



Feature Photo, caption: Student shovels the snow off a car on January 29, 2026. The big snowbanks have been a challenge for students with their cars parked on campus since the storm this past weekend. PHOTO BY MORGAN BLANCHARD, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

‘Heated Rivalry’ can single-handedly save the entertainment industry

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Ever since COVID and the rise of streaming services, the entertainment industry has been in a slump. Streaming services have changed how we consume media and have rattled the revenue chain. Trying to adapt to this new form of consumption while balancing financial demands has swept aside creative endeavors, leading to a stretch of cash grab movies. Theaters and straight-to-streaming movies were overtaken by remakes, live-action adaptations and sequels featuring only A-list actors. Despite poor reviews, producers have remained too scared to take a gamble on anything new for fear of losing money. In this time of industry peril where movies and television are losing steam, in comes the smash success “Heated Rivalry,” which put aside the cash grabs and gained what all the big names had been trying – and failing – to do. With a few Canadian tax dollars and a dream, director Jacob Tierney’s queer hockey romance “Heated Rivalry” stumbled into the most talked-about show on the block. However, to call “Heated Rivalry’s” success sheer luck wouldn’t be true. Its success is the culmination of everything consumers have been looking for in entertainment in the last five years.

While some may just chalk up the success of “Heated Rivalry” to the story alone, that’s not the case. Every small decision in the casting, production and release combined to create the perfect environment to shape a cultural phenomenon not seen since the days of cable television. A big aspect that kept this show consistently in the public eye was its weekly releases. Outside of the two-episode premiere, the six episodes released one-by-one on a weekly basis, straying from the presently favored format of

streaming television in which seasons are released all at once or in multi-episode chunks. By returning to the practice of weekly episodes, the release of a new episode became an event akin to holidays, bringing friends together for watch parties and fostering communities in a time where social isolation has been prevalent. On top of the social aspect, viewers spent the entire week between episodes discussing what happened and what they believed was going to happen next, garnering more interest and traction than if all episodes dropped at once. Even a month after the season finale, “Heated Rivalry” is still flooding social media with updates on the actors, new discoveries from the episodes and what will come next.

Another aspect that resonated with “Heated Rivalry” was the presence of new actors on the scene. While most media nowadays have star-studded casts teeming with household names, not a single star of the new show was a familiar face. The most recognizable name from the cast is the actress for Rose Landry, Sophie Nélisse. She appears as Teen Shauna in “Yellowjackets,” a Showtime thriller drama with a cult following and critical acclaim but not necessarily huge traction. Besides this, the stars of the show are completely new names to the Hollywood scene, with Hudson Williams portraying Canadian hockey player Shane Hollander and Connor Storrie portraying his Russian rival Ilya Rozanov. Fans of the show have agreed that these two are perfect for these roles and lauded them for their acting, something that might not have happened if they cast the two biggest names without concerning chemistry or truth to the character. It has also enabled Williams and Storrie to shoot to stardom, allowing new actors to break into an increasingly more exclusive field. Adding new,

talented faces increased the traction to “Heated Rivalry” as people wanted to see new faces that they couldn’t see elsewhere.

While the show has already made leaps and bounds in fixing some of the problems of the current entertainment industry, it’s making choices going forward that add to its potential success. One of the main issues in media is currently the time it takes between seasons of shows. One of the most prevalent examples is the Netflix series “Stranger Things,” which took three years between the final two seasons, leading to the eventual fall off and not as much interest in the ending. With “Heated Rivalry’s” unexpectedly fast renewal for a second season, Tierney plans to write the scripts, shoot and have the highly anticipated season out within 18 months of its announcement. This quick turnaround makes use of the interest garnered without losing energy while proving the years between seasons is unnecessary and harmful. The series also plans to have merch proceeds go directly to the actors when their likeness is used, an action foreign to film and television. Hopefully, this will help to support actors financially and create an environment actors want to work in.

In summary, “Heated Rivalry” highlights what consumers want in media: something new. New faces, new stories, new content. People are tired of the same actors telling the same stories over and over again. We want something we haven’t seen before with the right actors for the role, not just names we know. People love “Heated Rivalry” not just because it’s a queer romance with some spicy scenes, but because it’s feeding us these stories exactly how we want to consume them. If other big names take a page from their book, I believe the entertainment industry can find its feet again to continue making truly riveting content.

Welcoming back 2016: WHY WE HAVE BECOME SO NOSTALGIC



An iPhone 6 next to a MacBook. The iPhone 6 came out in 2014. PHOTO COURTESY OF PEXELS.COM

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Musical.ly. The iPhone 6 (with a home button). YouTube collabs. Slime. These are all trademarks of what some people call the best year of their lives: 2016. In terms of pop culture and how colorful the world felt overall, this is the year that people have come to remember a decade later. But is living in a time that we will never have back a good choice? Or is our nostalgia a sign of how disheartened we have become as a society? Trying to recreate the years that have already passed is the main reason why things are not how they used to be, and why we have struggled to get back there.

For many people in Gen Z, 2016 was our middle school years. Those years were defined by carefreeness and the lack of responsibilities we all had. Even for most adults at that time, there was a positivity in the air that is lacking today. Still reveling in the Obama Hope Era, America was proud to have a president that represented our country well. This allowed us to decenter politics and live our lives to the fullest. People united over catching all the Pokémon on the Pokémon Go app or watching the top YouTube creators collaborate on silly food challenges. It seemed like you could connect with others just by walking outside, but now that is far from the case.

Following the election of President Trump in November of 2016, our daily lives have become much more political. The breaks from worldly affairs that we used to enjoy are nonexistent now. The unity that we had as a country seemed to chip away with each year of his presidency, resulting in the loss of hope and connectedness. The solution that most people have found to this problem is by remembering times when our lives were suppos-

edly better. It is hard to blame anyone for missing what seems like a better time, but at what point does reminiscing do more harm than good? Almost every day, I encounter a video or article glamorizing a pre-COVID time. When it was 2016 or 2019, we weren’t looking back on how good 2013 was. We didn’t even conceptualize if we had it better a few years prior; we just lived. Current trends are a reminder of how different the world is, with global events on full display across social media. At the heart of the nostalgia for 2016 is the resentment of division that our country now faces. The events of the past decade have further separated the far left from the far right and in some cases more than that.

Most people who miss 2016 do not solely miss the pop culture moments. They miss a time when we were more unified. The nation is much more politically fueled, and there is less space for people to be complacent when it comes to current events. By living in the past, we are missing out looking towards the future. Nostalgia might make us feel like we are being more present, but the start of this year has proved it has become more of an escape from what we have faced in the 2020s so far. Bringing back 2016 has allowed us to take a break from the start of Trump’s second term and has let us temporarily ignore our realities. If we keep living to recreate a “better time” we are fated to miss what we have in front of us. Instead of trying to re-live 2016’s cultural moments, we should realize what truly made that year good. We should use our complaints about the current state of our world to figure out where it all “went wrong”. While it is not a crime to celebrate 10 years since our favorite year, to get back to that, we need to learn how to come together. If we do, the fun challenges, trends and joys will follow suit.



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