

Rating: 3 out of 4

Running Time: 95 minutes

This animated feature from Disney opened exclusively in cinemas on Wednesday, Nov. 22.

As every reader already knows, over the years Disney has crafted some of the best animated features ever made. Lately, the studio has been attempting to use their famous brand to create live-action remakes of these titles, but now they are also introducing tie-ins to classics within their animation line. Their latest is *Wish* and it is something of an origin story for the celestial body referenced in "When You Wish Upon a Star," from the masterpiece,

Pinocchio

. The end result is perfectly entertaining, although the film does pale in comparison to the previous works that it makes references to.

This tale is set in the seemingly happy Kingdom of the Rosas, located in the Mediterranean Sea. Their leader, King Magnifico (Chris Pine), is a sorcerer who uses his magical powers to protect his citizens. Those who choose to live on the island go through a ceremony on their 18th birthday in which they provide the king with their deepest wish. He keeps them and, on occasion, makes some of them come true.

Teenager Asha (Ariana DeBose) excitedly interviews to be his apprentice, hoping to make the wish of her 100-year-old grandfather Sabino (Victor Garber) become a reality. However, she immediately becomes nervous about the king's immense power. Asha, believing that wishes shouldn't be the property of anyone, attempts to free her grandfather's deepest desire, while drawing the help of a powerful star from the sky. After the king brands her a traitor, she must hide from all and try to convince friends and family that their leader may be villainous.

This is animated using modern technology, but the visual style does emulate Disney titles from the 1930s and 1940s. Stylistically, the approach works extremely well and the movie looks gorgeous as viewers travel through the seaside village, castle and surrounding forest.

And, as in most other Disney titles, the unique creatures from both space and the animal kingdom are very cute to behold. The jolly but shy star is fun to watch, as is Valentino (Alan Tudyk), a goat who is given and takes full advantage of the ability to talk.

There are also a couple of impressive musical numbers. An unexpected dance from the residents of an enclosure in the castle is one of the film's most memorable moments. It provides a big laugh, although opportunities for the protagonists to slyly joke about how what is occurring around them may or may not be "a wish" aren't maximized to their fullest.

The songs performed by the protagonist are fine, but the strongest track actually comes from King Magnifico, as his frustrations rise to the surface and he embraces his dark journey into black magic. This character is actually the most memorable in the film, although families should be warned that as he becomes more obsessed with eliminating the lead, what results is likely too intense and frightening for very young viewers.

Truthfully, the fact that the villain is so dynamic makes another flaw apparent. The lead, and especially her human friends, don't feel as unique, distinctive or developed.

Additionally, the tone of the film does become quite dark toward the climax, resulting in a song that is essentially about fomenting a revolution. Such a number certainly works in adult-oriented material like *Les Misérables*, but feels out of place here. At least the movie doesn't go any further in this direction, avoiding the necessity for a follow-up number about a worse topic.

The end result of the animated effort is something of a mixed bag. This movie looks marvelous, has some fun moments and includes a couple of catchy tunes. But the human heroes don't make as big of an impression and the story doesn't get creative with individual wishes, which could have added more humor and spectacle to the proceedings. *Wish* is a solid animated feature, but one that isn't likely to make as lasting an impression as one might hope for.

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