

Blu-Ray Review: Lovely Diamond Edition of Timeless ‘The Lion King’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on October 16, 2011 - 8:30pm

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CHICAGO – “The Lion King” is one of the most important and influential films ever made. It is more than a box office hit, more than a Broadway phenomenon, more than a cultural icon. The film is one of those rare instances in which a cinema classic can be recognized in its own time as such. People don’t just love “The Lion King” like they love the new multiplex flavor of the week. They adore it so much that they see it again and again (as in the recent release of “The Lion King 3D”). For that reason alone, “The Lion King” is a perfect choice for a Disney “Diamond Edition” Blu-ray release, one of the Fall releases that we can guarantee will be a hot holiday gift item and will satisfy thousands of buyers this upcoming season.



Disney has stuck relatively close to the early days of their resume when reaching into their vault for Blu-ray releases. Stellar Blu-Ray editions of “Pinocchio,” “Sleeping Beauty,” and “Snow White and the Seven Dwarves” have become deserving bestsellers, but they haven’t tapped our generation’s Disney hits until recently, starting with “Beauty & The Beast” and, now, “The Lion King”. Considering the generation that spends the most money on Blu-ray players and releases holds this Oscar-winning hit as a beloved part of their childhood, it’s difficult to imagine that this edition won’t be one of the highest-selling of the year. Does it live up to its expectations? Will fans be happy to have it in their collection and introduce it to the next generation?



The Lion King was released on Blu-ray on October 4th, 2011
Photo credit: Disney

Yes and yes. This is another stellar Diamond Edition, a release that doesn’t feel weighed down with clutter. So many family movies mistake quantity for quality, adding goofy games or useless archival material just to entice buyers to a title that they probably already own. The producers of the Blu-ray release of “The Lion King” could have easily gone that route and assembled useless features, specials, interviews, and games but everything on “The Lion King” Diamond Edition feels worthwhile and the wealth of new material (including interviews and never-before-seen deleted scenes) makes it a much-easier pill to swallow for families who already own well-worn a DVD of their favorite Disney movie.



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Photo credit: Disney

Of course, it's always about the movie itself and "The Lion King" has held up even more remarkably than I expected (which is one of the reasons the 3D re-release did as well as it did). Some of the movies from the '90s already look a bit dated but not "The Lion King," in no small part due to the timeless themes with which it plays — growing up, betrayal, the circle of life. As someone says in the excellent new retrospective documentary about the making of the film, *"If you can put the death of a parent side-by-side with a flatulent warthog then you've really got something."* That may sound simple, but it's true — "The Lion King" played with deep themes while also being thoroughly entertaining for younger viewers — dead parents and farting warthogs.

The transfer is strong without being quite as remarkable as the vault transfers. It probably comes from having seen movies like "Dumbo" in such mediocre quality that transfers for the films that are fifty years older than "The Lion King" are more jaw-dropping. "The Lion King" looks good but it would be surprising if it didn't. The audio transfer is more notable, as the award-winning soundtrack booms from every corner of your stereo system.

You probably own "The Lion King" and may not care enough about the HD transfer but, believe it or not, the special features are interesting enough to make this a worthwhile purchase on their own. The release includes never-before-seen deleted scenes, including musical numbers, that are truly fascinating in that they were all correctly deleted. It shows you how important editing can be to a project. If Mufasa's goofy dance number had stayed in the film, would it still be a classic? Probably, but it would be less of one because it would be less of a film. Editing is crucial to every film and these deleted scenes prove it yet again.

The deleted scenes aren't the only new material — never-before-seen bloopers are also included but the real catch is "Pride of the Lion King," a stellar documentary with new interviews with Matthew Broderick, Nathan Lane, Jeffrey Katzenberg, the film's director, and many more. It's a great retrospective about the importance and influence of the film. It's accompanied by all of the classic DVD special features, a Sing-Along Mode, and much more.

There are two must-own Disney Blu-rays this holiday season — "Dumbo" and "The Lion King." Don't miss either.

"The Lion King" features voice work by Matthew Broderick, Nathan Lane, Jeremy Irons, and James Earl Jones. It was released on Blu-ray on October 4th, 2011.



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