

How Terribly Normal to be 70

Richard Lee, PhD.

St. Bonaventure University

[rlee@sbu.edu](mailto:rlee@sbu.edu)

Abstract

Motion pictures such as *La Bamba*, *The Buddy Holly Story*, *The Doors*, *Rocketman*, and *Bohemian Rhapsody* tell the stories of some of rock'n'roll's most influential artists. In these films and other rock'n'roll biopics, audiences see individuals growing into celebrity and coping with all that fame and fortune brings – the good as well as the bad. What audiences do not see are the issues entertainers confront when they grow old and struggle to remain successful and relevant in an industry whose biggest stars often are its youngest.

This paper focuses on three films whose (fictional) protagonists are older musicians putting their lives and careers into context.

- *Danny Collins* – The title character is a superstar with riches earned during the classic rock era, but he wants what money cannot buy, including a reconciliation with the son he has never met.
- *Crazy Heart* – Otis “Bad” Blake is a has-been country music star who struggles with alcoholism and is angry that a musician he once mentored has become a success and left him behind.
- *Ricki and the Flash* – Ricki Rendazzo abandoned her family to follow her dreams of becoming a rock star but ended up playing in small bars and supporting herself by working in a supermarket.

This paper explores how these three films provide audiences with stronger connections to celebrities than the popular biopics that offer glimpses of lives beyond the reach of most audience members. These three films show the human side of entertainers struggling with the same issues that confront the general public.

The first part of the paper lays out the rationale for this theory; the second part uses existing research studies on film, music and aging to support the theory.

**KEYWORDS:** audience, aging, biopics, cinema, musicians, rock'n'roll

### Part 1: When I'm 64

As rock'n'roll's popularity grew in the 1960s, young singers and songwriters showed little interest in aging gracefully. As he sang the lead in The Who's "My Generation" in 1965, 21-year-old Roger Daltrey boldly proclaimed "I hope I die before I get old." Mick Jagger, in 1975 at the age of 31, told *People* magazine he would rather be dead than sing "Satisfaction" when he was 45, and in 1968's "Old Friends," 26-year-old Paul Simon sang that it would be "terribly strange to be 70." Perhaps, Ian Anderson put it best when he painted an unflattering picture of an aging rock star in a song titled "Too Old to Rock'n'Roll: Too Young to Die." But the song, released in 1976, concludes with a twist on the lyrics that accurately predicted what was in store for many rock stars as they grew older: "You're never too old to rock and roll if you're too young to die."<sup>1</sup> Roger Daltrey didn't die before he got old; Mick Jagger still is performing, and Paul Simon found out what it was like to be 70 on his birthday in 2011.

As rock stars aged, so too did their audiences. Accordingly, the music industry has responded by providing ways to accommodate older fans. Winery concerts and seated dinner shows provide comfortable alternatives to performances in stadiums and arenas. CD box sets, remastered reissues and DVDs provide older audiences with new opportunities to purchase recorded music.<sup>2</sup>

Films, in particular rock biopics, also provide a means for older audiences to remain connected with music and performers from their youth. They can sit in the comfort of a theater or a living room and watch Queen perform at Live Aid or Elton John debut at the Troubadour. In most biopics, the stories focus on performers' younger years – the struggle for success and then the experiences of that success, the good as well as the bad. Biopics have largely been devoid of

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<sup>1</sup> Lyrics were transcribed by this author from recordings. The Mick Jagger quote was included in *Time* magazine's July 26, 2018, article "Mick Jagger Said He'd Rather 'Be Dead' Than Sing 'Satisfaction' at 45. Now He's 75 and Still Playing It."

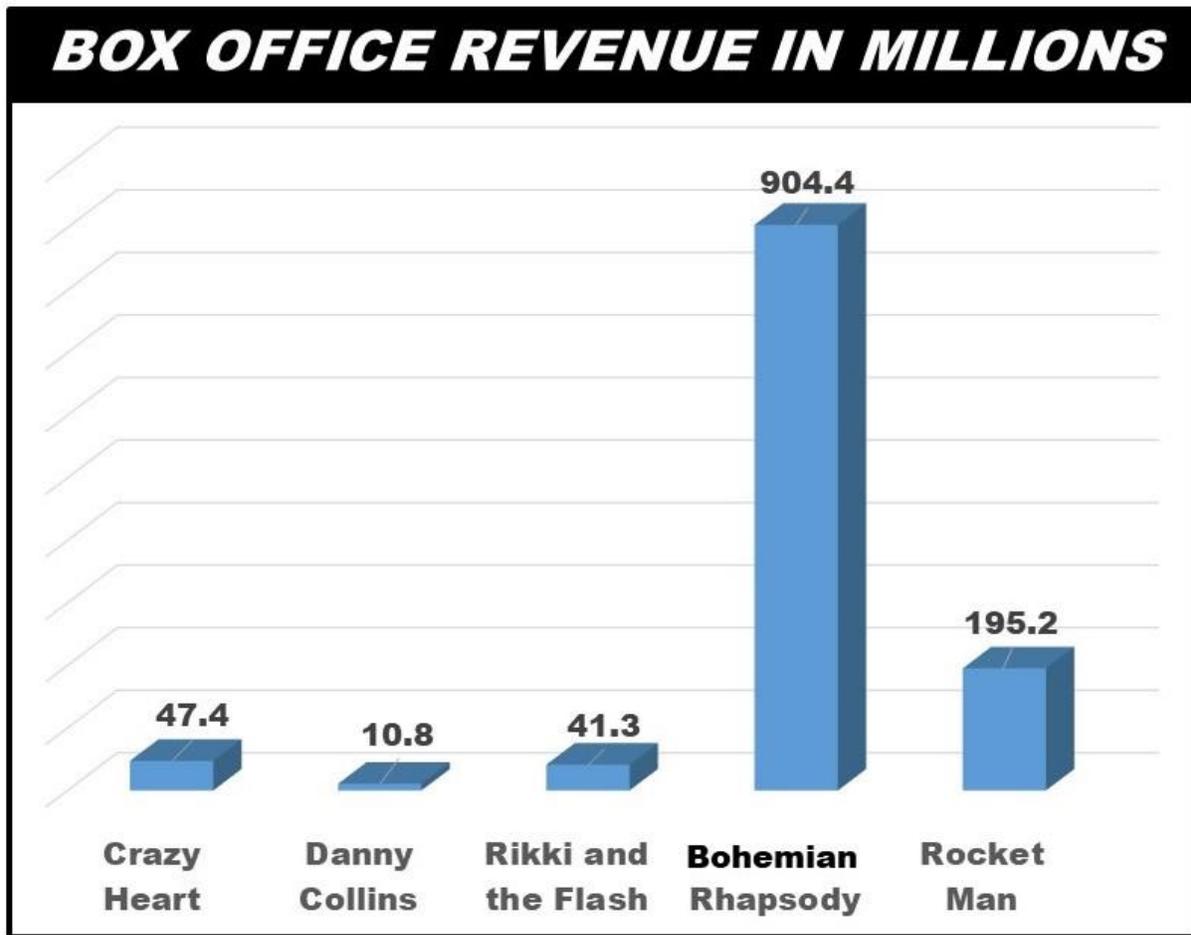
<sup>2</sup> "Popular Music Scenes and Aging Bodies" by Andy Bennett, *The Journal of Aging Studies*, 2018.

depictions of artists in their later years, in part because many of their subjects, such as Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and Jim Morrison, died young.

Also, in addition to their artistic value, films are designed to produce revenue. With a few exceptions, movies about older people are not big box office draws.<sup>3</sup> Statistics compiled by Box Office Mojo, an American website that tracks box-office revenue in a systematic, algorithmic manner, show that *Bohemian Rhapsody* and *Rocket Man* earned far more than *Danny Collins*, *Crazy Heart* and *Rikki and the Flash*. Even though the films about older performers featured some of the industry's top actors (Al Pacino, Annette Bening, Jennifer Garner and Bobby Cannavale in *Danny Collins*; Jeff Bridges, Colin Farrell and Robert Duvall in *Crazy Heart*, and Meryl Streep, Kevin Kline and Audra McDonald in *Rikki and the Flash*).

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<sup>3</sup> To understand the relationship between revenue and demographics, see "The Advertising License to Do Business: The Second Filter" in "A Propaganda Model" by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, excerpted from their book, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, 1988.



Source: Box Office Mojo (totals not adjusted for inflation)

As Ian Inglis explained in a *Popular Music History* article, “Popular music will certainly continue to be recruited into film’s commercial portfolio and pop/rock biopics will continue to be made—but on terms which satisfy a studio’s accountancy department far more than a university’s history or popular music department.”<sup>4</sup> According to MedienABC, a company that provides media education resources for teachers, the film industry covets the 15-to-24 age group: “There is huge competition to get the audience to spend their ‘leisure pound’ in the cinema, rather than somewhere else.”<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the revenue issues, filmmakers may shy away from older characters because they are not physically appealing to audiences. “We’re decaying as we get old,” former Jefferson

<sup>4</sup> “Popular Music History on Screen: The Pop Rock Biopic” by Ian Inglis, *Popular Music History*, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> “Film and Audiences.” MedienABC, nd.

Airplane lead singer Grace Slick said at an Aging in America conference in 2014. “Why don’t you see people my age in bikinis in magazines? Because it would make you throw up! ... I don’t like to see old people flapping their wings around on stage.”<sup>6</sup>

Films have occasionally provided glimpses of rock stars who are middle-aged or older. In the opening sequence of *Get On Up*, the 2014 biopic about James Brown, Chadwick Boseman plays the 55-year-old Godfather of Soul who wears a jogging suit and drives a pickup truck to his office in a strip mall. The rest of the film, however, tells Brown’s story, from his childhood in Georgia to his rise to superstardom. *Love and Mercy*, also released in 2014, shows a middle-aged Brian Wilson, portrayed by John Cusack, struggling with mental health and legal issues; much of the movie, however, depicts the Beach Boys’ heyday in the 1960s and the factors that led to Wilson’s struggles.

The best representations of older musicians in film are movies whose characters are fictional. In *Danny Collins* (2015), *Crazy Heart* (2009) and *Ricki and the Flash* (2015), filmmakers have created stories that resonate with audiences because those stories are not just stories about older musicians dealing with life issues; they are about people dealing with common life issues – and those people just happen to be musicians.

In *Danny Collins*, the title character, played by Al Pacino, is a superstar who has earned millions of dollars. He lives in a mansion and travels by private jet. But Collins realizes he is just going through the motions. “I haven’t written a song in 30 years – 30 years!” he says at the start of the film. Night after night, Collins sings the same songs he has sung for years, and his audience is filled with grey-haired senior citizens, some of them dozing while he performs. Despite his success in the music business, his life is unfulfilled, so he attempts to connect with a grown son he never knew, a son who was conceived during a one-night stand while he was on the road. The initial interactions do not go well. The son wants nothing to do with Collins, but over the course of the film, they slowly bond, and Collins finds peace and redemption.<sup>7</sup>

*Crazy Heart* tells the story of Otis “Bad” Blake, a 55-year-old country singer who enjoyed some success when he was younger but has a much different lifestyle than Danny Collins. Blake,

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<sup>6</sup> “Older Rock Stars Reflect On Aging” by Richard Eisenberg, *Forbes*, March 18, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> All movie summaries and quotes come from the author’s viewing experiences.

portrayed by Jeff Bridges, still has fans, but not enough to fill large arenas and stadiums, so he plays in small bars and bowling alleys. Instead of a private jet, he drives an old beat-up truck and travels from gig to gig in the Southwestern United States. He is an alcoholic and is generally in bad health, the result of years of an unhealthy lifestyle. As he describes himself, “I’m 57 years old. I’m broke. I’ve got ten dollars in my pocket.”

Blake is a bitter man. He is bitter that Tommy Sweet, a singer who got his start with his band, has become a superstar. He also is jealous because he sees Sweet with all the things he wishes he had. Like Danny Collins, Blake has a grown son he doesn’t know, but the focus of the film is not on son. The movie tells the story of a romantic relationship Blake develops with a young woman and her child. Their relationship does not last, but it sets him on the right path. He enters rehab and cleans up his lifestyle. He reconnects with Sweet and starts writing songs for him, earning huge royalty checks as the songs become hit recordings.

Ricki Rendazzo, the title character of *Ricki and the Flash*, is the lead singer of a house band at a small bar. Rendazzo, who is played by Meryl Streep, left her husband and three young children and moved to Los Angeles with dreams of becoming a rock star. Those dreams never panned out, so she works as supermarket cashier to support herself. Rendazzo had no relationship with her children as they grew to adulthood, but when her daughter goes into depression and attempts suicide, her ex-husband asks her to help. She returns to suburban Indiana and the gated community where her ex-husband and his wife live. The reunion with her daughter – and her whole family – does not go well at first. The experience is similar to Danny Collins’ initial interactions with his son. Eventually, after arguments, tears, tensions and awkward moments, things do work out, and the film ends on a happy note.

What do these films about a mega-star, a washed-up country singer and the leader of a bar band have in common? First, all the characters are fictional. Next, most films about rock’n’roll focus on a performer’s rise to fame and time in the spotlight. These three films all take place in the later years of each musician’s career. All three stories involve family. Danny Collins wants to build a relationship with the son he never knew. Bad Blake, shunned by his biological son, attempts to find a new family with a young woman and her child. Ricki Rendazzo needs to repair her shattered relationship with her three children.

All three movies have happy endings. The endings are not perfect, but they are happy. Collins and his son become parts of each other's lives. Bad Blake and Tommy Sweet patch things up; Sweet starts recording Blake's songs. They become hits, and Blake earns huge sums of money in royalty checks. Rendazzo goes to her son's wedding and eases the tension by hopping onstage and playing a set of songs with her band.

Although the three films have similarities with popular biopics about real entertainers, they belong in a different genre from biopics, or perhaps a sub-genre. Biopics take audiences into a world that is not theirs. Audiences get to be in the room when the Doors are creating "Light My Fire" and inside Folsom Prison as Johnny Cash performs for inmates in the 2005 film *Walk the Line*. These films peel back the curtain on a world of fame, fortune and excesses. *Danny Collins*, *Crazy Heart* and *Ricki and the Flash* do just the opposite. Instead of bringing ordinary people into the world of celebrity, they bring celebrities into the world of ordinary people. By so doing they forge stronger, more lasting connections with audiences than the major biopics.

## Part 2: Celluloid Heroes

Films have been a robust topic for scholarly research, but the literature does not include research that addresses the central argument set forth in this paper. Database searches for studies on cinema, biopics, rock stars, aging, audiences and other key words yielded books and journal articles on a variety of ancillary topics. Although these studies focus on topics other than how audiences relate to films about older, struggling musicians, they contain elements that, when woven together, support the hypothesis that such films provide audiences with stronger connections to celebrities than movies that tell the stories of superstars such as Elton John or Freddie Mercury. **The research shows that including films about fictional characters in a study of biopics about real people is valid because biopics usually contain fictional elements. The studies also show that the experiences and challenges that rock stars confront as they grow older often are the same experiences and challenges facing members of the general public. These shared experiences, when depicted in movies such as *Danny Collins*, *Crazy Heart* and *Ricki and the Flash*, create a strong bond between audiences and the characters in the films – stronger than audience bonds with the superstars whose stories are told in popular biopics.**

A popular topic in the research was authenticity. Although the three films discussed in this paper are fictional, the discussion of authenticity helps place them in context of biopics on actual people because, as Penelope Spirou explains in her “The Musical Biopic: Representing the Lives of Music Artists in 21st Century Cinema,” paper, “...the contemporary musical biopic re-mythologises the music artist, creating a fabricated account of a life history.”<sup>8</sup> In other words, films about real-life rock stars often contain elements that are not fully accurate. Hence, the research validates the inclusion of fictional films in discussions of biopics because parts of each biopic also are fictional.

In the research, scholars explored and debated ethical questions in biopics that alter facts, but they generally agreed that a film can effectively tell a story even if its depiction of an artist’s life is not 100 percent accurate. A certain degree of poetic license often is needed to translate a real-life story to film. According to Spirou, “The musical biopic demonstrates that biography is a subjective interpretation of a life history. There can be no ‘truth’ or accurate re-telling of an actual life narrative.”

Rinske Lerk, in a paper titled “Is This the Real Life? Is This Just Fantasy? A Musicological Research on Authentic Representation in Musical Biopics,” draws a distinction between authenticity and representation.<sup>9</sup> She argues that biopics are “based on facts” that represent events in artists’ lives; they are not documentaries. In an Instagram post, Queen guitarist Brian May<sup>10</sup>, who was portrayed in *Bohemian Rhapsody* and served as a creative and musical consultant for the film, articulated a similar sentiment, explaining that biopics must portray 20 years in two hours of screen time:

Think about the vast amount of situations and millions of words actually spoken in that 20 years. There is no way to tell your story without compressing timescales, moving events around, condensing multiple conversations over years into single scenes,

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<sup>8</sup> “The Musical Biopic: Representing the Lives of Music Artists in 21st Century Cinema” by Penelope Spirou, submitted to fulfill her requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of New South Wales.

<sup>9</sup> “Is This the Real Life? Is This Just Fantasy? A Musicological Research on Authentic Representation in Musical Biopics” by Rinske Lerk for a master’s degree at Utrecht University.

<sup>10</sup> May also is a scholar. He received a Ph.D. degree in astrophysics from Imperial College in 2008.

amalgamating characters, and basically leaving 99.9 percent of what actually happened out.<sup>11</sup>

May's explanation is not unique to *Bohemian Rhapsody*, nor is it new. In 2007, more than 10 years before the release of the Queen biopic, Inglis wrote, "At best, the popular music biopic can only provide a superficial account of a performer's career – one which simply scratches the surface of his or her life. To complain because it fails to do any more is to misunderstand the constraints, the objectives, and the experience of cinema."<sup>12</sup>

Of less relevance to this paper was a significant body of work that focused on the technical aspects of filmmaking and the music industry. These include papers on the impact of camera techniques<sup>13</sup> and the use of music in film.<sup>14</sup> However, portions of some of the technical studies included information of value to this paper, such as the life issues musical artists face as they grow older. For example, JoAnna Sloggy's "Growing Old as a Rock Star: A Four-Part Study of the Aging Voice" paper focuses on the effects of age in an effort to develop voice care protocol for aging rock stars. While much of the paper addresses medical and physical issues, Sloggy includes a chapter about the broader challenges confronting performers as they grow old. "Despite these challenges, most singers are driven by an imperative to ply their craft for as long as possible," she wrote.<sup>15</sup>

Sloggy's paper provides a segue to the central thesis of this paper. Singers are not alone in wanting to ply their craft as long as possible. The life issues associated with aging affect all people, not just entertainers. Teachers, engineers, scientists and others want to remain relevant and integral in the workplace. This is why *Danny Collins*, *Crazy Heart* and *Ricki and the Flash* resonate more strongly with audiences than biopics about superstars and the trappings of fame.

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<sup>11</sup> May's Instagram post, which further explains his views on authenticity in biopics may be accessed at <https://www.instagram.com/p/BypBoeDFDys/?igshid=s8f0o2xenc5j>.

<sup>12</sup> Inglis, *Ibid*.

<sup>13</sup> "My Culture, I Can Perform It, I Can Critique It: Film, Audience and Cultural Critique" by Tom Otto, *Visual Anthropology*, 2018.

<sup>14</sup> "Syncopated Beats and the History of Sadness: The Affective Fusion of Audience and Film through Music" by Kutter Callaway, *Religions*, 2016, and "Film Music Influences How Viewers Relate to Movie Characters" by Berthold Hoeckner, Emma W. Wyatt, Jean Decety and Howard Nusbaum, *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, 2011.

<sup>15</sup> "Growing Old as a Rock Star: A Four-Part Study of the Aging Voice" by JoAnna Sloggy for her doctoral dissertation at the College of Health Sciences at the University of Kentucky, 2019.

Indeed, the quantity and quality of research on how audiences relate to films and their characters is significant, and it supports the theory of this paper, namely that audiences connect with these three films because they show the human side of entertainers struggling with issues that confront the general public. Raymond Williams' exploration of why people go to the movies, theater and museums further explains what makes these three films distinct from other biopics. Williams found that some people seek entertainment; others just want to appreciate the art.<sup>16</sup> Audience members enjoy watching biopics for entertainment, but they appreciate *Danny Collins*, *Crazy Heart* and *Ricki and the Flash* on a different level.

That different level can involve what Stanley D. Williams calls a moral premise, a term he describes as a conflict of values. "The value conflict engages audiences at a value or heart level by allowing the audience to identify with the various characters and helping them decide what moral choices to make. Thus, moral suturing, is not a passive experience, but an active decision making and rooting experience," he wrote in an article summarizing the points in his 2006 book *The Moral Premise: Harnessing Virtue & Vice for Box Office Success*.<sup>17</sup>

Applying Williams' moral premise theory to *Danny Collins*, *Crazy Heart* and *Ricki and the Flash*, it becomes clear that all three films have conflicts of values that help them connect with audiences. Danny Collins feels the conflict between his successful, but unfulfilling, career and atoning for being absent from his son's life. Bad Blake is talented and kind-hearted, but he must choose to change his lifestyle in order for his true self to show. Ricki Rendazzo's conflict is between career and family. These are experiences that are not unique to entertainers. Each of these conflicts is easily relatable to audiences, more so than the conflicts that confront the rock stars depicted in biopics. **People of all types may have felt something missing in their lives, experienced jealousy at the success of a colleague or co-worker, or have had to choose between family and career.**

"The ability of narrative films to elicit sympathies, antipathies, allegiances, and other responses to fictional characters is a key element in their aesthetic success, and in their moral and

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<sup>16</sup> Raymond Williams, "'Mass Communication' and 'Minority Culture,'" excerpted from *Communications*, 1962.

<sup>17</sup> "How Filmmakers Connect With Audiences" by Stanley D. Williams, posted on *Movie Online*, nd.

ideological impact,” Carl Plantinga wrote in a 2010 *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* article.<sup>18</sup> Plantinga describes this concept as character engagement, and the concept is applicable to the lead characters in all three films. He also posits that audiences have the ability to see beyond a character’s flaws and view him or her positively. “Thus, Rick in *Casablanca*, like Jerry Maguire, may seem calloused and cynical, but the audience is made to suspect that deep down, he is a moral being who will eventually do the right thing,” he wrote. Similarly, audiences can look beyond Danny Collins’ jaded attitudes, his drug use and his infidelities. Likewise, they know there is a kind soul beneath Bad Blake’s gruff personality, and they understand that Ricki Rendazzo loves her children, even though she abandoned them to chase her dreams.

The lead characters also evoke sympathy, another one of the traits Plantinga identified. Watching Collins’ first meeting with his son is painful. Collins is rejected, and he realizes that his riches cannot buy his son’s love. Blake struggles not only with alcoholism and health issues, but a career that has been reduced to performances in small bars and bowling alleys. At night Rendazzo is the leader of a band that has a small, but enthusiastic following. During the day, she works in a grocery store and takes orders from a manager, who tells her she must smile more when she interacts with customers.

Audience members may not have encountered these exact experiences, but they can relate to them, and scholars cite identification as a factor that connects films and their audiences. “The individual character models of the filmmakers and the viewers resemble each other because they are built from comparable bodily and mental dispositions, among them shared knowledge about reality and media conventions,” Jens Eder wrote in a 2010 *Projections* article.<sup>19</sup> All three characters fit this description. Audiences can identify with Collins’ frustration, Blake’s disillusionment and Rendazzo’s disappointment. According to Jonathan Cohen, audiences connect with characters such as Collins, Blake and Rendazzo by putting themselves in the characters’ shoes.<sup>20</sup> “While strongly identifying, the audience member ceases to be aware of his or her social role as an audience member and temporarily (but usually repeatedly) adopts the

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<sup>18</sup> “I Followed the Rules, and They All Loved You More’: Moral Judgment and Attitudes toward Fictional Characters in Film by Carl Plantinga, *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 2010.

<sup>19</sup> “*Understanding characters*” by Jens Eder, *Projections*, 2010.

<sup>20</sup> “Defining Identification: A Theoretical Look at the Identification of Audiences With Media Characters” by Jonathan Cohen, *Mass Communication & Society*, 2001.

perspective of the character with whom he or she identifies,” he wrote in a 2001 *Mass Communication & Society* article.

Many biopics have these same factors – conflict, sympathy, allegiance, identification -- that facilitate audiences’ connections with films, but the connections fostered by films such as *Danny Collins*, *Crazy Heart* and *Ricki and the Flash* are stronger and easier to make. Audiences meet Collins, Blake and Rendazzo as people with real-life issues whereas they enter the theater already knowing who Freddie Mercury or Elton John are, but knowing them from afar, making it difficult to relate to their offstage struggles regardless of how real those struggles may be.

Research also suggests that audiences are more likely to connect with fictional characters such as Collins, Blake and Rendazzo rather than real people. “Though they are fictional stories, the basis of believable fiction is reality because it is written by real people to evoke real social thoughts, feelings, and behaviors,” Karen E. Dill-Shackleford, Cynthia Vinney and Kristin Hopper-Losenicky wrote in a 2006 *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* article.<sup>21</sup>

Studies conducted by researchers support the suggestion that audiences relate well to fictional characters. Juan-Jose Igarta oversaw three separate studies in which a total of 300 participants completed questionnaires or were interviewed immediately after watching films.<sup>22</sup> “The results obtained in the three studies support the centrality of this construct in analyzing the effects of media entertainment, in particular fictional feature films,” he wrote in a 2010 *Communications* article. “It was confirmed empirically that identification with characters not only gives rise to enjoyment of audiovisual narration (hypothesis 1), but also contributes to explaining its affective (hypothesis 2) and cognitive impact (hypothesis 3a).”

A team of researchers from several universities in the United Kingdom developed a methodology for quantitative studies of film audiences. Their paper, published in *Cultural Trends* in 2019, primarily is an explanation of the methodology and how it was developed, but their work did

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<sup>21</sup> “Connecting the dots between fantasy and reality: The social psychology of our engagement with fictional narrative and its functional value” by Karen E. Dill-Shackleford, Cynthia Vinney and Kristin Hopper-Losenicky, *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 2016.

<sup>22</sup> “Identification with characters and narrative persuasion through fictional feature films” by Juan-Jose Igarta, *Communications*, 2010.

show that audience members' personal lives affect not only their relationships with film characters, but also their decisions on what films to watch.<sup>23</sup>

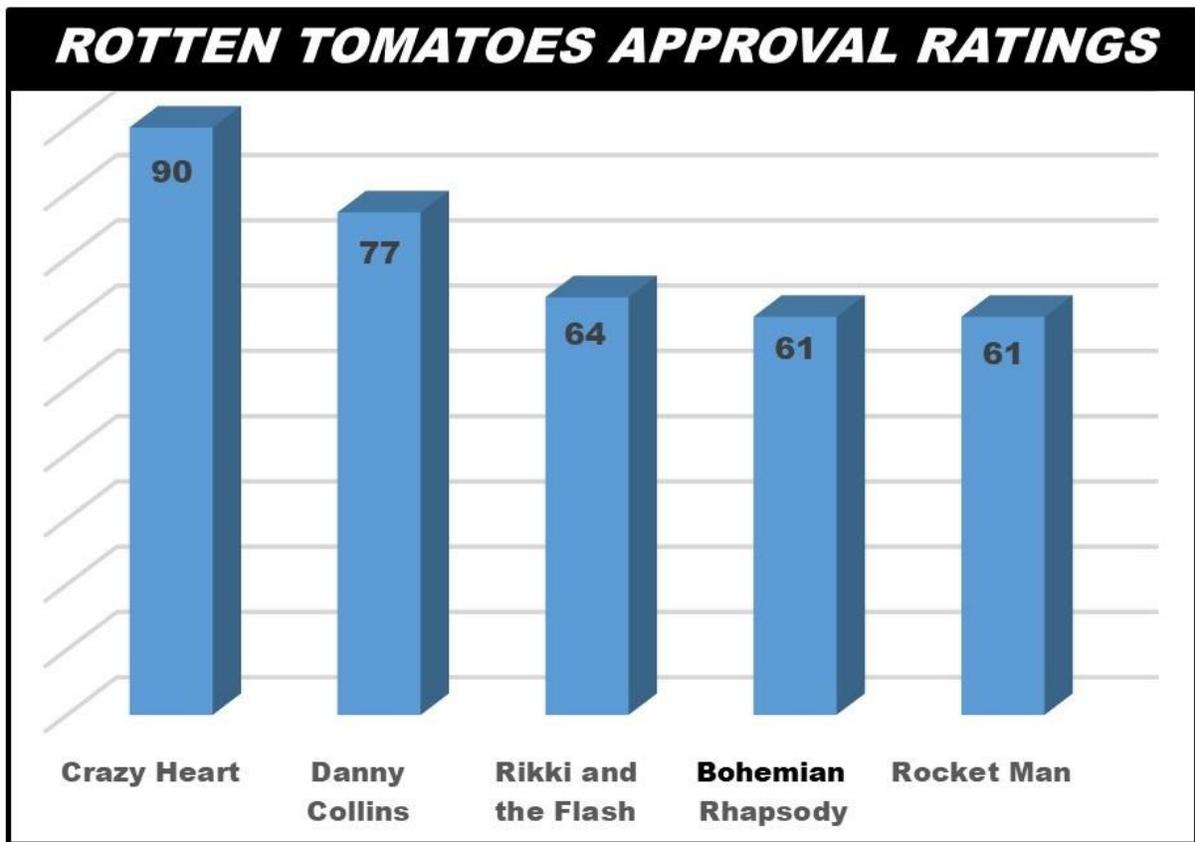
### Conclusion

The literature on the relationship between films and audience lends support to part of the theory of this paper. *Danny Collins*, *Crazy Heart* and *Ricki and the Flash* check all the boxes needed to resonate with viewers. Each film has a moral premise; they elicit empathy, sympathy and allegiance, and the characters are people with whom viewers can identify. However, the second part of the theory – that these audiences have deeper connections with these three films than with biopics about major rock stars – is more difficult to prove. The biopics check all but one of the boxes needed to resonate with audiences. Unlike *Danny Collins*, *Crazy Heart* and *Ricki and the Flash*, they depict the lives of real people. Research shows viewers are more likely to connect with fictional characters than real people.

This paper suggests that audiences forge stronger connections with *Danny Collins*, *Crazy Heart* and *Ricki and the Flash* because the characters in these films deal with issues that are common to the general public, whereas the issues rock stars confront in the biopics are unique to the world of superstardom, or if not unique, colored by the trappings of superstardom so the experiences are less similar to those encountered by everyday people. Data on Rotten Tomatoes, a film-rating site that includes ratings from audience members, lends support to this hypothesis. *Danny Collins*, *Crazy Heart* and *Ricki and the Flash*, received higher ratings than *Bohemian Rhapsody* and *Rocket Man*.

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<sup>23</sup> "Using mixed-methods, a data model and a computational ontology in film audience research" by Bridgette Wessel et al, *Cultural Trends*, 2019.



Source: Rotten Tomatoes

While this is a logical observation, it cannot account for the fact that every individual will connect (or not connect) with films based on his or her own life experiences. For example, a person who has chosen to break longstanding family traditions and obligations is likely to connect with the parts of *Bohemian Rhapsody* that show a young Farrokh Bulsara engaging in difficult conversations over family dinners. Other factors, such as the quality of the actors and their performances, also are likely to affect how people relate to films.

The studies described in this paper yielded empirical data on audiences' relationships with films, as well as a methodology to measure those relationships. Data always is valuable, but its value is limited when attempting to quantify human emotions. In fact, any attempt to determine how people relate to films, or any piece of art, is destined to be subjective. In the words of Raymond

Williams: “Great art can give us deep and lasting experiences, but the experience we get from many things we rightly call art is often light and temporary.”<sup>24</sup>

Whether a film provides an experience that is “deep and lasting” or one that is “light and temporary” depends more upon the viewer than the filmmaker.

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<sup>24</sup> Raymond Williams, *Ibid.*

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