Opinion

The problem with time travel and body swap movies

By NICOLE GEMMATI
Staff Writer

Movies are often a common ground for people, with the subject being a great way to open up debate. No matter how thought-provoking they may be, movies that involve time travel or body swaps often leave people confused and thinking for days.

Time travel movies often give more thought to the science behind it. This logic usually begins and ends with the machine used to travel back and forth. After the plot concludes and the characters settle into their new lives, viewers are left wondering what happens afterwards.

As soon as characters time travel, they're opening up alternate realities. One past choice means they'll be traveling back to a different reality. In the movie "Hot Tub Time Machine," once the characters travel back in time, they try their best to do things exactly as they were so they don't change the future.

This attempt to preserve their reality is made easier by the fact that the main characters are transported back into their own bodies, a smart way to avoid making their situation even more confusing, given that most time travel movies feature multiple versions of the same character running around. As seen in other movies, this often leads to glitches in the matrix.

Though "Hot Tub Time Machine's" version of time travel may not affect themselves or their world, it certainly affects those around them, in both the past and the future. To those in the past, the main characters suddenly begin acting differently one day, coming together for a goal that they were never interested in before. Many questions also arise about the memories saved from these experiences. While these questions go unanswered, personality differences are more pronounced in body-swap movies.

The trope of characters trapped in each other's bodies typically leans away from scientific explanatio. Using an unanswered questions of the universe often serves as a cop-out instead. Though viewers may still be confused about how the characters got body-swapped in the first place, they're more likely to understand the fact that an explanation just doesn't exist, rather than one they don't understand.

Some of these explanations include spells ("It's a Boy Girl Thing") and energy transfusion ("The Swap"). Both movies follow a similar premise, though the latter is more child-friendly, while the former leans into the awkward parts of the encounter, with the characters forced to live with their new bodies.

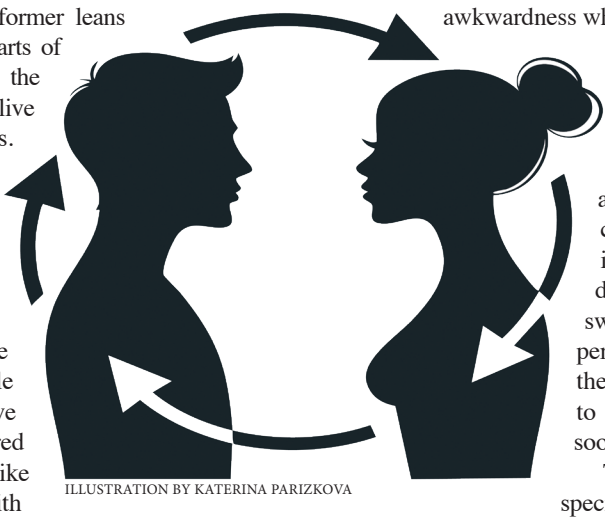


ILLUSTRATION BY KATERINA PARIZKOVA

"It's a Boy Girl Thing" also raises an interesting question: whose body would be the ideal one to be swapped into? While a lot of people have probably wondered what it would be like to switch bodies with the opposite sex for a day, this movie shows the pros and cons of this aspect. Given that the main characters hate each other, they revel in embarrassing one another… the only downside is that they get embarrassed in return.

With the characters in "The Swap," Jack (Jacob Bertrand) and Ellie (Peyton List), being essentially strangers, their situation may seem ideal. The simple goal of reverting things to normal is the top priority. Though if you think about a stranger doing your business for you — including attending your important meetings — it gets a little more complicated. While some may hope "Freaky Friday" is the body swap situation they find themselves in — seeing as how your partner in crime is someone you're close with — they may fail to see that that closeness may lead to awkwardness when nature calls.

And just like the time travel dilemma, to everyone else, it seems as if the main characters in question decided to switch their personalities for the fun of it. Only to switch back soon after.

The last of this specific genre — time loop movies — bring both the problems of personality switches and alternate realities. While the character is saved from their time prison in these other dimensions, they fail to learn their lesson.

In every time loop movie, there comes a day when they decide to do whatever they want. Given that there are alternate realities, there's at least one where the main character is stuck dealing with the consequences.

Side characters see a different version of the main character, one that's usually either suddenly unpleasant or incredibly wise. "Happy Death Day" follows Tree Gelbman (Jessica Rothe), who tries different tactics to avoid dying over and over again. Considering that other characters' lives go on, there are versions of Tree that meet her untimely end without ever making it out of her own personal Hell.

With all these questions being raised, the aftermath of the personal journeys would be beneficial towards the worldbuilding/multiverse building of these situations, even if it's more character-driven than plot-driven.

And since these characters certainly don't expect to find themselves in these situations, the influx of movies in our dimension may serve as a warning to establish a code word with someone, so that if we ever do find ourselves in these situations, we'll be believed.

If that means having to say your code to your mortal enemy, so be it.

Buffalo Bills' window is shrinking while leadership stays comfortable with mediocrity

By ANTHONY ANGELILLO
Copy Editor

Jan. 17 looked like the kind of playoff game Buffalo usually wins. No punts. Plenty of yards. A quarterback who still found ways to score even when nothing felt clean. The Bills then turned over the ball five times and lost 33-30 in overtime to the Denver Broncos in the AFC divisional round.

Two days later, Buffalo fired head coach Sean McDermott. A day later, owner Terry Pegula admitted he made the call in the locker room right after the loss while emotions were running high.

The same announcement also elevated general manager Brandon Beane to president of football operations, with Beane now running the coaching search.

Pegula described seeing Allen cry in the locker room after the loss and deciding that a change was needed.

That honesty might win points with fans who want transparency, but it also sounds like a franchise making its biggest decision at the worst possible time.

McDermott still had to go, at least in my view. Buffalo has hit the same postseason wall too many times.

The Bills have exited in the divisional round four times in the past five seasons, which is the definition of failure. Although McDermott coached a strong regular-season program, the playoffs kept exposing the same cracks.

However, Beane is now receiving more power, which makes no sense. If the Bills truly believe the operation needs a different structure, they need to fire Beane as well.

Buffalo basically announced that the coach was the problem while the roster builder was the solution. That is the kind of messaging that turns a firing into a scapegoat story.

Beane has done some good. The Bills stayed relevant for years, kept winning and built a team that looks like a contender on paper. The core of the Beane debate is that he creates a good team, not a complete team.

The wide receiver discussion shows why. During the Pegula press conference, he interrupted Beane to explain that the coaching staff pushed for Buffalo to draft Keon Coleman, not Beane.

That is a bizarre thing for an owner to feel the need to say out loud, given that Coleman is still on the roster for the next two seasons. Coleman might still become a strong player as development takes time.

However, the stats compared with the next receiver selected, Ladd McConkey, fuel the criticism. Too often, the Bills look one piece short at the exact moment the playoffs demand answers.

That is why Beane's promotion irritates me more than McDermott's firing.

It tells the next coach that the GM is no longer just the GM and tells the locker room that the person who assembled the roster is untouchable.

If Buffalo wants the respect to mean something, the Bills cannot keep operating like a team that believes it is always one tweak away. They have been one tweak away for years.

The Broncos game is the perfect example of why the window feels smaller.

Buffalo did almost everything needed to win. The Bills did not punt on 11 drives. They racked up 449 yards. They moved the ball at will. Then the turnovers swallowed the entire night.

Allen took the blame after the game, which is what franchise quarterbacks who have four turnovers do. The concerning part is that Buffalo continues to expect Allen to be Superman and fix the numerous issues on the offense.

That works in October. It gets punished in January, especially if Allen is playing banged up with four known injuries heading into the playoff game against the Broncos.

Allen will also have a new coach for the first time. That reset costs time. Time is the one resource that the Bills have borrowed for far too long.

The Buffalo Bills clearly felt that pressure, which is why they fired McDermott. Pegula said the team hit a "proverbial wall."

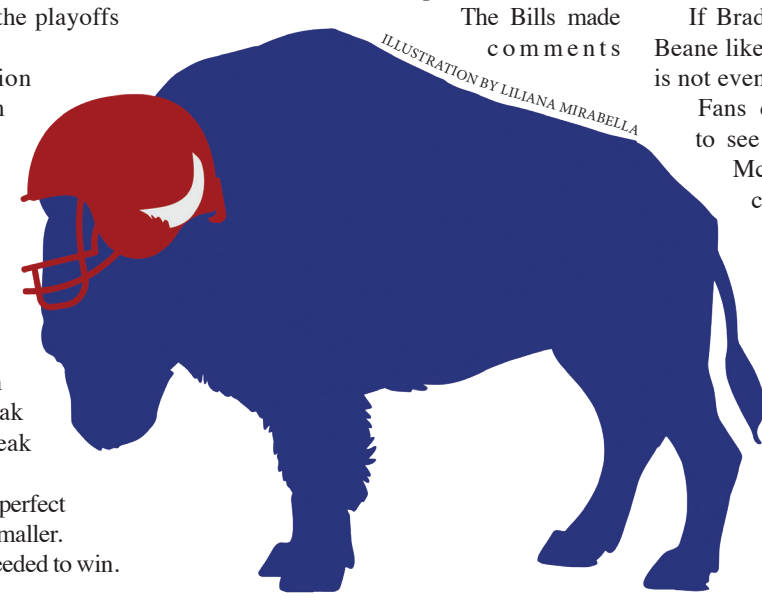


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The Bills made comments like this throughout this press conference, and when the dust settled, it made Buffalo look more delusional than teams like the Cleveland Browns or the New York Jets.

Candidates should be coming in droves to become the head coach of a team with Josh freaking Allen as quarterback, and in one day, Beane and Pegula made the franchise less appealing than canned sardines.

However, as of Jan. 27, the Bills promoted their offensive coordinator (OC), Joe Brady, as their next head coach. Brady will inherit a team where the person hiring him has more power than ever.

Brady's experience with the organization from his time as OC should make it easier for the locker room to accept him as their next head coach. All eyes are now on Brady to finally break through and win while Josh Allen is still in his prime.

If Brady fails, Buffalo can fire him too. Beane likely stays. That is not a fair setup. It is not even a smart setup.

Fans do not have to love McDermott to see the imbalance. Pegula described McDermott as a coach who helped change the franchise's mindset.

That is true. McDermott turned Buffalo into a regular playoff team. He also created an era that now feels like it peaked without cashing the check.

Buffalo chose an emotional firing and a comfortable promotion. Brady will either drag the franchise past its failures or become another name attached to it.