Ted Ross is Lion who got drummed out of jungle

"There's your father, the Lion," said four - year - old Asia's little friend.

Who is Asia?

She's the daughter of actor Ted Ross, who is the Lion in "The Wiz," since he created the role in the Broadway stage musical as well as bringing him back to life in the spectacular musical movie version, a Motown Production for Universal release.

In the screen version, the "yellow brick road" goes down New York's Fifth Avenue, and when Dorothy, portrayed by Diana Ross, passes by, the library lion, on the left of the entrance, winks at her and roars at her pet miniature Schnauzer, Toto.

This lion is a bookworm and, in the words of Ross, "he's been drummed out of the jungle and this is the only work he can get, sitting on a pedestal.

Ross' interpretation of the Lion won him a Tony Award in 1975 as best supporting actor in a musical, and he is one of only two performers from the stage production to be cast in the screen version — the other being Mabel King, who portrays the wicked witch Evillene.

The other roles were given to superstars like Miss Ross, Michael Jackson (of The Jackson Five), Nipsey Russell, Lena Horne and Richard Pryor as The Wiz himself.

Ross confesses to liking animals very much; he doesn't,however, care for zoos. "Animals are very cooled out," he says, "because they don't go against their nature, like human beings."

"You've got to be impressed by the domestic situations of pigeons, for example,"he notes, "and, the societal relations of ants and bees and even of primates is very impressive."

But what about lions?

Ross has very mixed feelings about the so - called king of the jungle, who can be rather lazy and selfish.

"The animal I really like is the silver - tipped ape," he says, "he's really beautiful. I wish I could communicate with him."

Not only has Ross done a certain amount of animal watching in preparation for his role in "The Wiz," he also read a book on lions entitled "A Pride's Progress," when first cast in September, 1974, the much appreciated gift from a friend.

Ross' fifteen weeks on the road with the show, on top of a long Broadway run (now in its third year, but without him), have made him think deeply about the meaning of the role.

"Like so many men today, the lion has a macho problem," he says. "He's convinced that he's not a man if he cries, but that he's got to come on loud and roar all the time."

"The watchword of this country seems to be 'Bigger Better Best,' but I don't think we should get whacked out because somebody's bigger," Ross notes. "We shouldn't get bogged down with false bravado because we're not what other people say we should be."

Ross' ultimate message? "Be yourself. Be happy being yourself. And do the best you can for yourself."

Regarding "The Wiz," he advises, "Check out this story and take it seriously. You'll find there are lots of people just like yourself."

"The Wiz," a Motown Production for Universal release, stars Diana Ross, Michael Jackson, Nipsey Russell, Ted Ross, Lena Horne and Richard Pryor as The Wiz. Produced by Rob Cohen, with Ken Harper serving as executive producer, it was directed by Sidney Lumet from a screenplay by Joel Schumacher. Production design and costumes were by Tony Walton, songs by Charlie Smalls and music adapted and supervised by Quincy Jones.

XMAS at the movies

Clint Eastwood brawls for fun

Clint Eastwood poses with his friend Clyde.

If there is such a thing as a crossover star in reverse, he's it. He's as charismatic as "Shaft," and as cool as Superfly." He's hard but he's fair. And now he has put away his blazing .357 Magnum and doubled up his fists in the lighthearted new Warner Bros. movie "Every Which Way But Loose" opening nationwide on Dec. 20.

The man is Clint Eastwood, a laconic, raw - boned action actor famed on screen in recent years as the renegade San Francisco detective Dirty Harry, and widely respected off screen for remembering the people he knew when he was struggling.

Now for Christmastime comes "Every Which Way But Loose," a rare cinematic romp with a traditionally tough character in which Eastwood becomes a good - natured truck driver with a taste for cold beer, country music, cool sheets, and a little con game on the side because he just happens to be the best barroom brawler riding the roads.

"Every Which Way But Loose" also stars Sondra Locke, whose country songs lure the trucker on a merry cross - country chase; Geoffrey Lewis, who arranges Clint's brawls with the hustler's odds on their side; and an 11 - year - old orangutan named Clyde, who is Eastwood's sparring partner and confidante.

In the movie, Eastwood has to deal with a motorcycle gang out to get him for roughing up a few of its members. He also has a couple of off - duty cops looking for him to square what they regard as a mean trick. His lady love is hard to convince that he is God's gift to women, so the man's life is no bed of roses.

And while "Every Which Way But Loose" is essentially a comedy spiced with rousing action and engaging music, its hard entertaining edge is that the central character is good at something (brawling), and he makes it pay off (money) for him while having fun at it.

That's Clint Eastwood. And that's entertainment.

'Lord of the Rings'

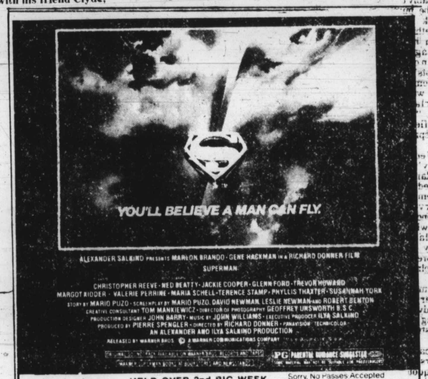
The power and magic of Gandolf as seen by Frodo and Sam

Fantasy Films presentation of J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings," presented in Dolby Stereo Sound, will open in Baltimore on December 20 at the Movies 1, Towson and Pikes theatres.

A Saul Zaentz's Production of a Ralph Bakshi film, "The Lord of the Rings" brings to the screen Tolkien's creations — Middle - earth, Frodo and the other Hobbits and their Shire, the Wizard Gandalf, the great warrior Boromir, the Dark Lord Sauron and all of the elves, dwarves, orcs and other fantasy characters and lands — a world beyond the furthest reaches of your imagination.

The film captures both the essence of the story and the nuance of atmosphere and character in Tolkien's novels. In them, one man cast a lingering spell of awe and wonder, of magical innocence overcoming evil, of simple courage conquering fear — he gave us the legend that will live forever in the minds of the more than 20 million partisans who have bought the books.

Director Bakshi, whose credits include "Fritz the Cat," and "Heavy Traffic," has created a new revolution within the animation industry. He shot the entire film in live action before transforming it completely into animation.



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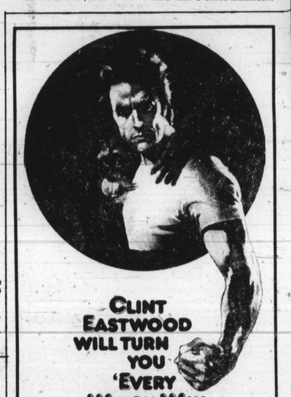

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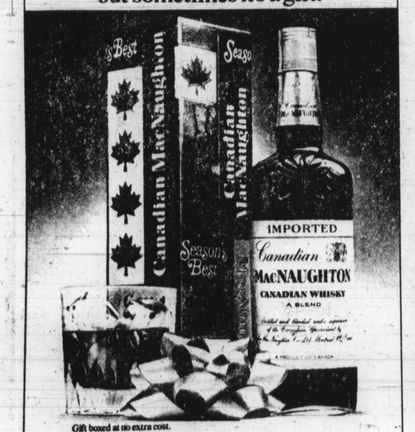

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8. My Claim to Fame-True Love is my Destiny — James Wells
9. Shoot Me With Your Love — Tasha Thomas
10. MacArthur Park -Suite — Donna Summer

Remembering Blanche Calloway

Blanche Calloway was the "Queen of Swing" during the 1930's and early 1940's. She was the leading female band leader rotating on the Chitterlin' Circuit, playing the Lafayette Theatre on 7th Avenue, the Apollo in Harlem; the Regal in Chicago; the Royal in Baltimore and the old Howard Theatre in Washington.

She is credited with giving many musicians, besides her famous brother, Cab, a start. The Apollo Theatre on 125th Street opened as a vaudeville theatre in January, 1934 and she and her band played the Apollo, twice a year, usually in June, September or November.

Other bands playing the Apollo in those years were the likes of Valaida Snow, Eddie South, Fletcher Henderson, Chick Webb, Tiny Bradshaw, Willie Bryant, Mrs. Louis Armstrong, Jimmie Lunceford, Erskine Hawkins to name a few.

Cory Cole joined Blanche Calloway and was the youngest man in the band. He stayed with Blanche for two and half years. He says she was a great girl, had a good personality and looked exactly like Cab.

Born in Baltimore, she began her stage career in the 1920's and starred in Eubie Blake's "Shuffling Along" on Broadzay. She sang in New York with Earl 'Fatha' Hines and Louis Armstrong bands and briefly with Duke Ellington's band. Her two best known songs were "Rhythm In the River" and "I Need Loving."

Her 20-piece band was called "Blanche Calloway and the 12 Clouds of Joy. Their theme was "Growlin' Dan."

She retired from the stage in 1944 and later became the first female disc jockey in the South while living in Miami.

She was founder and president of Afram House, Inc. specializing in cosmetics and cosmetic aids geared to blacks. It was the first major black owned and operated mail order company.

For the past six years she has made her home in Baltimore, most recently in her own apartment. For awhile she lived with her sister, Mrs. Clarence (Bernice) Monroe in Morgan Park. Mrs. Monroe's husband is a retired professor of Morgan State University.

The AFRO featured her last appearance in a wheel chair when she entertained senior citizens at the Waxter Center and received a standing ovation.

Private funeral services were held Tuesday.

Bill Lane in Hollywood

ALEX HALEY probably does not know it, but he put a lot of other black writers into something of an image fix when he admitted some passages in his phenomenal book "Roots" may have come in some research way from white author Harold Courlander's earlier book, "The African."

Reflect upon the widespread semblance of glee the reportages carried in telling of Haley's admission and Courlander's view of the monied out - of - court settlement. Many white observers are already contending Haley "lifted" his whole book from Courlander, forgetting Haley already had authored a book about Malcolm X which still sells.

In many circles black literary people were already having problems getting credence in the mainstream. Try to count the times white newspaper and magazine writers and TV people have quoted black writers on topics other than black. Try to count black writers on non - black topics on the nation's book stands.

Even in major universities, black students turning in papers on world topics are always being asked by their white professors to name the sources from which the professors presume the black students have obtained certain lofty ideas and data — as if a black student cannot think like an ordinary newspaper editorial writer, or better. The black student, challenged thusly by a white professor of history at UCLA recently, told the professor he got an idea for a portion of his treatise from a black historian. He was then asked by his professor, "And from whom did the historian get his idea?"

Most humans get ideas from other humans when not getting them from casual personal observations. And most writers, no matter what color, know how to transform and transmit those ideas into their own words, often translating those obtained ideas — sometimes paragraphical into several pages. But never just changing a word or two here and there, like a neophyte dodger.

Frankly, it would be against the grain of any good black writer to use verbatim material of any researcher without restructuring the material extensively, or concisely, in his own style.

Again, it is sad indeed for the biggest literary work by a black in the history of America to come clouded as neededly stolen from a black inadvertent or not, at least, Muhammad Ali original.

JOHN AMOS is again before he gets in. He differed allegedly with the producers of his new TV series pilot, "Onward and Upward," on directions the series would take in subsequent segments. It was the same production company with which he had differed before he bowed out of "Good Times." Amos' role was that of an ex - football player who goes to Congress. The pilot segment had already been filmed. When Amos quit the producers went into a tizzy trying to decide on the Amos replacement, talking to Paul Winfield, James Earl Jones, Billy Dee Williams. Preference was apparent for Williams, but he was set to begin filming "Nightmare Alley" with Berry Gordy directing. Amos' agent, Sandy Bresler, would not talk to us, word being he was trying to get Amos back into the series.

THE real show the other day in Hollywood was not "Timbuktu!" on stage at the Pantages, but on the parking lot behind the theatre. The star was Eartha Kitt. Co - star was Isaac Sutton, top Jet - Ebony photographer. Eyewitnesses were shocked to see Sutton rolling on the ground, being forcibly punched and booted by none other than the Karate - trained Miss Kitt. The row have been close friends for 19 years. It was Eartha who influenced Sutton to transfer his base to Hollywood from Chicago some years back, but Sutton had not attended any of the Kitt - starring "Timbuktu!" shows, in D.C., or in NYC, nor in Hollywood, and Eartha was mad at him. Real mad. Maybe Sutton mused among his bruises, "Why, darling, I didn't know you cared that much!" Anyway, Sutton sent her flowers, afterwards. Huh?

Sutton was still nursing his bruises a few days later when he joined his friend Richard Pryor in Peoria, Ill. for the funeral of Pryor's beloved grandmother, Mrs. Marie Bryant, who died of a stroke and heart attack at age 79. She had been Pryor's main life influence, and she died holding the hand of her grandson. Pryor, who has all along been highly generous with his parents and relatives, had bought his grandmother two homes, and kept her supplied with a new car, to go fishing.

MAX Julien still reportedly avoiding confabbing with his estranged longtime live - in love, Vonetta McGee, after reportedly pepping the BMW he'd bought her when Vonetta arrived at the Julien manse to talk repotedly of a settlement anent their "grievances."

DETROIT Councilman Nicholas Hood hyped interest everywhere in the new black — originated disco dance, the Freekey Deekey, when he lambasted the dance as being too suggestive for children . . . . Dionne Warwick, as did singer

TV Watching

By Vanessa Johnson

Paul Winfield is a Vietnam vet who returns to Saigon in search of the son he has never seen in "Green Eyes" on ABC, Mon. Dec. 25.

Friday

Mike Douglas: Joining co - host Bill and Susan Seaforth Hayes and Bob Hope, magician Judy Carter, singer O.C. Smith, beauty consultant Gloria Heidi. 4:30 - 6:00 p.m. - Channel 13.

Bob Hope Special: A Christmas show with Andy Gibb, Dionne Warwicke, and Red Skelton. 8:00 - 9:00 p.m. - Channel 11.

Saturday

Hocus Focus: Members of the Essex Community College department of humanities and art perform a scene from "Amahl and the Night Visitors". 12:00 - 12:30 p.m. - Channel 11.

The Temptations on Soul Train

Phyllis Hyman, getting Barry Manilow to produce songs for her next album.

... Boney M, the "Rivers of Babylon" singers from the West Indies who struck fame and fortune in Germany, getting their first U.S. tour lined up now, after their big news - making concerts in Russia where they were mobbed by young Russian fans and where their song "Rasputin" was banned.

SHERMAN — Hemsley and Isobel Sanford happy over their 100 weeks of doing "The Jeffersons," and now looking forward to another year with their top television comedy show.

A December night 2000 years ago in Bethlehem is the scene for this cartoon. 4:30 - 5:00 p.m. - Channel 4.

Christmas Eve on Sesame Street: Big Bird, aided by his Muppet and human friends, tries to solve the mystery of how round Santa Claus fits in skinny chimneys. 5:00 - 6:00 p.m. - Channels 22 - 67.

Simplest Man in Town: The familiar plot has a new character, storyteller B.A. H. Humbug, who relates how the lightwad gets some ghostly prodding one Christmas Eve. 8:00 - 9:00 p.m. - Channel 11.

Welcome Back, Kotter: The Sweathoods help the Kotters trim the Ci's asmas tree, as flashbacks recall past episodes. 8:00 - 8:30 p.m. - Channel 13.

Love Boat: On a Christmas cruise, a recent parolee starts a new life with his loving wife. Starring Ted Lange. 9:00 - 10:00 p.m. - Channel 13.

Hot City: Guests not known at press time. 11:30 - 12:30 a.m. - Channel 2.

Saturday Night Live: Guests on this show from last Christmas include Mikael Spillman winner of a viewer contest to be the show's host. 11:30 - 1:00 a.m. - Channel 11.

Don Kirshner's Rock Concert: Barry Manilow, The B.T. Express and Natalie Cole are the guests. 1:00 - 2:30 a.m. - Channel 4.

Juke Box: Andy Williams, the happy Christmas. 5:30-6:00 p.m. - Channel 2.

Battlestar Galactica: The convoy is left virtually defenseless when a highly contagious space disease infects the Galactica's entire crew of fighter pilots. 8:00 - 9:00 p.m. - Channel 13.

Drifters and many others are guests tonight. 2:10 - 3:35 a.m. - Channel 13.

Sunday

For You . . . Black Woman: Guests today not known at press time. 8:30 - 9:00 a.m. - Channel 9.

Tiny Tree: A story of love and loyalty in which a cripple girl befriends a tiny pine tree and its circle of animal companions. Touched by her kindness the woodland creatures come up with a plan to ensure that the girl has a

Randy Brown on Soul Train

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