

# "KING KONG" STIRRING FILM

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BY EDWIN SCHALLERT

A spectacular picture, a sensational thriller, "King Kong" had its premiere last night at Grauman's Chinese Theater, and an intrigued and stimulated audience went home afterward to enjoy a first-class nightmare.

Anyway, they saw something. Pink elephants don't grow any larger than the giant ape that is the star of this hair-raiser. And, as if that weren't enough, there are dinosaur, brontosaurus, pterodactyls and other mammoth denizens of the forest primeval, whom it would take an expert in such things to identify. It's good that "King Kong" arrives before the beer onslaught; else some people might begin to think they were seeing things.

Anyway, this is a great circus show. And it outdoes circuses, because it has its own menagerie. The kind that a paleontologist would rave about, and the sort that will make you believe that the screen has grown up overnight scientifically.

Only we did have one other picture that was exceedingly clever in its way in the silent days, called "The Lost World." To this "King Kong" bears a family resemblance, for the dinosaurs in this production are descendants, so to put it, from the earlier ones. And if anything they have waxed more proficient as actors.

## JUNGLE PROGRAM

"King Kong" climaxes a picturesque and colorful Grauman program, in which the jungle is always to the forefront. It's a case of back to the primitive, with the stage for the prologue turned into a veritable maze of trees and intertwining branches, and an octoroonesque ensemble that are decked out in plenty of war paint, and costumes that suggest Zululand or what you please.

The prologue is swifter in tempo and shorter than usual. A very lively affair with excellent high spots—the remarkable juggler who does tricks of balancing that are truly astounding, the Cacholats with their plastic posing in a strong man act, and Jimmy Savo, who still shines as one of the most original of comedians. One misses seeing the famous Savo facial expressions in a large theater, yet notwithstanding his antics proved considerably amusing, and he got a good round of applause.

The whirling dancer, Gloria Gilbert, who makes you see double, as she weaves across the stage, topped everything for the ovation. She's a marvel.

## APE FIGHTS AIRPLANES

So much has been heard of "King Kong" that detailed description of the picture is more or less useless. It is known, perhaps, by this time that the culminating kick is the scene where the monster ape, title character, carrying the heroine in his paw, is shown ascending the Empire State Building and doing brownie battle there with an air fleet.

The story is a weird and imaginative adventure about a film director's expedition to an island where antediluvian monsters still dwell and where the ruler of them all is

Kong, to whom the natives make human sacrifices. It's really a dandy pipe dream and every device of the track camera and miniature setting, not to say, perhaps, some fancy enlargements of the ape, has been used to lend it realism.

Some of the views of the chief monster are a bit unrealistic, particularly the rather out-of-perspective first observation of him, but, in the main, the effects are extraordinary. They are especially extraordinary when it comes to the various members of the family of saurus—bronto, dino, etc.

The fight between Kong and the dinosaur is a magnificent bout. So, too, is the scene where the adventurers explode one of the big beasts with a huge gas bomb. It's the only thing that will put the quietus on him. Also to be noted are the scenes where Mr. Bronto saurus wrecks the raft, and when the ape shakes the travelers off the huge tree trunk bridge.

This picture is not a world-beater for human characters, though they have only that same general flatness that frequently prevails in adventure stories.

## BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Certainly Fay Wray screams most excitingly. She's the beauty in this narrative of beast and beauty, the film having a real theme in the conquest of the beast by beauty, supported by an Arabian proverb right at the outset. Miss Wray registers the most convincing performance, though Bruce Cabot is also good.

Dialogue allotted to Robert Armstrong, Cabot and others at the beginning of the picture is pretty strained, but you feel that it is just being used to pave the way for the big show to come. And that doesn't depend much on conversation, but on lots of action.

First views of the island, where many of the dread happenings are to occur, sends a good old-fashioned shiver up and down the spine, and from there on things are exciting. Some of the horrors, it must be said, are a little strong.

The picture has atmosphere; in fact, almost might have borrowed some of it from good old Robert Louis Stevenson. But then it was contributed to by that prize thrill story writer, the late Edgar Wallace.

With Merlan C. Cooper, he is credited with fabricating the plot, the idea being Cooper's, who was also producer and director along with Ernest Schoedsack.

Willis O'Brien as the principal technician did much, very much indeed, for the good of the picture. In the cast are Frank Reicher, Sam Hardy, Noble Johnson and others. The majority fare somewhat more fortunately than Armstrong, who seems to feel too heavily the weight of the whole expedition. He suffers from a stiff written part. An amusing bit in the film is the Chinaman played by Victor Wong.

You won't want to miss this show.