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## **National Animal Protection Organizations, Celebrities Protest Use of Live Elephant in New Film Production**

*Los Angeles, Calif. (September 7, 2017)* – The Performing Animal Welfare Society (PAWS), together with top Hollywood celebrities, national animal protection organizations, conservationists, and elephant sanctuaries, issued an [open letter](#) to FJ Productions condemning its use of a live elephant in its current production of *Saving Flora*, a film about an elephant fleeing a circus. As exposed in a [previously released video](#), Tai, the elephant used for the film, has herself been subjected to the same training tactics used in inhumane circuses.

“It adds insult to injury to use an elephant who was stolen from her family in the wild and trained to perform with circus-style methods to tell the story of an elephant escaping a circus,” said PAWS president Ed Stewart. “This is an affront to anyone who cares about these self-aware, highly intelligent and sensitive animals.”

Video evidence shows handlers with Have Trunk Will Travel, the California-based company that owns Tai, forcefully striking and hooking elephants with a bullhook – a weapon resembling a fireplace poker with a sharpened metal tip and hook – to force them to perform tricks during training sessions. Tai’s owners have publicly defended using bullhooks on elephants.

In addition to the letter, a [petition on Change.org](#), led by Bob Barker, is calling for FJ Productions to reconsider its use of Tai and instead employ a computer-generated elephant.

“There is no place for animal cruelty in entertainment,” stated Barker, an Emmy Award-winning television host. “Today we have the technology to replace live animals in film productions, so there is no excuse for using live elephants or other wild animals, who are cruelly trained to perform.”

**Signatory celebrity endorsers include:**

- Bob Barker, Emmy Award and Lifetime Achievement Award Winner, Television Host, Producer, Actor
- Kim Basinger, Academy Award-winning Actress
- Jorja Fox, Actress, *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, *ER*, *West Wing*
- Ross McCall, Actor, *Band of Brothers*, *White Collar*, *24: Live Another Day*
- Kevin Nealon, Actor, Writer and Comedian, *Weeds*, *Saturday Night Live*
- Kristin Bauer van Straten, Actress, *HBO's True Blood*, *Once Upon A Time*
- Betty Thomas, Director, Producer and Actress, *Hill Street Blues*, *Audrey*
- Lily Tomlin, Actress, Comedienne, Producer

**Joining PAWS, signatory animal protection and conservation organizations include:**

- Performing Animal Welfare Society (PAWS)
- The Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee (TES)
- Global Sanctuary for Elephants (Brazil)
- Amboseli Trust for Elephants (Africa)
- ElephantVoices (Africa)
- Animal Legal Defense Fund
- Animal Welfare Institute
- PETA Foundation
- The Humane Society of the United States
- In Defense of Animals
- CompassionWorks International

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**About the Performing Animal Welfare Society (PAWS)**

*Founded in 1984, the [Performing Animal Welfare Society](#) (PAWS) operates three sanctuaries in California, including the 2,300-acre ARK 2000 natural habitat refuge, that are home to a large variety of species including elephants, bears, big cats and other wild animals rescued or retired from circuses, zoos and the exotic pet trade.*

*PAWS is licensed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. It is accredited by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS), and is rated a four-star charity by Charity Navigator and received an "A" rating from CharityWatch.*