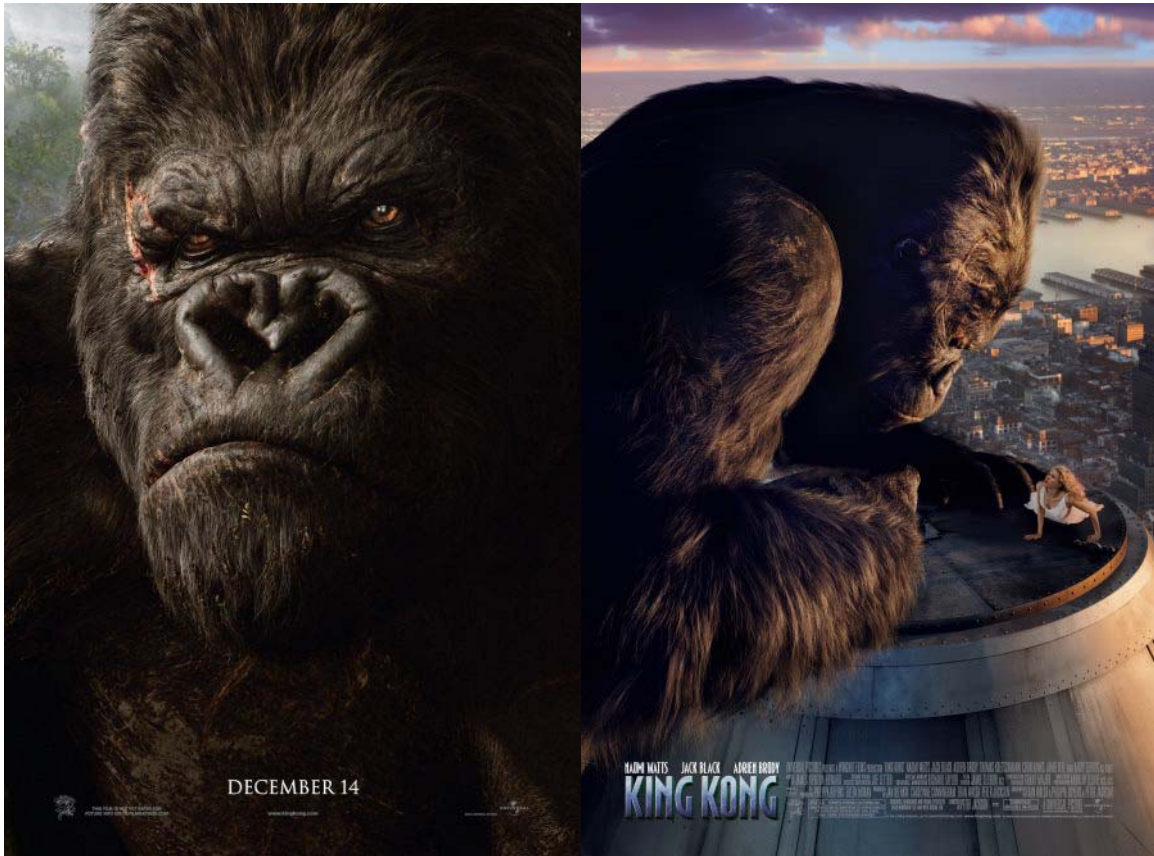


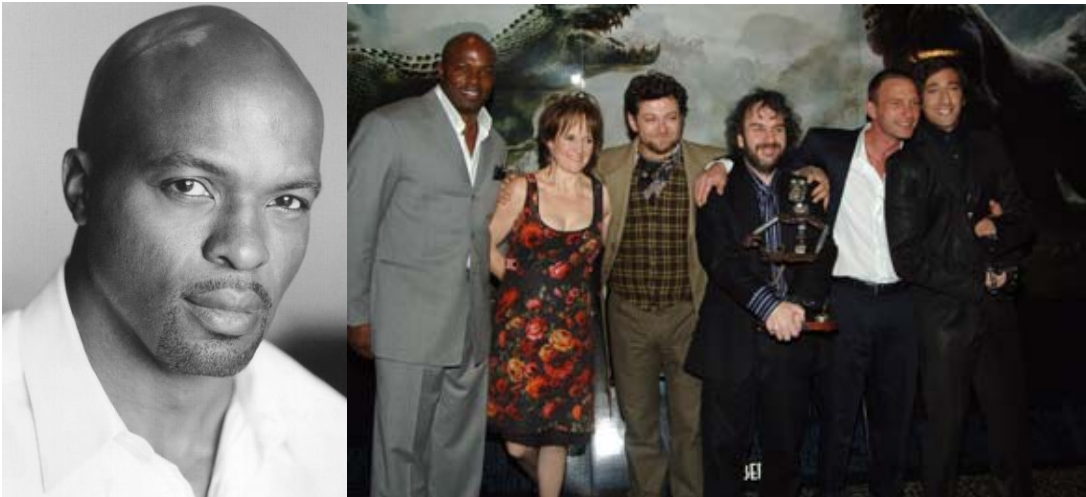
KING KONG Film Review:

## *“Beauty Is What Killed The Beast”...Carl Denham*



**“Set in the 1930s, this is the story of a young and beautiful actress Ann Darrow from the world of vaudeville who finds herself lost in depression-era New York and her luck changes when she meets an over-ambitious filmmaker Carl Denham who brings her on an exploratory expedition to the mysterious Skull Island (near Sumatra) to investigate legends of a giant gorilla named Kong. Once there, they discover that King Kong is a real creature, living in a massive jungle where creatures from prehistoric times have been protected and hidden for millions of years. As the explorers search for the great ape, their quest puts them up against both Kong and his dinosaur enemies. Ultimately, it is the attention of a beautiful human woman that soothes Kong long enough for him to be subdued by the explorers and shipped back to New York, where his bleak future involves being put on display in front of humans... but how long can even the mightiest shackles of man hold back an ape 25 feet tall? The beauty and the beast finally meet their fate back in the city of New York where the filmmaker takes and displays the ape in quest of his fame by commercial exploitation which ultimately leads to catastrophe for everyone including a playwright Jack Driscoll who falls in love with Ann and plays an unlikely hero by trying to save her from Kong and her destiny.” ...Boondish & Steandric, Imdb.com:**

**“Beauty Is What Killed The Beast”**...Jack Black as Carl Denham says those immortal lines at the end of what can only be called in my estimation the best film in 2005. And it will stand as one of the best films of all time. *King Kong* has arrived and this 207 million and 187 minute cinematic masterpiece will not disappoint anyone who watches it. The film’s opening moments depict a grim, cold and bleak 1930’s depression era New York, Peter Jackson could have saved some B-roll shooting days and just borrowed some footage from *Cinderella Man*. But overall what I liked the most about the first hour of *King Kong* was the writing by Jackson’s free flowing script. The narrative set up and dialogue is best between the film’s main characters: Ann Darrow, played brilliantly by Naomi Watts; Carl Denham, played with lots of energy and guile by Jack Black; Jack Driscoll, played in the same dead face expression as most of his roles by Adrian Body; Bruce Baxter, finally a big film break for CBS’ *Early Edition*’s highly under utilized and smooth actor Kyle Chandler; and Captain Englehorn, played with ice and cold hearted flare by Thomas Kretschmann. The cast makes the picture really soar. The ship’s crew and Denham’s film crew all are dead on caricatures of 1930 people. The only brother in *King Kong* is Hayes and Evan Parke plays him well. I know Evan personally and last saw him shortly before he went away to shoot *King Kong*. You might know Evan from seeing him over the past two years in diverse roles on *LA Dragnet*, *Jake In Progress*, *Alias*, *Medium* and *CSI: NY*. Evan has been in a few features like *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*, *Planet Of The Apes* and *Cider House Rules*. But clearly *King Kong* is his biggest Hollywood break.



Evan is a highly talented actor that always is going bring a high level of credibility to any role he plays. That was no exception with Hayes in *Kong*. Hayes has a moral backbone that eludes the rest of the ship’s crew. He wants Jimmy a stowaway--now cabin boy to better himself by getting an education and not spending his life—as Hayes implies wasting away on a broken down steamer. Hayes also implied that he had military training in the War. I don’t want to nitpick, but the last real War for Hayes would have been World War I and he would have been twelve years or younger old if *Kong* were in the 1930s. But other than that Hayes is a definitely enlightening black character that stands alone because of his values, actions and words. Also, Evan’s voice is used in Ubisoft’s *King Kong* video game, which is currently on sale.

Another notable performance in *King Kong* definitely comes from Jack Black. His Carl Denham is not over the top. He's in control of his character from beginning to end. The best parts of Jack Black in *Kong* are watching him in the first hour trying to convince everyone around him that he is going to make a hit film even when every conceivable odd is stacked against him. There is even clever exchange where Denham tries to get actress Fay Wray as a last minute replacement for his film. Denham's loyal and able assistant Preston, played steadily without by Collin Hanks, tells him that Fay is busy doing a film for RKO. There are many subtle and insider jokes throughout the film that Jack delivers on time and effortlessly.



But other than *King Kong* the real standout performer is Naomi Watts. She throws herself selflessly in the role Ann Darrow. It would so easy to play Ann campy and corny as the potential love interest to a monster ape. But Naomi is highly believable as a struggling Depression actress with a burning desire to be a real actress one day. Naomi is extremely pretty, but never tries to act pretty. It must have been hard for Naomi to spend hours after hour acting to a green screen or a life-size *King Kong* puppet. But she did and it extremely well. Naomi's Anne Darrow is not eaten or beaten up like previous female sacrifices because she defiantly stands up to Kong. And at one point even entertains the great ape with her vaudeville routine. I do not know how many other actresses were considered for the female lead in *King Kong*. But if Jackson and the producers had chosen anyone less stellar than Naomi Watts this film would have been just an excuse to watch recycled prehistoric creatures from *The Lost World*. She really makes one feel that she trusts Kong more than man itself. You could see the beauty and the beast bond on screen. And one is so convinced in her admiration and love for *King Kong* that a *Kong* audience would not have been shocked if she had jumped off the Empire State building right after Kong fell to his death. Naomi's pure and passionate acting makes *King Kong* a delight.

Peter Jackson is at his best in the first hour because he has the innate ability of trying to keep an audience's attention in the story—even though we are itching to see *King Kong*. That great cinematic moment does not happen for an hour into the flick. Before that we are treated to some excellent foreshadowing by Jackson in the way he depicts the natives of Skull Island. These Skull Island survivors are not the stereotypical and simple native savages seen in past *Kong* films. No these people are just straight out ruthless, killers who don't give a damn about Carl Denham and his movie stars and crew. I call the natives—Skull Island survivors because they would rather starve or each other than try to live inside the deadly Skull Island.



Skull Island is worth seeing by its self. This is a true homage to Lucas and Spielberg. So much like an *Indiana Jones* film, but even jacked up more. There really is no part of the island except the barren rocks that is safe. Jackson sets this up greatly by just showing that the natives of Skull Island would rather freeze and starve and even go to cannibalism rather than live in the interior of Skull Island. There are so many ways to die on Skull Island that it would take hours to do it justice. Any season of *Survivor* would not make it past the introductions if they landed on Skull Island. I won't spoil the great action scenes and creature effects with a blow-by-blow recap. Just watch enjoy every bone snapping, flesh stripping and bloody moment Jackson dishes out.

My only glaring criticism with *King Kong* is that Jackson jumps from Skull Island to New York and offers nothing in an explanation how Kong got back there. I would have liked a radio message to a bigger freight ship that transported Kong to NYC. They showed Kong being transported in an oil tanker in Paramount's 1976 remake. But dealing with all these practical logistics would have slowed down the film and only delayed seeing some of the film's best live action and special effects action. Watching Kong rip up New York is another set of outstanding filmmaking that will be watched over and over again when the film goes on DVD. In fact, Universal is so confident of *King Kong's* success that they have already released the behind-the-scenes and making of DVD as an early X-mas present for *King Kong* fans. Why wait eight months to see how this great film was put together from beginning to end.

I have to comment on the fact that the 63rd Golden Globes were just announced and *King Kong* was glaringly overlooked as a Best Picture nominee. Peter Jackson did get a nod as best director, but you know he cannot win if *King Kong* didn't even get a Best Pic nod. *King Kong* is the best picture in 2005 no matter what liberal Hollywood media hype machine is saying about *Brokeback Mountain*. I have not even seen this supposedly touching gay cowboy story, but I have to say that it could not *top King Kong* in scope or sheer enjoyment on any day. One can easily whip out a *Brokeback Mountain* type gay male bonding film every year. Peter Jackson's *King Kong* is a momentous event film. There are some films like *Spider-Man* and *Spider-Man II*, *ET*, *Lord of The Rings* Trilogy, *Titanic*, *Indiana Jones* Trilogy, *Superman*, *Jaws*, all the *Star Wars* films, etc., where the merger of cinema digital technology, special effects and casting create the ideal film that stands becomes a true cinema anomaly. Look how many *Batmans* had to be made over the past twenty year until Warners finally got it right with Christian Bale in *Batman Begins*. Michael Keaton, Val Kilmer and George Clooney will be forgotten now that we've seen the best actor to play Batman.



It is the same thing with *King Kong*. Peter Jackson has gone back like the classic of its day, the 1933 RKO *King Kong*, and picked the best actress, actors and used the most sophisticated special effects and digital cinema wizardry to give us a film that will last another 70 or 100 years. No one is going to be saying in my lifetime that we need another *King Kong* or that some new filmmaker thinks they can ever outdo what Peter Jackson did. The 1976 Dino de Laurentiis's *King Kong* and 1986 *King Kong 2* are the worst Kong remakes. Even *Son of Kong* and the *King Kong vs. Godzilla* are better films. I will say more about *King Kong* after I watch it again and toward the eve of the Oscar nominations. *King Kong* deserves to get a best picture nomination and win, Peter Jackson gets best director nod and win, Naomi Watts should get best actress flat out. Jack Black could get a supporting acting nod. Easily the film gets a best writing nomination. And undoubtedly *King Kong* should sweep all the technical and special effects awards—I don't care if *Revenge of the Sith* was off the chain. And lastly the Oscars should create a special non-actor *King Kong* should be given so as to not embrace any real actors who would have lost to him in the best actor category. *King Kong* ruled Skull Island and it will definitely rule the box office for many months to come. I give *King Kong* five cheesecakes out of five.

Sincerely,

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