

DAYTIME'S JOHN LA GIOIA: NOBODY WANTS TO LIVE WITH ME

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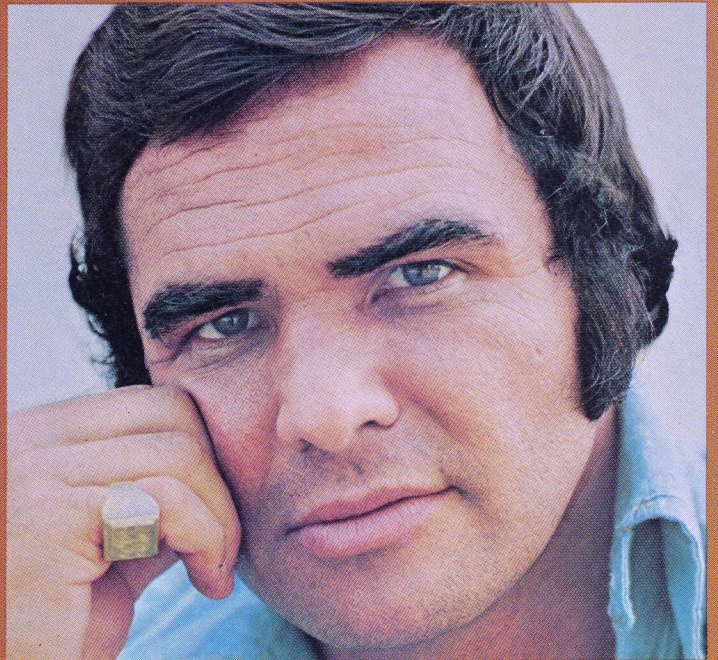
ON-THE-SPOT NEWS AND PICTURES OF CELEBRITY PEOPLE

HAS BARBRA KICKED JON OUT FOR GOOD?

THE UNTOLD STORY



**KING KONG
NEARLY KILLED
JESSICA LANGE!**



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THE UNTOLD STORY

KING KONG

NEARLY KILLED JESSICA LANGE



■ It seemed a natural from the beginning—a new version of the first definitive monster film, featuring the latest in special effects techniques. But the dominant thing in the spectacular new *King Kong* is that, despite the impressiveness of the 40-foot mechanical hero, the film is also a love story.

"Yes, I see Kong as the greatest love story ever made," enthused producer Dino De Laurentiis. And because of an intelligent and witty script, the audience's sympathy is aroused—not only by the terror of the heroine (Jessica Lange), who is

first captured to appease Kong, but by the fact that the monster creature proceeds to fall impossibly in love with her.

Though most of the action sequences—running through the jungle, and so forth—were done by a man in an ape suit, it is impossible to tell, on screen, when the man leaves off and the mechanical monster ape takes over.

And monster he is. Forty feet tall and weighing 6½ tons, Kong's "flesh" was made of latex and covered by over 1,000 pounds of horsehair, which, at one point, developed fleas and had to be completely fumigated.

Kong's innards consisted of more than 3,000 feet of hydraulic hose and 4,500 feet of electrical wiring. He is electronically controlled by a complex hydraulic valve system that can roll his eyes and give 16 separate movements to his hands. The

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animation is done by a team of 20 operators, each working a lever controlling a single movement. His cost: approximately \$1.7 million.

The most complicated, and dangerous, parts of the monster's mechanism were the arms and hands—used mainly to scoop up and caress Jessica Lange, who plays the girl, Dwan. Kong's hands measure 6 feet across and the arms weigh 1,650 pounds each.

Hydraulics were used to manipulate the monster fingers and for a while there was a real and overriding fear that the merest touch too much enthusiasm and lack of finesse on the operators' parts and Jessica might be accidentally crushed—to death!

Jessica, 27, is a former model appearing in her first film. She took the dangers of it complacently, even though some of the grimaces she made while in Kong's clutches were caused by very real pain.

Once the hand, pursuing her fleeing through the jungle, crushed her painfully to the floor; in another scene, where Kong is supposed to gently stroke her, he instead gave her a blow that caused her, she said, to see stars.

The consensus of opinion is that, belying her fragile cover-girl appearance, Jessica is a gutsy girl who knew the dangers she had to face but was determined to take them in stride and say nothing.

Her big break in doing Kong came almost as a fluke—Streisand refused the role, Cher became pregnant, and so the unknown model, flown out from New York just before Christmas, 1975 to test for the part, walked off with one of the choicest Hollywood plums ever.

"Jessica has that special kind of face the camera falls in love with," one observer said.

The head of Paramount put it more practically: "We've signed her up for 700 years."

It seems as though both the new King Kong and his love, new star Jessica Lange, are going to be around for a good many years to come. ■