

# Amazing Cinema

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## THE COMING

Interview with  
**BERT I. GORDON**

Plus: New FX Films  
Son of Kong  
Amazing Video

**Joe Dante:  
The Howling**

# Amazing Cinema

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## THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

85 minutes

Paramount Home Video  
5451 Marathon St.  
Hollywood, CA 90038

**Bill George (\*\*):** Apocalyptic fable with a moral: if it weren't for germs, we couldn't abort Martian attacks. Stay tuned for the special effects, but beware of Pal's customary pontifications (is this the one where a swarm of terrified people, seeking shelter, frantically knock down a blind man?); pretty routine.

**Gary Svehla (\*\*½):** A greatly flawed science fiction classic; one of the first examples where special effects completely dwarf story and characters. The film suffers from bad pacing, allowing too many dull sequences to materialize. The special effects featuring Martian death machines and the fascinating alien creatures are classically designed and executed, but expert special effects do not a great film make.

**Don Leifert (\*\*):** Disappointing adaptation of H.G. Wells' classic novel; poor performances upstage good special effects in this ponderous tale of a Martian invasion; lots of overacting in this one.

The Martian from *War Of The Worlds*.



## HORROR HOSPITAL

Video Communications  
6555 Skelly Dr.  
Tulsa, OK 81145

**Bill George (\*\*\*½):** Visceral madness, with generous dispensation of clinically black humor (even paying homage to William Castle in one of the many sick jokes); Michael Gough's best performance since THE LEGEND OF HELL HOUSE. If you like Antonin Artaud, Rainer Werner

# AMAZING VIDEO

A monthly selection of capsule comments on current video fare by our three resident film buffs: Don Leifert, Gary Svehla, and Bill George—all veteran fans of the science fiction/horror genre. The opinions given here are not necessarily those of AMAZING CINEMA; if you disagree with one, feel free to write and comment.

### THE RATING SYSTEM:

- \*\*\*\* Great stuff!
- \*\*\* Pretty good.
- \*\* Could be better.
- \* Yuch!

(Note: Most films are available at discount prices from local video stores; or write to listed companies for retail prices and catalogues.)

Fassbinder, and/or Georges Franju (whose LES YEUX SANS VISAGE may have inspired this broad satire), you'll love HORROR HOSPITAL.

**Gary Svehla (\*\*):** An attempt to blend black humor and sadistic horror (complete with overdose decapitations to boot) instead becomes tedious and dull; British "B-film" madman, Michael Gough, is a delight as usual, but the film still falls flat on its face.

**Don Leifert (\*\*½):** Surgical satire featuring Michael Gough at his hammiest; mad scientist attempts to create a race of super zombies (sound familiar?) by enticing misguided teenagers to his rest home; tongue-in-cheek tone is consistent throughout this entertaining spoof of mad doctor movies.

## KING KONG (1933)

105 minutes

Nostalgia Merchant  
6255 Sunset Blvd. #1019  
Hollywood, CA 90028

**Bill George (\*\*\*½):** If you ever externalized your more predatory impulses, courted and lost a beautiful woman, or fell off the Empire State Building, you'll surely be able to identify with the legendary title character. For further revelations on the film, read "The Girl In The Hair Paw" by Ronald Gottesman and Harry Geduld (Avon Books).

**Gary Svehla (\*\*\*\*):** A cinematic fable/fairy tale that will never fail to charm. The blending of outstanding special effects (creating moviedom's most sympathetic monster, even though this uncult version does at-



tempt to make Kong more the savage) with strong performances in a realistic jungle setting creates a romantic fantasy world juxtaposed to the harsh realities of the urban New York City locale. The musical score by Max Steiner alone is worth the cost of this tape.

**Don Leifert (\*\*\*\*):** Exciting blend of music (Max Steiner) and stop motion animation (Willis O'Brien) add up to the granddaddy of all monster-on-loose movies; O'Brien's amazing ability to breathe life and personality into animated miniatures lifts this action/fantasy film miles above the countless imitations that followed; Robert Armstrong takes acting honors as a made moviemaker who exploits the giant anthropoid; Kong's footage is far more brutal in this uncult version.

## KING KONG (1976)

135 minutes

Paramount Home Video  
5451 Marathon St.  
Hollywood, CA 90038

**Bill George (½):** One of the most notorious embarrassments of big-budget moviemaking (until HEAVEN'S GATE eclipsed its beached-whale reputation). Dreadful script and abominable special effects constitute one of the most expensive amateur movies ever made. Sole assets are Jessica Lange and (in a cameo) John Agar as the Mayor of New York. (John was also in the classic turkey, CURSE OF THE SWAMP CREATURE—he obviously assumed this was the sequel.)

**Gary Svehla (\*\*½):** Jessica Lange's sexuality and Rick Baker's almost uncredited performance as Kong provide the only merit in this unnecessary remake of a classic. The few seconds worth of mechanical Kong featuring his leaky crotch aptly sum up the entire movie. The over-long story is matched in dullness by bland performances.

**Don Leifert (\*\*):** Poor acting and a silly script damage this ambitious attempt to improve upon a classic; Charles Grodin, a talented comic performer, is awful in the Robert Armstrong role; film's merits include a first-rate score by John Barry and Rick Baker's underrated performance as Kong.

Left: One of the pre-production poster concepts for the original *King Kong*. Note the artist's treatment of the famous Kong-Tyrannosaurus fight. Below: Rick Baker as Kong in the dreadful DeLaurentis remake.

