

ALADDIN

THE MUSICAL MASTERPIECE EDITION

A Walt Disney Pictures / Disney Home DVD Presentation
Directed by Ron Clements & John Musker
Written by Roger Allers & Ron Clements
Original score by Alan Menken

A film review by Franco P. Visser

No, your eyes are not deceiving you, and yes, you did read correctly! The film I am reviewing for this edition of the journal is the musically re-mastered edition of the original 1992 Disney Studios animation-adventure release Aladdin. As I took to the recliner, determined and on my way to review the film Stephanie Daley (Redbone Films / Silverwood Films / Pathé Production) a small but significant tingle of excitement stirred inside me as I saw the 'new' Aladdin being advertised on television. And these were my thoughts behind changing the film to be reviewed: with our current national climate of political tension, economic uncertainty and brilliant fuel costs, the foreign political developments (or lack thereof), and a general feeling amongst the people of tension and stress, I felt it high time to take a step or two back and revert, maybe 'regress' to times when things were easier and less pressured, when Aladdin followed a series of animation-adventure films such as Little Mermaid, Beauty and the Beast, Sinbad, the Lion King and the like to the enjoyment of millions of people all over the world – children AND adults.

Much of what mental health professionals have to deal with every day, both professionally and personally can be described as 'heavy', dreary, heartbreak and tension filled. Well, take a bit of time out, kick off the shoes, loosen those muscles, warm up the vocal chords and join me for a rather intriguing, entertaining and enjoyable journey!

From the moment that the films' title flashes in gold through red flames one is transported to the Arabia of old and the feeling of warm, romantic and floral Arabian nights washes over you like a fresh rainstorm on a hot Highveld summers' evening. No draining and complicated characters and plot to follow here. The old notion of good-triumphs-over-evil is the main story-line to remember, and the rest is well, just pure unadulterated fun. Aladdin (voiced by Scott Weinger), a 'street urchin' and 'street rat', accompanied by his very naughty and skilled companion monkey Abu (voiced by Frank Welker), meet the Princess Jasmine (voiced by Linda Larkin) on a chance encounter in a busy Arabian market. They connect instantly albeit that Aladdin does not realise who Jasmine is until the palace guards appear to arrest him for theft and Jasmine demands his release. Jasmine's father, The Sultan (voiced by Douglas Seale) longs for his daughter to get married, and he has reached his wits' end as Jasmine keeps on rejecting one suitor after another.

But as with all good fairy stories, there must be an evil character; here in Aladdin in the form of Jafar (voiced by Jonathan Freeman), the



court vizier (I ran to the Oxford Dictionary and this is what it said: Vizier – an important official in some Muslim countries, origin Arabic), and Iago, his very vocal and cheeky companion parrot voiced by Gilbert Gottfried. Jafar, together with Iago plots to over-throw the Sultan and marry Jasmine and claim the throne of Agrabah. Aladdin meanwhile, unsuccessfully used by Jafar to obtain a magic lamp and with it the most outrageous, clever, witty and loyal blue Genie (voiced by Robin William, so you can imagine!) gets to have himself created Prince Ali Ababwa, a very rich and strong middle-eastern royal. In so doing he can claim Jasmine's hand in marriage as Agrabah law states that only someone from noble descent can marry the Princess Jasmine. And by this time Aladdin has

fallen desperately in love with her. The rest of the story I leave up to you to discover and enjoy.

What makes this musical edition special is the fact that it has a sing-along bonus feature, and for those of us with artistic inclinations, or for those just brave enough to 'live' a little and risk opening up their vocal chords and 'letting it rip' throughout the house, this feature is extremely enjoyable. Whenever there is a song in the movie, the lyrics automatically appear and you can thus sing along, and so you must. Aladdin – the musical masterpiece edition was thus specifically chosen as an hour or two of pure relaxation and enjoyment, time taken out to risk and let the inhibitions (the vocal ones at least) go.

And this is the invitation: take time out of your busy and pressured filled lives and do something to 'treat' the inner child that still resides in each of you. Disney was created for magic, and some might argue 'yes well, sure, for kids of course...' but no, magic in all its forms are for adults too, especially those in whom the inner child is still very much alive and present. Let me be very clear that I am aware that there is a difference between child-like, immature and childish, but with this review I am talking about spending time 'nurturing' and 'treating' your inner child to some limitless, especially 'vocal' fun. Escape to the magic that is Aladdin and experience again that special feeling you get when enjoying a good animated adventure film, with no worries, anxiety or heartache present. "When the wind's from the east and the sun's from the west, and the sand in the glass is right, come on down, stop on by, hop a carpet and fly, to another Arabian night..." Afterwards as a matter of course you should eat candy, drink sodas and eat ice-cream just to make sure that 'little-you' had a great day. Now all sing in chorus: Your wish is my command!