

Four Cinderellas

A Delightful Time Warp

By Norman Hill

Who would've thought that today I'd be close to owning four versions on DVDs of the same classic fairy tale—three down, one to go? From the early 1950s, the Disney animated version was first. It was brilliantly drawn, and contained several timeless songs. Two comic tunes were "Cinderella, Cinderella" and "Bippety Boppety Boo." In 1957 and 1964 there were two TV special versions. Both featured musical scores by Rogers and Hammerstein II, although

some of the songs differed. Fourth, still being shown, the latest non-musical version of Cinderella has other aspects to recommend it.

The animated version did a great job in communicating the evil of the stepmother, Cinderella's de facto slave-master. Her snarls and evil eye, directed at various beings, show vividly her vicious character. Her cat, Lucifer, is an animal kingdom version of the stepmother and does get its just desserts near the end.

Each of the four versions treats resolution and fitting of the glass slipper on the heroine's foot a little differently. In the first, the stepmother has locked Cinderella in the attic, while her daughters attempt the unsuccessful fit. When Cinderella's friends get her the key to release her, she runs downstairs. The observant stepmother trips the court attendant with the glass slipper. When he falls, the glass slipper hits the floor and is demolished. But to this vicious woman's dismay, Cinderella produces the matching slipper in her possession.

There is general agreement that the two stepsisters are ugly and stupid. When their bare feet are shown in one sequence, animated drawing shows that even their bare feet are homely (and stupid).

A hit song for the Fairy Godmother is "Bippety Boppety Boo." To me, this makes her more lovable than the godmothers of later versions.

In 1957, for the live TV special, Julie Andrews played the feature role. She was then the toast of Broadway, starring in *My Fair Lady*. One song written for her is "In My Own Little Corner of the Room." Together with the prince at the ball, they sing, "Ten Minutes Ago." Since Andrews was, after all, the main star of the show, in duets with the Prince, she seems to take a subtle lead.

For me, one minor drawback of this version is that after the Prince finds Cinderella and fits her with his glass slipper, the stepmother and her two daughters seem to get off quite easily—no condemnation, no putdown, much less banishment.



