

Lessons learned from a summer of 'Barbie'

By Janelle De Jesus
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"Barbie," directed by Greta Gerwig, took over the world this summer as it became the No. 1 movie in the world to watch.

The film has made more than \$1.4 billion at the box office. The film is now the only woman-directed movie to ever break a billion dollars. It is also Warner Brothers' highest-opening weekend film.

I personally watched the film five times in theaters. Yes, I said five. A couple times with friends, then my girlfriend, and of course my mom and sister. With each watch I gained a new perspective of the story it was trying to tell.

The movie served as an extremely nostalgic piece of media I was able to indulge in. When I went to the movie theater, I took my childhood Barbie with me. She was my favorite toy as a kid, and after all these years I picked her up again. I carried her in my tote bag and she sat and watched the film. By the time the credits rolled, I was in a puddle of tears hugging her close to me.

The film allowed me to take all of my past selves on a journey with Barbie through history; my mother grew up with Barbie, as did I and my sister, so there was never a moment in my childhood that we weren't playing make-believe.

The "Barbie" Movie had countless references to my pink-filled childhood. For example, in the background of the films there were statues from "Barbie: Mermaidia" and "Barbie: Fairytopia." The movie also had nods to previous toys I owned or wish I owned – such as "Video Star Barbie" and "Skipper's Treehouse."

However, my favorite reference happened at the end of the film. The

golden locket that Barbie wore on her neck in the girlhood montage was a direct reference to "Barbie in the Nutcracker," the first-ever animated movie of the Barbie franchise. In the original film, the locket was said to take you home no matter where you are – and in the end it took Barbie to the real world where she felt at home.

Outside of pure nostalgia though, the story covers feminism, girlhood, and aspects of being a woman in a patriarchal society. The movie covers Barbie and Ken going into the real world to help Barbie Land as strange things start to occur to Margot Robbie's character, Barbie. However, while in the real world for only a few hours, Ryan Gosling's character, Ken, discovers patriarchy, and chooses to take it back to Barbie Land.

Our protagonist returns to the imaginary land with two humans – Gloria and Sasha – in hopes of restoring the rift between humans and girls. But they are faced with a misogynist world when they return. Barbie struggles with her relationship to Ken from here on out, but ultimately learns Ken's naivety to the harm of their ways is exactly how to take them down.

Ultimately, the Barbies use their knowledge of the double-edged sword that is womanhood as their way of taking over what is rightfully theirs. The movie has many moments of feminism, including an incredible monologue delivered by Gloria – played by America Ferrera – in which she discusses the hypocrisy of being a woman in a man's world.

"I'm just so tired of watching myself and every single other woman tie herself into knots so that people will like us," Gloria said. "And if all of that is also true for a doll just representing women, then I don't even know."

She was right. Going into the movie



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I knew I loved Barbie because of her ability to be anything she wanted. Never in my life had I thought I doubted my abilities, or thought I wasn't good enough –

until someone said I couldn't do it all. In a way I believe that's how all women feel. All it took was a well-planned, feature-length film for people worldwide to notice how difficult being a woman truly is.

The movie has a devastatingly beautiful ending. The movie ends with Barbie meeting the creator of Mattel, Ruth Handler, in which she takes a walk and discusses her ending as a woman in both of these worlds. Robbie's character tells Hader, "Maybe I'm not Barbie anymore." In which Hader says an idea claiming people create things such as "patriarchy and Barbie just to deal with how uncomfortable [being a human] is." The finale discusses Barbie wanting to be "a part of the people that make meaning, not the thing that gets made."

Something about the complexity of such a simple scene gets me into tears every time. How beautiful is it that we as women and even humans, get to create any sort of idea that comes to our minds? How incredible is it that we can be anything

we set a goal to? The movie opened up my eyes, as a daughter, a woman, and an imaginator.

The scene fades out with a montage as Barbie enters the real world – Billie Eilish's "What Was I Made For?" started playing and tears started rolling down my eyes as a montage of young girls-turned-adults played.

The "Barbie" movie broke records because of its ability to tell a woman's story in the easiest way possible – with the toy that inspired them. The movie didn't make a billion dollars because of its soundtrack or celebrity names, though they were all iconic. The movie was successful because it was a story written, directed, and created by women for women. I hope every person who entered this movie left with new knowledge in their hearts.

As for me, when I came home from the first time seeing it, I grabbed my favorite Barbie and put her on my bookshelf – no longer in a stuffy box. She now had a place to sit, so I could be reminded daily of one of the women who inspired me my whole life. It was a summer of "Barbie," but I know I will be rewatching this movie every season.

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