

Not THAT MGM Lion...

Have you seen that MGM lion video? When I asked a friend about this the other day, he apparently thought I was referring to the lion that roars at you from the screen in the beginning of some movies – not THAT MGM lion! I'm talking about the shocking video of the lion turning on his trainer at the lion exhibit in the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas. Notice I didn't use the word "attack". Animal experts (including Jack Hanna, my favorite animal expert) who have reviewed the footage have agreed that it wasn't an attack, but rather retribution or perhaps rough play from one grumpy lion. The fact is, had the lion been attacking, it would have been over in a matter of seconds with a tragic outcome for the trainer. The trainer escaped uninjured, and watch how the lion follows him out of the enclosure, giving him "yeah, you'd BETTER run" looks all the way out:

Personally, I do think the lion was playing rough. He might have gotten a bit irritated at the trainer, but if he had truly wanted to hurt him, he could have killed him in seconds flat, which is why extreme caution should always be used when handling exotic animals. I wish the video showed what was occurring between the lion and his trainer just before the incident. Seconds before, the lion seems relaxed, but then the camera pans away until the lion lunges for the trainer's leg. What I find truly amazing about the video is the female lion's reaction. She follows the male lion around the enclosure throughout the incident, seemingly trying to get him to stop stalking the trainer. Just after the male lion's first lunge, the female even jumps on his back and gives him a little nip. A penny for... scratch that – I think I'd pay a lot of money for the thoughts of these lions!

Scary as these incidents are, I'm happy to report that this one had a positive outcome – the trainers are fine. I wonder if that trainer will be working with that male lion again?

Another Wonderful Zoo Visit

We went to the Toledo Zoo again last weekend (it was our second weekend to visit the zoo in a row; we visited on Feb 7 and 15). Almost a week has passed since our last visit, but I had other blog posts lined up and ready to go, so that's why I'm first writing about it now.

Having a zoo membership is awesome because you get to visit the zoo whenever you have free time, and you don't have to worry about seeing EVERYTHING on EVERY visit since you know you'll be back soon. The last few times we've gone, we parked in the back parking lot and stay on that side of the zoo,

which cuts the amount of walking considerably – a great option for winter months since this parking lot is free in the off-season and very close to the rear zoo entrance. With 4 small children, this is the way that works best for us, even though it means skipping the other side of the zoo which includes the polar bears, seals, wolves, and giraffes. No matter, we still see plenty, and now we have a whole half a zoo to see sometime if we go without the kids or are feeling extra ambitious.

Every zoo visit is different, which is one of the things I love about going. The animals are always doing different things, and my favorite exhibits vary with each visit. Here are the highlights from last Sunday's visit:

Lions – The Toledo Zoo has white lions. White lions are rare and the result of a recessive gene similar to the gene of white tigers. The Toledo Zoo has 3 white lion brothers on loan from Siegfried and Roy, the famous Las Vegas magicians. Normally during our zoo visits, the lions are sleeping and up on a ledge far from the viewing glass, but last Sunday they were walking around, and one of them even walked right up against the viewing glass! I've seen lions up close before, but not for a long time and never the gorgeous white lion until last week.

Hippos – The hippos are in their indoor enclosure for the winter, and even though their room seems somewhat cramped, the animals don't seem unhappy, and it's very cool to see these HUGE animals up close. It's amazing to me that their small pool must get very deep very fast in order to allow the animal to be completely submerged. As we watched, the hippo was bobbing for apples, and he caught his apple and swallowed it whole. This hippo was so large that the apple in his mouth looked about as big as a grape would look in the mouth of a human being. And this provided an extreme close-up of his humongous teeth!

Gorillas – When we got to the gorilla exhibit, it was empty.

But a friendly zookeeper told us to stick around for about 10 minutes for gorilla feeding time. We then got to watch as the keepers threw greens, fruit, and straw all around the enclosure; taking care to place some on the various ledges and hide some within crevices of the exhibit (seriously, am I too old to embark on this as a career?!? I'm afraid so...). Then they let the gorillas back in, and it was a frenzy. Well, an orderly frenzy – there was no pushing nor shoving; just some excited gorillas foraging in their exhibit. They quickly found all the hidden surprises, and we laughed as one of the females hoarded as much lettuce as she could carry and brought it up to a high ledge to enjoy it all by herself.

Elephants – The elephants were indoors, and the now 6-year-old baby Louie was using his trunk to eat jello off the floor. I really enjoy watching elephants use their trunks; it's fascinating to me how dexterous they are – almost like they have 2 fingers on the end. But we've watched Louie grow up ever since we've been coming to this zoo when he was just a year or two old, and now he's getting pretty big! Last time we were at the zoo, he was trying to get down a step so he could get to the water, and he ended up going backwards down the step – it was so cute!

So great day, awesome fun as always! Like I said, every visit is different, and I am never disappointed! I am a zoo-addict!

Ignorant Viewpoint of Iron Man

I've never read a comic book in my life, so why did I go see [Iron Man](#)? Easy – Tuesday is movie night for us, my local

movie theater had 3 movies available, and it only cost \$3 for both of us to see one. The choices were [What Happens in Vegas](#), which I wasn't going to touch with a ten foot pole. I don't like [Ashton Kutcher](#), I'm not a big fan of [Cameron Diaz](#), and I heard a reviewer say something about the audience being tortured, not to mention that the premise itself sounded terrible – more like a Saturday Night Live skit than a movie. Another choice was [Prince Caspian](#), which I was somewhat open-minded about watching since I did read the first of the Narnia books way way back when, but my husband wasn't interested in seeing that one at all, and the 2 hour and 20 minute running time kinda turned us away also. So Iron Man it was.

The movie started out interesting enough – it was never boring, so don't let the fact that I fell asleep fool you. That's just what I do when I don't have time to nap during the day and I see a movie too early before I've gotten my second wind that carries me through the evening. So I would say that there was too much of a backstory given, even for people like us who had never really heard of Iron Man before and especially didn't know his backstory. The backstory seemed to go on and on, but my husband liked that, and since I was sleeping through most of it, I can't really fairly say that it was too long. Super hero movies are not even close to being my favorite kind of movie, but I did enjoy this one. It had the perfect amount of action (too much action makes my mind wander), cool special effects, and an interesting story line. The acting wasn't horrible or even bad, but what do you expect with veterans like [Robert Downey Jr.](#) and [Gwyneth Paltrow](#)?

They had good chemistry; the love story wasn't too cheesy, and I liked the ending of the movie. I really enjoyed seeing all the technology as Robert Downey Jr. was working in his "cave" and whatnot, and the huge enemy suit was really fun to watch in the showdown between good and evil. The people behind us came close to ruining things though, since it was a grown woman exclaiming things like, "Cool! That's awesome! I wish I could do that!" I'm glad she was enjoying herself, but

it was distracting to the rest of us.

Since I'm not a comic book fan, I will pose a question to those who are. What percentage of superheros are filthy rich tech geeks who develop their weapons in reclusive mansions? This seems to be a common theme, but maybe it's just in the superhero movies I've seen. But anyway, I liked the movie; it tempted me to possibly check out Dark Knight this summer, unless I'm too busy like, having a baby or something. Iron Man was well worth our \$3. I don't think I would have said the same for What Happens in Vegas.

Academy of Country Music Awards Night!

Awards time was upon us again last night! Overall, I had a good time during the Academy of Country Music Awards, not as much fun as actually being there like I was in 2000, but a good time! There were some disappointments for me though, as you will read in my play-by-play of the awards below:

Carrie Underwood opened the show – I like Carrie Underwood; even though she's a country crossover, I think she has an amazing voice. By the way, very early in her season of American Idol – when I still watched it – I predicted that she would win and also that she would be a very good country singer. Just had to get that in there to boost myself after I did so horribly at predicting this year's ACM awards. But her new song isn't country enough for me, and it made it seem like she is trying to cross back over into pop or rock. Was not a big fan of her performance.

Next Reba McEntire made a funny joke in a beautiful blue dress

with a classy fit. The joke was about 1986, and she said, "Back then, Roger Clemens wasn't even interested in country music!" The audience oohed and ahed, I guess it was kinda controversial, but I liked it. The joke was in reference to the affair that took place years ago and just now came to light between a married and much older Roger Clemens and a teenage up and coming country star named Mindy McCready, who unfortunately is better known these days for controversy than for country music. Reba's jokes were actually pretty funny tonight, I liked the Kenny Chesney song reference: "she thinks my *fracture* is sexy" and also when Reba was talking about the correlation between #1 hits and birthdays, she said, "I have 33". Her delivery made that joke pretty funny, and I do like her as a host.

Next up was a live performance from Toby off-Keyth. To his credit, many of the performers seemed off pitch tonight, could there have been some issue with the sound system? That aside, his new song is simply awful. Quite possibly the worst country song ever. The lyrics are terrible, and hearing it off-key was even worse.

Time for the first award! SINGLE RECORD OF THE YEAR – I guessed Don't Blink by Kenney Chesney, and hubby guessed Stay by Sugarland. Other nominees were Miranda Lambert, Big and Rich, and Gary Allan -Slow start – hubby is one up on me already since the winner is Stay. Gotta give him some credit, it's a nice song.

Next is a live performance from Brad Paisley – his new song is ok, I like it, but he seems off key too. Hubby says, Brad Paisley? He's always off key on the live shows. I don't remember this being the case, Is he?

Next, Taylor Swift wins TOP NEW FEMALE VOCALIST – no surprise there – hubby is 2 for 2, and I am on the board with 1.

Miranda Lambert's live performance – alright.

Now the award for NEW DUO/VOCAL GROUP – Never even heard of any of the nominees since I listen to Kidsongs in the car now; I no longer get to listen to country radio, so all the new stuff on the awards show tonight was truly news to me. Quiz me on Kidsongs episodes though, and I'd win every time!

Rodney Atkins gives an off key live performance. Not that this song about kids swearing sounds that great on the radio either. It's an ok song, but he has a crackly country voice, and live singing just makes it worse.

TOP NEW MALE VOCALIST – Hubby guesses Luke Bryan I guess Jake Owen, and the nominee not chosen by either of us wins – Jack Ingram.

Live performance from Kenny Chesney – I'm never a huge fan of Chesney, but he wasn't off-key, so I won't complain.

Live performance by Geroge Strait – I was not crazy about his new song but at least he wasn't off key either. Live performance duet – Kenny Chesney and George Strait – Chesney went a little off key, but I don't like this song Shiftwork anyway.

Next was a world premiere of Sugarlands new single, which I really liked! The woo-oohs were a little corny, but the song reminds me of 80's country and it was a very catchy tune.

ALBUM OF THE YEAR was won by Miranda Lambert – and nobody in our household guesses this category correctly.

Live performance by Brooks and Dunn – not off key

SONG OF THE YEAR – I guessed Kenny Chesney, hoping he would win this instead of Entertainer of the Year, but I was disappointed because Hubby guessed Sugarland's Stay would get this award.

Taylor Swift gave a live performance – a little off key until it started raining on her on stage. That was pretty cool, but

did they turn off her mic and let her lip sync? Would the mic even work in the rain? She got pretty wet and was suddenly on key, so I wonder...

TOP VOCAL DUO – Brooks and Dunn – We both guessed this one correctly – EVERYONE WINS!

Trace Atkins live performance – pitch problems

I have to comment on the baby puking commercial that aired here. I believe it originally aired during the Superbowl. But it shows a baby talked into a webcam, and all of a sudden, he spits up. I just love the irony of the baby talking like a normal adult, then all of a sudden spitting up like a baby. You have to see it and probably have kids to appreciate it.

Now finally, after stringing us along all night, it was time for the Garth Brooks tribute. Garth used to be my favorite country singer, way back when, until he sold out, retired a few times, became Chris Gaines, etc etc. But he still has some great music in his library, some of which he treated us to tonight in a live performance. Reminded me of the 3 times I got to see him in concert. He was a GREAT performer, and even though he has aged a little, he can still give a good concert. I loved how when he went off key, he covered by pretending he was just having fun with the song and meant to have pitch problems – yeah right! And he did mess up the words in The Thunder Rolls – he came in too early. But a good concert by him overall, even if he was a bit rusty. He also included the following songs in his montage: Callin Baton Rouge, Friends in Low Places, We Shall Be Free, The Dance, Just Ledoux, In Another's Eyes (special guest duet with wife Tricia Yearwood. Not to be rude, but I was POSITIVE Garth was going to be announcing some baby news – Tricia looked extra puffy. He didn't say anything though, so I guess I'm just a jerk for noticing and saying so. Being in the public eye must suck!), More Than a Memory, Rodeo, and the finale Ain't Goin Down Til the Sun Comes Up. Then, Garth was given the Crystal

Milestone Award of which he is deserving, despite all the selling out he's done. And when he called Reba Ms. Yearwood, it was hilarious, but since it was followed by "I love her", I can see why he mixed up the names to say that about his wife – aw!

Next award – VOCAL GROUP – Rascal Flatts

Keith Urban live performance – liked the song, but what's with the do doo's? This is the second do doo's song tonight!

David Spade's long joke was funny, but I have yet to understand his presence at country music awards?

Rascal Flatts live performance was off key.

Eddy Arnold tribute – Carrie Underwood and Brad Paisley sang one of Eddy's songs as a duet, and it sounded magnificent. Awesome tribute.

Kellie Pickler live performance – off pitch, like so many others before her.

Trisha Yearwood comes out to present MALE VOCALIST – kudos on the costume change, shouldn't be any baby rumors due to this dress. I have Kenny Chesney, Hubby has George Strait. Paisley wins.

Lee Ann Rimes – live performance – not off key, but the band is way loud.

Carrie Underwood wins FEMALE VOCALIST and puts me within one point of tying up the contest between my husband and me!

Montgomery Gentry – live performance off key – sounds horrible

ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR – Wait, my ballot sheet says we still have Video of the year and Vocal Event of the Year, what happened? Some research on the internet shows I lost both those categories, ugh. I guessed Brad Paisley and Hubby has

Keith Urban – Chesney wins AGAIN!!! I should have seen it coming, I was just hoping that with the new voting system this year – they let the fans vote for Entertainer of the Year – I thought the fans would take away Chesney’s monopoly on this category. His joke about thanking his parents for doing what they did so many years ago that led to his creation was kinda funny, if a bit unexpected.

So, you can see where my disappointments lie – mainly with the entertainer of the year award, losing to my husband, and not liking many of the new songs that were performed. But like I said, I had fun watching, and now I know I will have to do more research before the next country awards in the fall so I can get more correct guesses. I’ll have to find a way to take back control over the car radio for starters!

21

There’s been lots of talk of this number on my blog lately, but this time I’m referring to the movie [21](#), not the tv show. I have to admit, I was a little reluctant to see this movie because the previews reminded me of [Ocean’s 11](#), and I was not a big fan of that movie. I also thought I might have trouble following the movie 21 because I don’t know how to play many of the popular card games prominent in Las Vegas; like poker, and most importantly Blackjack. But I didn’t have trouble following the movie, and I actually enjoyed it from start to finish. It was a good mix of action, thoughtful dialogue, good acting, and plot twists; all of which add up to a well-balanced and entertaining film.

The movie revolves around a college professor, played by the enjoyable and versatile Kevin Spacey, who trains a “club” of

gifted math students to excel at the game of Blackjack. They develop a system and take trips to Las Vegas to win lots of money. Enter student Ben Campbell, the club's newest recruit, who only wants enough money to pay for his dream of attending Harvard medical school. He gets caught up in the lifestyle, however, and it's interesting to see what happens next... I won't spoil it – it's a good movie, go see it!