

Jurassic Park III

US : 2001 : dir. Joe Johnston : Universal / DreamWorks : ? min
 prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:
[Trevor Morgan](#)
 Sam Neill; William H Macy; Téa Leoni; Alessandro Nivola; John Diehl; Laura Dern

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω 8 ∅ M ∞	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Source: Empire – Feb 2001

Empire – February 2001 – pre-release comment:

"Dinosaurs once again go ballistic in tropical island theme park. Expect running, screaming, kids in peril and some of the best visual effects of the year. ETA: summer.

"They're almost the same locations as in 'THE LOST WORLD'", notes "JURASSIC PARK III" director Joe Johnston about his currently

shooting threequel, "and that is the only similarity there is, I guess. My film will be more light in proportion to 'THE LOST WORLD'. Steven's sequel was very dark and scary. This time it's going to be more like a catastrophe film from the '70s but with more dinosaurs. Also some new ones."

Always on the cards since "THE LOST WORLD"'s release in 1997, "JURASSIC PARK III" started filming on August 30, with



Having established its good parenting credentials in "THE LOST WORLD", poor Tyrannosaurus Rex is relegated to the under-dog of this edition, bitten in half by a new bad boy on the block. There's a moral there somewhere.

Source: ie magazine – March 2002

locations including Hawaii and Los Angeles. Johnston, who collaborated with Spielberg as a storyboard artist on the **INDIANA JONES** movies before directing "**HONEY, I SHRUNK THE KIDS**", "**THE ROCKET-EER**" and "**JUMANJI**", is holding the reigns *[sic]* after Spielberg decided to pass third time round. Based on Spielberg's story idea and polished by, among others, "**ELECTION**"'s Alexander Payne and Jim Taylor, little is known about the plot; rumours that the dinosaurs rule the earth again after a new Ice Age seem unfounded, with the story set in between the action of the first two movies. The latest spin from the rumour mill has Sam Neill returning as palaeontologist Alan Grant, heading up an investigation team who return to the park after a plane has downed.

Details of the characters are sketchy, but it is thought that Macy plays Paul, a business man, Leoni is Amanda Kirby, Paul's associate and love interest, Morgan assays *[sic]* Paul's young son, and Nivola is a palaeontology student.

Whether the dinosaurs will once again take on a major city is still unclear, but rumblings that the JP3 production team have been in contact with the Utah Police Department to get down details of their cars and uniforms might suggest a dinosaurs vs cops showdown. While it has been confirmed there will be flying dinosaurs –

a scene involving pteradons *[sic]* attacking characters escaping on paragliders that was excised from "**THE LOST WORLD**" is believed to be making a comeback – the cast will probably have no idea what they look like.

"I'm dying for them to show the clip of this without the dinosaurs," laughs Leoni. "I'd love for people to see how goofy we look running away from giants that aren't there. We look like we popped some tablet of acid." "

ie magazine – March 2002 – DVD review:

"The third instalment of the "**JURASSIC PARK**" sage delivers much more than you might first imagine. OK, the storyline differs little from its predecessors and the technical brilliance of the dinosaurs no longer has the impact that it had in the first film, but this outing certainly has more than its fair share of shocks and is surprisingly grisly in places. Dr Grant (Sam Neill) returns to "that" island (although his reasons for doing so remain something of a mystery¹) and runs into monstrous amounts of monster trouble. For all

¹ *In order to raise funding for his work, he agrees to chaperone a rich couple on a sightseeing flight over the island. What' so mysterious about that?*

its predictability, "JURASSIC PARK III" races along happily and is genuinely entertaining, never letting minor irritations like logic or plot consistency get in the way of a flesh-shreddingly good yarn."

Radio Times (cinema) review:

"A bit of history: "JURASSIC PARK" made over \$900 million worldwide. Sequel "THE LOST WORLD" made \$600 million. So a third instalment was, let's say, economically inevitable. This time, as if to prove that the franchise runs itself, Steven Spielberg has allowed "JUMANJI" director Joe Johnston to take the reigns *[sic]* and he's done a creditable job, with what is basically a retread of the earlier films with some new set-pieces thrown in.

We're back on Isla Sorna, where genetically engineered dinosaurs run wild, with another band of walking packed lunches: divorcees William H Macy and Téa Leoni looking for their 14-year old son who is lost in the jungle; palaeontologist Sam Neill (from the first film); and his protégé Alessandro Nivola. You don't have to wait long for the big reptiles to appear – early on, a towering, belligerent spinosaurus makes light work of a T. Rex as if to say: there's a new, computer-generated villain in town.

It's familiar ground, but those set-pieces (particularly the pterodactyl attack) are

excellent. Only the ending seems a little dashed off, but this is still the first decent blockbuster of 2001, if that's not faint praise."

– Andrew Collins



It's times like this when a guy could really get turned off fossil-hunting – thinks fossil hunter Alan Grant.

Source: Radio Times

Even the mighty Spielberg is not immune to the law of diminishing returns as it holds for film sequels. "INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE" was for my money the least of the trilogy (and rumours of a fourth abound) because it seemed to recycle just too many ideas and settings from the first film. It was made to the same high production standard, it matched the original for pace and humour, but with all its fleshing out of the character's personal history it still seemed more like a reheated "RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK" than an entirely fresh adventure for the same character. This may have been partly in reaction to hostile press for the second Indiana Jones film, which did try a completely fresh approach.

Critical reaction to "THE LOST WORLD" was not hostile, but certainly lukewarm. Spielberg again maintained the high production standard of its predecessor, which smashed all box office records, and he pulled off several bravura sequences of cliff-hanger action. Audiences were given more dinosaurs for their money (one frequent carp about the first film) and a far higher body count, but the fickle moviegoing public reacted with a ho-hum "been there, done that" to a special effects bonanza which a few short years before had blown their socks off. Still, Hollywood cannot resist a "franchise" (translating as an idea which can be milked repeatedly) and a third film was all but inevitable. Spielberg declined to direct this one in person, but his shadow falls across it from the opening scene to the end credits.

If the subtext of **"THE LOST WORLD"** was that dinosaurs are not the bad guys, merely good parents in scaly skins, then the subtext of **"JURASSIC PARK III"** is that, hey, they were really smart too! Velociraptors, it argues with unconvincing excitement, had communication abilities

exceeding those of modern dolphins and even primates. Not only that, but they could count, as the humans in the story discover to their cost. Where the tyrannosaurs in the second film pursued the cast halfway across the island to defend their young, here a whole posse of raptors pursue the intruders to recover a couple of eggs, which is a bit of a harder proposition to swallow.

And having given us one "T Rex" in the first film, and three in the second, the writers felt they had to come up with something to top that, and what they come up with is a "super-predator", one Egyptosaurus, even bigger and more menacing than the tyrannosaurus. This is directly equivalent to **"ALIEN RESURRECTION"** concocting a super-duper new alien form which immediately pulverises the super-duper queen from **"ALIENS"**, or **"TERMINATOR 2"** giving us a new invincible killing machine which beats the crap out of the invincible killing machine from the previous entry. The problem with this tactic of upping the stakes each time is that one quickly reaches a point where the stakes cannot plausibly be raised any higher. There is a desperation in it, as though producers have convinced themselves we will not be satisfied with a second helping from the same menu, but must always be placated with a sensation topping the one before.

The supremely successful James Bond series never suffered from the same endemic insecurity (nor did, for another example, Hammer with its Dracula or Frankenstein series). If the central pretext is engaging enough, audiences will readily visit it again. There is no necessity to keep trumping oneself in a frantic bid to keep interest alive, any more than producers need to keep inflating the budgets of blockbuster productions (currently topping \$200,000,000) in a vain attempt to guarantee commercial success. More is frequently less.

Not only – we're led to believe – did dinosaurs have impeccable family values credentials, the series seems keen to demonstrate what a beneficial effect they have on human ones (the ones that don't get munched, anyway). **"JURASSIC PARK"** taught child-hating Dr Grant to love and cherish the plucky little things – it made a prospective father of him. **"THE LOST WORLD"** threw (white) father Ian Malcolm and his neglected (black) daughter together by having them run for their lives a great deal – it made a better father of him. And **"JURASSIC PARK III"** offers a kind of radical family therapy session by pitching estranged mom, dad and son onto an island teeming with flesh-eaters. It seems to work a treat. Mortal peril is a super bonding agent – one of the prime maxims of Hollywood, and therefore of Spielberg.

The film opens with son and stepfather paragliding off the shores of the quarantined Costa Rican Isla Sorna, hoping to spot some antique fauna on the hoof. A mishap overtakes the boat towing them, and the joyriders drift helplessly inland, to a general smacking of lips from the foliage below.

We meet palaeontologist Alan Grant and palaeobotanist Ellie Sattler, who had been toying with thoughts of starting a family in the first film, now surrounded by a healthy looking brood. But wait – the children are not Grant's! In a **shock development**, Ellie (Laura Dern) went and married some other guy while our attention was distracted by the events in **"THE LOST WORLD"**. Reeling from this calamity, we accompany Grant back to his current dig, about to be abandoned for lack of cash, when he is propositioned by yet another wealthy businessman offering to fund his excavations. The price this time is that he act as a tour guide for the businessman and his wife, who want to conduct a thrill-seeking low level flight over Isla Sorna. Feeling uncomfortably like a seasoned hooker, Grant agrees, but takes along his assistant (Nivola) to share the indignity. Several shady looking types join the chartered flight at the last moment, and before Grant knows what's happening the plane has landed smack in the middle of the island.

But not for long. The businessman's wife (Leoni) begins yelling out through a bull-horn while her associates scour the bushes around. "That's not a very good idea" Grant insists, and the associates quickly come running back, suggesting the plane take off again – pronto. As it

does, leaving one of their number behind, an immense animal lurches from the trees, eating the man left on the ground and forcing the plane to crash in the treetops. It then bites the plane in half, and chases the survivors into the undergrowth, where they run into a tyrannosaurus rex feeding on some carrion. The rex and the larger beast, a spinosaurus, have a brief set-to which the rex does not survive. With this flimsiest of pretexts, we are literally dropped straight into the action, to spend the rest of the film fleeing like headless chickens for the coast. But who needs a plot? We're here for the dinosaurs, right?

The couple, Grant discovers, are the divorced parents of the boy who was lost over the island eight weeks before with his stepfather. To add insult to injury, the father is a small town salesman of bathroom fittings and not the millionaire entrepreneur he pretended. “D’you mean to say you stranded me on this island and I’m not even getting paid for it?” Grant snaps.

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If there must be a fourth film in the series, perhaps we will see them building their own cities and inventing portable phones.

See also **"JURASSIC PARK"** and **"THE LOST WORLD – JURASSIC PARK"**, and subject index under **DRAGONS & DINOSAURS** and **LOST CHILDREN**.