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User-Penetrated Content: Fan Video in the Age of Convergence

Julie Levin Russo brings a lot of different ideas to the table when talking about media in her piece called, “User-Penetrated Content: Fan Video in the Age of Convergence.” She begins by talking about video mashups and other fan made content, like vids. She also brings forth the issues surrounding copyright laws and also how writers dealt with convergence where things turned to a more digital age.

Mashups are usually made by fans of tv shows and use two video sources or clips and combine them to get commentary. There is a mashup of twilight and Buffy the Vampire slayer to show viewers that Buffy is superior to Twilight. The main purpose for mashups, to me, is just for fans to become a part of their favorite show and add to it by giving an aspect in the show a twist or different view. Personally I feel like mashups aren’t made to really put down certain shows, it’s just all fun for the fans. I also believe that mashups have had a rise because of convergence and how society is becoming more digital. Videos are easily extractable from youtube or other online sources and can be distributed just as easily online. Prior to the digital age, people would have to get video clips from VHS and there wouldn’t be many places to share that new content for other individuals to see it.

The way Julie Levin Russo describes vids in her article sounds similar to that of mashups. The only main difference is that vids take a series of clips from one video source and add music to show a certain aspect of the show. Sometimes vids are meant to shine light on subjects people feel uncomfortable about, but are prominent in society. For example, Russo talks about a mashup of Spock and Kirk from Star Trek that shows them
as lovers. The clips are taken out of context and put in a certain order by fans to show a different view of character relationships. I think this idea of vids is perfectly okay considering fans are making it for entertainment purposes.

This fanmade content also runs into the problem of copyrights by the original show because most shows don’t want others to take their content and turn it into something different. I think this can be because they are afraid it will attract a negative view on their show. Copyrights discourage fans from making new content to share because they are also afraid that the original show could sue them. Most people will put up disclaimers stating that they don’t own the content and the video they made is for fair use of online videos. In my opinion, if fans are putting up disclaimers stating their videos are for entertainment and they don’t own the original content, then it should be fine for them to create fanmade content and distribute it for other fans’ enjoyment.

Lastly, Russo mentions how writers struggle with convergence and the digital age. With the web becoming a big part of distribution, shows have incorporated webisodes or online exclusives for fans. Writers of the shows have had problems with compensation for their online work, and I feel as a professional writing major that if writers are giving the show content, they should be compensated. Writers are putting in the work for online exclusives aside from the show, essentially putting in extra work, so they should receive extra pay.