

King Kong remake worse

by Cheryl Downton

It has been forty-three years since audiences were first treated to King Kong atop the Empire State Building, blindly swiping at the buzzing planes, while at the same time keeping a protective paw around Fay Wray. The Dino De Laurentiis remake of 1976 stars a bigger and brighter Kong astride the New World Trade Centre in New York City, madly grabbing at the overhead planes while keeping a whimsical eye on Jessica Lange. Despite the similarities of the story line and landscape, the two films are vastly different.

The original 1933 black and white production with the jerky, puppet-like movements of cardboard characters, and a Kong ever-changing in size, cost just over four hundred thousand dollars. The cost of the De Laurentiis extravaganza was just over twenty-five million dollars. Unfortunately, the product has not proportionately been improved. Yes the original Kong is indeed a rather unbelievable character, with his uneven movements and changing physical stature, (due mainly to the primitive cinematography techniques available). Yet, the producers did not attempt to make Kong something he was not. The original "King Kong" lacks subtlety, but is more convincing than the 1976 remake. Kong, depicted as little more than an ape, was destroyed by man's greed and selfishness; he had a soul, and suffered, but remained an animal.

The 1976 "King Kong" advertised as: "The most exciting original motion picture event of all time", is just too glossy. The movie can be viewed as an example of some of the changes in thought, values and ideals our society has struggled with since the 1930's. The producers of the 1976 "King Kong" somehow feel that more gloss, more gimmicks and more general triviality is necessary to attract today's audience. If Halifax audiences reflect the views of a wider population, the producers are not necessarily correct. Wormwood theatre screened the original film before two jammed packed houses recently, and the general consensus was that the original was number one by a wide margin.

The Dino De Laurentiis production is filled with cheap tricks and unnecessary additions. Jessica Lange is not a modern day Fay Wray. Wray played the part of a

scared-to-death innocent, terrorized by a huge, hairy ape, convincingly. Lange does nothing more than simper and make ridiculous comments such as "Have you ever met anyone saved by Deep Throat before"? It is not that Lange is miscast; rather the movie itself is miscast. Lange comes into the movie floating in a rubber dingy dressed in a black cocktail dress.

The 1976 "King Kong" is intent on making headlines. The movie jumps far overboard with regards to theme and moral messages. The one possible theme or message, man's inhumanity to man and beast, is overshadowed by vulgarity. Kong is personified, with leathery paws, blinking glassy eyes, and silly smirks. It comes across as

too glossy and just plain silly; the shine and glitter is just too bright. The movie is overly commercial: from plot (a frantic search for oil and fast money and fame) to the slick character portrayals, to the too smooth ending-Dwan (Lange) forfeits love for advancement of her career through gross commercial-

ism.

"King Kong" is one more movie which might have easily gone without a remake. This does not mean however, that it will not gross millions of dollars from a public willing to shell out to see what can only be labeled as another Hollywood 'Flic'.



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