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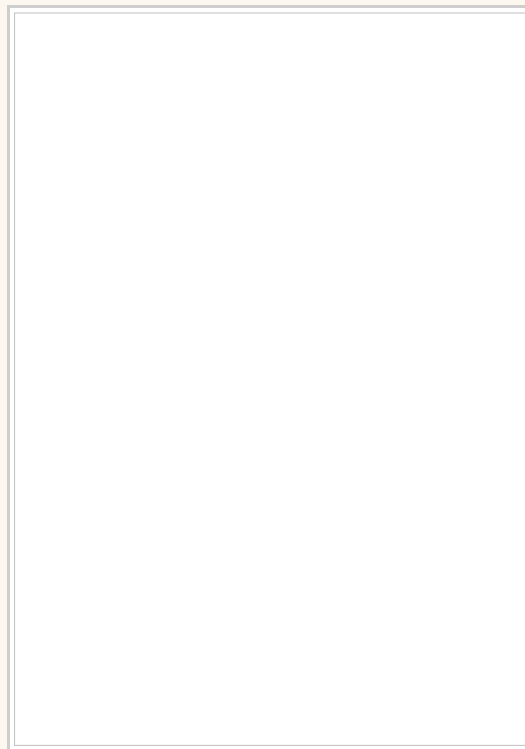
Filed under: Uncategorized — Tags: The Lion King — testzack2 @ 2:27 pm

The Lion King

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This article is about Disney's 1994 film. For the theatrical musical, see [The King \(musical\)](#)^[a]. For the ferry, see [MS Kongshavn](#)^[a].

The Lion King



The film's theatrical release poster by John Alvin^[a]

[1]^[a]

Directed by Roger Allers^[a]
Rob Minkoff^[a]

Produced by Don Hahn^[a]

Written by Irene Mecchi^[a]
Jonathan Roberts^[a]
Linda Woolverton^[a]
Matthew Broderick^[a]
Jeremy Irons^[a]
James Earl Jones^[a]

Starring	Jonathan Taylor Thomas <div>Nathan Lane <div>Ernie Sabella <div>Moira Kelly <div>Robert Guillaume <div>Rowan Atkinson <div>Whoopi Goldberg <div>Cheech Marin <div>Jim Cummings </div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div>
Music by	Songs: <div>Elton John <div>Tim Rice <div>Lebo M </div></div>Score:<div>Hans Zimmer </div></div>
Distributed by	Walt Disney Pictures
Release date(s)	June 15, 1994 (selected cities) <div>June 24, 1994 (general)<div>November 18, 1994 (re-release)<div>December 25, 2002 (IMAX re-release Special Edition)</div></div></div>
Running time	90 minutes
Language	English
Budget	\$ 45,000,000 ^[2]
Gross revenue	\$ 783,841,776 ^[2]
Followed by	<i>The Lion King II: Simba's Pride</i>

The Lion King is a 1994 American animated feature produced by Disney Feature Animation. Released to theaters on June 15, 1994 by Disney Pictures, it is the 32nd film in the Walt Disney Animated Classics series. The story, which was strongly influenced by the William Shakespeare *Hamlet*, takes place in a kingdom of anthropomorphic animals in Africa. The film was the highest grossing animated film of all time until the release of *Finding Nemo* (a Disney/Pixar computer-animated film). *The Lion King* holds the record as the highest grossing traditionally animated film in history and belongs to an era known as the Disney Renaissance.^[5]

The Lion King is the highest grossing 2D animated film of all time in the United States,^[6] and received positive reviews from critics, who praised the film for its music and story. During its release in 1994, the film grossed more than \$1 billion worldwide, becoming the most successful film released that year, and is currently the twenty-fifth highest-grossing feature film.

A musical film, *The Lion King* garnered two Academy Awards for

achievement in music and the Golden Globe Award for *Best Motion Picture Musical or Comedy*. Songs were written by composer Elton John and by Tim Rice, with an original score by Hans Zimmer.^[7] Disney later produced two related movies: a sequel, *The Lion King II: Simba's Pride*; and a prequel-part parallel, *The Lion King 1½*.

The Lion King takes place in the Pride Lands of the Serengeti, where a lion rules over the other animals as king. Rafiki (Robert Guillaume), a wise mandrill, anoints Simba (cub by Jonathan Taylor Thomas, adult by Mat Broderick), the newborn cub of King Mufasa (James Earl Jones) and Queen Sarabi (Madge Sinclair), and presents him to a gathering of animals at Pride Rock ("Circle of Life").

Mufasa takes Simba on a tour of the Pride Lands, teaching him about the "Circle of Life", the delicate balance affecting all living things. Simba's uncle Scar (Jeremy Irons) tells him about the elephant graveyard, a place where Mufasa has warned Simba not to go. Simba asks his mother if he can go to the graveyard with his best friend, Nala (cub by Niketa Calame, adult by Moira Kelly). Their parents agree but only if Mufasa's majordomo, the hornbill Zazu (Rowan Atkinson), goes with them. Simba and Nala elude Zazu's supervision and go to the graveyard instead. There, the cubs are met by Shenzi, Banzai and Ed (Whoopi Goldberg, Cheech Marin and Jim Cummings), spotted hyenas who try to kill them, but they are rescued by Mufasa. Mufasa later tells Simba how very disappointed he is in him and how he put both Nala's and his own life in danger.

Meanwhile, Scar gains the loyalty of the hyenas by claiming that if he becomes king, they'll "never go hungry again". Scar tells the hyenas that for this to happen they must kill Mufasa and Simba, thus establishing his plan of regicide. Some time later, Scar lures Simba into a gorge for a "surprise from his father". There, the hyenas create a wildebeest stampede. Alerted by Scar, Mufasa races to rescue Simba from the stampede. He saves his son but is left clinging to the edge of a steep cliff. Scar, instead of helping Mufasa, flings his brother into the stampede below. Simba sees his father fall and rushes down the cliff after him only to find him dead. Scar convinces the young cub that he was responsible for his father's death and recommends that he flee from the Pride Lands. Scar again sends Shenzi, Banzai and Ed to kill Simba, but he escapes. Scar informs the pride that both Mufasa and Simba were killed and that he is assuming the throne as the next in line, thus allowing the hyenas into the Pride Lands.

In a distant desert, Simba is found unconscious by Timon and Pumbaa (Ned Flanders and Ernie Sabella), a meerkat-warthog duo who adopt and raise the cub. When Simba has grown into an adult he is discovered by Nala, who tells him that Scar, through his irresponsibility, has turned the Pride Lands into a barren wasteland. She asks Simba to return and take his place as king but Simba refuses, still believing he caused his father's death. Simba shows Nala around his kingdom and the two begin to fall in love. Rafiki arrives and persuades Simba to return to the Pride Lands, aided by Mufasa's presence in the stars.

Once back at Pride Rock, Simba (with Timon, Pumbaa and Nala) is horrified to see the condition of the Pride Lands. After seeing his mother Sarabi struggle to see Scar for criticizing him, Simba announces his return. In response, Scar tells Simba that Simba was responsible for Mufasa's death and corners Simba at the edge of Pride Rock. As Simba dangles over the edge of Pride Rock, Scar pretends to help but quietly reveals to Simba that *he* killed Mufasa. Enraged, Simba leaps up and pins Scar to the ground, forcing him to admit the truth to the pride. A final battle then ensues between the hyenas and the lionesses which results in Scar being cornered by Simba. Attempting to gain Simba's mercy, Scar blames Mufasa's death on Scar, but Simba orders Scar to go into exile. Scar pretends to leave but turns to attack Simba, resulting in a final duel. Simba triumphs over his uncle by flipping him over the edge of the cliff. Scar survives the fall but finds himself surrounded by the now-reformed hyenas, who attack and kill him. Simba and Nala become the new king and queen of the Pride Lands. The film concludes with the Pride Lands turning green and life again and Rafiki presenting Simba and Nala's newborn cub as "The Circle of Life" continues.

Characters

Main article: [List of The Lion King characters](#)

- **Simba** (voiced by **Jonathan Taylor Thomas** as a cub and **Matt Broderick** as an adult) is the protagonist of the movie and the son of Mufasa.
- **Scar** (voiced by **Jeremy Irons**), the film's antagonist, is Mufasa's jealous and scheming younger brother who desires the throne.
- **Mufasa** (voiced by **James Earl Jones**) is the King of the Pride Lands and Simba's father.
- **Nala** (voiced by **Niketa Calame** as a cub and **Moira Kelly** as an adult) is Simba's childhood friend and intended mate.
- **Timon and Pumbaa** (voiced by **Nathan Lane** and **Ernie Sabell** respectively) are the comical meerkat and warthog duo who live under the philosophy of "hakuna matata" (no worries). They become Simba's provisional guardians during his exile.
- **Rafiki** (voiced by **Robert Guillaume**) is a wise mandrill who is responsible for presenting the newborn prince of the lions at Pride Rock to all to see.
- **Zazu** (voiced by **Rowan Atkinson**) is a loyal hornbill who serves as Mufasa's majordomo.
- **Shenzi, Banzai and Ed** (voiced by **Whoopi Goldberg**, **Cheech Marin** and **Jim Cummings** respectively) are a trio of spotted hyenas who help Scar in his evil doings.
- **Sarabi** (voiced by **Madge Sinclair**) is Simba's mother and the leader of the lionesses.
- **Sarafina** (voiced by **Zoe Leader**) is Nala's mother. Her name is given in the end credits of the film.

Production

The production of *The Lion King*, originally titled *King of the Jungle*, took place at Walt Disney Animation Studios in Glendale, California, and Disney-MGM Studios in Orlando, Florida. The original treatment, inspired by Hamlet, was written by Thomas M. Disch (author of *The Brave Little Toaster*), as "King of the Kalahari" in late 1988. Since his treatment was written as work-for-hire, Disch received no credit or royalties.^[8] Thirteen supervising animators, be-

California and Florida, were responsible for establishing the personalities setting the tone for the film's main characters. Nearly twenty minutes of the were animated at the Disney-MGM Studios.^[9] Ultimately, more than artists, animators and technicians contributed to the *The Lion King* over lengthy production schedule. More than one million drawings were create the film, including 1,197 hand-painted backgrounds and 119,058 individual colored frames of film.^[9]

In April 1992, when Rob Minkoff joined the directing team, a session was to revamp the story. Kirk Wise and Gary Trousdale, the directors responsible for *Beauty and the Beast*, also attended. For two days, the producer, Don Bluth, presided over the discussion that finally produced a character makeover for Simba and a radically revised second half of the film.^[9] Screenwriter Linda Mecchi joined the team that summer to help further develop the characters and define their personalities. Several months later, she was joined by Jonathan Roberts in the rewriting process. Working together in the animation department and in conjunction with the directors and story team, they tackled the unresolved emotional issues in the script and also added many new situations, with Pumbaa and Timon and with the hyenas.^[9]

Animators studied real-life animals for reference, as was done for the earlier film, *Bambi*.^[10] Jim Fowler, renowned wildlife expert, visited the studio on several occasions with an assortment of lions and other jungle inhabitants to discuss behavior and help the animators give their drawings an authentic feel. He taught them how lions greet one another by gently butting heads, and show affection by placing one's head under the other's chin. Fowler also talked about how they protect themselves by lying on their backs and using their claws to ward off attackers, and how they fight rivals by rising on their hind legs.^[9] To prepare the filmmakers, some of the lead production crew made a trip to Africa to better understand the environment for the film. The trip gave production designer Chris Sanders a new appreciation for the natural environments that inspired him to find ways to incorporate these elements into the design of the film.^[9]

The use of computers helped the filmmakers present their vision in new ways. The most notable use of computer animation is in the "wildebeest stampede" sequence. Several distinct wildebeest characters were created in a 3D computer program, multiplied into hundreds, cel shaded to look like drawn animals, and given randomized paths down a mountainside to simulate the unpredictable movement of a herd. Similar multiplication occurs in the "I Just Prepared" musical number with identical marching hyenas.^[11] Five specialized trained animators and technicians spent more than two years creating the minute stampede sequence.^[9]

At one time, the Disney Feature Animation staff felt *The Lion King* was more important than *Pocahontas*.^[3] Both projects were in production at the same time, and most of the staff preferred to work on *Pocahontas*, believing it would

be the more prestigious and successful of the two.^[3] Songwriter Elton John thought his career had hit a new low when he was writing the music to the “Hakuna Matata”.^[12] However, the strongly enthusiastic audience reception of an early film trailer which consisted solely of the opening sequence with song, “Circle of Life,” suggested that the film would be very successful. It turns out, while both films were commercial successes, *The Lion King* received more positive feedback and larger grosses than *Pocahontas*.^[13]^[14]^[15]

Elton John and Tim Rice wrote five original songs for this film, with John performing “Can You Feel the Love Tonight” during the end credits. The film’s score was composed by Hans Zimmer and supplemented with traditional African music and choir elements arranged by Lebo M.^[16]

Songs

Here are the musical numbers in the original theatrical film, listed in the order of their occurrence:

- **“Circle of Life”** is sung by an off-screen character voiced by Carmen Twillie, with African vocals by Lebo M and his African choir. This song is performed during the ceremony where the newborn Simba is presented to the animals of the Pride Lands. The song is reprised at the end of the film, during the presentation of Simba and Nala’s newborn cub.
- **“I Just Can’t Wait to Be King”** is sung by young Simba (Jason Weaver), young Nala (Laura Williams), and Zazu (Rowan Atkinson). Simba uses this musical number in the film to distract Zazu so that he and Nala can sneak away to the elephant graveyard, at the same time expressing his wish to be king as soon as possible.
- **“Be Prepared”** is sung by Scar (Jeremy Irons/Jim Cummings), Shenzi (Whoopi Goldberg), Banzai (Cheech Marin) and Ed (Jim Cummings). During this song, Scar reveals his plot to kill Mufasa and Simba to his hyena minions.
- **“Hakuna Matata”** is sung by Timon (Nathan Lane), Pumbaa (Ernie Sabella) and Simba (Jason Weaver as a cub and Joseph Williams as an adult). Timon and Pumbaa use this song as a warm welcome to Simba when he arrives at their jungle home, and to explain their “no worries” lifestyle. This sequence also contains a montage sequence in which Simba grows from a young cub to a young adult, indicating the passage of time in Simba’s life in the jungle. The American Film Institute released its AFI’s 100 Years... 100 Songs list in 2004, and “Hakuna Matata” was listed at number 99.^[17]
- **“Can You Feel the Love Tonight”** is a love song sung mainly by an off-screen character voiced by Kristle Edwards, along with Timon (Nathan Lane), Pumbaa (Ernie Sabella), adult Simba (Joseph Williams) and adult Nala (James Earl Ray/Dworsky). This musical sequence shows Timon and Pumbaa’s frustration in seeing Simba fall in love, and the development of Simba and Nala’s romantic relationship. The song won the Oscar for Best Original Song during the 74th Academy Awards.

Additionally, a song which was not present in the original theatrical film but was later added to the IMAX theater and to the DVD Platinum Edition release of the film is:

- **“The Morning Report”** was originally a scene planned for the theatrical film but never made it past the storyboard stage. It was later cut and the lyrics were written to be used for the live musical version of *The Lion King* instead.^[18] It was later added, with an accompanying animated sequence, to the 2002 IMAX rerelease. Sung by Zazu (Jeff Bennett), Mufasa (James Earl Ray), and Simba (Joseph Williams).

Jones) and young Simba (Evan Saucedo), the song is an extension of the scene in the original film where Zazu delivers a morning report to Mufasa and later gets pounced on by Simba.

Soundtrack and other albums

Main article: [The Lion King \(soundtrack\)](#)

The film's original motion picture soundtrack was released on July 13, 1994, and was the fourth best-selling album of the year on the [Billboard 200](#) and the best-selling soundtrack.^[19]

On February 28, 1995, Disney released an album entitled *Rhythm of the Pride Lands*, which featured songs and performances inspired by, but not featured in, the film. Focusing on the African influences in the film's original music, most of the tracks were by African composer Lebo M, sung either partially or entirely in various African languages. Several songs included on the album would be featured in other *The Lion King*-related projects, such as the stage musical and the direct-to-video sequels (e.g., "He Lives In You" was used as the opening song for *Lion King II: Simba's Pride*, and a reincarnation of "Warthog Rhapsody", called "That's All I Need", in *The Lion King 1½*). *Rhythm of the Pride Lands* was initially issued in a very limited quantity, but there was a 2003 rerelease included in several international versions of *The Lion King*'s special edition soundtrack, with an additional track. Additionally, *The Lion King Expanded Score* contains numerous before-released instrumental music from Hans Zimmer's original score.^[20]

The compilation *Classic Disney: 60 Years of Musical Magic* includes "Circle of Life", "I Just Can't Wait to Be King", "Hakuna Matata", "Can You Feel the Love Tonight?", and "Be Prepared". The compilation *Disney's Greatest Hits* includes "Circle of Life", "Hakuna Matata", and "Can You Feel the Love Tonight?".

Rel

Box office performance

The Lion King became the highest grossing motion picture of 1994 worldwide and the second highest in the USA (behind *Forrest Gump*).^[21] The film initially made US\$ 312,855,561 domestically, including a short return to the box office in November 1994, and adding in its 2002 IMAX rerelease the domestic total to \$328,541,776.^[22] *The Lion King* held the record for the most successful animated feature film until 2003 when it was surpassed by the computer-animated *Finding Nemo*, but it remains the highest grossing hand-drawn animated feature film.^[4]

The Lion King box office revenue

Source	Gross (USD)	% Total	All Time Rank
Domestic	\$328,541,776 ^[2]	41.9%	18 ^[2]
Foreign	\$455,300,000 ^[2]	58.1%	N/A
Worldwide	\$783,841,776^[2]	100.0%	24^[2]

Critical reviews

The Lion King garnered critical acclaim and at Rotten Tomatoes^[14], based on 147 reviews collected, the film has an overall approval rating of 92%, with a weighted average^[14] score of 8/10.^[14] Among Rotten Tomatoes's *Cream of the Critic*^[14], which consists of popular and notable critics from the top newspapers, websites, television and radio programs,^[23] the film holds an overall approval rating of 100 percent.^[24] By comparison, Metacritic^[25], which assigns a normalized score of 100 rating to reviews from mainstream critics, calculated an average score of 88 from the 13 reviews it collected.^[25]

Chicago Sun-Times^[26] film critic Roger Ebert^[26] called the film “a superbly done animated feature” and, in his print review wrote, “The saga of Simba, which traces its deeply buried origins owes something to Greek tragedy and certainly to *Hamlet* is a learning experience as well as an entertainment.”^[26] However, on the television program *Siskel & Ebert*^[27] the film was praised but received a mixed reaction when compared to previous Disney films. Gene Siskel^[27] and Roger Ebert^[27] both gave the film a “Thumbs Up” but Siskel said that it was not as good as earlier films such as *Beauty and the Beast*^[27] and was “a good film, not a great one”.^[27] Hal Hinson of *The Washington Post*^[28] called it “an impressive, almost daunting achievement” and felt that the film was “spectacular in a manner that has nearly become commonplace with Disney’s feature-length animations” but was less enthusiastic toward the end of his review saying, “Shakespearean in tone, epic in scope, it seems more appropriate for grown-ups than for kids. Truth be told, even for adults it is downright strange.”^[28] Owen Gleiberman^[29] film critic for *Entertainment Weekly*^[29], praised the film and wrote that it “has the resonance to stand not just as a terrific cartoon but as an emotionally powerful movie”.^[29] *Rolling Stone*^[30] film critic Peter Travers^[30] praised the film and wrote that it was “a hugely entertaining blend of music, fun and eye-popping thrills, though it doesn’t lack for heart”.^[30] The staff of *TV Guide*^[31] wrote that “the film has some of Disney’s most spectacular animation yet—particularly in the wildebeest stampede—and strong vocal performances, especially by Broadway comedian Nathan Lane. However, it suffers from a curious lack of an undeveloped story line.”^[31] James Berardinelli^[32], film critic for *ReelViews*^[32] praised the film saying, “With each new animated release, Disney seems to be expanding its already-broad horizons a little more. *The Lion King* is the most mature (in more than one sense) of these films, and there clearly has been a conscious effort to please adults as much as children. Happily, for those of us who generally stay far away from ‘cartoons’, they have succeeded.”^[32] In 2008, the American Film Institute^[33] revealed its “10 Top 10—the best ten films of the ten “classic” American film genres—after polling over 1,500 people from the creative community. *The Lion King* was acknowledged as the fourth best film in the animation genre.^[33] However, Rowan Atkinson^[34] has stated that apart from *Four Weddings and a Funeral*^[34], he is not proud of any of his films, which includes *The Lion King*.^[34]

Awards and nominations

The Lion King received many award nominations, including the Academy Award^[35] for Best Original Score (by Hans Zimmer) and the Golden Globe award for Best Motion Picture – Musical or Comedy, both of which it won. Most notable is the song “Can You Feel the Love Tonight” by Elton John and Tim Rice, which won the Academy Award for Best Original Song, the Golden Globe for Best Original Song, the BMI Film Music Award, and the Grammy Award for Best Vocal Performance Male.

The awards were as follows:

- Academy Awards^[35]
 - Best Original Score (Won)
 - Best Original Song for “Can You Feel the Love Tonight” (Won)
 - Best Original Song for “Circle of Life” (Nominated)
 - Best Original Song for “Hakuna Matata” (Nominated)
- Golden Globe Awards^[36]
 - Best Motion Picture – Musical or Comedy (Won)
 - Best Original Score (Won)
 - Best Original Song for “Can You Feel the Love Tonight” (Won)
 - Best Original Song for “Circle of Life” (Nominated)
- Annie Awards^[37]
 - Best Animated Feature (Won)
 - Best Achievement for Voice Acting to Jeremy Irons for voicing Scar (Won)
 - Best Individual Achievement for Story Contribution in the Field of Animation (Won)
 - Best Individual Achievement for Artistic Excellence in the Field of Animation (Nominated, lost to *The Nightmare Before Christmas*.)
- Saturn Awards^[38]^[39]
 - Best Fantasy Film (Nominated, lost to *Forrest Gump*.)
 - Best Performance by a Younger Actor to Jonathan Taylor Thomas for voicing young Simba (Nominated, lost to Kirsten Dunst for *Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles*.)
 - Best DVD Classic Film Release in 2004 (Nominated, lost to *The Adventures of Robin Hood*.)
- British Academy Film Awards^[40]
 - Award for Best Sound (Nominated, lost to *Speed*.)
 - Anthony Asquith Award for Film Music (Nominated, lost to *Backbeat*.)
- BMI Film & TV Awards^[41]
 - BMI Film Music Award for “Can You Feel the Love Tonight” (Won)
 - Most Performed Song from a Film “Can You Feel the Love Tonight” (Won)
- Grammy Award^[42]^[43]
 - Best Vocal Performance Male to Elton John for “Can You Feel the Love Tonight” (Won)
 - Song of the Year for “Can You Feel the Love Tonight” (Nominated, lost to “Streets of Philadelphia” from *Philadelphia*.)
 - Best Song Written for a Motion Picture, Television or Other Visual Medium for “Can You Feel the Love Tonight” (Nominated, lost to “Streets of Philadelphia” from *Philadelphia*.)
 - Best Song Written for a Motion Picture, Television or Other Visual Medium for “Circle of Life” (Nominated, lost to “Streets of Philadelphia” from *Philadelphia*.)
 - Best Instrumental Composition Written for a Motion Picture or Television (Nominated, lost to *Schindler’s List*.)
- MTV Movie Awards^[44]
 - Best Villain for Jeremy Irons (Nominated, lost to Dennis Hopper for *The Untouchables*.)

Speed.)

- Best Song From A Movie for “Can You Feel the Love Tonight” (Nominations lost to “Big Empty” from *The Crow*.)
- Kids’ Choice Awards^[45]
 - Favorite Movie (Won)

1995 release

The Lion King was first released on VHS and laserdisc in the United States on March 3, 1995, under Disney’s “Masterpiece Collection” video series. In addition, Deluxe Editions of both formats were released. The VHS Deluxe Edition included the film, an exclusive lithograph of Rafiki and Simba (in some editions), a commemorative “Circle of Life” epigraph, six concept art lithographs, another tape with the half-hour TV show *The Making of The Lion King*, and a certificate of authenticity. The CAV laserdisc Deluxe Edition contained the film, six concept art lithographs and *The Making of The Lion King* and added storyboards, character design artwork, concept art, rough animation and a directors’ commentary that the VHS edition did not have, on a total of four double sided disks. The VHS tape quickly became one of the best-selling videotapes of all time: 4.5 million tapes were sold on the first day^[46] and ultimately sales totaled more than 30 million^[47] before these home video versions went into moratorium in 1997.^[48]

2003 Platinum Edition

On October 7, 2003, the film was rereleased on VHS and released on DVD for the first time, titled *The Lion King: Platinum Edition*, as part of Disney’s Platinum Edition line of animated classic DVDs. The DVD release featured two versions of the film on the first disc, a remastered version created for the 2002 IMAX release and an edited version of the IMAX release purporting to be the original 1994 theatrical version.^[49] A second disc, with bonus features, was included in the DVD release. The film’s soundtrack was provided both on the original Dolby 5.1 track and in a new Disney Enhanced Home Theater format, making this one of the first Disney DVDs so equipped.^[50] By means of scene branching, the film could be viewed either with or without a newly-created scene — a short conversation in the film replaced with a complete song (“Morning Report”). A Special Collector’s Gift Set was also released, containing the DVD set, five exclusive lithographed character portraits (new sketches created and signed by the original character animators), and an introductory documentary entitled *The Journey*.^[48]

The Platinum Edition of *The Lion King* was criticized by fans for its advertising: producer Don Hahn had earlier stated that the film would be the original 1994 theatrical version, but it was confirmed after release that it was a “digitally enhanced” IMAX version instead, which is slightly different from the original theatrical cut. One of the most noticeable differences is the re-drawn crocodiles in the “I Just Can’t Wait to Be King” sequence.^[49] Despite the criticism, more than two million copies of the Platinum Edition DVD and VHS units were sold on the first day of release.^[46] A DVD boxed set of the three

Lion King films (in two-disc Special Edition formats) was released on December 6, 2004. In January 2005, the film, along with the sequels, went back on moratorium,^[51] but new and used copies still sell very well.^[52]

Future re-release

Disney has yet to announce a date for the Blu-ray Disc release, although the studio showed clips of the film on Blu-ray at the Consumer Electronics Show 2008.^[53]

Controversy

Story origin



^[54]



^[55]

Comparison of *Kimba the White Lion* (left) and *The Lion King* on pride rock (right)

Main article: *Kimba the White Lion*#*The Lion King* controversy

The Lion King was the first Disney animated feature to be an original story rather than being based on an already-existing story.^[3]^[9] The filmmakers have said that the story of *The Lion King* was inspired by the Joseph and Mary stories from the Bible and William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.^[3] Certain elements of the film, however, bear a resemblance to a famous 1960s Japanese anime television show, *Kimba the White Lion*.^[54] One similarity is the protagonists' names: Kimba and Simba, although the word "simba" means "lion" in Swahili.^[55] Many characters in *Kimba* have an analogue in *The Lion King* and that various individual scenes are nearly identical in composition and camera angle. Early production artwork on the film's Platinum Edition DVD includes a white lion.^[56] Disney's official stance is that the similarities are coincidental.^[57]

Yoshihiro Shimizu, of Tezuka Productions, which created *Kimba the White Lion*, has refuted rumours that the studio was paid hush money by Disney but explained that they rejected urges from within the industry to sue because, 'we're a small weak company. It wouldn't be worth it anyway... Disney's lawyers are among the top twenty in the world!'^[58]

Christopher Vogler, in his book *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*, described Disney's request that he suggest how to improve the plot

The Lion King by incorporating ideas from *Hamlet*.^[59] It has also been noted that the plot bears some resemblance to the West African Epic of Sundiata.^[60]

Alleged subliminal messaging



^[61]



The supposed “SEX” frame

In one scene of the film’s original VHS and LaserDisc releases, it appears as if the word “SEX” might have been embedded into the dust flying in the sky as Simba flops down,^[61] which conservative activist Donald Wildmon^[62] asserted was a subliminal message^[63] intended to promote sexual promiscuity^[64]. The film’s animators^[65], however, have stated that the letters spell “SFX” (a common abbreviation of “special effects”), and was intended as an innocent “signature” created by the effects animation team.^[62] Due to the controversy it caused, the scene was edited for the film’s 2003 DVD and VHS releases, and the dust no longer formed any letters.^[63]

“The Lion Sleeps Tonight”

The use of the song “The Lion Sleeps Tonight^[66]” in a scene with Timon and Pumbaa has led to disputes between Disney and the family of South African musician Solomon Linda^[67], who composed the song (originally titled “Mbube”) in 1939. In July 2004, the family filed suit, seeking \$1.6 million in royalties from Disney. In February 2006, Linda’s heirs reached a legal settlement with Abilene Music, which held the worldwide rights and had licensed the song to Disney for an undisclosed amount of money.^[64]

Hamas’ propaganda

In August 2007, the Hamas^[68] organization produced an animated propaganda film that resembled the style of *The Lion King*. The program was aired via a television station^[69], *Al-Aqsa TV*. Hamas was portrayed as a lion that chased and killed rats that bore the likenesses of members of the secular Fatah organization in Gaza^[70]. The program was briefly aired but was pulled off the air for revision.^[65]^[66]

Because of its popularity, *The Lion King* has been referenced in a variety of media. For instance, the animated TV series *The Simpsons* spoofed the film in the episode “Round Springfield”. Toward the end of the episode, the ghost of Mufasa appears in the clouds with Bleeding Gums Murphy (who had appeared earlier that episode) and Darth Vader, and James Earl Jones (who voiced Mufasa and Darth Vader) says, “This is CNN. You must avenge my death. Kimba... dah, I mean Simba,” a reference to the *Lion King*/*Kimba the White Lion* controversy.^[67] Simba and Nala’s escapade to the elephant graveyard was mentioned in a Season 2 episode of *House*.

Disney also frequently referenced *The Lion King* in its own films and shows. For example, in the Disney-released, Pixar-produced 1995 computer animated film *Toy Story*, the song “Hakuna Matata” can be heard playing in Andy’s room during the film’s climax.^[68] Pumbaa made a cameo in *Aladdin and the King of Thieves* (1996),^[69] and *Hercules* (1997) paid homage to both *The Lion King* and the Nemean lion: Scar’s skin is worn by Hercules while he is posing as a painting on a Greek vase.^[70]

Sequels and spin-offs

The success of the film led to several spin-offs, the first being a 70 mm film released in 1995 titled *Circle of Life: An Environmental Fable*. It promoted environmental friendliness and was shown in the The Land Pavilion’s Haunted Theater at Epcot in Walt Disney World.^[71] A spin-off television series called *The Lion King’s Timon and Pumbaa*, which focused on the titular meerkat and warthog duo in a more modern, human world than that of the film, also debuted in 1995.^[72]

In addition, a direct-to-video sequel called *The Lion King II: Simba’s Pride* was released in 1998,^[73] focusing on Simba and his daughter Kiara as she falls in love with Kovu, a former member of Scar’s pride. Finally, a direct-to-video prequel-parallel, *The Lion King 1½* (also known as *The Lion King 3: Hakuna Matata*), was released in 2004, providing some background on Timon and Pumbaa and giving the timeline of *The Lion King* from their perspective.^[74]

Many characters from *The Lion King*, including Timon, Pumbaa, Simba, Rafiki, Zazu, Shenzi, Banzai, Ed, Scar and Mufasa, appear in the Disney Channel series *House of Mouse*.^[75] Some of them also appear in the series’ spin-off movies *Mickey’s Magical Christmas: Snowed in at the House of Mouse* and *Mickey’s House of Villains*.

Musical

Main article: *The Lion King (musical)*

The Lion King was adapted into a successful Broadway stage musical in 1997. The musical is based on *The Lion King* film and is directed by Julie Taymor, using actors in animal costumes as well as giant, hollow puppets.^[76] The musical won six Tony Awards, including Best Musical and is produced

Video games

Two video games based on the film have been released. The first, titled *The King*, was published in 1994 by Virgin and was released for the NES (or Europe), SNES, Game Boy, Sega Master System, Sega Genesis, Game Boy Advance, PC, and Amiga.^[79] The second game, called *The Lion King: Simba's Mighty Adventure*, was published in 2000 by Activision and was released for PlayStation 2 and Game Boy Color.^[80] It was based on the first film and its storyline continued into the sequel.

In 1996, Disney Interactive and 7th Level released *Timon & Pumbaa's Jungle Games* for the PC. It was later seen on the SNES. The *Games* include: one where Timon and Pumbaa hunt for bugs, one where Pumbaa uses his gas to destroy fruits and bugs (and even a kitchen sink) that fall out of trees, a variation of pinball, a game where you use a peashooter to hit enemy creatures in the jungle, a game where Timon has to jump onto his friends in order to cross a river to deliver bugs to Pumbaa, and a variation of *Puyo Puyo* called *Bug Drop*.^[81]

A game called *The Lion King 1½* was published in 2003 for the Game Boy Advance, based on the direct-to-video film and featuring Timon and Pumbaa as the playable characters.^[82] In the Disney and Square Enix video game *Kingdom Hearts*, Simba appears as an ally that Sora can summon during his battles.^[83] He also appears again as a summon character in *Kingdom Hearts II*. In *Kingdom Hearts II*, the Pride Lands are a playable world and a number of characters from the film appear, including Simba, Timon, Pumbaa, Nala, Mufasa, Rafiki, Scar, Shenzi, Banzai and Ed.^[84]

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