

The topic

**SPOILER
ALERT!!!**

Review : West side story, the remake, by Steven Spielberg (2021)

Today we're going to focus on the new Spielberg movie : the remake of West Side Story !

A respectful tribute to the original movie

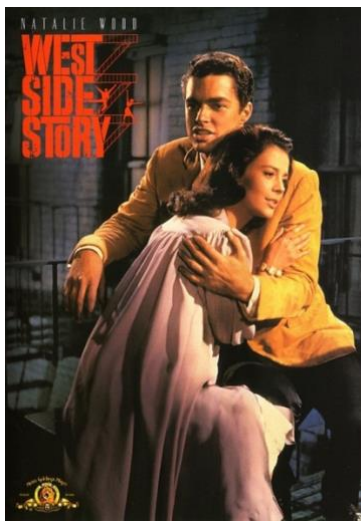
Little reminder

West Side Story is a musical inspired by Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet.

The plot is transposed in the West Side of Manhattan where a gang war between the Jets and the Sharks takes place, in the middle of which an impossible love story takes place between Maria, a young Puerto Rican girl being the sister of Bernardo, chief of the Sharks and Tony, a young white boy, a former member of the Jets.

Their shared love rekindles the fight and provocations between the two clans.

The screenplay, and the original plot of the film, have not been altered. We therefore find the already well-known characters: Tony, Maria, Anita or Bernardo in this new version.



1961 poster



2021 poster

The production

Cinematically this film is **breathhtaking**, an excellent job from the production team. The film offers us **grand scenes** especially music scenes that have been reinvented in a **modern** and **intelligent** way while keeping the lyrics of the original songs.



The ball scene and the meeting before the final battle between the Jets and the Sharks are particularly **impressive**.

In short, great ideas of staging, sets and impeccable editing, nothing very surprising from Steven Spielberg who already has not much to prove.

The **actors** are **excellent**, we notice a lot of pop culture personalities who will be recognized and appreciated by many young people.

Special mention to Ariana De Bose who plays Anita and transcribes very well the sublime and charismatic energy of the character.

Modification on the scenario

Very good ideas were also taken in the scenario: the relations between the characters are more developed in particular the love story between Tony and Maria: some added scenes take the time to show them spending more time together. This idea is very clever because it makes the ending more believable and the love between the two more special.

We also have a zoom on Tony's backstory and the events that led him to stop delinquency. His relationship with Valentina is very touching. The Jets and Sharks are also more staged which allows the viewer to be closer to them and to be more affected by the ending.

A deeper message

The original **West side Story** deals with topics like **racism, inclusion in America** when you are Latino, xenophobia from white people, etc.

But this film asks more questions and goes further in the reflection. First of all, it can be noted that each Puerto Rican character is played by a Latino actor. Indeed, Steven Spielberg had stated that it was very important for him to have these roles played by real brown actors unlike the original film in which, with the exception of Anita, all the other roles were played by white actors.

The topic of the **integration of immigrants** is more accentuated with the character of Anita who asks her entourage to speak in English when they speak in Spanish: indeed, we noticed certain scenes in which the Puerto Rican characters spoke Spanish. The fact of not having translated these dialogues is also an interesting decision because it makes Spanish a language as important as English, we notice that Anita desires to integrate into American society. This allows to better initiate the subject of the famous song "America".

Yet, the treatment she undergoes at the end makes her say that she is not American, this can be a very strong message: if we want the immigrant to feel a part of our country, they must be treated properly.

In this film the policeman takes side with the Jets, putting them against the Sharks because of their origin. We feel the fear of white characters who no longer feel at home with the massive arrival of Puerto Ricans in the West Side of the city.

Something very interesting is that the movie doesn't just show a "good" and a "bad" side, it doesn't take a stand and just shows us the struggles of the characters. The Jets also face difficulties and live in poverty.

By getting to know each other, the protagonists understand that the other gang is not necessarily privileged.

The character named "anyone" is present in the original film, but his trans-identity is much more accentuated in this version.

A reinvention of the script

We can see that the film has decided to take a more serious tone:

The representation of corpses on the screen, the blood very regularly shown and the very frequent use of the f-word is a bias taken by the production in order to modernize the film and open it to a more contemporary audience compared to its former version considered "old school". But maybe the fact of being too explicit especially in the scene where the Jets assault Anita, and the use of the word "rapists" was not necessary as the scene was already easy to understand for the people who needed to understand it in the original film.

This more explicit aspect was perhaps unwelcomed in a film that wishes to reach the younger generations because it affects the general public aspect of the film.

In conclusion, this movie was very pleasant with some clever adds and modifications. The production is amazing and the actors very talented.

This is not completely similar to the original version but it manages to stay true to it.

Score : 4,5 stars/5

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(Credits : pictures from Spielberg movie)