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# Yes, 'Jurassic World' is a movie about animal rights

The blockbuster's exploration of how we treat animals has drawn comparisons to 'Blackfish.'



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Chris Pratt portrays dinosaur trainer Owen Grady, one of the few characters who sees the park's dino as more than dollar signs. (Photo: Universal Pictures/YouTube)

**Editor's note:** If you haven't seen the movie yet, this article contains spoilers.

"Jurassic World" invites viewers into a world in which dinosaurs are real — but it's also a world in which theme park attractions are so commonplace that children are no more impressed by a triceratops ride than a pony ride.

Scientifically, we know the creation of such a park is [near impossible](#), but the filmmakers' ability to bring this world to life has less to do with special effects and more to do with how accurately the movie reflects our consumer culture, the ethical dilemmas presented by technology and our relationships with animals.

At its core, "Jurassic World" is a fantastical monster movie, but it makes a serious statement about animal rights.

### Animals or assets?

From the moment the film's trailer was released, people began drawing comparisons to "Blackfish," the 2013 documentary that explores the controversy over captive killer whales at theme parks.

The scene that sparked the association features a large pool surrounded by tourist-packed stands that's not unlike the facilities SeaWorld uses for shows. However, instead of an orca leaping out of the water



for a tasty fish, in the film, a mosasaurus wows the crowd by swallowing a great white shark.

And the SeaWorld likeness isn't a coincidence.

"There's a bit of a 'Blackfish' vibe to this story," Colin Trevorrow, "Jurassic World" director, told [Slashfilm](#).

In one of the movie's first scenes, Owen Grady, a dinosaur trainer portrayed by Chris Pratt, foreshadows what's to come when he says he doesn't control the park's rangers, which he has named as you would any pet. "It's a relationship. It's based on

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...reports, which he has named as just another job. "Our relationship is based on mutual respect," he explains.

The park's operations manager, Claire Dearing, played by Bryce Dallas Howard, responds by referring to the dinos as "assets," which doesn't sit well with Grady.

"It's probably easier to pretend these animals are just numbers on a spreadsheet, but they're not," he tells her. "They're alive. You might have made them in a test-tube, but they don't know that."

Throughout the film, Owen must repeatedly explain that the park's dinosaurs are wild animals, not products to be exploited for profit or, in the case of Vic Hoskins — Vincent D'Onofrio's character, who heads up the park's security force — living weapons to be militarized.

But Vic makes his own argument when he says, "Extinct animals have no rights."

### Man vs. monster

However, Owen's message hits home when the park's newest "asset," which has been [genetically engineered](#) to satisfy consumer demand for a bigger, badder and deadlier dino, gets loose.

Everyone — save for Owen, the film's hero — responds naively, thinking they can outsmart the dinosaur dubbed Indominus rex. After all, we created this monster.

Owen is the only voice of reason, pointing out that Indominus rex is a living creature raised in captivity, and the only interaction it's ever had is with the crane that feeds it. It has no idea where it fits on the food chain, but it won't take it long to figure out it's at the top.

In other words: When you mistreat an animal, you can't be surprised when it turns on you.

Naturally, no one listens, and Indominus rex goes on a killing spree — killing not for food, but for sport — and it's not until the creature happens upon a field of mauled Brontosauruses that Claire finally recognizes [dinosaurs](#) as sentient beings.

"It's sort of, like, if the black fish orca got loose and never knew its mother and has been fed from a crane," Trevorrow said.

Throughout the film, Indominus rex kills both man and beast with equal measure. Mankind, on the other hand, manages to take down very few dinos. We're just no match for the creatures we thought we had under control.

Unlike most monster movies, "Jurassic World" doesn't glorify man's triumph over beast. And unlike its predecessors in the Jurassic franchise, the film doesn't conclude with the heroes narrowly escaping the giant toothy reptiles using their own wits.

Instead, the heroes of the film turn to their last hope — a pack of raptors and T. rex himself — to take down their deadly creation.

The message is clear: Man has no place in this world.

### Who's the real monster?

The Jurassic franchise is a far cry from Steven Spielberg's 1975 blockbuster, "Jaws" about a man-eating [great white shark](#) that mankind must destroy. The film, based on Peter Benchley's novel of the same name, inspired a shark-hunting trend that dramatically reduced shark populations worldwide.

"Knowing what I know now, I could never write that book today," Benchley said.

But man vs. beast movies have changed substantially since the era of "Jaws."

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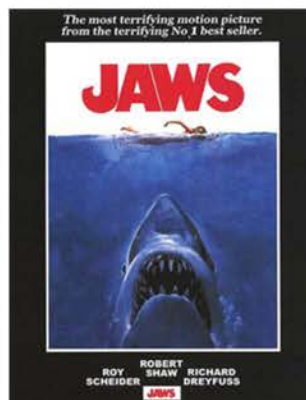
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"It used to be a simple case of 'they kill us, we kill them, end of story,'" writes Steve Rose in [The Guardian](#). "But the more we have learned about animal intelligence and behavior, the weaker our appetite for seeing them massacred on screen has become."



In fact, according to a recent [Gallup Poll](#), 32 percent of Americans believe animals should have the same rights as humans, an idea that recently went to court in New York when the Nonhuman Rights Project filed a lawsuit to obtain rights for [two chimpanzees](#).

Whether chimps or other animals are granted rights will come down to public opinion, and movies will undoubtedly play a vital role in molding them.

Just as "The Terminator" and "The Matrix" have compelled us to examine our relationship with technology, films like "Jurassic World" and "Rise of the Planet of the Apes" force us to consider our treatment of animals. Because while these films may be entertaining thrill rides, they're also cautionary tales of what can happen when you mistreat your fellow creatures.

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[Laura Moss](#) writes about a variety of topics with a focus on animals, science, language and culture. But she mostly writes about cats.

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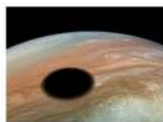
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