

T H E A R T S

Coming to a Toy Store Near You

Is the dinosaur sales blitz aimed at kids too young for such a scary movie?

And now a word about dinosaur lip balm. The "Jurassic Park" merchandising campaign has had all the subtlety of an ice age: more than 1,000 products fly the film's flag, and executives at Universal Pictures are predicting that retail sales will top the \$1 billion generated worldwide by that now prehistoric hit "Batman." McDonald's brings us "dino size" fries. Nintendo weighs in with a "Jurassic Park" video game. Kenner offers a line of dinosaur toys. MCA/Universal's merchandising slogan is "If it's not 'Jurassic Park,' it's extinct," although a better one might be "If it's not 'Jurassic Park,' it's \$15 cheaper." The dino line goes on. And on. Suddenly, Barney is an underdog. "A lot of people come down on me for turning my movies into a cottage industry," says Steven Spielberg, "but it's the American way."

Few are willing to bet against "Jurassic Park" and its toy army, despite the fact that Arnold Schwarzenegger's "Last Action Hero" will open on June 18, amid a merchandising blitz of its own, spearheaded by Burger King and Mattel. "Jurassic Park" is "like nothing I've seen before," says Bob Solomon, chairman of Dakin, Inc., which is now cranking out stuffed dinosaurs and dinosaur coffee mugs. "This logo is hot. I believe 'Jurassic Park' is going to have legs well beyond the summer." More than 100 licensees have signed on for "Jurassic Park." The biggest of them bought the right to the logo months before the movie even went into production, presumably because of Spielberg's reputation and the surprising star power of T-rex et al. All of the licensees will cough up roughly 10 percent in royalties. But, says Universal Pictures head Tom Pollock, "It's not really a matter of how much money the licensees are giving us. It's how much licensees like McDonald's are spending to advertise their promotion. Advertising for the U.S. will exceed \$68 million."

There's not a shadow of a doubt that Spielberg's movie will dispose of America's disposable income, but there is the shadow of a shadow. "Jurassic Park," after all, is too violent for the merchandisers' target audience—those young enough



A consumer in the jaws of a merchandising campaign that includes models, sneakers, lunch bags, fanzines and a thousand other dino doodads

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: SHONNA VALESKA, NC, LESTER SLOAN—NEWSWEEK (2)

REVIEW

Monsters to Haunt Your Dreams

Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* is nothing more—and nothing less—than the world's most extravagant Godzilla movie. The filmmakers may insist this isn't a monster movie, but as any dinosaur-obsessed 8-year-old can tell you, these prehistoric giants are the ur-monsters of all our nightmares. Without them, half the gnarly demons in movie mythology would never have been dreamed up. And if Spielberg's P.C. horror movie—that's paleontologically correct—turns into the megablockbuster everyone expects it to, it's simply because it has the dream cast of the summer: toothy T-rex; the long-necked *Brachiosaurus*; a sickly, armored *Triceratops*; the poison-spitting, gremlinlike *Dilophosaurus*; a stampeding *Gallimimus* herd, and the consummately villainous *Velociraptors*, the smartest, meanest flesh-eaters in the park.

All these stars, it should be

pointed out, are female. (Who said there were no great roles for gals this summer?) You see, to prohibit his dinosaur population from reproducing outside the lab, John Hammond (Richard Attenborough), the billionaire impresario of the tropical-island theme park, has cloned only female creatures. Naturally, since he is afflicted with incurable hubris, his best-laid plans go awry: as every cautionary scientific fable since "Frankenstein" has warned, don't mess with Ms. Nature.

When the dinosaurs go on their rampage midway through "Jurassic Park," Spielberg and his special-effects aces rev up the terror with a cutthroat efficiency that will be too intense for most kids under 9. Good as the bone-crunching mayhem is—an enraged *Tyrannosaurus* overturning a car, a spectacular shot of a velociraptor leaping off a kitchen floor toward the camera—Spielberg is especially canny in his buildup to horror.

The thumping tread of an unseen beast, its massive weight eerily conveyed by the turbulence in a water glass . . . the thrashing of trees and the cries of predator and prey when an ox is dropped into a raptor's pen for lunch—at such moments "Jurassic Park" has the spine-tingling magic of Spielberg's best work.





to dip into the "Jurassic Park Golden Look-Look Story Book." There's a good deal of media commotion whenever a movie is stamped with an "NC-17" instead of an "R" but, where merchandising is concerned, the real ratings war is fought on the slim battlefield that separates "PG" and "PG-13." Consider the strange case of the Happy Meal. When "Batman Returns" spread its wings over the earth last year, McDonald's whipped up a promotional campaign involving Happy Meals for kids. The film was rated "PG-13," unfortunately. McDonald's was quickly set upon by watchdog parents who thought the burger-meisters were pushing an inappropriate movie down 10-year-old throats.

"Jurassic Park" carries a PG-13, and even Spielberg, who has four children 8 and younger, admits, "I'm not going to let my kids see it for a couple of years. I know 9-year-olds I could take to 'Jurassic Park' who would see it again and again. But my kids are more vulnerable to things that go bump in the night." McDonald's is hedging its bets by forgoing special-edition Happy Meals and making its play for older customers. But, says one advertising executive, "There is a potential for an audience backlash. The danger lies in the assumption by parents that because

McDonald's is doing the promotion it's OK to take your kids to see the movie."

Where merchandising is concerned, the movie "Jurassic Park" is full of itself: its logo pops up in more than a dozen scenes in the fictitious theme park, gracing everything from aprons to baseball caps. At times, such gonzo reflexiveness looks like an ironic comment on Hollywood's commercialism ("In a way," says Spielberg, "I was kicking myself in the butt"). But other times it looks like a home-shopping network. One studio executive claims the gift-shop sequence is a dig at saturation-style merchandising campaigns: "It's a joke. We're also making the point that you don't just put these things out and try to grab as much money as you can from people." You may buy that—and you may also buy the Jurassic Park Molded Dinosaur Bubble Bath Decanter—but there's no way around the fact that the dino line will be on shelves for some time. An animated TV series is being considered, as is a "Jurassic Park" water ride for the Universal Studios theme park in Orlando.

In the end, what's so wrong with making godzillions on knickknacks? "There is a connotation of shame around the word 'merchandising,'" says Spielberg. "It's not shameful. When I was a kid, the one thing I always wanted was a souvenir. I got it with the Davy Crockett movie in 1955, when I was 7 and they were selling coonskin hats in the lobby." How he lived without the Davy Crockett Light & Sound Backpack, we'll never know.

JEFF GILES with DONNA FOOTE in Los Angeles

RETAIL
SALES OF
JURASSIC
STUFF ARE
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TO TOP
\$1 BILLION



BILL NATION

The parts, however, are better than the whole. When Spielberg is cooking on all burners—in "Jaws," in "Close Encounters" or "E.T."—he can transform genre conventions into a seamless, visionary whole. "Jurassic Park" doesn't have that organic flow; it can't disguise its clunky, B-movie soul. Following Michael Crichton's novel, screenwriters Crichton and David Koepp round up their unlikely gaggle of characters, each of whom has to carry a heavy load of scientific exposition, and none of whom

makes any deep claims on our affections.

Hammond assembles a trio of experts to give his park their seal of approval: we meet paleontologist Alan Grant (Sam Neill), whose aversion to children will be predictably reversed when he must save Hammond's two movie-bratish grandchildren from becoming the dinosaurs' hors d'oeuvre. As his paleobotanist girlfriend, Laura Dern radiates strenuous enthusiasm. It's never clear why Hammond wants the opinion of the moralizing

mathematician Ian Malcolm (Jeff Goldblum), but Goldblum's manic line readings add a quirky pleasure to the setup. Hammond himself, played by Attenborough with plummy theatricality, is transformed from Crichton's evil fanatic into a more avuncular presence: the true bad guy is the obese, mercenary Dennis

Sam Neill as paleontologist Alan Grant flees from a stampeding Gallimimus herd at the theme park

ILM—UNIVERSAL



Nedry (Wayne Knight), who's selling pirated dinosaur embryos to an outside concern. Spielberg tweaks profiteers again (or is he tweaking himself?) when he shows us rows and rows of Jurassic Park souvenirs at the park's gift shop: merchandise just like the products that will be spun off this movie.

"Jurassic Park" hits all the patented Spielberg marks—humor, thrills, heart—but not without strain. There's a gooey, lyrical interlude when Neill and the kids bond with a grazing Brachiosaurus (in the movie's New Age scheme of things, the good dinosaurs are vegetarians), but it feels like a pumped-up Kodak moment. These battle-scarred kids should be terrified. Oh, well. Is there any point in complaining that this \$60 million fun-house ride is less than a classic? All we really ask is that it be scary (it is) and that the dinosaurs set a new standard in suspension of disbelief (they do). Go, tremble and enjoy.

DAVID ANSEN