

King Kong Is Back!: An Unauthorized Look at One Humongous Ape (Smart Pop series)

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From Brand: Smart Pop : King Kong Is Back!: An Unauthorized Look at One Humongous Ape (Smart Pop series) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised King Kong Is Back!: An Unauthorized Look at One Humongous Ape (Smart Pop series):

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A VARIETY OF FASCINATING ESSAYS!By Tim JansonWell 2005 was truly the year of King Kong with Peter Jackson's wonderful remake of the classic 1933 epic. In King Kong is

Back, part of Benbella Books' Smart Pop series, a score of luminaries share their thoughts on Kong in a wildly diverse array of essays spanning from the 1933 original, right up to Jackson's remake, and everything in between, including the Japanese Kong films. While perhaps a bit uneven in their tone and scope, these essays are at worst passionate and at best, often brilliantly considered. Nick Mamatas and Paul Levinson share similar memories on growing up in New York in the 1970's when the running of King Kong on WOR was as much a tradition on Thanksgiving Day as the Macy's parade or Detroit Lions football. Don DeBrandt's piece tries to make the argument that the 1976 remake is actually better written and acted than the original, almost dismissing it as an airy fantasy. He makes the point that the remake was more socially conscious and more complex, pointing out that the search for Skull Island wasn't about making a film but rather finding oil. That may be, but people don't go to see Kong for social relevance, they go to be entertained. Rick Klaw's essay "Thirty Three" delves in the colorful history of the two men who brought King Kong to the screen, Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack. These two have a background that you'd think had to be written by Hollywood. Both served during WWII and both aided Poland in their fight for independence with Russia. Cooper was a pilot for the Polish Air Force and was made a squadron commander in 1920. He was shot down and captured by the Russians and held in a prison camp until he escaped along with two Polish prisoners and traversed 500 miles to freedom into Latica. A remarkable history. Another great essay is from Bob Eggleton who discusses the making of the 1933 film, focusing on stop-motion animation whiz Willis O' Brien, and a man whose name has been nearly lost to the sands of time, Marcel Delgado, who actually made the various Kong models used in the animation process, not to mention the various dinosaurs and other beasties. Robert A. Metzger's "Dragons Teeth and Hobbits" supposes a true history to Skull Island, King Kong, dinosaurs, and a long lost forgotten race of little people thousands of years old. Metzger hypothesizes about not only Kong's origin, but the origin of the great wall. Seeing as how Kong easily climbed the Empire State Building, this wall would have posed little problem to him...so just who built it and why? Fascinating stuff! Some of the essays are a little on the dry side but all in all its wonderfully done and a great book for any King Kong fan. Reviewed by Tim Janson 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A barometer on American culture from the 1930's through modern day By Jessica Lux Editor David Brin released an essay collection about One Humongous Ape (King Kong) immediately prior to the theatrical re-make of this classic by director Peter Jackson. As a hardened skeptic, I viewed the book as a promotional stunt--but I couldn't have been more mistaken. This is an academic and enjoyable collection of essays on topics ranging from personal experiences with the King Kong films, the science and art of the Kong movies, and the philosophy of King Kong. The opening essays feature fond memories of the 1933 film version of King Kong from its 1976 to 1985 tenure as a Thanksgiving-day-staple on New York local television, and of reactions to the 1976 re-make. Writers compare the thematic elements of the 1930's and 1970's version, exploring the relationship audiences had with each release, in the days before the VCR. In his essay on The Making of King Kong, artist Bob Eggleton takes the reader behind the scenes in animation technology throughout the last century, explaining why the 1933 animation feels so much better when compared to the 1976 version, and applauding Jackson's wisdom for making his 2005 film a period piece set back in the Depression. Psychobiologist Dario Maestriperi, on the other hand, teaches the audience about gorilla and primate biology, and explains the truth about gorilla mating, aggression, and general behavior. The exploration of King Kong might be stretched a little far in Joseph D. Miller's argument that Skull Island can be mapped to the region on Sigmund Freud's Triune Brain, but it is a theory to entertain. Robert A. Metzger even argues that King Kong was real, and lists geographical and plot clues that Merian C. Cooper actually had a King Kong-like experience on which the film is based. The final essays probe the thematic and cultural implications of the Big Ape story, including the parallels between Kong and the experience of enslaved Africans brought America. As a story that has been told in three times in American history, King Kong, and his theatrical success at the time of each release, can be used as barometer for American social and political culture. While there are certainly highs and lows in this collection, overall, it is a landmark piece about all aspects of this American phenomenon. Detailed writer biographies follow each entry, so be prepared to be introduced to some new writing talent and other works to follow up with. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. "Whatever happened to Fay Wray?" By Found Highways King Kong Is Back! And it's a lot of fun to read! The three sections of the book form a recapitulation of the film-going experience, from being a kid watching King Kong on TV for the first time, to the discovery (or invention) of the "deeper meanings" of the film as an adult. David Gerrold and Adam-Troy Castro (among other contributors) give intriguing scenarios about what might have happened to the Beast and his Beauty. (They're written almost as nonfiction, but would have made good stories.) It was nice that a couple of essayists rehabilitate the 1976 remake with Jessica Lange. There's nothing wrong with retelling a classic horror story taking feminism and environmentalism into consideration. Steve Rubio's article on the 1976 movie was particularly good. I'd forgotten how hopeless the 1970s Kong looked and sounded, chained up in the ship's hold for someone else's profit. (There was too much unapologetic racism in the original film to introduce guilt showing a slave ship.) Robert Hood's essay on who would win a fight - - King Kong or Godzilla - - was interesting. It's obvious the kaiju eiga (giant monster films) of the fifties and sixties were influenced by Kong and Mighty Joe Young, but the respective filmmakers (Shiro Honda and Willis O'Brien) were connected in other ways too. There's a filmography of movies that were sequels to the original King Kong or influenced by it, but they left one

film out I think should have been included. It's a movie where the mad scientist becomes the ingenue - - The Rocky Horror Picture Show. As Rocky carries his creator's body up the RKO Radio tower, with Riff Raff and Magenta firing deadly ray guns at them both, Rocky gently pulls Frank's arm over his shoulder to protect him. The first time I saw that (in the scummy Tali theater in West Berlin when I was twenty-five) I cried. But it wasn't the Transylvanian ray guns that got them. "Twas Beauty killed the Beast."

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From Booklist This reader about the classic monster movie King Kong (1933) seems a bit rushed, trying to come out before Peter Jackson's new King Kong premieres in December. Five essays in it weren't ready for advance review. The 14 that were, however, range from informative to wiseass; all entertain. Bob Eggleton's "The Making of King Kong," on filmmakers Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack (see also Mark Cotta Vaz's Cooper biography, *Living Dangerously*, 2005), and James Gunn's "King Kong and 1930s Science Fiction" both inform, pretty soberly. Adam-Troy Castro's smarty-pants "Ann, Abandoned," exploring what might have been had Fay Wray's character been left with Kong on Skull Island, has its giddy "ewww!" moments (don't miss it). Intelligent nostalgia pervades two memoirs of New York TV channel WOR's many airings of the original film, while Robert Hood's "Divided Kingdom: King Kong versus Godzilla" rewards cultural ponderers, and Adam Roberts' "Why Does My Daughter Love King Kong So Much?" gratifies armchair psychologists. If not something for everyone, darn close. Ray Olson
Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved "There is a boom of new Kong books...My favorite...is [this] savvy collection of essays by fantasy authors." The Boston Globe