

[NOTE: the intro here, discussing the history of sitcoms and sitcom revivals, will be finished later on.]

On October the 15th, 1951, I Love Lucy first premiered on CBS.

But just as the first episode was ready to film, Lucille Ball discovered she was pregnant. This was amazing news for the titular couple, who had been trying to have kids for years; for the network, it was a nightmare, as heavy censorship and strict cultural norms had created a taboo around pregnancies being depicted on broadcast television.

The consequences of this quiet decision were enormous for the television industry, as this was the first invention of the television rerun.

This did not come without controversies. In the following decades, many acting unions would speculate that rebroadcasts of old material would mean the death of the industry. Instead of actors being paid weekly to perform material one time for each viewing, those performances could be permanently bottled and rebroadcast Ad nauseam with no further pay.

In the mid-1950s, a compromise was created when the major American acting unions were able to negotiate pay residuals for each rebroadcast, meaning that actors would still gain diminishing returns for each viewing of their performance.

[This segment will be expanded to really go into the history and politics of the union strike that resulted from this disagreement.]

I Love Lucy was not the first sitcom, hell it wasn't even the first show to do half of the things it gets credit for. But it is probably the oldest sitcom you have heard of. The invention of the rerun gave many TV shows a much longer shelf life than was possible beforehand, transforming many sitcoms from here on out into multi-generational classics.

In the late 1970s, the very first sitcom reunions, driven totally by nostalgia, were broadcast on American television. This started in 1977 with television films based on *Dobie Gillis*, *Father Knows Best*, and the *Addams Family*.

The oldest in that list, based on 1959's *Dobie Gillis*, is notably lost media - and I don't mean the kind of lost media where it's not on YouTube. I mean the kind of lost media where even the network can't find a good copy of it.

As this became more of a trend, some reunion films became so successful that they ended up having sequels. 1978's *Rescue from Gilligan's Island* was followed by *The Castaways on Gilligan's Island*, and then, infamously, by *The Harlem Globetrotters on Gilligan's Island*.

Several of these movies, such as 1981's *Return of the Beverly Hillbillies*, were intended to be backdoor pilots to potential full-scale revivals. This often distracted from the more simple premise of a one-off reunion, leading to heavily chaotic and confusing movies.

It wasn't until 1983 that someone pulled this idea off successfully. That year, a sequel film to 1957's *Leave it to Beaver*, titled *Still the Beaver*, was broadcast on CBS. The film was a grandiose success and led to a sequel series on The Disney Channel titled *The New Leave it to Beaver*. This was the first time that a classic sitcom of the past was revived in a new era, depicting old legacy characters struggling with a new generation of family and friends. The show eventually switched to airing on TBS, in total running for an impressive four seasons.

Through the 1980's, films and shows of this design only became more common. Sometimes these movies would seek to bring closure to their source material, given that conclusive series finales in sitcoms were much less common before the 1970s.

Other films, like *Project: ALF*, chose to ignore any interest in closure to tell entirely original stories. A big problem with a lot of these projects was an incomplete roster. It was common for at least one cast member to either be uninterested or unavailable. Often this led to infamous recasts, which sorta spoiled the entire point of a reunion.

Other films would sometimes try to fill the void by inventing entirely new characters, again seeking to tell new stories for new audiences. But this often led to frustrating cliffhangers, leaving the characters permanently in peril and AGAIN defeating the entire point of the catharsis a reunion is meant to establish.

[The rest of this intro will recap the history of sitcom reboots leading up to 2020, leaving a little info undiscussed for a future segment]

We need to go... To the ending...

[Quinton pours coffee. He sits down. He is smoking.]

Four years ago, I sat down on this couch in this exact spot... And my life... changed forever.

[clip: Today I am starting what I am calling the 'iCarly project']

The day of that recording feels both like a distant hazy mirage, and something that could have happened yesterday. In the time since then, we have explored everything connected to iCarly that I could possibly think of. From the original series, to its sister show Victorious, then to its spin-off Sam & Cat, and its Disney Channel rip-off Bizaardvark. But there's still one thing that we have left. The very thing I never asked for: the 2021 iCarly reboot.

Now, those of you who follow me on social media and know me personally will attest that I have long had mixed feelings about this show's existence and if I should cover it.

After all, I envisioned the iCarly mini-series as an exploration into the works of Dan Schneider and the cultural repercussions of what he created - shows and movies which are beloved in spite of his infamy. I always intended that the Dan Schneider video would be where I would stop and move on to something else.

And many of my fans have picked up on this and have encouraged me to NOT talk about this show. After all, it wasn't nearly as popular or culturally relevant as the original, and I covered its paradoxical existence pretty well in my last couple of videos in the mini-series.

So in the same way that people ask, why did the iCarly reboot need to exist, some of the same people may ask... Why does the iCarly reboot video need to exist?

And while I've posed both questions as unanswerable in the past, in the last year I think I've come to a place of understanding about all of this.

When I started the iCarly project, I imagined it as something I was going to make. And of course, that's what it ended up being. But it also became a second thing. The iCarly project was something that *happened* to me.

Before the iCarly project, I was not a big YouTuber, I was something of a minor-league player and most of my videos struggled to break 100k views. But suddenly, within the span of just a few videos and a couple dozen hours of content, everything changed. I started getting recognized in public. I was getting sent beautiful fan art, amazingly kind emails, and DMs from fans who loved what I was doing online. Because of these videos and the resulting growth of my channel and community, I found a place of mental and financial stability that I had previously never known.

That being said, I've begun to notice a shift. People used to come up to me and say "Hey, you're the iCarly guy. I love watching your stuff." But more recently, it's been more common for people to say... "Hey, you're the iCarly guy. I used to watch you all the time."

And that's understandable. I made something that was a big hit, I took a break, then I moved on. I made new things, tried out new ideas, and some of it went over pretty okay. But nothing has compared to what I had with iCarly. And I've been left with this weird complicated feeling. Even though I'm so glad that everything has happened and I wouldn't change a thing, I sometimes worry that I have been gifted a legacy, but a legacy in the past tense. And I wish I could resurrect that old energy to push my life in a new direction.

And all this has made me realize that while it's very easy to say that iCarly's cultural presence is defined by being a creation of Dan Schneider... It's also a thing that happened to Nathan Kress, that HAPPENED to Jerry Trainor, that HAPPENED to Miranda Cosgrove.

These are people who will always have their faces and names attached to iCarly. This will always be their legacy, always be what they are famous for. And what the iCarly reboot was really about is reclaiming that. It's these people saying, "Yeah. I'm the iCarly guy. I'm the iCarly girl. And instead of fighting that, I'm going to do one last wild ride and make something great to celebrate everything before this."

And isn't that just fascinating? That my motivation for creating this project aligns perfectly with the reason that the three main cast members wanted to bring the show back.

(quinton stands up)

So instead of wasting your time, talking about when the show was greenlit and when the first ad aired, and who wrote the episodes and this and that... Let's jump to the chase.

(quinton walks into his set)

On June the 17, 2021; the first three episodes of the iCarly reboot premiered on Paramount+. So let's look at season 1, episode 1... iStart Over

So we begin our story in media res, as we see Carly run into Spencer's apartment, only to find him building a sculpture butt-ass-naked.

Soon enough, coy exposition reveals the new status quo of the series. Spencer has become a world-famous artist and is *exceptionally* rich now. He's even gone from renting his lavish apartment to fully owning it, and from here on we get constant mentions of the ridiculous details of his status in the Seattle upper class.

Meanwhile, Carly and Freddie are in a more transitional awkward phase of their lives. Freddie has attempted several failed startups and has gone through two marriages ending in divorce; he now lives with his mother again. He is also raising his adopted step-daughter; sharing custody with his ex.

Carly finished High School in Italy and briefly attempted to study at college but, like her brother, quickly dropped out due to missing her creative vices. Since iCarly, she's hosted Italian QVC and college radio but desperately wants to return to making content on the internet, where she still has a large following.

Carly's boyfriend Bo is also an online influencer, and he has asked that they talk privately. Carly believes this can only mean one thing - he is going to propose that they start a channel together.

Freddie and Spencer assume the same, and the three decide to secretly livestream the meeting without Bo's consent.

So I watched some of the first iCarly video before I started this one, and I noticed that I say in the intro that I'm curious if I will look at the characters not as kids, but as internet influencers like me. And in retrospect... I don't think that happened, I think I saw them MORE as kids than I did growing up.

But this show is weird because the characters are living out situations similar to my lifestyle. And because of that, I've just found myself reacting to a lot of this as if Carly is my YouTuber friend telling me horrible stories about stupid things she's done recently.

Like, Carly baby, haven't you ever heard of a work-life separation? You put your internet persona in one box, you put the real you in another box. It's like these things, I only smoke for my YouTube career. So I get to file these babies on my taxes!

CIPOS

Quinton, on the floor, with as many cigs as he can get in his mouth

“I’m gonna save so much fucking money next April.”

[He takes the cigs out, takes a hit of his inhaler, and puts the cigs back]

So Bo comes over, it’s all live-streamed, and it turns out Bo actually wants to break up. Carly’s obsessive clingyness has been smothering him and he thinks they should see other people. Freddie and Spencer attempt to stop the live stream but only break her phone in the process. After the modern take on the iCarly intro, we see Carly at her apartment a month later. She is wallowing in a depressive state and is given a pep-talk by her roommate Harper, who thinks they should go to Spencer’s party that night.

Harper is a modern woman, a pansexual who enjoys fucking anything that movies

[Clip: something like “You like parties because everyone wants to sleep with you]

So far you may have noticed that the iCarly reboot is a little... edgier and raunchier than the original. And this is a very interesting element that that we didn’t explore in the intro. And to correct this, I know where we need to go.

Welcome to my pinboard. Last time, I was talking about Bizzaaaaah nevermind. Last time we were here, Johnmas hijacked the set. I gotta start locking my doors.

Well, the good news is I killed him with a really bad Subway sandwich, so we don’t need to worry about him for at least another, 10... 20 minutes. I don’t know.

Anyways. In our previous intro, I gave an overview of the history of sitcom reunions and reboots. But it’s interesting to point out that iCarly was not any regular type of sitcom. It was a KIDS sitcom.

The problem with children’s programming is that there is a very narrow demographic of viewers who have a likelihood to tune in. And not only do the people included naturally age OUT of the demographic; but said demographic has been shrinking in range for the past decade.

In the 2000s, channels like Nickelodeon were able to take advantage of the booming teen market. It wasn’t uncommon for High Schoolers to still watch these networks and enjoy them. But today, the average 5th grader probably watches YouTube more than Cartoon Network and the Disney Channel.

So when a big company comes out and reboots a brand from your childhood, the mood is usually that YOU were the target demographic... 20 years ago. But you're not gonna tune in to watch a reboot of these properties.

So instead, the target audience is probably your kids. And specifically, your kids when they're young. Much younger than you were when you watched the original program.

Here's a great example. In 2007, Total Drama Island premiered on Cartoon Network. I remember watching this show a LOT from middle school into high school. It was a very important part of my teenage years.

In 2018, a reboot of the series was created titled Total DramaRama. This presented all of the characters as toddlers being taken care of at a daycare run by Chef Hatchet.

But then, in 2023, the real PROPER Total Drama Island was brought back for a brand-new 26-episode season dropping on Cartoon Network and Max. This was much more in line with the original series, being targeted towards today's tweenagers and to some extent, the audience of the original. This was a proper continuation that was promoted specifically to ME. Anyways, I didn't watch this shit.

Based on the ratings and general vibes, I don't think a lot of other people did either. Or maybe some of you watched the first two episodes, went "Oh, that's cool," then forgot to watch the rest.

And the real sad truth is that while it's easy to make fun of these toddler reboots made for babies of all these classic franchises... Based on what I've seen, it seems like Total Dramarama was the financially and culturally successful reboot.

And it seems to me that almost every successful reboot of kids' shows in the last decade follows this trend. Girl Meets World has a lot more in common with middle-of-the-road Disney Channel sitcoms than it does Boy Meets World. Raven's Home is a reboot of a sitcom that was meant HEAVILY for teenagers, and from everything I've seen it is meant for a much younger audience.

And to some extent, it's hard to complain about this too much. Because if anything, it's our fault. I think the young adults of today have made a bad habit of wishing reboots and revivals into existence NOT out of intention of watching them... But because they like the warm feeling of knowing that thing exists. They like it when the Wikipedia article goes on for a few more paragraphs.

So many adults petitioned Nickelodeon, no HARASSED Nickelodeon, telling them to make Hey Arnold the Jungle Movie... And then when Nickelodeon did actually make that movie... Well, have you seen it? I have, it's okay.

It's clearly created as a backdoor pilot for an entirely new season of the show, because the public rallying for more Hey Arnold was so extreme that we all gaslit Nick into thinking that we would watch a revival. And then we didn't.

But still I think Millennials and Gen Z lead very pop-culture-oriented lives. And many people associate their childhoods with the media they watched growing up. And there is certainly an ongoing interest in this fantasy of taking one of those franchises kids grew up with, rebooting it, moving it to an adult network; and then continuing the show but for grown-ups.

CIPOS

Okay, so it's SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS, but instead of flipping patties and catching Jelly Fish, he SMOKES CRACK AND PCP

In 2019, a reboot for the show Lizzie McGuire was announced for Disney+. The reboot was going to be created by the original showrunner with Hilary Duff reprising her role as Lizzie, now in her 30s.

The show would have featured Lizzie catching her husband cheating on her, causing them to get divorced and for her to move back to Los Angeles. Three episodes were written and two were filmed. Until suddenly, the boot came down.

Disney was allegedly very unhappy with the tone of the series. By all accounts, it was hardly edgier than something like Brooklyn 99, but it was a sitcom for adults. And it dived into adult topics and was very much not written for a toddler audience.

Tensions grew and eventually, the show was canceled despite two episodes being filmed already.

This is the immediate context which the iCarly reboot was born into. The show was originally actually conceived and pitched as a show for kids, much like Raven's Home or Girl Meets World. But eventually, the direction pivoted to instead exclusively targeting audience members in their 20s and 30s who had grown up with the brand and wanted to see the characters explored from a more grown-up perspective.

[Clip from pilot: something like "This is just like the old iCarly, but a little more grown up"]

And this was then promoted as a heavy selling point for the revival. You probably know this clip for instance:

[What's your favorite curse word? Probably fuck]

But I do think that there is an inherent fault in the genetic code of the iCarly reboot that has always been a turn-off for me. And that fault is... That this is a show targeted at me, a reboot about my childhood heroes coming of age... And yet. I still have to spend so much of the runtime watching... Some FUCKING kid

["Hi Carly, how's retirement?" "I'm not retired." "You haven't posted in a month. In internet years, that's a decade!"]

That just reads to me as an aspect of the show that was pitched for the baby version of this show and then stuck around. And I just... I don't like her, I don't get why she's here.

People on the internet have this really annoying trend of engaging with media criticism as if the fictional characters are REAL PEOPLE.

So I feel like people in the comments are gonna say "Oh, so you just want Freddie to disappear from his stepdaughter's life, you think he should abandon her because he's getting a divorce??" And, just for the sake of me, I need everyone to try and view this character as a creative decision that someone in the real world made.

This character didn't exist until someone decided that she did. And I understand why something like the Wizards of Waverly place reboot went for this, because that's a show for kids. But this is the experimental, edgy "only marketed to adults" show. So why do I have to put up with this random kid that I don't know?

Keep in mind that I film these videos as I go, I am really filming this after watching the pilot and NOTHING else. So they might make this character work. But at the moment, she doesn't FEEL like a character. She feels like she exists for conflict.

She's a bratty, phone-obsessed kid who doesn't respect Freddie, but has a very warm relationship with Freddie's mother; who has turned out to be a much better grandma than she was a parent.

But it's just not clicking for me. And that's also how I feel about Harper by the way. Every new character in this show makes me want to burn out my retinas with these cigarettes.

[My body, my choice clip]

If you want examples of some of the adult humor in the episode, we find out Spencer's first commercially successful statue was a marshmallow shaped like the white house which he accidentally caught on fire. The burnt, melting aesthetic was interpreted as a metaphor for democracy following the 2016 election.

Towards the end of the episode, Carly finds the original George-the-Bra prop, she implies that she bought it as a kid hoping she would "grow into it."

Now, did the original iCarly have jokes like that? Yes. But now the actors have agency over their lives, so it feels much less scummy.

Carly goes to Spencer's rich-friends party, where Spencer unveils his next project. In the original series, Spencer shorted out the apartment's power with a sculpture with moving parts. But this won the team a Jonas World Record. Since that episode, someone else has beat him, so he has brought out the original and added new parts to win back the title. However, Harper just doesn't get the point of it all.

["It's just the same thing you did before with a few new pieces, right?"]

If they did this on purpose, this metaphor is genuinely extremely clever.

Carly is fully prepared to bail on the party, before she runs into a cute boy from her past. His name is Luke, and he's a professor who studies mouth feel or something like that. Carly invites him back to her place for some private intimacy, which turns out to be her showing him episodes of Law & Order. It feels really weird for them to use real brands and shows instead of parodies.

The next day, Spencer Carly and Harper talk about what happened, with them all noting Carly's depressive haze seems to have suddenly passed. Freddie and Millicent burge in, they barge in, because iCarly characters are like me. They don't know how to lock doors.

Cut to Quinton at his front door. He tries turning the lock the wrong way.

"I'm out of ideas."

The gang quickly piece together that something is up, as Carly has gone on one date with Luke and already has framed an Instagram photo of him. It transpires that Carly has invited her ex over to show him that she's won the breakup.

But when Bo does arrive, he has something to tell Carly. Not only has he found a new partner, not only is it getting serious, but he and his partner are going to be launching their own channel. Carly, trying to save face, says that she and Luke will ALSO be starting a new channel - and she'll be live streaming that Friday.

Carly soon goes on another date with Luke but ends up finding him entirely annoying and unrelatable. It becomes obvious that she was trying to force the relationship and she bails on him.

Later on, Freddie and Carly talk about what's really going on. Carly desperately wants to create, to has something new to her name, but she wants someone to create content WITH. Carly wishes she could just revive iCarly, but fears that it wouldn't work without Sam. But Freddie says Carly can still be creative even if she's just by herself.

So Carly, Freddie and Spencer head back up to his rarely used Apartment Attic, where some of the iCarly set still rests in place. To try and prove iCarly still works in the modern age, they do a new segment about anti-aging products, which they decide to test on baby Spencer. As they do the live show, Harper and Millicent stand in the wings making sure to comment on how the webshow is both funny and popular.

[clip: "This is weirdly popular."]

Spencer becomes more irritated and annoyed as more of the viscous white mess is spread over every inch of his face.

[clip: I don't know why he's complaining. I pay people to do this to me.]

Wow, what an interesting joke, I'm going to think about it no further and continue with my life.

In the epilogue, Spencer gives up on reclaiming the Jones World Record and accidentally sets the sculpture on fire when he tries to turn it on. Luckily Freddie is a firefighter now, so this isn't a problem! ... Oh wait, wrong reboot.

Harper, now fascinated, declares that it's totally genius - a metaphor for setting your old self on fire so you can be reborn from the ashes. But Spencer privately tells Freddie that the fire wasn't on purpose - because it never is.

So that was the very first episode of iCarly parenthes 2021. Naturally, I am back here yet again at the pinboard set, where I am going to quickly be discussing some of my hot takes.

The writers have a difficult job here because they're trying taking a show that was about the internet in 2007 and they're rebooting it as a satire of the internet in 2021. There's a natural attempt to casually modernize everything. They don't say they run a website, they don't say they run a web show. They run a channel. Based on everything we've been shown so far, iCarly.com doesn't exist anymore. iCarly is a channel on a YouTube-like website and not a stand-alone domain.

But they have to then take the actual material of the iCarly web show and translate it into humor that works for adults in the modern world. And the old iCarly skits are weird even then, because they're not indicative of what the 2007 internet was really like. They're a representation of how a middle-aged man in 2007 interpreted internet culture.

An obvious example of this is Fred, right? Fred was a web series about a child being neglected and abused while attempting to understand the world around him. Dan Schneider interpreted his videos as lol random nonsense where saying anything random is funny.

["I like cheese! Cheese!"]

And that kind of humor is very indicative of what the in-universe iCarly web show ended up being. And so when they try to take that same humor but insert a kind of late 20s ironic pastiche of societal expectations... It's weird. It feels weird.

And it's made more weird by the Greek chorus providing commentary telling you how funny and popular this skit is.

I think it's undeniable that when I go into an iCarly reboot, I don't care about the web show. I care about the characters and the direction their lives are going in. So let's go ahead and break down how I feel about each one of these.

Starting with Spencer. I like that they position Spencer as a very rich and successful person. The antics Spencer got into in the original series often felt very weird when you remembered that he was basically unemployed. This is fine for a kids' show, but adults expect internal consistency in their storytelling.

I also foresee this opening up some possibilities for new Spencer storylines, like maybe Spencer questions why he even likes making art once profit is involved, or maybe he enters a relationship where his money is making things weird.

As for Freddie and Carly, I again have mostly positive things to say. I like that they show these characters not necessarily as failures, but certainly as people kind of lost and adrift. Freddie is back living with his mother, Carly can't find purpose and doubts her own creativity, I think it puts you in a situation where you want to see these people prosper and recover.

As for the new characters...

I don't like them.

The elephant in the room here is that we have two missing people from the original roster - Noah Munck as Gibby and Jennette McCurdy as Sam Puckett.

In the series, it's explained that Sam has run off to join a motorcycle gang. Freddie says that he's worried about Sam, Carly says she's worried about the gang.

Of course, to many people, doing iCarly without Sam is as ridiculous as our world, as it is within the show. It's obvious to me that if Jennette had agreed to join the cast, the character of Harper would not exist. Or at least, she wouldn't be one of the leading cast members.

This causes some curiosity in my mind about how much of Harper's characterization would have been used in a draft that included Sam. Would Sam be a polyamorous sex fiend trying to console her best friend roommate? Or would she have had a more nuanced depiction?

I think the ultimate reveal that Sam has joined a biker gang indicates to me that I don't want to see a version of the character made by this creative team. In my mind, I would much prefer Sam to have escaped the cycle of abuse and become a counselor or something. I expect that if the full cast had made it into this incarnation, Carly and Freddie would have been depicted as complex people going through difficult times in their lives... And Sam would have been a cliched joke machine cranking out laughs. Exactly what she was on Sam & Cat.

But maybe I'm giving the writers too little credit and they did have unused ideas of how to modernize the Puckett character.

As for Millicent... I don't like this character. And the show has 32 episodes to change my mind, I guess.

With that, let's give the show a chance and move on to iCarly season 1 episode 2: iHate iCarly. Wow, truly an episode made for me.

[review go here lol]