

AMERICAN FORCES NETWORK



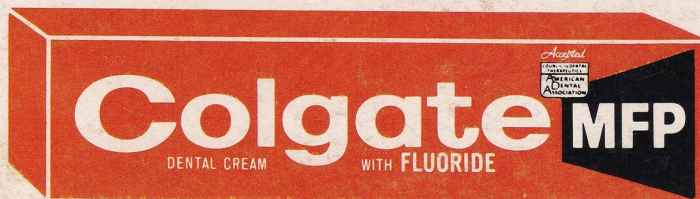
TV-Guide®

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INDEX

- 2 Highlights in Germany
- 4 Short News
- 6 Düsseldorf: The Chameleon on the Rhine
- 12 Sewing Solutions — Part 5
- 18 Our Side: Panama and Turkey — Military Decisions Ahead for President Carter
- 20 Paging the Ladies: International Beauty Secrets
- 24 Recipes: Tennessee Treats
- 28 Jest A Minute
- 30 Focus: Jessica Lange
- 33 Program Schedules
- 81 AFN TV-Guide Travel Quiz
- 82 Photography
- 86 It's Lottery Time Again
- 88 Calendar of Events in March '77
- 90 Hifi and Stereo News
- 100 Audio/Photo Club Reports
- 106 Radio Programs
- 112 Audio/Photo Activities in Germany



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Jessica Lange

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Jessica Lange

It's the film of the moment, and probably of the year. It's **KING KONG**. It's a remake of the thriller of many years ago (1933) in which Fay Wray starred, earning the title of the "best screamer in the business" while struggling in the clutches of the original Kong. This time, the film was touted in advance as probably the greatest fantasy thriller produced to date. It was released in late December for public showing in 2,200 theaters in 17 countries, and the new **KING KONG** appears to be living up to every bit of

its \$ 5-6 million worth of advertising. The modern gorilla, Kong, is an unbelievably impressive technical achievement. But what of his leading lady, the fragile female whose life he threatens to extinguish with one flick of a gigantic finger? The young lady who won out in competition with many others, who was chosen for this role-of-the-year, is Jessica Lange, a newcomer to the screen. But what a way to arrive! Surely the envy of many an aspiring actress, Lange won the part after one screen test and not a really tremendous effort on

her part. She was working as a model in New York, but nothing spectacular in the way of jobs. Actually she had always aspired to be an actress and had previously taken acting lessons. When word spread that the search was on for the right female to play the part of Dwan in **KING KONG**, Jessica jumped at the chance. She took off for California and a screen test. Amazingly, she was chosen after only one day, presumably because she somehow possessed the exact qualities that director John Guillermin was looking for.



The winning of this prized part meant weeks and even months of filming under trying physical conditions. Actually, three months of studio filming occurred, during which time Miss Lange was hoisted and heaved, thrown about and clutched in the mighty fingers of the mechanical hand of King Kong. "Evenings, after filming, I was often completely exhausted," she related. "I would have the feeling that I was engaged in a war film, and I was often scratched and bruised."

Following is a copy of the invitation printed in New York newspapers on June 21 of last year: "Come and see KING KONG. You are invited to participate in the filming of the finale of the spectacular Dino De Laurentiis production "King Kong" at the World Trade Center Plaza Tonight, Tomorrow, Wednesday from 9:00 PM until dawn. Participation will be limited to a maximum of 5,000 persons."

This was to be the closing scene of the movie. It was hoped that the required 5,000 persons would be attracted. Instead, 30,000 New Yorkers filled every square foot of ground before the World Trade Center.

The police were helpless, but director Guillermin was ecstatic. The cameras rolled and filmed the biggest mass crowd scene ever. It was the high point of the film and also for Miss Lange. For her to see those thousands of people turn out was indeed a thrill of a lifetime.

Another film location was a jungle-filled island, where supposedly the mighty Kong was the ruler. After a search for the right spot, the Kululau Valley on the island of Kauai in the Hawaiian Islands was chosen. It is a spot so remote that the only transportation was via helicopter. Jessica Lange and her co-stars Jeff Bridges and Charles Grodin had to be transported daily shortly after sunrise, a 1-1/2 hour flight. And by four o'clock in the afternoon the return flight was necessary, before thick fog enveloped the valley and made their departure impossible. The helicopter pilots hired for this undertaking were all veterans of the Viet Nam conflict. "The possibility of spending a night in this valley," said Lange, "was during the entire time like a nightmare." The mechanical wonder, King Kong, is 13 meters tall and weighs 6-1/2 tons! One step by

him reaches 5 meters. His movements are controlled by an electronic-hydraulic system which causes even his eyes to roll and which allows his arms to move in 16 different positions. His movements are so real that some viewers tend to forget that King Kong is a mere mechanical monster. In fact, his publicists ostensibly requested that he be allowed to be considered in the running when Oscar time arrives!

And the young Lady who is the object of the gorilla king's attentions is the "Lucky Lady", the 27-year-old blonde Jessica Lange, who in her first film role won the right to be considered a star, but also played "second fiddle" to the real star of the show, the one and only King Kong.

Photos: Tobis Filmkunst GmbH

