

Review: Singer Camilla Cabello dazzles in ambitious re-telling of 'Cinderella'



CHENNAI: It is hard to grab attention while repurposing a fairytale that has seen countless retellings, but Kay Cannon, best known as a screenwriter for “Pitch Perfect” film series, has wisely tweaked “Cinderella” to retain a fair degree of interest. The director wisely transforms her into an epitome of modernism with a strong feminist streak – not seen in traditional versions of the story.

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Although the earliest known literary version of Cinderella, battered by a wicked stepmother and equally brutish stepsisters, appeared in Europe in 1634, the fable of the godmother, who magically transforms a pumpkin into a swanky stagecoach and

micé into horses has been around since even earlier, albeit in verbal forms. The story also appeared in Grimms' Fairy Tales during the early 19th century, and this was an adaptation from the work of a French author, Charles Perrault.



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Cannon, who wrote and directed the work that is now streaming on Amazon Prime, manages to sidestep tried and tested tropes by weaving in a couple of novel features and dressing it up as a musical.

It opens with the townsfolk singing Janet Jackson's "Rhythm Nation" and Cinderella (essayed brilliantly by Cuban-American singer and songwriter Camilla Cabello) herself belting Des'ree's classic, "You Gotta Be." The medley by Keith Harrison is quite melodious and draws you into the tale with its magnetism.

Set in a dusty town with its toiling masses, Cannon's fantasy first gives us a taste of snobbish royalty: King Rowen (Pierce Brosnan, can't sing to save his life!) and Queen Beatrice (Minnie Driver) stand on the balcony atop their palace looking down on their subjects. Their son, Prince Robert (Nicholas Galitzine), is firmly under the thumb of his father, who insists the boy find a bride immediately. When he first notices Cinderella, or Ella, she is busy laying out her dresses, all personally designed and handmade. She's ambitious and has no time for pining over lovers.

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Cannon adds new dimensions to the age-old characters. Cinderella's stepmother, Vivian (Idina Menzel), and stepsisters, (Maddie Baillio and Charlotte Spencer), are far from the obnoxious creatures of the original tale. In fact, Vivian comes off as rather kind, perhaps due to her own unhappy life. The sisters are more funny than fiery and it is not a fairy godmother but a parent (Billy Porter) who opens the doors of destiny for Cinderella to attend the royal ball.

Though, on the whole, a disarmingly novel experiment, Cannon does still fall into the trap of having her protagonist forced to choose between love and career, a dilemma which seems a little staid.
