

Key Words:

Nostalgia, Animation Aesthetics, Brad Bird, 2D Animation, 3D Animation, Golden age of Animation, *The Iron Giant*, *The Incredibles*, Disney, Pixar.

Abstract:

The use of 2D animations visual designs within contemporary 3D animated films has become a vastly more popular and far-reaching trend, with big animation companies like Pixar and Disney, releasing several films since 1995 that reveal a re-emergence of 2D nostalgia in main-stream animation. I believe this is a result of a desire in audiences for a more nostalgic aesthetics, in the form of 2D aesthetics in the character designs and overall style choices within contemporary 3D animated films. I will endeavour to explore this trend within this research report by discussing two films from director Brad Bird, *The Iron Giant* (1999) and *The Incredibles* (2004), that I feel explore this contemporary trend of nostalgia specifically within the animation industry, stressing the importance of the visual signifiers that I believe incorporate this current trend of nostalgia. This paper does not, however, look at nostalgia as a broad based cultural phenomenon, but rather looks at the aesthetics of nostalgia specifically in terms of my two case studies and feature film animation. To do this, this paper will look to define nostalgia in terms of animation, exploring the sentimental nostalgia that I believe is evident in my two case studies, after which it will look at the history of 2D and 3D animation, and how the developments within these two mediums made the aesthetic of my case studies possible. The majority of this paper will be dedicated to discussing my chosen case studies in terms of the visual indicators of nostalgia that can be found within them. Throughout this paper, I will attempt to show that the aesthetic of these two films is a direct result of the nostalgia that contemporary audiences and animation studios have for a specific style of animation and the lifestyle associated with it, from a time that embodies this: 1950s and 60s America.