

JoJo's Bizarre Adventure: Its Inspirations and Influences

Art is the product that is made when someone takes inspiration from something, and then channels that inspiration into creation. Art can also serve as inspiration for other artists who create derivative pieces with that inspiration. This cyclic process of being inspired, creating, and inspiring others is a fundamental property of art, and *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure* is no exception. Created by Hirohiko Araki, *JoJo's* is a modern phenomenon in anime and manga due to its large cast of unique characters, diverse settings and genre, as well as its overwhelming popularity. However, *JoJo's* didn't just materialize out of the aether and into existence. Like all other art, *JoJo's* has drawn inspiration from other artists and their works, incorporated that inspiration into itself, and has inspired others in the creation of new art.

Each part of *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure* is unique because they each draw influence from the popular culture of the time they were written, which creates a universe that changes and evolves alongside other mediums. Cinema has had a major impact on the characters of *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure* because Araki designed many of his characters out of appreciation for his favorite actors and genres. Inside each volume of *JoJonium*, which are large compilations of the manga volumes, there is an interview with Hirohiko Araki where he discusses his process for creating his characters. In the first volume, he talks about Jonathan Joestar, a 6 ft 5 inch muscular behemoth, and how he was inspired by action movies: "When this part was originally being serialized, it was the age of 'muscles' on the silver screen--guys like Schwarzenegger and Stallone. Schwarzenegger, for example, could never be stopped by an amount of gunfire, right? I wanted Jonathan to have a similar look to him--a look of unstoppableness." (Araki, *JoJonium* 1)

Araki wanted to make Jonathan a "symbol of purity and dignity,"(Araki, JoJonium 1) and used the action movies of the time as inspiration. He wanted to make a character who always fought for what's right and, in the words of Jonathan, "has to be brave enough to go into a fight he knows he'll lose."("Dio the Invader" 05:34-05:38) Araki drew inspiration from more than just 80's action flicks, as he also had a deep appreciation for genres.

For instance, when creating Jotaro Kujo, the main protagonist of part 3, Araki modeled his character off of Clint Eastwood (Araki, JoJonium 8). On the surface, you wouldn't think that there is any connection between Jotaro and Clint Eastwood. In the manga and anime, Jotaro is designed to look like a high school delinquent who wears a large coat, two belts, and a large chain on his collar. However, it's his personality that reflects the tough-as-nails characters that Eastwood plays. Jotaro is an incredibly mature, stoic, and straightforward character who prefers to settle fights with his strength rather than trickery (although he does demonstrate ability to come up with clever strategies). Araki also mentions that Jotaro's trademark pose and quote, "yare yare daze," are modeled off Clint Eastwood's pose with a .44 magnum and line, "Bank robbery? Give me a break..."(JoJonium 8).

One of the biggest mediums to influence *JoJo's* was music, and it can be seen in the characters. Many of the characters names are direct references to songs, albums, and artists from pop culture, such as Robert E.O Speedwagon, Will A. Zeppeli (named after Led Zeppelin), J Geil (also called Centerfold in English subtitles), Vanilla Ice, and Red Hot Chili Pepper. However, for some characters, their entire character will be based around a reference to music, rather than just their names. One of the best examples for this is found in the main antagonist of part 4 of the series, Diamond is Unbreakable, Yoshikage Kira. Kira is special because his

character is a reference to not one, but two different artists: David Bowie and Queen. As Francesco-Allesio Ursini, a professor in English linguistics and literature, states in his paper, "David Bowie's Influence on JoJo's Bizarre Adventure," he talks about how Kira's character, "is the closest homage to David Bowie in the series, specifically to the 'Thomas Jerome Newton' persona..." He comes to this conclusion because Kira visually appears as a man with blue eyes and blond hair who dresses in formal suits, and also has a desire to stay out of the spotlight by blending into a crowd (Ursini 2017). Another musical reference in Kira's character is how his stand (a physical manifestation of one's spirit), Killer Queen, is a direct reference to the work of the band Queen. The stand is centered around explosions, and has three different bombs that act as its abilities. Killer Queen's three bombs act as a reference to the three explosives mentioned in the songs lyrics (gunpowder, gelatine, dynamite with a laser beam), which are, "guaranteed to blow your mind." Another reference to the song is made when, after being discovered, Kira forces another stand user to help him change his identity. This is similar to the action taken by the titular "killer queen," where, "to avoid complications, she never kept the same address." Furthermore, Two of these bombs are named Sheer Heart Attack and Bites the Dust, referencing the Queen songs Sheer Heart Attack and Another one Bites the Dust.

Movies and music of the past and present help to shape our pop culture through others making allusions and references to them, and *JoJo's* has the same effect. *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure* has had a huge impact on our modern pop culture, as references to the series can be found across many mediums, as well as in memes.

In the past, *JoJo's* didn't have the fame that it has today. In fact, in the West, fans of anime and manga were considered a niche group during the late 20th century, and the fandom

didn't become mainstream until the early-mid 2000's (Levi, 45-46). Many series in the West, such as *JoJo's*, had to rely on the efforts of the fanbase either learning Japanese, or creating translations for those who didn't, in order for it to spread (Levi, 46). Even with fanbase involvement, and a short animated series made in the early 90's, it still couldn't grow beyond a small cult following (Gigguk, 2017). However, like other cult classics, such as *Rocky Horror Picture Show* and *The Room*, the series eventually became very well known and popular due to the anime adaptation made by David Production (Gigguk, 2017).

Although the recent adaptation has provided for an easy way for western audiences to consume and experience *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure*, it wouldn't have reached the current levels of success without the internet and the meme culture that has emerged from it. It's undeniable that the internet has completely changed how we as a civilization interact with one another. It has opened the door us to gain near limitless amounts of knowledge, and also to communicate with one another in an instant, where in the past it would've taken weeks or even months depending on the distance. And with the rise of the internet, we have also seen the rise in the cultural phenomenon known as memes. In Limor Shifman's paper, "An anatomy of a YouTube meme," she defines something as memetic when it, "lures extensive user engagement in the form of parody, pastiche, mash-ups, or other derivative work" (Shifman, 2011). Due to how strange and eccentric the series is, combined with the internet's power of mass, instantaneous communication, and you have perfect way for something like *JoJo's* to grow in popularity.

JoJo's Bizarre Adventure is, as the name implies, bizarre. The absurd and over-the-top nature of the series has created a plethora of moments that can be parodied and transformed into memes that can be appreciated by anyone, even those that have never seen the show. An example

of one of these moments is in episode 46 of *Stardust Crusaders* where Jotaro and DIO have a short exchange of banter before the climactic last fight of the arc. After DIO kills Joseph Joestar, Jotaro's grandfather, he says to Jotaro, "You're next." After delivering this line, Jotaro begins to walk towards DIO, at which point DIO says, "Oh? You're approaching me?" To this, Jotaro simply replies, "I can't beat the shit out of you without getting closer." ("DIO's World, Part 2", 19:56-20:28). In the context of the situation, the actions made by Jotaro are absurd. He just witnessed his grandfather die at the hands of the strongest and most powerful being on the planet, and what does he do? He walks towards DIO for the simple reason that that is the only way he's going to be able to fight him. It's the absurdity of these actions, as well as the serious delivery behind Jotaro's lines that has sparked numerous parodies of this scene. One such parody features two cats who look at each other as these lines are dubbed over them. Then, one of the cats gets on its back legs, put its front legs in the air, and holds that pose. Once this happens, the cat which represents DIO screams, "ZA WARUDO!", which is the line that DIO says when he activates his ability to stop time. After this, the video ends with the DIO cat pushing over the cat that's balancing on its hind legs (The House of Dank). This just shows that the absurd nature of *JoJo's* is perfect for making memes, and that even a video of two cats can be made into a *JoJo's* reference.

JoJo memes have become such a common thing to see on the internet that it provides a form of publicity for the series, and can draw people into the franchise. Two factors of a successful meme, as Shifman outlines in her book "Memes in Digital Culture," are how frequently you can see memes of a certain subject, as well as how well it encourages audience participation (Shifman, 70-72). *JoJo* memes do this exceptionally well, as they are constantly

being produced and put online, and how the repeated viewing of these memes can lead people to searching out and viewing the series. Memes are how I was first introduced to *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure*, as well as many other shows, and it was my curiosity and desire to learn more about the background of these memes that has led me to watch *JoJo's*, as well as many other series. I'm not the only person who has considered watching a show because of a meme. Take PewDiePie, a well known YouTuber for example. When he watched the aforementioned cat video, he said, "Why have I not watched *JoJo*? It's clearly everything I want in an anime." (PewDiePie). Memes are a powerful tool that can be used spread knowledge and influence around the internet, and the sheer quantity of *JoJo* memes being spread around the internet only causes its influence and knowledge about the series to grow.

JoJo's Bizarre Adventure has not only impacted our modern pop culture through the memes it spawned, but also the multitude of references and allusions to *JoJo's* in other mediums, such as video games, anime, and sometimes even in real life. One of the most popular *JoJo's* references is trying to imitate one of the many odd, outlandish, and at times dangerous poses. One example of *JoJo* poses in anime can be found in the show *When Supernatural Battles Became Commonplace* --a non-serious and comedic version of the typical Shonen genre--where a group of high schoolers (and one grade schooler) one day find that they have supernatural powers, and, as the name implies, has battles with their powers. In episode 8, the "villain" of the series is telling one of his associates about the newly empowered group, and as he does this, he imagines the members of the group all striking various poses from *JoJo's* ("Holmgang Battle" 16:28). *JoJo* poses also get referenced in the long running series of *Pokemon*. In episode 57 of *XY Kalos Quest*, we see Meowth mimicking Jonathan Joestar's pose, while also "Muda-nya!

Muda-nya! Muda-nya!" which is a reference to DIO's catchphrase, "Muda! Muda! Muda!" (Vinyls the Best). *JoJo* poses aren't just referenced in anime, but many people in real life strike these poses. From your average fan of *JoJo*, to a convention cosplayer, to even celebrities mimic the poses from the anime and manga. In fact, a musical Idol by the name of Shoko Nakagawa even attempted to do a *JoJo* pose live in a concert, which resulted in her breaking her tailbone (Loo).

There are also many references to *JoJo*'s references in video games across many different genres. In the fighting game *Skullgirls*, there is a character named Peacock who has the ability to drop a steamroller on their opponent, just like how DIO attacked Jotaro using a steamroller at the end of part 3 (Waldmann). Another reference to part 3 can be found in *Team Fortress 2*, a first-person shooter which the fans also lovingly call a, "war-themed hat-collector simulator." There are two cosmetics for the Heavy class added into the game in March 2018 which are references to Jotaro Kujo, the Starboard Crusader and the Tsar Platinum. The Starboard Crusader has the same iconic design of the hat Jotaro wears, as well the name itself is a reference to the title of part 3: *Stardust Crusaders*(FiveEyes). The Tsar Platinum on the other hand is a play on the name of Jotaro's stand, Star Platinum, as well as the fact that the Heavy's character is Russian, thus using "Tsar" rather than "Star"(BigBob).

JoJo's Bizarre Adventure has become a modern phenomenon in manga and anime because of just how special it is. It has managed to take inspiration from many different aspects of pop culture, and work it into the very soul of the series. And because of the uniqueness and sheer absurdity of the series, it has been able to grow and thrive in our modern meme culture. To

quote Gigguk in his video, “This Video is about *JoJo’s Bizarre Adventure*,” “You know what, it’s not just the poses, it’s not just the memes, the loud fanbase, the great OP’s, the works of enemy stands, the beautiful DUWANG’s, the immortal young Araki, the never-ending manga, the Dio’s, Za Warudo, the references, the pop culture, or the great anime. It’s just *JoJo’s*.”

(Gigguk)

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