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Aladdin (DVD) Review

By Britt Gillette

Anxious to follow up on the massive commercial and critical success of Beauty And The Beast,

Disney created another animated masterpiece with Aladdin. Although not nearly as successful in terms of critical acclaim as the aforementioned film, or later Disney creations such as The Lion King and Finding Nemo, Aladdin is nevertheless just as entertaining and probably the funniest of all the animated Disney features. With the voice of Robin Williams leading the way, the film is a non-stop foray into the timeless fantasy world of A Thousand And One Arabian Nights spliced together with the rapier-like wit and quick-fire humor of one of America's most talented comic performers...

The film takes place hundreds of years ago in the windswept sands of the kingdom of Agrabah, where a young street urchin named Aladdin wanders the streets, stealing and hustling for survival. Along the way, he's joined by his loyal companion Abu, a clever and enterprising monkey. Yet, in stark contrast to the poverty-ridden streets below, the lustrous facade of a massive palace towers high above the urban world of Aladdin. Inside, the Sultan of Agrabah lives a carefree life of opulence and luxury with his beautiful daughter Jasmine and a cunning, ambitious adviser named Jafar.

Forced to spend her days inside the palace walls, the headstrong Princess Jasmine sneaks out in order to experience the world around her. During this dangerous trek through the streets of her kingdom, the girl befriends Aladdin who is immediately awestruck by her beauty. But when Princess Jasmine's escape is brought to the attention of Jafar and her father, she is quickly rounded up, and Aladdin is thrown in prison. Hoping to seize the kingdom for himself, Jafar enlists the aid of Aladdin in an effort to obtain a fabled magic lamp, the purported powers of which are unlimited. Legend has it that only a "diamond in the rough" is capable of retrieving the lamp from the Cave of Wonders. All others will be swallowed whole by the endless sands of the desert.

When Aladdin fails in Jafar's quest, he is left for dead. But he soon discovers the mysterious lamp and the blue genie who resides within. Granting Aladdin the ultimate power of three wishes (with certain conditions such as not wishing for more wishes or wishing for someone to fall in love with you), the genie transforms Aladdin into a powerful Prince, thus making him eligible to marry Princess Jasmine. Riding into Agrabah at the helm of a triumphant parade, only Jafar knows the true secret of Aladdin's identity and his success, and he's determined to scheme and connive until he gains control of the

magic lamp himself...

Aside from Robin Williams, this film is easily forgettable. With him, Aladdin is transformed into a legendary blockbuster hit. In fact, the later appearances of comic voices in animated films such as Shrek (Mike Myers and Eddie Murphy), Mulan (Eddie Murphy), Finding Nemo (Ellen DeGeneres), and The Lion King (Nathan Lane & Whoopi Goldberg) can most likely be traced back to the overwhelmingly positive audience reaction to Robin Williams and the comic relief his blue genie provided. This once overlooked aspect of the animated film has since become a staple, and Aladdin is the reason why. In addition, the film boasts a beautiful soundtrack that gave birth to the chart-topping hit "A Whole New World". Fun for children and adults alike, Aladdin is the perfect film for those who enjoy creativity, humor, and a great story...

Britt Gillette is author of The DVD Report (

<http://thedvdreport.blogspot.com>

), a blog where you can find

more reviews like this one.

Recordable DVD formats explained

By Kenny Hemphill

Recordable DVD formats explained by Kenny Hemphill

Picking your way through the ton of information available on recordable DVD formats can be a nightmare. To help you out, we've done our best to distill it into this summary.

There are five recordable versions of DVD; DVD-R for General, DVD-R for Authoring, DVD-RAM, DVD-RW, and DVD+RW. None of the formats is fully compatible with the other although there are drives which will read, and in some cases write to more than one format.

DVD-R for General and DVD-R for Authoring are essentially DVD versions of CD-R. And DVD-RW is a DVD version of CD-RW. All three formats can be read in standard DVD-ROM drives and in most DVD video players. The difference between DVD-R for General and DVD-R for Authoring is that DVD-R for General is a format intended for widespread consumer use and doesn't support 'professional' features such as piracy protection or duplication in mass duplicators. The Pioneer DVD-RW drive which is the most popular PC device for writing to DVD uses the DVD for General format. And as the case with CD, DVD-RW is essentially the same as DVD-R except that it can be erased and written to again and again.

DVD-RAM is slightly different as it is a sector based disc which mounts on the desktop of a PC when inserted into a drive. Files can then be copied to it in the same way as any other mounted media. Some single-sided DVD-RAM discs can be removed from their caddy and inserted in a DVD-ROM

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drive which will then be able to read the content of the disc.

There are DVD video recorders which use the DVD-RAM format. This enables them to pull off clever tricks like timeshifting - where you can watch the beginning of a programme you have recorded while you are still recording the end on the same disc.

DVD+RW is the newest format and not supported by the DVD Forum, the body which sets the standards for DVD. However, it is supported by some of the biggest electronics and computer manufacturers, and is therefore likely to stick around.

It is also the format used by Philips in its DVD video recorders. Despite not being authorised by the DVD Forum, DVD+RW is claimed by its supporters to be compatible with more DVD video players than DVD-R and DVD+RW writers are found in PCs from quite a few manufacturers.

Kenny Hemphill is the editor and publisher of

The HDTV Tuner



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