

Question: Does piracy devalue creative material?

Most creatives have been stealing from others for ages, often shrouding subtle messages and/or light to heavy similarities in materials developed. As the text states, Walt Disney took from the likeness of Buster Keaton's Steamboat Bill, Jr in Steamboat Willie, which is an example of piracy though it's through parody of it and in turn, brought animation to a new forefront, creating value for Disney's material. I'd say it did over shadow Keaton's material though, so there's a bit of devaluation there of the creative material Steamboat Willie took from. There wasn't even a shout-out or mention to Keaton, only those who watched Keaton's movie previously would recognize it. But, there are others who "respectfully" steal just a little bit and make something of their own, often paying a homage to their influencer via imagery or cinematography in films, such as Quentin Tarantino with his movies, or in some other way, shape, or form in other media.

So, piracy can devalue, but it can also give more value to a certain creative material. At a concert, say you're waiting between two band sets and they play some music to pass the time. Chances are often that no one paid the artists of those songs to play but having the crowd listen can give more value to the certain songs when a certain someone in the crowd listens to someone they haven't heard before. The opposite can happen for a creative material though, take the case of during (now) president Trump's campaign run, there was a certain rally where "We Are the Champions" by Queen was played and later on Twitter, Brian May of Queen stated that they did not give Trump the permission to play that song. Regardless of what else happened of the matter, I haven't able to like the song in the same light again and, to me, it devaluated that creative piece of music.

Monetarily speaking as well, when creatives distribute their creations to make money, that's when piracy is can devalue creative material. If an artist is trying to make a living and people steal their material to observe it or redistribute it, it can be detrimental to a creative's financial well-being. However, if one believes getting more views/listens/impressions on a certain material, it can increase its cultural capital (its reputation on how it stands in society), then piracy is another way of bringing attention to the creator's material and not devalue it as bad as one would think.

Cases can be made for both; however, I think the answer is a no for creativity's sake. People can take from others and it can propel one's idea to a height they've never seen before. Piracy encourages creativity but also sometimes devalues the content from which it's taken from. It can't be helped that we all stand on the shoulders of giants, so another person's work is another person's foundation.