Ray Harryhausen: Special Effects Titan

By Gilles Penso
Ray Harryhausen.

Ray Harryhausen monsters,
you know, they're all beautiful.

(Dragon roars)

(Woman screams)

(Creature snarls)

(Dinosaur roars)

(Creature roars)

I love Ray Harryhausen films,
those were a huge influence on me
as a kid.

I never knew who Ray Harryhausen was,
I just saw these things happening.
It was only later that I discovered
it was one guy giving life to these things.

(Man) That is very difficult,
to define myself in two words.
I would say I was a filmmaker
rather than just an animator
or a special effects person.
I'm in on the story at the beginning.
Sometimes I initiate the story.
I wear many different hats
in the production.
I even, at the end of the day,
go out and help sell the picture.
Ray is the only technician really
who is an auteur
It is a very unique position.
There really isn't anyone else like it.
He has a huge body of work.
There was nobody else
who was doing that sort of work.
I mean, he's the only person.
He himself is deeply influenced
by the master Willis O'Brien,
who had done King Kong.

(Ray) When I first saw King Kong
in 1933,
I wanted to do something
in the film business.
Well, in 1933, when I was 13,
King Kong nothing like it
had been put on the screen.
(Narrator) 'Truly
the thrill of thrills.
"Don't miss it
this time."
And it haunted me for years,
even though it was a little jerky.
This creature is amazing, you know,
it's so big, you know.
It just left an enormous impression.
It wasn't only the technical expertise,
it was the whole production of the Films.
They took you by the hand
from the mundane world of the Depression
and brought you
into the most outrageous fantasy
that has ever been put
on the screen.
It really set me off on my career.
I didn't know how the film was made
when I first saw it.
Finally, it came out in magazines
how King Kong was stop motion.
And that intrigued me,
so I started experimenting on my own
as a hobby, in my garage.
I took courses in photography
at USC at night school
and I studied various things,
art direction and film editing.
It gradually developed from a hobby
into a profession.
I couldn't find anybody
to make the figures
so I had to learn
to make them myself.
I couldn't find anybody to photograph it,
so I learned photography
and learned to do things myself.
Stop motion animation
is really basically
the same principle
as the animated cartoon,
only instead of using flat drawings,
you use a dimensional model. This has a rubber coating on the outside of a metal armature and as the shutter is closed on one frame of film, you move it slightly, you move the arms and you have to keep it all in synchronization. And then when you get hundreds of these still pictures, it gives the illusion that the thing is moving on its own. In my early days, I did mostly experiments with dinosaurs. (Man) We were both 18 and we both loved King Kong and I met his dinosaurs in his garage. I said, "Oh, God, this is incredible! "You build these, do you'?' He said, "Yes. Let me show you a piece of film I did." And he showed me a little tiny piece of 5mm film with his dinosaurs roaming over a prehistoric landscape. I said, "You know something I got to tell you?" He said, "What?" I said, "I think you're gonna be my friend for life." I wanted to make a film called E Evolution. It was about the development of life on Earth. And then Fantasia came along and so I abandoned it. They could do it so much better with Disney. But I had all these tests that I had made for dinosaurs for Evolution and I showed them to George Pal. (Man) George Pal was a European animator who went to America
to make a series of films there and was commissioned by Paramount to make the Puppetoons series. My first professional job was with the George Pal Puppetoons before the war. The George Pal technique, all the models were cutout ahead of time in wood. So there wasn't much creativity, you simply substituted a new figure. There was very little for an animator to put his own personality into. But it was an enormous part of Ray's early career. When he came out of the army in around about 1946, he found a thousand foot of Kodak 16mm footage. It was out of date, so they were throwing it out. So he used that for his first films, and those were the Mother Goose stories that became the first of the fairy tales. The fairy tales were really what I call my teething rings. (Tony) That's where he really learnt so much about film making. And he went on to make Little Red Riding Hood, Hansel and Gretel Rapunzel King Midas, and eventually, The Tortoise And The Hare. His mother and father helped him. His mother made a lot of the clothes for the fairy tales and his father obviously did a lot of the machining, the armatures and everything, based on Ray's designs. Fred and Martha, his parents,
were a huge part of his life. Most parents would have said, "No, no, you've gotta be a doctor or a plumber." I was very fortunate, I should say, that my father knew a lot about engineering and machine work and he used to make a lot of my armatures on the lathe at home.

(Tony) And Fred continued to make the armatures until just after hours! Men In The Moon, when he died.

So all the armatures seen in all the feature films were made by Fred. My first introduction to the work of Ray Harryhausen was the Mother Goose stories, actually, which at the time I was not aware that they were Ray Harryhausen's work.

(J' Frantic orchestral music) I was about nine or ten years old and, you know, it was all cozy, Christmas Eve, and this Films came on, which was Hansel and Gretel And I could not believe it, I was just so drawn into it, the magic of it. I don't know back then if I knew how stop frame animation was done, but I could see there were no strings. I think Ray Harryhausen is really the grandfather of stop frame animation. I mean, I know that there was Willis O'Brien as the great-grandfather. I'd kept in touch with Willis O'Brien. I had met him when I was still in high school. I called him up at MGM and he kindly invited me over. I brought some of my dinosaurs in my suitcase and showed them to him. And finally, after Merian Cooper and Willis O'Brien were going to make
Mighty Joe Young,
I became Willis O'Brien's assistant.
(Whistle blows)
(Sirens blare)
(Gorilla roars)
Here we were
making another gorilla picture,
which wasn't quite like King Kong
but it had a gorilla.
And gorillas are my best friends.
(Narrator) 'See Mighty Joe Young,
enraged by Hollywood pranksters,
'destroy film-land's swankiest nightclub
on the fabulous Sunset Strip.'
Willis O'Brien was busy
getting the next set-ups ready
and making tests and everything,
so I ended up doing
about 90 percent of the animation.
I think that's some of his best stuff,
cos the personality in Joe Young
is amazing.
And the way he moves,
he does move like a gorilla.
Whereas King Kong
doesn't move like a gorilla at all.
(Narrator) 'See the most fantastic
relationship between beast and beauty,
'a mere girl
mastering a primitive giant.'
(Ray) I thought I'd get in the mood
by eating celery and carrots
for my tea breaks
so that I felt like a gorilla. (Laughs)
The studio sent a cameraman
to the Chicago Zoo to photograph a gorilla.
All the gorilla did seem to do was
walk across the screen and pick his nose,
so we couldn't use that
to any great degree as a copy,
but it gave an idea
of how a gorilla moves.
(Narrator) Mighty Joe Young, whose
sensational exploits will startle you.'
After Mighty Joe Young, I did The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms. (I Dramatic orchestral music) (Roaring) (Explosions) (Screaming) (Beast roars) I didn't wanna duplicate the Lost World concept of having a real known dinosaur, so we devised this dinosaur between the writers and the producers and myself and called it the Rhedosaurus, a different type of animal that has never been seen before. (Narrator) 'The beast would come back, 'back to the caverns of the deepest Atlantic 'where it was spawned. 'An armored giant...'
(Bradbury) Ray Harryhausen and I showed up at the same time. He said, "Well, maybe some day you'll write a screenplay for me "and I'll do dinosaurs for you." I said, "I'm gonna pray to God for that." His budget for that was $5,000 to put all special effects together, build the models, miniatures, everything. (Ray) When we were making Mighty Joe Young we had 27 people on the stage. The budget went up so high. So I tried to reduce the whole process to a simple way of combining the live action with the animated model. (Man) He'd shoot the live action first then he would project it on a rear projection screen back there. Screen's here, projector's back there,
project one frame at a time.
In front of that, he would put a camera.
Then he'd put his animation table
and then he would take a puppet.
He'd then matte out the animation stage
the puppet was sitting on with paint.
So it was live action,
still frame, puppet, still,
black below.
Advance the projector,
pose the puppet,
take a frame of film,
et cetera, et cetera.
So what he'd do is he'd undo the
animation stage, lower it out of the screen,
he would then put a counter matte
which was painted
to block out the area that
had previously been exposed.
And so then he would put
the projector on frame one,
take a frame on the camera,
put the projector
on frame two,
take a frame on the camera,
et cetera, et cetera.
Now he had all of the live action
and the animation together in one go.
(Ray) You could intricately interweave
the animated model with live actors.
It looked like they were photographed
at the same time.
I tried to do a lot of research.
When I did The Bees;
I studied lizards.
So you have an influence
of these creatures
that are similar to
what may have happened in the past.
(Tony) The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms
being the first monster rampage movie
after King Kong, really,
and from The Bees; of course,
the Japanese made Godzilla.
Who was a man in a suit
stomping around on miniature sets.
(John Landis) Gojira is a direct result
of Beast From 20,000 Fathoms, exactly.
Toho said, "We'll make one of those!"
Ray's creatures,
the way they move
essentially is the way
we think of dinosaurs,
how they move.
I mean, even to this day.
I mean, when you see a movie
like Jurassic Park..
(Dinosaur growls)
- (Man screams)
- (Bones crunch)
It was, it was like
Ray did that kind of stuff all the time,
which is cool,
you wanna see people being eaten alive.
You know,
that's what it's about.
That's movie-making!
And Steven Spielberg,
when Ray was in town,
got him over to the editorial suite
for Jurassic Park
He showed me some of his beginning
of the CGI process
of the dinosaur
knocking the car off the bridge.
Ray was blown away by it. He thought
it was just really an amazing process.
I couldn't say anything negative
because it was most impressive!
I just wanna acknowledge the fact
that we wouldn't be here today
making these movies,
like Jurassic Park and like Avatar;
without Ray,
the father of all we do today
in the business of science fiction,
fantasy and adventure.
(James Cameron) I'd see
a Ray Harryhausen film,
and for the next five weeks,
I was drawing comic books,
my own comic books of that story.
But not just a clone of the story
but my own version of it.
So I was doing this for a long time.
So Avatar really represented
an opportunity for me
to do all those things
I had always dreamed about.
I think Ray would have loved to have
had access to the tools that we have now
for computer-generated
animated characters
because, you know, for him,
the stop motion puppetry
was a way for him to get the images
that were in his head up on film.
And that was the only way to do it
at that time.
(Ray) We had to compromise on scenes
that you'd wanna do differently
because of the technical limitations.
But we didn't know there would be
anything different at the time.
So just as O'Brien, when he started
The Lost World and King Kong,
they used the facilities
that they had at that time
and you didn't anticipate
the new types of electronics
that can do
the most amazing things.
If Ray were working right now, he'd be
using the tools that we're using right now.
He wouldn't cling to the puppetry.
His imagination would require
that he used the best,
most fantastic techniques available.
(Ray) Well, I don't know,
it's hard to say.
It's just another way of making films.
I think I would prefer to make films
with the model animation
rather than CGI, today even.
(I Dramatic orchestral music)
(Tony) Charles H. Schneer
was a young producer working at Columbia
and he saw
The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms
and wanted to meet Ray.
Charles said, "Well, I wanna make a movie
about a giant octopus
"that attacks San Francisco."
(Screaming)
They did
this film together
and they had terrible problems
with the San Francisco bridge.
We were obliged to submit the script of
It Came From Beneath The Sea
to the city fathers for approval
so we could get
the cooperation of the police.
When they read the script,
they turned it down
because they said
it would make the public lose confidence
that a creature can pull down
the Golden Gate Bridge.
So we had to do things
through devious means.
We put a camera
in the back of a bakery truck
and went back and forth on the bridge
to get projection plates secretly.
I mean, it's a fantasy film
and I'm sure that no-one lost confidence
in the Golden Gate Bridge
because a giant octopus
pulled it down. (Laughs)
(Screaming)
The octopus in It Came From Beneath
The Sea only had six legs.
That was because of the budget
restrictions, Ray had to save money,
and therefore he dropped two legs,
literally dropped two legs, so it's only got six. So you never see all of the tentacles out at one time because he hid them. Ray loves calling it the Sixtopus. (I Dramatic orchestral music) (Man) When we did Pirates Of The Caribbean here at ILM, Hal Hickel and all the guys that worked on that were big Harryhausen fans. And, for example, the Kraken had six legs because the octopus had a limited number of legs, of course, in It Came From Beneath The Sea. And a lot of the feeling of Davy, that sort of, you know, in-your-face performance came right from seeing Ray's film where it's an in-your-face performance going on. When Harryhausen animated the octopus for It Came From Beneath The Sea, I can imagine it must have been pretty difficult for him to get the character into tentacles. There's no face. We had a huge advantage when we created the tentacles for Dr. Octopus because we created faces, basically. So we would have a certain opening of the mechanical aspects of it that would create anger. We would have another one that would be curiosity, another one that would be sadness. And each tentacle had a range of emotion. I think it's pretty obvious that Sam Raimi is a huge fan of Ray Harryhausen if you take a look at the work on Spider-Man 2 Dr. Octopus. I mean, come on. Ray Harryhausen, to me, the most important thing that he has done
is to be an influence and to inspire
literally a generation
or probably two generations
of filmmakers.
I don't know anyone else that has taken
all these young adolescent children
who watched his movies
and turned them into filmmakers,
directors, writers, special effects men.
I wanted the movie to be an homage
to the Ray Harryhausen movies.
I'm very flattered that they find
that our films were that attractive
and tried to make
a similar type of image.
(Sirens blare)
(Narrator) 'The whole
world is under attack.
'Can it survive?'
(Screaming)
I found it a challenge
to try and make the metallic objects
like the flying saucer
have an intelligence inside,
even though we never showed
the actual people inside.
And that came out about the time
when there was a lot of flying saucer
clippings in the newspaper.
(Dennis Muren) How can you bring
a personality into a flying saucer?
And there were a lot of movies made
with saucers in the '50s
that were pretty dull to look at.
But Ray gave them personality and life
and you were just enthralled as a kid
looking at them.
(Tony) These are two
of the flying saucers.
They were designed by Ray,
very carefully designed by Ray
in great detail.
And they were machined and built
by Ray's father,
with Ray, Fred Harryhausen.
Ray built into the design
three nodules on each flying saucer
so that he could actually
suspend the actual machine.
And from each of the nodules
would come up to the aerial brace.
(Screeching)
He'd used wire braces.
If you think of a string puppet,
you have a cross like that
from which the strings hang
so you can manipulate the puppet.
He invented a geared aerial brace
where it would tilt the flying saucer.
So they'd be able to go in
at a certain angle.
I knocked over the Washington Monument
long before Tim Burton did. (Laughs)
His films, when I saw them, he just...
You felt the hand of an artist with him.
And it's something that's always
touched me and I've always remembered.
No matter what technology you use,
you know, whether it's
stop motion or cell
or live action or CGI,
you know, it doesn't really matter
what the technique is,
you try to find artists.
They come in many forms.
The Animal World was a film
that was being made by Irwin Allen,
an ex-agent
who had become a producer.
And he wanted to put a film together
about the animal world,
the animal kingdom.
He used 16mm film a lot
and blew it up to 35
from different cameramen
who had made pictures
in jungles and remote areas.
But it was going to have
an opening sequence of dinosaurs.
So Irwin Allen asked Willis O'Brien
to design the special effects
and Willis O'Brien asked Ray
to do the animation.
He would do the set-ups,
I.e. he would design everything.
It's only a very short sequence, I think
it's between 10 and 15 minutes long.
(Ray) I remember
when the first publicity came out,
the reviewers mentioned the dinosaur
sequence before any other sequence
and said that
that was the highlight of the picture.
So Willis O'Brien and I
were most grateful for that.
(Narrator) 20 Million
Miles To Earth.

(Roaring)
(Woman screams)
(Roaring)
(Roaring)
(Creature roars)
The creature in 20 Million Miles
To Earth went through many changes.
It was very stout. It had horns at
one point. It had one eye at one point.
(Tony) Originally
20 Million Miles To Earth was made,
as written by Ray and a dear friend of his,
Charlotte Knight,
as The Cyclops,
and was gonna be attacking Chicago.
(Ray) That was an early concept
of the Ymir.
(Tony) But Ray wanted to go to Italy,
specifically Rome.
(Ray) So I changed it around
because I wanted a trip to Europe.
And that's where he changed the creature
from a Cyclops into the Ymir.
(Ray) Finally I arrived
at the humanoid torso,
sort of a lizard combination
with a humanoid torso,
because I felt you could get much more
emotion out of a humanoid type of figure
rather than an animal type of figure.
(Man) The Ymir, coming at the end
of Ray's black and white period,
is probably the best black and white
monster that he ever created,
particularly in the early stages
when it's small
and it's doing things like this.
All the humanoid gestures
that make these monsters so personable
and make them
so much more appealing.
The design of the creature that we have
in Piranha is a little bit like the Ymir.
In Piranha, there was no stop motion
monster written into the script.
The stop motion monster
was in the movie
simply because Jon Davison,
the producer, and I liked stop motion.
Any kind of stop motion from my movies
is a tribute to Ray Harryhausen
Or Willis O'Brien...
You can't make a creature film
without thinking of Ray Harryhausen
because he created creatures
that were so sympathetic.
And let's face it, he made
the greatest monster movies of all time.
(I Dramatic orchestral music)
His monsters have a heart.
His monsters are charming.
So you might be frightened by them,
but when the movie's done, that's what
you remember and you care about it.
(Tony) Ray never calls
any of his creations monsters.
They're never called monsters,
they're always called creatures.
(I Dramatic orchestral music)
I destroyed New York
with the beast,
I destroyed San Francisco
with the octopus,
I destroyed Rome
with the Ymir
and I destroyed Washington
with the flying saucers.
And that got rather tedious.
So I was looking for a new avenue
in which to use stop motion animation.
And I latched upon Sinbad
(J' Dynamic
orchestral music)
(Creature roars)
'The 7th Voyage Of Sinbad
is the eighth wonder of the screen!'
The first sketch I made
was the skeleton on the spiral staircase.
And then I made
six or seven other drawings.
I did a 20-page outline
of how the story could develop.
And I took it around Hollywood
and nobody was interested.
Howard Hughes had just made
The Son of Sinbad
It flopped at the box office.
So most of the producers
that I showed it to, my drawings,
they said,
"Oh, costume pictures are dead."
No, it cannot be so.
(Ray) I brought the drawings out
and Charles Schneer got very excited.
But I had visions in mind
of doing it lavishly
like The Thief Of Bagdad
that Alexander Korda made.
So I re-evaluated it
and redesigned it
so that we could make it
for an inexpensive sum.
When he hooked up with Charles Schneer,
who was a sympathetic producer,
he gained a lot of power
and therefore he was able to go to
the story conferences
and able to design the movie
through the storyboards
and really have an extreme effect
at putting his mark on the pictures.
(Ray) We got several writers
to formulate a script,
a comprehensive script,
using my drawings as the basis,
and that's how
The 7th Voyage developed.
I remember growing up
with Maria Montez films.
She and Sabu and John Hall
made a series of Arabian Nights
pictures for Universal.
One was called
Ali Baba And The 40 Thieves.
And they would talk about the Roc,
they would talk about the Cyclops,
but you never saw it on the screen.
(Cyclops roars)
The critics started saying that it was
animated, the creatures were animated.
The average person
hears the word animation,
they immediately think of a cartoon.
So we found that many people,
particularly adults, stayed away
because they thought
it was for children.
So we tried to devise a new name called
Dynamation from "dynamic animation."
(Narrator) 'This is Dynamation!'
(I Dramatic orchestral music)
I designed the Cyclops very carefully
because I didn't want people to think
it was a man in a suit.
So I put goat legs on,
like a satyr in ancient mythology.
And I gave him an appearance
and three fingers
so that no-one could assume that
there was a man inside the Cyclops.
And I think it worked out very well.
Whereas I was beginning to learn
how to alter a human face
and a human head,
Harryhausen could do anything.
He could make a huge Wingspan
on a creature.
He could make something have a single
eye and make it blink. Backward-bent legs.
He could make dragons,
he could make octopus.
I couldn't do that. I could change
the shape of someone's nose.
I could turn myself into Mr. Hyde.
I could turn my friends into the Mummy.
But I couldn't do these fantastic creations.
And so, yeah,
I guess I was a little bit jealous
because it seemed
way out of my league.
I get more fan mail coming in about the
Cyclops I think than any other character.
My favourite Harryhausen creature
is always gonna be
the Cyclops in 7th Voyage
because that was the one that,
you know...
Suddenly it's in colour
and it comes out on the beach
and it's huge and it's got this strange
sort of motion to it you can't figure out
and it's angry
and it's gonna get poor Sinbad.
And, you know,
you never forget that.
It was so inspiring
that it made you wanna make movies.
Are we going anywhere special tonight?
I just got us into a little place
called, erm, Harryhausen.
(Laughs)
You know, Ray, my first success, if you like, in movies was when I was 15 years old and I made a film for a high school competition called The Valley And it actually won the award for best special effects and this was the star of that movie. You'll see a similarity to somebody that you created a long time ago. When I was 12, 13 years old, and other kids were getting interested in cars and sports and girls, I used to like monsters, and I particularly loved Ray's films. I think Peter Jackson said he had a bunch of stop motion things that he had done. He wanted to be Ray Harryhausen. He tried doing this stuff and was like, "No, maybe I'll be a director instead!" Without The 7th Voyage Of Sinbaoi you would never have The Lord of the Rings. Peter had developed his way of directing scenes and I had developed my way of directing and designing scenes and when we did Lord of the Rings, we collaborated on designing and directing sequences which emulated what we felt was the best of Harryhausen. Ray Harryhausen, he's a child himself, to some degree. He's able to connect with the audience and say, "isn't this amazing, isn't this cool? "Creatures, monsters, let's bring them to life." On Alice in Wonderland Tim Burton obviously is a big fan of Ray's and the last sequence with the Jabberwocky,
we wanted to touch a little bit on Ray's work.
So the Jabberwocky does certain stances and things.
He doesn't fly. He does more Harryhausen type of movement.
(Jabberwocky roars)
And the location it takes place in is kinda like taking Rob Stromberg's designs, a bit of Jason And The Argonauts squeezed into the spiral staircase to nowhere from 7th Voyage.
(Ray) If you had James Bond fighting a skeleton, it'd be comical.
But having a legendary character like Sinbad, who personifies adventure, you would accept it more readily as a melodramatic story.
We had Enzo Musumeci, who was an Italian fencing expert. And when we would rehearse, he would play the skeleton in The 7th Voyage. He'd give claps of his hands to get a beat.
They knew that at that point, they had to stop their sword and not let it go through.
When the first 7th Voyage Of Sinbad was released in England, they cut out the whole skeleton sequence. They said it would frighten children.
Good Lord, what you see on the screen today is more horrifying than any skeleton on the screen!
(J' Majestic orchestral music)
The 3 Worlds Of Gulliver was a classic story and that really brought us over to Europe, because The 3 Worlds Of Gulliver required big people and little people,
little Liputians. We used to have to wait maybe six weeks to get a composite print of what we called traveling matte where two pieces of film are interwoven with one another in the optical printer. And the Rank laboratory had a traveling matte system that would make the picture very practical. So we decided to move our whole operation to Europe and use the sodium backing that the Rank laboratory had in England. Music I found very important. I discovered that when I first saw King Kong. The fact that the score for King Kong enhanced the film so much, I became interested in music and what it could do to heighten the emotion of the visual. Ray has a passion for film music. He actually animates to music sometimes to give him inspiration. A very famous one is the snake woman from 7th Voyage Of Sinbad. He used to play Shhrazade to that and that gave him inspiration before Bernard Herrmann came on board. Bernie Herrmann, I used to listen to his music on Orson Welles' radio show. (Tony) It was Charles Schneer that managed to get Bernard Herrmann on board and he went on to write exceptional scores for 7th Voyage Of Sinbad Gulliver, Mysterious Island and Jason And The Argonauts... And his music is very unique and was just made for our type of film. (I Dynamic orchestral music) The scores that Bernard Herrmann wrote
for Ray Harryhausen
are certainly some of the most exciting,
I think, that he wrote.
- Where's Gulliver?
- Here I am!
Down here.
(I Dramatic orchestral music)
Glumdalclitch! Down here!
Bernard Herrmann
was very strange and very quirky
but he also had the adventure sense.
Grand, but quirky and strange.
(Man) The Harryhausen movies, for sure,
that's where Herrmann was at his best,
as an orchestrator
doing incredibly unique things,
being extraordinarily colourful,
and two, being highly dramatic
in the best of ways.
He contributes greatly
to the believability of it all
because he takes it so seriously.
Every composer I've ever known who's
worked in fantasy or horror films or sci-fi
have talked about
how he's influenced them.
Ray got on
with Bernard Herrmann very well,
as you can tell
from most of his animation sequences.
We wanted to make fantasy memorable
and I think that's occurred.
(Woman screams)
Fantasy, I would say,
appealed to my sort of gothic mind,
from my German ancestors,
I suppose.
Fantasy is
magnificent on film.
There's
no other medium
that you can express yourself in fantasy
the way you can in films.
(J Dramatic
orchestral music)
(Narrator) 'Whatever you have imagined
in your wildest dreams
'now becomes a visual reality,
'as Jules Verne's most fantastic adventure
in space and time...'
(Ray) Mysterious island
was another problem.
The studio, Columbia Pictures,
had a script
and after we'd made
The 7th Voyage,
they felt that perhaps we would be
interested in doing Mysterious Island
which was a Jules Verne story.
We used the basic principles
of The Mysterious Island
but we had to make it more interesting
because it ended up as just
how to survive on a desert island.
We re-storied the whole basic line
to add to the final screenplay
that you saw on the screen.
At first, it started out
as a prehistoric background.
We were gonna have dinosaurs.
Then we decided against that.
And finally, when Captain Nemo
became prominent in the story,
we decided to have it based on
him trying to produce more food
for the world by growing everything large.
We would have many so-called
sweat-box sessions
where the writer would turn in
a certain number of pages
and we would tear it apart
and analyse it.
Then I would bring drawings
of what I thought we could do
lavishly on the screen for little money.
Then it was the writer's job
to incorporate all these suggestions
and drawings into the final screenplay.
I have a two-year-old daughter
who loves Mysterious Island
a movie she calls
"Big Chicken Fall Down".
(Woman screams)
(Narrator) 'Jules Verne,
a man whose great stories
inspired such unusual films as
'Around The World In 80 Days,
20,000 Leagues Under The Sea,
Journey y To The Centre Of The Earth,
'surpasses them all
with Mysterious Island'
(Screaming)
The crab came from
Harrods department store.
It was a live crab
when I bought it at the fish market
and we had a lady at the museum
put it down in a humane way.
She took all the meat out of the inside
and I put an armature
in the actual crab.
The next step was to try to put
Greek mythology on the screen.
(J' Majestic
orchestral music)
Some of the films
are better made than others.
And some of them
have better scripts than others.
I mean, Jason And The Argonauts
probably has the most literate screenplay,
and so it's a better movie.
A lot of people find
Jason And The Argonauts
is one of our best films.
It's my favourite
because it was the most complete.
(Joe Dante) The plots of Harryhausen
movies are fairly consistent,
and I think that's one of the reasons that
Jason And The Argonauts sticks out,
because there's a lot of other
Greek baggage that goes with that story.

(Ray) Basically, the Talos sequence came from an idea I had about the Colossus of Rhodes.

(I Dramatic orchestral music)

In the original tale of Jason And The Argonauts, Talos is just an eight-foot mechanical creature.

(John Landis) If you look at Talos, how does a man of bronze move, you know? And it's just so miraculous how that moves and how he creates this sense of size, how enormous, enormous. IS...

I mean, what other monster is as big as Talos? I mean, just enormous! Without changing any expression.

I mean, Talos is a statue.

When he's dying, grabbing for his throat, the way he moves is something!

(Man) I want to speak on behalf of all the actors that appeared in Harryhausen films. They weren't all monsters, they weren't all effects, there were real live actors in there.

What I do remember was the hands-on ability he had to direct us.

I ran along the sand and what astonished me was that Ray ran with me. And he said, "I looked up to the sky, there was the monster."

There was no monster, just a big blue emptiness. But he said, "Fall now!" I fell...

We were trained to be classical actors, to appear at the Old Vic. That was our standard.
But there was I eating sand in Palinuro.
But loved it, loved it!
Loved being there, being part
of this titanic imagination of this man.
(Peter Jackson) I love the fact that
when you're watching one of his movies,
you're aware that you're looking
at literally a performance of his.
I mean, he's acting
through all these different creatures,
whether it's a Cyclops
or a snake with nine heads.
I mean, you're seeing...
you're seeing his acting abilities.
As an animator,
you have to kind of become an actor.
You know, you're...
Before you do a piece of action,
you often either look at yourself
in the mirror
or you act it through on video
just to see what it is,
and you put something of yourself...
You know, you try to put emotion
into an inanimate puppet.
He sort of starts in his brain,
goes through his fingers
into the creatures that he's animating
and finally onto the screen.
I asked him once, with the Hydra,
with all those seven heads,
I said, "How did you keep track'?'"
He said, "I have no idea."
(Tony) This is the seven-headed Hydra
from Jason And The Argonauts.
It's probably one of the biggest
of Ray's models.
As you see, it has incredible detail.
The complexity of it,
seven heads, two tails.
Ray could never make anything
easy for himself.
He would always make it
more complex each time.
(Ray) The Hydra came from the Hercules legend. We had to bring that in. We didn't want a dragon because there had been dragons on the screen before, so we chose the Hydra. (Tony) This creature, like most of the creatures in Ray's films, were built in Ray's workshop in his London house. (I Dramatic orchestral music) (Ray) There is a sequence in the original tale of Jason where corpses come out of the ground, rotting corpses which are not very pleasant to look at, at least in that time. Well, we didn't want to get an X for our film so we made them clean-cut skeletons. And we had seven skeletons. Seven is a magic number all through mythology. And we had seven skeletons fighting three men. He always tried, like filmmakers do today, to outdo themselves. And that's why one skeleton developed from 7th Voyage into seven skeletons in Jason And The Argonauts... Why have one when you can have seven? (Laughs) This is one of the original skeletons from Jason. He has every joint that a real skeleton would have. We photographed the live action first with stuntmen who portrayed the skeletons who were swordsmen. We'd time it very carefully and maybe rehearse it ten times, and then the final piece of film, the stuntmen are removed
and the actors shadow-box.
And that as a piece of film
I rear-project behind these skeletons
so that the human being
is the same size as the skeleton.
(J' Frantic orchestral music)
When the skeleton kills Andrew Faulds
against the temple
and Andrew Faulds falls on the ground,
and the skeleton looks around
and he then jumps over the body,
that's an aerial brace,
the use of an aerial brace.
Aerial wire animation takes a lot longer
and it's very complicated.
Most people would have had it
stepping over or going around,
but Ray had him jumping over.
That's the difference.
That's the Harryhausen touch.
(Ray) Sometimes I would only get
about 13 to 15 frames a day.
It took four months
to animate to the sequence.
It only took two weeks
to photograph the live action.
They pretty much used
every single frame that they shot, too,
so it was... He was very economical.
Almost everything was take one.
98 percent, 99 percent was take one.
An amazing achievement
if you think about it.
We never had money or budget or time
to do retakes.
(Steve Johnson) I think if he finessed it
and did two takes, three takes,
it wouldn't come from his heart.
He would refine it too much
in his mind
and it would not be
what he initially thought.
And H.R. Giger taught me that. The more
quickly you get your ideas out of your head
and up on the screen or onto the canvas, the more real it's gonna be.
I believe Clive Barker told me the same thing.
He said, "When I'm painting, I like to make mistakes."
And I think that has a lot to do with why Harryhausen's stuff really resonates and sticks and stays in all of our minds, because it's very pure.

(J' Frantic orchestral music)
When I was about 12 years old, I remember rushing home, I couldn't wait to see Jason And The Argonauts for the first time.
And I was just so gobsmacked.
The skeleton fight in Jason And The Argonauts? I can practically remember what row I was sitting in at this little theatre in Orangeville, Ontario, at the age of nine when the images of those skeletons leaped off the screen and drilled straight into my DNA.
I know this isn't real but, boy, it sure looks real.
And that's the feeling I had as a young boy in the theatre watching Ray's films. When you're transported as a young person to these fantastic worlds, whether it was Greece or wherever it was, and skeletons move around and sword-fights happen, this is magic!

(J' Frantic orchestral music)
I'm sure there's a direct link between those demonic skeletons and the chrome death figure in The Terminator.
So, Ray, I hope you can forgive me and remember that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.
I see a lot of sequences that we had originally done years ago
reproduced in various films of today. 
Very flattering! 
(Narrator) 'The Hrs! Men In The Moon.
'An experience unparalleled 
on the screen 
['as two worlds meet and clash] 
(Ray) H.G. Wells, 
I was a great admirer, 
and I wanted... 
After Mighty Joe Young 
I wanted to do War of the Worlds 
and I made a lot of drawings 
and an outline for the story structure. 
I wrote to Orson Welles 
but I never got an answer. 
I wanted to do The Time Machine 
but somebody else 
had already taken the rights. 
Finally we did a Wells story 
called Hrs! Men In The Moon. 
(J' Dramatic string music) 
We tried to keep that feeling that 
the insects developed an intelligence 
rather than the mammals. 
I think Ray Harryhausen 
would probably say 
that he was influenced 
by Georges Mlis. 
If you look at his work, 
it really is part of a continuum 
that goes back to the birth of cinema. 
(I Slow piano music) 
Actually, Ray has 
a personal business card 
of Georges Mlis. 
Ray, oh, yes, 
a huge admiration for Mlis, 
and I think most fantasy filmmakers do. 
(Man) The First Men in The Moon 
aliens are... 
Nowadays we would look 
at them as kind of 
this B-grade, you know, clich, 
kind of like...
But a clich I actually really love.
I love the fact
that when we design aliens
for feature films or comics
or games or whatever,
humans keep on going back
to the same grab bag of elements.
They're insectoid or they're reptilian
or they're, like, octopi
or cephalopods and stuff.
We just go back to the same cliches
again and again.
Everything humans think is creepy, crawly
and disgusting, that's what aliens become.
(Man) Stand back!
(Vincenzo Natali) Essentially the best
effects films, like District Q
are the ones where you can feel
the hand of the creator
within the design and execution
of the creatures.
What's important to remember is when you
look at the link between Ray Harryhausen
and the work of, say, ILM or Phil Tippett
is how much there actually is
in common between them.
And really, in essence,
how little has changed
in spite of how the technology's evolved.
(Creature growls)
I'm always saying to the guys
that I work with now on computer graphics,
you know, "Do it like Ray Harryhausen,"
or, "Why don't you just look at a
Harryhausen shot and see what he did?"
And I'm always going back to that well
because of the economy
and the simplicity.
Take guard!
There's this tendency with computer
graphics, because you can do it,
if you want somebody to reach
and pull something in,
there tends to be, like, these ridiculous
flourishes and all this extra stuff. It's like, "What's that about?" "Just do it," you know? "Just get to it and tell the story as directly as possible."

One of the ironies is all the great innovators in computer-generated animation are all stop motion animators. I mean, you know, Phil Tippett, Dennis Muren, these guys, they were all animators. The first job I got was actually doing stop motion for a commercial and I think that really sort of helped to figure out the character, what its performance is, what it's feeling, and communicating that idea in a few frames to the public. The role of the animator is changing. First of all, you've got motion capture, you've got all these tools available to you, so the actors are giving us amazing reference.

- How will I know if he chooses me?
- He will try to kill you.

The CG character would be from their performance, exactly as they did it, down to the minutest detail. And so the animators, who are very important in the process, they would do the tail, the ears, and they would ensure that the actor's performance was exactly replicated in the CG. Art challenges technology. Technology inspires the art. And I would argue that's the way that every master of every medium of animation, be it puppet animation, clay animation,
computer animation,
hand-drawn animation,
that exact thing happens with them.
Well, there's room for every type of media
for entertainment.
After all, that's the end product,
is to entertain the public.
If you can entertain them with a yo-yo,
well, that's fine,
use a yo-yo for entertainment.
But that's rather difficult.
(Narrator)
'One Million Years BC.
'Introducing the fabulous Raquel Welch
as Loana The Fair One,
'John Richardson as Tumak'
(Ray) One Million BC is another matter.
I made that for Hammer films.
And they bought the rights
to a remake of it,
a 1940 film with Victor Mature
and Carole Landis.
I don't like retakes, basically,
but I felt we could do better
than the original
where they used lizards
with fins glued on their back
and they had a tyrannosaurus
with a man in a rubber suit
that looked so phony,
they had to keep hiding it behind bushes.
So all you saw was an eye
or a finger or something.
So I wanted to change that concept
by using animation.
(Dinosaur roars)
A lot of the motion
is developed on the screen
and comes from the character.
If you have a dinosaur,
I like to keep it active
by having the tail
swooshing all the time.
I used to read dinosaur books
and imagine going to see them,
what it would be like to stand next to them
and then I discovered this film
where there are real people with dinosaurs
and I couldn't believe it.

(Roaring)
My influence was Charles R. Knight,
the key figure in
the American Museum of Natural History.
He was the first one to restore dinosaurs
from the basic skeletons.
Here is an example
of some prehistoric restorations
and then we start actually
from the skeleton, the basic skeleton,
to plan the armature
for the rubber models.
And then we go to the museums
and actually see the skeletons
and try to develop our animals
in a way that they're well known
from the museum point of view.

(Dinosaur roars)
Ray Harryhausen's work
had a huge influence on us
during the design of King Kong.
There were lots of ways
we could possibly go
with the design of the creatures
and the dinosaurs.
And Peter said he didn't want them
to be real dinosaurs,
he wanted them
to be movie dinosaurs.
So we were trying to evoke that era
of dinosaurs from movie history
and really capture that.
And in that sense, they're more
sort of monsters and characters
more than they're true animals.

(Dinosaurs roar)
(Woman) I remember one scene
when we were in Lanzarote,
this is when these pterodactyls
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were kind of coming over us, and we didn't know this, we didn't see this, but Ray got onto a flatbed truck and drove in front of us while we, in our little wet, skimpy little pieces of leather, brandished our spears...

(Laughs)

...at these things.

(Growls, laughs)

(Ray) Raquel Welch was cast in the picture. That was one of her first films. She never looked like a real cavewoman She wasn't supposed to. That wouldn't have been very entertaining to the public. If cave women in prehistoric days looked like Raquel Welch, we've regressed today! (Laughs)

Gwangi was another story. Willis O'Brien started Gwangi at RKO way back in the '40s. And unfortunately, the war came along and they canceled the picture after OB spent about a year preparing it. So he kindly gave me a script years ago and I had it in my garage and Charles and I were looking for a subject one time and I brought out this whole script of Gwangi O'Brien's original idea was to have cowboys roping a dinosaur for the Sideshow. That always impressed me. And we tried to keep that part of it in the picture.

(Tony) The lasso sequence in that, of course, was incredibly complex. The lassos from both sides of the... the cowboys lassoing the monster
around the neck or on the foot,
would be lassoing this pole on this Jeep
which would be hurtling around.
He put the screen together at the back
so he obliterated the Jeep
with the monster stick.
The miniature ropes would be
tied to the monster around the neck
and that would go off at exactly,
match the exact same direction
as the live action would
on the rear projection plate.
It took well over two and a half months
to film that one sequence.
- (Dinosaur roars)
- (Men scream)
(Chaotic shouting)
(Man) Ray, we owe you more
than we can ever really express,
based on all of the roads
that you pioneered and built from dirt
into a super-highway
of eventual digital technology.
The V-rexes in King Kong were...
They're fundamentally different
from what we know real dinosaurs to be.
They had this heavy-set tail that was
hanging down, they had three fingers
and they're basically inspired by things
like Gwangi from Ray Harryhausen.
(Joe Dante) Harryhausen has never
worked with a, quote, "great director."
No-one ever says, you know,
it's a Jim O'Connolly movie
or it's a Nathan Juran movie.
It's always a Ray Harryhausen movie.
It was his concepts,
the creatures in them were from his mind,
so they were his films.
A lot of directors couldn't see that.
There were examples where the director
did not approve of Ray
being on location shoots,
but didn't quite understand
why he was there.
Even though the scripts
would detail in Ray's drawings
exactly what was gonna happen
in that sequence.
(Ray) I make hundreds
of continuity drawings
which show the progression
of the scene
and then I direct
those scenes myself.
Ray Harryhausen
was the star of those movies.
I couldn't really tell you
who the actors were in the films
but I certainly remember the creatures.
I mean, the thing with the Films.
I think there's some terrible acting in it,
the scripts aren't the greatest,
but, boy, his elements,
when he made clay live,
are still some of the best moments in Films.
(Woman) I was probably
about six or seven at the time
and I remember two old ladies came up
and said, "Oh, hello, sweetheart.
Can we have a look in your baby buggy'?
"Yeah, you can look at my dollies,"
you know?
Pulled back and there was Gwangi!
Of course, instead of dolls,
I had dinosaurs.
To me, it was normal.
Dad had them all over the house.
And he didn't have an oven
and so he used our oven
to cook his creatures in.
And lunch times and dinner times
used to be very interesting
because everything
tasted of latex rubber.
And after a while of having roast chicken
tasting like rubber, it was not so funny.
(Ray) By the time we finished the picture,
which took a year and a half, 
they had sold the studio 
and the new owners 
didn't have any respect 
for what the previous owners sanctioned, 
so they just dumped Gwangi 
on the market. 
Unfortunately, 
it was released too late. 
If it had come out 
in the '50s or early '60s, 
I think it would have been 
better received. 
The word Gwangi 
suggests something like Godzilla, 
so everybody thinks that 
maybe it was made in Japan. 
You'd need a very big publicity campaign 
to make people aware 
that it was an unusual Films. 
It's sad because a lot of people feel 
it's one of our better pictures, too. 

(J' Rousing 
orchestral music) 
(Narrator) 'See the sorcerer 
of the black arts, 
'the gold helmet faceless Vizier, 
'the death fight of the centaur and the 
griffin, the six-armed goddess of evil.' 
- (Roaring) 
- (Explosion) 
(Ray) Gwangi was not a big success 
at the box office 
so we decided to go back 
to the Sinbad pictures. 
So I devised two stories, 
Golden Voyage and Eye Of The Tiger. 
When you work with Ray, 
you're absolutely sure what you're doing. 
It comes from his drawings, 
drawings that I, as a sculptor, 
could reproduce his things in full size. 
His work is so accurate in conception 
that there's no ambiguity,
so I knew what I was doing.
Ray was the king, the god,
and you did what he said.
One of the toughest things
about integrating a character
is really making it appear
to be in the scene.
And the best way to do that is to...
...create something
that physically happens, really on set.
And it had to be rigged
by the special effects department.
(J' Dreamy orchestral music)
Working with Ray Harryhausen
was the most amazing experience for me.
I was a relatively,
well, very unknown actress
and had never worked
with his stop motion Dynamation.
There was nothing to work with.
Ray used to show us
these wonderful drawings that he'd done
and say, "Now, this is what
you're going to be reacting to,
"but it's not a drawing, it's a real-life,
huge, enormous creature,
"17, 20-foot high.
"So this is what
you're gonna be reacting to."
So you kind of become like a child,
in a way,
and remember how you used to play.
And then Ray,
his eye-line was a stick,
so he'd have the stick,
and on the stick he'd drawn this eye,
which for me was the centaur's eye.
And Ray would wield the eye.
"Look at the eye! Look at the eye!"
And this was Ray's eye-line for the actors.
(Joe Dante) It's hard to get actors
to look in the right place.
They look like they're looking further
than they're supposed to.
It takes a particular kind of actor who can look at a distance and make you think he's looking in the middle distance as opposed to far away. (Narrator) 'Behind this door lies a world of wonders, 'a studio where special effects wizard Ray Harryhausen 'and producer Charles Schneer 'make the unreal real in the magic of Dynarama for countless moviegoers. 'In their new film, The Golden Voyage Of Sinbad 'Schneer and Harryhausen move from the drawing board 'to a sunny beach in Majorca.' (Ray) We were originally going to shoot The Golden Voyage in India, and Kali was a result of planning the picture for India. But when we changed our mind and shot it in Spain, for many reasons, we left the Kali sequence in. We felt it would be a very good dramatic situation. (J' Sitar music) (Ray) My work seemed to bridge O'Brien's period into the modern Star Wars effects. I think my favourite creature from a Ray Harryhausen film would probably be from the first one I ever saw, which was The Golden Voyage Of Sinbad And it was the Kali, the giant statue that comes to life. And it was just so shocking to see it so beautifully rendered and animated and I think it stands the test of time. It hasn't really aged one bit. And I still find it terrifying. Many critics called our films a special effects film, which they were not.
We used every effect at the time in order to put the fantasy subject on the screen.

(Narrator) 'Journey across the oceans of antiquity to the northern edge of the ancient world.'

'Filmed in the miracle of Dynarama. Come face-to-face with the prehistoric troll.

'See the sorceress bring life to the all-powerful minotaur.

Sinbad And The Eye Of The Tiger

There's something that happens with stop motion that I've always felt, when you use an actual model rather than computer-generated images, the model is strange, it gives the nightmare quality of a fantasy.

(John Lasseter) It wasn't really very realistic, but it was great because he was creating fantasies. I don't, as a filmmaker, and at Pixar, we don't ever wanna make things that are absolutely perfectly real. We like to, like Ray, take a step back from reality.

(Ray) If you make fantasy too real, I think it loses the quality of a nightmare, of a dream.

With stop motion, you can never quite get it to look real and that's actually an asset, because you get a sense of the work that's gone into it and it makes the performance much more dynamic, possible. There's really no constraints except the artist doing it. It's not the same as with a CG thing, because CG, our brain seems to know that's not quite the same
as an actual piece of physical material that's been given life. This is like the Golem. I mean, our whole world. It's like God creating Adam. You take clay and you give it life and then it breathes, and Ray did that! And it's the result of that particular kind of animation, I think. (Dennis Muren) There's something cold about computer graphics. I don't think it was always this way. Maybe I'm looking back fondly at some of the early stuff that was done that seemed to me more realistic. I think we could touch the dinosaur in Jurassic. As an industry, we're turning out so many shots so quickly that we haven't had time to catch up and learn how to do it. And when we were doing the first stuff at ILM, back in the early '90s, you know, we spent months or even a couple of years figuring out how to make this thing look like an object and not like a graphic. That was the big challenge at that point. I would find it rather unappealing to sit at a desk and just push buttons to get a visual image on the screen. I think they're really two different things. Stop motion is what it is, an art form and a sense of tactile feel and the artist is visible in every frame. CG is something else that's more of a fluidity and it's just different. Stop motion is still alive, it's not dead. People say, "Oh, it's a lost art", but it's not a lost art. I mean, Henry Selick and Nick Park, there's a lot of people
doing stop motion still.
(John Lasseter) All the guys at Aardman
doing clay animation.
I mean, come on!
Do you really wanna see
Wallace & Gromit
in any other medium? No!
The storytelling that they do,
the subjects that they choose,
lend itself to the stop motion medium.
(Nick Park) You know, when you're sat
there with a character, it's in front of you,
you use your fingers,
you're holding it, you're handling it,
there's a kind of...
There is a kind of connection.
Unlike all the other types of animation,
what you see is a real performance.
It starts at frame one
and the animator
has to make that journey.
In other forms of animation,
you'll do these key poses
and then a computer or an assistant
will in-between.
And you can manipulate those
and change.
To lock yourself away in a studio
and be able to move something
with hundreds of joints...
If you lose the thread,
the thing just becomes nonsense.
(Phil Tippett) Shots can sometimes take
up to 15 or 20 hours.
If there's a mistake,
if there's one mistake,
if the camera goes crazy
or your puppet breaks, you're doomed
and you have to
start the process all over again.
Occasionally, if the phone rings,
I answer it and that's maybe
where you'll see a little bit of a jerk
because I'd forgotten
whether one head was going forward
or one head was going backward.
Now, with digital and videotape,
the stop motion animators
have a way of keeping track.
Ray did it all in his head!
(Monkey chatters)
You animate the model
and one pose leads to another pose.
It is like sculpting, you have to know
what you're doing and then just do it,
because if you try to think about it,
your brain would implode.
It's not an intellectual thing,
it's an intuitive thing.
And I think that, for me,
is really important, to have that contact
and you're manipulating it
frame by frame
so you're kind of struggling with it.
Like in any kind of a live performance,
you always leave an allowance
for some other adjustment
that you may wanna do.
You may be thinking that
you're gonna do this,
but you'll get into it
and all of a sudden you'll realise,
"You know what?
I could do this instead."
And so you can improvise.
(Ray) You may know the broad concept
of what's happening in the scene
but all the little details
are put in as you go along
by your imagination.
(Creature roars)
There was a man who said, "Why do you
go to the trouble of using stop motion?
"Why don't you put a man in a suit'?"
Well, that's the easy way out.
In the 15 features I've made
and the many shorts,
I did all the animation myself.
And I was able to do that
up until the '80s.
I was a loner.
I preferred to work by myself
because animation requires
an enormous amount of concentration.
In the days of Ray Harryhausen,
it was Ray
and a guy that used to click the shutter
on the camera.
And he'd do the thing and the guy would
click. And it was two guys doing it.
Now it's an army.
Today, of course,
it takes 80 people, 90 people.
You see them credited on the screen.
One person does the eye,
one person does the nose,
one person does the tail of the donkey.
One person's doing the facial,
another person's doing the body.
Sometimes another person can be doing
even tail motion or ear motion.
People doing the layout,
people doing the muscle rigs,
people doing the facial rigs,
people doing the lighting.
You know, there's a whole team
that's a shader team.
There are people doing things
I don't even know what they do!
It's a different atmosphere.
Some shots that are done today
with computer graphics
were the entire budget for their movies.
And so the economy of a singular guy
working on this thing,
it was very important that he was able
to have creative control over the stuff.
Now it's such a big organization
with many, many producers and
many effects technicians working on it,
it's difficult to give a singular vision.
There really aren't very many singular
vision films actually made any more, unless you're a Spielberg or a Cameron or a Peter Jackson, a director strong enough to be able to put that vision all the way through, and even then, it kind of needs to be watered down cos there are so many people working on it. One person must arbitrate between many, many good ideas. You know, should it be lit like this or should it be lit like that? And they're all valid choices. Should the creature be green or Should ii be brown? Any choice you make is gonna be valid when you're working with such talented people. But one person does have to arbitrate and sometimes it's a very arbitrary choice. That is defined by specific individuals, by an author, and in most cases, that's the director, but with Ray Harryhausen, it was the visual effects artist. I'm grateful that I was able to do what I did without having any interference from the studio or from anyone. I remember somebody made a film some years ago about Medusa and they had just an actress with a wig on with snakes. Every time she walked, they would bobble up and down, you know? It wouldn't frighten a two-year-old child. So I always wanted to animate Medusa and I had a great chance when Clash Of The 77?ans came about. I tried to design her so that she wouldn't have clothes. That's why I gave her a reptilian body, because I didn't wanna animate
flowing cloth.
We gave her the arrow
from Diana's bow and arrow
and the rattlesnake's tail,
so she could be a menace
from the sound-effect point of view.
It became a big problem
because she had 12 snakes in her hair
and each snake had to be moved,
the head and the tail,
every frame of film,
along with her body and her face
and her eyes and the snake body.
The Medusa sequence,
if you see that film,
the tension that builds up between...
...the actor and his shield
and everything
that goes on there,
and you realise the bulk of it
is just stop motion,
close-ups of stop-motion.
It's a wonderful piece of work.
(Ray) I wanted green eyes for Medusa,
but I couldn't get them
so I had to use blue eyes,
unfortunately.
They were dolls' eyes, little
baby dolls' eyes that were put in her skull,
and you would roll them around
with the stop motion process.
I would move them
with an eraser of a pencil.
(Guillermo del Toro) People think
if you design monsters,
you design them for the sake
of making them cool,
but you never do that.
You design them to be
the character that you want them to be.
A good monster has to have character,
has to have a personality,
you know, it has to be
crazy, savage, funny.
Whatever you wanna use, you have to define it by the silhouette, the details, you know? And if the monster works like that then it's a well-designed monster. (Ray) The monster that attacked Andromeda in Greek mythology, there are various concepts of a dragon-like creature. I wanted to make it semi-human so it would make the story a little more logical. I gave it sort of the arms of an octopus with hands on the end of it. And he developed from that point of view. The Kraken was a word that is not in Greek mythology. That comes from Norse mythology more. We needed a word and I guess the writer felt that was the right word to use. (Steve Johnson) I do think it's very important to sketch creatures before you sculpt them, for the very simple reason, again, it comes to the purity. Your mind can move your hand on a paper in two dimensions much more quickly than it can move your fingers in three dimensions. And if you sculpt something, it takes longer. If you sketch something, you can do it more quickly and get your concept out. All my illustrations are in black and white. I never cared much for colour. It took too long for one thing, for me, and I was never groomed in colour, to speak of. I learned mostly by doing it myself. Ray obviously did very simple drawings that were perfunctory, because they were for himself, he knew he was gonna build from the design.
And he had that luxury of being the one that was actually gonna realise everything from design through to actual... what was gonna get printed to each frame.

(Ray) My influences over the years was largely Gustave Dore, a French artist in the Victorian period. He illustrated the Bible, many thousands of pictures. Up until that time, Ray, of course, had done all the animation on his own.

(Ray) When Clash Of The Titans came about, I found that due to technical difficulties I had to hire other people to do some animation.

(Tony) And he found two animators to help him, the great Jim Danforth, an American animator, and an English animator called Steve Archer. Steve did a lot of the Bubo sequences. Jim, I believe, did a lot of the Pegasus sequences. And their input into that film was just enormous.

When I came to London to do An American Werewolf In London, I went to visit him at Pinewood. He and Jim Danforth were animating Pegasus, the flying horse, and it was just extraordinary how much time it took to light. I mean, forget the animation, just to light, because they had to hide all the wires. I think I was there four or five hours, they probably got two or three seconds of usable footage. I mean, it was amazing!

(Steve Johnson) When an audience goes to see a movie and there's a special effect, it's kind of like
when you go to see a magician.
A magician pulls a rabbit out of a hat.
You know he's not really
pulling that rabbit out of his hat,
but you know he tricked you somehow,
and so you feel involved
because you wanna figure it out.
This is the way it was
with Harryhausen's stuff
from his rear-projection to his
live-action pieces to his stop motion.
How did he do it? One of the drawbacks
to computer animation,
it takes the audience out of the equation.
The audience isn't as involved.
They generally know it's CGI. So I think
it puts a little bit of a distance
between the audience and the movies,
unfortunately.
I remember
in the old James Bond movies
there would always be a huge stunt
at the beginning
and everybody would gasp
because it was so thrilling.
And it was actually being done
in front of their eyes.
Today you could do the same stunt
and people would say, "Oh, CGI."
The second you make a movie
and you see 1,000 soldiers
or 100,000 soldiers running over a hill,
you know that
there are not 100,000 soldiers
available to anybody on the face of
the planet today for any sensible cost.
And so you know that that is not real.
As real as it looks,
you know it's not real.
It's up to you to decide
how far you're gonna allow us
to push the envelope of digital creativity.
You know, you accepted
my digital dinosaurs
because you wanted to enjoy
and be scared by the stories,
so you accepted the digital dinosaurs.
But there is a point
where audiences are going to reject...
...digital special effects
and start to maybe go to movies
where we actually do something
that existed in real space and real time.
Now there are so many effects being done
in so many films
and hundreds or thousands of shots
in each film,
there's a real danger
of the effects not being special any more,
they're too common.
Young people have been brainwashed
by television
to want everything quickly, you know,
and you just can't have an explosion
every five minutes in Greek mythology.
So I felt it was time to retire.
I felt I had had enough.
It's my incredible pleasure to present Ray
with a special BAFTA Award.
(Applause)
We declare the exhibition open!
(Cheering and applause)
(All) J' Happy birthday to you
I Happy birthday to you...
I Happy birthday... I
(Tony) The Ray and Diana Harryhausen
Foundation,
it was set up in the 1980s by Ray
to educate people
into stop motion animation
and also to protect his heritage
for the future.
Preservation, conservation
and other aspects of it
are our major, major priority.
So we're desperately trying to save
the original models
because the material that he makes them
out of, latex rubber, they're so fragile. 
Vanessa and Jim Danforth and I 
went through Ray's garage in 2008 
and found a treasure trove. 
I opened up a bag and found, immediately, 
a little wooden curlicue, 
one of the dragon's horns 
from 7th Voyage Of Sinbad 
and then the other one. 
Then I looked down 
and saw a little character 
with Curly-toed Shoes. It was Sinbad! 
And Jim said, "That's the Sinbad 
that was carried aloft by the Roc!" 
And then there was a little piece 
of rubber and I flipped it over, 
it was the harpie's head! 
And there were tons of things 
and they were all there in the garage 
for over 50 years. 
And that's the great thing 
about Ray Harryhausen's puppets, 
he still has the originals, it's amazing. 
(Ray) Yeah, that's one of my early 
brontosauruses. 
(Woman) He's quite big, so... 
You'd have to be 3 Greek wrestler 
to animate that! 
The foundation is preserving 
the puppets and moulds 
and Ray's diaries, Ray's sketches, 
beyond the scenes photographs, 
his dailies, his daily reels 
from all his black and white films. 
(Tony) The dailies, 
the outtakes from The Beast 
right through to 7th Voyage Of Sinbad 
are all being preserved now digitally 
for the future. 
Peter Jackson 
voluteered to restore them, 
so I went down to New Zealand 
and Peter and I recorded it 
on high-definition video.
(Tony) Peter Jackson has been amazingly generous, not only with time but with preservation.

(John Landis) When Ray visited Peter Jackson, he went to Weta. He brought with him one of the little skeletons and Peter took it and had it scanned exactly. And then from the scan, they made a mould. But what's incredible is that the actual bronze you end up with isn't a copy of the skeleton, it is the skeleton, exactly!

I just want to say thank you to Peter Jackson, Randy Cook, and all those many others who've given us support. His legacy, of course, is in good hands because it's carried in the DNA of so many film fans.

I think all of us who are practitioners in the arts of science fiction and fantasy movies now all feel that we're standing on the shoulders of a giant. If not for Ray's contribution to the collective dreamscape, we would not be who we are. Ray, your inspiration goes with us forever.

It represents a form of film-making that really will never happen again, but I think it's all the more special because of that. He's... you know, his patience, his endurance, has inspired so many of us. I'm glad to say that, just like I was impressed by King Kong people are impressed by our Films. And other people are impressed by
Peter Jackson and Spielberg and Lucas.
That's the way the snowball rolls on.