

Dynamite^{T.M.}



**A
Dynamite
Double Feature!
Laverne and Shirley And King Kong!**

KONG MAKES A KING-SIZED KOMBEBACK!

"It was beauty killed the beast."—
and also a beauty of a clean up job
for the World Trade Center's
sanitation department!



Those rumors have been driving us bananas! Ever since movie producer Dino De Laurentiis started making a new version of *King Kong*, weird feedback has been coming out of Hollywood. One rumor said that a tall man in a monkey suit would play King Kong. Another claimed he would be played by a Muppet. To get the facts behind this monkey business, *Dynamite* went to Hollywood. Here's what we found out:

Ever since he made his first appearance in that 1933 movie, Kong has been a crowd-pleaser. In this latest epic, he is a crowd! If you add him all up, he has seven heads, 17 arms, 12 legs, and 14 eyes. Don't go away, we'll tell you how it breaks down.

In most of the scenes, Kong is played by a 40-foot-tall mechanical ape. This mean machine can walk (it takes 16-foot-long strides), roar, beat its chest, and wage gorilla warfare on jet fighter planes. It weighs two tons and wears a heel-to-head fur coat that took 25 seamstresses two weeks to stitch together. But for waiting around under hot lights (or giving interviews) there's an understudy—a perfect look-alike, ton for ton.

In case you like to know how much things cost, Big Kong's price tag was two million dollars. The understudy was cheaper—about \$300,000. With a star that expensive, you don't let him do his own falls or fights. For the rough stuff in the long shots, you hire two stunt men and dress them in monkey suits.

In the 1933 movie, *King Kong*, the big ape was played by a little 20-inch aluminum figure covered with rubber muscles and rabbit fur. He looked huge because all the scenes he appeared in were miniatures. For those close-ups with Fay Wray, a separate, giant-sized head, arm, and hand were used.

There's a mini-Kong in this new movie too. He's about three feet high, and has a jointed metal frame so his arms, legs, and head can be moved. After he's posed in one position, he is photographed. Then the

camera is stopped and the model is put in the next position. Every step he takes requires at least 12 separate shots, but when they are all run together on the screen, the movements are smooth and lifelike. Mini-Kong does his stuff in scaled-down models of Skull Island and New York City.

It takes a lot to get ahead in the movie business, and Kong has more than most. He's got an extra head and four extra arms and hands. The head is about five feet from ear to ear. It can grin, roll its eyes, or gnash its teeth, whenever an operator at a remote control console pushes the right buttons.

The day we were on the set, Kong's right arm was the star of the show. The scene being shot was the one where Kong comes out of the jungle and grabs the girl (played by Jessica Lange) off the platform. Jessica wasn't around because the week before the hand had goofed and dropped a stand-in 12 feet to the ground. Now the hand was doing five-finger exercises to get the pickup right.

Our eyes told us that the 14-foot-long arm was attached to a crane that in turn was attached to a truck. In the truck sat an operator pushing buttons and pulling levers. The huge hand began to move, flexing and stretching its fingers. Wow! We forgot all about the crane and the truck. Kong's arm and hand looked a lot more real than our own—and a lot bigger.

When we left the set, the hand was picking up and putting down a stunt man who happened to be about Jessica's height. So far, it hadn't dropped him once.

According to one of those wild rumors we told you about, production on *King Kong* was slowed because the special effects people built two right arms. Was this true? we asked. Sure, the studio publicist admitted, but they also built two left arms at the same time. "But that isn't funny, so nobody reported it," he said.

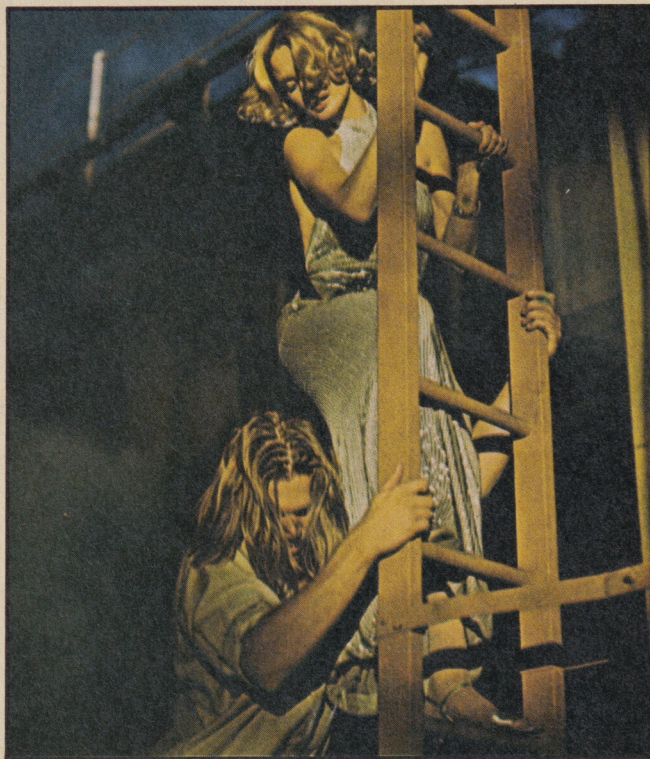
What *is* funny is what happened when the *King Kong* company came to New York in June to film Kong battling jet fighters



Kong gives the lady a hand—with the help of a giant crane that rasies and lowers the monstrous arm.



Jessica Lange is fit to be tied at the prospect of a date with Kong!



Jeff Bridges helps Jessica escape from her heavy date.

while standing on the top of the World Trade Center. With his skeleton reinforced with steel and with the extra machinery inside, Kong's weight shot up to six and a half tons. The folks in charge of the Trade Center feared that an overweight Kong would K.O. their roof, so it was back to the drawing board at the studio. There Kong would do his big scene on a soundstage—standing on top of a full-scale model of the Trade Center tower roof.

But New Yorkers got a thrill anyway. For

the scene where Kong lies dead in the street at the foot of the twin towers, producer Dino De Laurentiis shipped Big Kong No. 3 to the city. This was a 30-foot-high non-mechanical model of Kong, mostly made of styrofoam, hair, and stuffing. His job was just to lie there while Wilson (played by Charles Grodin) said, "It was Beauty killed the Beast." Like a lot of big-time Hollywood stars, Kong No. 3 didn't do anything, but he looked great doing it!

—Margaret Ronan