

What's trending? Retro-millennia

By  Bronwyn Williams

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Perhaps as a reaction to the disillusionment of adulthood, the infamously aspirational millennial generation, which came of age right as the Great Recession of 2008/9 took hold, is looking back to the comforts of childhood brands and media as a balm for their collective pre-mid-life-crisis.



Pixabay via [123RF.com](https://www.123RF.com)

This trend can be seen through the generation's seemingly insatiable obsession with rainbow-hued unicorns of all kinds, and the popularity of the reincarnation of the childhood favourite toy, Barbie, into the "woke" Barbie range of today.



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Backwards-looking trend

(Speaking of Barbie, she is now available in plus size, gender neutral, multi-racial, differently-abled, tattooed, and even Muslim hijab-clad versions. The millennial of today is sure to find a Barbie doll to fit their current personal identity, without the social guilt of conforming to Original Barbie's very un-PC, white, blond, hetronormal aesthetic.)

The entertainment industry has been quick to cash-in on this backwards-looking trend. Turn on Netflix, and you will be bombarded by re-runs of 1990's television favourites ready for you to binge-watch, including *The Fresh Prince of Belair*, and the not-very-politically-correct-at-all-by-today's-standards, *Friends*.



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Not only are entertainment providers simply re-screening comforting old favourites, they are also investing in a slew of re-boots starring the most popular characters of the 80's and 90's. *Gilmore Girls*, *Full House* (now *Fuller House*) and *Bill Nye the Science Guy* have all returned to the small screen, with varying degrees of success.

The throwback scene

Pop culture is also getting in on the throwback scene:

Alternative rock band, Radiohead released an album, *OKNOTOK*, in 2017 that contains a hidden computer programme which unlocks a bonus music video. The catch is, the programme only runs when installed on a specific 80's computer.

On the other side of the cultural spectrum, Bruno Mars' latest music videos borrow heavily from the big-caps, baggy-pants and bright colour look and feel of the early 1990's.

Sooth your inner millennial child

If re-living your childhood through a screen is not enough, other businesses around the world are now offering adult sleepover parties and bedtime stories to soothe your inner millennial child through their pre-midlife crisis:

- *Bedtime Stories For Grown-Ups* by Ben Holden is an anthology book of stories that seek to separate people from technology and re-engage them in the childhood bedtime ritual.
- The Astronights at the Science and Natural History Museum in the USA offers the opportunity to go behind the scenes

of various collections on display in the museum before crawling into your sleeping bag for a slumber party with the rest of the visitors.

- WeWork, a co-working space provider, hosts weekend-long adult summer camps for its employees and the members who rent its spaces.

So, the question now is, what childhood comforts could your brand offer millennials to escape from the stresses and pressures of “adulting”?

ABOUT BRONWYN WILLIAMS

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