

Peter Jackson's *King Kong* Review

After changing the face of blockbuster cinema with *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, Peter Jackson commanded a record-breaking \$207 million to helm a big-budget remake of one of his favourite films: the Classic Hollywood version of *King Kong*. With twice the runtime and 300 times the budget, Jackson's remake has a much larger scale than its predecessor.

Jackson's affection for the 1933 original comes through in the faithfulness of his remake, but despite the tender loving care that he brought to the project, his 2005 remake isn't quite as great as its predecessor. Still, it's a pretty satisfying update of a classic tale and, in some ways, an improvement on its source material.

10 Better: Andy Serkis' Mo-Cap Kong Is More Sympathetic



The beauty of *King Kong* has always been that the monster is sympathetic. In the 1933, the ape was brought to life using models and stop-motion and his treatment as a beast and later as a spectacle made him plenty sympathetic.

But Andy Serkis' motion-capture performance as Kong in the 2005 remake makes him an even more sympathetic character. There's a reason Serkis is the go-to guy for mo-cap.

9 Worse: Overlong Runtime

Both *King Kong* movies tell the same story: a director brings his cast and crew to Skull Island, they find a giant ape living there, they bring it back to New York to turn into a stage show, it escapes from its shackles and bounds across the city, and then it gets killed at the top of the Empire State Building.

The difference is, the 1933 original told that story with much more economy. Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack fit all the plot beats into a brisk 100-minute runtime. When Peter Jackson told the same story, it took him over three hours.



8 Better: More Spectacular Action



The action scenes in the original *King Kong* movie are compelling, but the action in the 2005 remake is on another level. In the original, the characters nearly fall into a chasm filled with giant bugs. In the remake, they actually fall in and contend with those bugs in hand-to-hand combat.

The stop-motion effects in the original are impressive, but Kong's battles with dinosaurs are a lot more riveting and visceral with flashy state-of-the-art CGI.

7 Worse: Less Sense Of Adventure

While the original *King Kong* is hailed as one of the greatest monster movies ever made, it doubles as one of the greatest adventure movies ever made. The 1933 masterpiece's wondrous sense of adventure matches that of the finest masterpieces of the genre, from *Up* to *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

The sense of adventure in the remake isn't on nearly the same level. Jackson too often favours gruesome horror imagery over the fun of adventure.



6 Better: Stronger Performances



The acting in the original *King Kong* movie is perfectly serviceable, particularly by legendary scream queen Fay Wray, but the performances feel wooden in more than a few scenes.

By comparison, the acting in the remake is much better. Peter Jackson cast some of the greatest actors working today – Naomi Watts, Andy Serkis, Jack Black, Adrien Brody – to give these characters the nuance they lacked in the original.

5 Worse: No New Ground Broken

What really blew audiences away about the original *King Kong* movie was its groundbreaking special effects. It broke all kinds of new ground and, despite their dated look, the effects hold up to this day.

The remake is technically very masterful and its CGI effects look incredible, but it didn't break any new ground or change the course of moviemaking like the original did.



4 Better: More Rounded Characters



The original *King Kong* movie gives audiences a feel for the individual personalities of characters like Ann Darrow, Carl Denham, and Jack Driscoll, but the focus is so often on the monster that the human cast occasionally gets lost in the fray.

In the remake, the characters are much more rounded – particularly Ann and Jack, whose romance is developed enough in the revamp to create a weird kind of love triangle with Kong.

3 Worse: Less Distinctive Cinematography

With huge, sweeping crane shots covering the CGI-ridden action scenes, the *King Kong* remake has a much less distinctive visual style than the original movie.

The original movie had its own look, achieved through a combination of live-action and animation shot on black-and-white film, whereas the remake's aesthetic is closer to a generic blockbuster.



2 Better: No Racist Overtones



Although the film's creators denied that it was intentional, many critics noted racist overtones in the original *King Kong* movie. It's been read as both a metaphor for American slavery and a cautionary tale about interracial dating.

The same allegory can be seen in Peter Jackson's remake, since it retains the original's plot, but it's much less overt and efforts were made to remove the racist overtones.

1 Worse: Overkill

Peter Jackson's *King Kong* is the definition of overkill. Every plot point is overexplained, every scene is way longer than it needs to be, and the scale of every set piece is unnecessarily massive. For three hours, it beats the audience over the head with CGI and noise.

The original movie has dinosaur fights and ape love, but it never goes too far. It never feels like overkill. The remake, on the other hand, has long stretches that become exhausting and wear out their welcome.



Choose the correct option

1. It tripled the budget. the original
the remake.
2. The gorilla was created using models and stop-motion. the original
the remake.
3. It takes less time to conclude. the original
the remake.
4. The characters fight with huge insects. the original
the remake.
5. The special effects are totally innovative. the original
the remake.
6. There is more adventure. the original
the remake.
7. The actress's performance fell flat. the original
the remake.
8. The characters are more thoroughly developed. the original
the remake.
9. It has a better aesthetic. the original
the remake.
10. It was criticized for its hints of racism. the original
the remake.
11. There are unnecessary details. the original
the remake.

Match the words to the meanings

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| • direct: _____ | bound |
| • that may be relied on: _____ | brisk |
| • a pair of metal rings connected by a chain: _____ | chasm |
| • to move quickly with large jumping movements: _____ | compelling |
| • only saying what is necessary: _____ | flashy |
| • making you want to watch or listen: _____ | go-to |
| • a very deep, narrow opening in rock, ice, or the ground: _____ | helm |
| • extremely interesting: _____ | riveting |
| • intended to get admiration: _____ | shackles |
| • very modern: _____ | state-of-the-art |

- to publicly praise or show approval for a person or an achievement: _____
- extremely unpleasant and shocking: _____
- a quality of something that is not easy to notice but may be important: _____
- a big change from other things of its type: _____
- contest, dispute: _____
- to change or arrange something again, in order to improve it: _____
- moving, especially quickly and powerfully: _____
- a supporting arm for holding a motion-picture or television camera: _____
- a megahit: _____
- giving a warning: _____
- done or shown publicly or in an obvious way: _____
- an excess of something beyond what is required or suitable: _____

blockbuster
cautionary
crane
fray
groundbreaking
gruesome
hail
nuance
overt
overkill
revamp
sweeping

