AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN LASSETER FOR *TANGLED*

What makes the newest Disney animation, *Tangled*, so special?
This movie is special because it's the 50th animated motion picture from the Walt Disney Animation Studios. This is the studio that started it all with *Snow White And The Seven Dwarves* many years ago. This is the studio that has never stopped making animated films. It's never closed its doors. I'm so proud that *Tangled* is the 50th feature in our history. It's a very fresh-looking movie, it's very funny and the characters are great. The story is emotional and the songs are fantastic. I'm incredibly proud of it.

How would you describe the story of *Tangled*?
The story is based upon the well-loved tale of Rapunzel, but this has a fresh, modern and contemporary feel to it. The characters and the humor are very modern – but it is also a story with a heart. The hallmark of every Disney film is its heart. That's what Disney animation is all about. Walt Disney always said, "For every laughter, there should be a tear." And that's something we truly believe in.

How do you add the 'heart' to your movies?
We always strive to create movies that are funny and entertaining. We want characters that are so engaging and appealing that you want to be with them – but it's that heart of the movie that stands out for me. It's the heart of the movie that makes audiences remember how a film made them feel. We can all sit around and talk forever about our favorite movies and why they are our favorites – but the thing that always drives me is that emotion is a key part of storytelling. The heart is not something you can add at the end of the movie.

How do you ensure that all your movies have heart and emotion?
I insist that we have internal screenings of every story reel every three to four months. No matter whether the filmmakers want to show their work or not, they have to show it internally; it's not their choice. We all watch the work as a group and we get together afterwards to talk about it. We talk honestly and what's nice is that it's a peer-to-peer discussion. That's how we see how movies are progressing. We can make sure it has heart and emotion at this early stage before we progress any further.

What is the secret to great storytelling?
We've always lived by three rules. Firstly, you have to tell a compelling story that keeps people on the edge of their seat. Secondly, you populate that story with memorable and appealing characters. Thirdly, you put those stories and characters in a believable world. It doesn't have to be a realistic world – that's for the live action folks – but it has to be a believable world.

What challenges did you face when you were coming up with the story of Rapunzel?
When it comes to well-loved tales from the past, logic wasn't necessarily part of the original storytelling. You're constantly thinking, 'Wait a minute… Why do they do that?' We had to do a lot of work on the story of Rapunzel to make everything logical and believable – but I think that's something that the story team did really well.

What other challenges did you face?
This was a very, very challenging and complex film – and we held the bar extremely high, especially with the animation, the character design and the modeling of the characters. It's very, very difficult to animate human characters and make them believable because everyone in the audience looks at a human in the mirror every day. You see humans everywhere you go, whether it's a family member over the dinner table or a stranger commuting to work. And so, in order to make a believable human, you have to do it really well. You have a lot more leeway with a talking horse or a talking toy because you're making it up – but a human is different. A human is much more challenging. We wanted these characters to become some of the best human characters ever animated in computer animation – and I think we've achieved that. It's terrific.

What challenges did you face when it came to Rapunzel's hair?
I think the technical group did an amazing job with the hair in *Tangled*. We knew all along that there was going to be lots and lots of hair in this movie, but it was a real challenge because it had to look perfectly natural. One of the difficulties in creating a film is that people put an immense amount of time and effort into things that never get noticed. If they *don't* do a good job, the audience notices it – but you don't want them to notice things like this. We needed to make this hair believable. No one has ever done anything quite like this before, but we really pulled it off. This studio has invented a lot of new technology for this movie. Artistically, we've raised the bar.

What's your favorite scene in *Tangled*?
One of my favorite sequences in the movie is the one we developed with the floating lanterns. Personally, these sequences are very special to me. Why? Well, let me tell you a little story… My wife and I headed to Bora Bora, Tahiti, for our 20th wedding anniversary. The Head Of Food Service at the resort we were staying at was an Italian guy, but he married an Indonesian woman and he had lived in Indonesia for years. He said to us, "I have something special for you." And on our 20th anniversary, he brought out a lantern. He had us sign a little note to each other, which we taped to the top of the lantern, and then he lit it. It was dusk, we were on the beach and it was very romantic. The guy then said, "Kiss and let it go." So we let it go and that beautiful lantern floated up into the Tahitian sky and drifted off into the distance.

That sounds incredibly romantic…
It was beautiful. We had dinner on the beach that night and we watched the lantern float away for about two hours until it was a tiny, little speck in the sky. It looked like a star up there. It was one of the most magical things that has ever happened to me, so when we started talking about doing something special for *Tangled*, I mentioned this story to the team. We got on the internet and we discovered that there are festivals in Southeast Asia where thousands of these lanterns light up the sky. We'd never seen anything quite like it, so it became an inspiration for the movie.

How would you describe Rapunzel?
Rapunzel is one of the most special characters we've ever created. She's so beautiful, but more importantly, she's empowered and talented. She really drives the story of *Tangled*. She wants to get outside and she wants to head off on an exciting adventure – and that's exactly what she gets.

TANGLED is Available on 3D Blu-ray, 2D Blu-ray, DVD & Movie Download formats March 29th!