Chattanooga choo-choo stars in ‘Water for Elephants’

Posted on May 31, Posted by Ken Beck Category Ask Ken Beck

Dear Ken: I just saw the movie “Water for Elephants.” Tell me about the handsome but villainous dude who played August, the owner of the circus who beat the elephant?
That would be Austrian actor Christoph Waltz, 54, who was born into a theater family. He had a very workmanlike career for 30 years in German film and television, and then director Quentin Tarantino cast him as Col. Hans Landa in “Inglourious B……s,” which made him an international superstar and won him a best supporting actor Oscar. The divorced father of four children speaks German, French and English. He next stars as Cardinal Richelieu in “The Three Musketeers.” Regarding “Water for Elephants,” the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum in Chattanooga provided a vintage steam locomotive and a three-mile track for the production, which filmed in Chattanooga last July and August. Lookout Mountain also appears in the movie.

Dear Ken: Who has won the most Academy Awards?
The late, great Walt Disney took home 26 Oscars, four of those honorary. Costume designer Edith Head earned eight. Director John Ford won four. Katharine Hepburn won four best actress Oscars, and Walter Brennan won three best supporting actor Oscars. As for movies, three films won 11 Academy Awards: “Ben-Hur,” “Titanic” and “The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King.”

Dear Ken: How many mechanical sharks were used in the making of “Jaws”?
From what I could find, three of the sharks, named “Bruce” after Steven Spielberg’s lawyer, Bruce Ramer, were made from the same mold for the 1975 thriller. The metal monsters were 25 feet long and their heads weighed 400 pounds. All three were later destroyed. However, baby brother Bruce was evidently born from the mold a few months after his elder siblings and displayed at Universal Studios Theme Park for 15 years. Last year an NPR reporter tracked down the fourth Bruce in a Southern California junkyard.

Dear Ken: What country music female singer has the most No. 1 hits?
Right now, it is a tie: Dolly Parton and Reba McEntire each have had 25 No. 1 tunes on the Billboard Hot County chart.

If you have a trivia question about actors, singers, movies, TV shows or pop culture, e-mail your query to Ken Beck at