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# MONKEY BUSINESS

King Kong the Second / The Captain & the Ape - A Story



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## TWO KONGS AND A MONKEY

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It was a fateful day when the captain rescued a six-foot monkey marooned off Africa and took it aboard his sailing vessel.

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We asked you to write some stories suggested by Ray Bradbury's tale "The Illustrated Man." Here are three of the best you sent in.

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Cover designed by Rick Stark; cover photo, courtesy of Paramount Pictures.

## FEBRUARY 27—THE NEXT ISSUE OF SCHOLASTIC VOICE

"The Question of Sybil." The best-selling true book about a girl divided into 16 very different "selves" recently became an exciting four-hour TV drama. To discuss it we invited six students, a psychiatrist, and the author of the book. We'll eavesdrop on their conversation—and offer a dialogue from the book.

### NOTE ABOUT VOLUME NUMBERS

This issue, the second of the spring semester, is Volume 61, No. 11. Scholastic no longer starts a new volume number with the second semester. Volume 62, No. 1, will be the first fall issue of 1977.









# YOU CAN'T KEEP A GOOD APE DOWN

He was only 18 inches high. He had a metal skeleton, rubber muscles, and a rabbit fur covering. But ever since he made his first screen appearance in 1933, he has been Hollywood's **BIGGEST** star. He will always be known as "King"—King Kong.

You have probably seen the 1933 *King Kong*. It turns up on TV regularly. It has played in rerun movie theaters for 43 years. Some people claim to have seen it 40 or 50 times. ➤



**KONG TAKES BOW.** Live actors performed on stage of Shrine Auditorium. Kong was filmed separately on a mini-stage.

A theater in South Africa is said to have played nothing but *King Kong* for the last 20 years.

The biggest scene in *King Kong* shows the ape on top of New York City's Empire State Building. In one huge hand, he holds Ann Darrow (Fay Wray). With the other, he grabs at the biplanes that fly around his head, their guns pumping lead into him. The planes' bullets prove too much for Kong. He carefully sets Ann down on the roof, and plunges to his death in the street below.

But wait! Kong has never really died. You can't keep a good ape down. He's making a comeback in a brand-new, color, stereophonic-sound, 24-million-dollar *King Kong*. And no doubt about it—he's bigger than ever. This new Kong

stands 40 feet high, on or off the screen.

### One More Time

Who would think of remaking *King Kong*?

Producer Dino De Laurentiis would. One morning he went to wake his 15-year-old daughter Francesca for school. On Francesca's wall was an old movie poster advertising *King Kong*.

If light bulbs really appeared over people's heads when they get ideas, a 1,000-watt bulb should have blazed above De Laurentiis at that moment. "I slapped my head and said, 'This is an inspiration! I will remake *King Kong*.'" But De Laurentiis knew he was going to have problems that would drive the average producer bananas.

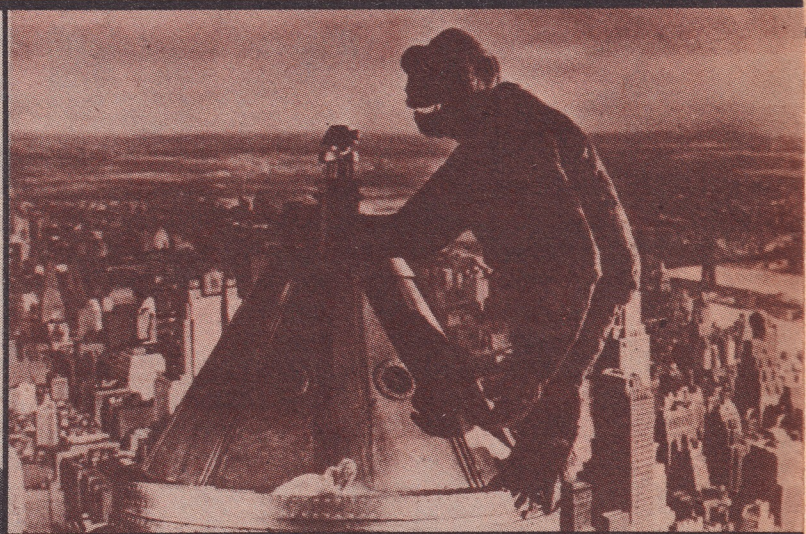
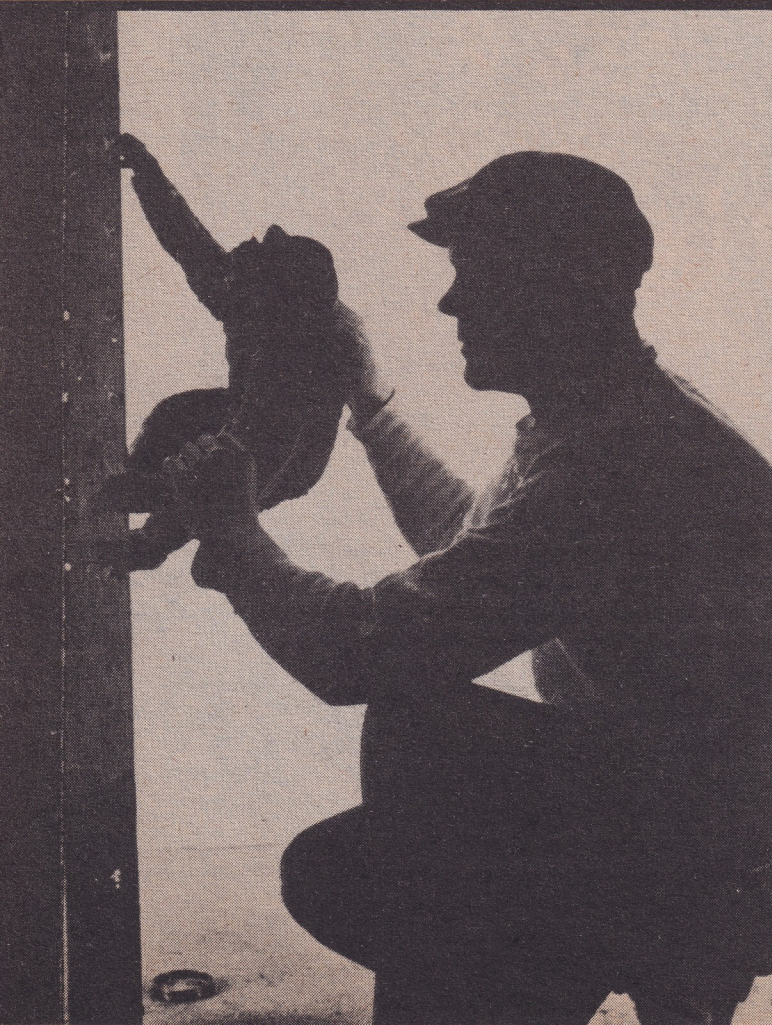
Would there be the same kind of problems the makers of the 1933 *Kong* had?

### "I'll Have Women Crying"

The first *Kong* was the idea of Merian C. Cooper. He had made two semidocumentary outdoors movies called *Grass* and *Chang*. In 1930 he tried to get Hollywood studios to back one of his pet projects—a movie about a real gorilla battling komodo-dragon lizards.

No studio wanted to back this bout. But RKO asked Cooper to look over a film they had in production called *Creation*. It was about the adventures of a shipwrecked crew on an island inhabited by prehistoric beasts.

Cooper thought *Creation* was dull but the beasts were terrific. They were miniature dinosaurs animated by two special-effects men

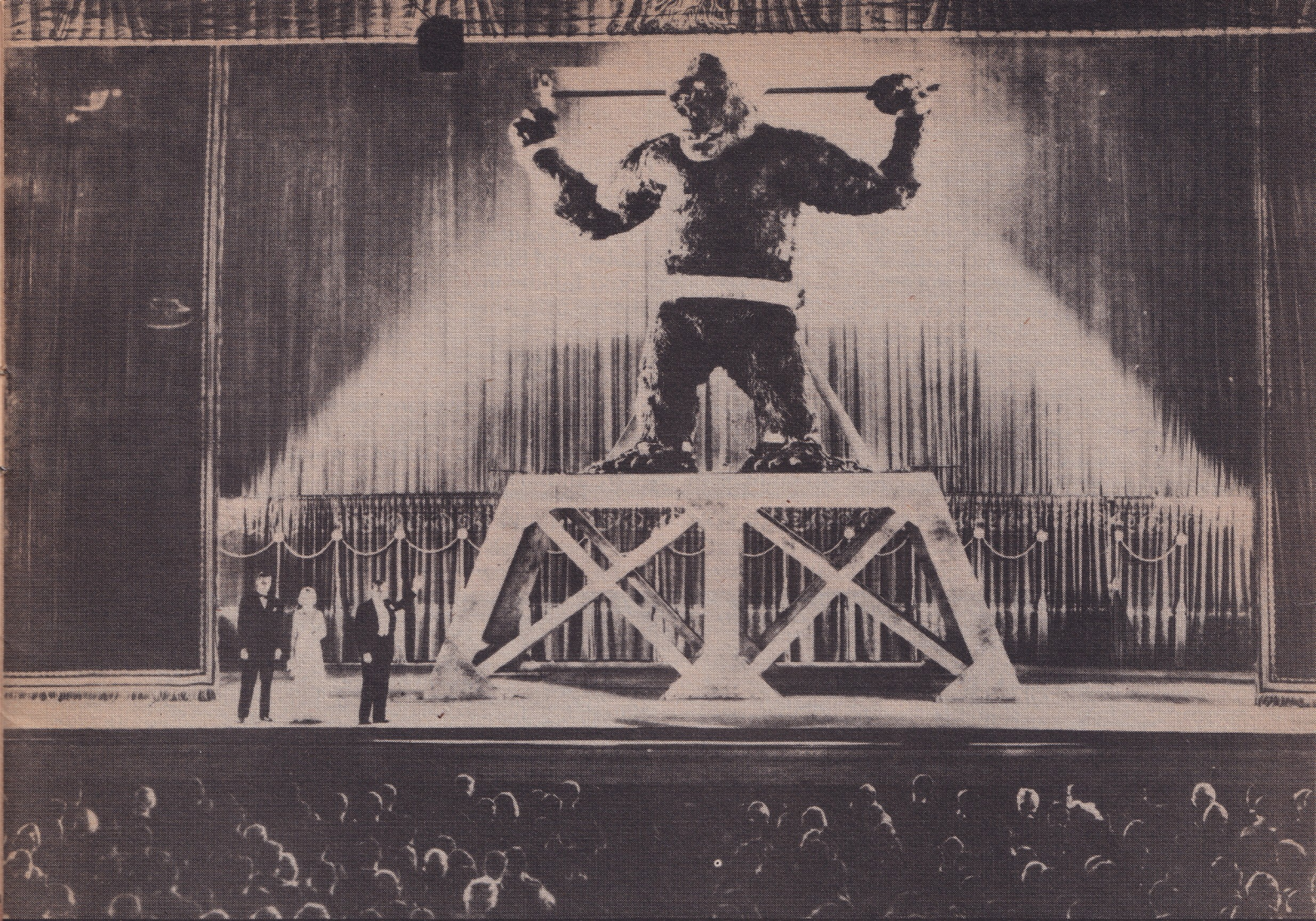


**KONG AT THE TOP** of the Empire State Building. Scene with Kong is filmed and projected on screen. Then it is synchronized with footage in foreground showing live actress Fay Wray.

**KONG STARTS CLIMB** up side of miniature Empire State Building in '33 epic. Special-effects man Buz Gibson "assists" climb by wiring Kong into place so each "step" can be shot separately.

Production pictures of 1933 *King Kong* published by permission of A.S. Barnes & Co. of Cranbury, NJ; of 1976 *King Kong*, courtesy of Paramount Pictures.





named Marcel Delgado and Willis O'Brien. So he decided to save the beasts and junk the movie. Instead of "just a lot of animals walking around," Cooper envisioned matching them up with "a giant ape with human characteristics." He would call it "Kong," an East Indies word for gorilla.

"He has to be the fiercest, most brutal, most monstrous thing that has ever been seen," Cooper told O'Brien.

But would the audience feel sympathy for such a monster? O'Brien wondered. "Yes," said Cooper, "I'll have women crying over him before the movie is through. And the more brutal he is, the more they'll cry."

Using gorilla dimensions, Delgado made a Kong 18 inches high. "The skeleton," he says, "was made of high-tempered dural (an aluminum alloy), and I gave him latex muscles that react, which is why Kong looks alive instead of stiff."

O'Brien used a process known as "animation in depth." Kong would

be placed in one position, and a single frame shot of that position. Then Kong would be moved slightly, and another frame shot. When all the movements had been photographed, the strip of frames would be projected at 24 frames a second. Result—Kong seems to be moving smoothly and realistically.

### Nature vs. Civilization

Meanwhile, Cooper was coming up with the story.

"I got to thinking about the possibility of there having been one beast more powerful than all the others, and more intelligent." Cooper had made *Grass* and *Chang* in remote Asian settings close to nature. He had no great love for the cities of our day. So he wondered what would happen to his super-beast if he were placed in the midst of modern civilization. "Why not place him at the pinnacle of the tallest building, symbol of modern man's achievement and aspiration? Why not pit him against modern man?"

But how was the beast to be captured? "I had it—through a beautiful girl! It is Beauty that kindles the spark of something the brute has never sensed before."

The concept was set. The method chosen. Now it was time for action.

### Lights! Camera! Puppets!

The screenwriters were still working on the script when Cooper shot Kong's first scene. It was the one showing Kong on top of the Empire State Building. Of course, Kong never set foot on top of the real Empire State Building. He climbed up a scale model in the studio. Because the animation scenes had to be done so painstakingly, they were all shot first. The animators worked in a closed, black-draped space. None of their figures were more than knee-high. The 18-inch Kong battled mini-dinosaurs over the humans. The dinosaurs chased wooden "people" up trees and through a doll-sized jungle.

From the beautiful results on



screen, you would never guess at the problems the animators had to overcome. For example, the hot movie lights were so hard on the dinosaurs' rubber skins that they had to have wooden stand-ins to take the heat off.

But the Empire State scene needed more than puppets. How about that live-action background of airplanes? Co-director Ernest Schoed-

of wood, wire, cloth, and metal, and a covering of rubber and bearskins. Three men could huddle inside it and make the mouth, lips, nose, eyes, and eyebrows move by using levers and compressed air. The mouth had a six-foot grin and the eyebrows were four feet across.

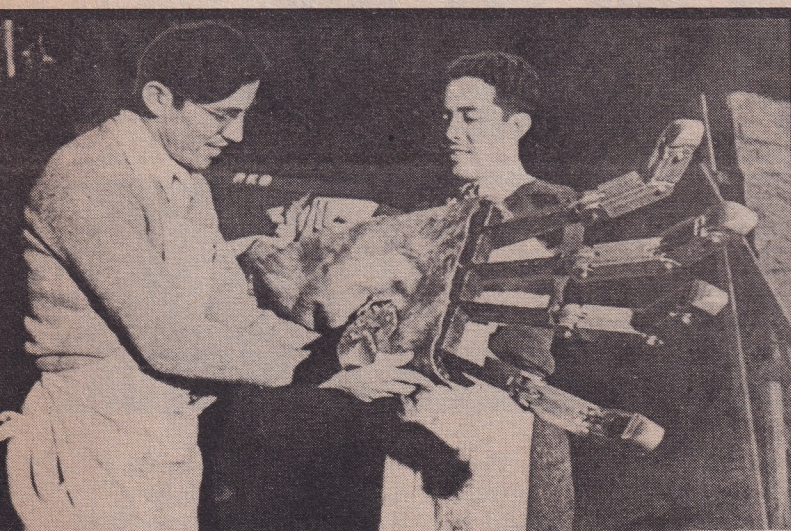
An immense foot and lower leg were also built to trample Kong's enemies into the ground. Then

gargling a mouthful of water before a microphone.

### Was Kong for Real?

Was all this convincing?

It must have been. Some members of the audience were sure the giant ape was real. A popular science magazine reported that Kong was really "a normal-size actor in an ape costume." One ac-



**GIVING '33 KONG A HAND,** Delgado brothers cover steel hand with rubber "flesh." Fingers could move.



**GETTING A HEAD,** '76 Kong has 14 separate facial expressions. That's more than some live actors have.

sack put himself and his camera crew on top of the real Empire State Building, and photographed real planes flown by stunt pilots. When Schoedsack saw that the planes were going so fast their images blurred, he climbed into one plane himself and showed the pilots how to do the scene right. Other planes were wooden models animated like the monsters. Eventually the live and animated sequences were intercut.

### King-Size Kong

Although Kong was mostly an 18-inch puppet, a bigger Kong was used in close-ups. The special-effects men built a huge head, chest, and shoulders. It had a frame

there was the giant hand with jointed fingers that lifted Fay Wray into the air. "The whole contraption," Fay remembers, "with me in the hand, could be raised and lowered like a crane."

Kong's voice was also a big deal, as none of the actual animal roars and growls sounded right. Finally the sounds of angered lions and tigers were played backwards and slowed down, and this worked.

Kong's conversational grunts came from the throat of Murray Spivack, the chief sound-effects man, but they were slowed down for the right effect. The heavy breathing of the dinosaurs came from a bellows, and their death rattles were produced by a sound man

tor claimed that he himself had played Kong on the Empire State. As recently as 1969, *The Chicago Sun-Times* said that one Ken Rody "really is King Kong."

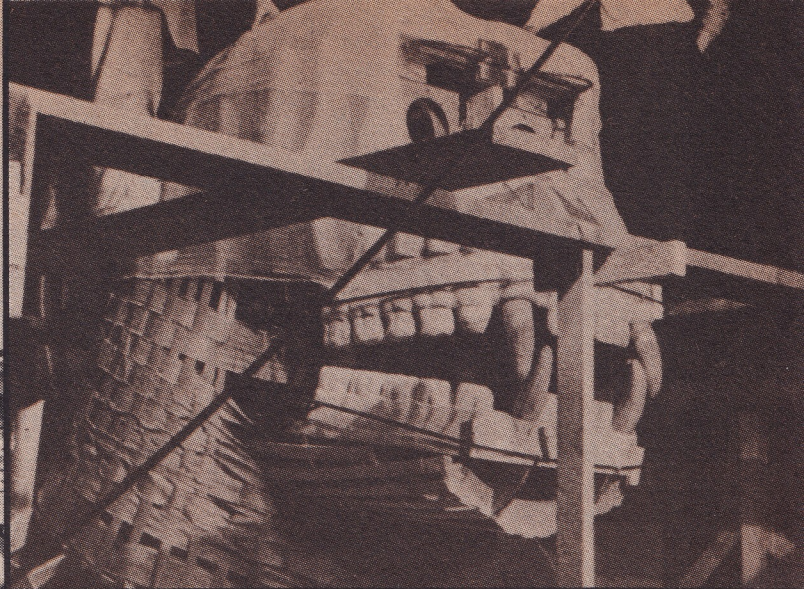
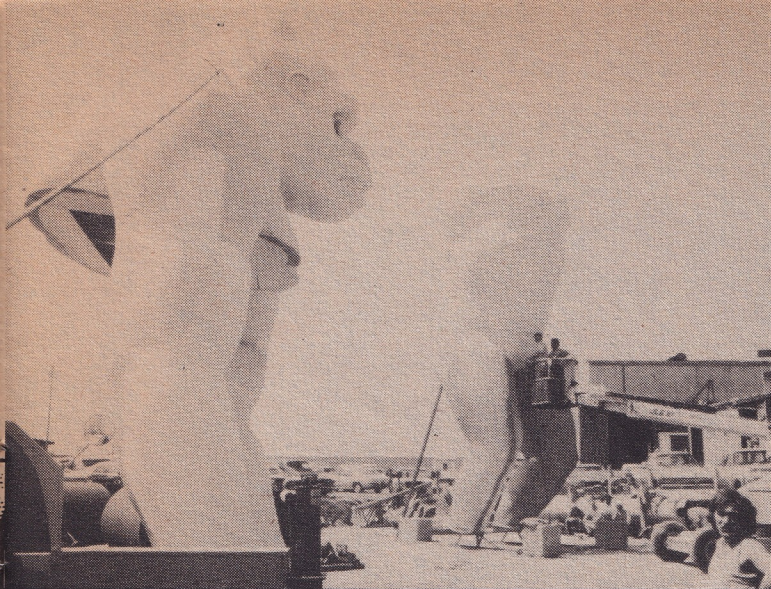
But everyone connected with the actual making of the '33 film denies these stories, as they deny the *Time* story, published in '33, saying there were six men in Kong's interior running 85 motors. But if *Time* had been describing the Kong of 1976, they wouldn't have been far off.

### The Komeback Kid

The new King Kong is many things.

**It's a motorized robot**—a 40-foot mechanical monster weighing in at six and a half tons. Cost to build:





**HALF A KONG** meets the other half. For 1976 version, non-movable Kong who does New York death scene is cast in heavy plastic, then built on Hollywood back lot.

**NOT JUST ANOTHER PRETTY FACE**, skull of '33 Kong is made of balsa, plastic, rubber. Eyes are 12 in. in diameter, teeth 10 in. long. Men inside worked head.

two million dollars. It was too heavy to do its final scene on the twin towers of New York City's World Trade Center. This was filmed on a full-scale model of the building in Hollywood. The monster's hide is 30 bearskins. Its innards are 3,000 feet of hydraulic hose and 4,500 feet of wiring to make all its rubber muscles move.

**It's also a 40-foot styrofoam non-mechanical monster.** This version was brought to New York simply to do the death plunge and lie in the street at the foot of the Trade Center. A crowd of 20,000 real New Yorkers showed up to watch the scene being filmed and to act as extras. But when they broke ranks and crashed the police barricades to grab souvenir tufts of Kong's fur, the cameras ground on. "It made a great shot," says one member of the camera crew.

**It's also an actor in an ape suit.** Yes, this time there really was one. Rick Baker wearing an ape suit does many of Kong's more expressive scenes. When you see Kong dying in closeup, that's Rick. When you see Kong fighting a mechanical 80-pound snake, that too is Rick.

But when the mechanical Kong is in operation, that's not Rick, that's a crew of seven technicians controlling 50 hydraulic jacks. One wiggles Kong's toes, another turns his head, others blink his eyes, move his legs, swing his arms, open and shut his jaws, pound his chest, and even breathe for the camera.

The mechanical arm that stars in many of the scenes is not attached to Kong. Like the arm that raised up Fay Wray, it's hooked up to a crane operated by four men at a control panel. When they push the right jacks, the hand opens, closes, and lifts as much as 3,000 pounds.

### Kong's Power

Now that you've peeked behind the scenes of the old and the new *King Kong*, are you sorry? Does knowing the tricks spoil the magic?

For some people the magic holds, no matter what. Says novelist Wallace Markfield, who has made a study of Kong, "I must confess that whenever the original Kong crosses the light of the TV screen, he renders me helpless."

Today, 47 years after King Kong I, the story is still a winner. And Kong, whether he's a creature of metal, rubber, and fur, or an actor in an ape suit, is still the King.

—MARGARET RONAN



**KONG TAKES DIVE** from top of World Trade Center in 1976 film version. As he lies in street, Dwan (Jessica Lange) screams at crowd to keep back. Real fall was done by stunt man in ape suit from scale model of Trade Center. Closeups of living Kong's face were done by actor in ape suit.