

“Aladdin”

By Helen Lutz

Once upon a time, a long time ago, Disney turned fairy tales into beautiful animated movies leaving us humming/singing the tunes as we left theaters. Recently Disney has resurrected these ‘cartoons’ as new live action feature films. We’ve seen live action “Jungle Book” – it was okay, not my favorite; live action “Alice in Wonderland” – left me cold; live action “Dumbo” – still didn’t like the dancing elephants; live action “Cinderella” – not bad, I own a copy; and live action “Beauty and the Beast” – beautifully done.



The latest movie to hit the Disney list of cartoons turned live action films is “Aladdin,” currently in theaters everywhere. The cartoon version was okay; we watched it the other night with the grandkids. They didn’t fight too hard when bedtime came around as long as we promised that we would leave it at their house and ask mommy to let them finish it the next day – it was a little less than magical. The star and saving grace for the cartoon was the amazing talent the late Robin Williams brought to the role of the Genie; hard shoes to fill.

The movie “Aladdin” opens with a story being told to children by their father, nice touch. The father takes the kids’ imaginations on a wild ride as they join ‘street rat’ Aladdin (Mena Massoud) in the fantasy Middle Eastern marketplace of Agrabah. Aladdin, with his pet monkey Abu, must steal in order to eat which forces them to run, keeping one step ahead of the authorities and their giant swords. Aladdin, however, is also shown to have a heart of gold caring for others.

During the opening sequence set to Disney song “Arabian Nights” Aladdin takes us through the marketplace as he escapes police and meets a lovely young lady who is also caught ‘stealing.’ The two evade capture ending up in Aladdin’s unique home. It’s not until later that Aladdin learns that the young lady is none other than the beautiful princess Jasmine (Naomi Scott).

The movie follows along the story line of the animation with a lion cave which houses untold riches as well as a precious lamp which can only be entered by ‘the diamond in the rough.’ The Sultan’s trusted, but evil, vizier Jafar (Marwan Kenzari) yearns to be much more than number two searching for the diamond of the rough who can enter the cave and retrieve the lamp – and find the diamond he does in the person of Aladdin.

Aladdin and Abu make their way through the cave of riches as Aladdin searches for the precious lamp; however, Abu has been trained to steal. Unfortunately, Abu acquires a large gem just as Aladdin locates the lamp and the two find themselves trapped deep within the cave along with an interesting magic carpet but no hope for escape. Wondering about the old lamp Aladdin polishes it a bit. Much to his surprise the Genie (Will Smith) of the lamp appears and the story begins...

Smith makes the Genie his own instead of trying to mimic Williams. The Genie is blue, fun and street wise with a large hair knot. It’s fun to watch as Aladdin is eventually transformed into a prince soliciting the hand of the lovely Jasmine. What is special about Jasmine in the movie version is that she is her own woman – why does she have to marry? Why can’t the ancient laws be changed to allow for a female sultan? The movie runs just a bit long for a kids’ movie (two hours), but holds our interest throughout with its bold colors and entertaining Genie. On a scale of one to four Hart Beats I give “Aladdin” TWO 1/2 HARTS. It provides a well told story for kids of all ages, even young-at-heart kids like me.