

The Lion King - Review by Ken James



Josette Bushell-Mingo (Rafiki), London Production; Photo: Catherine Ashmore; © Disney.

**Regent
Theatre
Wednesday
July 27**



I have always felt one should attend the theatre full of great expectations, so it was when I saw **The Lion King** at the Regent Theatre recently.

All the media hype had successfully seduced me into a state of anxiety and had created an almost frenetic desire in me to be exposed to this theatrical masterpiece.

Alas, as good as the production was I felt let down, not by the magnificent costumes, the wonderful music or the clever lighting but the story is based on a children's animated cartoon.

Simply put, it is about a young lion cub Simba being driven into exile after the death of his father, the King, then returning to overthrow his wicked uncle and reclaim his rightful throne.

The superlatives and critical acclaim drenching this production made me feel I was about to witness the second coming. Sorry folks, the story line didn't do it for me. That was its weakness. If only the "book" had been stronger.

Another annoying weakness the night I saw the production was the actor playing young Simba spoke as though he came from Altona not Africa. Details like that certainly detract from the many other inspiring pieces of theatrical magic.

Please dear readers don't be quick in your condemnation of my vision. I want to share the moment. As mentioned earlier, **The Lion King** did have passages of greatness, but please keep things in perspective.

This show should be embraced by Victorians, and I am sure it will have a long and

successful run, just don't expect a life changing experience.

According to press releases and other critical acclaims I should have found the meaning of life by curtains end. I didn't.

The stars of the show are definitely the costumes or to be more precise the masks and puppets so cleverly designed to make the audience feel they were real.

The performances brought the animal characters to life, with special mention of **Terry Bader** playing Zazu, **Jamie McGregor** as Timon and **John Xintavelonis** playing Pumbaa.

I've always been a huge fan of **Tony Harvey**, and his performance as the King's evil brother Scar was a joy to watch.

The ensemble worked well together and gave me the feeling it is a very harmonious, company.

All the theatrical elements were there for a spectacular evening. My only regret was the **Lion** didn't take me on the journey I had expected.



Elton John and Tim Rice; Photo: Tony Russell; © Disney.



Tony Harvey (Scar) & Turanga Merito (Simba), Australian Production; Photo: James Morgan; © Disney.



Buyisile Zama (Rafiki), Australian Production; Photo: James Morgan; © Disney.

"Dirty Dancing" and "Leader of the Pack" Ticket Winners

We had a fantastic response to July's competition for tickets to "Dirty Dancing" and "Leader of the Pack". Some contestants went to amazing lengths in the way they presented their answer. Winners were:-

DIRTY DANCING TICKETS - Phil Suter, Elwood; Jenny Manuel, Mt Eliza; Kristie Hanlon, South Yarra.

LEADER OF THE PACK TICKETS - Ainslie Cox, Port Melbourne; Jeanette Inglis, Parkville. All winners contacted by phone.

Answer: 14. Prahran Health Foods, Beauty Sanctuary Day Spa, Vuletic Hair, Zigbi Hair & Beauty, First Sketch, Blondes to Brunettes, Lisa Costan Stylist, Mexicali Rose, El Dorado, Dragon Court Restaurant, Woodin 'U', The \$10 Music Man, Pets United and Volkspower.