

Aladdin rubs the wrong way

Aladdin: The Magical Family Musical

Directed by Ted Dykstra
Starring Jamie McKnight, Bret "The Hitman" Hart and Jennifer Dale
Runs until 19 November
Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium

AMANDA ASH
Arts & Entertainment Editor

Oh, Disney. Despite your somewhat flaky contributions to the current animated world, or your capital-hungry theme parks that steal money out of the hands of cotton-candy loving children, you should still be praised, for your colourful genius is evident when it's placed in contrast with some of the rather cretinous childrens productions that are being produced.

Surely there are other adaptations of *Aladdin*, that magical Middle-Eastern classic, that don't quite meet the expectations of the fantastical film we all remember from our youth. But for now, *Aladdin: The Magical Family Musical* is the one that stands out as the epitome of adaptation disasters.

The musical is nothing like the *Aladdin* that involves a hilariously comedic Genie, an exotic magic carpet ride between a poor boy and a beautiful princess, or a grotesque and captive transformation of an evil villain. In fact, the musical *Aladdin*—including the music—really has nothing at all to do with the movie, except that the main character's name is Aladdin, and the backdrop is a stereotypical Middle Eastern setting, which is confusing, since the production theoretically takes place in Edmonton.

The premise of the musical is as follows: there's a lazy boy named Aladdin (Jamie McKnight) who spends his days skateboarding with his skater friends (and yes, the song "Skater Boi" is sung), he falls in love with Princess Jacuzzi (played by Rhoslyne Bugay, and yes, she's referred to as "bubbly") and is tricked into retrieving a magic lamp by his evil uncle (Ross Petty), which houses



the muscular Genie (Bret Hart).

Really, there's not much of a storyline to *Aladdin*, if there even is one at all, for the brunt of the play is spent making horribly clichéd jokes that often fly over the heads of kidlets but send a wave of embarrassment through the adults. And to top it all off, after every pun and quip, there's the annoying drum roll/cymbal crash.

Unruly references abound, and a plethora of groan-worthy Top 40 songs (from Shania Twain's "Any Man Of Mine" to Steppenwolf's obvious "Magic Carpet Ride") soak the performance in a bitter marinade that only the theatrically uncouth could stomach. Of course, one must take into account the fact that *Aladdin* is for the kids, aiming to season them in the ways of pop-culture and classy sophistication itself, but when the play begins criticizing the occupation of acting as a good-for-nothing pastime, it seems that the production's goal simply collapses in on itself.

If there's one thing that could be expected from *Aladdin*, it's a scene involving Bret Hart doing some sort of wrestling move. But the surprising thing about this conjecture—which, by the way, is a correct assumption—is that it ends up being the only enjoyable moment of the entire musical. The Genie (better known as Bret "The Hitman" Hart) trumps the evil uncle by taking him on in a wrestling ring, performing his signature move "The Sharpshooter." If it wasn't for that, audiences—or what was left of the spectators after intermission—would have slid all the way off of their chairs from utter boredom.

Kids' productions, even for University students, can be entertaining (think *Spongebob Square Pants* or *Veggie Tales*), but in the case of *Aladdin: The Family Musical*, save your time and money and stay at home. There, at least, you can pop in the old VHS of *Aladdin* and sing along to "A Whole New World."



FICTION:

This baby is going to grow up meddling with dark magic, spreading the Wiccan word with profuse gestures and articulate speeches.

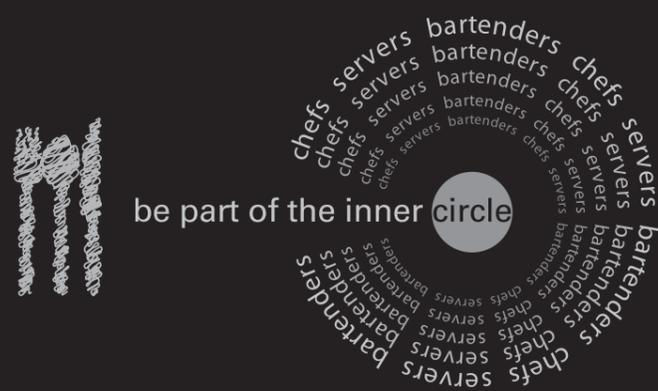
FACT:

Gateway A&E (meetings Thursdays at 5pm in 3-04 SUB) staff ads are better than News staff ads.

GATEWAY A&E

Creating strife in close working environments since 1910.

NOW HIRING



Chop is more than a restaurant, we are the place to share a **passion** for life. We believe in the bonding power of **great food**, fine wine and good company. In order to be the best, you must surround yourself with the **best**. Our team is looking for people that share our **values**:

QUALITY PASSION LEADERSHIP

OPENING SOON at 17635 Stoney Plain Road.

Apply today: ctyacke@chop.ca • bgerman@chop.ca
t 780.487.2467

chop
STEAK FISH BAR

Babel towers, toys with emotion

Babel

Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu
Starring Brad Pitt and Cate Blanchett
Empire Theatres
Now Playing

CARLA KAVINTA
Arts & Entertainment Writer

In Biblical times, Noah's descendents built the Tower of Babel as a stairway to heaven, hoping to reach its eternal glory and euphoria. However, the builders became profusely preoccupied with the tower, neglecting to worship God himself. Because of this ignorance, God punished them by creating different languages, so nobody could understand each other. From this brief history lesson, we can see the appropriateness of the title of Pitt's new powerful drama, *Babel*, as it illustrates the severe consequences of simple misunderstandings and miscommunications.

Iñárritu, whose previous works include *21 Grams* and *September 11*, cleverly links four stories, each set in a different country: Mexico, Japan, Morocco and the US. The intellectual and emotional stimulation begins as an elderly and disheveled villager sells a rifle to a near-by family in the middle of the Moroccan desert. As the

young boys of the family toy with the new rifle, they aimlessly shoot at an American tour bus, hitting one of the passengers (Cate Blanchett). What was thought to be innocent target practice escalates into a torrent of events impacting lives around the globe.

Although many rifts arise due to the inability to understand each others' languages, the characters all feel the same pain and loneliness.

Structured much like last year's Oscar-winning *Crash*, *Babel* successfully shows the universality of emotions, regardless of race or culture, reminding us that we are all connected. Although many rifts arise due to the inability to understand each others' languages, the characters all feel the same pain and loneliness.

Adding to this element of frailty are the explicit sexual moments throughout the film. From a curious young boy in Morocco to a feisty teenage girl in Japan, *Babel* forces us to

acknowledge our most basic drives. Initially, the scenes leave the audience feeling uncomfortable and confused. However, by the end of the film, a connection is made and yet another aspect of humanity is revealed.

As the film jumps from one story to the next, we become progressively empathetic toward the characters. The collaboration of gut-wrenching performances by Pitt and Blanchett alongside the honesty and intensity of the lesser-known actors creates an atmosphere that is almost too real. Amidst the unconstrained performances are incredible visual stimuli, including the barren North African desert and the buzz and bright lights of Tokyo.

Iñárritu leaves us with a satisfying and authentic ending, which reaches no resolution. Staying true to the film's sense of realism, the ending is far from perfect. Relationships are left wavering, the futures of many characters are left dangling and many other loose ends are left to our own interpretation.

Just as the builders were brought down to earth, *Babel* affirms our own mortality, serving as a unique and refreshing example of meaningful filmmaking. With intertwining plot lines, sharp acting and remarkable visuals, *Babel* is an experience that should not be missed.



021 Lower Level Students' Union Building
Monday to Friday 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
call: 492-9113
email-printcentre@su.ualberta.ca
[web: www.su.ualberta.ca/printcentre](http://web.www.su.ualberta.ca/printcentre)

STUDENTS' UNION
PRINT CENTRE

