

CRUELLA

USA/UK | 2021 | 134' | Comedy, Crime | Rated PG-13

Directed by

Craig Gillespie

Written by

Dana Fox

Tony McNamara

Aline Brosh McKenna

Kelly Marcel

Steve Zissis

Dodie Smith

(based on the novel by)

With

Emma Stone

Emma Thompson

Original Music by

Nicholas Britell

Première:

18/05/2021 (Hollywood)

World release:

26/05/2021



Hello cruel world.

REVIEW

This is Estella's story. Wait, wasn't it Cruella?

It seems that the little girl with the strangest hair color had a life worth telling, a life that begins with one parent, goes on with a sense of loneliness and a strong need for compensation, which will soon become more like a revenge. A cruel one, against the woman who made her first Estella and then Cruella.

And, yet again, another Disney live action movie.

And, once again, a villain-based prequel.

It was the only way of bringing the "Hundred and one Dalmatians" story into a live action in this movie trend, since the story was brought to life way before the beginning of this new cycle. Which, by the way, had the most magnificent Cruella, played by Glenn Close.

The great problem of a villain-based prequel, though, is to make the character the main one, the protagonist, not the villain, and this means create a villain to the villain. This creates a short circuit, where the 'known villain' seems 'less of a villain' than the 'new villain', so that the 'old villain' turns out to be almost a 'good person', or at least have her good reasons, which the viewer is led to empathize with.

If only this was a light problem, the movie would be a great one. Instead, the screenplay (maybe overwritten, maybe just a lack of a unified intent) is a muddle of styles and moods, where the genre of the movie - and, more seriously, the audience for whom it is written - is unclear from the beginning to the end.

On the other hand, the story relies on an incredibly coherent and deep punk setting, where Cruella's black, white and red overwhelm the Baroness' colorful fashion industry. There is a slight incoherence with the original novel (and movie) "A Hundred and one Dalmatians", set in 1958, while this prequel is set in the late 70s; at the same time, the punk atmosphere is way more useful to the story, so one can overlook this minor issue.

If there is someone from the crew actually worth unconditional praise, this is Jenny Beavan, one of the most acknowledged costume designers in Hollywood, winner of 2 Academy Awards ("A room with a view", 1985, and "Mad Max: Fury Road", 2015). She truly deserves the credit of telling the

evolution of Cruella through her style, her open challenge with the Baroness that pushes Cruella's creativity (or, to be fairer, Beavan's) over its limits.

Although Glenn Close's Cruella is unrivaled, this young Cruella benefits the wonderful talent of Emma Stone. The fun of playing this role is tangible, and her confidence grows together with the personality of the character, that builds up throughout the movie.

On the other hand, though playing a controversial character, Emma Thompson confirms her being eclectic; she succeeds in bringing to life a character way more despicable than Cruella so that the viewer's empathy stays on the title character. It's the script's fault, not hers, if this was a mistake. Her Baroness has something of Glenn Close's Cruella and, in some ways, something of Meryl Streep's Miranda Priestly ("The devil wears Prada", 2006) though lacking that spark of comprehension that made Streep's character less vicious.

A note on the Dalmatians, almost completely digitally animated. They are way less participating in the plot, while playing an important part in the two key moments of the story; apart from a poor realism which the digital animation couldn't completely avoid, these three spotted dogs are something incredibly distant from the adorable hundred we knew. No surprise Cruella ends up hating them.

Nicholas Britell's soundtrack relies way more on iconic music from the punk-rock mood the movie embraces than on original content. There is very little actual score in the movie, so that the praise can only go to the selection of songs that goes from "Come Together" to "Feelin' Good" while the only original song, "Call Me Cruella" by Florence + the Machine (and produced by Britell) is well contextualized but not as iconic as some of the songs chosen for the soundtrack.

All in all, gathering the elements, the movie is not bad, it entertains and is enjoyable in itself and as a part of the Disney's "expanded universe". It might enter in some list of strictly genre-based analysis, wouldn't think any higher position in the history of cinema.

ASSESSMENT

POSTER	86%
TAGLINE	70%
TRAILER	84%
SATISFACTION	80%
DIRECTING	84%
SCREENPLAY	78%
PRODUCTION DESIGN	89%
CINEMATOGRAPHY	92%
CAST	90%
MUSIC	75%
TOTAL	84% = B