



# Disney's Recipe For Success



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**If it ain't broke don't fix it... unless you're Disney. In fact, a live-action renaissance movement has recently taken over Disney. This trend of retelling classic stories in a new medium has proven to be successful, with last year's live-action version of *The Jungle Book* earning close to \$1 billion worldwide. With at least 17 more scheduled remakes, Disney seems to have found a formula that works.**

**D**isney's latest project *Beauty and the Beast* is a live-action re-telling of the studio's animated classic, which was the first animated feature to be nominated for an Oscar for Best Picture. The film's director Bill Condon found the source of inspiration for his remake from one his favorite films; the 1946's *La Belle et la Bête*. In Condon's version, the Beast takes Maurice prisoner for picking a white rose, which is a nod to the 1946 film. The filmmaker also included an homage to the original author of the classic tale, Gabrielle-Suzanne Bardot de Villeneuve, when he named Belle's hometown 'Villeneuve'.

In order to bring the 1991 animated film in line with the 21st century, Disney refashioned the classic characters for a contemporary audience. These remakes are not simply relying on the shadows of the past. Rather, they're using the best talent available to build upon the already present foundation. This can be seen with the choice of outspoken feminist activist Emma Watson, portraying the protagonist Belle in the 2017 adaptation.

Originally created by the first female screenwriter at Disney Animation Studios, Linda Woolverton, the character set herself apart from her contemporaries by being less passive and much more independent. However, Woolverton still struggled to get her ideas across for the classic animation. Watson helped forge an ideal Belle who not only helps her father craft music boxes but is also an inventor in her own right. This natural development of character builds on Woolverton's original vision through Belle's wardrobe as she wears boots and has her skirt hitched to one side to make it easier for her to ride her horse.

Another adjustment to the screenplay was the inclusion of a more diverse cast, which can be seen through the relationship of Maestro Cadenza and Madame Garderobe. The addition of Maestro Cradenza, who becomes a harpsichord under the curse, makes reference to Villeneuve's original story as well as LePrince's suburban adaptation a few years later, both of which include Beauty playing the harpsichord in her home and also reveal that Beast has a harpsichord in his castle.

The character of Garderobe contributes to another element of diversity, during the final battle scene, where she wraps three

men in dresses. As in the original animation two of the men run off, however the reboot decided to include another man, who remains delighted to be in a dress and 'comes out of the closet' so to speak.

The most controversial change can be seen with the character of Lefou, who appears to experience mixed feelings for Gaston and briefly dances with a man during the final celebration. Condon's adaptation manages to be both nostalgic and new, targeting children as well as adults who yearn for the original classics but appreciate the more adult remakes.

Condon's *Beauty and the Beast* reworks the soundtrack by remaining faithful to the classic tunes but also refreshing favourites such as "Be our Guest", which features over a dozen references; including *West Side Story*, *Singing in the Rain*, *Cabaret* and *Chicago*, which Condon wrote the screenplay for. Three brand new songs were also added to this latest version of *Beauty and the Beast*, one of which is Céline Dion's "How Does a Moment Last Forever".

Disney classic remakes' recipe for success has not just depended on brand loyalty but rather on their ability to use modern tools to bring stories of the past to the forefront of present day. These modern retellings have allowed the stories to expand to a point where simple plots and characters have turned into poignant stories. CGI technology has given the classic tales a face-lift. No longer is the action relegated to mere watercolours, as the stories now jump into the physical medium. By reconstructing and revitalizing the tales of the past Disney is helping the audiences of today find a way to identify with the stories of yesterday.