

OP ED PIECE

Saturday Night Live is a prime example of how to adapt content to the changing environment in order to produce longevity in success. By embracing significant news events rather than being a separate entity, SNL becomes a part of the culture that surrounds the news. Throughout the years SNL has battled both quirky news oddities and more somber events by allowing a heavy stream of commentary to weave their way through the jokes they write. Skits that deal with topics such as the presidential race, war coverage, and the search for Saddam Hussein make it clear that little is off limits to the show. What makes them a piece of the nation's culture rather than a disgraceful comedy show is that line that is drawn between overreaching comedy and embracing your audience. In September of 2001 when the Twin Towers were hit the show battled the line between respecting the victims and keeping the nation in good spirits (no one will forget the power that came from Paul Simon singing "The Boxer" in front of a stage of firefighters and policeman, the dust of the towers still on their coats). Rather than cancelling the show they honored the heroes of the tragedy during it, doing their best to continue to make America laugh.

It's unlikely anyone has ever referred to Saturday Night Live as unsuccessful, and the show's relevance in today's society can be seen through the success of both its current and former cast members. Overall, 11 movies have been produced based on SNL characters (including Wayne's World, Superstar, and MacGruber) and there is a long list of shows and movies that star a variety of SNL alumni (including Andy Samberg in Brooklyn Nine-Nine, Fred Armisen and Carrie Brownstein in Portlandia). Even

commercial advertisements have caught up on the craze (just watch State Farm's ads featuring Dana Carvey and Kevin Nealon as their SNL characters Hans and Franz).

SNL has also been able to adapt to the changing world when it comes to casting and writing for the show. YouTube was a previously untapped resource that Saturday Night Live is now able to utilize for finding new talent. Currently on the staff of SNL is the trio from "Good Neighbor" (Kyle Mooney, Beck Bennett, Nick Rutherford), a YouTube account that posted comedy sketches similar to SNL skits. Kyle and Beck are current cast players, and Nick is a writer for the show. The changing world of technology has allowed such lesser-known comedians more platforms to display their skills on.

Not many will argue that SNL has a place in pop culture history, but what is it about their current content that keeps them relevant? It's not hard to lament when your favorite cast members move on from the show. I remember complaining to my mom a few years ago when a group of my favorites on the show left—Kristin Wiig, Bill Hader, and Jason Sudakis. I thought the show wouldn't be as funny anymore. She shrugged and told me that was how it worked. The cast moves on, and Lorne Michaels finds new ones to make room for on your Saturday nights. For my mom, Steve Martin and John Belushi were the stars. For others, the pinnacle of the show was Will Ferrell. Even now there are specific cast members that have their own fan bases. (Aidy Bryant is my #1). What keeps SNL relevant after all these years is the show's ability to embrace its audience and become a part of their everyday life. I think I speak for every fan of the show, past or present, when I say thank you, Lorne Michaels, and here's to another four decades of continuing to make us laugh.