

photoplay

FILM MONTHLY

MARCH 1977

40p

READ ABOUT THOSE LUCKY LADIES WHO ARE

**THE
LOVES OF
STARSKY
AND
HUTCH**

PICTURES
INSIDE

**KRISTOFFERSON
AND WHY HE'S
ONE OF THE
SCREEN'S
SEXIEST
GUYS**

JESSICA
LANGE

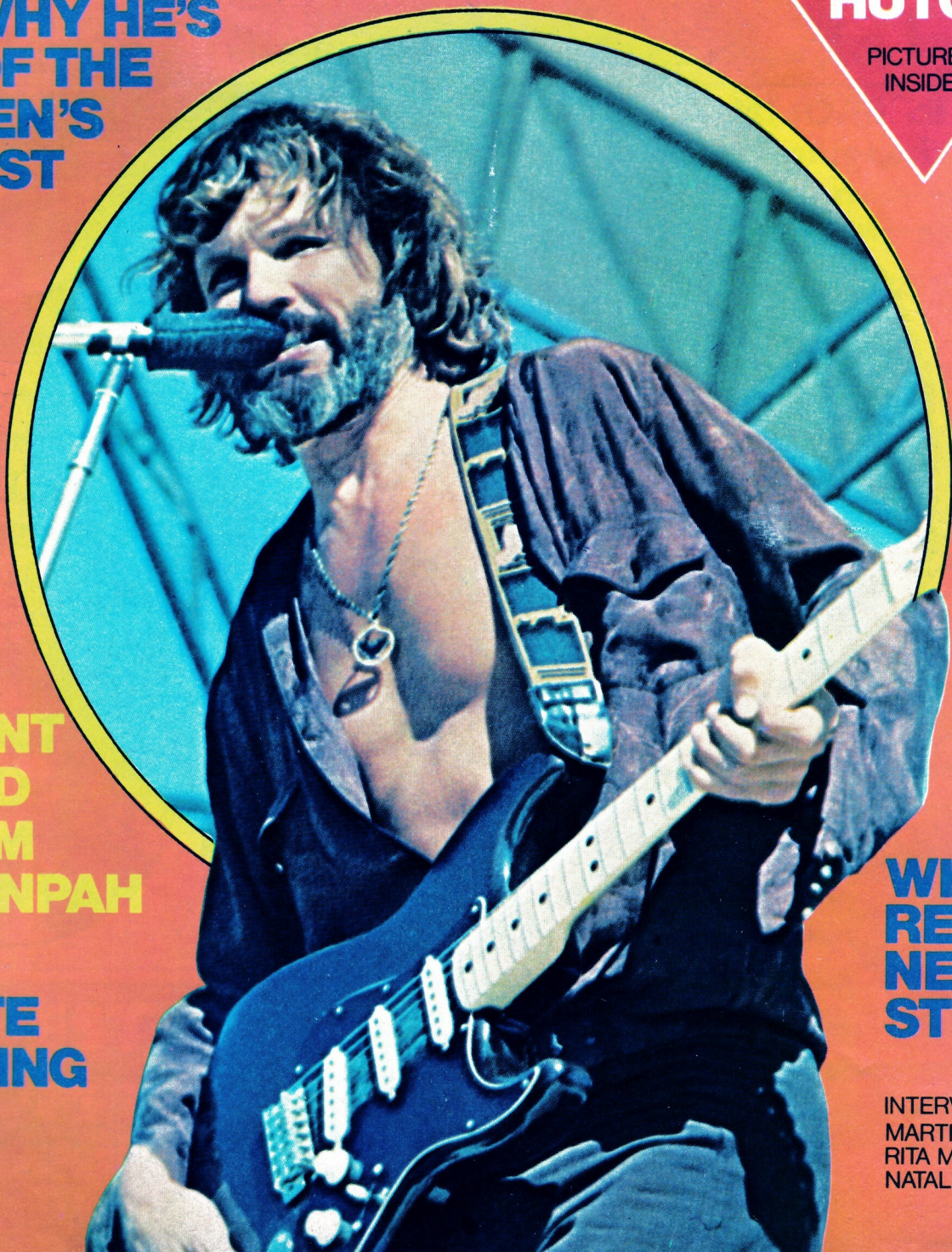
**MY
YEAR
WITH
KING
KONG**

EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW

**THE
VIOLENT
WORLD
OF SAM
PECKINPAH**

**TWO-
MINUTE
WARNING**

THE MOVIE
WHICH POSES
A HORRIFYING
QUESTION



**WHY
REDFORD
NEVER
STRAYS!**

INTERVIEWS WITH
MARTHE KELLER
RITA MORENO
NATALIE WOOD



THE KING (KONG) AND I

Jessica Lange talks to Sue Clarke about her year with the screen's biggest star



Portrait of a beast — that's King Kong in the latest film about the famous gorilla

● FOR a girl who had spent a year of her life in the hairy clutches of a 40ft gorilla, Jessica Lange looked remarkably cool and serene. As she sipped scotch and soda she talked to me about her year as the new *King Kong's* beloved Dwan.

"It's all rather like some crazy childhood fantasy come true," confessed the tall, willowy blonde from Minnesota. She was a successful model in New York and Paris, before she was suddenly whisked off to Hollywood for a screen test. On December 17, 1975, she flew to California, and was eventually given the part. Almost exactly a year later the movie in which she has her first, and starring, role was premiered in London.

"I knew the moment I did the screen test that the part was mine," she recalled. "The day passed in a dream. The test itself was three short scenes, first when Dwan is found floating in the middle of the ocean, the second a light-hearted scene, and the third Dwan's first encounter with Kong.

"You know, some pretty important people were considered for the role," she added. "Barbra Streisand, Cher, Valerie Perrine, Dominique Sanda. But the thing that worked in my favour was that Dino de Laurentiis, the producer, and director John Guillermin never seem to agree on anything, and that's how they came to test me — an unknown. John said '*She's not bad*' and Dino said '*Why not?*' and that's how I

got the part!"

Jessica lit a cigarette, then recounted what it was really like starring with the screen's 'biggest' star for years.

"I started working on the film in January, but King Kong didn't actually show up until August. In fact, I only have one scene with the mechanical gorilla and *that* only lasts four minutes on the screen. Most of the time I was playing into thin air, to a spot on ceiling. I began to feel I was in a bubble."

Jessica spent three months working in the mechanical hand, which was not without its dramas. There was the time when a tendon snapped, King Kong's wrist went limp, and Jessica found herself upside down looking at the distant jungle floor. Then there was the Kong thumb which had a habit of pressing a bit too firmly into her naked back, leaving bruises and a distinct ache. And the day when what should have been an affectionate light tap on the head left her wondering if her neck had been broken! Not to mention the times she had to don a harness and be suspended high above the studio floor, or climb a 70ft. ladder and edge her way along a narrow catwalk.

"I did all my own stunts, except for one 60ft fall," she said proudly. "Initially I refused to do all sorts of things, but somehow I was manipulated into it. Fortunately I studied dance and mime for several years, so I was in good shape because it was an extremely



Jessica Lange — about to be sacrificed to the famous Kong

'Most of the time I was playing into thin air. I began to feel I was in a bubble'

physical role.

"At the beginning, Dino offered me a dramatic coach as I hadn't done any acting before. By half way through the movie, I realised it wasn't a dramatic coach I needed but a track coach because I was doing so much running about!"

Jessica didn't see the original 1933 *King Kong* until the day after she finished filming the new one. "Our story is really very, very different," she said. "Our director, John Guillermin, didn't want to make a monster film. The main point of concentration is the love story, the legend of beauty and the beast. The only way you can deal with it is as a fantasy, a romantic fairy tale."

Jessica felt the character of Dwan as *she* played her is very much in the same vein as the comedic roles of Marilyn Monroe and Judy Holliday. "She is slightly whacky and frivolous at the beginning," she explained, "and although she is not quite a tragic heroine by the end, she is more than just a one-dimensional character. It was a kind of razor's edge really, not to make it farce or tragedy."

With *King Kong* now on show, Jessica has her eyes fixed firmly on a movie career. She has an old-style seven-year contract with Dino de Laurentiis which she says she is not too happy about, but expects to start her next movie — a dramatic role — this spring.

"I think of my life in phases," Jessica reflected with a smile. "About four years ago, I went through a 'dreams and schemes' period when I decided I wanted to become an actress. Now it is all happening."

And while 27-year-old Jessica embarks on her own new career so, too, is her Spanish photographer husband, Paco Grandi, whom she met when she was studying painting at the University of Minnesota. He is currently involved in making a documentary film on reggae musicians in Jamaica.

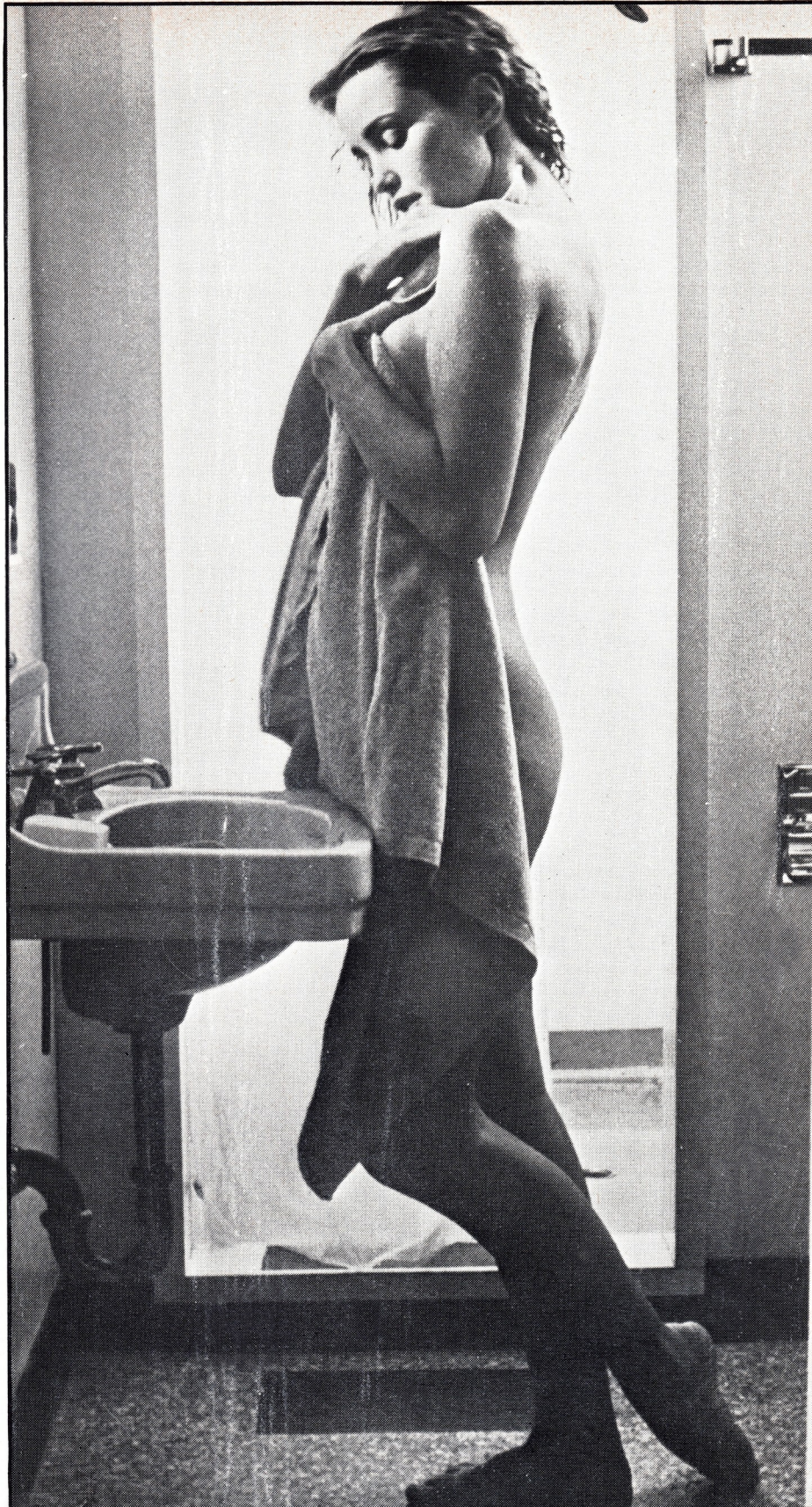
□ END



As Dwan, Jessica is held in the palm of the huge gorilla



Kong, in destructive mood, rampages through New York



Jessica Lange looks great in — or out of — clothes

□ When *King Kong* star, **Jessica Lange**, went on a world-wide tour to promote the movie, the producer **Dino De Laurentiis** and Paramount Pictures, agreed to give her 6,000 dollars to spend on a suitable wardrobe. I met her in London and can report that she spent some of that money very wisely. She looked great.

□ I suppose it's inevitable that there will be a follow up to *King Kong* and I can report that one is already being planned but it's no longer titled, *King Kong In Africa*. Producer **Dino De Laurentiis** says political turmoil on that continent has persuaded him to move the story's locale to America's Far West. What's interesting me is how *will* they bring Kong back to life again? Small problem, no doubt, for the scriptwriters, but easily solved, I suppose. Talking of Kong, he may be big in the new movie — 40 feet high — but I hear that's nothing to the size he appears in New York's Times Square. On the side of the Loews Building the production company painted a huge picture of him to help advertise the movie.

photoplay's
**STAR
MOVIE
GUIDE**
to the latest releases

★ FAIR
★★ GOOD
★★★ VERY GOOD
★★★★ EXCELLENT

KING KONG ★★★

Kong is back! For those who know only of filmdom's most famous beast from books or by watching his powerful antics being somewhat diminished on television, this new film will show what the mighty ape is all about. Apart from Technicolor and wide-screen he's basically much the same as he ever was, darker in colour maybe, not quite so mighty (he defeats only a snake in this new version not half-a-dozen large prehistoric creatures as he did back in 1933) but, alas, just as vulnerable. This time it's Jessica Lange, delicious and sexy in her screen debut, who is responsible for the mighty beast's downfall — his capture on the mysterious island that he rules so majestically, his humiliation in a freak show in New York and finally his death as he is shot to pieces on top of the twin towers of the World Trade Centre. Otherwise it's much the same story as before with oil man Charles Grodin (a very amusing performance) and zoologist Jeff Bridges starring as Miss Lange's human "protectors" and Kong doing his best to snatch her back whenever he can. At the climax it all gets too much for him and he goes on the rampage through New York streets, smashing buildings, ripping up trains, and proving he can be just as vicious and mean as his predecessor. All in all it's top grade fun with some fine technical wizardry and special effects work. *King Kong* 1977 style is a spectacle of the largest and most exciting kind, something that only the cinema can provide and, in this case, it provides it spectacularly for the whole family. Directed by John Guillermin. Cert: "A". Running time: 134 minutes. (EMI).

The man behind the background music of the new ***King Kong*** is John Barry. I've always liked Barry's screen work particularly his Bond scores. His *Kong* score is just as exciting and intriguing as ever. The film's original soundtrack is released on the **Reprise** label (**MS 2260**) and in addition to the album itself is a special King Kong poster . . .