

REACTING TO MOVIES

BY JOHANNA BURNS
Managing Editor

One of my earliest memories is sitting on my diapered booty watching, for the first of what would be a thousand times, a girl fall in love with a beast. Since that moment, "Beauty and the Beast" has been my favorite movie. So when Disney debuted its live action remake of a tale as old as time last weekend, I went in knowing I might be disappointed. I shouldn't have worried.

Going into the theater I had two concerns — storyline and music. As so often happens with resonances, each retelling of a story changes the plot to suit their purposes, their style. The 1991 animated version of "Beauty and the Beast" differed significantly from the original fairy tale, focusing less on Belle's backstory and more on the Beast's backstory. In the fairy tale, Belle's father is a merchant in reduced circumstances, her mother is present and well, and Belle is one of three daughters. The animated movie simplifies that storyline, eliminating the character of the mother and sisters, and instead focuses on how the Beast came to be cursed.

To my delight, the remake kept elements of both versions by sticking closely to the Beast's backstory while leaving a trail of clues for Belle's backstory that culminates in a dramatic scene in Paris. The result is a satisfying tribute to previous stories that still offers something

new to audiences intimately familiar with the Beauty and the Beast story.

For most Disney fans, the work of Howard Ashman and Alan Menken borders on the spiritual. The songs of the 1991 classic were what drove the storyline, even going so far as to actually tell the story at times. I knew, for this movie to be successful in my eyes, the work of Howard Ashman had to be honored. I felt safe going in knowing Alan Menken was still responsible for the score, and I was curious to see what changes he might make, if any.

For the most part, it stayed true to the original soundtrack, as it included classics such as "Be Our Guest," "Something There" and of course, "Beauty and the Beast." However, I was surprised by the number of new songs. The addition of songs like "How Does a Moment Last Forever" and "Days in the Sun" were not particularly memorable, but I recognize their use in the story. The one new song that I did truly enjoy was "Evermore." It was refreshing for the Beast to have his own song, and placing it at the moment of the movie when Belle leaves made it so stirring. I was surprised to find myself tearing up. There's been a lot of controversy regarding Emma Watson's — and other actors' — ability to sing. While I agree singing isn't Watson's forte, I was willing to sacrifice that point for her superb acting skills. She brought a force to Belle's character that was missing

from the animated movie and cemented the character as ahead of her time.

This wouldn't be a review of "Beauty and the Beast" if we didn't talk about the library. In the animated movie, the library scene serves as a turning point in the Beast and Belle's relationship. As a child, I nearly worshiped that library — to be honest I probably still do. It's safe to say that I was positively drooling to see what Disney would do with CGI technology. The lead into the scene was promising. With the stunning detail of the castle — the entire castle is reminiscent of the opulence of Versailles — and landscapes, I expected the library to be jaw-dropping. To my disappointment, we were only given a quick glimpse of the library. However, the attention was focused on the playful interaction between Belle and the Beast in the library. Disney chose to have the two bond, not over a gift, but over the joy of literature itself. In the end, the touching banter over books more than made up for my quashed dreams of library aesthetic.

My only recommendation — don't see it in 3-D. I found it distracting, even nauseating, until halfway through the movie.

I give this remake a solid B. It doesn't live up to the hype the way the Cinderella remake did, but it stays true to its roots while finding new and magical ways to delight audiences. I look forward to more Disney remakes — cough, cough, "Mulan" and "The Lion King" — to come.

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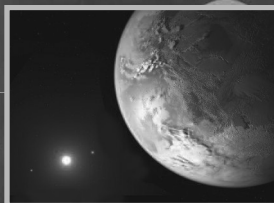
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DOES GOD EXIST?

One Scientist's Look at Evidence of God



A devout atheist until his early 20s, John Clayton was part of the same organized atheist group that made Madeline Murray O'Hair famous. He decided to write a book called *All the Stupidity of the Bible*, but instead found himself slowly becoming convinced about Christianity. Today, he travels the U.S. giving some 40 lectures per year on the subject "Does God Exist?" He is a retired teacher and geologist by profession, having taught for 41 years in public schools in South Bend, Indiana. He holds a B.S. from Indiana University in Education with a concentration in Physics and Mathematics. He holds an M.S. from Indiana University in Education with a concentration in Chemistry and Psychometry. He also holds an M.S. from the University of Notre Dame in Geology and Earth Science. Mr. Clayton has received numerous teaching awards. He maintains a popular website that stresses that science and faith are not enemies, but friends. His website is <http://www.doesgodexist.org/>

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Sat. March 25 What Is God & Who Created God? VH 1000, 7-9 PM, Q&A till 10 PM

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