



Legendary songwriter Richard Sherman reflects on THE JUNGLE BOOK

The mere mention of THE JUNGLE BOOK brings a broad smile to Richard Sherman's face. One half of the legendary songwriting team, The Sherman Brothers, this vibrant man -- in his 6th decade as a songwriter -- looks back warmly after 40 years on his creative association with this memorable film and the man who shaped this classic animated gem.



The MUSICAL MAGIC of The SHERMAN BROTHERS



"When I think about it, it seems like yesterday" reflects Sherman. "I knew it was going to be good, but I was so close to it, I never said, 'This is going to stand out as one of the jewels in the crown of Disney's animated classics.' I'm very happy to be wrong about that!"

Embraced by generations, Disney's classic film THE JUNGLE BOOK is indeed a shining jewel of animation. With a memorable musical score featuring five songs written by the

Academy Award®-winning team of The Sherman Brothers, this jubilant jungle adventure will soon delight generations again with the newly restored Diamond Edition, Blu-ray™ Combo Pack.

Initially, Disney's telling of Rudyard Kipling's The Jungle Book was dark and rather moody. In many ways it was truer to Kipling's literary work, but over a year into development, production of the film was halted in order to shift direction. As Sherman puts it, "Walt's philosophy was, 'Let's take this great thing and do it the Disney way!'" Taking a lighthearted approach to Kipling's classic collection of 'Mowgli's Stories,' nearly all of the previously written songs were set aside except for 'The Bare Necessities,' the bright melody by Terry Gilkyson and the Sherman Brothers were called upon to start over. "Walt put us on this movie because he knew we had a sense of humor and we had a lot of fun with words."

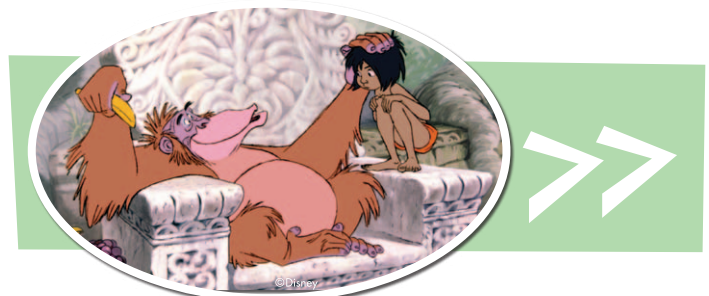
Disney's instruction to these young songwriters was, "Find the fun!" As Sherman recalls, "He winked and said, 'Have fun with the scary stuff so it wouldn't be scary,'" and have fun, they did! "We laughed a lot! I remember laughing so much at the various funny things that we were doing, playing with this heavy story and the more we got into these things, the funnier they became!"

As this departure from the original book took shape, the individual characters became the primary focus. Following Walt's directive



that his telling of The Jungle Book would be "a character-driven piece," the Sherman Brothers applied their musical magic to shape THE JUNGLE BOOK into a swinging celebration. From the memorable King Louie and his band of monkeys wooing young Mowgli for the secret of 'man's red flower' in 'I Wan'na Be Like You,' to the villainous python Kaa and his trance-inducing song 'Trust In Me,' the Sherman Brothers shaped a series of memorable musical adventures. "These are such great original characters, that all we thought about was sequences and the joy of seeing these personalities evolve," reflects Sherman.

"I remember vividly talking about the leader of this ferocious bunch of elephants that would flatten the jungle as they went through. They would troop through the jungle together and the word troop always reminded me of the military."



THE SHERMAN BROTHERS continued >>



This fierce pachyderm was originally called just 'Hathi,' but in a moment of inspiration, Robert and Richard figured, "If we make him 'Colonel Hathi' – this old, retired general – that would make it funny and we'd make them more like an elephant platoon marching thru the jungle instead of just a herd." Sitting down to craft the song, Richard recalls "I remember Bob asking me, 'What do you remember about being in the army?' I remember 'hup...2...3...4' and marching, marching, marching! Bob said 'That's it!'" From that moment on, 'Colonel Hathi's March,' and this lovably bumbling character, were born.



"We learned so much while working on this picture," recalls Sherman. "Working at Disney was like going to college...you just kept learning and the master teacher was Walt." Nearly teary-eyed in his reflections, Sherman's admiration for Walt Disney is clear, "I just thought he was the greatest thing I ever met in my life as far as creativity! Walt knew that if you put the right talent together and you just turn them loose – do it the way you feel it – out would come something better. He never told you what to do, he never gave you instructions, he'd always say: 'Find your spots and let me see what you've got.' He was the master storyteller of the last century."



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Sadly, near the end of production on **THE JUNGLE BOOK**, Walt Disney passed away unexpectedly, presenting a devastating turn of events for the creative team. "We never dreamed it would be Walt's last personally produced film," recalls Sherman. With such a dramatic setback, the entire future of animated feature films was at stake, yet as Sherman points out, **THE JUNGLE BOOK** quickly

earned a deserving place on Disney's animation crown. "It set the pace for future animation, it was a giant; so hugely successful that it saved animation at Disney Studios and it also set a style and pattern for personality within animation which is what Walt really went for."

That broad smile flashes again as Richard Sherman considers why, after 40 years, we have such a classic film to celebrate. "**THE JUNGLE BOOK** lives because the characters are so vivid and everyone working on the film had a freedom. They were not just constricted to what was on the page, they were free to do what their brains and talent told them to do. We were extensions of

Walt's creativity and with everything I've ever done since then, he's always been sitting on my shoulder."

This brilliant crown-jewel shines on as Walt Disney's lasting legacy to animation. Relive the musical magic of **The Sherman Brothers** and **THE JUNGLE BOOK** on the newly restored Diamond Edition Blu-ray™ Combo Pack. mj



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