

A tropical paradise, *Jurassic Park* becomes a tropical nightmare when the dinosaurs escape.

Why wouldn't we make *Jurassic Park*?" Kathleen Kennedy laughs. "Don't you want to see a movie with dinosaurs?"

Certainly Universal Pictures and Amblin Entertainment are hoping that there are legions of people who want to see "a movie with dinosaurs," as the investment in this big-scale adaptation of Michael Crichton's bestseller climbs skyward.

Crichton was well aware of the movie possibilities of his novel—which, to a degree, reads almost like a novelization already. Galleys of the book were sent around to producers in Hollywood who might be interested in it. Steven Spielberg and his Amblin Entertainment company, obviously already interested in dinosaurs (*The Land Before Time*, the forthcoming *We're Back*), pounced on the property, and longtime Amblin producer Kathleen Kennedy headed the project with Spielberg.

"We were very intrigued with dinosaurs," she says, "and thought it was a fantastic

Producer Kathleen Kennedy guides the tour of a land where dinosaurs roam.

BY BILL WARREN

premise that had more to say than just an action-adventure type of picture. And Crichton is wonderful at giving you a sense of scientific intrigue, along with action, so we were quite compelled by that."

There was nothing especially labyrinthine in the progress of *Jurassic Park* from novel to screen. Crichton, a screenwriter and director himself, took the first crack at the script "to bring it down to some workable size," Kennedy says. After that,

Hook's Malia Scotch Marmo turned in some drafts, but little of her contributions are left, as David (*Death Becomes Her*) Koepp took it over from that point "and really put it in screenplay form. It's a pretty typical process," Kennedy says, "of going through a book that's obviously so much denser than what you can do with a movie, and whittling it down so it makes sense in a two-hour format." Crichton and Koepp will share the screenplay credit.

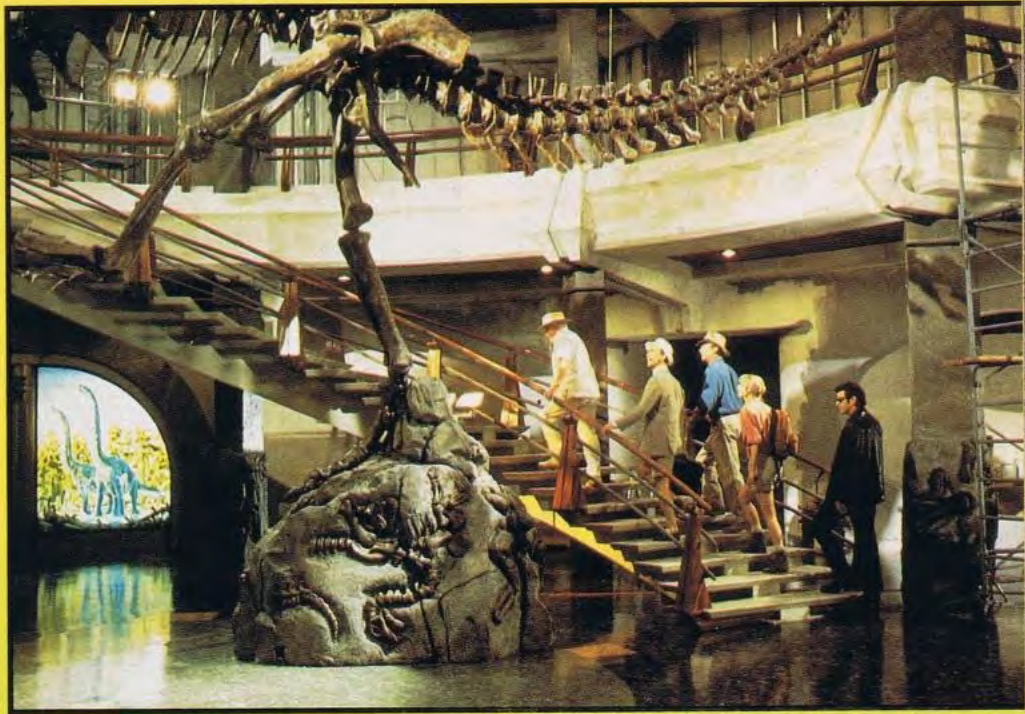
Where Dinosaurs Live

As almost everyone must know by now, *Jurassic Park* is the tale of a gigantic amusement park of the future, an island off the coast of Central America that has been purchased by lavishly wealthy entrepreneur John Hammond (Sir Richard Attenborough). What's different about *this* park are the attractions: living, breathing dinosaurs. Using techniques that sound pretty plausible, they've been brought to life by using the DNA from dinosaur blood found inside prehistoric mosquitoes preserved in amber.

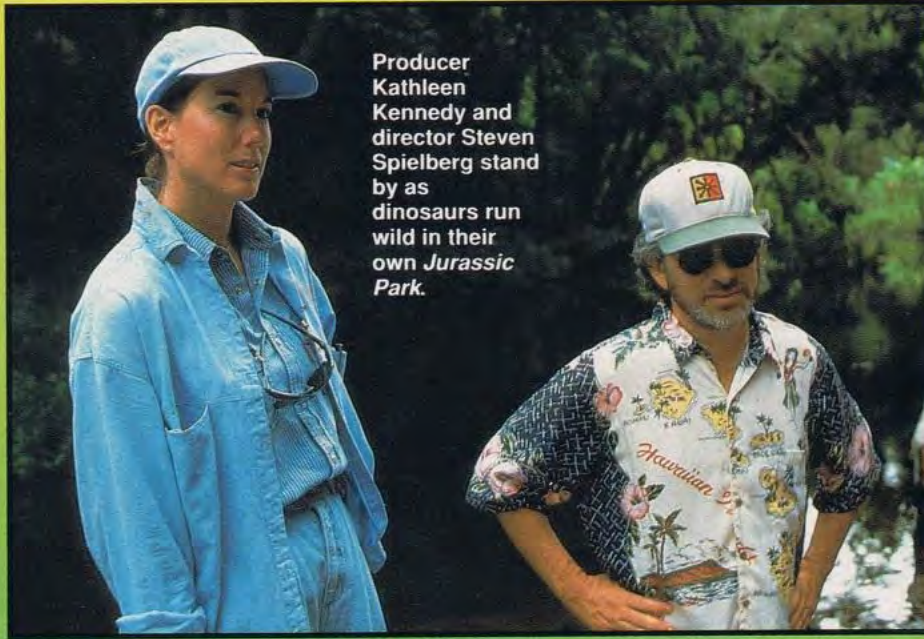
But of course, Hammond doesn't tell this to paleontologist Dr. Alan Grant (Sam Neill) and chaos-theory expert Dr. Ian Malcolm (Jeff Goldblum) when he brings them and

others to Jurassic Park before the place opens for business. Naturally, as in Crichton's *Westworld*, things go wrong. Very wrong. Or there wouldn't be a movie. The film also stars Laura Dern as Dr. Ellie Satler, Joseph Mazzello and Ariana Richards as Hammond's grandchildren, Bob Peck as Robert Muldoon, a great-white-hunter type, and Wayne Knight as Dennis Nedry, the quintessential computer nerd.

The black-clad, smug Malcolm is along to explain it all to us; in his novels, Crichton (STARLOG #91) always includes a healthy dollop of scientific information to back up his science-fictional ideas. In *Jurassic Park*, the focus is on chaos theory—why complicated systems tend toward chaos—and, as Kennedy says, "Steven was always quite intrigued by that and very much wanted to make it part of the film. We handle that in a very similar fashion to how it's handled in the book. There's a fair amount of time when the actors are in cars making their way along the magnetic track that runs through the park. This gives Malcolm an opportunity to discuss his theories in connection with



A tour of the impressive facilities gives the park a great send-up, but who knows what lurks beyond the gates.



Producer Kathleen Kennedy and director Steven Spielberg stand by as dinosaurs run wild in their own *Jurassic Park*.

Richard Attenborough had long been a major actor in Britain, but eventually moved over into directing films like *A Bridge Too Far* and *Gandhi*, and hasn't acted in years. However, says Kennedy, "We've been trying to get Richard to be in movies with us for a while, so this isn't the first time we approached him. It just so happens that it was a good time in terms of his finishing directing *Chaplin* to make him available, and he was intrigued to work with Steven. I think they had a wonderful time together.

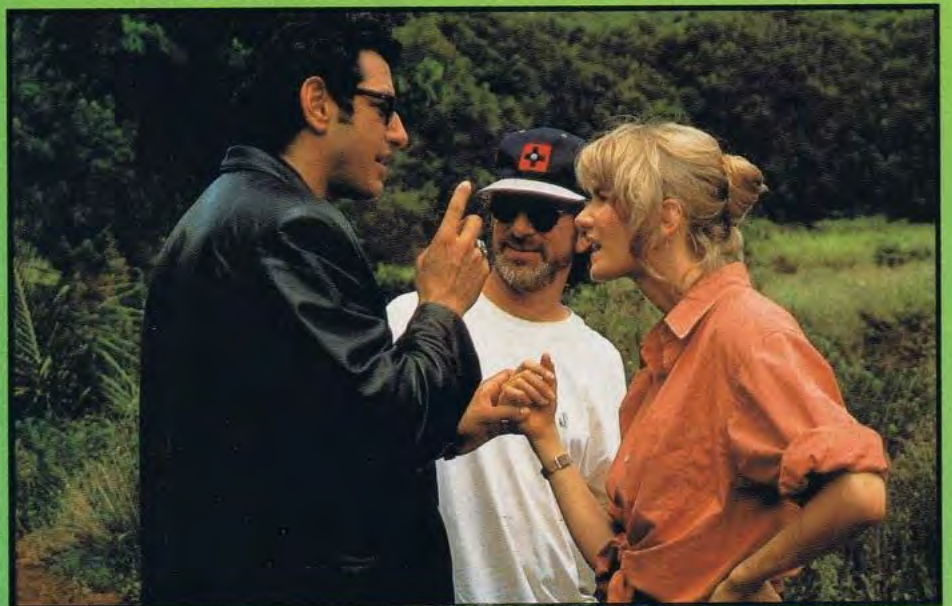
"If there's one thing we consistently tried to do, it was to make logical financial compromises every step of the way, so we could

Jurassic Park "provided an environment for Steven [Spielberg] to do his best work" alongside "wonderful actors" like Jeff Goldblum and Laura Dern.

what's going on out there in the park."

Production designer Rick Carter's plans for the park's control room were also employed to help explain these ideas. "We tried to set up the control room with elaborate visual programs in a way that would allow us to convey many of these theories. The repetition makes it something that will be accessible to the audience. But of course the main dramatization of chaos theory," Kennedy laughs, "is that all of the dinosaurs go berserk."

When the cast was announced for *Jurassic Park*, some people were surprised. Where were the likes of Sean Connery or Harrison Ford? Why wasn't a big star like Tom Cruise or Julia Roberts in the film? The idea is very simple, says Kennedy. "The sense is that the *dinosaurs* are the megastars. Steven wanted very good, solid actors who could handle a performance in a format like this; that was important to him."



make this movie for what we thought was a reasonable amount of money. If we had used major stars, you're talking about a movie that's in the \$80-\$90 million range, and that gets ridiculous. Then the whole attitude, the whole approach to the movie, is excess. And everybody adopts a sensibility of excess—and we wanted to *avoid* that completely.”

Because the undertaking is clearly expensive anyway, due mostly to the FX, and because a megastar director like Spielberg is involved, *Jurassic Park* already carried a kind of aroma of excess, and Kennedy acknowledges this. “Sure, there’s a tendency immediately for people to respond like that, so as a producer, I had to work very, very hard, constantly talking to people and bringing everything down, keeping the brakes on all the time. A project like this one can easily go flying out of control in the bat of an eye.

“*Jurassic Park* was a tremendously difficult film,” she admits, “but I think that the process by which we went about prepping the picture paid off—we prepped it for over two years. Early on, we put together what I sort of likened as the Dream Team of special FX people. We had Dennis Muren from ILM, Stan Winston, Phil Tippett and Michael Lantieri. The four of them sat down with us almost three years ago, at the very, very beginning. We carefully outlined how we thought we were going to make this film.

“We had originally intended to do a fair amount of stop-motion and Go-Motion, but at a certain point completely eliminated that in favor of computer graphics.” A problem with stop-motion animation has always been the “strobing” of the models: Each frame is an absolutely clear, still picture, without any motion blurring, and this creates what some

“Don’t you want to see a movie with dinosaurs?” queries Kennedy. Young Joseph Mazzello may have, but right now he’s preoccupied.



people think of as the “jerkiness” of stop-motion. Even though Kennedy, Spielberg and the others felt they could eliminate that through digital blurring, and even felt that that would be their big breakthrough in FX technology for this film, they “made this giant leap right into computer graphics.”

When Dinosaurs Walk

Rarely have computer-generated images (CGI) been used to create *living* creatures. They’ve created spaceships, been used for abstract, surrealistic designs, even created cartoony characters, but this effort to make dinosaurs look absolutely real, completely alive, is something fairly new.

The technology in CGI is evolving so swiftly that you might expect that by the time *Jurassic Park* wrapped, the FX done early for the film might look primitive compared to those created at the production’s end, but Kennedy says that’s *not* what happened. “We had done extensive storyboarding and animatics [simple computer animation of the storyboards], so that we could see the movement within the action sequences, and know what we had to build.



Jurassic Park holds more than an expansive wilderness, more than anyone can imagine.

Although the FX overall were the biggest challenge facing the filmmakers, they weren't a serious problem. "In a certain way, this movie was blessed," she points out, "because I don't remember anything being a huge problem by itself, including Hurricane Iniki, which struck Kauai [Hawaii] while we were shooting there. I think this was a movie that, because we had such a good group of people, I always thought of as being ahead of any problem, and capable of solving them quickly.

"Even with the hurricane hitting, it basically cost us only one day of shooting. We were supposed to be traveling on a Saturday, letting the crew rest on Sunday and shooting on Monday. We ended up traveling Sunday, resting Monday and shooting Tuesday." Contrary to what you might have read elsewhere, *Jurassic Park* won't include any footage of the real hurricane.

"We tried to set up the control room with elaborate visual programs in a way that would allow us to convey chaos theory."



"We had sessions once a week with everybody involved in this process, and we would go through the storyboards of every sequence, and carefully analyze who was going to do what. And that was a process that itself evolved and changed along the way—but we never once had to go back and redo anything."

Jurassic Park's dinosaurs are not done exclusively through computer graphics, except for one stampede sequence of gallimimus (ostrich-like dinos). The dinosaurs are rendered with CGI, full-sized models and puppetry. Winston was in charge of the potentially scariest creatures, the velociraptors: Swift-moving, intelligent carnivores not much larger than human beings, which were done largely with animatronics. However, Kennedy says that in one scene, there will be cuts between the same individual dino rendered in CGI and done with Winston's rod-and-wire controlled puppets.

"The matching is holding up very well," she says. "Much of that has to do with the fact that you can do digital blends and digital blurring now. It has really helped to integrate the images."



"The sense is that the dinosaurs are the megastars," Kennedy notes.

Why Dinosaurs Attack

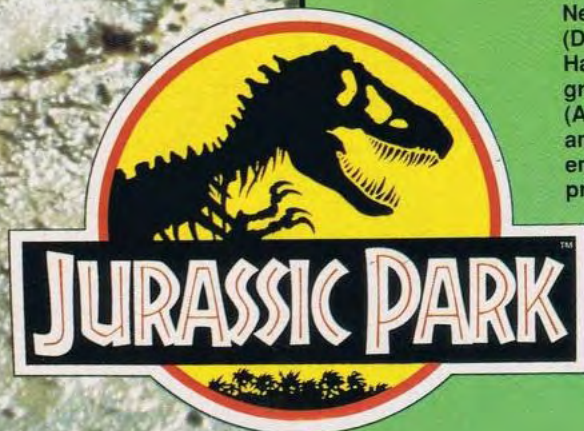
As readers of Crichton's novel know, there are any number of potentially terrifying sequences in *Jurassic Park*, including the attack of the *Tyrannosaurus rex* in the night, and its later pursuit of Alan Grant and the children as they try to flee to safety down a park river. And there's also the assault on the others by a herd of clever, sneaky raptors. Some have been referring to the movie, without seeing it, as "*Jaws* on land."

Kennedy is very anxious to clear that idea up. "I stay away from saying that," she insists, "because it is a far, far cry from *Jaws*. There's *nothing* like *Jaws* in this; the structure wasn't set up like that at all. There's so much more to this movie than just fighting dinosaurs. There's also the discussion of where does science stop doing what it potentially could do, and analyze what it *should* do. That's a big, big aspect of the movie and takes it beyond just creating a picture where dinosaurs attack people."

She agrees that *Jurassic Park* simultane-



Dr. Alan Grant (Sam Neill), Dr. Ellie Satler (Dern) and John Hammond's grandchildren (Ariana Richards and Mazzello) encounter the prehistoric.



ously has an ecological sub-theme. "Man cannot control nature, and the arrogance to think that they can is often what gets mankind into trouble. Technology takes us to a point where we're capable of doing things, but then you have to ask the moral question: *Should* we be doing those things? It becomes a moral responsibility of what we are capable of doing that this movie begins to question. *Should* we be re-creating dinosaurs?" But while Kennedy is serious about this, she does laughingly agree that this sounds a great deal like the "you shall not meddle in God's domain" themes of horror & SF movies of the 1930s.

In fact, Kennedy's pretty cheerful about everything connected with *Jurassic Park*. When it's pointed out that this movie, which comes out *against* an amusement park with dinosaurs, is going to help *create* amusement parks with dinosaurs—*Jurassic Park* sections are planned for the Universal Studios theme parks in California and Florida—and that this is, shall we say, a bit ironic, Kennedy bursts out laughing. "Oh sure," she says, "that should offer a huge amount of humor in the movie. If you're not laughing at that, then you're taking the movie too seriously."

But she herself does take marketing and merchandising very seriously indeed. "Ultimately, you must realize that for a movie that's going to cost this kind of money, the sophistication of marketing and merchandising techniques have reached the point where it's responsible to do what you can to make money that offsets the picture's cost and therefore justifies the expenditure. All you can really do, though, is maintain quality control, and make sure that the toys and anything else that emanate from the movie are of good quality.

"Having been involved with *E.T.*, there was nowhere near this kind of sophistication back then. All I did was get telephone calls about 747s landing full of pirated *E.T.* dolls. The fact is, if you don't do it, somebody else will, and there will be a lot of junk flooding the market." But this doesn't drive the film itself, she says. "The movie *always* comes first."

Clearing up a few rumors about *Jurassic Park*, Kennedy says that Ray Harryhausen *didn't* have any involvement with the movie at all, and won't be receiving screen credit. Neither will George Lucas, but he *is* helping in the editing stages, because Spielberg is off in Krakow on his next movie, *Schindler's List*. Which brings up another rumor: *Jurassic Park* actually wrapped 12 days ahead of schedule, almost unthinkable for a movie of this nature. Naturally, this led to much industry speculation that Spielberg somehow shortchanged the dinosaur picture to get on with *Schindler's List*.

His departure, Kennedy says, "was always part of the plan. The shooting schedule on *Jurassic* and the schedule on *Schindler's* have been set for two years; nothing has changed. *Schindler's* had to start when it did because Steven needed snow on the ground. It's too bad that everyone in this town is so cynical."



"There's so much more to this movie than just fighting dinosaurs," Kennedy says.

Even though she has now left Amblin to form a partnership with her husband, director/producer Frank Marshall, Kennedy still maintains some ties with Spielberg's company, and provides a few details of upcoming projects. Computer graphics won't be used for *The Flintstones*, for example. "We have the Henson Group working with us on that. That's a whole different tone; after all, *Dino's purple*," she laughs. "This is *not* an attempt to re-create real dinosaurs; here we can be much more cartoony. This starts shooting in May, with Brian Levant, who did *Beethoven*, directing."

She knows little about the other Amblin genre projects, including *Plastic Man*, *Zorro*, *Casper the Friendly Ghost* and *The Nearsighted Mr. Magoo*, but says that in all

cases, they are indeed on the schedule, with Amblin awaiting scripts on each film.

Kathleen Kennedy (who discussed her career in STARLOG #127) is a hands-on producer, and was on the set of *Jurassic Park* every day. But even with the long, slow FX process, the hurricane and the big scale of the movie, she had a great time. "I would say that this is one of the best experiences that I've had on a movie, simply because it was so well-organized and put together. We had a script we all loved, we had wonderful actors and it provided an environment for Steven to do his best work. And *he* had a wonderful time, too."

Now Universal and Amblin are hoping you'll have a wonderful time vacationing at *Jurassic Park* as well. ❁