

## 5 Things Tim Burton's remake of *Dumbo* did Right

Katie Clark | 4/11/2019

**Warning:** This post contains spoilers for both the 1941 and 2019 versions of *Dumbo*.

Tim Burton's 2019 remake of the classic Disney movie *Dumbo* takes a few key ideas from the 1941 Disney tale and stretches them into a 144 minute story that highlights a lot more than Dumbo's large ears. Though some are not in favor of redoing such a classic tale, here are five things that the new *Dumbo* did right to make the movie more than just the retelling of a classic story.

### 1. *In the Eyes of Children*

Unlike Disney's 1941 *Dumbo*, the animals in the remake do not talk. In fact, Dumbo's beloved mouse sidekick is not present in the remake, instead the companionship is replaced with two young children. The two kids, Milly and Joe (played by Nico Parker and Finley Hobbins, respectively) can immediately see the talent that Dumbo has and the goodness in his heart.

When the new business owner, V.A. Vandevere (played by Michael Keaton), threatens to kill Dumbo's mother, the children can immediately see what is most important- reuniting Dumbo and his mother and getting them away from the circus.

This take allows viewers to realize that adults often move too quickly in this world, and sometimes it takes a different mindset to see what truly matters in harsh situations.

### 2. *It's a Business World, Sweetie*

In the original *Dumbo* tale, the complex idea behind Dumbo being involved in the circus doesn't really circulate around business, though the remake focuses on the reasons behind Dumbo's fame. Money. The original characters aren't focused on money at all, assumably due to the 1941 movie is focused more on the *animal's* outlook.

In the new version, however, Burton focused on the human side of the story, and ringmaster Max Medici (played by Danny Devito) rebuilds his circus reputation around Dumbo's fame and fortune. The struggling circus profits off of Dumbo's flying abilities and eventually enters a business contract because of little Dumbo's quickly rising stardom. This contract gets the characters locked into an unfair and abusive situation, which shows the audience that money can make us blind to the suffering of others.

### 3. *A Darker Side to the Friendly Story*

To many, Burton is well known for his darker, horror-themed films such as “Corpse Bride”, “Big Fish” and “Edward Scissorhands.” His take on Dumbo was nowhere near the scary and dooming ideas touched in his darker themes, but Burton’s use of heavy, dark colors were certainly woven into the emotional weight of Dumbo’s story.

For instance, most of Dumbo’s scenes are quite dimly lit. This is absolutely not a downside to the film, as there is a heaviness in Dumbo’s story that is exposed in the new film. Burton’s choice of lighting aids allowed us to see the raw pain Dumbo and his circus friends feel as they’re being exploited for their differences.

### 4. *Pink Elephants on....Bubbles*

The new *Dumbo* takes place in 1919, decades before the original tale. CGI graphics, which are computer generated images for animation, were used to make Dumbo and his story come to life. Dumbo was able to view The Pink Elephants as a bubble-blowing circus act, the use of CGI and futuristic colors breathing a new life into the familiar dancing icons.

The choice of bubbles was a great detail, as it hints to the original drunk hiccup bubbles from baby Dumbo but keeps the film PG. The animation in this scene is jaw dropping and *fun*. The neon lighting, flowing movements and original song “Pink Elephants on Parade” made this scene a favorite of mine.

This special moment was important to keep in the film, as the dancing elephants inspired Dumbo before his own act. A little imagination and fun can take a nervous performer a long way.

### 5. *Addressing the Elephant in the Room*

The new story of Dumbo addressed something not involved in the original tale: All creatures deserve to be free.

The story of Dumbo’s separation from his mother remains relatively the same in Burton’s remake. Dumbo’s mother, Ms. Jumbo, is mistakenly labeled as aggressive when trying to defend her newborn baby. The characters in the movie eventually realize that Dumbo and his mother belong together and belong in the *wild*, and many risk their lives to reunite the little family before releasing Dumbo and his mother from captivity.

Society has finally moved towards better treatment of animals and even banned animal use in some circuses. Countries such as Bolivia, Greece, Mexico and Peru all have circus animal bans and recent legislation in the U.S. ended the [\*Ringling Brothers\*](#) animal career in 2017.

There were many wondrous things that Tim Burton's 2019 "Dumbo" did to retell an original Disney story. From a reenvisioned plot line, wonderful animation and the confrontation of social ideas, the remake of Dumbo is sure to hit a soft spot in us all. To Dumbo, the brave and accepting little elephant who changes the hearts of all, fly away, O baby of mine.