

REEL REVIEWS



TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX

★ ★ ★ ½ *The Princess Bride* Oaks East Six

Have you watched *Bugs Bunny* recently? It's still the only worthwhile show on Saturday morning. Bugs was funny when we were young, but it's even better now. We can appreciate the sharp use of classical music, social commentary, pop cultural references and subtle sexual innuendoes.

Seeing *The Princess Bride* is a little like watching *Bugs Bunny* as an adult. It works first — and most importantly — as an engaging tale about dashing young men, beautiful maidens, gentle giants and not-so-clever thieves.

But *Bride* also acts as a witty satire. It never makes fun of fairy tales; that would spoil our fun. Instead it plays with the conventions of the genre, poking gentle fun at everything and everyone *except* the all-important business of true love and a happy ending.

Based on the delightful novel by William Goldman, the movie begins by showing us a little boy moping around his room. He isn't feeling well, and now Grandpa's come to visit. The boy isn't in the mood for him ("I hate it when he

pinches my cheek"), and he sure as heck doesn't want to be read a story.

"A book?" he says with disgust.

"In my day, television was called books, and this is one of the best," answers Grandpa (Peter Falk). With the promise of sword-fights, giants, danger and really bad guys, Grandpa cajoles him into listening.

Slowly, the boy is drawn into the story of heroic young Wesley (Cary Elwes) and sweet Buttercup (Robin Wright), two young people fated to be together. They fall slowly in love and soon embrace — only to be interrupted by the groans of the little boy.

"Hold it. Hold it!" he mutters. "Is this a kissing book?" And so the tone of the movie is set. The fantasy continues along in a wonderfully comic vein. Elwes and Wright are marvelous as the two leads, and they're supported by a large and wonderful cast peopled with hilarious cameos by the likes of Billy Crystal, Peter Cook and Wallace Shawn. It is a rich comic tale spiced with the modern sensibilities of the boy and his grandfather.

At its heart, *The Princess Bride* is about the joys of reading. The fantasy is filled with laughter and fun, but the real action takes place in the bedroom as we watch the boy slowly become engrossed in the tale.

Besides, was there ever really any doubt as to who would triumph in the end? At one point, things aren't going too well and the boy becomes upset and shouts, "No, no, no. You're reading it wrong, Grandpa. You're screwing up the story! Wesley can't die. He and Buttercup have to get together, I just know it."

He shouldn't have worried. As Wesley said, "Death can't stop true love. It can only delay it for a while."

The *Princess Bride* is certainly one of the most entertaining films of the year. But — and this is the Kiss of Death — it is also one of the best family films in a long time.

Rob Reiner, who also gave us *Stand By Me* and *The Sure Thing*, has scored a bull's-eye. I feel like getting married and fathering children just so I can have an excuse to see it again.

By Michael Giltz

Cary Elwes and Robin Wright star in *The Princess Bride*.

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