.”

– Kyle Buchanan, *The New York Times*

“...The performances are flat, the pacing is sluggish, and the film somehow manages to feel more like a corporate product than a work of art.”

– Scott Mendelson, *Forbes*

“It’s a triumph of rendering technology and a failure of dramatic animation. Everything about this film feels like it’s been stripped of its original vitality. The characters can no longer emote. They can no longer really act. So what’s the point?”

– A.A Dowd, *AV Club*

...oh!

By this point, Disney had completely dropped the ball, but executives like Iger were already too busy scrambling to make another “live-action” Lion King movie that would follow up

this historic financial outcome to even realize how they were digging their own grave. Sure, the project checked off most of the boxes set by the original, but the liveliness and charm of the 90's *Lion King* was nowhere to be found through the desaturated color palettes, soulless Beyonce covers, and complete lack of "Be Prepared". Following in these footsteps (CGI pawprints?) Disney's live-action *Mulan* hit theaters, oh wait, and **Disney+** in 2020... and a total of, like, 5 people actually saw that abomination. (\$69.9 million at the box office + around \$33.6 million from Disney+ Premiere Access = approximately \$100.4 million in revenue... against a production and marketing budget nearing \$330 million.) Still, a similar trend was noted— though most of the original points were adapted, the music —arguably one of the most iconic parts of the movie— was almost entirely cut out from the film, save for a few instrumental covers in ads and emotional cop-out moments in the film ((“Reflection” in the 2020 reboot.....)), and the titular heroine was given some random elemental powers that unintentionally wiped out the elements of sacrifice, courage, and female-empowerment that the original was admired for.

Once again, Disney was sacrificing quality for the sake of getting big-name adaptations out into the world. And, unfortunately, not just in the live-action sphere. Pixar released *Incredibles 2* in 2018— 14 years after the release of the original— and earned \$1.2 billion worldwide with a side of reviews ranging from unimpressed to full-on disappointment. Following a similar timeline to WDAS that would go on into the COVID-19 quarantine years, Pixar's animation department was also following Iger's lead into an abyss of cinematic ruin. And, as shocking as it may be, the consequences felt on the Pixar side of things may have been more damning than whatever *Lion King* (2019) and its emotionless pixels did.

So What's Pixar Been Up To?

Looking at Pixar's run through the 2000s and 2010s, there was just success after success to be found with such a lineup as *Up* (2009— \$735 million worldwide), *WALL-E* (2008— \$521 million worldwide), *Inside Out* (2015— \$857 million worldwide), and *Coco* (2017— \$814 million

worldwide). These films established themselves not only as major financial hits, but also as cultural touchstones that received love and celebration from audiences of all ages and all over the world. Even the films such as *Brave* (2012), with rockier production histories, still did objectively well for themselves financially (a global gross of \$540 million for *Brave*) and garnered their own cult followings. No one would argue that Pixar had a pretty good method going on, and it mostly came from original standalone projects rather than relying on sequels. Still, there were some hiccups along the way, such as the aforementioned *Incredibles 2*, and *Toy Story 4* that would come out only one year later in 2019. For both films, the fact that they had even attempted to follow up such masterpieces as *The Incredibles* and *Toy Story 3* had curious moviegoers and online critics flocking to the theaters in droves, which of course boosted box office profits. However, neither film was particularly beloved in the long run. Both of those franchise projects were met with harsh criticism and many a feature-length video essay to tear them apart for meddling with stories that were otherwise iconic and near perfect, and even less-intense fans of Pixar had started to wonder if it was a matter of the stories getting lazy or if they were simply growing out of the magic. The timeless wonder Pixar had been known for slowly began to fade. THEN came the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Losing The Plot, One Poor Plan At A Time

Oh *Brother*... no one wants to hear about the pandemic anymore... yeah, yeah, okay. But unfortunately this period completely changed how Disney and Pixar treated their animated projects, and it is a crucial aspect to address. As the disease and ensuing quarantine mandates shut down all theaters worldwide, all studios were hastily shoved into the world of digital releases and an overwhelming amount of streaming services fighting to get content out. Lucky for Disney, their brand new streaming service, Disney+, had just come out as of November 2019, mere months before the world shut down, so it made sense to just embrace this platform as the next big project. Yet, while the newest Disney solo projects were getting the “Premiere Access”

release model that intended to mimic box office profits, the Pixar films were simply getting regular streaming releases. *Soul* (2020) and *Luca* (2021) each reached insanely high viewership counts, with *Luca* even being the most streamed movie of 2021 in the US, but there were zero dollars in the box office to support this success. By 2022, when theaters were already opening up again, Pixar's *Turning Red* was still limited to a straight-to-streaming release. To paraphrase what many critics have said on *The Wrap* and *IndieWire*, Pixar was slowly turning into Disney's content machine to boost Disney+ subscriptions.

To make matters worse, it wasn't as if Disney was straying away from theaters as a whole: *Raya and the Last Dragon* and *Encanto* both had proper theatrical releases as early as 2021, and anyone who wasn't living under a rock absolutely felt the cultural impact of *Encanto* and its incredibly catchy soundtrack. By all accounts, the world was clearly willing to embrace and support movies in person once again. As Disney kept Pixar only on streaming sites, "Kids were being taught that Pixar movies are for watching at home" (*Variety*). This idea would also go on to contribute to weaker box office turnouts once Pixar was allowed to enter the theater world again— *Lightyear* (2022) had a box office performance of \$226 million against its budget of \$200 million, and *Elemental* (2024) received the lowest box office numbers on opening weekend in Pixar HISTORY at only \$29.5 million. But the push to streaming was only part of the problem.

Jumping back to *Lightyear*, it was clear that Pixar, and Disney by extension, had lost sight of what the audience was actually looking for. The ones calling the shots at this point were (still) Iger on the WDAS end, and Pete Docter as Pixar's Chief Creative Officer. In hindsight, *Lightyear* was doomed to be a marketing misfire from the start. The ads were so set on hyping up this movie within a movie as the film Andy apparently watched that inspired the Buzz Lightyear toy, but there were two problems that audiences found with this. For general audiences, the issue was that this elaborate pitch wasn't expressed clearly enough, and a lot of people were confused when watching the movie in theaters. "We asked too much of the audience," Docter later expressed in an interview with *The Wrap*. "When they hear Buzz, they're like, great, where's

Mr. Potato Head and Woody and Rex? And then we drop them into this science fiction film and they're like, 'What??'. But it wasn't really that the audience wasn't ready... What's most probable is that the trailers leaned into the sleek sci-fi tone while claiming to link this story back to the Buzz everyone knew and loved, and then the Buzz on screen was NOTHING like the gullible yet sincere Buzz Lightyear character the world had grown to love. The second gripe came with die-hard Disney fans, aka the last people Disney should want to upset, and it was that THIS CONCEPT WAS ALREADY DONE IN 2000 WITH *BUZZ LIGHTYEAR OF STAR COMMAND*. There was such an uproar about this issue on Disney Adult forums and Film Critic video essays that it genuinely surprises me that the waters seemed to have cooled.

Elemental also faced its own set of problems due to a strange marketing plan. The film's story follows a similar trend to that of Pixar's iconic catalogue— "*what if ____ had feelings?*", only instead of cars or toys, this time it was elements. Yet, despite this familiar formula, the film still had a historic opening weekend... and not in a good way. Docter has even wondered aloud in interviews for *Entertainment Weekly*, "Did we market it wrong? Did people not see it as something they were interested in?" . To answer him, um... yes... The film had a very limited trailer lineup and a strangely late push on social media and TV ads. Clearly the film had enough to stand on, because by the end of the theatrical release period, the total worldwide Box Office gross was \$400 million, and the film amassed over 26 million views on Disney+ within its first five days on the platform. It was clear that the real issues came down to how the movie was managed alongside the overall shift in audience expectations that Disney itself created.

Creative Rock Bottom

Even though the problems were very clearly created by Disney, and they were still solvable problems, the approach taken to correct them was not what fans of animation had wanted to hear at all. Iger had seen enough financial losses to totally shift from "quality over

quantity” to “just make the money back!!”. Remember those quotes from earlier? Yeah. Keep those in mind...

During a 2023 earnings call, he announced new sequels to *Toy Story*, *Frozen*, and *Zootopia*, stating, “We are leaning into our unrivaled brands and franchises as we focus on the long-term growth of our streaming business and theatrical state”. Nostalgia and brand recognition OFFICIALLY became the forefront of the Walt Disney Company, there was no way around it.

Docter also reinforced this sentiment, though with a (very misplaced..) sense of resentment toward the creative flops. After seeing the lukewarm reception to *Luca* and *Turning Red*, Docter... ever the inquisitive fellow... openly questioned their box office appeal. In a 2023 *Wrap* interview, he suggested that the quieter, more personal tones of these films may have been part of the problem: “I think people come to Pixar for big, broad adventures,” he said. “*Luca* and *Turning Red* were more introspective– and maybe that wasn’t what audiences were expecting.” ((??????? Hello ?????? When have “emotional” and “introspective” ever been a problem for Pixar? Have they seen their own movies?)) This attack on “Lukewarm Reception” also seems like it’s being based off of box office or financial numbers, and that really isn’t fair because these films were released exclusively on streaming, and they only hit theaters for a very limited run in 2024 for a (also poorly marketed, might I add) summer re-release event. Given the background of everything the 2021-2023 Pixar films struggled through, it is wholly unfair to judge them on a metric they were never given the chance to flourish in. Docter then doubled-down on his misinterpretations of animation’s audience by addressing his take on the *Elemental* problem. He admitted that the movie’s initial marketing failed to excite viewers, but he reaffirmed that the studio would be focusing more on “characters people already know and love.” He added, “If we’re going to spend this much money, we better be damn sure we’re going to get a return.” Shortly thereafter, *Inside out 2*, *Toy Story 5*, and even more expansions to the *Cars* universe were all announced as Pixar’s new top priorities. According to *The New York Times*, Pixar has laid off over

75 employees as part of a broader restructuring, in a move insiders claim will “better align with franchise-focused content development”.

Disney’s overall philosophy changed parallel to Pixar’s upon this sentiment being released. In 2024’s D23, a massive convention where Disney usually announces all of its upcoming projects, Iger stated that “Original animation is a riskier bet now. Audiences want what’s familiar.” ... But, is that even really the case anymore?

Snow White (2025): a Perfect Storm

The irony here, however, is that even these very audiences are starting to tire of these reboots, sequels, and adaptations. On March 21, 2025, Disney released its live action *Snow White* remake, and the results were nothing like what was expected. The catastrophic failure of this movie has sent shockwaves through the studio, prompting a significant reevaluation of its approach to adapting animated classics. With a production budget estimated between \$240-270 million, the film barely managed to gross \$201.7 million worldwide, marking one of Disney’s most expensive misfires to date.

Snow White (2025)’s underperformance was exacerbated by a series of controversies leading up to its release. Lead actress Rachel Zegler’s public critiques of the original 1937 film and her political statements stirred backlash, leading Disney to pull back on a lot of its promotional efforts. To add fuel to the fire, the decisions to omit the 7 dwarfs and then make them with CGI instead of using live actors drew more criticism, and all of this destroyed any audience enthusiasm that may have been left for this film. And that’s not even mentioning the last minute Gal Gadot slander train that took off on social media as many people disagreed with her own political views and took jabs at, not only her performance in *Snow White*, but her acting career as a whole.

In the wake of *Snow White*’s more than disappointing performance, Disney has paused development on its planned live-action remake of *Tangled*. That project was already in

pre-production with casting underway, but as Disney reassess the viability and safety of live-action adaptations, putting it on hold seemed the safest. As Disney already has plans to release live action *Lilo and Stitch* and *Moana* remakes, only time will tell how those get received. Audiences have been complaining about these remakes for years, but only now are the financial records also reflecting that as they are no longer a novelty and the rush to see them in theaters has taken a very sharp nosedive. For many viewers, *Snow White* was the last straw.

Closing Notes

As of late, Disney (and Pixar) have been going through a rough creative patch. Pixar is finally set to release *Elio* in 2025, an original story that has been delayed twice now, and if that project can't make back its money and more... The future for Pixar seems very grim as sequels are being planned by the bunch. Disney animation's live-action and animated projects are also following a similar downward spiral. This gap has led competitor studios such as Dreamworks to take center stage with hits such as *The Wild Robot* (2024), and even an indie animated film from all the way out in Latvia, *Flow* (2024), has made animation history and taken home such a prestige as the Academy Award for best animated film! Even the award shows that used to instantly bend to the whims of Disney can't justify the blind votes anymore. Additionally, now more people eagerly look towards the upcoming *Spider-Verse* projects by Sony to reinvent animation once again. Sure, that is also a franchise project, but each installment has done wonders towards innovating the medium of animation as a whole, and it doesn't feel like a "safe" cop out in the grand scheme of things. Disney Animation has come a LONG way from where it started, and this is far from its first slump. However, unless the company learns to trust its original products again and actually give them the space they need to succeed, the current unsustainable practices seem to be driving the studio right into the same sad pit Bob Iger tried so hard to avoid all those years ago.

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