



Before its release, the swords were out for Disney's live-action version of Aladdin. It was always going to be difficult to live up to Robin Williams' performance as the Genie in Disney's original 1992 animation and director Guy Ritchie's latest films have been disappointing, but sheathe your weapons because this new Aladdin is actually great fun. It is far from perfect, but this story of a penniless yet good-hearted young man whose life is changed when he finds a magic lamp really takes flight. It is lively, colourful and genuinely funny, and doesn't break what didn't need fixing about the original. As one character remarks of Aladdin's early attempts at romance: it's "clumsy but in a charming sort of way".

The cast do an admirable job of bringing their characters to life. Mena Massoud brings the necessary roguish charm to Aladdin himself, the street rat with a heart of gold. Princess Jasmine is played by Naomi Scott, a British actor who gets to show off her singing talent with a *Let It Go*-style power ballad, *Speechless*, in which she declares that she's not just going to stand aside like a passive princess. The villainous Jafar (Marwan Kenzari) provides a threat to our heroes as he seeks to gain more and more power.

But we all know the main draw here is the blue-skinned guy. Will Smith seizes his chance to let his comedy muscles go wild and do what he does best. His Genie is less cartoonishly crazy than Williams', but that fits quite nicely in this live-action film.

On the whole, Ritchie's adaptation wisely does little except add human flesh to the bare bones of what was always one of Disney's strongest stories. It still holds up as a tale whose central couple's deceptions, entrapments and self-discoveries have a pleasing symmetry to them, and whose "it's what's inside that counts" morals are in the right place.

Guy Ritchie's adaptation is lively, colourful and genuinely funny – making only minor tweaks to the original, it's thankfully not a whole new world, just a slightly updated one.

