

# FILM REVIEW

FEBRUARY 1977

15p



**FREE  
SUPERSOFT  
SHAMPOO**

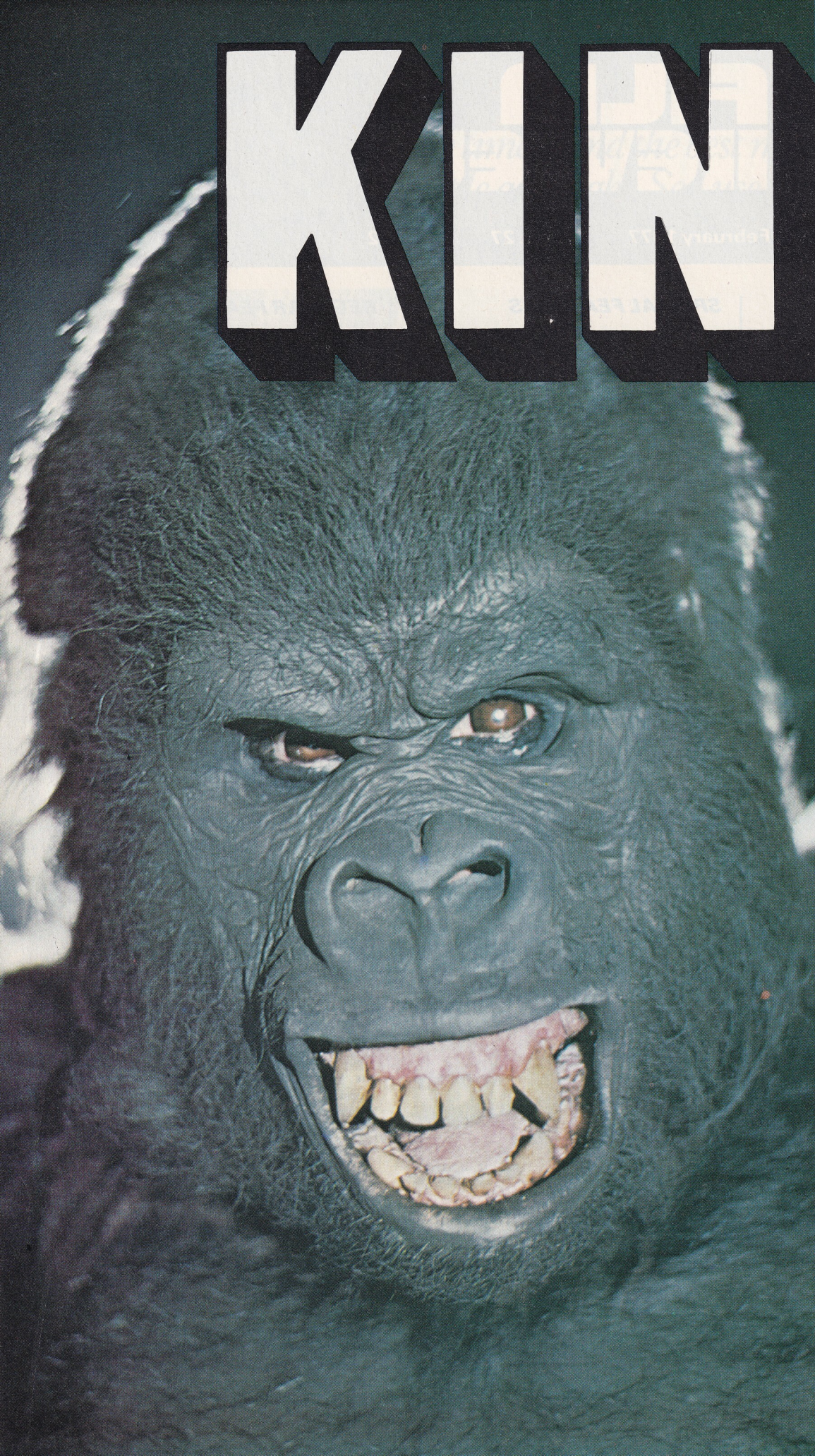
WITH THIS ISSUE

BRITAIN'S TOP-SELLING M

BRITAIN'S TOP-SELLING MOVIE MAGAZINE



# KING



The Chinese have an endearing custom of giving romantic names to the passing years like "The Year of the Tiger", "The Year of the Dragon" and even "The Year of the Rat". It seems extremely likely that, in the film world at least, 1977 will be known as "The Year of King Kong", because in size, scope and sheer unadulterated excitement it will have no rival. The film is the culmination of more than a year's hard work by Dino De Laurentiis, probably the most successful independent producer in Hollywood today, and the enormous team of helpers he managed to recruit to make the epic.

Laurentiis was well aware of the magnitude of his task, for the original version of *King Kong* in 1933, with Willis H. O'Brien's marvellous trick photography, still stands up well after forty years and is regarded as a classic in its genre. It was useless contemplating anything less than a super version, so he began the process of assembling the necessary multitude of craftsmen, acquiring five large Hollywood sound stages including the biggest they had, supervising the construction of the elaborate sets, and searching for locations which would be "just right" for the film, wherever in the world those locations might be. He also had the added responsibility of finding a beautiful girl for the role of the captive beauty created by Fay Wray more the forty years ago.

To direct the new epic, Laurentiis invited John Guillermin, whose most recent tremendous success, *The Towering Inferno*, is sufficient guarantee that the bigger they come the better he handles them.

Two of the leading human characters are young men — Prescott the impetuous zoologist, and Wilson the shrewd oil executive. Jeff Bridges, one of the more respected young actors in Hollywood today, was chosen to play Prescott, the man who rivals Kong for the affections of the lovely girl found adrift in the Pacific



# KONG

Ocean. Charles Grodin, an actor with considerable stage, television and film experience, was named to play the slightly devious Wilson who realises that Kong could be an even better financial proposition than oil.

Interest was understandably keen on who would be selected to play Dwan, the lovely girl who drives Kong bananas. There was no shortage of applicants for the part and, indeed, there was hardly a beautiful young actress in Hollywood whose name went unconsidered by the questing Laurentiis. In the end, he felt that the mystique of the role might best be preserved if it were taken by an unknown. So the ultimate choice fell on Jessica Lange, a popular fashion model with the famous New York *haute couturier* *Wilhelmina*, for the engagingly wacky girl whose delightful innocence and stunning beauty are readily appreciated by both Kong and Prescott.

Laurentiis is nothing if not thorough, and when production was first announced, full-page ads were taken in major newspapers offering a colour poster of Kong on top of New York's World Trade Centre (not the Empire State Building as in the 1933 version). The response was terrific – Paramount had to hire an army of temporary secretaries to cope with the thousands of letters. Laurentiis was surprised to find that most of the letter-writers – sixty-five per cent to be exact – were from young fans, very inquisitive about the nature of the giant ape. Would he, they wanted to know, be an actor or a gigantic mechanical model?

The Kong that looms on the screen will be a 40-foot mechanical monster weighing an incredible 6½ tons and able to cover no less than 15 feet in a single gigantic stride. A technological marvel in itself, it is electronically controlled by a complex system that can roll the beast's eyes and give no less than sixteen separate movements to his hands, the most famous being the

one when he lifts Dwan with his huge fingers.

The greatest care was taken to find a believable "home" for Kong, and many Pacific islands were meticulously inspected to provide the right location. The search ended at Kauai, the most remote and arguably the loveliest of the Hawaiian Chain. There was general agreement that the north coast of Kauai, with its dramatic cliffs, thickly foliated jungle, and the pervading sense of isolation, offered the film men exactly the right terrain

for the scenes of Kong in his natural habitation.

So wild was the landscape that no film unit had ever previously ventured there to shoot a feature movie. Four helicopters daily airlifted the 50-strong company over the valleys, jungles and mountains to the locations which were so inaccessible that without the helicopters it would have taken them two-and-a-half days to get there on foot. One day the unit technicians laid down a fog bank to create the eerie, mysterious feeling

surrounding Kong's home. The natives on the beach at nearby Hanalei Bay were startled to see their clear sunny day disappear behind Hollywood clouds!

The company returned to America on the Norwegian supertanker *Suzanne Onstad* where shooting continued all the time. In the film the tanker is used for the transporting of Kong from his jungle home to New York where he is to be put on show. Arriving in Hollywood, the studio's back lot

*continued over*

*Seen below shortly on their arrival on the island are Dwan (Jessica Lange), Prescott (Jeff Bridges), Bagley (Rene Auberjonois) and Wilson (Charles Grodin) with Carnahan (Ed Lauter).*







was used for one of the biggest sets constructed in the movie capital since its golden days in the thirties and forties. It is a wall, over 500-ft long by nearly 50-ft high, designed to keep Kong out of the native village. Behind the wall is an altar on which Dwan is to be sacrificed to Kong. For a whole month 300 extras, made-up as natives on Skull Island, performed at the wall, chanting and dancing before racing up the ramps to see Kong come and carry off the girl.

The other major location was the most controversial city on earth — New York. No one could doubt that it would be here that the great ape would have his date with destiny among the so-called civilised

humans. Advertisements in the city's newspapers invited the public to watch Kong's death scene and some five thousand people turned up for the shooting. But that was nothing to the crowd that massed on the following night, after the press and television had given it the biggest movie coverage in living memory. An estimated 30,000 New York crowd packed every square inch of the Plaza of the World Trade Centre for Kong's last farewell to Dwan.

"No one cry when Jaws die," Italian-born De Laurentiis told reporters. "But when the monkey die, everybody gonna cry!"

Briefly, the story concerns an oil company which is nervous that a

competitor might up-stage them by discovering a new oil source. The Petrox Company therefore sends an expedition into the Pacific, headed by Fred Wilson (Charles Grodin), to investigate reports of rich underwater oil deposits off Skull Island.

Jeff Prescott (Jeff Bridges), a Princeton University zoologist, stows away aboard Wilson's ship. He has been lured to Skull Island by ancient stories of a prehistoric monster supposedly living there. While the ship is at sea, a distress signal is picked up, but before a proper bearing can be taken the SOS is lost.

Wilson calls a meeting of the crew to inform them that he believes they are heading for one of the biggest oil strikes ever made. Just at that moment Prescott walks in and identifies himself as a university professor. Wilson, in spite of Prescott producing credentials, flatly disbelieves him, accusing him of being a spy for a rival oil company.

The confrontation is interrupted by a call from the deck that a lifeboat has been sighted. Aboard it is the beautiful Dwan (Jessica Lange), unconscious and wearing a somewhat revealing gown. Recovering consciousness, she tells Wilson and Prescott that she was

*Above right: Dwan is tied to an altar to await her fate in the hands of Kong. Right: Kong lies dead after toppling from the 110-storey World Trade building in New York.*

travelling to Hong Kong when their ship blew up and left her the sole survivor. The oil ship makes a landfall at Skull Island and Wilson, Prescott and others penetrate the interior where they find the natives engaged in performing a ritual. A beautiful girl is being carried to a kind of altar, the rest of the tribe chanting "Kong... Kong... Kong..." It is the beginning of an incredible adventure.

Perhaps the last words are best rendered by Dino De Laurentiis in his delightfully inimitable English, when he told awestruck reporters in New York:

"Intellectuals gonna love Konk — even film buffs who love the first Konk are gonna love ours. Why? Because I no give them crap. I no spend two, three million to do quick business. I spend twenty-four million on my Konk. I give them quality. I got here a great love story, a great adventure. And it gets a general rating, for family, for everybody!"

Dwan ..... JESSICA LANGE  
 Prescott ..... JEFF BRIDGES  
 Wilson ..... CHARLES GRODIN  
 Captain Ross ..... JOHN RANDOLPH  
 Bagley ..... RENE AUBERJONVOIS  
 Carnahan ..... ED LAUTER

A Dino de Laurentiis presentation  
 distributed by EMI  
 Certificate "A"





**SUPERB,  
EYE-CATCHING  
3-D POSTERS  
OF  
KING KONG**

are on sale at  
cinemas showing  
the film.

Get your copy of this  
outstanding poster  
early, as supplies  
are limited.

Closing date for the  
**KING KONG  
POSTER CONTEST**  
held in our January issue  
is January 21



The soundtrack  
of the most exciting original  
motion picture event of all time.



# KING KONG

MUSIC COMPOSED AND CONDUCTED BY

**JOHN BARRY**

K54090





# JESSICA

the top model who makes  
opposite the top monster



Not since the young Vivien Leigh emerged from the enormous ruck of screen hopefuls to play the lead in *Gone With The Wind*, has Hollywood seen a casting event like Dino De Laurentiis's search for a female lead for his multi-million dollar contemporary version of *King Kong*. It seems that the producer felt that in a story that has signs of becoming folklore, a beautiful unknown might better suit the mood than an established star — always provided, of course, that a suitable beautiful unknown could be found. The hunt began among the film city's lovelies, and then someone handed Laurentiis some pictures of an international top model named Jessica Lange. The producer looked hard at the photographs and immediately had her jet to Hollywood at two hours' notice for a screen test.

Jessica arrived in Los Angeles for the first time in her life, having taken the precaution of booking a return airline ticket as she didn't really expect to get the part. Laurentiis and his aides took one look at the screen test and realised that their search for Dwan, the beauty who torments the giant ape with her loveliness, was over. Jessica was given the part.

"But what about my return flight ticket?" asked the startled beauty.

"Tear it up or give it away," smiled the producer. "You won't be needing it!"

Then began the process of star building, something that hasn't been seen in Hollywood since the heyday of Marilyn Monroe and Kim Novak. Laurentiis is well aware of the value of the star mystique, which he has been keen to revive ever since he transferred his operations from Italy to Hollywood three years ago. Suitably coached and groomed in the best tradition of star creation, Jessica was introduced at the largest press conference held in the movie city in recent memory. She delighted everybody present when she made her first public appearance beside the huge hand of *King Kong*.

Certainly she is beautiful; short, blonde, finely chiselled classical features and a shapely slim figure. Added to this she has a freshness of personality, a wry sense of humour and a dry wit that won over the jaded Hollywood press corps immediately. They asked her about her part in *King Kong*...



## s her movie debut

"When I first read the script, I thought what a marvellous role it would have been for Marilyn Monroe with its inherent humour," Jessica answered. "All the same I've tried to read something of myself into the character of Dwan. She's a free spirit, totally uninhibited, unselfish, impulsive and adventuresome. To some she might appear kooky but she's not really," went on Jessica. "Actually she's a terribly honest and open person."

Asked if she found a big difference between modelling and filming, her answer came quickly.

"I do indeed!" she said. "The hours are far longer in a film studio, and when I'm through for the day there's not much time left to explore Los Angeles which I'd never seen until now. I miss the pace of New York which, of course, is my home, but I'm beginning to appreciate LA, especially its nearness to the Pacific Ocean and the desert."

As Jessica has worked as a model for some years in both New York and Paris, she was asked if modelling had helped her with her filming.

"Only to a limited extent," she answered. "There's not much acting you can do as a fashion model. The photographer will ask for a soft look or a sexy look, but he doesn't give you much leeway in expressing an emotion. At best you can sometimes create a certain feeling in photography. But what it really did for me," she finally conceded, "was to make me aware of the camera."

Like many beautiful girls who spend hours in front of a camera, Jessica is convinced that she has a better side to be photographed. With her it is her right side which is her good side. "I have a different bone structure on the left," she confided to the press boys. But try as they would, they could discern no apparent difference in the two sides of her lovely face.

Honesty is what is most apparent in the new star. She has the ability to open up and reveal herself without being guarded or on the defensive. Dino De Laurentiis has picked a worthy successor to Fay Wray.



*Jessica is seen opposite in a typical model pose and on the right more relaxed with Jeff Bridges, her co-star in King Kong*