Ray Harryhausen: special effects

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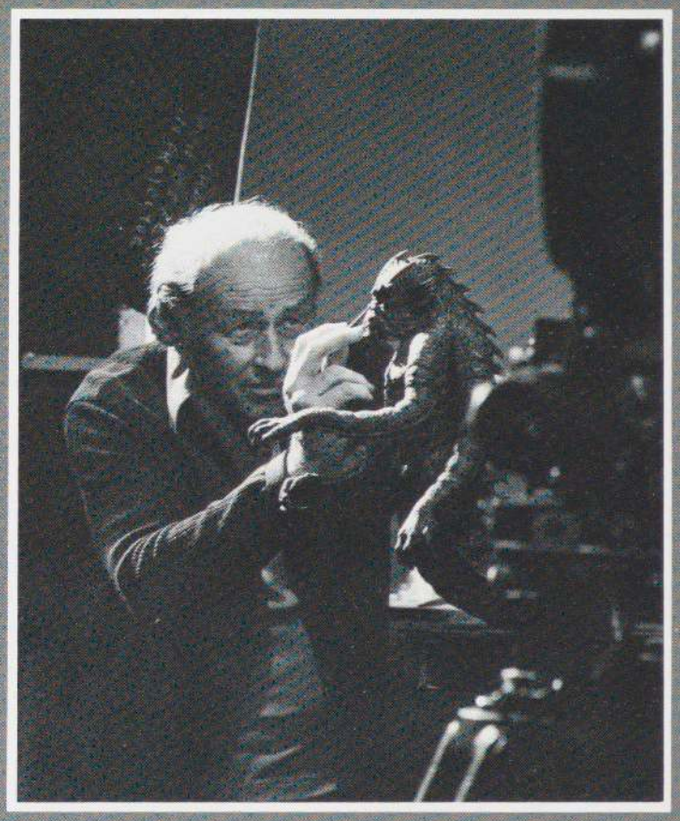
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RAY HARRYHAUSEN: SPECIAL EFFECTS

How do you write a short introduction to a long friendship? How do you put in words the meaning of a relationship that has covered some 34 years, now? It won't be easy, but I must try.

I have known and loved Ray Harryhausen and his work since the night in 1937, when he walked into the Little Brown Room at Clifton's Cafeteria in Los Angeles, for a science-fiction-fan-writer meeting, and showed me his drawings and told me his dreams. In no time at all, I was out visiting his home, prowling his garage, where he kept his dinosaurs, arranging for him to make a life-mask of me, over which he would create a liquid latex mask of pure green horror with which to terrify my friends at Halloween. If memory serves me, Ray and I went off to an All Hallows Midnight Show at the Paramount Theatre in Los Angeles to see Bob Hope in "The Cat and the Canary," and in the middle of the show I put on the Harryhausen mask and caused people in the seats in front of us to jump a foot.

You see, Harryhausen and I, at 17, were like most teenagers. But unlike many, we had large dreams that we intended to fulfill. We used to telephone each other nights and tell the dreams back and forth by the hour: adding, subtracting, shaping and reshaping. His dream was to become the greatest new stop-motion animator in the world, by God. Mine, by the time I was 19, was to work someday with Orson Welles, whose career was beginning to burgeon on the American scene.

Somewhere along through the years, Ray was best man at my wedding.

Somewhere through the years we realized our dreams. He worked with Mr. Willis O'Brien on "Mighty Joe Young" and soared on his way. I wrote lines for Orson Welles twice: when I did the screenplay of "Moby Dick" for John Huston, and the narration for Nicholas Ray's "King of Kings."

What you will see in this presentation is a record of the young and the middle dreams of Ray Harryhausen. Looking at these photographs and the film footage you will see this evening reminds us once again of the creative powers of single individuals in the world. Not groups, but lonely, creative spirits, working long after midnight, change the cinematic and aesthetic machineries of civilization.

While recently watching Ray's newest film, "Clash of the Titans," I remembered those long-ago days in Ray's garage holding his monsters in my hands, and the nights when he came to the house to dance his puppets and marionettes and fill us with delight.

He is "Uncle" Ray at our house. Damned if he isn't Uncle to a whole new generation of film lovers and fanatics.

This is the proudest Introduction I will ever write in my life. It is written by the boy in me who, at 17, first fell in love with his genius and the extensions of that genius, the delicious monsters that moved in his head and out of his fingers and into our eternal dreams.

Long after we are all gone, his shadow-shows will live through a thousand years in this world.

RAY BRADBURY

THE FILMS OF RAY HARRYHAUSEN

MIGHTY JOE YOUNG **1949**

The first feature film on which Ray Harryhausen worked, an Oscar winner for its breathtaking special effects. Harryhausen executed most of the animation, working with concepts and processes designed by Willis O'Brien, the man who animated the original King Kong. The story involves an impresario who hires lovely Jill Young and her pet gorilla to perform in a Hollywood nightclub, after first discovering them on an African plantation. Scenes of Joe lifting a piano during the playing of Beautiful Dreamer, and of the ape rescuing a baby trapped atop a burning orphange, are now classics.

THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS **1953**

This film, which inspired Godzilla and the-monster-on-the loose cycle of the 1950's, was Harryhausen's first solo effort. The plot derives from Ray Bradbury's short story "The Fog-horn," as an atom bomb test deglaciates a prehistoric monster and follows his destructive trek from the Arctic to New York City. The beast's attack on a lighthouse, filmed virtually in silhouette, in one of Harryhausen's most evocative scenes.

IT CAME FROM BENEATH THE SEA **1955**

A giant octopus, its diet of fish depleted through nuclear detonation at sea, rises from the ocean to feast on humans. The creature finds San Franciscans particularly palatable, affording Harryhausen the opportunity to destroy the Golden Gate bridge and other local landmarks. Due to the cost of constructing the monster model, the octopus was actually a quintopus, sacrificing three tentacles to economy.

EARTH VERSUS THE FLYING SAUCERS **1956**

Having razed New York and San Francisco, Harryhausen turned to the nation's capitol for his next battleground. An alien world is dying, and its inhabitants journey to Earth intent on colonization. When advised that the planet will not surrender, the space denizens turn loose every weapon on board their flying saucer fleet. Human kind retaliates with anti-stabilizer rays, a confrontation which leaves the invaders thwarted and Washington DC in rubble.

ANIMAL WORLD **1955**

Ray Harryhausen and his mentor, Willis O'Brien produced a spectacular color sequence in this documentary look at the evolution of life on earth. Their recreation of life and death in the days of the dinosaurs has been favorably compared to the Rite of Spring segment of Fantasia.

TWENTY MILLION MILES TO EARTH **1957**

The first manned flight to Venus ends tragically when the returning spaceship crashes in the Mediterranean Sea, however, a specimen of Venusian life escapes from the vessel. Though only a foot tall, when it reaches shore, the extraterrestrial grows to a prodigious height when its metabolism is upset by Earth's atmosphere. The creature is hounded by Earth people and lashes out by raining destruction upon Rome. According to Harryhausen, "We were running out of locations in America. What could we begin except to begin to destroy Europe?

THE SEVENTH VOYAGE OF SINBAD **1958**

Harryhausen's first color feature, wherein the fiancee of the legendary sailor is shrunk to inches in height by the sorcerer Sokurah. The adventurer thus sails for the Isle of Colossa to obtain a vital ingredient in the curative portion: a fragment of eggshell from the nest of the monstrous Roc. On route to restoring his lover, Sinbad battles a pair of cyclops, a fire-breathing dragon and a skeleton warrior brought to life by Sokurah.

THE THREE WORLDS OF GULLIVER **1959**

Jonathan Swift's classic satire proved to be an ideal vehicle for Harryhausen's talents as eighteenth century physician Lemuel Gulliver, finds himself shipwrecked among the diminutive warmongers of Lilliput and the superstitious giant of Brobdingnag. Gulliver's desperate battle with a Brobdingnagian crocodile is one of Harryhausen's finest achievements.

MYSTERIOUS ISLAND **1961**

Jules Verne's sequel to his classic novel "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" was altered slightly to accommodate Harryhausen's creations. As Captain Nero endeavors to eradicate starvation from the Earth by breeding enormous animals. Refugees from a Civil War prison camp soar by balloon to Nemo's sanctuary, where they survive not only giant bees and crustaceans, but an erupting volcano.

JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS **1963**

Harryhausen's first epic foray into Greek mythology recounts Jason's search for the golden fleece. Two awesome confrontations highlight the film: the mighty struggles against the bronze titan Talos and the sword battle with seven living skeletons. Harryhausen considers the film's seven-headed Hydra to be one of his most sinister creations.

Filmography notes compiled by Jeff Rovin

FIRST MEN IN THE MOON **1965**

A serio-comic adaptation of the somber H.G. Wells novel. When a nineteenth century scientist discovers an anti-gravity paint, he uses it to hurl a sphere containing himself, a playwright and the dramatist's lover to the moon. There, they encounter a civilization of Selenites, pacifistic insect beings. The framing story of a modern lunar descent was so well executed that Harryhausen's footage was widely used by NASA to illustrate their upcoming Apollo landing.

ONE MILLION YEARS B.C. **1966**

Though Raquel Welch received most of the publicity, Ray Harryhausen dinosaurs are the true stars of this remake of the Victor Mature classic. The story, remarkably told without a word of dialog, follows the fate of two prehistoric lovers who hail from rival tribes. Harryhausen is particularly proud of the climactic earthquake, whose impressive scope was achieved on a minimal budget.

THE VALLEY OF GWANGI **1969**

This tale of cowboys and prehistoric monsters is set in the unique locale of turn-of-the-century Mexico. Braving the terrors of the Forbidden Valley, a circus owner captures the awesome Gwangi and exhibits the dinosaur in his big-top. But Gwangi is freed by frightened natives and decimates the city before being immolated inside a burning church. The Gwangi model was a favorite of Harryhausen's daughter, Vanessa, creating quite a stir when she wheeled him about the streets of London in her carriage.

THE GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD **1973**

A sorcerer with visions of world conquest seeks an enchantment which will make him invincible. Sinbad races the mage to the remote land of Lemuria to prevent him from placing three golden amulets in the Fountain of Destiny, thus achieving his goal. This film contains Harryhausen's oddest assortment of creatures: the batlike homunculus, a ship's living masthead, the six-armed metal goddess Kali, a golden griffin, and the one-eyed centaur.

SINBAD AND THE EYE OF THE TIGER **1977**

When a witch transforms a prince into a baboon, Sinbad must escort the hirsute monarch to a pyramid, whose magical powers will cure him. The sorcerer dogs Sinbad's path to see that he fails, though the voyage to the top of the world is fraught with even greater dangers, such as a giant walrus, a troglodyte and a trio of savage wolves.

CLASH OF THE TITANS **1981**

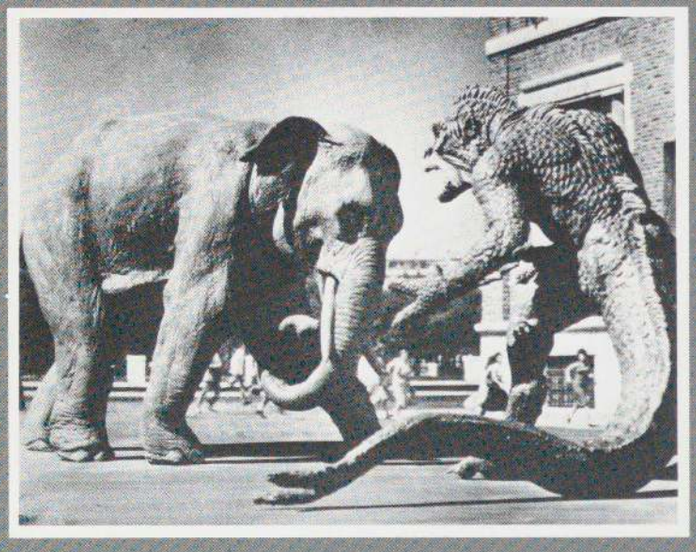
Harryhausen's newest fantasy saga is a literate, visually stunning tale based on the Greek myth of Perseus and his rescue of the Princess Andromeda, with a cast of international stature. Harryhausen pits the young hero against his most sinister creations, including the mountain-tall sea beast, the Kraken, the two-headed wolf dog, Dioskilos, and the crowning figure of the animator's distinguished career, the snake-haired Medusa. For good measure, Harryhausen also destroys the city, bringing a tidal wave down upon the vain municipium.



THE SEVENTH VOYAGE OF SINBAD, 1958



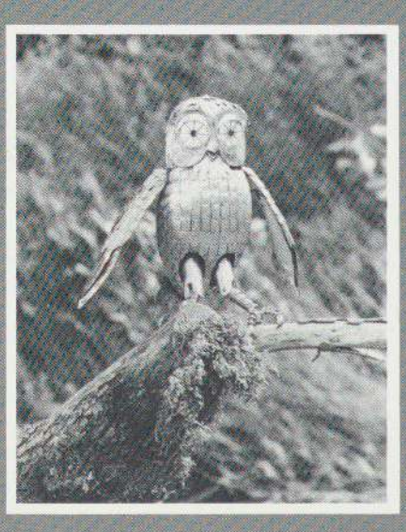
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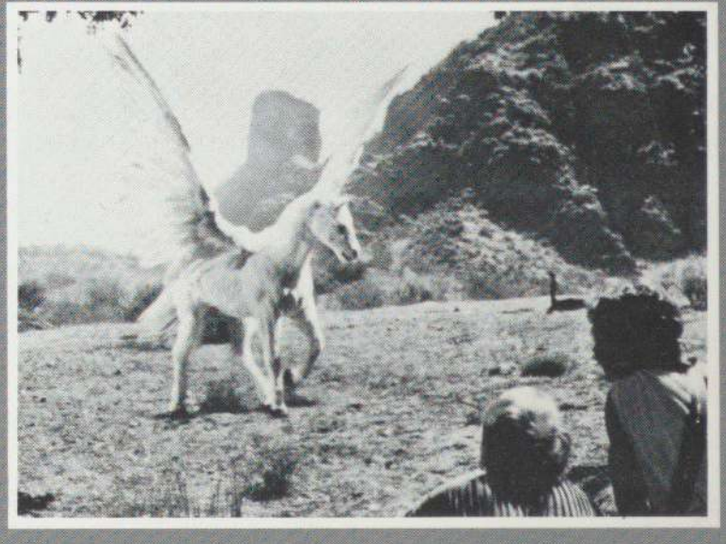
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CLASH OF THE TITANS, 1981



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