

Wass rebounds from criticism for 'Jungle' role

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HOLLYWOOD — Ted Wass will be the lucky guy romping through the underbrush with Tanya Roberts in Columbia Pictures' "Savannah, Queen of the Jungle." The bigscale adventure picture, which begins shooting in Kenya this month, is scheduled for an August release.

The 31-year-old actor has had a rough ride since his memorable role in TV's "Soap." He made his movie debut as a bumbling detective in "The Curse of the Pink Panther." But the much-sought role as Peter Sellers' replacement turned into a real-life curse when the film bombed.



Ted Wass

"I felt from the beginning that I would probably get damaged either way," Wass recalled in a phone interview. "The best thing I could do was put my head down and do the work."

Director Blake Edwards recently filed a \$180 million lawsuit claiming that MGM-CA mishandled the picture. "My own opinion is that it deserved a better fate than it got from the studio," Wass said.

Undaunted, Wass recovered from "Curse" and recently completed work on "Oh, God, Part III." He portrays a down-and-out songwriter who sells his soul to Satan — played by George Burns, doing double duty as God and the devil in the third installment of the successful series. Wass, who studied opera and classical drama in his hometown of Chicago, performs three songs in the movie.

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