

JANUARY 1977 No. 314

60c\*

REGISTERED FOR POSTING  
AS A PERIODICAL  
—CATEGORY "B"

# Parade

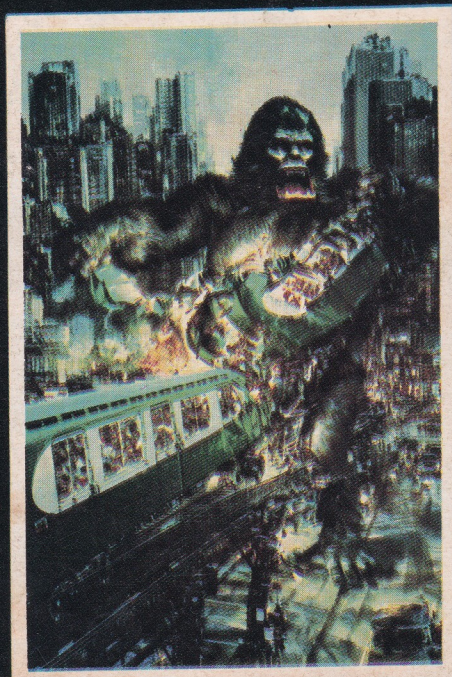
## KING KONG

*Fabulous movie  
monster reborn*

**BIG  
STEAM  
FEATURE—**

Win Hornby train sets

**PLUS: 20 OTHER  
GREAT STORIES**





# KING

KING KONG is born again in film—the basic differences between the two Kongs are 43 years and 11.7 metres. The first movie about the huge gorilla was issued in 1933, and is deservedly a classic, still retaining the power to entertain, impress and even grip an audience.

But Kong in that film was a mere 45 cm tall—an 18 in. model, manipulated with trick photography superb for its

---

## BY JIM MURPHY

---

time to appear as a 40 ft. (12.2 m) giant.

Nothing so Lilliputian would serve the film business today, with audiences accustomed to blazing office buildings, whole cities crumbling and mechanical sharks that gobble up Robert Shaw.

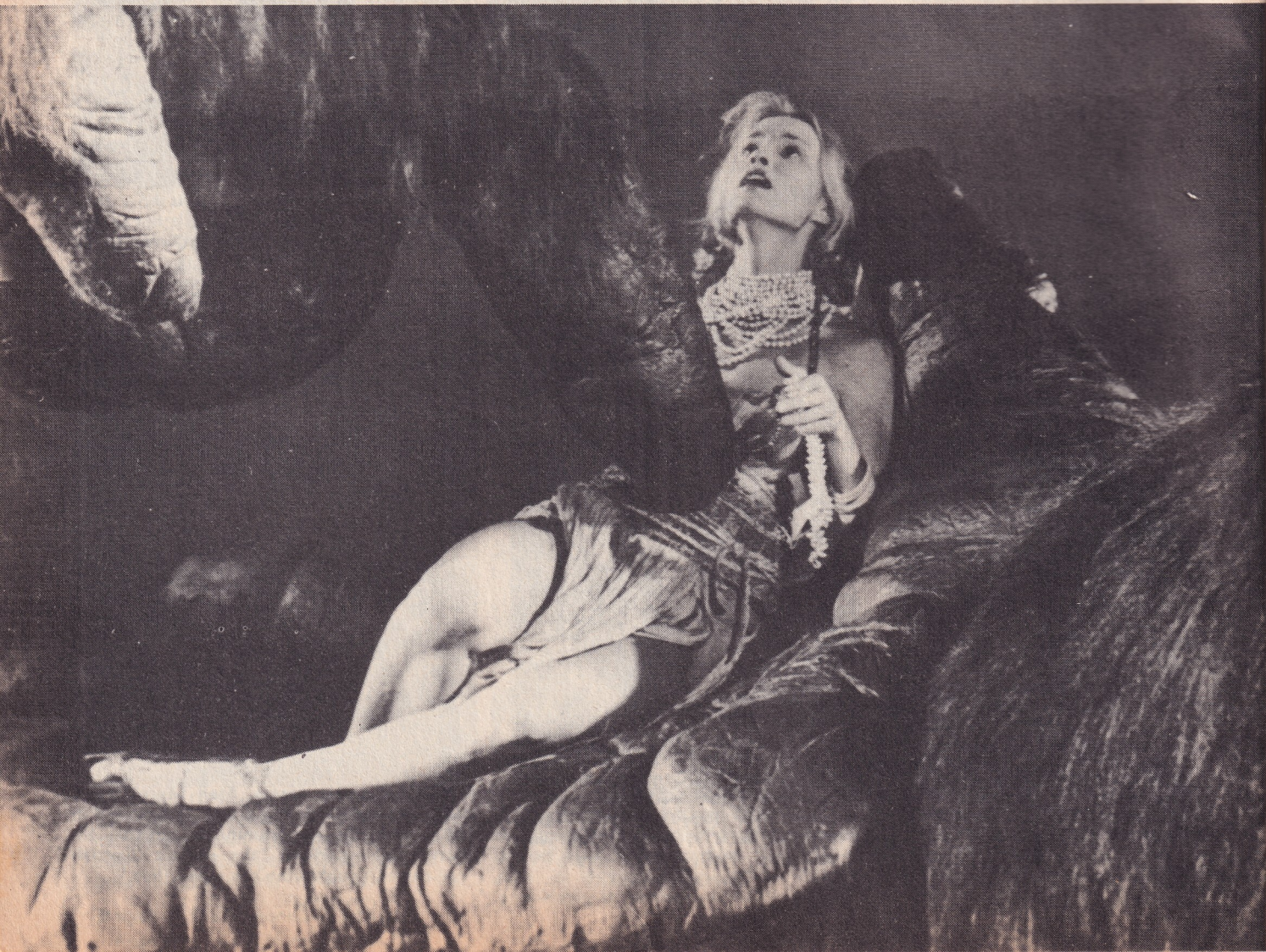
When producer Dino De Laurentiis decided that he was going to make Kong king again, one of the first resolutions was that Kong would be life-size . . . a

genuine eighth wonder of the world, a fully-mechanical 12 m behemoth which could just about do everything except tap dance.

It cost \$1.7 million (out of a total budget of \$24 million), but Laurentiis got his Kong—and the advance interest generated in the project by exhibitors and the public assured him of a financial success even before the movie was completed.

If King Kong does the same sort of business as *Jaws* (and everything points

**POWERLESS** in the monster's grip. A blood-curdling scene from the spectacular King Kong remake.





# KONG

## THE MASSIVE MONSTER WHO TERRORISED A NATION COMES TO LIFE AGAIN IN A REMAKE OF THE EPIC FILM OF THE 30s

to Kong being this year's movie craze) independent producer De Laurentiis stands to make \$100 million.

However, despite his Hollywoodian determination that it shall be, in every way, costlier, more spectacular, wider-screened etc., etc. than the 1933 film, De Laurentiis has not lost sight of the qualities which made the original King Kong a memorable film.

Aside from its element of high adventure, King Kong No. 1 evoked a remarkable sympathy for the gorilla. He was a fierce but proud jungle beast who exhibited tenderness—even love? — for the pretty blonde woman (Fay Wray) whom he captured.

It was not his fault that he was ripped from his island home and taken to alien New York where, confused and frightened and desperately wanting the object of his affection, he went on a rampage until he was shot down from the top of the Empire State Building.

The idea for monkeying around with the classic Beauty and the Beast theme belongs to Merian C. Cooper, a former aviator who was working for RKO Pictures in the early 'thirties.

British thriller writer Edgar Wallace, just before he died, collaborated with Cooper on the first script outline of the movie, which was to be the box office sensation of its day and pull RKO out of the financial mire.

The special effects were what dragged audiences in to see the film (just as today's audiences are insatiably curious about flames, earthquakes, giant sharks and a bigger, better gorilla) and these were the brainchild of Willis O'Brien.

O'Brien had experimented with animating three-dimensional models as early as 1915 with a short titled *The Dinosaur And The Missing Link*. The Link character of that film was the prototype of Kong.

O'Brien had no Dino De Laurentiis around to write open cheques. Nor were today's technical resources available.

He worked in a small corner of the studio with his models, miniature sets and a back-projection screen.

On a foreground sheet of glass would be painted part of the scene. Behind it, the screen would show scenes with the actors in the jungle, pre-filmed. In between was Kong . . . all 18 inches of him, his head, arms and legs being moved almost infinitesimally as each frame of the back-projected film was inched along.

For the scene in which Kong tears off Fay Wray's clothes, she was filmed first with invisible wires jerking off the garments. This was then back-projected, and the model of Kong in the foreground was matched to each movement. It took 23 hours to film.

In the 1976 King Kong, fashion model Jessica Lange is cradled in a giant mechanical hand of Kong, operated by hydraulics from a control board manned by a staff of 20.

The hand had built-in fail-safe devices to prevent it squashing the actress, but even so she was bruised, knocked about and, once, nearly dropped by the finicky machine.

The new Kong is a technological triumph of Italian-American parentage. His creators were Carlo Rambaldi, one of the Italian cinema's top effects designers, who had worked with De Laurentiis on *War And Peace* and *The Bible*, and Hollywood's Glen Robinson, a double Oscar-winner for *Earthquake* and *The Hindenburg*.

Like their predecessor Willis O'Brien, they began their Kong with a metal frame with moveable joints. But instead of covering it with cotton wool and spraying with latex, as O'Brien did with his tiny model, they coated their Kong with plastic styrofoam.

Inside was a labyrinth of nearly 1000m of hydraulic hose and 1368m of electrical wiring leading to the control board with 70 switches and levers.

Weighing 6.6 tonnes and with a 6 m (20 ft.) chest width, King Kong Mk. II can wiggle his arms, roll his neck,

twitch his ears, roll his eyes, bend both legs, pull his mouth back to show his gums, rotate his hips, thrust out his legs and, if the occasion demands, even smile.

His hairy coat was created by Hollywood wig maker Michael Dino. After checking 34 samples of various kinds of fur, he settled on horse tails.

Some 1800 kg of horse tails were flown in from the Argentine, bleached and tinted to match, and then woven by a team of 100 workers into netting that could be glued to Kong's plastic body.

Hair for his chest and chin was fixed by hand, one strand at a time. (Back in 1933, Willis O'Brien covered his Kong with humble rabbit fur.)

For the island scene where Kong breaks down the huge wall built by the natives to keep him out, De Laurentiis ordered the construction of the biggest set seen in Hollywood since M-G-M built and burnt Atlanta for *Gone With The Wind*—14.3 m high, 152 m wide, and capable of holding 300 stamping, shouting extras. (In 1933, they used a pair of gates that had been lying around since De Mille's 1925 silent, *King Of Kings*.)

Kong's bellow, with the benefit of advanced electronic techniques, rumbles the very theatre.

(The first Kong's voice was a recording of a lion's roar, played backwards and slowed down to lower the pitch one octave.)

His descendant comes to life through the wonders of Metrocolor and Panavision, with location shooting in the Hawaiian islands and in New York City (where 30,000 residents were unpaid extras in the final scenes of the crowds milling around the fallen Kong).

---

## The first Kong

### SEE OVERLEAF

---



# THE FIRST KONG

BY the very nature of the King Kong story, the humans are in every way dwarfed by the monster.

Most people remember Fay Wray in the original film, but who remembers Robert Armstrong and Bruce Cabot as the other leads?

Miss Wray, famed thereafter for her ability to scream lustily, played Ann Darrow, a sweet-as-apple-pie girl who was near starvation because of the Depression when a film producer spotted her and offered her a job in his new movie to be shot on location on a mysterious, uncharted island.

She was wary about travelling alone on such a trip, but the prospect of hunger was worse, so she accepted.

Robert Armstrong was Carl Denham, the producer, whose equipment for making his big movie spectacular consisted solely of one silent camera on a tripod — but things were simpler back in the 30s.

It was Denham who saw the money-making possibilities of the giant gorilla. He shackled him, and took him back to New York for display in a theatre.

Bruce Cabot was Driscoll, the sailor who fell in love with Ann and who inflamed the jealousy of Kong.

In the remake, the corresponding characters are: Dwan — "like Dawn, except I switched the two letters to be more memorable" — a smalltime actress who is shipwrecked when travelling to Hong Kong with a film producer.

She is picked up by the oil exploration vessel heading for suspected underwater deposits off fog-shrouded Skull Island.

Fred Wilson is the leader of the expedition, an executive of the Petrox Oil Company. A hard-driving, suspicious man, it is Wilson who sees capturing Kong as a commercial proposition — a massive public relations exercise to impress the world with his company's might.

Jack Prescott is a Princeton University zoologist, who stows away on the oil ship so he can investigate ancient reports that a prehistoric monster exists on Skull Island. Prescott falls in love with Dwan.

The roles are played respectively by Jessica Lange, Charles Grodin and Jeff Bridges.

Miss Lange got the role after Barbara Streisand and Cher had both turned it down, and the producers decided to search for an unknown.

She was a New York model (and former art student and dancer) whose employers suggested that she try out for the role. The return half of a two-way New York-Los Angeles air ticket was never used; she was given the role on the strength of the screen test alone.

By the end of the filming, Jessica



**WEAK,** starving Ann Darrow (Fay Wray) allows herself to be rescued by fast-talking producer Carl Denham.

had grown to regard the giant mechanical creature more as a person than a machine.

"He was no longer an abstract mechanical," she said. "Even when I first read the script, I never saw Kong as a monster. The way it's written he's not frightening. He is almost a romantic leading man. It is the story of Beauty and the Beast."

Charles Grodin is an established Broadway director and star, but not too well known to cinema audiences. He came to King Kong from the smash hit stage comedy Same Time Next Year, in which he starred opposite Ellen Burstyn.

His film debut was as Mia Farrow's young doctor in Rosemary's Baby. He played the navigator in Catch-22, the groom who falls in love with another woman on his honeymoon in Neil Simon's The Heartbreak Kid, and appeared with James Mason and Candice Bergen in 11 Harrow House.

Jeff Bridges, son of Sea Hunt's Lloyd and brother of Beau, has starred in numerous films including The Last Picture Show and Thunderbolt and Lightfoot (for both of which he earned Oscar nominations), Fat City, The Lolly Madonna War, Stock Car Hero and Hollywood Cowboy.

Producer Dino De Laurentiis describes his new version of King Kong as "a straight, romantic adventure picture with some humor... a picture for everyone, the whole family."

But co-star Grodin sees deeper implications: "It's a wonderful, theatrical presentation about the rape of the environment," he says.

"Kong is really the pure, natural animal when he is in his jungle habitat.

"His fate is to be exploited by men who put him in bondage and carry him off to a hostile environment.

"If you had gone out to make a



**A THRILLING** poster showing a scene from the 1931 film.

film about how man has exploited and polluted his streams and atmosphere, and did it in a documentary style, no-one would come out to see the film.

"But, in doing King Kong, I realised I had a chance to work in a film containing an important sub-theme which had the potential of being seen by more people than any other film in the history of the business."