King Kong (2005)  (From imdb)

Trivia

It took 18 months to craft the CGI version of the Empire State Building. The real thing was built in 14 months.

The scene where Denham, Driscoll and the crew fall into a pit filled with giant bugs is a reference to a scene in the original King Kong (1933), where the crew fell into a pit and were devoured by giant spiders, which was cut after many members of preview audiences ran out of the theater in horror during the scene. The original scene has never been found.

King Kong's roar is a lion's roar played backwards at half speed.

The tyrannosaurus has hands with three fingers (instead of the scientifically correct two) as an homage to the original King Kong (1933) in which the tyrannosaurus also had an extra digit, and is explained by the idea that the dinosaurs on Skull Island have evolved in the 65 million years since the two-fingered tyrannosaurus went extinct elsewhere in the world.

Peter Jackson was paid $20 million to direct this film, the highest salary ever paid to a film director in advance of production.

The digitally-rendered 1933 NY is so detailed that it contained 90,000 separate buildings.

(at around 42 mins) When the radio operator aboard the "Venture" receives a radiogram via Morse code, supposedly telling the captain that Carl Denham is wanted by the police back in New York, the Morse code message in the soundtrack actually says "Show me the monkey." (In Morse, this is .... ..- ..- / - .. ..- . .. . .- -. -)

Andy Serkis (Planet of the Apes, The Hobbit) had 132 sensors attached to his face so that his every facial expression could be captured and shown on King Kong's face.

The color orange was deliberately kept off set and in the lighting effects because it was found to create an odd effect on Naomi Watts' piercing blue eyes.

Andy Serkis essentially had to play King Kong twice. First, alongside Naomi Watts in a makeshift gorilla outfit so his co-star had something to react to. Then, once principal photography was completed, he had to re-do his performance, this time in a motion capture suit.

This film held the record for being the most expensive ever made in the US until it was topped by Spider-Man 3 (2007).
Production of the movie turned out to be so enduring and challenging that director Peter Jackson lost 70 lbs.

As a personal favor for Peter Jackson, Bryan Singer - who was in Australia working on Superman Returns (2006) - spent two days directing the King Kong vs T-Rex confrontation sequence. He was given a special thanks at the end credits.

Besides studying wild gorillas in Rwanda in order to be able to mimic their movements and behavior, Andy Serkis also developed a close friendship with a female gorilla called Zaire at a zoo near London.

(at around 1h 50 mins) The giant worms that attack Lumpy in the insect pit were derived from a recurring nightmare of one of Richard Taylor's workshop crew. Their motion was based on that of a man sealed inside of a sleeping bag.

At the very end of the closing credits the movie is dedicated to "The original explorers of Skull Island..." followed by the names of the actors who played major roles in the 1933 original. The billboards that appear in Times Square are the same as the ones found in the 1933 film.

On April Fools Day 2005, Peter Jackson posted an elaborate practical joke, which he posted on a web diary. He "revealed" that they were already starting production on "King Kong: Son Of Kong" and "King Kong: Into the Wolf's Lair". Both films, supposedly to be released in 2006, contained the principal characters riding Son of Kong, strapping machine guns to his back and fighting Adolf Hitler's genetically mutated creatures. The film was going to be produced under the banner of "Big Primate Productions".

Several of the Skull Island natives were played by Sudanese actors who did not speak English, and they were coached with the assistance of an interpreter. Conceptually, the natives of the island had piercings and scarification that were created as makeup and prosthetic appliances, although one of the extras had authentic tribal scarring on his forehead.

The insects attacking Jack Driscoll at the canyon bottom are gigantic versions of the Weta, a species native to New Zealand and the namesake of Peter Jackson's production studio.

The movie was shipped to theaters in the USA under the name "Tiny Dancer". For added security, the eighth reel was shipped separately from the rest of the pr

Vicky Haughton had to spend nearly six hours in makeup each morning for her role as the witch doctor, and receives less than two minutes of total screen time in the movie.

The movie has the most number of visual special effect shots - around 2400. It surpasses the record set by Star Wars: Episode III - Revenge of the Sith (2005), which has 2200 shots as well as the previous Lord of the Rings movies (FOTR has 560, TTT has 800, ROTK has 1488)

Adrien Brody was the first and only choice for hero Jack Driscoll. While Brody was under the impression that he was competing with other actors for the role, he was quickly informed by the producers that they were only interested in him. He signed on before the script was written.

Peter Jackson originally wanted to make this film immediately after The Frighteners (1996). When Universal saw that Godzilla (1998) and Mighty Joe Young (1998) would be released the same year, they pulled the plug on the project and Jackson moved on to The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (2001), using the ghost effects he developed for King Kong. After the tremendous success of the trilogy, Jackson was finally able to make the film.
For the New York scene, the few hundred extras used each had three different costumes that they would wear for different exterior scenes. At one time during production, as many as 100 people were working in the costume department alone.

King Kong is being described as 25 feet tall on his hind legs by the makers of this version, half as tall as the filmmakers of *King Kong* (1933) described their "50-foot" Kong. However, in proportion to people and objects in that film, the original Kong was actually around the same height (20-25 feet) as the new Kong.

(at around 1h) As the Skull Island natives are attacking Ann, Jack, and Carl, look closely at the old witch doctor woman's right hand as she's chanting and approaching Ann: she's giving Ann the finger.

The "Scream Ann! Scream for your life!" scene shown in trailers across the world for the movie never made it into the final cut.

Between 60 and 70 vintage cars were collected locally for use in the New York scenes. These cars are popular in New Zealand, and they apparently were not hard to find.

By comparing the *King Kong* (1933), *King Kong* (1976), and *King Kong* (2005), Kong appears older film by film.

Over 2 million feet of film were shot, equivalent to 370 hours of footage, 123 times more than the final cut.

Several pieces of dialogue in the movie are taken from the original 1933 *King Kong* (1933): * When Ann Darrow and Bruce Baxter are filming a movie scene on the deck of the S.S. Venture (with Carl Denham operating the camera), their "movie dialogue" (about "women on ships") is taken verbatim from an on-deck conversation between Ann Darrow and Jack Driscoll in the original film. *In a deleted scene, while filming Ann on the island, Denham instructs her, "Scream Ann! Scream for your life!" *Denham's "We're millionaires, boys" speech, after the capture of Kong. *Denham's "He was a king in the world he knew" speech, just before Kong is revealed in the Broadway theater. *And of course, the final line, "It was beauty killed the beast."

The final credits run longer than 10 minutes.

Considering the film's running time, it could have possibly been longer. According to the book *The Making of King Kong*, there was a scene written and filmed where Denham, Driscoll and the Venture crew build rafts to cross the swamp, only to be attacked by an aquatic creature (a "Piranhadon"). This scene ended up being included in the extended edition of the film. There was also mention of a scene where Lumpy the cook shoots a large flightless bird.

After searching worldwide for the right boat to be the Venture, Peter Jackson found and purchased the Manuia, in the South Pacific island of Tonga. Several set pieces were added to the 50 year old vessel to make it resemble a 1930s freighter. Film crew were forced to abandon the boat during filming in March 2005 when it sprang a leak and began to take on water off New Zealand's Kapiti Coast. Emergency repairs were carried out and it sailed back to Wellington, where the remaining boat scenes were shot without further incident.

(at around 1h 35 mins) The log scene where King Kong lifts, roles and throws it into the ravine to get rid of his pursuers was used in all 3 versions.
For this film, the roars of Kong were provided by Andy Serkis and lowered down in pitch to match the voice of a real gorilla. These were then augmented with the sounds of other animals to achieve the final effect, including horses, cats, pigs and elephants.

(at around 27 mins) Jimmy (Jamie Bell) is seen reading 'Heart of Darkness' by Joseph Conrad and even has a conversation with Hayes (Evan Parke) about it. Both the book and the story of King Kong have similar themes.

The New York set was only four blocks across and one story high; the rest was added digitally.

This was one of the last films personally green lit and approved by former Universal studio chairman Stacey Snider before her departure to DreamWorks. She originally balked at the finished version, since one of her stipulations was that the final length not exceed 160 minutes. According to Peter Jackson, it was waived when she actually saw the film (at executive screenings) and said that it exceeded her expectations.

A new studio had to be built at the New Zealand Stone Street Studios just to accommodate the sheer scale of the production.

(at around 1 min) At the beginning of the film there is a shot of a restaurant in New York called "BG's Sandwiches." It is a nod to BG Hacker, who organized and catered the New York premiere parties for Peter Jackson's production people on all three "Lord of the Rings" films.

When planned to be released in 1998, Kate Winslet was the first choice for Ann Darrow.

The Times Square set was built about 20% scaled down from the original. For this and most other New York sets, only the first story was built in full scale. The rest of the scenes were added digitally. Streets were also extended using digital effects, and the number of pedestrians and cars were doubled or even tripled in large scenes, using the same process applied to the battle scenes in the Lord of the Rings films.

There are no gorillas in any zoo in New Zealand for the production team to study; the nearest is in Melbourne Zoo in Australia. Director Michael Apted came to the rescue by letting them study over 20 hours of research footage he had shot whilst prepping Gorillas in the Mist (1988).

(at around 2h 35 mins) The ice skating scene in Central Park was not in the original script. Peter Jackson asked Universal if they could shoot the scene when the film was in post-production. The studio liked the idea and gave him the go-ahead.

In an early draft of the screenplay, Ann Darrow was the daughter of a famed archaeologist and Jack Driscoll was his assistant. Lord Darrow was killed in Ann's introductory scene by the Indonesian military in a cover-up attempt of his discovery of remnants of the Skull Island culture.

At the time, this was the most expensive film ever made. Universal were placated at the excessive bill when Peter Jackson showed them an advance screening.

The pages of script that Jack gave to Carl in the ship were actually part of Peter Jackson's personal copy of the King Kong (1933) script itself. As proof, Jackson revealed it in one of the film's post-production diaries "Pick Up Wraps".
Howard Shore had written and recorded much of the score for this film, but shortly before release, he departed from the project. Peter Jackson stated that because of "differing creative aspirations" between the two of them, they both thought it best for Shore to be replaced by James Newton Howard, who was given less than two months to write and record a new score for the entire film.

The studio in Wellington, New Zealand was located very close to the local airport, so planes flying overhead often posed problems while shooting outside on the backlot.

The hand-cranked motion-picture camera carried around by Black's Carl Denham, the movie maker, is an actual antique Bell & Howell 2709 which is also the same type of camera used in the original King Kong (1933). According to Peter Jackson's commentary on the extended version of the film, the actual camera was much too heavy to carry around. What you see for most of the film is a replica made out of foam.

(at around 12 mins) In the dialog near the beginning when Carl Denham mentions that the actress "Fay" is filming something for "RKO" and "Cooper," the Cooper of whom he speaks is Merian C. Cooper, who produced the original King Kong (1933). On the soundtrack at this point we even hear the original three-note Kong motif, which was used many times throughout the 1933 film.

Peter Jackson owns a number of props from the original King Kong (1933) and put some of the items from his collection into this film. These items include Skull Island spears and a brightly painted shield (seen in the cabins of the Venture) and some of the drums from the sacrifice scene (in use during the jig scene).

(at around 25 mins) One of the gas bombs from King Kong (1933) can be seen in the shot of the cage filled with chloroform.

(at around 24 mins) When Adrien Brody is first taken to the animal cells on the boat to find sleeping quarters, a cage bearing the sign Sumatran Rat Monkey can be seen as he turns the first corner. This is a nod to Dead Alive (1992) also directed by Peter Jackson.

Contains approximately 800 miniature shots.

(at around 1 min) In the beginning of the movie you see a worker on a steel part. Due to the camera angle it is clear he is working on top of the (not yet erected) Empire State Building. Camera is directing NE over Chrysler Building and Queens Bridge. Empire State was opened in 1931.

The exterior of the fictional Alhambra Theater where Kong is put on display is modeled after the Paramount Theater, built in 1927, at 1501 Broadway in New York City - particularly the lavish, ornamental marquee. In later years the Paramount would be home to World Wrestling Federation/Entertainment's two restaurants (WWF New York and WWE The World), and then the Hard Rock Cafe.

Peter Jackson has expressed a desire to remaster the film into 3D at some point in the future.

During production, Peter Jackson hosted a video production diary, made specifically for the fan website, kongisking.net. Diary "entries", posted every 2-3 days, were created by the same company responsible for the Lord Of The Rings DVD sets and gave an exclusive look at the production of the film, with other cast and crew members often acting as "guides". Eventually visitors to the website were invited to email in questions to potentially be answered in future videos.

Peter Jackson had a birthday during the production of the film. To commemorate the occasion, the cast of the film secretly shot a short film entitled "The Present" and screened it for Jackson on his birthday. The short involved a birthday present that was stolen from Naomi Watts and subsequently traded hands throughout the cast of the film before Lobo Chan (Choy) ultimately ran off with it. At the
end of the screening, Chan ran into the room and presented Peter Jackson with the actual gift. In an interview, Jackson refused to reveal the contents of the box, saying that it shall "remain a mystery."

Ian McKellen turned down the role of Carl Denham, as he was doing a play in London.

28 copies of Darrow's petticoats were made. Some were clean, some dirty, while others were ripped.

Andrew Lesnie at one point suggested shooting the film in black-and-white.

The two original models of Apatosaurus from King Kong (1933) were used for reference in creating a creature for a similar dinosaur sequence in this movie.

Peter Jackson likes to shoot animatics in pre-viz for most of his big action sequences. Before the film started shooting, he screened the animatic for his cast and crew, most of whom were in tears at the end of this screening.

Weta Workshops created 8 variations of animal excrement and even researched the manure of tigers and camels.

(at around 9 mins) When Carl Denham puts a glass up to the door of the screening room to eavesdrop on the studio executives' conversation, a poster for Merian C. Cooper's 1927 silent film, Chang: A Drama of the Wilderness (1927) is on the anteroom wall behind him.

(at around 7 mins) When the thuggish Studio Executive refuses to continue financing Denham's film, he says, "It's not the principle of the thing; it's the money!" This is a saying attributed to legendary showbiz mom Rose Hovick, mother of Gypsy Rose Lee and June Havoc (who is given a Thank You in the credits).

Shipped to cinemas in Europe under the name "Gipsy Camp". It came in two packs, reel 1, 3, 4a, 6, 8 and the next day 2, 4b, 7 and 9

Sylvester McCoy screen tested for the role of Herb the cameraman.

The makeup artists initially tried old-age stipple (applications of liquid latex to create natural wrinkles in skin with little to no prosthetics) on Vicky Haughton, but her skin was simply too good and healthy to wrinkle, so they went with prosthetics instead.

The non-profit organization producer/performer Anthony Begonia volunteers with was featured during the New York depression feeding scenes.

Almost all of the exterior shots of New York City fail to depict the Chrysler building, which is very close to the Empire State Building and at 1,046 feet ought to nearly rival the great ape's last stand in height.

Michael Muhney auditioned for the role of Bruce Baxter.

Even though Englehorn gave orders to turn the ship he is the one who actually finds the island because had the ship not turned the crew would have missed the island and continue going thousands of miles.

(at around 2h 35 mins) One of the Times Square shop signs reads "Joseph Berlinger & Co. Silks." This is a reference to Joe Berlinger, who co-directed three documentaries about the West Memphis 3, a trio of teenagers who were falsely imprisoned for over a decade for a murder they did not commit. While they were jailed, King Kong director Peter Jackson was one of the most prominent celebrity activists fighting for the release of the 3 teens.
**Director Cameo**

Peter Jackson: A gunner in the airplanes. Jackson and makeup man Rick Baker both shaved off their beards to do the cameos. Kong kills 41 people throughout the film. One more than in the original.

at around 2h 55 mins) Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, the producer and director of the 1933 version, planned on creating a single shot of Kong falling into the distance from the top of the Empire State Building. Unfortunately, technology at the time didn't allow for this shot and it looked unrealistic. The idea was scrapped. Peter Jackson paid homage to Cooper's original idea by creating this shot at the end in his honor.

at around 12 mins) Fay Wray was in negotiations to appear in the film before she died. Peter Jackson wanted her to deliver the legendary last line: "Oh no, it wasn't the airplanes. It was beauty killed the beast." Instead, Jack Black's character now makes a reference to her as he is searching for a leading actress for his film, suggesting a "Fay" as a possible candidate. Colin Hanks's character responds by saying, "She's already filming something for RKO," which in reality was the original King Kong (1933). Black responds, "Cooper. I should have known," a reference to original Kong director Merian C. Cooper.

Kong makes his first visual appearance 71 minutes into the film.

In the Broadway show, where Kong is the unwilling star, the "native dancers" are dressed in the same costumes as the Skull Island natives in the original 1933 King Kong (1933). (The men wear furry gorilla costumes, and the women wear grass skirts and coconut brassieres.) The theater orchestra (led by composer Howard Shore (I)) plays sections from Max Steiner's score from the original film. During the "native dance" number, the orchestra plays the music from Steiner's score that is heard in the original film during the Skull Island natives' sacrifice dance. When the fake "Ann Darrow" (played by Julia Walshaw, Naomi Watts's stand-in) appears on stage before Kong, the theater orchestra plays the music from Steiner's score that is heard in the original film when Kong first appears before Fay Wray.

Because of the film's extensive length, critics have joked that Kong didn't die from the airplanes but of old age.

The three Rexes Kong fights are easily distinguishable by the constellation of their teeth. Incidentally, the first Rex to appear on screen is also the first to be defeated whereas the Rex Kong kills during the fight's climactic scene is the second one to appear.