



The Phenomenon of “Adultified” Remakes of Children’s Shows and Novels

In an age of booming television, streaming, and social media, remaking childhood classics with an adult spin is what movie makers think will make their income boom. And in some cases, that comes to fruition. But other times, the moneymaking scheme is too obvious for fans to avoid.

As someone who grew up in the 2000s, a few favorite shows of mine were *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* and *Winx*. Those were two shows that, even now, haven’t aged for me, and I am one of the many fans who agree.



YouTube

My Little Pony has gone through several generations of shows. I never realized the original existed — originally in 1986, according to [Shout! Factory](#) — solely because *Friendship is Magic* and the offspring movies such as *Equestrian Girls* are what I was raised on. This franchise is one of the few that capitalized on remakes, but they did it correctly. Instead of gearing the new shows toward adults, they kept it fresh and aimed toward the audience it should stick with: children.

However, *Winx* was not so lucky. Netflix released *Fate: The Winx Saga* in 2021, and those who weren’t familiar with the original show thought it was just fine. But for people like me, who were raised on the original messages such as girl power and friendship, knew that the show strayed way too far from the original when it came to the diversity of the cast and the romanticized fantasy plot. They even took away something so fundamental to the original: the femininity and bold fashion choices and incredibly varied personalities. [Variety magazine](#) also found the show to be rather disappointing.

And one would think that after *Fate: The Winx Saga*’s incredible flop, directors would realize that remakes require a certain familiarity and respect for the original material, otherwise, it’s better to leave the idea alone altogether. But that has turned out not to be the case. Instead, more examples flopped so hard that they never even caught wind and were canceled after the first season, such as *Kamp Koral* (based on *SpongeBob*) or the *Powerpuff Girls* reboot (which hasn’t even been released and yet is still despised by the community).

Reusing a good idea can work, but not when it’s a children’s show spun into something for adults. There is always something magical and innocent about our childhood favorites, and ruining that magic and innocence doesn’t bring profit.

The *Scooby-Doo* franchise is one in particular that has had its ups and downs. Ever since it was conceived in 1969, there have been an endless series of movies and show episodes. But the magic hasn’t been lost until very recently, since it has traditionally been geared toward children. Even a personal favorite of mine, *Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated*, released in 2010, which is definitely a lot creepier and scarier than older *Scooby-Doo* material, is a show that all ages can enjoy. This is perhaps one of the few examples of a show being somewhat “adultified” and still rocking the audience’s socks



Written by [Elanor Bonta](#) on April 3, 2023

off. It maintained its PG status while incorporating a creepy atmosphere, monsters, and lots of gut-wrenching drama. In fact, it might be the best production the *Scooby-Doo* franchise has conceived.

But it seems that, in recent years, HBO decided that it was wise to truly “adultify” the franchise. HBO went all out this January, making a rated-MA show, *Velma* (screenshot shown). And just from the rating alone, it doesn’t take long to realize that this show demolished any of the charm that made *Scooby-Doo*, well, *Scooby-Doo*. *Velma* was a flunk by producers, because for the adults who grew up on *Scooby-Doo*, it was an insult to their beloved childhood favorites due to an overabundance of sexual jokes, foul language, and an entire genre shift.

There are other major examples, such as *Riverdale* — based on the popular comic book series *Archie* — and a newer show, *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*, that were popular enough, but for the dedicated fans of the originals, it certainly wasn’t what they were looking for. So many show makers fail in their objective, but enough successes follow a script of slightly “adultifying” a childhood show or novel while still maintaining the magic, such as the aforementioned *My Little Pony* or *Scooby-Doo* franchises.

As a recommendation of a remake done well, *Anne With An E* was a hit, despite its unfortunate discontinuation after three seasons. It was based on *Anne of Green Gables*, and the show was able to capture the audience’s hearts with the same lovable characters, similar story arcs, and the same blossoming romance between Anne and Gilbert Blythe. At the same time, it was so different that, for those who were adamant fans of the original series, the show didn’t become boring.

The moral of the story is, don’t ruin old childhood favorites by stripping them of their charm and remaking them into something worse. For show producers, it doesn’t bring profit. Instead, maintain that magic and maintain the same audience as the original was intended for. “Adultification” is a phenomenon that needs to be rethought because what what the producers think isn’t always what the audience wants.



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