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PREVIEW

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DECEMBER 1976
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Charlie's Angels'

FARRAH

FAWCETT-MAJORS

WILL HER WINGS GET CLIPPED??

Exclusive Interview!

BRUCE JENNER - Can he out-distance
Mark Spitz in Hollywood?

On The Set With

"KING KONG" - How
can you "resist" him?

"STARSKY & HUTCH"

Have they caught
a new audience?

SNEAK PREVIEWS:

"THE SILVER STREAK"
starring Gene Wilder

"DAMNATION ALLEY"
starring George Peppard
& Jan-Michael Vincent



On Location with... "KING KONG"

Paramount and producer Dino De Laurentiis not only "went ape" with their \$22 million remake of the 1933 horror classic, they also went over-budget. But doesn't "a big star" deserve a BIG budget??



WIDE LOAD

1976



1933

Monkey business is becoming big business once again to the tune of \$22 million—the still-rising budget for the remake of the 1933 classic bout between beauty and the beast, *King Kong*.

Independent producer Dino De Laurentiis doesn't fool around when he has an epic up his sleeve. The original version of *King Kong* (which became a silver screen sensation back in 1933) set back RKO-Radio Pictures a paltry \$430,000 and rescued the studio's floundering finances. But in this up-date, De Laurentiis is spending \$2 million alone for the artificial ape of the title who will make his comeback in pictures under the Paramount banner.

De Laurentiis' motto on this picture seems to be "spare no expense" to achieve the realism he envisions. Notes the producer proudly, "It will be the all time spectacle. No horror shall be spared. The public can no longer be fooled, so you must make them sit up—*King Kong* will do that—frighten them into a new reality."

De Laurentiis describes his hairy headliner as "the biggest, most expensive star in the world." Kong, the super simian, will be a 40-foot mechanical marvel weighing in at six and a half tons. When "Big K" takes a step, he stumbles 15 feet, all made possible by his intricate, electronically-controlled hydraulic valve system which also allows the enormous ape to make goo-goo eyes at Jessica Lange, the shapely starlet who will recreate the role of distressed damsel that Fay Wray made legend in the original. Kong also can move his hands 16 different ways, best exemplified in the classic scene when Jessica will be lifted by Kong in his gargantuan fingers.

King Kong 1976 has basically the same plot line as version Number One with some change in details to add a more modern vision. The original screenplay of *King Kong* was the tale of a motion picture company that travels to a mysterious, uncharted locale known as Skull Island which is inhabited by a savage tribe of natives who kidnap the company's blonde and beautiful leading lady with the intention of presenting her to the gigantic gorilla they live in fear of and worship as a god. Kong grabs his frightened female gift and heads for his home beyond the walled fortress of the village. Battling prehistoric beasts in order to protect his beautiful booty, Kong



This is the "gentleman" who started it all in 1933—King Kong. From that RKO classic-of-sorts, producer Italian producer Dino De Laurentiis is determined to top the original with his \$22 million re-make.

also kills most of the sailors and film crew who attempt to rescue his new plaything. The remaining men counterattack with gas bombs and an unconscious Kong wakes up to find himself a carnival-like curiosity displayed before a stunned audience of New Yorkers. Kong goes "ape" and breaks loose,

According to De Laurentiis, "King Kong is a primitive animal . . ."

rampaging through Manhattan stomping and chewing up his adversaries in search of Fay Wray, the object of his affection, until Navy pursuit planes pop him off high above the city atop the Empire State Building. A defeated Kong plunges to his death on the streets below.

A quick quote from producer De Laurentiis describes his version

this way: "King Kong is a primitive animal brought into a society that seeks to exploit him. In a sense, we are all caught in the web of greater forces . . . therefore, Kong's struggle becomes our struggle."

The film crew of the original version has been transformed into an oil company expedition out searching for untapped sources of their product, who end up discovering Kong instead. Instead of being exploited as a tourist attraction, contemporary Kong ends up a promotional gimmick for the Petrox Oil Company who captured him. And the New York skyline has been altered since Kong fell from grace off the Empire State

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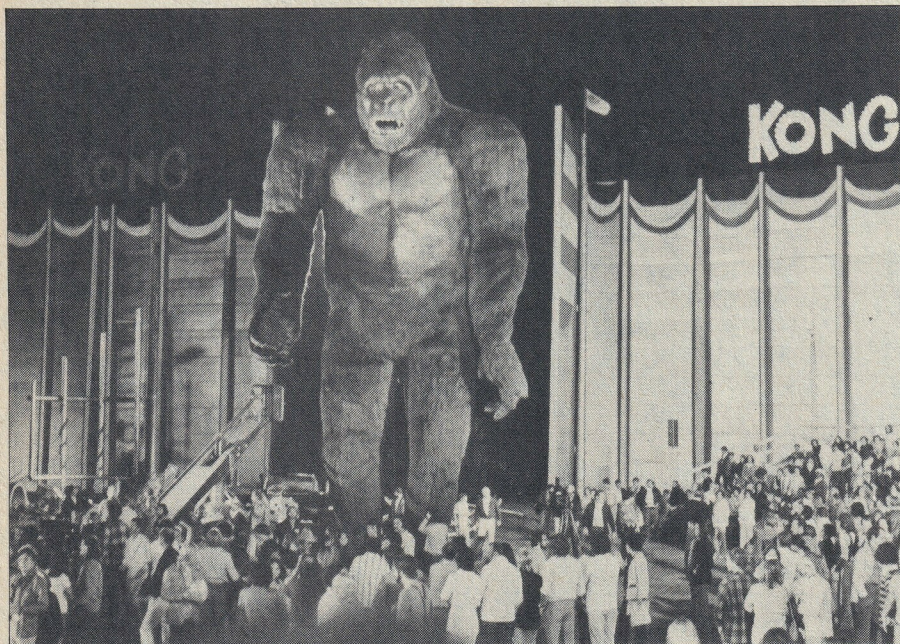
New York model-turned-actress Jessica Lange scored points with cast-&-crew—including one time Oscar elect Bridges—as "Dwan."



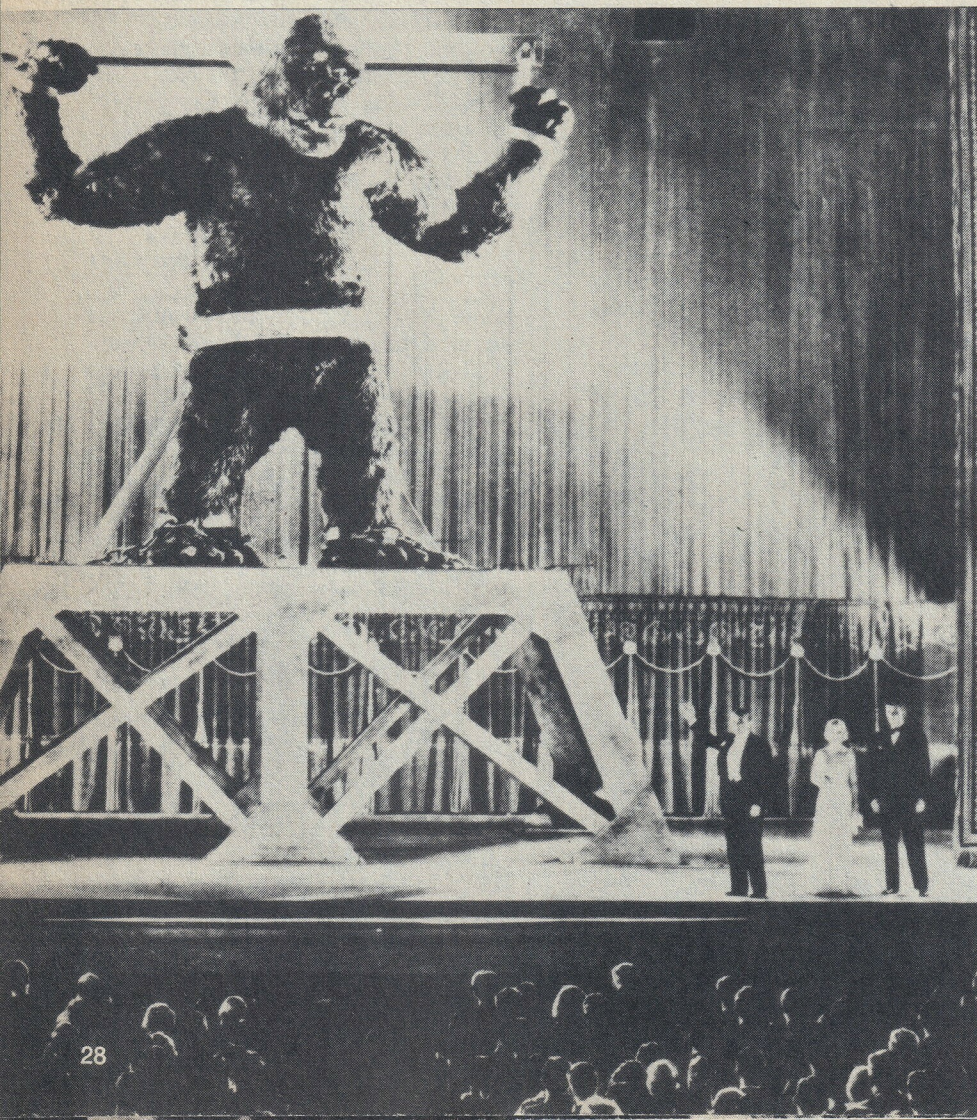
Producer De Laurentiis calls Kong "a primitive animal," but Jeff Bridges—playing an anthropologist—looks . . . primitive as well!



"KING KONG"



(Above)—In a clever move, producer De Laurentiis "invited" thousands of L.A. residents to be "part of the action" for a nightclub scene filmed at the MGM Culver City lot. Actually, they were extras. (Below)—Here's the 1933 version of the original nightclub scene...



Building in 1933. In 1976, the World Trade Center—the tallest building in New York—becomes the sight of Kong's "last stand."

John Guillermin, who manned the cameras for the spectacular screen holocaust *Towering Inferno*, is directing this monumental undertaking, traveling half way around the world with his cast and crew to capture the proper atmosphere.

Shooting took place over seven sound stages in Hollywood, including the largest available studio on any lot, plus location work on the island of Kauai in the South Pacific which was chosen because of the isolated terrain and dense jungle dominated by the dramatic cliffs which figure in the plot as Kong's playground.

Jeff Bridges plays a "fearless anthropologist"...

Jeff Bridges stars as "Prescott," the handsome and fearless anthropologist who battles with King Kong for the possession of "Dwan," the breathtaking beauty found adrift in the Pacific Ocean.

Newcomer Jessica Lange, who has never acted before, landed the role of "Dwan" after a lengthy search by producer De Laurentiis for a girl his title star could go "ape" over. Miss Lange is a former model with the prestigious Wilhelmina agency in New York City. The heroine of this tale is traditionally blonde to contrast the dark, forbidding form of her captor Kong. Jean Harlow, because of her platinum locks, was originally considered for the role in the 1933 version but stood up Kong to co-star with Clark Gable in another film. And though Fay Wray, who was finally chosen, had the proper look for the role, she had to resort to a blonde wig to cover her brunette hair. As an added touch of De Laurentiis realism, Miss Lange's blonde tresses are her own—he says.

Rounding out the major characters is Charles Grodin as "Wilson," the money-minded Petrox oil executive who masterminds the merchandising of Kong after discovering him on his fog-blanketed island domain. Grodin is best known for his starring role as the schnook in *The Heartbreak Kid* opposite Cybill Shepherd and his performances on Broadway in *Thieves* and *Same Time, Next Year*.

But a group of Los Angeles residents got a chance to co-star in *King Kong* as well. Three thousand locals were invited by the

producers of the movie to come see the king-size ape in action before cameras and bright lights on the back lot at MGM Studios.

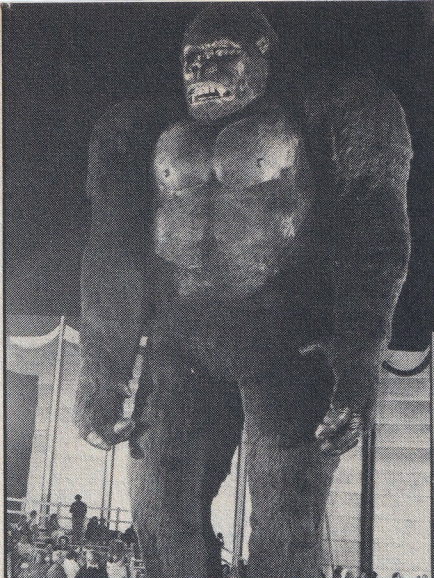
Three thousand unpaid "extras" went "ape" for the cameras . . .

Those participating sat in bleachers surrounding a huge outdoor set and were used in crowd scenes pertaining to particular plot lines of the film. Provided with banners emblazoned with "Kong" and balloons printed with the mega-monster's name, the audience eager to experience some of the magic of moviemaking cheered and screamed on cue, thanks to microphoned directions from John Guillermin.

Producer De Laurentiis' son, Federico, who wears the title of Executive Producer on the film, wandered through the mob of onlookers and press representatives looking somewhat official with his long hair stuffed under a baseball cap and a walkie-talkie strapped to his belt.

Charles Grodin, all decked-out in Great White Hunter garb, sat waiting for his camera call in a canvas chair with his name neatly stenciled on the back. And a few feet away stood an extra made up as a native tribesman with all the appropriate accoutrement—save a bone in his nose. (After all, this is the 1976 version!)

The night we attended the making of *King Kong*, the scene being shot involved a helicopter bearing Miss Lange and Mr. Grodin arriving in the center of what appeared to be a stadium where Kong is to be presented to the public for the first time since his



It was not a mere matter of "nuts and bolts" of putting the 1976 Kong together—he cost at least \$2½ mil, but he can roll his eyes!

capture. In this version, the beast confronts the beauty when she alights from a helicopter accompanied by Kong's captor, "Wilson" Grodin, and rushes up to a set piece resembling a sacrificial altar decorated all in silver. "Dwan" (Lange), dressed in a matching slinky silver gown, stands between two tall silver poles with her arms entwined in tinsel ropes awaiting the appearance of Kong from behind one of the biggest sets ever constructed for a motion picture—a 47-foot high, 170-yard long wall. The ape first emerges from a gigantic replica of a Petrox gas tank and, though the climax of the scene wasn't shot that evening, breaks from his bonds and causes, to say the least, quite a commotion.

Much of the evening's activities ended up being retakes of the helicopter bearing the stars, landing

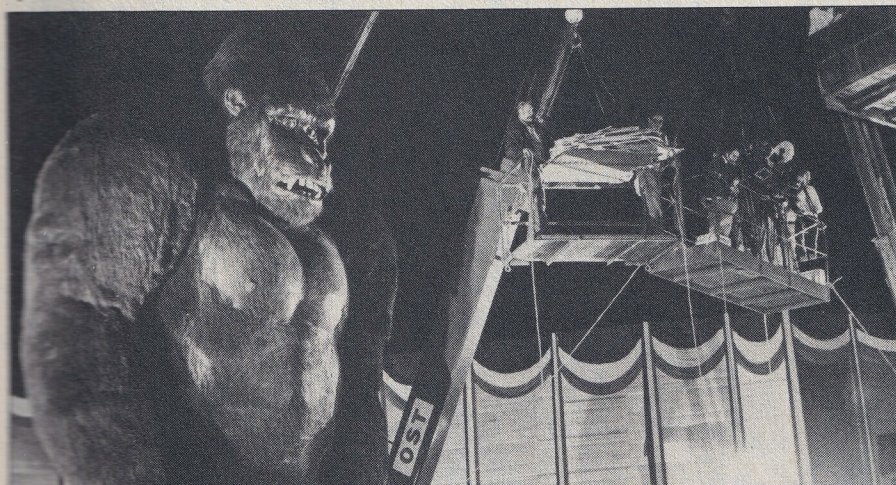
and taking off over and over again with much dust from the whirling blades flying in the faces of the fans watching in the stands. In truth, the audience didn't seem to mind at all, appearing happy just to be part of the filmmaking process.

Kong see girl . . . Kong go ape

Those film fans who missed making their screen debuts as extras for special scenes in *King Kong* on MGM's back lot had another chance to "monkey around" before cameras when the producers put together a "Welcome to Los Angeles" parade which would also serve as part of the action in the film. The ad in the *L.A. Times* designed to lure onlookers for the event in Century City read: "Wear your best threads because we are going to photograph the parade, and, who knows, you might be in pictures!" (A couple of labor associations later investigated the possibility of these "on-lookers" unwittingly serving as *un*-paid "extras.")

So it looks like *King Kong* is guaranteed to have a cast of thousands which could be a boon to box-office receipts of this hefty budgeted film, with hordes of those peopling Kong's crowd scenes hoping to get a glimpse of themselves up there on the screen. And when a picture's price tag touches \$22 million—which even to King Kong himself ain't peanuts—every ticket counts!—TIM HAWKINS.

In yet another example of De Laurentiis' "casting against type" was casting New York's Charles Grodin as an oil Co. heavy in Kong...



The masterminds behind Kong figured "well, if they could make Bruce do everything a real shark can in *Jaws*, we can make Kong do everything we want him to." They figured *wrong*—he couldn't stand on his own two feet . . . without the help of "hidden" hydraulic lifts and such.

