

## **The Mimic of Art (Jackie's Box's Content Farm Commentary)**

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Five Nights at Freddy's (or FNAF) is a popular horror indie game about working the nightshift at a Chucky Cheese esque animatronic pizza place which also happens to be the site of various child murders. How fun! The game blew up in late 2013 to critical acclaim for its creepy characters, immersive sound design, and addicting gameplay loop. While a horror game, FNAF struck the balance of a creepy cute aesthetic that would influence the "Mascot Horror" genre, which became synonymous with essentially being "horror, but for kids!". FNAF garnered a young but dedicated fanbase that generated various fanworks to show their love and dedication to the franchise.

However, as comes with all fame will come those who seek to capitalize on it. As would become a staple in the "Mascot Horror" genre, "content farms" arose. These would be channels creating "slop" or rushed/mediocre content in order to turn a quick profit on popular trends. "Content farms" are notorious for rarely if ever prioritizing individual artistic vision and instead aiming to say enough buzzwords possible to hit certain view counts. Whilst the content farm phenomena has haunted FNAF's fanbase for years, as news of a new FNAF game, "Secrets of the Mimic", began to spread, so too did a rising satirist who sought to poke fun at this pattern and how the art of fansong songwriting had devolved over time.

"Jackie's Box" by XTRATUNAMUSIC is...let's call it a challenging listen. Released before the game it was based on was even out, the song is an incredibly surface level reading of what could potentially be the events of "Secrets of the Mimic" based on limited information. From its first few seconds, Jackie's Box's instrumental begs to escape. The titular "Jackie" is a clown, and thus the song honors this by playing a horrifically pitched, warbling version of "Entry of the Gladiators", a song that has become synonymous with the theme of the circus. The song also has an intriguing visual setup of an ever looming png of the character, creating a sense of impending doom the longer you sit and listen. The song also utilizes various voice changer

effects common for portraying the animatronics in the FNAF community. All of these factors combine together to create the most disorienting experience possible especially when paired with the lyrics.

Speaking of the lyrics, Jackie's Box opens with a simple, yet definitive refrain. "MY NAME IS THE [REDACTED] MIMIC, OH YEAH." And it repeats again. "MY NAME IS THE [REDACTED] MIMIC, OH YEAH." Even from its first line, the song contradicts itself. If "Jackie's Box" is about the Mimic, who is Jackie? Are they separate entities? This question is never answered in the song itself so it's truly up to the viewer to decide. This is a staple mistake made in many content farm songs of which they often get information blatantly wrong about the franchises they are parodying.

As the song progresses, we see various bold artistic choices such as rhyming die with die. The song's lyrics consistently set themselves up only to flatline at the last minute, as seen with the rhyming schemes. This could be an example of triviality considering it represents how the lyrics of these content farm fansongs tend to lack any real artistic thought or meaning behind their lyrics and instead lean towards simple repetition. With absurdist remarks such as "Watch me shoot my secret cannon" and various "uh" flourishes, the lyrics are reminiscent of children making up lyrics they don't know as they go along and eventually devolving into mumbled garbled nonsense.

Most shocking about the song's lyrical structure however would be its attempts to have a narrative despite not being meant to have one. Lines such as "the way I disperse grief" are weirdly maturely put amongst the otherwise childish threats and remarks. It stands out like a sore thumb thus calling attention to a narrative that is begging to exist whilst being snuffed out before it even had the chance. This amongst other choices, such as using actual information such as the mention of the actual factory setting of the game misleads the audience. Is this genuine? Or is it all a big joke? However, as I mentioned before, the narrative isn't allowed to exist, so with the additional quick delivery of "MIMIC" we dive into the instrumental break. This

switch creates a sense of dissonance that forces you to sit with the absurdity of the lyrics and just laugh. It plays into how many of these fansongs tend to just say the name of the characters they are parodying or essentially point at keywords mentioned in trailers or press releases in order to allude to some sort of story without doing any real work.

In Verse 2 of the song we are introduced to Edwin, who made the mimic. We know this because he says it to us directly. Edwin's introduction is a key example of content farms needing to find ANYTHING to garner views. Edwin is represented by a low quality, almost astonishingly low effort png of a shadowy man. The lack of professional presentation makes it again, hard to take this video as a serious attempt at a song and more a comedic stand up routine. Edwin also dishes out a remark of "Singing this stupid song" which is a callback/reference to one of FNAF's most popular fan songs "It's Been So Long". The song is known for being a beloved staple of the community, but it is also well known in the broader public due to the dumbing down of its messaging through the "Man behind the slaughter" memes that arose in 2020. This small reference not only shows how these content farms often are piggy backing off the success of other more thoughtful/intentional works but also how these fansongs often fall victim to the cycle of losing their messaging in the widespread sharing of content on the internet. This would be a cycle even this very song would fall into as it became a widespread joke online. However, we close just as we started. This man's name is Edwin...but did he make the mimic? He doesn't tell us again so maybe we should ask him again just to be sure.

As the chorus kicks in again, we are met with a mix of simple threats and callbacks to Edwin via him nonsensically stating his name again. Something like "something went so wrong" or "and now I can't do anything" would make logistical sense given what the chorus is trying to say, but instead we once again are told what a character's name is and not much else. This calls out the pattern of these content farms emphasizing surface level things like the names or base details of these characters rather than truly trying to get at why people love them so much

Then we transition into Verse 3 where we are introduced to David. The third of our "My name is"s thus far. They say insanity is doing the same thing over and over again expecting a different result, which brings into question how the songwriter is doing after writing "my name is" as a lyric so many times. David's character motivation is simple: he wants ice cream, another David, and a ball. He runs out on the road, and a car hits him. He screams and dies. This anecdote which takes up an ENTIRE verse, gets this, has NOTHING to do with the mimic. It has nothing to do with Edwin even! Everything in this section is completely and utterly meaningless, just edgy wordslop used to build up filler time in a song that never ends. This too pokes at how empty these content farms content ends up being in the end, they will truly grasp at any straws to get a few views. Like Eve eating the forbidden fruit of knowledge, David attempts to eat some ice cream and faces the brunt of the universe's cruelty. Many such cases. Verse 3 showcases Jackie's box's biggest strength which is its tonal whiplash. We have a delightful little child who gets hit by a car, a killer robot who can only spout out childish threats, and a depressed inventor who regrets his creation, yet we don't even know what went wrong. Again, this song is constantly fighting to have a narrative yet is smothered by the fact in its own meta narrative it is meant to be nothing more than a cheap piece of content. It is stopped before it could even begin to have a life. This is the true tragedy of slop content, and Jackie's box portrays that tragic scenario perfectly, as you can't help but hold out hope that maybe something of substance will arrive from the song.

As we progress into verse 4 now, we are again introduced to...Jackie? But isn't Jackie the Mimic? You'd think so given the fact we see the same graphic on screen from before. However, it morphs and changes into a different character partway through. With more threats about Jackie's "clown power", we see again how these sort of threats throughout the entire song show the comedic technique of hyperbole. Using these exaggerated over the top threats, Jackie's box satirizes how the content farm can't even have the integrity to be faithful to the fear invoked by the original characters and instead make a complete edgy mockery of its source.

This is additionally backed up via the juvenile use of cussing in order to make the song seem more "mature". As the outro comes in, the song keeps hitting its beat for about 10 seconds, phase in and out TWICE at the end and is finally concluded when paired with the remark of "Robot Deactivated". This mimics (ha) a common tactic used in content farm content is the stretching out of the content to cover as many minutes as humanly possible, even if those minutes aren't full of anything meaningful. This is a key mocking of that practice.

Overall, Jackie's box is a satirical cautionary tale of the distortion of the genuine and sincere nature of the art of fan material evolving into meaningless content slop. It shows us how companies will prioritize laziness and lack of craftsmanship if it will turn them into a quick buck. However, despite its scathing critique, the song has become beloved in the FNAF community for its absurdity. Ironically, by portraying the insincere, Jackie's box shows a love and care for the fansong community unlike any other. The song overall signals to me at least, a message to create more meaningful work. Another piece of irony to have come from all of this as well is that "Secret of the Mimic" was severely underadvertised before the creation of this song, so Jackie's Box is a huge part of why it even got the traction that it did. In a way, this satire looped around to do good for the community it wanted to better, and I think for that and its other poignant hilarious messages, it deserves to be appreciated for what it is. Jackie's box is the worst song of all time, but in a way, that also makes it the best.