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# King Kong goes Ape

*This Time In a Paramount-  
De Laurentiis Release*

By Elmer Pasta

In 1976 there will be one film to remind the world what Hollywood magic is about. It is Dino De Laurentiis' multi-million dollar production of "King Kong." And in size, scope and excitement the Paramount Pictures release will cause a lot of attention.

Among the most successful independent producers in America today, De Laurentiis began preparation more than a year ago on his contemporary version of the classic story. After a five-month shooting schedule that will move men and equipment half-way

'round the world, he will present it to the moviegoing public by the end of America's Bicentennial year. No other film in this special year will probably show the spectacle and excitement that makes movies the most enduring popular art form in America.

The enormous complexity of his undertaking became evident to De Laurentiis when last summer he began assembling craftsmen, acquiring vast Hollywood sound stages, overseeing construction on the elaborate sets, and conducting a search for locations and a young beautiful woman to play King Kong's romantic interest, a role created more than 40 years ago by Fay Wray.

From the start, De Laurentiis wanted this production to be released

by Paramount, the biggest Hollywood has seen in years. To direct the epic, he chose John Guillermin, whose most recent film was the enormously popular "The Towering Inferno." To do the screenplay he selected Lorenzo Semple, Jr. who co-authored the De Laurentiis film, "Three Days of the Condor."

Two of the principal human roles are young men: Prescott, the dashing anthropologist and Wilson, the ambitious oil executive who sees that a big monkey like Kong could be more marketable than fuel in the United States.

Jeff Bridges, the two-time Academy Award nominee who scored so impressively in "The Last Picture Show," was picked to play Prescott, who engages Kong in a contest for the lovely girl found adrift in the Pacific Ocean. Charles Grodin, who had just finished a season on Broadway in the smash hit comedy "Same Time Next Year" was named to portray Wilson.

Interest has been extremely keen on the woman to play Dwan, who drives Kong bananas. Many of Hollywood's prettiest young actresses were considered. But after her screen test last December, jetting to the West Coast on a two-hour notice, Jessica Lange, a popular fashion model with Wilhelmina in New York, was chosen for the slightly wacky girl whose inherent innocence and natural beauty are quickly appreciated by Kong and Prescott both.

When production was announced last fall in full page ads in the country's major newspapers, a color poster of Kong atop New York's World Trade center was offered free. The response was overwhelming. Extra secretaries had to be hired to answer the many thousands of letters.

De Laurentiis was amazed to find that sixty-five percent of the letter writers were young moviegoers, very inquisitive about Kong, especially whether he would be an actor or a giant mechanical model.

Movies being a form of magic, the mystery remains. When the audience goes into the theatre and confronts Kong storming through a South Pacific island jungle, it will have to decide if Kong is real or a cleverly crafted illusion.

The Kong that looms on the screen will be 50 feet tall; able to cover 15 feet in a single stride and has the weight of five hundred men.

Aware of the real truth about Kong, beside the film's creators, are the 200 crew members who started work last summer on the sets, costumes, locations and most importantly the special effects that give King Kong its claim to cinematic greatness. Every new technique, and the best of the old

ones, are being used to make every frame of "Kong" realistic and entertaining.

From Europe and the United States, De Laurentiis gathered the best craftsmen to make totally believable Kong's supreme adventure that ends spectacularly in New York City.

Richard Kline, known for his excellent camera work in "Camelot," was named director of photography. From Italy came men with whom De Laurentiis was closely associated when he was the top movie producer there: Mario Chiari as production designer; Carlo Rambaldi, effects designer and Aldo Puccini, miniature designer. Each is assisted by associates, all veterans in making big movies.

Nothing has been haphazard about the production. Hundreds of intricate illustrations, called story boards, were drawn in the art department so that every scene was minutely designed and made familiar to those who would film "King Kong."

In adjoining sound stages, carpenters put up scaffolding from which cameras can record the enormous size and every angle of Kong; seamstresses worked on the costumes for hundreds of extras; plasterers made molds that became the realistic rocks the humans crawl over to escape from the rampaging Kong, and skilled cameramen experimented for hours with the latest cinema photographic materials to bring Kong back to the screen.

In its vastness, not only does the film spread over seven sound stages, including the biggest one existing in Hollywood, but across the Pacific Ocean to Kauai, the loveliest and most remote island in the Hawaiian chain, and a continent to New York City where filming ends in June, 1976.

After thorough location trips throughout the South Pacific, the staff agreed the north coast of Kauai, with its dramatic cliffs and isolated, thickly foliated jungles offered the right terrain for the island scenes in "King Kong."

No other movie company has gone into this area to shoot. Three helicopters will be used daily to airlift cast and crew into these locations, so inaccessible that it would take at least two-and-a-half days to get there on foot.

The other principal location is the most controversial city in the world. No one connected with the film ever doubted that New York City would again have to be the place for Kong's rendezvous with his destiny among so-called civilized humans. Literally thousands of New Yorkers will become extras in the fantastic finish when Kong scales one of the world's tallest buildings to flee those out to destroy him.



Jessica Lange stars in the new "King Kong"

Traveling half-way around the world throughout the production, "King Kong" needed enormous technical and logistical support, receiving it from dedicated production managers and three camera units shooting simultaneously on land and sea; eight cameramen working concurrently in the various locations and full staffs in Hawaii and New York.

The executive in charge of overall production is Jack Grossberg and the production manager is Terry Carr. In Hawaii, the unit production manager is Brian Frankish and in New York, George Goodman. The visual consultant is Academy Award-winner Dale Hennesy.

Guillermin's first and second assistant directors, respectively, are Kurt Neumann, who is very familiar with the terrain of Kauai, having just finished work there on Ernest Heming-

way's "Islands in the Stream," and Nate Haggard.

Close to De Laurentiis in every phase of "King Kong" has been his young son, Federico, serving as executive producer on the adventure film.

The first scenes of "King Kong" take place on location in Los Angeles' San Pedro Harbor, while a second unit did open sea coverage. From the studio, the production moved half-way across the Pacific to Kauai for days of arduous shooting in the primitive jungles.

Returning to Hollywood, the production settled into the studio and Bell Ranch for several months, where every conceivable interior set had been constructed. Then in late spring, the huge company flies to New York to do what is conceivably the single most famous scene in all movie history—when King Kong goes ape again! Δ