

Messengers from the Stars: On Science Fiction and Fantasy

No. 2 - 2017

Editorial Board |

Adelaide Serras
Ana Daniela Coelho
Ana Rita Martins
Angélica Varandas
João Félix
José Duarte

Advisory Board |

Adam Roberts (Royal Holloway, Univ. of London, UK)
David Roas (Univ. Autónoma de Barcelona, Spain)
Flávio García (Univ. do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)
Henrique Leitão (Fac. de Ciências, Univ. de Lisboa, Portugal)
Jonathan Gayles (Georgia State University, USA)
Katherine Fowkes (High Point University, USA)
Ljubica Matek (University of Osijek, Croatia)
M^a Cristina Batalha (Univ. do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)
Susana Oliveira (Fac. de Arquitectura, Univ. de Lisboa, Portugal)
Teresa Lopez-Pellisa (Univ. Autónoma de Barcelona, Spain)

Copy Editors |

Ana Rita Martins || Igor Furão || João Félix || José Duarte

**Book Review |
Editors**

Diana Marques || Igor Furão || Mónica Paiva

Translator |

Diogo Almeida

Photography |

Rodrigo Tavarela Peixoto

Site |

<http://messengersfromthestars.letras.ulisboa.pt/journal/>

Contact |

mfts.journal@gmail.com

ISSN |

2183-7465

Editor |

Centro de Estudos Anglísticos da Universidade de Lisboa |
University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies
Alameda da Universidade - Faculdade de Letras
1600-214 Lisboa - Portugal



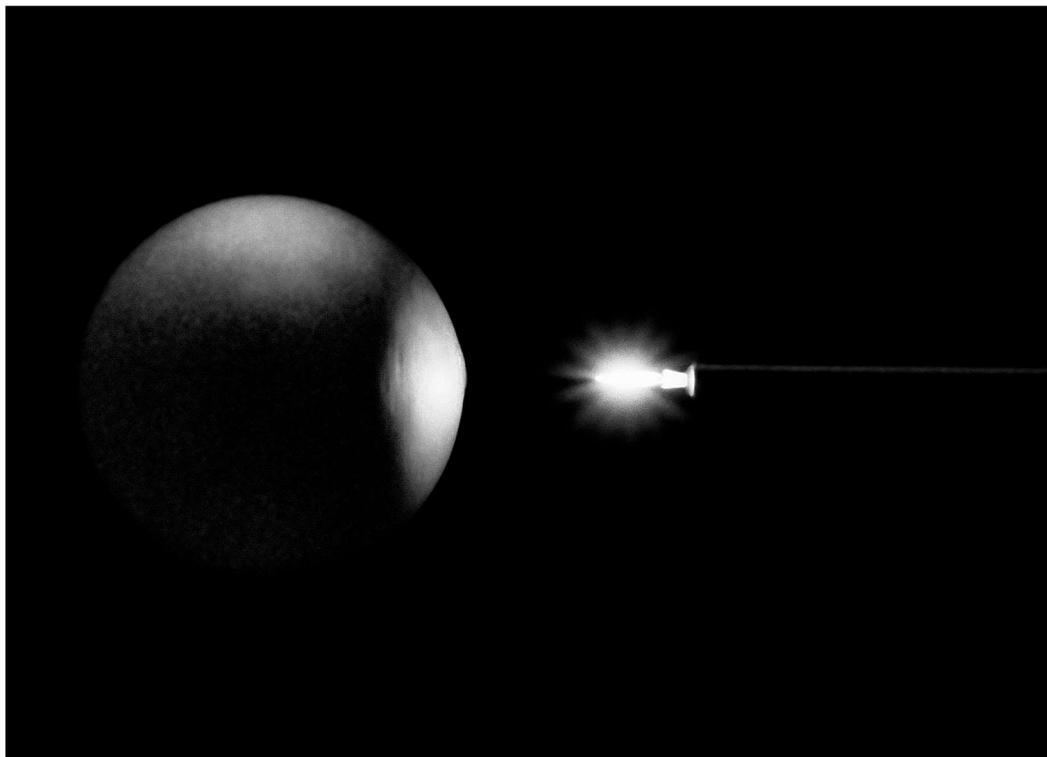


Fig. 3 - cat. n. 2331-j (Spherical deformation sheen)

“Vaguely Disreputable”: Ray Harryhausen and the “Kidult” Film

Noel Brown

Liverpool Hope University

Abstract | This article explores the role of film producer and special effects pioneer Ray Harryhausen in the development of the so-called “kidult” film. It examines the origins and the significations of the word “kidult”, which was seen to refer both to a specific *type of film* and to the *audiences* it mobilises. It denoted appeal to child and adult audiences, while asserting a distinction, a breaking away from parallel conceptions of the “family film” and “family audiences”, which had held sway in Hollywood’s industry and promotional discourses since the early 1930s. Harryhausen claimed to have invented the word and his film *7th Voyage of Sinbad* (1958) was explicitly promoted as a “kidult” film on initial release. Through close analysis of Harryhausen’s fantasy films, this article argues that these productions adopted many of the essential narrative and representational elements of the 1950s Hollywood teen film, while still recognisably residing within a broader definition of Hollywood family entertainment. It contends that Harryhausen’s films were precursors to the contemporary Hollywood fantasy blockbuster in their address to the conceptual

“kidult” consumer, their fast-paced, action-adventure narratives, and their emphasis on spectacle.

Keywords | Hollywood; “kidult”; family film; 1950s; Harryhausen.



Resumo | O presente artigo visa explorar o papel de Ray Harryhausen, produtor de filmes e pioneiro no campo de efeitos especiais, no desenvolvimento do género “kidult”. Pretende-se examinar as origens e significados do termo “kidult”, cujo uso tinha sido aplicado tanto para designar um *tipo de filme* específico, como o *público* que este mobiliza. É sabido que o termo sugere um apelo ao público adulto e infantil ao mesmo tempo que reafirma uma distinção ou distanciamento de concepções paralelas sobre o conceito de “filmes para a família” e um “público composto por famílias” que tinham dominado a indústria de Hollywood assim como os discursos promocionais desde o início dos anos 1930. Harryhausen alega ter inventado a palavra e aquando do lançamento o filme *7th Voyage of Sinbad* (1958) foi explicitamente promovido como “kidult”. Através da análise dos filmes de Fantasia realizados por Harryhausen, o presente estudo argumenta que estas produções adoptaram vários elementos essenciais à narrativa de filmes para adolescentes produzidos por Hollywood durante os anos 50, enquadrando-se ao mesmo tempo na definição mais abrangente de entretenimento Hollywoodiano para a família. Os filmes de Harryhausen foram ainda precursores dos *blockbusters* de fantasia contemporâneos de Hollywood no que diz respeito ao modo como se dirigem ao consumidor de filmes “kidult”, nas narrativas rápidas e repletas de aventura e acção, e na enfase dada ao espetáculo.

Palavras-Chave | Hollywood; “kidult”; filmes para famílias; anos 50; Harryhausen.



The studios left us alone, as long as we didn't run over budget...They thought these genres – sci-fi, fantasy – were vaguely disreputable, B-movie kids' stuff. In fact, we coined a new term, ‘kidult’, to describe the kinds of audiences attracted. – Ray Harryhausen.¹

The quotation above identifies three key elements constitutive of Ray Harryhausen’s relationship with the Hollywood mainstream of the 1950s: i) his incongruity with the dominant aesthetic style and the industry’s conception of mass audiences; ii) the air of disreputability that surrounded his primarily youth-orientated films, and iii) newness – implicit in the new word, and the new concept, of the

¹ Harryhausen’s quotation was in an article published in 1995, long after his career in Hollywood had come to an end. See Stuart Husband, “It Came from Los Angeles”.

“kidult”. This word was used by studio Columbia to promote Harryhausen’s fantasy extravaganza, *7th Voyage of Sinbad* (Nathan Juran 1958); the marketing strategy was intended, in the words of trade paper *Boxoffice*, “to convey the intelligence that here is a parcel of escapist entertainment that will assert a strong appeal to both kids and adults” (Harryhausen and Dalton 121). As we can see from the two quotations above, “kidult” was seen to refer both to a specific *type of film* and to the *audiences* it mobilises. It denoted appeal to child and adult audiences, while asserting a distinction, a breaking away from parallel conceptions of the “family film” and “family audiences”, which had held sway in Hollywood’s industry and promotional discourses since the early 1930s.² While notions of a “family audience” imply a differentiated movie experience, with distinct, programmed pleasures for each member of the family, the neologistic mash-up “kidult” suggests, rather, a hybridisation of child and adult tastes.

Today, in the post-Lucas and Spielberg epoch, this model of popular culture seems distinctly non-radical. However, in the context of 1950s America, it was anything but. In this essay, I will explore Harryhausen’s role in the ongoing development of “kidult” cinema, with reference to contemporary discourses, and carry out a close textual analysis of several of his films produced between the late 1950s and early 1980s. His role, I would argue, is threefold. Firstly, *7th Voyage of Sinbad*, Harryhausen’s breakthrough film, was the first Hollywood release marketed towards the “kidult”. Secondly, his two most important films, *7th Voyage* and *Jason and the Argonauts* (Don Chaffey, 1963), are clear precursors to the Hollywood-produced, kidult-orientated blockbusters that now dominate global box office charts – a group of films and franchises that includes *Star Wars* (1977–), *Superman* (1978–87; 2013–), *Indiana Jones* (1981–2008), *Harry Potter* (2001–11), *Transformers* (2007–), and many others. Thirdly, the cultural reception of Harryhausen’s fantasy films spans the three commercial stages of kidult entertainment: resistance, ambivalence and finally mass acceptance. Harryhausen, now widely seen as the “true author” of the films to which he contributed his 3-D stop-motion animation, has been cited as a key influence by such major figures in the “New Hollywood” as George Lucas, Peter Jackson, Tim Burton, James Cameron, Henry Selick and Denis Muran. Before proceeding further, it is worth noting that several of the above individuals have been

² On the beginnings of the “family film” in Hollywood, see Noel Brown, “‘A New Movie-Going Public’: 1930s Hollywood and the Emergence of the ‘Family’ Film”.

identified as exponents of “kidult” entertainment, and/or as “kidults” themselves.³ Yet while Spielberg and Lucas undoubtedly popularised the kidult film, Harryhausen, as I will argue, can be regarded as one of the most important figures – a “missing link”, if you will – in its formation.

The Beginnings of the “Kidult”

Although commonly presumed to be a recent coinage, the word “kidult” actually dates back to the 1950s. However, Harryhausen’s later claim to have concocted it himself is suspect: the earliest reference I have found is an article in the North American trade paper *Variety* (24 November 1954) that announces a coming “kidult kick”: “the berthing of talent and shows in slots that are conventionally for kids on the time element but, in addition, lure many an adult viewer” (23). In fact, the term appears to have been the invention of TV marketers, with early instances generally alluding to a concrete “kidult slot”; a later *Variety* article (3 January 1962) points to CBS’ broadcasting of *Lassie* (1954–74) and *Dennis the Menace* (1959–63) during the late-afternoon/early-evening period as constituting “a strong 90-minute kidult family bloc” (21). What *does* appear to be true is that the term was unknown, or at least unused, in the Hollywood film industry when it was appropriated by Harryhausen and Columbia’s marketing team to promote *7th Voyage of Sinbad* in 1958. All of the references in *Variety* during the 1950s relate to television rather than cinema. Aside from Harryhausen’s use of the word, this remained the case throughout the 1960s and 1970s. During the 1980s, the term moved beyond industry discourse into popular/journalistic usage, and attained its denigrating latter-day meaning of an individual suffering (to borrow the title of a bestselling pop psychology book from 1982) from “The Peter Pan Syndrome.”

It is highly improbable that a film would explicitly be marketed for the “kidult” audience today as usage of the term has become almost exclusively derisory. This trend possibly began with *New York Times* film critic Vincent Canby’s dismayed response to the Bruce Willis action vehicle, *Die Hard* (John McTiernan, 1988), which he claimed was made:

³ Spielberg and Lucas, in particular, have both been identified as quintessential “kidults”; see Noel Brown, “Spielberg and the Kidult”.

for that new, true-blue American of the electronic age, the kidult, who may be 8, 18, 38 or 80... In the past, our most popular movies have been those that somehow have managed to appeal to both children and adults, though not necessarily for the same reasons or with the same degree of intensity...The [Steven] Spielberg films have always been made on the assumption that there exists a common ground where the interests of children and adults overlap, even though there are vast differences between children and adults in their experience, education and capacity to understand. Today's hip film makers now realise that's baloney... No longer is there a necessity to find areas in which the interests of the child and the adult overlap. They are the same. (19)

Subsequent references in the popular press (in America and Britain alike) have largely been scornful. British journalist Mark Lawson calls kidulthood a “denial of ageing” and “a comfort blanket hunger for lost innocence” (24); David Aaronovitch claims that “this kidulthood is a way of avoiding reality rather than of understanding it” and that “Kidulthood wishes to escape the world rather than to engage with it” (5); the *Washington Post* seemingly spoke for the majority with its succinct evaluation of the “kidult” as “that most unlovable of modern phenomena” (n. pag.).

The “Family”/“Kidult” Dichotomy

We need to divorce ourselves from such value judgements, and instead examine what is really meant by “kidult”. My own understanding of it, following that of Harryhausen and the marketing men who coined the term, is that of a form of entertainment that symbolically constructs pluralistic mass audiences as a *single entity* motivated by common desires. This notion need not be profane or subversive. Classic children’s novels such as *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Peter Pan* (1911) have long attracted a substantial adult readership, and “crossover fiction” – a term applied to works which appeal dually to child and adult readerships – is a widely understood phenomenon in children’s literary studies. However, to judge from the denigrating descriptions of “kidulthood” above, even now there is lingering suspicion in some quarters that individuals partaking of such cultural forms are failing to “leave behind childish things”, transgressing the boundaries between Shakespeare’s Seven Ages of Man, and re(embracing) tastes, pleasures and preoccupations supposedly ill befitting a mature, reasoning, responsible adult (a position forcefully propounded by cultural critic Benjamin Barber). For these reasons, perhaps, the 1930s concept of

“family films” addressing “family audiences” continues to hold sway in the United States to this day, despite audience research by the Hollywood studios’ own trade organisation (“Theatrical Market Statistics” 8) showing that the majority of theatrical audiences are teenagers and childless people in their twenties, and four decades since Spielberg’s and Lucas’ “kidult”-orientated films decisively displaced the old, staid middlebrow family movie of Hollywood’s classical era.

Concepts of the “kidult” and “kidult entertainment” have been defined largely in terms of a series of oppositions with the parallel concepts of the “family”, and of “family entertainment”. It is these oppositions that must be explored in order to approach a fuller understanding of the phenomenon. The first major distinction, I would suggest, is that whereas “family” entertainment implies a mass audience comprising adults and children as *separate entities*, “kidult” entertainment implies no such audience differentiation; a “kidult” may inhabit any age, so long as s/he enjoys such entertainment. This emphasis on aesthetic appeal removes the need for many of the traditional narrative strategies employed by classical Hollywood family films such as *Meet Me in St. Louis* (Vincente Minnelli, 1944) or *Mary Poppins* (Robert Stevenson, 1964) to appeal to the tastes and requirements of children, on the one hand, and those of adults, on the other. In the classical-era family film, these strategies include: i) different on-screen identification figures (Jane and Michael Banks in *Mary Poppins* for the children; Mary Poppins, Bert, and Mr. and Mrs. Banks for the adults); ii) parallel plotlines (Mr. and Mrs. Smith’s emphatically “adult” arguing about whether to move to New York in *Meet Me in St. Louis*, and their daughters’ various youthful misadventures surrounding Halloween and the State Fair); iii) the use of adult jokes that children may not understand, and/or childish slapstick that adults may not appreciate.

Essentially, the family film posits a compromise, a state of equilibrium, between the perceived needs of different audience sections. The parallel targeting of child and adult demographics is known as “dual address”; it offers mass audiences multiple avenues of access, or points of entry.⁴ Most Hollywood family-orientated productions dating from the period at which the classical family film was at its height (c. 1930–70) embody the essential characteristics outlined above. Examples of such films include *Tom Sawyer* (John Cromwell, 1930), *Little Women* (George Cukor,

⁴ See Adrian Schober, “‘Why Can’t They Make Kids’ Flicks Anymore?’: *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* and the Dual-Addressed Family Film”.

1933), *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (David Hand et al., 1937), *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939), *Fantasia* (Ben Sharpsteen et al., 1940) *Lassie Come Home* (Fred M. Wilcox, 1943), *Meet Me in St. Louis*, *The Yearling* (Clarence Brown, 1946), *On Moonlight Bay* (Roy Del Ruth, 1951), *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (Richard Fleischer, 1954), *Old Yeller* (Robert Stevenson, 1957), *tom thumb* (George Pal, 1958), *Pollyanna* (David Swift, 1960), *Mary Poppins*, and *The Sound of Music* (Robert Wise, 1965). All of these films were major productions and were designed as spectacles as well as parables. However, with only a couple of exceptions, spectacle plays a subordinate role to core values of social and familial unity and collective morality. These productions tend to uphold established structures of society, attempt to impart moral lessons, and serve the ritual imperative of bringing families together through a shared viewing experience. The Walt Disney Company, and independent filmmakers such as Robert B. Radnitz and Joe Camp, continued making “traditional” family films of this ilk into the 1970s, but with diminishing returns, other Hollywood majors had largely abandoned the dual-addressed family film by the late 1960s.⁵

By contrast, “kidult” material pursues a less differentiated mode of audience address, operating more on what might be called an “appeal of the senses”. Key elements include a fast-paced and “transparent” narrative, visceral thrills and excitement, and impressive visual spectacle (often drawing on the technological potentialities of computer graphics, 3-D, and other aesthetic attractions). In practice, the purely “kidult” film remains a hypothetical category: Harryhausen’s productions, *Star Wars*, and the many films that have followed in their path, are more aptly regarded as family/“kidult” hybrids. That is to say, they combine aspects of the “dual address” that characterises the classical-era family film, and the “undifferentiated address” that, *in extremis*, demarcates the “kidult” film.⁶ Several of the most important structural and ideological constitutive elements of the family film dating back to the 1930s remain apparent, to varying degrees, in the more “kidult”-orientated, post-1970s productions. They include: i) reaffirmations of family, friendship and community; ii) the defeat or exclusion of disruptive (social) elements; iii) the minimisation of “adult” themes, such as sexuality, strong violence, cruelty,

⁵ On the development of the family film in Hollywood during the 1960s and 1970s, see Noel Brown, *The Hollywood Family Film: A History, from Shirley Temple to Harry Potter* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), chapters 6 and 7.

⁶ For a further elaboration of “undifferentiated address”, see Noel Brown and Bruce Babington, “Introduction: Children’s Films and Family Films.” *Family Films in Global Cinema: The World Beyond Disney*. Eds. Brown and Babington.

poverty, gore and so on; and iv) their underpinning by a story which, while it may acknowledge the possibility of an unpleasant, undesirable outcome, ultimately is upbeat, morally and emotionally straightforward, and supportive of the status quo. Crudely speaking, the “kidult” aspects provide excitement, thrill, and spectacle: aspects that play equally well to adults and children because they do not require a high degree of cognitive processing, and are pleasurable on a basic and innate level. Producers of blockbuster films often compare their products to “rollercoaster rides”, which implies a desire to evoke a satisfactorily diverse combination of cognitive and pre-cognitive responses. The “family” aspects provide moral and ideological grounding, and represent civilisation’s claim to thought, knowledge, and education; they also underpin and uphold differences in experience, competency and outlook among children and adults.

It is easy to fall into the trap of over-generalising regarding the decline of dual-addressed family films and the emergence of “kidult”-orientated films. Although there has been a progressive liberalising trend in Hollywood representations of sex, violence, and other “mature content”, the fact that family films continue to eschew *Die Hard* levels of violence confirms that moral suitability is still an important constituent in contemporary manifestations of the genre.⁷ As Canby intuited, children and adults alike may respond favourably to the adult elements in *Die Hard* or the *James Bond* films, but such productions are not widely regarded as “family entertainment” because of long-held standards of acceptability governing children’s consumption of such products – standards that Harryhausen, as well as Lucas and Spielberg, implicitly endorse(d). Furthermore, and notwithstanding the inevitable hybridism between “family” and “kidult” characteristics noted above, there was never a decisive paradigm shift at which point the “family” film transformed into the “kidult” film. Rather, it was a long transition period marked by a series of smaller turning points. Harryhausen’s significance was in mining the middle ground between the emerging teen market and the established family market, as did Lucas and Spielberg. But post-1970s Hollywood family films such as *Annie* (John Huston, 1982), *Home Alone* (Chris Columbus, 1990), *Cheaper by the Dozen* (Shawn Levy, 2003), and contemporary animated films produced by studios such as Pixar, all hark

⁷ See Dean Keith Simonton, Lauren Elizabeth Skidmore and James C. Kaufman, “Mature Cinematic Content for Immature Minds: ‘Pushing the Envelope’ vs. ‘Toning it Down’ in Family Films”, for an analysis of suitability in contemporary Hollywood films.

back to the older strategies of dual address. Disney's Joe Roth explicitly identified the Spielberg-Lucas collaboration *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Spielberg, 1981), the first in the *Indiana Jones* series (1981–2008), as “the beginning and the end of family films in America” (Weinraub B1).

Other Hollywood executives place the mid-1990s as the major turning point. In a 1996 *Los Angeles Times* article, a high-level Sony executive announced, portentously: “the death of the family movie – that is the footnote for summer 1996” (Brennan F1), while Twentieth Century-Fox executive Bill Mechanic explained, “We made a strategic move to get out of the kid business, as we've known it, a year ago. Kid-oriented movies have been in trouble. [*The Nutty Professor* and *Independence Day* have become the kid movies, the new family films” (Brennan F1). Opinions clearly differ on when and how this shift occurred, but there is broad consensus among scholars that there *have* been radical developments in the Hollywood family film.⁸ Changes in the family film reflect different conceptualisations of movie-going audiences. Adult and child spectators are now differentiated to a much lesser degree. For most contemporary Hollywood “family films”, the implied audience – that is, the imagined or presumed audience that all films implicitly construct – is no longer a nuclear family comprising individuals that hold different needs and desires. Rather, following Harryhausen and the network TV marketing men of the 1950s, it is an amalgamated child-adult: a “kidult”. Admittedly, this is truer of live-action than of animated films like *Toy Story* (John Lasseter, 1995) and *Frozen* (Chris Buck and Jennifer Lee, 2013), where adult jokes and intertextual allusions play a greater part, but even these films appeal greatly to the senses, and seek to recuperate idealised values of childlike wonder, imagination, innocence, goodness, freedom, and play within an easily grasped narrative framework.

Harryhausen's Early Career

It is not merely that Harryhausen's films possess many of the elements that would come to define contemporary Hollywood “kidult”-inflected entertainment that make them ripe for analysis. It is that they were made in a period in which North

⁸ See, for instance, Brown, *The Hollywood Family Film: A History, from Shirley Temple to Harry Potter*; Peter Krämer, “‘The Best Disney Film Disney Never Made’: Children’s Films and The Family Audience in American Cinema since the 1960s”; Schober, “‘Why Can’t They Make Kids’ Flicks Anymore?’: *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* and the Dual-Addressed Family Film”.

America was beginning the transition from a predominantly adult-orientated to a predominantly youth-orientated cultural model. As such, they reflect many of the tensions arising from this transition. Harryhausen's medium was stop-motion animation, a special-effects technique in which three-dimensional models are animated frame-by-frame to provide an illusion of movement. Its usage has mainly been confined, in Hollywood cinema, to fantastic subjects, as with Willis O'Brien's pioneering work on *The Lost World* (Harry O. Hoyt, 1925) and *King Kong* (Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, 1933). O'Brien, one of the very few special effects technicians in Hollywood to specialise in stop-motion, was a towering influence on Harryhausen's art. Harryhausen's significance derives partially from his extraordinary skill as a stop-motion animator. Even more importantly, his early films appeared on the market at precisely the time at which a new consumer group was emerging: the teenager.

During the early 1950s, Harryhausen was one of many independent producers in Hollywood selling escapist fantasy films to the incipient "teen" market. This was a period in which family entertainment was strongly characterised by didactic principles and an emphasis on "wholesomeness". In spite of overwhelming evidence that domestic audiences were dominated by young people (Handel 1950; Lazarsfeld 1947), there was a deep-seated resistance amongst the old-school Hollywood moguls to youth culture. Furthermore, according to an industry maxim dating back to the 1930s (Harmetz 19), fantasy films were box office poison due to the failure of several high-profile films, such as *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Blue Bird* (Walter Lang, 1940) and *Mighty Joe Young* (Ernest B. Schoedsack, 1949). The twin turning points occurred during the early-to-mid 1950s: the popularisation of television, and the surge in independent production. With television's emergence demanding changes in the production strategies of the major studios, a new generation of independent producers came to the fore.⁹ These filmmakers, energised by the development of teenage and youth culture, brought new methods and ideas to Hollywood cinema.

Harryhausen's breakthrough in mainstream Hollywood owed much to his initial success in teen exploitation filmmaking. Awareness of the emergence of the teenage consumer created a virtual industry in teen exploitation. One of the major sub-genres was the monster-on-the-rampage film, or "creature feature" – a form that

⁹ On the rise of the teen film, particularly in the independent sector, see Thomas Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s*.

lent itself particularly to Harryhausen's realm of expertise. By the early 1950s, his services were much in demand after his successful contributions to *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (Eugene Lourie, 1953). Harryhausen's work caught the eye of independent producer Charles H. Schneer, who was working at Sam Katzman's production unit at Columbia, which specialised in schlock sci-fi. Intrigued by the visual potentialities of stop-motion, Schneer conceived the idea of a giant killer octopus loose in San Francisco, and Harryhausen was contracted to provide the visual effects. The resulting film, *It Came from Beneath the Sea* (Robert Gordon, 1955), pleased Katzman, and Schneer and Harryhausen collaborated again on *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers* (Fred F. Sears, 1956), cementing a partnership that endured throughout the remainder of Harryhausen's career. Soon after, Schneer formed his own company, Morningside Productions, whilst retaining his partnership with Harryhausen and association with Columbia as financial backer and distributor. Their next film, *20 Million Miles to Earth* (Nathan Juran, 1957) was a watershed: it was their last "creature feature", and also their last film aimed primarily at teenage audiences. From then on, they focused their attentions on addressing the "kidult" audience.

Schneer later claimed to have been motivated by "visuals and locations that had not been photographed" (*The Harryhausen Chronicles*). Like Katzman, he possessed a sharp eye for subjects that were topical and easily and cheaply exploitable. Harryhausen, meanwhile, was actively seeking to expand the narrative and technical potentialities of stop-motion animation (Harryhausen and Dalton 103). He felt that an action-adventure fantasy based around the character of Sinbad – whom he regarded as the "personification of adventure" – would manoeuvre them into the Hollywood mainstream (Harryhausen and Dalton 103). However, the production personnel and the aggressive, jargonistic marketing strategy used to sell the film revealed its origins in teen exploitation. Schneer and Harryhausen conjured the term "Dynamation" to describe Harryhausen's methods of three-dimension stop-motion, and used it endlessly to promote their films (sometimes with variations such as "Superdynamation" and "Dynarama"). Equally, Columbia's press department marketed *7th Voyage of Sinbad* as a "kidult" film. The thrust of this marketing strategy was to position it *between* the emergent "teen" and the established – but increasingly dusty – "family" markets. Because the "kidult" trend really started with *7th Voyage of Sinbad*, it can be seen, in retrospect, as the most important family film of the 1950s.

The film's plot is deliberately straightforward. Sinbad (Kerwin Matthews) and his men, lost at sea, chance upon the uncharted island of Colossa, which is home to an assortment of fearsome, exotic creatures. They encounter a magician, Sokurah (Torin Thatcher), fleeing from a giant Cyclops. Sokurah uses his magic lamp to keep the monster at bay, and they hurriedly escape back to the ship. In the confusion, the lamp is thrown overboard, and is washed up on the shore. Sokurah demands that they return for the lamp, but Sinbad refuses, setting sail for Baghdad, where he is to be married to the princess Parisa (Kathryn Grant). Upon their arrival, Sokurah requests that the Caliph (Alec Mango) grant him a ship and crew to return to Colossa and retrieve the lamp, but on Sinbad's advice, the Caliph refuses. Enraged, Sokurah miniaturises Parisa, and then informs the distraught Sinbad that the only way to restore her to normal size is by obtaining a fragment of the eggshell of a giant bird native only to Colossa. Still unsuspecting, Sinbad, Parisa and a mutinous crew return to Colossa. Sinbad manages to retrieve the lamp and return it to Sokurah, who restores Parisa to normal. Although Sokurah treacherously animates a sword-wielding skeleton in an attempt to kill them both, Sinbad and Parisa manage to overcome various dangers, and Sokurah is killed when his mortally-wounded pet dragon accidentally crushes him.

The Arabian Nights milieu in which *7th Voyage* operates contributes to its escapist functions. Eastern narratives, even within the Hollywood firmament, frequently operate within a more fantastic milieu. In Tony Curtis' early-1950s star vehicles *The Prince Who Was a Thief* (Rudolph Maté, 1951) and *Son of Ali Baba* (Kurt Neumann, 1952), for instance, the setting not only provides an attractive backdrop but, within its narrative conventions, signals escapist adventure. Audiences responded strongly to *7th Voyage*: the film grossed over \$6 million from a budget of \$650,000. Critical opinion was more ambivalent. *Variety* (26 November 1958) adjudged the film to be "primarily entertainment for the eye" with Harryhausen "the hero of the piece" ("7th Voyage of Sinbad" 8), and *Film Daily* (25 November 1958) deemed it to be "a spectacular presentation of the Sinbad story" ("7th Voyage of Sinbad" 6). Other responses were less favourable. *The Hollywood Reporter* (25 November 1958) wrongly believed that the stop-motion effects were achieved electronically, and *The Christian Science Monitor* (18 December 1958) regarded it as "largely an excuse for Hollywood to toy with its latest technical process, 'Dynamation'" (Maddock 7). These responses suggest that *7th Voyage of Sinbad* was

not really regarded as a family film, a genre that, at this point, was still viewed primarily in social terms. It was seen as entertainment in the service of the family, which operated as a socialising apparatus, an agent of social stability, and a microcosm of society-at-large. In contrast, *7th Voyage of Sinbad* was predicated on spectacle and adventure, with few obvious morals to impart, beyond its basic good vs. evil thematic.

Almost all mass-appeal productions depend for their success on some combination of characteristic “family” and “kidult” modes of appeal. In *7th Voyage of Sinbad*, there are several textual strategies designed to engage teenage and adult audiences on their own presumed level. The casting of attractive male and female leads in Kerwin Matthews and Kathryn Grant, and the associated romance, is a notable example. All of Harryhausen’s films include a romantic subplot, reflecting a presumption shared by Harryhausen/Schneer and Columbia that representations of courtship and romantic fulfilment were necessary to appeal to mainstream (“general”) audiences. This is certainly a convention common to the vast majority of Hollywood films from the period, even those putatively aimed at juvenile audiences, such as the serials produced by so-called Poverty Row studios such as Monogram and Republic. However, the presence of the romantic subplot in Harryhausen’s films – particularly the post-1960s films, long after the broader convention ceased to apply – perhaps suggests some measure of uncertainty that they are capable of attracting adults without additional layers of attraction. Ironically, in each case, the romance is so anaemic, so perfunctory as to be almost irrelevant to the overall movie experience.

Harryhausen’s endings announce another important departure from the classical Hollywood family film norm. In each of his productions, a spectacular adventure set piece serves as dramatic climax. These resolutions are largely functional and instrumental, rather than emotive and uplifting in the vein of *The Wizard of Oz* and most other mainstream family films. They are built around impressive spectacle, with the action and music (in many cases composed by Bernard Hermann) building to a thrilling crescendo. But whilst these fantastic spectacles elicit excitement, fundamentally they are not *emotional* experiences (unless we count vicarious feelings of triumph and catharsis). In *The Wizard of Oz*, the final moments capture Dorothy’s happiness at her return home to Kansas, surrounded by love in the presence of family and friends, and bursting with newfound appreciation in the manifold pleasures of everyday life. In Harryhausen’s oeuvre, dramatic efficiency replaces such familiar

“family” patterns of emotional fulfilment and moral or spiritual revelation. His films revel in economy of storytelling – an operational hold-over from the teen exploitation school of filmmaking where narratives had to be tight, functional, and free from excess. Emotive or didactic codas (such as those that characterised MGM’s Andy Hardy series of the 1930s and 1940s) had little place in the 1950s teen film from which Harryhausen and Schneer took their cue.

Rather, the climactic set pieces in Harryhausen’s films underscore the fact that story exists to frame the special-effects sequences at the heart of their appeal. In *Jason and the Argonauts*, the ostensible purpose of Jason’s (Todd Armstrong) voyage to the distant land of Colchis in search of the Golden Fleece is to give him the means of reclaiming his kingdom by overthrowing the tyrannical King Pelias (Douglas Wilmer), who had seized his crown by force-of-arms when Jason was a child. In practice, this plotline offers little more than basic heroic motivation. The substance of the movie experience lies within the various (stop-motion animated) dangers met by Jason and his crew during their voyage, where they encounter and defeat the enormous bronze statue Talos, overcome a group of harpies who are tormenting a blind seer (Patrick Troughton), pass through the lethal Clashing Rocks, and battle a multi-headed Hydra for possession of the Fleece. The centrepiece of the movie – and probably the most iconic sequence in Harryhausen’s oeuvre – occurs at the very end, where the vengeful ruler of Colchis, King Aeetes (Jack Gwillim), in retribution for the theft of the Fleece, animates seven sword-wielding skeletons to do battle with Jason and his followers. When Jason succeeds in ‘killing’ them (after a titanic struggle) by jumping from a cliff-top into the ocean below, he swims back to the Argo. At this point, the film abruptly ends. What follows is left to the audience’s imagination. The viewer is simply left to *assume* that Jason returns to his homeland and reclaims his throne. The film ends at a dramatic high-point, therefore, but fails to resolve its own storyline.

This is an important point. Such tension between story and spectacle rarely arises. *Jason and the Argonauts* is an extreme example because of its structure, which effectively demands two forms of closure: a spectacular special-effects finale for possession of the Fleece, and the logical battle between Jason and Pelias for the throne (the film’s “MacGuffin”). However, if we view the film as spectacle, as contemporary audiences surely did, the fact that it does not resolve the Pelias story – and complete Jason’s internal voyage from symbolic boyhood to symbolic manhood –

is less important. While the film received predictably mixed reviews upon initial release in the US, the ending itself appears to have passed without comment. Presumably, it was simply viewed within the broader context of the film itself: an enjoyable, but ultimately disposable, piece of screen entertainment undeserving of serious critical analysis. Although *Variety* (5 June 1963) praised this “choice hot weather attraction for the family trade – a sure delight for the kiddies and a diverting spectacle for adults with a taste for fantasy and adventure” (“*Jason and the Argonauts*” 5), the *New York Times* (8 August 1963) dismissed it as “absurd” and “no worse, but certainly no better, than most of its kind” (Thompson 1). These reviews were written in a period in which poor plotting and characterisation were seen as standard weaknesses in fantasy films. The assumption seemed to have been that juvenile and adolescent audiences had yet to graduate to a higher plane of cultural awareness, borne through interpretative skills acquired in adulthood.

It is hardly surprising, then, that *Jason and the Argonauts*, like *7th Voyage of Sinbad*, was overlooked for Academy Award recognition for its special effects, nor that the comparatively staid historical epic, *Cleopatra* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1963) won the Visual Effects Oscar. Indeed, this lack of recognition is indicative of a wider industry disregard for Harryhausen, who was always forced to struggle for studio backing, and had to work with extremely small budgets. *Jason and the Argonauts* was not a commercial hit. Its reception effectively ended Harryhausen and Schneer’s flirtation with the Hollywood mainstream. Their next “Dynamation” film, *First Men in the Moon* (Nathan Juran, 1964) – adapted from H. G. Wells’ novel by respected British sci-fi writer Nigel Kneale – was one of their most intelligent productions, but it, too, was a flop. Harryhausen then made a profitable but critically derided film for British studio Hammer, *One Million Years B.C.* (Don Chaffey, 1966), while *The Valley of Gwangi* (Jim O’Connolly, 1969) languished in obscurity.

“Kidult”-orientated films were rarities in 1960s Hollywood. Although independent producers George Pal and Irwin Allen were also concerned with spectacle, Pal’s focus was more moralistic, and the visual impact of Allen’s productions was often undermined by execrable production values. It was network television that pointed the way to the future, with youth-appeal, action-adventure franchises as *Batman* (1966–68), *Star Trek* (1966–69) and *Mission Impossible* (1966–73). In comparison, Disney’s output during this period was unremittingly saccharine and didactic, while the other major studios channelled their energies into hugely

inflated, middlebrow family blockbusters such as *My Fair Lady* (George Cukor, 1964) and *The Sound of Music*. While *The Sound of Music* was a huge hit – Hollywood’s most profitable film of the decade, no less – attempts to replicate its success with similar productions, such as *Doctor Dolittle* (Richard Fleischer, 1967), *Star!* (Robert Wise, 1968) and *Hello, Dolly!* (Gene Kelly, 1969), resulted in spectacular losses. Family-adventure films such as *Fantastic Voyage* (Richard Fleischer, 1966) and *Batman* (Leslie H. Martinson, 1966) also underperformed. North America had entered a period of counter-cultural fervour. By 1968, Hollywood had replaced its restrictive Production Code (established in 1930, formalised in 1934) with a far more liberal ratings system. Over the next few years, mainstream cinema veered toward such hard-edged independent fare as *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper, 1969) and *Woodstock* (Michael Wadleigh, 1970). Revealingly, when Disney re-released *Fantasia* in 1970, *Variety* (13 November) reported that one theatre chain chose not to target “families” in its publicity drive, but rather teenage potheads in search of a psychedelic, substance-enhanced trip (“Disney’s *Fantasia* Going To Pot?!? That’s How Natl Gen. Sells The Reissue”).

Harryhausen’s Late Period

In Harryhausen’s post-1970s films, a curious dialectic asserts itself between his characteristically “kidult” modes of spectacle and wholesome adventure, and a new emphasis on more “adult” pleasures. This manifests itself in the various scenes of mild nudity, profanity, and violence scattered amongst his late-period films, *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad* (Gordon Hessler, 1974), *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger* (Sam Wanamaker, 1977), and *Clash of the Titans* (Desmond Davis, 1981). By the early 1970s, it should be noted, the traditional “family” film was in decline. All the major studios had abandoned the dual-addressed movie, with the exception of Disney, which was struggling to make much money on its theatrical products (Krämer 188). Public demands for an increase in “family” fare to counter-balance the new “adult” films reaching the screens were ignored (Krämer 268–71). Disney aside, only independents operating low-investment/low-returns strategies – such as Robert B.

Radnitz and Joe Camp – saw dual-appeal family films as profitable enterprises.¹⁰ Instead, the major studios re-orientated towards the youth market with ever edgier fare, while a new breed of film school-educated directors influenced by European art cinema, such as Francis Ford Coppola and Martin Scorsese, pursued the kinds of explicitly adult-orientated films that, collectively, signalled the end of the 1930s concept of the “family audience” as Hollywood’s backbone.

In this context, it is perhaps easier to see why Harryhausen and Schneer – and their distributors – might have felt that a change in style was necessary to adapt to new market conditions. With *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad*, Harryhausen and Schneer regrouped after several years in the cinematic wilderness and returned to the source of their greatest commercial success. However, in accordance with the cinematic conventions of the period, what emerged was notably darker in tone and appearance than its predecessors: more dialogue-orientated, with a corresponding reduction in the action-adventure quotient, and a more sophisticated, allusive slant to the humour. Furthermore, it is interesting that Sinbad, portrayed here by John Phillip Law, conspicuously possesses an Arabian accent. Sinbad may, as Harryhausen has always claimed, be an archetypal adventure hero, but there seems to have been a conscious decision – whether for artistic or commercial purposes – to de-emphasise his “Americanness”. The 1970s, Harryhausen later remarked, was the age of the anti-hero, and the classically clean-cut, square-jawed American hero portrayed by Kerwin Matthews in *7th Voyage of Sinbad* was perhaps felt to be ill-suited to this new epoch. However, Sinbad’s “otherness” here may have constrained the film’s commercial prospects in the notoriously nationalistic US domestic market. While certain aspects of the Sinbad character (his bravery, charm, masculinity) are typical heroic attributes, others (his tanned skin and colourful clothes) bespeak attractive exoticism; this more alien figure might have been a step too far. Hindered by Columbia’s lukewarm promotion, *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad* was, nonetheless, a solid box office hit, although scarcely rivalling Disney’s more traditional family movie, *Herbie Rides Again* (Robert Stevenson, 1974).

By the mid-1970s, the major studios had been focusing their attentions on harder-edged material for several years. Suddenly, this was to change. The

¹⁰ On the trajectory of the classical-era Hollywood family film during the 1960s and 1970s, see Noel Brown, “The Apostle of Family Films”: Robert B. Radnitz, Children’s Cinema and Anti-Disney Discourse in the 1960s and 1970s”.

development of the multiplex cinema in the early 1970s created the necessary theatrical conditions for the saturation-release blockbuster, which itself invited spectacular presentation and films which pursued as wide an audience as possible. The first “multiplex blockbuster”, *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975), was too violent for “family” suitability, but its modes of appeal were palpably “regressive”, tapping basic fear (as well as pleasure) responses.¹¹ Promoted heavily via the “rival” medium of television, and shown on an unprecedented number of multiplex screens nationwide, *Jaws* recouped well over \$150 million from an initial \$9 million outlay. Its success confirmed that mass audiences were still attainable given a comprehensive marketing strategy, and the right film. Yet its violence and gore automatically precluded status as family viewing. It was *Star Wars* that ultimately redefined the family movie by fusing undifferentiated-appeal “kidult” aesthetic elements with the broad moral suitability of the classical family film. In a period in which North America was suffering a “crisis of confidence” – one that was all-too-clearly reflected in such downbeat Hollywood fare as *Night Moves* (Arthur Penn, 1975) and *All the President’s Men* (Alan J. Pakula, 1976) – *Star Wars* offered uncomplicated escapism, facile optimism and dazzling spectacle. It was comfortably the top-grossing film of the decade, but evidence that it was not merely a random “runaway” hit was provided by Spielberg’s *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) and Warner’s *Superman* franchise, which also yielded enormous returns by tapping the amorphous family/“kidult” audience.

Ironically, at precisely the point at which “kidult”-inflected films were finally gaining mass commercial and critical acceptance, Harryhausen and Schneer found it increasingly difficult to sell their projects to studios. Furthermore, interference from executives, who misguidedly believed that a harder edge was necessary to appeal to older audiences, led to a shift away from the wholesomely escapist elements that had characterised the early films. *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger* was Harryhausen’s first production to contain nudity. The scene in question sees young stars Jane Seymour and Taryn Power swimming naked in a river. The nudity is brief and inexplicit, mostly filmed in long-shot or from the rear. There was, as Harryhausen admits, “a gradual realisation that these films needed more adult interest.”¹² But this perception surely misunderstands their essential appeal to older audiences. Inexplicit nudity may

¹¹ On the film’s regressive appeal, see Robin Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan... And Beyond*. 145.

¹² Correspondence between the author and Tony Dalton and Ray Harryhausen, 9 February 2011.

have served as minor erotic titillation for young spectators on the verge of adolescence, but was neither strong enough nor sufficiently contextualised to attract the paying custom of older demographics in an age where censorious pleasures, previously off-limits, now freely circulated in the cultural mainstream. It may be recalled that *Deep Throat* (Jerry Gerard, 1972), the first hardcore pornographic film to receive wide release in America's theatres, and which drew at least \$50 million in box office receipts, pre-dated Harryhausen's 1970s *Sinbad* films.

Moreover, it was abundantly clear that Harryhausen and Schneer did not possess sufficient resources to compete with *Star Wars*, which pioneered several special effects processes at great expense. In fact, the release of *Star Wars* marked a watershed in Harryhausen's career, and, indeed, in the ongoing development of the family movie. For the first time, Harryhausen's approach appeared passé and out-of-step with the cultural climate. Moreover, Lucas and Spielberg (and their followers) had hit upon a style of filmmaking, which not only combined the most appealing elements of earlier "family" and "kidult" films, but also possessed considerable franchise and merchandising potential. Lucas cannily realised that spectacle and escapism, in isolation, were insufficient. It is fitting that Lucas, fearing audience apathy in the weeks before release, lamented that he had made "a Walt Disney movie" that would struggle to break \$10 million at the box office, for *Star Wars* owes as much to the emotive and didactic elements widely associated with Disney's films as to the "kidult" aesthetic that Harryhausen popularised (Krämer 190). Lucas' and Spielberg's films not only served as artistic templates for subsequent Hollywood family films and franchises, but signalled a new period in which creative and industrial strategies would be founded upon appeals to the conceptual "kidult".

Harryhausen's final movie, *Clash of the Titans*, was released during the summer of 1981. Following the critical and commercial failure of *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger*, Harryhausen and Schneer – realising that they did not have resources to adapt their filmmaking style to match current market trends – returned to classical mythology, namely the story of Perseus. Hollywood studio MGM was attempting to re-establish its credentials as a Hollywood major, and showed interest in the idea, which embodied the kind of "good, exciting family entertainment" it was eager to produce (Harryhausen and Dalton 262). The film was given a budget of \$16 million, which exceeded that of all the producers' previous productions combined. In the event, the film was a modest box office hit. However, *Variety*'s (10 June 1981) not-

atypical assessment of it as “an unbearable bore” (“Clash of the Titans for the Young in Heart Only” 18) surely reflected the fact that mainstream Hollywood films with “kidult” appeal were now operating under new economies of pleasure. Show-stopping spectacle need not be confined to a series of intermittent special-effects interludes, as with Harryhausen’s films. Rather, with the massively increased resources and technological potentialities of the “New Hollywood” cinema, spectacular sensorial appeal – wedded to the fast-paced and “transparent” narratives of old – could be sustained over the entire course of a film.

Clash of the Titans is probably the least “kidult”-orientated of Harryhausen’s films, instead falling back on classical family movie tropes. The courtship between the romantic leads is far more central than the wholly gratuitous romantic subplots in previous Harryhausen films, but remains perfunctory. The film attempts to draw older spectators with the lure of established screen performers, but the supposedly-starry cast in reality comprises an assortment of unknown youngsters (Harry Hamlin and Judi Bowker as Perseus and Andromeda) and aging character actors (Laurence Olivier as Zeus; Maggie Smith as Thetis; Ursula Andress as Aphrodite; Burgess Meredith as Ammon), most of whom would be identifiable only to film- and television-literate viewers. The most blatant incongruities are the two scenes containing brief nudity, as well as a sequence in which a man is burned at the stake, which ensured that the film received an “A” rating in the UK, thus preventing children under the age of 14 from attending without adult supervision. Harryhausen told me in personal correspondence that the inclusion of these elements was at the insistence of MGM, which – unaccountably, given the film’s supposed status as “family entertainment” – “wanted [the film] to have some adult content to appeal to a wider audience.”¹³ Ironically, as the enormous popularity of *Star Wars*, *Close Encounters*, *Superman* and *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* demonstrates, “adult” content had become unappealing to many adults spectators. Allegedly, *E.T.*’s main consumer-base was “childless couples in their twenties and thirties”, not young children (Morris 85). It seems reasonable to assume that older viewers attended such films not to be reminded of the social and interpretative constraints of adulthood, but rather to escape them, at least temporarily.

¹³ Correspondence between the author and Tony Dalton and Ray Harryhausen, 9 February 2011.

Conclusion

North America – and, indeed, late-modern Western society in general – continues to embrace the “kidult”. Evidence that the recreational requirements of adults and children were moving into alignment as early as the 1950s can be seen not only in responses to *7th Voyage of Sinbad*, but also in the fact that Disneyland’s customer composition was weighted 4-to-1 in favour of adults (Merlock Jackson 94). During the 1990s, several of the major Hollywood studios created specialised “Family Film” production divisions, gearing their industrial operations towards “kidult”-orientated franchises with international appeal, and which could be realised across multiple media platforms.¹⁴ At the time of writing, the list of the top-grossing 20 films of all time includes such putatively child-orientated releases as *Frozen* with \$1.2 billion, *Minions* (Pierre Coffin and Kyle Balda, 2015) with \$1.5 billion, *Toy Story 3* (Lee Unkrich, 2010) with \$1 billion, and *Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg, 1993) with \$1 billion. According to statistics released by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), children aged 2–11 made up only 12 per cent of ‘frequent movie-goers’ in North America in 2012; this figure fell to 7 per cent in 2013 (2014: 12; 2015: 12). However, 41 of the top 50 highest-grossing films at the North American box office in 2012 and 2013 were deemed suitable for “family audiences” (this includes films rated “G”, “PG” or “PG-13”), with only nine films rated “R” (adults only).

Given the relatively lowly proportion of children under the age of 12 in the US theatrical audience, non-child audiences must play a major role in sustaining Hollywood’s industry of “children’s films”. Harryhausen, then, was part of a much broader cultural movement which, over the course of the last 60 years, has seen the “kidult” – both as a cultural form and a consumer group – move to the forefront of Western popular culture. I do not wish to oversimplify this complex socio-historical process. Harryhausen was no monolithic instigator of “kidult” entertainment; he, too, was inspired by a multitude of artists – from painters (Gustave Doré, Charles Knight, John Martin) and animators (O’Brien) to producers (Merriam C. Cooper, Alexander Korda, George Pal, and even Walt Disney) – who shared a similar fantastic vision.

¹⁴ These developments are recorded in numerous editions of *Variety*: “New plan to put Warners in Family way”; Christian Moerk, “Family Volume at WB”; Kathleen O’Steen, “Matoian Makes Fox His Family”; “Sony in Family Way”; “Paramount, Producer in a Family Way”.

But where Harryhausen departs from Disney (and from classic children's literature conventions) is in his films' emphasis on escapism, rather than didacticism. This concentration on pleasures equally accessible to child and adult audiences defines "kidult" entertainment. It also explains the enduring popularity of Harryhausen's films, which lack the overt moralism of the classical-era family movie. The filmmaker's high current standing also reflects the growing legitimacy of purely escapist family entertainments that, as recently as the 1970s, were dismissed as shallow, infantile, and unworthy of preservation or serious discussion.

I would like to finish with a few words on the current status of the "kidult". Beyond the comparatively hermetic world of industry jargon where the word is still in wide currency¹⁵ – a reflection of its utility as signifying something *other* than "family-orientated" – the usual response appears to be one of scorn, amusement or revulsion. It is one thing, perhaps, to consume such entertainment; it is quite another to self-consciously interrogate the implications of the act of consumption in relation to self and to society. Ironically, this ambivalence is sustained by a mainstream media that holds "kidult" entertainment – not just films but television, books, video games and all manner of consumer products – as the pinnacle of popular entertainment in all but name, yet insists on deferring to the evidently reassuring "family" label. Like Harryhausen prior to his recent critical reassessment, the "kidult" remains "vaguely disreputable".

Acknowledgements | Belated appreciation to the late Ray Harryhausen, who very graciously agreed to the email interview on which this article draws; also to Tony Dalton, who helped arrange the interview.



¹⁵ A few examples, among many: In 1988, John Cassaday, president of Campbell Soup, Ltd., told a marketing seminar in Toronto that "kidults" – "a new name for children and adults" – would be a vital consumer group of the future (Marina Strauss, "'Kidults' Tapped as Hot New Market"); in 1996, television network Nickelodeon, described one of its marketing campaigns as "kidult" (Stuart Elliott, "Trying to Lure Media Buyers, Nickelodeon Asks a Multiple-Choice Question with Only One Answer"); at the recent Hong Kong Toys and Game Fair, there was a category of exhibits called "Kidult World" ("Kidult World: Still Small but with Huge Potential"); and, lastly, there is a British-based fashion company called "Kidult Clothing".

WORKS CITED

- “7th Voyage of Sinbad.” *Film Daily* 25 Nov. 1958: 6.
- “7th Voyage of Sinbad.” *The Hollywood Reporter* 25 Nov. 1958: 3.
- “7th Voyage of Sinbad.” *Variety*, 26 Nov. 1958: 6.
- Aaronovitch, David. “What’s So Smart About Being Childish?” *The Independent* 6 Jun. 2001: 5.
- Barber, Benjamin R. *Consumed: How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantilize Adults, and Swallow Citizens Whole*. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007.
- Brennan, Judy. “Summer School Lessons; Families Didn’t Flock to Movies That Were Aimed at Children.” *The Los Angeles Times* 12 Sept. 1996: F1.
- Brown, Noel. *The Hollywood Family Film: A History, from Shirley Temple to Harry Potter*. London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012.
- . “‘A New Movie-Going Public’: 1930s Hollywood and the Emergence of the ‘Family’ Film.” *The Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, vol. 33 (1), 2013: 1-23.
- . “The ‘Family’ Film, and the Tensions Between Popular and Academic Interpretations of Genre.” *Trespassing Journal* 2 (2013): 22-35.
- . “‘The Apostle of Family Films’: Robert B. Radnitz, Children’s Cinema and Anti-Disney Discourse in the 1960s and 1970s.” *Red Feather Journal: An International Journal of Children’s Visual Culture* 4: 2 (2013): 1-20.
- . “Spielberg and the Kidult.” *Children in the Films of Steven Spielberg*. Eds. Adrian Schober and Debbie Olson. New York: Lexington Books, 2016. 19-44.
- Brown, Noel and Bruce Babington. “Introduction: Children’s Films and Family Films.” *Family Films in Global Cinema: The World Beyond Disney*. Eds. Noel Brown and Bruce Babington. London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2015: 1-16.
- Canby, Vincent. “‘Die Hard’ Calls to the Kidult.” *The New York Times* 31 Jul. 1988: 19.
- “Clash of the Titans for the Young in Heart Only.” *Variety* 10 June 1981: 18.
- Disney, Walt. “Interview with Fletcher Markle.” *Walt Disney: Conversations*. Ed. Kathy Merlock Jackson. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006. 89–103.
- “Disney’s Fantasia Going To Pot?!?! That’s How Natl Gen. Sells The Reissue.” *Variety* 13 Nov. 1970: 3.

- Doherty, Thomas. *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988.
- Elliott, Stuart. "Trying to Lure Media Buyers, Nickelodeon Asks a Multiple-Choice Question with Only One Answer." *The New York Times* 8 Jan. 1996: 44.
- Handel, Leo A. *Hollywood Looks at its Audience: A Report of Film Audience Research*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1950.
- Harmetz, Aljean. *The Making of the Wizard of Oz*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977.
- Harryhausen, Ray and Tony Dalton. *An Animated Life*. London: Aurum, 2003.
- Husband, Stuart. "It Came from Los Angeles." *The Guardian* 18 Dec. 1995: B5.
- "Jason and the Argonauts." *Variety* 5 June 1963: 6.
- "‘Kidult World’: Still Small but with Huge Potential." *Tradegood.com*. 22 Nov. 2013. Web. 14 Feb. 2015.
- Krämer, Peter. "'The Best Disney Film Disney Never Made': Children's Films and The Family Audience in American Cinema since the 1960s." *Genre And Contemporary Hollywood*. Ed. Steve Neale. London: British Film Institute, 2002. 185–200.
- . "Disney and Family Entertainment." *Contemporary American Cinema*. Eds. Linda Ruth Williams and Michael Hammond. London: McGraw-Hill, 2006. 265–79.
- "Laughing it up for Laddies: TV Comics Veer to Moppet Tie." *Variety* 24 Nov. 1954: 23.
- Lawson, Mark. "Peter Pan Refills the Piggy Bank." *The Guardian* 17 Jun. 2000: 24.
- Lazarsfeld, Paul F. "Audience Research in the Movie Field." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (254), 1947: 160–68.
- Maddock, Melvyn. "7th Voyage of Sinbad." *The Christian Science Monitor* 18 Dec. 1958: 7.
- Moerk, Christian. "Family Volume at WB." *Variety* 14 May 1993: 3.
- Morris, Nigel. *The Cinema of Steven Spielberg: Empire of Light*. London: Wallflower, 2007.
- "MPAA Theatrical Market Statistics 2013." Motion Picture Association of America, 2014.
- "MPAA Theatrical Market Statistics 2014." Motion Picture Association of America, 2015.
- Murray, Paul. "Back from the Brink." *The Washington Post* 26 Jun. 2005: n. pag.
- "New plan to put Warners in Family way." *Variety* 9 Dec. 1991: 1, 3.

- No title. *Variety* 3 Jan. 1962: 21.
- O'Steen, Kathleen. "Matoian Makes Fox His Family." *Variety* 18 Nov. 1993: 1, 14.
- "Paramount, Producer in a Family Way." *Variety* 15 Apr. 2002.
- Plantinga, Carl. *Moving Viewers: American Film and the Spectator's Experience*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2009.
- Schober, Adrian. "'Why Can't They Make Kids' Flicks Anymore?': *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* and the Dual-Addressed Family Film." *Family Films in Global Cinema: The World Beyond Disney*. Eds. Noel Brown and Bruce Babington. London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2015. 53–68.
- Simonton, Dean Keith, Lauren Elizabeth Skidmore and James C. Kaufman. "Mature Cinematic Content for Immature Minds: 'Pushing the Envelope' vs. 'Toning it Down' in Family Films." *Empirical Studies of the Arts* 30: 2 (2012): 143–66.
- "Sony in Family Way." *Variety* 26 Feb. 1999: 7.
- Strauss, Marina. "'Kidults' Tapped as Hot New Market." *The Globe and Mail* 16 Nov. 1988: n. pag.
- "Theatrical Market Statistics." Motion Picture Association of America, 2009.
- Thompson, Howard. "Jason and the Argonauts Seek Golden Fleece at Leow's State." *New York Times* 8 Aug. 1963: 19:1.
- Weinraub, Bernard. "Movies for Children, and Their Parents, Are Far From 'Pollyanna'." *The New York Times* 22 July 1997: B1.
- Wood, Robin. *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan... And Beyond*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

FILMOGRAPHY

The Harryhausen Chronicles. Dir. Richard Schickel. American Movie Classics (AMC), 1998. TV movie.