

Following a Perfect 1994 Release, 'The Lion King 3D' a Money-Hungry, Manipulative Exploitation

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – While “The Lion King” is one of the best Disney movies of all time, “The Lion King 3D” is a manipulative exploitation to bring paying parents back with their kids merely through the sexiness of today’s 3D fad.

Disney’s 1994 version, which has and will continue to stand the test of time, was the highest-grossing animated film ever until 2003’s “Finding Nemo” from Disney and Pixar. That said, its 2011 release is lazy, underwhelming and a missed opportunity to up its already epic ante with more vivid colors, etc. Just making it 3D isn’t enough.



Left to right: Simba, Pumbaa and Timon in “The Lion King 3D”.

Image credit: Disney Enterprises

Many people don’t know the film is out now, and upon finding out, you’ll wonder: Is this an entirely new “The Lion King,” is it a rerelease without anything new or is this a reboot? Answer: Nothing’s new except that it’s being rereleased for the first time in 3D. Other than the 3D, the film’s the same, the story’s the same and each scene is the same.

While the 3D will appeal to kids who convince their parents, the 3D conversion is disappointing. Many people are tired of 3D these days and clearly know by now it’s a profitable marketing tactic. Still, we have seen cases where 3D truly does add to the entertainment of overall experience.

For example, 2011’s voraciously gory “Final Destination 5” – despite being only worthy for its pure shock value – is actually improved by its

use of 3D. Its death sequences truly do pop out at you. That 3D makes the dramatic even more extreme, and being that shock is the film's only value, 3D works there. But in "The Lion King 3D," the 3D falls flat and is a background afterthought.



"The Lion King 3D".

Image credit: Disney Enterprises

A producer for "The Lion King 3D," of course, feels otherwise: "When I first heard that 'The Lion King' was going to be converted into 3D, I wasn't sure it could be done," reveals producer Don Hahn. "However, I was blown away by the results. It looks fantastic! All in all, it took about nine months to complete the process. We spent the first three months preparing and testing the shots followed by six months of actual production work."

But despite the film's lazy, money-fueled 3D exploitation, people so far are flocking to theaters in droves and Disney is proving that its rerelease decision in 3D is a success. Following its wide release on Sept. 16, 2011 in 2,330 theaters, "The Lion King 3D" in one day has surprisingly already put up \$8.8 million in the U.S. and is on its way to a projected \$33 to \$35 million weekend. Suffice it to say that you can expect more Disney rereleases in 3D in the future.

Today, 1994's "The Lion King" is the sixth highest-grossing animated film ever and it continues to be the highest-grossing hand-drawn animation film in history. "The Lion King" in 1994 is still the highest-grossing 2D animated film of all time in the U.S. In total, the 1994 film grossed more than \$783 million worldwide, which makes it currently the 35th highest-grossing feature film ever.



"The Lion King 3D".

Image credit: Disney Enterprises

"The Lion King" was released by Walt Disney Pictures in 1994 as the 32nd film in its collection of animated classics. Despite being released under the guise of a children's story, "The Lion King" is actually chock full of biblical influences – such as burning bushes and rays of light – and is most closely influenced by the Bible stories of Joseph and Moses. It also pays homage to William Shakespeare's "Hamlet". "The Lion King" takes place in a kingdom of anthropomorphic lions in Africa. Anthropomorphism means these non-human animals have been given human characteristics.

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Following the 1994 critically acclaimed release, Disney later produced two related movies: "The Lion King II: Simba's Pride" sequel in 1998 and a prequel/parallel in 2004 called "The Lion King 1½". In the 1994 version as well as 2011's, both films are ultimately made into a perfect classic through a rich story and evocative, great-feeling, sentimental music. Songs were written by composer Elton John and lyricist Tim Rice with an original score by Hans Zimmer.

10 Things You Never Knew About 'The Lion King'

1. "The Lion King" was originally titled "King of the Jungle" and then "King of the Beasts".
2. An artist in Burbank, Calif. invented Pride Rock.
3. "In the early stages, Zazu was a little, pointy-beaked bird," reveals co-director Roger Allers.
4. It took nine months to convert "The Lion King" into 3D.
5. The creative team brought real lions into the animation studio to research their movements.
6. Instead of the crazy hermit monk that Rafiki now is, he initially was a very serious counselor.
7. Nathan Lane and Ernie Sabella originally auditioned for the role of the hyenas.
8. The unused song "He's Got it All Worked Out" got replaced by "Hakuna Matata".
9. Pumbaa's belly rubbing was inspired by an animator's (Tony Bancroft) pregnant wife.
10. The filmmakers originally wanted Cheech and Chong to voice the movie's hyenas.



Timon in "The Lion King 3D".

Image credit: Disney Enterprises

"The Lion King 3D" features voice work from Matthew Broderick, Niketa Calame, Jim Cummings, James Earl Jones, Nathan Lane, Ernie Sabella, Jeremy Irons, Robert Guillaume, Rowan Atkinson, Moira Kelly, Whoopi Goldberg and Cheech Marin. The 3D film opened in theaters everywhere on Sept. 16, 2011 and releases on Blu-ray and DVD combo pack on Oct. 4, 2011. The film, which is rated "G," has a running time of 88 minutes.



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