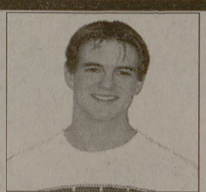


The mixed-up world of Disney

Recent animated films distort original fairy tales, sacrifice story quality for merchandising



CHRIS HUFFINES

There were no talking parakeets in *Aristocats*. Neither animals nor inanimate objects talk. Mermaids turn into foam when they die. And in real life, nobody appeals to specific demographics.

While the normal people of the world may be well aware of these facts, that awareness is being erased from the minds of America's children. And they aren't even being subtle about it.

"They" are, of course, Disney. That's right, the biggest animation house in America, the bastion of gay rights and family values, is doing the children of America an enormous disservice. By cookie-cutting out "Animated Classics" (like *I* said, not even *Beauty and the Beast*), Disney is destroying fairy tales for America's children, and it is as to stop.

The current crop of Disney films, including its most recent release, *Tarzan*, follow a very simple formula. There is the hero. The hero has a romantic interest, who is usually going to be somehow helpful in fixing the hero's almost-fatal flaw.

There is the bad guy, who is going to thwart the hero, usually in some way relating to the romantic interest. The hero tries to do the right thing and is rebuffed. At this point, the hero, with the aid of the cartoonish sidekicks, saves the romantic interest from the villain, and the villain is defeated.

The villain's sidekicks and fatal flaw, which is usually arrogance or an underestimation of his enemies, are important here.

They all live happily ever after.

Older Disney films, like *Bambi*, *Sleeping Beauty* or *Cinderella*, never bothered with a formula.

They realized the structure of the fairy tale would work well enough without talking parakeets, dancing gargoyles, apes with Brooklyn accents or the other straws Disney has heaped on the back of this camel.

Older Disney films really were Animated Classics. Recent Disney movies are tired leftovers.

And then there is the next cardinal sin: adding characters to appeal to children.

In every Disney film, there are the silly little sidekicks whose sole purpose is to appeal to children. They do not really do anything that cannot be done by other characters. The only purpose for these kinds of ploys was identified by Mel Brooks: "Merchandising. Where the real money from the movie is made."

As if that were not enough, the fine folks at Disney are also ruining the messages of the films they are making into "Animated Classics."

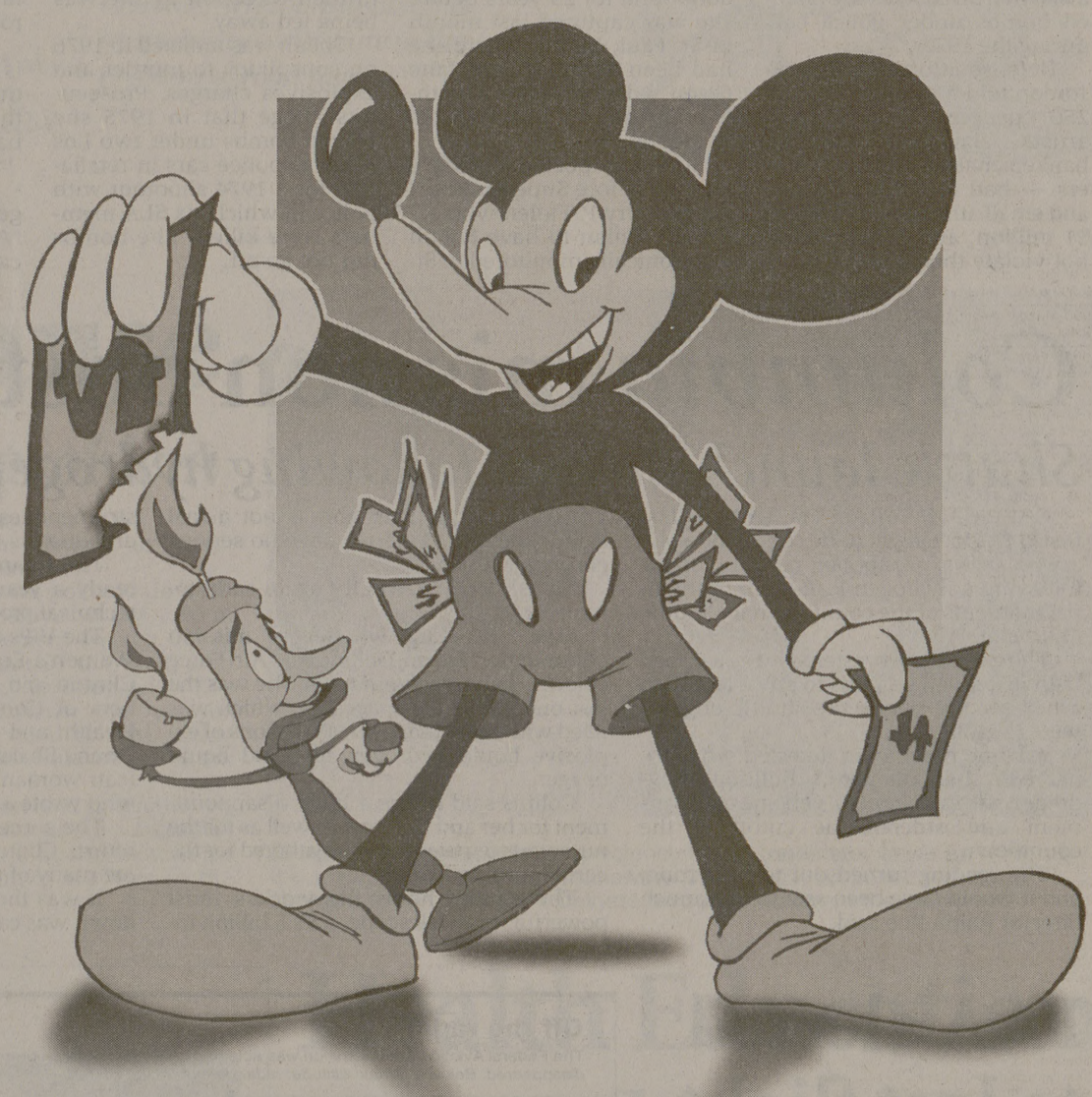
Take *Beauty and the Beast*, for example.

What is the purpose of the fairy tale? Quite simply, it says that appearances are only skin deep.

But what do the children remember? They remember Gaston, the obnoxious bully. They remember Lumiere, Mrs. Potts, Cogsworth and Chip, the most lovable servants-turned-household goods. They remember songs like "Be Our Guest" and "Gaston."

In fact, no song (which are the most powerful points in a modern musical) in the entire score of *Beauty and the Beast* is centered around not judging the Beast because of his appearance.

The closest is "Something There," which is more a statement of the



MARK MCPHERSON/THE BATTALION

Chris Huffines is a senior speech communication major.

MAIL CALL

Reader criticizes abortion column
In response to Tom Owens' July 20 column.

I was shocked and appalled by Owens' call for covert "war" against abortion clinics.

This is an example of the Religious Right's willingness to deceive and bend the law to get their own perverted way.

Well, the end does not justify the means.

Let's, just for a second, consider what would happen if abortion were made illegal.

Several doctors who treated women for wounds from self-inflicted abortion attempts in the '50s and '60s will tell you grim stories about permanent mutilation, death from infection and destroyed sexual functions.

People will always seek abortions as long as people continue to get pregnant.

If abortion is made illegal, the abortion industry will continue to exist and will be much more dangerous to the woman involved.

If Owens really thinks the government is a "terror to good works," then he should refuse police help, ambulance care and drop out of Texas A&M.

Why do you think tuition is not as much as it is at, say, Baylor or Rice?

Ben Braly
Class of '99

Officers do not need to show ID
In response to Scott McCrosky's July 19 mail call.

This is just to correct a little advice to fellow Aggies.

According to the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, a peace officer (all police officers are peace officers) must only state that he or she is a police officer and display his or her badge of office, whether in uniform or plain clothes.

A peace officer is not required to show picture ID to prove that he or she is a peace officer.

So, the next time a police officer asks for your dri-

ver's license, it is in your best interest to go ahead and show it to him or her.

Not doing so could land you in the Brazos County Jail for "failure to identify," a Class B Misdemeanor.

I would hate for fellow Aggies to take McCrosky's advice and end up facing up to 6 months in jail and up to a \$2,000 fine.

Besides, if there are people out there impersonating police officers with \$4 badges, I will be the first to tell them they will be caught and charged with a third-degree felony.

Peter Schulte
Class of 2000

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number.

The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:

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Celebrity death prompts reflection



CALEB MCDANIEL

All official reports now seem unanimous. John F. Kennedy Jr., his wife and her sister are still missing but presumed dead.

As a result, one can also presume that media coverage will continue on the recovery operations in New England and tributes to the victims of the crash for weeks if not months. The long litany of Kennedy misfortunes will be once again paraded before a captive national audience.

This media and mourning blitz is already being roundly criticized by some who question the newsworthiness of the accident. The justification for devoting hours to news on the search even when there are no new developments will be questioned.

Others will rightly point out that laying tons of bouquets in front of Kennedy's apartment will neither bring him back nor advance the causes he advocated in life.

Such critics certainly make some valid points. If Kennedy was the humble, admirable and media-sheltered man he is reported to have been, he would blush at the thought of his death receiving so much coverage.

And if Kennedy was the social benefactor some believe he was becoming, he would surely wonder whether expensive outpourings of grief in the form

of flowers is the best way to benefit society's needs.

However, we must be careful. Critics of the way in which the nation is responding to the tragedy make some valid points.

But there are another breed of critics who are in the wrong. They are the cynics who argue the crash is not worth responding to at all.

Unfortunately, this latter group is probably more extensive than the first. You have probably met some already. They usually begin by sounding the criticisms of the first variety about the media or the mourners, but they usually end up by saying something to the effect that it does not matter if a wealthy son of a president dies. Their watchword is a question: "Who cares?"

Apparently, they do not. And as exaggerated as the response to the crash may be, it is much worse not to care about the deaths at all — to pessimistically attribute the accident to the pilot's stupidity and treat his demise as a reduction to the surplus population.

Excessive mourning is not as distasteful as this kind of extreme misanthropism. The nation may be chastised for grieving in the wrong way, but they should not be scolded for grieving because feeling and expressing sorrow over celebrity deaths accomplishes two worthy goals.

First, mourning JFK Jr.'s death is a natural and healthy human impulse.

If the Kennedys were a family at the bottom of society, their losses would be

no less staggeringly tragic. And society is in trouble when people are cynically chided for seeing tragedy for what it is.

Humanity cannot become so hardened that it treats the death of a human being with unflinching coldness — whether that human being was a celebrity or not. It matters little whether the victims were great people. They were people, and that alone should validate mourning them.

Secondly, JFK Jr.'s death reminds us of our own impending deaths. We sometimes forget they are impending, but they are. And whether we are wealthy and well-liked, as JFK Jr. was, or poor and forgotten, we have the Great Equalizer in common — the brevity of life.

Reflecting on that sober truth is valuable because it places our plans and our possessions in perspective. JFK Jr.'s celebrity status in life can matter little to him now. What matters now to him — and what should matter to us — is how lives should be lived.

So if for no other reason, disregard those who say JFK Jr.'s death does not matter. Death matters.

Consequently, giving it our attention is valuable. The writer of the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes was right: "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men; and the living will take it to heart."

Caleb McDaniel is a junior history major.

Board of Regents should keep Joe Routh open to campus traffic



MARC GREETHER

One shopping mall is enough for College Station. All of Joe Routh Boulevard should remain open to cars.

Two weeks ago, the Student Senate passed a resolution supporting the closure of the portion of Joe Routh between Houston Street and Wellborn Road to non-bus vehicular traffic.

This closure would be used to create a "mall" environment by limiting traffic to pedestrians, bicycles, and University buses." Student Body President Will Hurd has expressed his support for this proposal.

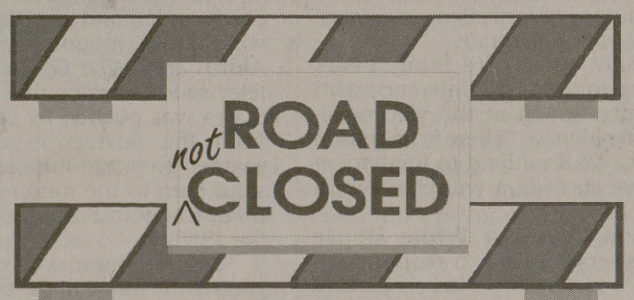
An even more restrictive plan which would exclude buses from

the area has been proposed. These are unnecessary, unwanted and unwise ideas.

Why should the road be closed? The Senate resolution offers no reasons for the support of the measure.

Hurd suggested that the road closure would improve bus services through the area. How exactly would this be accomplished? The area in front of the Memorial Student Center (MSC) is one of the best areas on campus in terms of bus traffic. In my experience, foot or bicycle traffic, not car or truck traffic, causes most of the slow downs in the area. The mall proposal would compound the problem, not fix it.

Moreover, if that section of road is closed, more car traffic would likely head down the road behind the MSC. Because that area is a major loading area for buses, the mall proposal could



have the unintended consequence of seriously slowing down bus traffic behind the MSC.

And what happens if portions of Wellborn, George Bush Drive or University Drive around campus are ever closed for construction, as Texas Avenue recently was? Traffic will have no where else to

go. The sections of Joe Routh under consideration for closure are needed for travel on several routes through campus that would be vital if these roads were closed. Leaving all of Joe Routh open is necessary for good traffic flow.

The only area on campus with bad traffic problems that are easi-

ly solvable has already been fixed. Just because closing Ross Street in front of the Chemistry building made traffic better does not mean every road closure will improve traffic patterns.

Closing Joe Routh would also adversely affect visitors to Texas A&M. Currently, visitors can drive all the way around campus to see sights or get a feel for where their sons, daughters or grandchildren will be attending college.

Of course a walking tour is better, but A&M's size prohibits many people from walking through campus. Do we really want to limit these people's access?

Few Aggies outside of Student Government want the road closed. People often drive through the area to drop off friends or simply to take another route through campus. They would like to continue to do so.

Perhaps other students do not see the necessity in closing Joe Routh because they spend time on other parts of campus. The area around the MSC and Koldus already has a large number of green spaces, fountains, art and other non-academic amenities. Few other parts of campus have this much development. No other area of campus has a mall. Joe Routh should not be closed to further develop this already well-developed part of campus.

The closure of Lubbock Street in front of the commons has precluded access to too much of campus already. One can only hope that the Board of Regents will not make the problem worse by supporting the closure of Joe Routh in front of the MSC.

Keep Joe Routh open for cars.

Marc Grether is a mathematics graduate student.