

Cats: An utter “Cat”astrophe

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This past Christmas break, my best friend and I took it upon ourselves to watch the horror movie *Cats* which premiered on December 20, 2019. Now, *Cats* is not branded, marketed, written, or labeled as a horror movie. BUT IT SHOULD BE! Seriously, this movie is centrally located in the pit of the uncanny valley, a concept suggesting that the more humanoid a figure is without being a perfect replica of a human, the greater the feelings of discomfort it will evoke. I can not begin to describe the extreme unease with which I viewed this film.

The most disconcerting aspect of *Cats* was the visual design and movement of the characters. Watching cats with human fingers and toes, with human proportions, who dance and move like people, was one of the most disturbing experiences of my life. When confronted with such a monstrosity, everyone responds differently. My response was to laugh. My brain had no precedent for processing what it was

seeing. These “cats” are actually actors who, with the use of advanced special effects, sang and danced with CGI fur to mimic the appearance of a cat. What the directors and editors failed to factor in was the fact that these actors still had human proportions and therefore were more recognizable as humans than as cats; however, the use of CGI made them just inhuman enough that many who viewed the film found the effects creepy. The *Cats* Broadway musical utilizes costumes, makeup, and practical effects, creating a less disturbing effect due to the lack of CGI and the clearly recognizable human performers.

I questioned several students who had viewed the film, and the majority agreed that the movie would have been less disturbing, even possibly enjoyable, had the creators decided to create fully animated cats, complete with cat-like features and proportions. I must also mention that all students interviewed stated they did not enjoy the film. I am personally at a loss to understand why, with the precedent of such movies as *Lion King* (2019) using

advanced animation to create realistic animals, the creators of *Cats* didn’t take a similar route. Senior Anna Reagan Mask questioned, “Why can’t they just make them cats?!” Senior Olivia Moore disagreed, saying, “I think that no animation is the only real way to do it without things getting really weird and creepy, even though it’s literally just making a copy of the musical.” The Broadway musical *Cats* was widely praised for its elaborate costumes, and many think that the movie would have been less disturbing had the filmmakers taken the costume route.

In conclusion, I do think everyone should see *Cats*, not because it’s a masterpiece of cinematography or has a compelling storyline, but because it is a bizarre cultural phenomenon and you will likely bond over the ordeal with any friends who accompany you. Senior Virden O’ Brian says “*Cats* is undeniably a film. Brimming with a score, cinematography, and performances, it’s a motion picture made by a team of filmmakers that can irrefutably be described as existent. Truly one of the films 2019 has to offer.”



Three of the titular CGI cats performing a dance routine, much to the discomfort of the audience.