

The Lion

UK : 1962 : dir. Jack Cardiff : 20th Century Fox : 96 min
 prod: Samuel G Engel : scr: Irene & Louis Kamp : dir.ph.: Ted Scaife
[Pamela Franklin](#)
 William Holden; Trevor Howard; Capucine; Makara Kwaiha Ramadhani; Paul Oduor; Zakee;
 Samuel Obiero Romboh; Christopher Agunda

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	€	M	♂	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
5420a	3.5	10	2	1,486	3	-	-	-	-	No	Unseen



Yes, I know it's marginally off-true, but the image-handling software I use will not correct by factors of less than 1 degree, so off-true it must remain.
 Source: Films & Filming Sept 62

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001 review:

"Beautiful scenery of Kenya is far better than melodrama about young girl attached to pet lion, with family concerned it is turning her into a savage. Shot in CinemaScope. **"

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review – identical to above

Halliwell's Film Guide review

"An American lawyer goes to Africa to visit his ex-wife and their child. Unabsorbing marital drama with child and animal interest. From a novel by Joseph Kessel."

The Films of 20th Century Fox review:

"A New York attorney (William Holden) arrives at the Kirinyaga Game Reserve in Kenya at the request of his ex-wife (Capucine), who is worried about their daughter (Pamela Franklin). The girl is growing up with an attachment to the jungle life and its animals,



As tame as a kitten my eye! – Dad doesn't look too sanguine about daughter's choice of a pet. "Are you sure you wouldn't rather have a pony, dear?"
 Source: The Films of 20th Century Fox

particularly with a lion she has raised from a cub. The stepfather (Trevor Howard) is a hunter and game warden and he senses that his wife and the ex-husband still have a yen for one another. In time he comes to realise that he cannot hold the wife and that it is best to let her, the girl, and the lawyer return to a more normal way of life in America. The film's main assets are its location shots of landscapes and animal life, and especially its footage of the magnificent, well trained, title beast."

Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89
 review:

"Some nice African backgrounds here – and some pretty unconvincing plot motivations. About an American lawyer who comes to Africa to see his remarried wife and their daughter. ** "

The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television review:

"Is Pamela Franklin taming her pet lion? Or is it turning her savage? Do we care? William Holden has to. Jack Cardiff directed. 7 "

TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995 review:

"Sentimental, cleverly-acted drama, shot on location in East Africa. A young girl grows up there, and strikes up a friendship with a huge lion. Pamela Franklin, who plays the girl, later starred in such films as **"THE PRIME OF MISS JEAN BRODIE"** and **"DAVID COPPERFIELD"**. Technicolor photography is as ravishing as one would expect from a film directed by former cameraman Jack Cardiff, who won an Oscar for his colour camerawork on the 1946 film, **"BLACK NARCISSUS"**.
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Films & Filming – September 1962 – review:

"For a poorish film **"THE LION"** has one great asset, the performance of Trevor Howard. Given a fairly conventional rôle, as a second husband who eventually does the noble thing, Howard utilises a style, strength and depth of feeling which turns this flickering morsel of humanity into a deeply moving figure – I doubt if the performance is flashy enough to pick up the stray Academy Award but as an example of really creative film acting the performance would be hard to fault. The actor pulls off one truly superb moment near the end when his estranged step-daughter runs towards him, his joy as he holds out his arms to her, and the hurt disappointment when she

avoids him turns that old controversy about whether stage acting is superior to screen acting into an entirely academic question, while his handling of dialogue is an object lesson in how to give point and meaning to fairly limp lines. The ennobling virtues of Howard's acting can be measured against the faint achievements of his co-stars in what are, basically, more dramatic rôles.

Like **"THE INSPECTOR"** this one falls between half a dozen stools – sometimes it's like a superior home movie ("Would you like to see the monkeys?" or "Shall we go and watch the elephants?" someone will ask every now and again – cue for the film to come to a full stop while the producers splice in yards of the animal material they've brought back from Kenya). Sometimes it lapses into triangle drama (Capucine is married to Howard but was once wed to, and still loves, Holden) but, again like **"THE INSPECTOR"**, the film dithers round a central core of drama which is hinted at but hardly developed at all. The lion of the title is, in fact, a symbol of Africa and represents the primitive in its battle with the civilised for the mind of a child, but this elemental conflict is brushed aside at every opportunity in favour of the weary chit-chat between Holden and Capucine.

Cardiff lacks the flair and brilliance to circumvent the faults in scripting and casting but in its rather stodgy, unimaginative way the film does well enough. The direction is distinguished more for the rapport it achieves with the actors – apart from Holden and Capucine – than for any originality in the handling. Children and amateurs are a good test of a director's skill and tolerance with the human element, and with his handling of the African characters (all played, presumably, by non-professionals) and with Pamela Franklin the director is fairly successful (the child gives a performance entirely free of cuteness or precocity [*sic*]), but fails to give his characters any really meaningful relationship to their background. Although, apart from Trevor Howard's acting, there is not a great deal to quicken the imagination, individual shots and

sequences are sometimes quite lovely to look at – a serene early morning sequence, and several quick panning shots which have an impressionist quality. For such incidental virtues, and for its major acting achievement, **"THE LION"** is worth a visit."

– Richard Whitehall

[no listing in "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "A Pictorial History of the Talkies", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Time Out Film Guide", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

Radio Times review:

"American lawyer William Holden goes to Africa to visit his ex-wife Capucine, now married to Trevor Howard, and their daughter in an unconvincing marital drama that's far outstripped by the beautiful Kenyan scenery and wildlife. Tepid direction by John Cardiff. ** "

TV Times note:

"Drama. A girl befriends a lion. ** "

Sunday Times note:

"An American Lawyer rediscovers his love for his wife in Africa."

Source unknown:

"Pamela Franklin befriends lion in dull family drama. Also starring William Holden, Trevor Howard and Capucine. ** "

No further information currently available. Pamela Franklin (13) plays Tina in tomboy mode, to judge from these stills. Such early post-colonial British films with (largely) African settings are as quaint in their way as ludicrous portrayals of the Dark Continent in American adventures of the Thirties. The significant subtext within this limp plot concerns fears of white children going native out in the heat and exoticism of Kenya, the lion merely a signifier for the great wild continent itself. And there's something amusing too about the concept that growing

up as a lawyer's daughter in New York is somehow more "normal" (for an English child) than life in an African wildlife park – or, as they still termed them in those days, "game reserve".

Two other British films of the period had very similar backgrounds, "**WHERE NO VULTURES FLY**" (51) and its sequel "**WEST OF ZANZIBAR**" (54), but for that matter "**SAMMY GOING SOUTH**" (63) evinced the same sense of generalised unease about its central boy, Fergus McClelland, meandering from Port Said to Durban under his own steam. And naturally, in an obvious sense, this film foreshadows the more successful "**BORN FREE**" (66). If you wanted to root even deeper psychologically, then the underlying parental anxiety here might in fact be about miscegenation – daughter is playing with lions now, but who's she going to be playing with in a year or two's time?

[Pamela Franklin](#) had appeared the previous year as Flora in "**THE INNOCENTS**", an irritatingly kitsch title for Henry James' "*Turn of the Screw*", with Martin Stephens as Miles. Later she was in "**THE THIRD SECRET**" (64), "**THE NANNY**" (65) – flirting with the milkman and taunting William Dix – and as the eldest daughter in "**OUR MOTHER'S HOUSE**" (67), attempting to carry on as normal without interference from the outside world after the death of their mother.

See subject index under **ANIMALS**, [AFRICA](#) and **STEPMOTHERS / STEPFATHERS**.