

'Little Mermaid' boasts brilliant characters, animation

NEW YORK (CNS) — "The Little Mermaid" (Disney) is an absolutely enchanting animated adaptation of the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale about a feisty young mermaid who falls in love with a human prince.

The Disney folks have recaptured much of their classic visual and aural magic in this feature-length reworking of the story that sees conflict between teenage mermaid Ariel (voice of Jodi Benson) and her father, Triton (voice of Kenneth Mars), the king of the Mer-people.

Secretly yearning to experience life as a human, Ariel and her adorable pal, Flounder (voice of Jason Marin), have been hoarding a treasure trove of human memorabilia from shipwrecks and such. With lots of misinformation from her squawking, well-intentioned sea gull buddy, Scuttle (with the voice and dizzy demeanor of comedian Buddy Hackett), Ariel attempts to learn all she can about life on land.

The bane of her existence and the real star of this film is self-important musical impresario Sebastian (voice of Samuel E. Wright), the crabby crustacean ordered by Triton to watch over Ariel and keep her out of mischief. When he finds that she's fallen in love with human prince Eric (voice of Christopher Daniel Barnes), Sebastian is one exasperated crab. He stops the show with two rousing Caribbean-flavored musical numbers and is the nutty focus of another titled "Les Poissons," in which he is hilariously targeted by cleaver-swinging French chef Louis (voice of Rene Auberjonois).

Boasting the most extensive use of animated effects in any film since "Fantasia" (1940), two-thirds of "The Little Mermaid" is set in a magical undersea world. Despite the one-dimensional flatness typical in most animation today, the underwater illusion is beautifully evoked, the landscapes and seascapes are dreamily lush, and the characters themselves are perfectly cast and thoughtfully developed.

In fact, there's not a false note or misstep in this entertaining fantasy that, unlike the original tale, ends on a hopeful, happy note. Not only will children benefit from seeing an enterprising female heroine who is faced with typical parental pressures and must learn to take responsibility for her own good and bad choices, but the film is an example of high-caliber animation art that will surely join the roster of top Disney films to delight family audiences for years to come. Credit should go to the team of over 400 artists and technicians who worked for nearly three years with writer-directors John Musker and Ron Clements to create this refreshing new animated classic.

The U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-I — general patronage. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is G — general audiences.

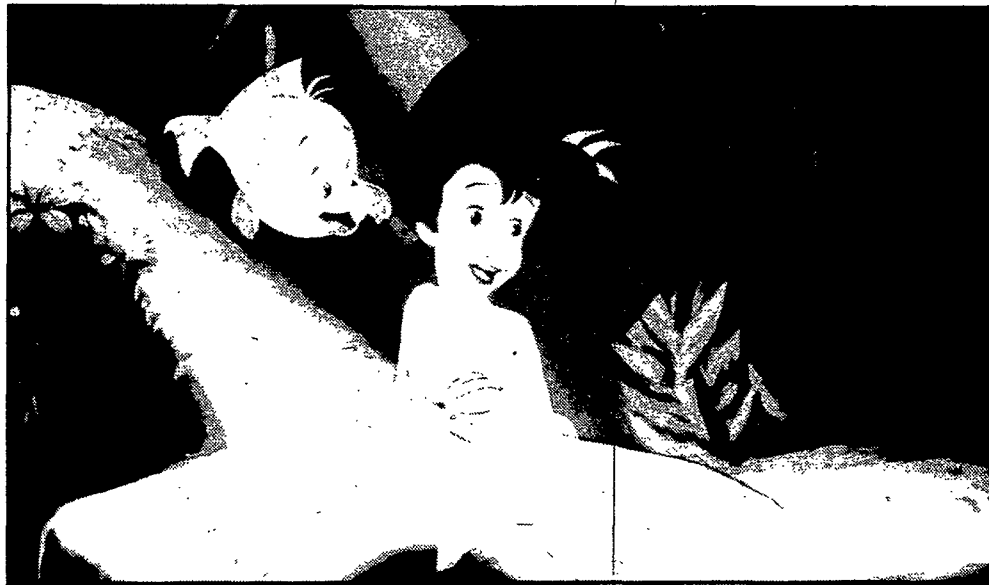
Mystery Train

Filed entirely in Memphis, Tenn., "Mystery Train" (Orion Classics) is an offbeat road picture touched by the spirit of Elvis Presley.

In three separate tales, independent writer-director Jim Jarmusch ("Down by Law") populates the barren, back streets of Memphis with outsiders. Some are forerunners passing through in search of Elvis' resting place or ghost; others are locals in personal crisis. All crash for the night in the seedy Arcade Hotel, which provides the focal point and comic relief that holds this slight, quirky film together.

In "Far from Yokohama," two emotionless Japanese teen-agers (Masatoshi Nagase and Youki Kudoh) arrive in town en route to Graceland and Sun Studio. She loves Elvis; he loves Carl Perkins; they make love; they leave town.

"A Ghost" focuses on Luisa (Nicoletta Braschi), an Italian passing through town transporting the body of her deceased hus-



When Ariel the mermaid falls in love with a human prince, a fish named Flounder wishes she would forget about the human world in 'The Little Mermaid,' a new Walt Disney animated feature.

band. She is conned by a local vendor and ends up sharing a hotel room for the night with dizzy local DeeDee (Elizabeth Bracco), who is leaving town and her boyfriend for greener pastures. After sharing gossip about ghostly Elvis sightings, the unnerved Luisa sights "Elvis" in her hotel room.

In the final segment, "Lost in Space," DeeDee's jilted boyfriend (Joe Strummer), who is nicknamed "Elvis," is consoled by DeeDee's barber brother Charlie (Steve Buscemi) and a black friend (Rick Aviles). They end up clumsily robbing a liquor store, shooting the store clerk and crashing

in a drunken stupor at the Arcade Hotel.

Jarmusch ties these three minimalist vignettes together with clever, subtle threads that makes this one of the least heavy-handed and most comically offbeat Elvis tributes so far. Not for audiences in search of Elvis with a big "E," this slim-Jim trio of tales pokes fun at those who take the myth too seriously.

Due to some profanity, sexual innuendo and violence, the U.S.C.C. classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

Halloween 5

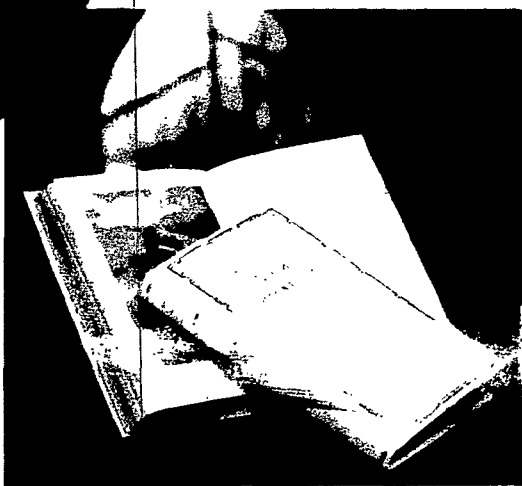
It's still not safe to walk the streets of Haddonfield, Ill., on Halloween eve thanks to the return of the bionic bogeyman, Michael Myers, in "Halloween 5: The Revenge of Michael Myers" (Galaxy).

Compared to this installment, "Halloween 4" (1988) was a work of art, since the new scenario makes no sense on any level and violently exploits Michael's psychic power over last year's target, his young niece Jamie (Danielle Harris).

Now recuperating in a clinic for troubled kids, Jamie is forever convulsing from nightmares and premonitions about Michael, who supposedly was torched on Halloween in 1988. Jamie knows better, and as Michael makes his way back to Haddonfield, Jamie and Michael's battered old psychiatrist, Dr. Loomis (Donald Pleasence), take one more stab at the maniac.

The film, directed and co-written by a woman, Dominique Othenin-Girard, offensively exploits little Jamie, since she is constantly being battered psychologically or physically by Michael and Dr. Loomis. Miraculously she survives, but Loomis may have reached the end of his rope in this installment.

Due to much intense menace that senselessly exploits a child, grisly, remorseless violence, and a sexually suggestive encounter, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is O — morally offensive. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.



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