

## FILM

### *Aladdin*

Directed by John Musker and Ron Clements

by Sean McQuaid

Disney can't seem to lose these days, at least as far as animated musicals are concerned. The immense popularity of *The Little Mermaid* was followed by the phenomenal success of *Beauty and the Beast*, and that in turn may be equalled by Disney's new animated adventure, *Aladdin*. The new film combines a good story with amazing animation and entertaining characters, not to mention a few fiendishly catchy tunes, and the end result is a family film that almost everyone can enjoy.

The story is appealing and simple, as is the norm with Disney films: a Sultan seeking a suitor for his strong-willed daughter and heir, the Princess, is plotted against by his advisor, Jaffar, who covets the throne and princess. To get these things, Jaffar seeks the genie's lamp, and tricks Aladdin, a young thief befriended by the princess, into obtaining the lamp. The plot thickens when Aladdin accidentally unleashes the genie and becomes its master, earning the

right to three wishes. Aided and abetted by the genie, Aladdin sets out to win the Princess's heart by taking on the identity of prince; however, Aladdin eventually faces the reality that she must love him for himself, and things are further complicated by the fact that Jaffar doesn't appreciate any rivals for the princess's hand. And when you're an evil advisor with a few sorcerous tricks up your sleeve, eliminating a would-be prince seems like a piece-of-cake...especially if you can get your hands on a certain lamp. It's a pleasantly corny yarn in the Disney tradition, with an imposing bad guy and a strong message about the values of true love and being yourself (kinda gives you a warm, fuzzy glow, doesn't it?).

The movie's songs, whose writers include the Oscar-winning Ashman and Menken, are solidly entertaining, ranging from the genie's manic "You've Never Had a Friend Like Me" to Aladdin and the Princess's love duet, "A Whole New World" (already popular on radio). Even more spectacular is the animation, which is in some segments truly awe-inspiring (the flying carpet ride through the exploding Cave of Wonder is easily on par with the Death Star chase from *Return of the Jedi* or any escape by Indiana Jones). The characters are alive with personality and movement, and many of the backgrounds and locales are beautifully rendered (one rather striking scene is the opening

of the Cave of Wonder's entrance, a gigantic, sentient cat's head of mystically animated stone). Enhancing all of this are some first-rate vocal performances, ranging from the gleefully grating Gilbert Gottfried's portrayal of Iago (Jaffar's perpetually abusive and surly parrot sidekick)

"...kinda gives you a warm fuzzy glow... doesn't it?"

to the merrily maniacal characterization of the genie by Robin Williams, who perhaps finds the ultimate visual outlet for his spontaneous stand-up comedy in the genie's ever-shifting animated form (for instance, the genie can change shape accordingly as Williams unleashes devastating imitations of Ed Sullivan, Jack Nicholson, and a host of others). With high quality music and animation and a strong vocal cast, *Aladdin* deserves to be the big hit it has thus far been for Disney. ●

