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## REEL WORLD



### Tim Burton taints a Disney classic and his own legacy

**The decline of Tim Burton continues with *Dumbo*, a wasteful remake of the 1941 animated classic that amounts to one big nothing—for kids and adults alike.**

The original *Dumbo* was a little more than an hour long, while this one lasts for nearly two hours that feel like 40. A bunch of unnecessary subplots and added characters take away time from one of the lone bright spots, the title character, an admittedly cute CGI achievement.

There are no talking animals in this version, so scratch Timothy Q. Mouse, the singing crows and the lullaby from Mama elephant. Instead of the mouse (who does make a brief appearance in a cage), we get the requisite precocious children, one of them played by Thandie Newton's daughter, Nico Parker, who absolutely cannot act.

Colin Farrell appears as Holt, the precocious kids' dad, an injured World War I vet. The circus is led by Max Medici (a blustery Danny DeVito), who has purchased a cheap, pregnant elephant. After Holt's circus-performer wife dies, Max assigns him to be keeper of the elephants, a comedown from his previous gig as a circus cowboy. Farrell, like most of the human actors in this movie, seems lost.

V.A. Vandevere, the villain of the film played by Michael Keaton, purchases Dumbo and plans to make him a main attraction at his Dreamland amusement park, which has a strong resemblance to Disneyland. So, in a way, the character can be seen as being modeled after Walt Disney. And he is portrayed as an evil

megalomaniac, so, in essence, Burton gets away with indirectly portraying Disney as a bit of a greedy monster. I'm not saying this is inaccurate, but it's odd to see it in an actual Disney movie.

As for Keaton, he's at his sneering worst in his movie, as if he was just put in front of the camera and told to act persnickety. You'd think the man who played Batman in a movie by the guy who directed *Batman* would translate to something fun. Alas, it did not.

In the original, Dumbo flew in only a couple of scenes for just a few seconds. Here, he has multiple flying scenes, which lessens the magic. And the scene in the original where Dumbo gets wasted and sees pink elephants is, regrettably, replaced by a lame bubble show homage.

As much as I liked the original, I've always taken issue with the notion that anybody would ridicule Dumbo for having big ears. All elephants have big ears, do they not? The premise falls especially flat in a big-budget live-action movie. The morality lesson at the core just doesn't ring true with actual humans acting it out. It's corny.

Burton's last great movie was 2007's *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, and in the interim, one of his worst films was another Disney reboot, *Alice in Wonderland*. *Dumbo* is actually worse than that mess, and proof that Burton needs to get far away from the Mouse and move closer to the weirdos who inspired the first half of his career. □



Poor



Fair



Good



Very Good



Excellent