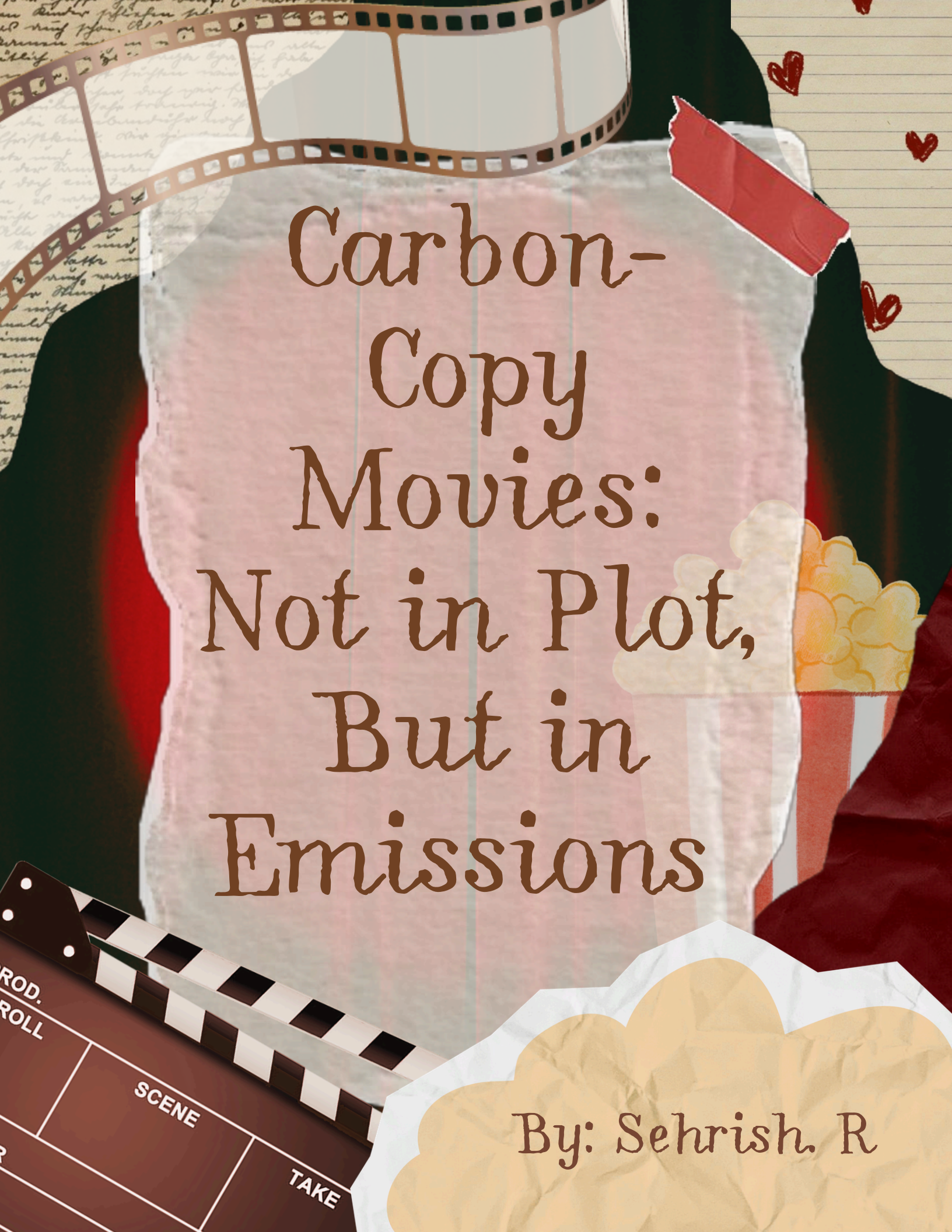




Carbon- Copy Movies: Not in Plot, But in Emissions

By: Sehrish. R

Toy Story, Spider-Man, Star Wars, Hunger Games—fans are thrilled by the exciting selection of movies releasing in 2026. At the same time, there's an 86 percent chance that between 2026 and 2030, one of these years will surpass 2024 in being the hottest year ever recorded. The global media and entertainment industry is expected to be worth \$4.2 trillion by 2030, while funding to fight climate change has reached US \$2.3 trillion in 2025—less than half of the media industry. Audiences will see the glamorous final products of movies, the dramatic lighting, the loud sound effects through theater speakers, but never the shadowy burning of fossil fuels throughout the entire creation process. Do they ever wonder about the sets and props that end up rotting in landfills once the production is over, the lights going out before turning back on for the next film to be in rotation, only for more waste to pile up?

The Odyssey of a Movie

There's a lot that goes into the making of a movie, most of which negatively impacts the environment. For one, transportation of actors alone accounts for around 51% of a film's carbon emissions. The average Hollywood film produces 483 tons of CO2, exceeding the average emissions of 10 million cars annually, and over half of it goes into simply moving both the actors and materials for the sake of the directors' visions. These numbers continue to add up when hundreds of films are being released per year. In addition, catering services during the production amount to piles of waste in both food and disposable tableware. Adding to landfill waste, sets and props are major contributors to environmental degradation. They're built out of cheap materials like wood, plastic, and foam, with the intention of saving money while disregarding the environmental consequences by constantly throwing them into landfills once a film is finished. Many people dismiss landfills, thinking, "At least they're going somewhere, right?"

However, landfills are a significant source of methane, similar to carbon dioxide in the sense that it traps heat. This is a major contributor to climate change that cannot be ignored. Therefore, such significant companies, such as filming studios known for producing large amounts of junk, have a responsibility to minimize their waste.

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But Where's the Final Destination of Waste?



Although the production is over, the waste continues to grow. Movie theaters around the world use massive amounts of energy per year in order to project movies in cool, air-conditioned environments.

The average movie theater goes through around 450,000 kilowatt-hours per year, more or less depending on the size of the building, which could power over 40 average American homes for a year. Energy consumption permeates the entire process. From filming, to editing, to ending up on the big screens, even to the average consumer sitting at home streaming. Along with the energy consumption comes waste generation. Movies create heaps of merchandise in order to attract consumers and cater to as many audiences as possible. For example, Wicked partnered with over 400 brands to create heaps of products, ensuring that the movie would be seen everywhere people looked. It creates a cycle, and once the trend dies down, thousands of piles of junk end up in the same landfills as the movie sets themselves. Is this really what the art of filmmaking should be about? Creating junk for the sake of generating traction and squeezing as much money as they can from blind consumers who just want to support their favorite movies?



The Film Front: First Steps

Thankfully, many studios have started to implement measures to be more environmentally conscious. For example, a handful of top studios have joined the Sustainable Entertainment Alliance, an organization dedicated to sustainable initiatives with the goal of minimizing the entertainment industry's environmental impact. Major companies like Sony, Netflix, Warner Bros, Disney, and Paramount have joined the alliance to implement greener practices in their processes. One major step includes turning to clean energy during production instead of diesel generators. Prime's *Fallout* had used such clean power units and solar panels during production.

Notable studios like Warner Bros. and Universal have committed to using 100% renewable energy for their U.S. facilities by 2030. Hopefully, more companies follow in their steps regarding this decision.



Are the Carbon Emissions Returning for Avengers: Doomsday?

Despite taking crucial first steps, it is important for the film industry to quicken its pace in making adjustments to its practices before it is too late. Disney, despite being a part of the Sustainable Entertainment Alliance, still had approximately 1.6 million metric tons of CO2 emissions across Scope 1 and 2 alone in 2025. These numbers will continue working against our planet until proper measures are taken by both industries and the consumers funding them. Therefore, it is important for consumers to be mindful of how they decide to interact with media. Rather than contributing to the long hours in which movies project throughout the day in large theaters, you could support local, smaller theaters that take up less energy to run. Digitally, viewers can attempt to minimize their number of subscriptions to reduce the strain on data centers running movies. Supporting companies like Warner Bros or Sony Pictures in implementing green energy and waste reduction protocols would also send the message to other studios to do the same. At the end of the day, our planet should not have to pay the price for the sake of our entertainment. Instead of blindly consuming media, we should work to mend our environmental footprint, one wasteful industry at a time.