

SMALL BUSINESS

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Prim and poofy

Craig Courtice, Alison Broverman and Jodie Katz, National Post

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Filmmaking is a collaborative art, so why isn't film reviewing? Each week in this space, experts, artists and paying movie customers come together to take apart a recent release. It's salty. It's full of hot air. It's the Popcorn Panel.

THIS WEEK'S PANEL - Craig Courtice, a short filmmaker who isn't very tall - Alison Broverman, freelance writer and occasional playwright - Jodie Katz, whose own wedding gown was inspired by Belle from *Beauty and the Beast*. Check her out at www.thesocialbutterfly.ca.

THIS WEEK'S FILM ENCHANTED

Craig Ah princesses, the scourge of feminists everywhere. These lasses seem content to go through life searching for nothing but a prince. *Enchanted* certainly winks at all the princess films of yore, but despite its meta-fictional packaging, it's still gooey Disney on the inside.

Alison Gooey is right. I've never been much into princesses -- my feminist friends and I often sit around ranting about how bad Disney's princess marketing tactics are for women; princesses are boring and passive, and they never do anything! Surely little girls should be taught to aspire to more than just wearing pretty dresses?

I was hoping *Enchanted* would be a satirical, subversive romp. It wasn't, although it had some clever moments; I loved the New York vermin cleaning up the apartment and the queen's crony questioning his sense of self while watching a

soap opera. Also, is there anyone more adorable in the world than Amy Adams? Her character should be cloying and irritating, but she's just so damn charming that she kind of makes the entire film work.

Jodie Gooley Disney? How about some old-fashioned Disney magic? I woke up this morning slightly discouraged that my two cats weren't proffering me my fuzzy slippers with faraway accents (and I don't own fuzzy slippers, so explain that).

Even though I am well past the princess-in-training, four-to-seven-year-old target market, the inner royal in me was swept away by the poofy dress, the curls aplenty and the glitter. It's no wonder the wedding industry is experiencing such a boon.

Come on, admit it, guys; didn't you want to wear that dress, even just a little bit?

Alison The clothing was great, and Adams has the prettiest hair ever (although as a curly-haired girl myself, I was a bit offended by her big straightening at the end of the movie). I loved seeing her come out of the sewer in that poofy dress, although I would be more likely to wear the dresses she made out of the curtains. Craig OK, I admit it. I went to the Disney store and tried the dress on. Sadly, it made me look fat.

What I find fascinating about the princess myth is that it endures despite the best intentions of liberal parents to stop it. Just look at those box-office numbers; Enchanted is on its way to the land of Shrek. But as a film ...

Jodie The film had a rather vapid moral, but this was a was a performance-based movie. Take Prince Charming, er, Edward. James Marsden (who made the univisor look sexy in the X-Men trilogy), was channelling Cary Elwes' smarmy charm in The Princess Bride. For anyone who is a Disney aficionado fixated on more than fashion (by the way, Craig, I saw you in the dress, and white is really your colour!), the princes are arrogant poster boys for a animated fantasy hair-care solution. Marsden, took all those obvious elements and infused a sense of hilarity all the same.

Craig The Princess Bride is an interesting comparison. Both movies play upon fairy tale tropes with a meta-fiction device that counters any resistance the audience might have. The Princess Bride had the grandfather (Peter Falk) reading the fairy tale to his cynical grandson (a pre-Wonder Years Fred Savage); in Enchanted it's Adams' character being thrown from the make-believe world to New York.

Alison Enchanted plays less on the tropes of fairy tales than it does on the tropes of Disney princess films, while still unnervingly embracing all that Disney princess films stand for. (A far better Princess Bride comparison is this summer's underrated and totally wicked Stardust.) But I agree with Jodie, Marsden might just be a musical comedy genius (see also: Hairspray).

Jodie While we're talking musical comedy and genius, we cannot forget one of the queens of this genre, not to mention the film's Queen of Mean, Susan "My Last name is not Robbins" Sarandon, who epitomizes modern-day feminism. Sarandon made a career of playing female characters with angst (sexual in Bull Durham; man-hating in Thelma & Louise; Transylvanian-phobic in Rocky Horror), but not until Enchanted's Narissa have we seen all this angst in true Technicolor. Anyone who can turn themselves into a true dragon lady and still seem sexy is one hell of an actress.

UNPOPPED KERNELS:

Jodie: Unfortunately, I cannot say the same for one Dr. McDreamy, Patrick Dempsey. Is it just me or did the entire world totally forget that this was the very same guy who starred as the unlikely love geek in Can't Buy Me Love? I just don't get it, but then again don't listen to me; I never miss an episode of Grey's Anatomy.

Craig: I've never watched an episode of this TV program Mr. Dempsey stars in, so I went into this without the burden of expectations. My conclusion: I don't think he has what it takes to be a romantic lead in the movies. He's bland and kind of whiny and I didn't believe he was a dad. This worked great in Can't Buy Me Love because he was supposed to be a geek, but here he is totally outclassed by Amy Adams and James Marsden.

Alison: At the risk of losing my girl status, I have to admit I've never seen the appeal of McBoring, or his TV series. He definitely isn't leading man material, and I agree, totally gets lost in the midst of Adams, Marsden and Sarandon. Hell, even that annoying little chipmunk was more charismatic.

Craig: Hey, don't diss the Pip. Although, I'm not clear as to why he couldn't talk in the real world. Why can the animated-turned-real people talk, but not the animated-turned-real animals? In any case, I wrote this line down during the screening and never got to use it: Is Enchanted charming? Does a chipmunk s—t when it's scared? I can see now why I didn't use it.