

‘Cinderella’ Finds New Magic in Old Fairy Tale

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on March 13, 2015 - 12:20am

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Rating: **4.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – In the years since “Shrek,” the fractured fairy tale has become Hollywood’s default approach. We’ve been treated to so many irreverent and increasingly labored treatments of storybook characters, that Walt Disney Pictures’ new live-action “Cinderella” comes off as relatively fresh by comparison.

There’s just enough overblown CGI special effects to keep young audiences entertained, especially once the fairy godmother (Helena Bonham Carter) shows up, but not so much that they overshadow the story at the center of things. This is a straight-forward adaptation of the classic fairy tale that treats it as more than just kids stuff. It’s undoubtedly for kids, but director Kenneth Branagh and screenwriter Chris Weitz highlight the sort of aristocratic skirmishes you might find on Downton Abbey – and they’ve raided the prestigious British drama for some of its cast too.



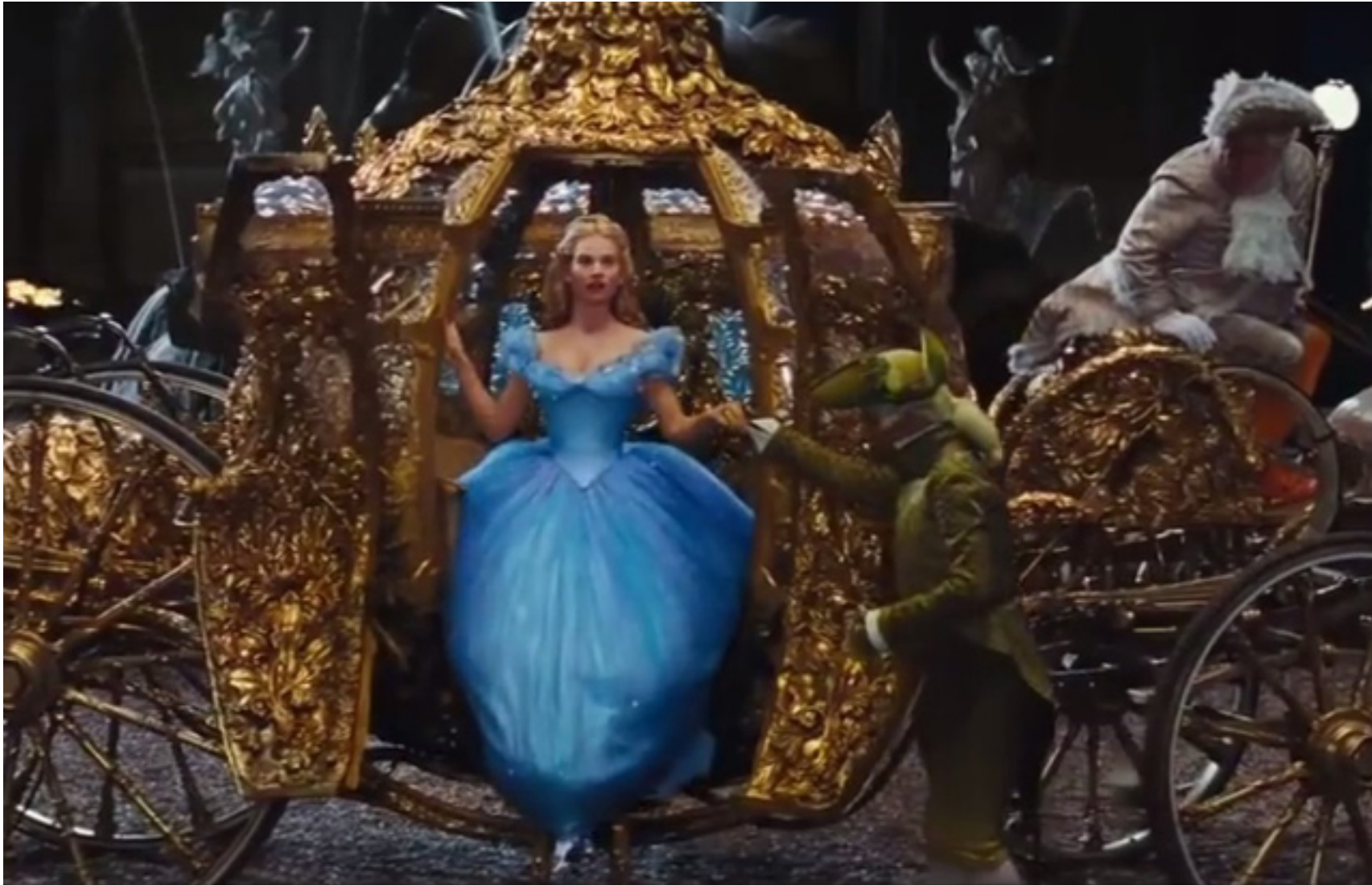
Lily James as the Title Character in ‘Cinderella’

Photo credit: Walt Disney Pictures

Lily James plays up Cinderella’s sweetness while fleshing out some of her other qualities. She’s undoubtedly an ideal of innocence, but James never gives off a whiff of naivete. She’s a woman who doesn’t have to take the abuse that’s heaped upon her, but rather she chooses to be kind to those who refuse to be kind to her.

Two-time Oscar-winner Cate Blanchett plays the impeccably dressed wicked stepmother, while Sophie McShera and Holliday Grainger are the two wicked stepsisters. Anyone expecting the ugly hags from the Disney animated classic will find that these villains have been given a “Devil Wears Prada” makeover.

None of these “wicked” characters are ever seen in anything that wouldn’t be at home on the runways of Paris – with Blanchett in particular parading around in a series of stunning outfits while her eyes shoot daggers at the youth and beauty of Cinderella. The film follows the recent trend of trying to give a back story to its villains to make their evil more understandable. Thankfully director Branagh keeps this to a minimum.



Traveling in Style with ‘Cinderella’

Photo credit: Walt Disney Pictures

There’s also some palace intrigue in the prince’s court courtesy of mustache twirling schemer Stellan Skarsgard, but it’s Helena Bonham Carter’s bippity boppity boop routine that was the biggest hit with my twins. She first shows up in disguise, but after a little Hollywood magic she’s the very picture of a fairy godmother with wings, and for reasons known only to herself, very very large teeth. Carter certainly makes the most of her screen time and seems to be having a lot of fun. She’s the closest this adaptation comes to irreverence.

As it is, Disney has found a way to revive another old chestnut. It’s not an overblown spectacle the way their “Alice In Wonderland” was, and some may call it dry or unimpressive, but it knows exactly what it wants to do. It’s the kind of movie that people say they don’t make anymore – a simple fairy tale with a good message that mothers, fathers and children can all enjoy together. And that just might be the rarest pleasure of them all.

“Cinderella” opens everywhere on March 12th. Featuring Cate Blanchett, Lily James, Helena Bonham Carter, Richard Madden, Sophie McShera, Holliday Grainger, Stellan Skarsgard, Derek Jacobi, Ben Chaplin, Nonso Anozie, Rob Brydon and Alex Macqueen. Screenplay by Chris Weitz. Directed by Kenneth Branagh. Rated “PG”



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