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From Publishers Weekly

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Ray Harryhausen is arguably the greatest stop-motion animator in the history of motion pictures, blazing new trails in special effects from the 1950s to the 1980s creating realistic dinosaurs, fantastic aliens, and imaginative mythological creatures. In the animator's own words, accompanied by hundreds of previously unpublished photographs, sketches, and storyboards from his personal archive, this book details Harryhausen's entire film career, from 20 Million Miles to Earth and Earth vs. The Flying Saucers to Clash of the Titans and Jason and the Argonauts. In words and images, this book explains the basics of special effects and stop-motion animation, along the way telling entertaining tales of working with the film stars of the day, such as Laurence Olivier, Maggie Smith, and Lionel Jeffries. Film buffs will relish such revelations as how Raquel Welch was picked up by a flying dinosaur in One Million Years B.C., why the octopus in Mysterious Island was really only a sixtopus, and what Medusa's blood was made from in Clash of the Titans.

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A Wonderful Record of an Amazing Career

By Sauropod

It's all here - behind-the-scenes info on every one of Ray Harryhausen's films, including his early experimental short subjects and unfilmed projects like FOOD OF THE GODS and THE ELEMENTALS. Lots of preproduction sketches and storyboard art, photos of models and miniatures, a reasonable amount of technical detail, and a much more revealing, personal tone than we have heard from Ray before. (But, ever the gentleman, he simply omits mention of any people he disagreed with - like the clueless director of VALLEY OF GWANGI who, rumor has it, tried to get Ray fired from the film! Neither the director's name nor the rumor appears in the text.) There is a respectable number of color photos and a huge assortment of black and white pix, all very well reproduced. Particularly interesting is a section at the end summarizing all the various projects that never made it past the development stage - and there were a lot! Also fascinating is the discussion of how the storylines of the movies changed dramatically through various drafts of the scripts. Giant rats in 7th VOYAGE OF SINBAD? A Valley of Vipers in a later Sinbad movie? (Producer Charles Schneer nixed both concepts, the latter because of "some extraordinary idea that it would frighten pregnant women," according to Ray.) My only gripe, and it is minor, is that some of the photos are very, very small. There's a shot of the clay sculture of a Sphinx modeled for the unmade FORCE OF THE TROJANS that is about the size of a postage stamp! Larger would be better, but I can't quibble much with a book that covers so much territory and gives us a glimpse of an era and style of filmmaking that will never be repeated. For those who cherish the hand-crafted excellence of Harryhausen's work, this is a must-buy, and a huge improvement over his much less comprehensive FILM FANTASY SCRAPBOOK.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Ray Harryhausen: An Animated Life

By C. A. Luster

I was lucky enough to meet Ray Harryhausen at an Archon convention in Collinsville, IL several years back. What amazed me is how layed back Ray Bradbury and he was with the fans that day. These were Gods in our world and yet they would talk to us like we were sitting playing cards or something. Ray Harryhausen had touched my life long before that when I first saw his B&W movies on TV. The one that truly made my jaw drop though was when I saw the just released color movie "The 7th Voyage of Sinbad" at the Granada theater in Mt. Vernon, IL. I never forgot the magic dream quality of those creatures and so I made sure any other movie he did the special effects for I went and saw. And if someone copied his creatures, "Jack the Giant Killer", et cetera, I went to see them too. This book gives us a great look into his life, art, and stop motion techniques. I highly recommend it to not only fans of Ray and special effects, but to anyone with an interest in movies. Great foreword, writing, pictures, and editing.

CA Luster

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Long overdue, but worth the wait.

By R. Gorey

Die-hard fans of special effects master Ray Harryhausen may recall Jeff Rovin's book "From the Land Beyond Beyond", which arrived in 1977. It was a welcome addition to the Harryhausen legacy, but was too subjective and fan-based for some tastes. Hard to believe it took almost thirty years for this definitive, color version of the Harryhausen story to arrive on the scene. Some will feel it is merely an extension of Ray's previous work, the Film Fantasy Scrapbook, and in many ways, it is, but there's so much detail here that this deluxe volume is worth picking up. Though of course modern special effects have become almost ridiculously complex, it's wonderful to hear Ray describe in great technical detail the processes and techniques he used to bring his animals and fantasy creatures to life in films like "7th Voyage of Sinbad" and "Jason and the Argonauts". He's also candid about which films worked for him (and audiences) and which somehow missed the mark. Even readers who prefer modern spectacles to Harryhausen's classical, stately epics should find something of value here, and there is plenty to inspire any animator, filmmaker, or budding cinematographer. This book isn't just a special effects guide, it's a valuable and integral part of the history of film: Harryhausen's career spanned five decades, and he worked with some of the greats in the industry--not only effects geniuses like Willis O'brien, but actors like Laurence Olivier, Maggie Smith, James Franciscus, Honor Blackman, Richard Carlson, Jane Seymour and Raquel Welch. A little pricey, but worth the cost. A must have for Harryhausen fans, naturally, but anyone interested in the movies will come away satisfied.

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