

= The Lion King =

The Lion King is a 1994 American animated epic musical film produced by Walt Disney Feature Animation and released by Walt Disney Pictures . It is the 32nd animated feature in the Walt Disney Animated Classics series . The story takes place in a kingdom of lions in Africa , and was influenced by William Shakespeare 's Hamlet . The film was produced during a period known as the Disney Renaissance . The Lion King was directed by Roger Allers and Rob Minkoff , produced by Don Hahn , and has a screenplay credited to Irene Mecchi , Jonathan Roberts and Linda Woolverton . Its original songs were written by composer Elton John and lyricist Tim Rice , and original scores were written by Hans Zimmer . The film features an ensemble voice cast that includes Matthew Broderick , James Earl Jones , Jeremy Irons , Jonathan Taylor Thomas , Moira Kelly , Nathan Lane , Ernie Sabella , Rowan Atkinson , Robert Guillaume , Madge Sinclair , Whoopi Goldberg , Cheech Marin , and Jim Cummings .

The Lion King tells the story of Simba , a young lion who is to succeed his father , Mufasa , as king ; however , after Simba 's uncle Scar murders Mufasa , Simba is manipulated into thinking he was responsible and flees into exile in shame and despair . Upon maturation living with two wastrels , Simba is given some valuable perspective from his childhood friend , Nala , and his shaman , Rafiki , before returning to challenge Scar to end his tyranny .

Development of The Lion King began in 1988 during a meeting between Jeffrey Katzenberg , Roy E. Disney and Peter Schneider while promoting Oliver & Company in Europe . Thomas Disch wrote a film treatment , and Woolverton developed the first scripts while George Scribner was signed on as director , being later joined by Allers . Production began in 1991 concurrently with Pocahontas , which wound up attracting most of Disney 's top animators . Some time after the staff traveled to Hell 's Gate National Park in Kenya to research on the film 's setting and animals , Scribner left production disagreeing with the decision to turn the film into a musical , and was replaced by Minkoff . When Hahn joined the project , he was dissatisfied with the script and the story was promptly rewritten . Nearly 20 minutes of animation sequences were produced at Disney @-@ MGM Studios in Florida . Computer animation was also used in several scenes , most notably in the wildebeest stampede sequence .

The Lion King was released on June 15 , 1994 , to a positive reaction from critics , who praised the film for its music , story and animation ; it finished its theatrical run as the highest @-@ grossing release of 1994 and the second highest @-@ grossing film of all time . The Lion King garnered two Academy Awards for its achievement in music and the Golden Globe Award for Best Motion Picture ? Musical or Comedy . The film has led to many derived works , such as a Broadway adaptation ; two direct @-@ to @-@ video follow @-@ ups ? the sequel The Lion King II : Simba 's Pride ( 1998 ) and the prequel / parallel The Lion King 1 ½ ( 2004 ) ? two television series , Timon and Pumbaa and The Lion Guard , and a 3D re @-@ release in 2011 .

= = Plot = =

In the Pride Lands of Africa , a lion rules over the animals as king . The birth of King Mufasa and Queen Sarabi 's son Simba creates envy and resentment in Mufasa 's younger brother , Scar , who knows his nephew now replaces him as heir to the throne . After Simba has grown into a young cub , Mufasa gives him a tour of the Pride Lands , teaching him the responsibilities of being a king and the Circle of Life . Later that day , Scar tricks Simba and his best friend Nala into exploring a forbidden elephant graveyard , despite the protests of Mufasa 's hornbill majordomo Zazu . At the graveyard , three spotted hyenas named Shenzi , Banzai and Ed attack the cubs before Mufasa , alerted by Zazu , rescues them and forgives Simba for his actions . That night , the hyenas , who are allied with Scar , plot with him to kill Mufasa and Simba .

The next day Scar lures Simba to a gorge and tells him to wait there while he gets Mufasa . On Scar 's orders , the hyenas stampede a large herd of wildebeest into the gorge . Mufasa rescues Simba , but as Mufasa tries to climb up the gorge 's walls , Scar throws him back into the stampede , where he is trampled to death . After Simba finds Mufasa 's body , Scar convinces him he was

responsible for his father 's death and advises Simba to flee the kingdom . As Simba leaves , Scar orders Shenzi , Banzai and Ed to kill the cub , but Simba escapes . That night , Scar announces to the pride that both Mufasa and Simba were killed in the stampede and steps forward as the new king , allowing a pack of hyenas to live in the Pride Lands .

After running far away , Simba collapses from exhaustion in a desert . Timon and Pumbaa , a meerkat and a warthog , find him and nurse him back to health . Simba subsequently grows up with them in the jungle , living a carefree life with his friends under the motto " hakuna matata " ( " no worries " in Swahili ) . When he is a young adult , Simba rescues Timon and Pumbaa from a hungry lioness , who turns out to be Nala . She and Simba reunite and fall in love . Nala urges Simba to return home , telling him the Pride Lands have become a wasteland with not enough food and water . Feeling guilty over his father 's death , Simba refuses and storms off , leaving Nala disappointed and angry . As Simba exits the jungle , he encounters Mufasa 's mandrill friend and advisor , Rafiki . Rafiki tells Simba that Mufasa is " alive " and takes him to a pond . There Simba is visited by the ghost of Mufasa in the sky , who tells him he must take his rightful place as the king of the Pride Lands . Simba realizes he can no longer run from his past and goes home . Nala , Timon , and Pumbaa join him , and agree to help him fight .

At the Pride Lands , Simba sees Scar hit Sarabi and confronts him , but Scar taunts Simba over his " part " in Mufasa 's death . However , when Scar pushes Simba to the edge of Pride Rock , he reveals that he killed Mufasa . Enraged , Simba roars back up and forces Scar to reveal the truth to the pride . Timon , Pumbaa , Rafiki , Zazu , and the lionesses fend off the hyenas while Scar , attempting to escape , is cornered by Simba at the top of Pride Rock . Scar begs Simba for mercy , insisting that he is family and placing the blame on the hyenas . Simba no longer believes Scar , but spares his life on the grounds of forever leaving the Pride Lands . Scar appears to comply , but then attacks his nephew . After a fierce fight , Simba throws his uncle off Pride Rock . Scar survives the fall , but is attacked and eaten alive by the hyenas , who overheard his attempt to betray them .

With Scar and the hyenas gone , Simba ascends to the top of Pride Rock and takes over the kingdom as the rain falls again . Sometime later , with Pride Rock restored to its former glory , Simba looks down happily at his kingdom with Nala , Timon , and Pumbaa by his side ; Rafiki presents Simba and Nala 's newborn cub to the inhabitants of the Pride Lands , and the Circle of Life continues .

= = Voice cast = =

Matthew Broderick as Simba , son of Mufasa and Sarabi , who grows up to become King of the Pride Lands . Joseph Williams provided adult Simba 's singing voice . Mark Henn and Ruben A. Aquino respectively served as the supervising animators for young and adult Simba. Jonathan Taylor Thomas voiced young Simba , while Jason Weaver provided the cub 's singing voice .

James Earl Jones as Mufasa , Simba 's father , King of the Pride Lands as the film begins . Tony Fucile served as the supervising animator for Mufasa .

Jeremy Irons as Scar , Mufasa 's younger brother and Simba 's uncle , who usurps the throne . Andreas Deja served as the supervising animator for Scar .

Moirá Kelly as Nala , Simba 's best friend and later his wife . Sally Dworsky provided her singing voice . Aaron Blaise and Anthony de Rosa respectively served as the supervising animators for young and adult Nala. Niketa Calame provided the voice of young Nala while Laura Williams provided her singing voice .

Nathan Lane as Timon , a wise @-@ cracking and self @-@ absorbed yet somewhat loyal meerkat who becomes one of Simba 's best friends and adoptive parents . Michael Surrey served as his supervising animator .

Ernie Sabella as Pumbaa , a naïve warthog who suffers from flatulence and is Timon 's best friend and also becomes one of Simba 's best friends and adoptive parents . Tony Bancroft served as his supervising animator .

Robert Guillaume as Rafiki , a wise old mandrill ( although , while counseling Simba , he jokes that " you are a baboon , and I am not " ) who serves as shaman of the Pride Lands and presents

newborn cubs of the King and Queen to the animals of the Pride Lands . James Baxter served as the supervising animator for Rafiki .

Rowan Atkinson as Zazu , a hornbill who serves as the king 's majordomo ( or " Mufasa 's little stooge " , as Shenzi calls him ) . Ellen Woodbury served as the supervising animator for Zazu .

Madge Sinclair as Sarabi , Mufasa 's mate , Simba 's mother , and the leader of the lioness hunting party . Russ Edmonds served as the supervising animator for Sarabi .

The three hyenas who serve Scar were animated by Alex Kupersmidt and David Burgess. Whoopi Goldberg as Shenzi , the sassy and short @-@ tempered female leader of the trio .

Cheech Marin as Banzai , an aggressive and hot @-@ headed hyena prone to complaining and acting on impulse .

Jim Cummings as Ed , a dim @-@ witted hyena who does not talk , only communicating through laughter . Cummings also voiced a gopher that talks with Zazu and replaced Irons as Scar in certain lines of " Be Prepared " after Irons blew his voice .

Zoe Leader as Sarafina , Nala 's mother , who is shown briefly talking to Simba 's mother , Sarabi .

= = Production = =

= = = Development = = =

The idea for The Lion King was conceived in late 1988 during a conversation between Jeffrey Katzenberg , Roy E. Disney and Peter Schneider on a plane to Europe to promote Oliver & Company . During the conversation , the topic of a story set in Africa came up , and Katzenberg immediately jumped at the idea . The idea was then developed by Walt Disney Feature Animation 's vice president for creative affairs Charlie Fink . Katzenberg decided to add elements involving coming of age and death , and ideas from personal life experiences , such as some of his trials in his bumpy road in politics , saying about the film , " It is a little bit about myself . " In November of that year Thomas Disch ( author of The Brave Little Toaster ) wrote a treatment entitled King of the Kalahari , and afterwards Linda Woolverton spent a year writing drafts of the script , which was titled King of the Beasts and then King of the Jungle . The original version of the film was very different from the final film . The plot was centered in a battle being between lions and baboons with Scar being the leader of the baboons , Rafiki being a cheetah , and Timon and Pumbaa being Simba 's childhood friends . Simba would also not leave the kingdom , but become a " lazy , slovenly , horrible character " due to manipulations from Scar , so Simba could be overthrown after coming of age . By 1990 , producer Thomas Schumacher , who had just completed The Rescuers Down Under , decided to attach himself to the project " because lions are cool " . Schumacher likened the script for King of the Jungle to " an animated National Geographic special " .

Oliver & Company director George Scribner was the initial director of the film , being later joined by Roger Allers , who was the lead story man on Beauty and the Beast in October 1991 . Allers brought with him Brenda Chapman , who would become the head of story . Afterwards , several of the lead crew members , including Allers , Scribner , Hahn , Chapman , and production designer Chris Sanders , took a trip to Hell 's Gate National Park in Kenya , in order to study and gain an appreciation of the environment for the film . After six months of story development work Scribner decided to leave the project , as he clashed with Allers and the producers on their decision to turn the film into a musical , as Scribner 's intention was of making a documentary @-@ like film more focused on natural aspects . Rob Minkoff replaced Scribner , and producer Don Hahn joined the production as Schumacher became only an executive producer due to Disney promoting him to Vice President of Development for Feature Animation . Hahn found the script unfocused and lacking a clear theme , and after establishing the main theme as " leaving childhood and facing up to the realities of the world " , asked for a final retool . Allers , Minkoff , Chapman and Hahn then rewrote the story across two weeks of meetings with directors Kirk Wise and Gary Trousdale , who had just finished Beauty and the Beast . The script also had its title changed from King of the Jungle to The Lion King , as the setting was not the jungle but the savannah .

The Lion King was the first Disney animated feature to be an original story , rather than being based on an already @-@ existing work . The filmmakers have said that the story of The Lion King was inspired by the lives of Joseph and Moses from the Bible and William Shakespeare 's Hamlet . During the summer of 1992 , the team was joined by screenwriter Irene Mecchi , with a second screenwriter , Jonathan Roberts , joining a few months later . Mecchi and Roberts took charge of the revision process , fixing unresolved emotional issues in the script and adding comic business for Pumbaa , Timon and the hyenas . Lyricist Tim Rice worked closely with the writing team , flying to California at least once a month , as his songs needed to work in the narrative continuity . Rice 's lyrics ? which were reworked up to the production 's end ? were even pinned to the storyboards during development . Rewrites were frequent , with animator Andreas Deja saying that completed scenes would be delivered only for the response to be that parts needed to be reanimated due to dialog changes .

= = = Casting = = =

The voice actors were chosen for how they fit and could add to the characters ? for instance , James Earl Jones was cast because the directors found his voice " powerful " and similar to a lion 's roar . Jones commented that during the years of production , Mufasa " became more and more of a dopey dad instead of [ a ] grand king " .

Nathan Lane originally auditioned for Zazu , and Ernie Sabella , for one of the hyenas . Upon meeting each other at the recording studio , the actors , who at the time both co @-@ starred in Guys and Dolls , were asked to record together as hyenas . The directors laughed at their performance and decided to cast them as Timon and Pumbaa . For the hyenas , the original intention was to reunite Cheech & Chong , but while Cheech Marin accepted to play Banzai , Tommy Chong was unavailable . Thus his role was changed into a female hyena , Shenzi , who was voiced by Whoopi Goldberg .

Matthew Broderick was cast as adult Simba early during production , and during the three years of voice acting only recorded with another actor once , and only discovered Moira Kelly voiced Nala at the premiere . Jeremy Irons had at first refused the role due to not being comfortable going from the dramatic performance as Claus von Bülow in Reversal of Fortune to a comedic role . But once he came in , Irons ' performance even inspired the writers to incorporate more of his acting as von Bülow ? even adding one of that character 's lines , " You have no idea " - and animator Andreas Deja to watch both Reversal of Fortune and Damage to pick up Irons ' facial traits and tics .

= = = Animation = = =

The development of The Lion King started concurrently with Pocahontas , which most of the animators of Walt Disney Feature Animation decided to work on instead , believing it would be the more prestigious and successful of the two . The story artists also did not have much faith in the project , with Chapman declaring she was reluctant to accept the job " because the story wasn 't very good " , and writer Burny Mattinson saying to co @-@ worker Joe Ranft about the film that " I don 't know who is going to want to watch that one . " Most of the leading animators were either doing their first major work supervising a character , or had much interest in animating an animal . Thirteen of these supervising animators , both in California and Florida , were responsible for establishing the personalities and setting the tone for the film 's main characters . The animation leads for the main characters included Mark Henn on young Simba , Ruben A. Aquino on adult Simba , Andreas Deja on Scar , Aaron Blaise on young Nala , Anthony DeRosa on adult Nala , and Tony Fucile on Mufasa . Nearly 20 minutes of the film , including the " I Just Can 't Wait to Be King " sequence , were animated at the Disney @-@ MGM Studios facility . Ultimately , more than 600 artists , animators and technicians contributed to The Lion King over the course of its production . Weeks before the film was to be released , production was affected by the 1994 Northridge earthquake , which shut off the studio and required the animators to finish their work from home .

The character animators studied real @-@ life animals for reference , as was done for the 1942

Disney film Bambi . Jim Fowler , renowned wildlife expert , visited the studios on several occasions with an assortment of lions and other savannah inhabitants to discuss behavior and help the animators give their drawings an authentic feel . The animators also studied various animal movements in natural settings at the Miami MetroZoo under guidance from wildlife expert Ron Magill . The Pride Lands are modeled on the Kenyan national park visited by the crew . Varied focal lengths and lenses were employed to differ from the habitual portrayal of Africa in documentaries ? which employ telephoto lenses to shoot the wildlife from a distance . The epic feel drew inspiration from concept studies by artist Hans Bacher ? which , following Scribner 's request for realism , tried to depict effects such as lens flare ? and the works of painters Charles Marion Russell , Frederic Remington and Maxfield Parrish . Since the characters were not anthropomorphized , all the animators had to learn to draw four @-@ legged animals , and the story and character development was done through usage of longer shots following the characters .

The use of computers helped the filmmakers present their vision in new ways . For the " wildebeest stampede " sequence , several distinct wildebeest characters were created in a 3D computer program , multiplied into hundreds , cel shaded to look like drawn animation , and given randomized paths down a mountainside to simulate the real , unpredictable movement of a herd . Five specially trained animators and technicians spent more than two years creating the two @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half minute stampede sequence . Other usages of computer animation were done through CAPS , which helped simulate camera movements such as tracking shots , and was employed on the coloring , lighting and particle effects .

= = Music = =

Lyricist Tim Rice , who was working with composer Alan Menken on songs for Aladdin , was invited to write the songs , and accepted on the condition of finding a composing partner . As Menken was unavailable , the producers accepted Rice 's suggestion of Elton John , after Rice 's invitation of ABBA fell through due to Benny Andersson being busy with the musical Kristina från Duvemåla . John expressed an interest in writing " ultra @-@ pop songs that kids would like ; then adults can go and see those movies and get just as much pleasure out of them " , mentioning a possible influence of The Jungle Book , where he felt the " music was so funny and appealed to kids and adults " .

John and Rice wrote five original songs for this film ( " Circle of Life " , " I Just Can 't Wait to Be King " , " Be Prepared " , " Hakuna Matata " and " Can You Feel the Love Tonight " ) with the singer 's performance of " Can You Feel the Love Tonight " playing over the end credits . The IMAX and DVD releases added another song , " The Morning Report " , which was based on a song discarded during development that eventually got featured in the live musical version of The Lion King . The film 's score was composed by Hans Zimmer , who was hired based on his work in two films in African settings , The Power of One and A World Apart , and supplemented the score with traditional African music and choir elements arranged by Lebo M. Zimmer 's partners Mark Mancina and Jay Rifkin helped with arrangements and song production .

The film 's original motion picture soundtrack was released by Walt Disney Records on July 13 , 1994 . It was the fourth @-@ best @-@ selling album of the year on the Billboard 200 and the top @-@ selling soundtrack . It is the only soundtrack for an animated film to be certified Diamond ( 10 x platinum ) by the Recording Industry Association of America . Zimmer 's complete instrumental score for the film was never originally given a full release by Disney , until the soundtrack 's commemorative 20th anniversary re @-@ release in 2014 . The Lion King also inspired the 1995 release Rhythm of the Pride Lands , with eight songs by Zimmer , Mancina , and Lebo M.

The use of the song " The Lion Sleeps Tonight " in a scene with Timon and Pumbaa has led to disputes between Disney and the family of South African Solomon Linda , 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 , who held the worldwide rights and had licensed the song to Disney for an undisclosed amount of money .

= = Release = =

For The Lion King 's first film trailer , Disney opted to feature a single scene , the entire opening sequence with the song " Circle of Life " . Buena Vista Pictures Distribution president Dick Cook said the decision was made for such an approach because " we were all so taken by the beauty and majesty of this piece that we felt like it was probably one of the best four minutes of film that we 've seen " , and Don Hahn added that " Circle of Life " worked as a trailer as it " came off so strong , and so good , and ended with such a bang " . The trailer was released in November 1993 , accompanying The Three Musketeers in theaters , as only a third of The Lion King had been completed . Audience reaction was enthusiastic , causing Hahn to have some initial concerns as he became afraid of not living up to the expectations raised by the preview . Prior to the film 's release , Disney did 11 test screenings .

Upon release , The Lion King was accompanied by an extensive marketing campaign which included tie @-@ ins with Burger King , Mattel , Kodak , Nestlé and Payless ShoeSource , and various merchandise , accounting 186 licensed products . In 1994 , Disney earned approximately \$ 1 billion with products based on the film , with \$ 214 million for Lion King toys during Christmas 1994 alone .

= = = Home media = = =

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 . The VHS tape contained a special preview for Walt Disney Pictures ' then @-@ upcoming animated film Pocahontas , in which the title character ( voiced by Judy Kuhn ) sings the musical number " Colors of the Wind " . 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 also 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 discs . The VHS tape quickly became the best @-@ selling videotape of all time : 4 @.@ 5 million tapes were sold on the first day and ultimately sales totaled more than 30 million before these home video versions went into moratorium in 1997 .

On October 7 , 2003 , the film was re @-@ released 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 . A second disc , with bonus features , was also included in the DVD release . The film 's soundtrack was provided both in its original Dolby 5 @.@ 1 track and in a new Disney Enhanced Home Theater Mix , making this one of the first Disney DVDs so equipped . By means of seamless 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 ( " The 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 book entitled The Journey . The Platinum Edition of The Lion King featured changes made to the film during its IMAX re @-@ release , including re @-@ drawn crocodiles in the " I Just Can 't Wait to Be King " sequence as well as other alterations . More than two million copies of the Platinum Edition DVD and VHS units were sold on the first day of release . A DVD boxed set of the three The 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 into moratorium .

Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment released the Diamond Edition of The Lion King on October 4 , 2011 . This marks the time that the film has been released in high @-@ definition Blu

@-@ ray and on Blu @-@ ray 3D . The initial release was produced in three different packages : a two @-@ disc version with Blu @-@ ray and DVD ; a four @-@ disc version with Blu @-@ ray , DVD , Blu @-@ ray 3D , and digital copy ; and an eight @-@ disc box set that also includes the sequels The Lion King 2 : Simba 's Pride and The Lion King 1 ½ . A standalone single @-@ disc DVD release also followed on November 15 , 2011 . The Diamond Edition topped the Blu @-@ ray charts with over 1 @.@ 5 million copies sold . The film sold 3 @.@ 83 million Blu @-@ ray units in total , leading to a \$ 101 @.@ 14 million income .

= = Reception = =

= = = Box office = = =

The Lion King earned \$ 422 @,@ 783 @,@ 777 in North America and an \$ 545 @,@ 700 @,@ 000 in other territories for a worldwide total of \$ 968 @,@ 483 @,@ 777 . It is currently the 29th highest @-@ grossing film , the sixth highest @-@ grossing animated film of all time worldwide and the third highest @-@ grossing film of Walt Disney Animation Studios ( behind Frozen and Zootopia ) . The film was also the highest @-@ grossing motion picture of 1994 worldwide . After its initial run , having earned \$ 763 @.@ 4 million , it ranked as the second @-@ highest grossing film of all time worldwide , behind Jurassic Park . It held the record for the highest @-@ grossing animated feature film ( in North America , outside North America , and worldwide ) until it was surpassed by the computer animated Finding Nemo ( 2003 ) , Shrek 2 ( 2004 ) , Ice Age : Dawn of the Dinosaurs ( 2009 ) , and Toy Story 3 ( 2010 ) prior to the 2011 re @-@ release . With the earnings of the 3D run , The Lion King surpassed all the aforementioned films but Toy Story 3 to rank as the second @-@ highest @-@ grossing animated film worldwide ? later downgraded to sixth after Frozen ( 2013 ) , Minions ( 2015 ) , and Zootopia ( 2016 ) ? and it remains the highest @-@ grossing hand @-@ drawn animated film . It is also the biggest animated movie of the last 50 years in terms of estimated attendance .

= = = = Original theatrical run = = = =

The Lion King had a limited release in North America on June 15 , 1994 , playing in only two theaters , El Capitan Theater in Los Angeles and Radio City Music Hall in New York City . It still earned \$ 1 @,@ 586 @,@ 753 across the weekend of June 17 ? 19 , standing at the tenth place of the box office ranking . The average of \$ 793 @,@ 377 per theater stands as the largest ever achieved during a weekend . The wide release followed on June 24 , 1994 , in 2 @,@ 550 screens . The digital surround sound of the film led many of those theaters to implement Dolby Laboratories ' newest sound systems . The Lion King grossed \$ 40 @.@ 9 million ? which at the time was the fourth biggest opening weekend earning ever and the highest sum for a Disney film ? to top the weekend box office . It also earned a rare " A + " rating from CinemaScore . By the end of its theatrical run , in spring 1995 , it had earned \$ 312 @,@ 855 @,@ 561 , being the second @-@ highest @-@ grossing 1994 film in North America behind Forrest Gump . Outside North America , it earned \$ 455 @.@ 8 million during its initial run , for a worldwide total of \$ 768 @.@ 6 million . Box Office Mojo estimates that the film sold over 74 million tickets in the US in its initial theatrical run .

= = = = Re @-@ releases = = = =

= = = = = IMAX and large @-@ format = = = = =

The film was re @-@ issued on December 25 , 2002 for IMAX and large @-@ format theaters . Don Hahn explained that eight years after The Lion King got its original release , " there was a whole new generation of kids who haven 't really seen it , particularly on the big screen . " Given the

film had already been digitally archived during production , the restoration process was easier , while also providing many scenes with enhancements that covered up original deficiencies . An enhanced sound mix was also provided , to as Hahn explained , " make the audience feel like they 're in the middle of the movie . " On its first weekend , The Lion King made \$ 2 @. @ 7 million from 66 locations , a \$ 27 @, @ 664 per theater average . This run ended with \$ 15 @, @ 686 @, @ 215 on May 30 , 2003 .

= = = = 3D conversion = = = =

In 2011 , The Lion King was converted to 3D for a two @-@ week limited theatrical re @-@ issue and subsequent 3D Blu @-@ ray release . The film opened at the number one spot on Friday , September 16 , 2011 with \$ 8 @. @ 9 million and finished the weekend with \$ 30 @. @ 2 million , ranking number one at the box office . This made The Lion King the first re @-@ issue release to earn the number @-@ one slot at the American weekend box office since the re @-@ issue of Return of the Jedi in March 1997 . The film also achieved the fourth @-@ highest September opening weekend of all time . It held off very well on its second weekend , again earning first place at the box office with a 27 percent decline to \$ 21 @. @ 9 million . Most box @-@ office observers had expected the film to fall about 50 percent in its second weekend and were also expecting Moneyball to be at first place .

After its initial box @-@ office success , many theaters decided to continue to show the film for more than two weeks , even though its 3D Blu @-@ ray release was scheduled for two @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half weeks after its theatrical release . In North America , the 3D re @-@ release ended its run in theaters on January 12 , 2012 with a gross \$ 94 @, @ 242 @, @ 001 . Outside North America , it earned \$ 83 @, @ 400 @, @ 000 . The successful 3D re @-@ release of The Lion King made Disney and Pixar plan 3D theatrical re @-@ releases of Beauty and the Beast , Finding Nemo , Monsters , Inc . , and The Little Mermaid during 2012 and 2013 . However , none of the re @-@ releases of the first three films achieved the enormous success of The Lion King 3D and theatrical re @-@ release of the The Little Mermaid was ultimately cancelled . In 2012 , Ray Subers of Box Office Mojo wrote that the reason why the 3D version of The Lion King succeeded was because , " the notion of a 3D re @-@ release was still fresh and exciting , and The Lion King ( 3D ) felt timely given the movie 's imminent Blu @-@ ray release . Audiences have been hit with three 3D re @-@ releases in the year since , meaning the novelty value has definitely worn off . "

= = = Critical response = = =

The Lion King was released to critical acclaim . On Rotten Tomatoes , the film holds a rating of 91 % , based on 113 reviews , with an average rating of 8 @. @ 3 out of 10 . It also ranked 56th on their " Top 100 Animation Movies " . The site 's critical consensus reads , " Emotionally stirring , richly drawn , and beautifully animated , The Lion King stands tall within Disney 's pantheon of classic family films . " On Metacritic , the film has a score of 83 out of 100 , based on 14 critics , indicating " universal acclaim " . CinemaScore reported that audiences gave the film a rare " A + " grade .

Roger Ebert gave it 3 1 / 2 out of 4 @-@ stars and called the film " a superbly drawn animated feature " and , in his print review wrote , " The saga of Simba , which in its deeply buried origins owes something to Greek tragedy and certainly to Hamlet , is a learning experience as well as an entertainment . " On the television program Siskel & Ebert , the film was praised but received a mixed reaction when compared to previous Disney films . Ebert and his partner Gene Siskel 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 and was " a good film , not a great one " . Hal Hinson of The Washington Post 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 . If truth be told , even for adults it is downright strange . "



Owen Gleiberman of Entertainment Weekly praised the film , writing that it " has the resonance to stand not just as a terrific cartoon but as an emotionally pungent movie " . Rolling Stone film critic Peter Travers praised the film and felt that it was " a hugely entertaining blend of music , fun and eye @-@ popping thrills , though it doesn 't lack for heart " . James Berardinelli from ReelViews 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 . "

Some reviewers still had problems with the film 's narrative . The staff of TV Guide wrote that while The Lion King was technically proficient and entertaining , it " offers a less memorable song score than did the previous hits , and a hasty , unsatisfying dramatic resolution . " The New Yorker 's Terrence Rafferty considered that despite the good animation , the story felt like " manipulat [ ing ] our responses at will " , as " Between traumas , the movie serves up soothingly banal musical numbers and silly , rambunctious comedy " .

= = = Accolades = = =

The Lion King received four Golden Globe and Academy Award nominations . The film would go on to win two Golden Globes ; for Best Motion Picture ? Musical or Comedy and Best Original Score , as well as two Academy Awards , for Best Original Score ( Hans Zimmer ) and Best Original Song with " Can You Feel the Love Tonight " by Elton John and Tim Rice . The songs " Circle of Life " and " Hakuna Matata " were also nominated . " Can You Feel the Love Tonight " also won the Grammy Award for Best Male Vocal Performance . The Lion King also won Annie Awards for Best Animated Feature , Best Achievement in Voice Acting ( for Jeremy Irons ) and Best Individual Achievement for Story Contribution in the Field of Animation .

At the Saturn Awards , the film was nominated in two categories , Best Fantasy Film and Best Performance by a Younger Actor although it did not win in either category . The film also received two nominations at the British Academy Film Awards , for Best Sound as well as the Anthony Asquith Award for Film Music although it lost in both categories to Speed and Backbeat respectively . The film received two BMI Film & TV Awards for Film Music and Most Performed Song with " Can You Feel the Love Tonight . " At the 1995 MTV Movie Awards the film received nominations for Best Villain and Best Song , though it lost in both categories . The Lion King won the Kids ' Choice Award for Favorite Movie at the 1995 Kids ' Choice Awards .

In 2008 , The Lion King was ranked as the 319th greatest film ever made by Empire magazine , and in June 2011 , TIME named it one of " The 25 All @-@ TIME Best Animated Films " . In June 2008 , the American Film Institute listed The Lion King as the fourth best film in the animation genre in its AFI 's 10 Top 10 list , having previously put " Hakuna Matata " as 99th on its AFI 's 100 Years ... 100 Songs ranking .

= = = Controversies = = =

Certain elements of the film were considered to bear a resemblance to a 1960s Japanese anime television show , Jungle Emperor ( known as Kimba the White Lion in the United States ) , with characters having similar analogues , and various individual scenes being similar in composition to the show . Matthew Broderick believed initially that he was in fact working on an American version of Kimba , since he was familiar with the Japanese original . However The Lion King director , Roger Allers , claimed he was unfamiliar with the show :

The whole time I worked on The Lion King the name of that show never came up . At least I never heard it . I had never seen the show and really only became aware of it as Lion King was being completed , and someone showed me images of it . I worked with George Scribner and Linda Woolverton to develop the story in the early days but then left to help out on Aladdin . If one of them were familiar with Kimba they didn ? t say . Of course , it ? s possible ... Many story ideas developed

and changed along the way , always just to make our story stronger . I could certainly understand Kimba ? s creators feeling angry if they felt we had stolen ideas from them . If I had been inspired by Kimba I would certainly acknowledge my inspiration . All I can offer is my respect to those artists and say that their creation has its loyal admirers and its assured place in animation history .

Co @-@ director Rob Minkoff also claimed he was unfamiliar with it " I know for a fact that [ " Kimba " ] has never been discussed as long as I 've been on the project ... In my experience , if Disney becomes aware of anything like that , they say you will not do it . People are claiming copyright infringement all the time . " He also stated that whenever a story is based in Africa , it is " not unusual to have characters like a baboon , a bird or hyenas . " Yoshihiro Shimizu , of Tezuka Productions , which created Kimba the White Lion , has refuted rumours that the studio was paid hush money by Disney but explains 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 ! "

Protests were raised against one scene where it appears as if the word " SEX " might have been embedded into the dust flying in the sky when Simba flops down , which conservative activist Donald Wildmon asserted was a subliminal message intended to promote sexual promiscuity . One of the animators , Tom Sito , has stated that the letters spell " SFX " ( a common abbreviation for " special effects " ) , not with an " E " instead of the " F " , and were intended as an innocent " signature " created by the effects animation team .

Hyena biologists protested against the animal 's portrayal : one hyena researcher sued Disney studios for defamation of character , and another ? who had organized the animators ' visit to the University of California 's Field Station for Behavioural Research , where they would observe and sketch captive hyenas ? included boycotting The Lion King among the ways it would help preserve hyenas in the wild . The hyenas have also been interpreted to represent an anti @-@ immigrant allegory , where the hyenas would be black and Latino ethnic communities . The film has also been criticised for advancing a fascist narrative in its portrayal of the lion kingdom and the circle of life where " only the strong and the beautiful triumph , and the powerless survive only by serving the strong . "

= = Legacy = =

= = = Sequels and spin @-@ offs = = =

The first Lion King @-@ related animated projects involved the characters of Timon and Pumbaa . First the duo starred in the animated short " Stand by Me " , featuring Timon singing the eponymous song , which was released in 1995 accompanying the theatrical release of Tom and Huck . Then the duo received their own animated show , The Lion King 's Timon and Pumbaa , which ran for three seasons and 85 episodes between 1995 and 1999 . Ernie Sabella continued to voice Pumbaa , while Timon was voiced by Quinton Flynn and Kevin Schon in addition to Nathan Lane .

Disney released two direct @-@ to @-@ video films related to The Lion King . The first was sequel The Lion King II : Simba 's Pride , issued in 1998 on VHS . The film centers around Simba and Nala 's daughter , Kiara , who falls in love with Kovu , a male lion who was raised in a pride of Scar 's followers , the Outsiders . 2004 saw the release of another Lion King film on DVD , The Lion King 1 ½ . It is a prequel in showing how Timon and Pumbaa met each other , and also a parallel in that it also depicts what the characters were retconned to have done during the events of the original movie .

In June 2014 , it was announced that a new TV series based on the film would be released called The Lion Guard , featuring Kion , the second @-@ born cub of Simba and Nala . It was first broadcast on Disney Channel as a television film titled The Lion Guard : Return of the Roar in November 2015 before airing as a series on Disney Junior in January 2016 .

= = = Video games = = =

Along with the film release , three different video games based on The Lion King were released by Virgin Interactive in December 1994 . The main title was developed by Westwood Studios , and published for PC and Amiga computers and the consoles SNES and Sega Mega Drive / Genesis . Dark Technologies created the Game Boy version , while Syrox Developments handled the Master System and Game Gear version . The film and sequel Simba 's Pride later inspired another game , Torus Games ' The Lion King : Simba 's Mighty Adventure ( 2000 ) for the Game Boy Color and PlayStation . Timon and Pumbaa also appeared in Timon & Pumbaa 's Jungle Games , a 1995 PC game collection of puzzle games by 7th Level , later ported to the SNES by Tiertex .

The Square Enix series Kingdom Hearts features Simba as a recurring summon , as well as a playable in the Lion King world , known as Pride Lands , in Kingdom Hearts II . There the plotline is loosely related to the later part of the original film , with all of the main characters except Zazu and Sarabi . The Lion King also provides one of the worlds featured in the 2011 action @-@ adventure game Disney Universe , and Simba was featured in the Nintendo DS title Disney Friends ( 2008 ) .

= = = Stage adaptations = = =

Walt Disney Theatrical produced a musical stage adaptation of the same name , which premiered in Minneapolis , Minnesota in July 1997 , and later opened on Broadway in October 1997 at the New Amsterdam Theatre . The Lion King musical was directed by Julie Taymor and featured songs from both the movie and Rhythm of the Pride Lands , along with three new compositions by Elton John and Tim Rice . Mark Mancina did the musical arrangements and new orchestral tracks . The musical became one of the most successful in Broadway history , winning six Tony Awards including Best Musical , and despite moving to the Minskoff Theatre in 2006 , is still running to this day in New York , becoming the third longest @-@ running show and highest grossing Broadway production in history . The show 's financial success led to adaptations all over the world .

The Lion King inspired two attractions retelling the story of the film at Walt Disney Parks and Resorts . The first , " The Legend of the Lion King " , featured a recreation of the film through life size puppets of its characters , and ran from 1994 to 2002 at Magic Kingdom in Walt Disney World . Another that is still running is the live @-@ action 30 @-@ minute musical revue of the movie , " Festival of the Lion King " , which incorporates the musical numbers into gymnastic routines with live actors , along with animatronic puppets of Simba and Pumba and a costumed actor as Timon . The attraction opened in April 1998 at Disney World 's Animal Kingdom , and in September 2005 in Hong Kong Disneyland 's Adventureland . A similar version under the name " The Legend of the Lion King " was featured in Disneyland Paris from 2004 to 2009 .