

Kull the Conqueror and Kull the Destroyer: A Literary and Cinematic Exploration of Two Barbarian Legends

In the annals of fantasy literature, Robert E. Howard's Kull of Atlantis stands as a towering figure alongside the likes of Conan the Cimmerian and Solomon Kane. These barbaric heroes have captivated readers for decades with their larger-than-life exploits, fierce battles, and unwavering determination. This article delves into the literary and cinematic adaptations of Kull, exploring the character's evolution and impact on popular culture.

Literary Origins: Kull of Atlantis and the Thurian Age

Robert E. Howard introduced Kull in a series of short stories published in *Weird Tales* magazine in the 1920s and 1930s. These stories chronicled the adventures of Kull, a powerful warrior and king who ruled Atlantis during its pre-cataclysmic era, known as the Thurian Age. Kull, like his literary counterpart Conan, possessed an indomitable spirit, raw strength, and a keen sense of honor. His adventures took him across the turbulent Thurian landscape, where he encountered ancient horrors, treacherous pirates, and enigmatic sorcerers.



Kull The Destroyer (1973-1978) #11 (Kull The Conqueror (1971-1978)) by Daniel Jesse

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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Kull the Conqueror and Kull the Destroyer: Literary Differences

Howard's Kull stories can be divided into two distinct periods: Kull the Conqueror and Kull the Destroyer. Kull the Conqueror stories, written in the early 1930s, depict Kull as a young and ambitious prince fighting to unify the warring tribes of Atlantis. These stories emphasize Kull's leadership qualities, strategic brilliance, and unwavering resolve.

In contrast, the Kull the Destroyer stories, written later in the 1930s, showcase Kull as a seasoned warrior and king facing the threats to his kingdom and the encroaching doom of Atlantis's impending cataclysm. These stories delve into Kull's inner conflicts, his struggles with fate, and his unwavering determination to defend his people against the darkness.

Kull the Conqueror: The 1971 Marvel Comics Adaptation

In 1971, Marvel Comics ventured into the Thurian Age with its Kull the Conqueror adaptation. Penned by Roy Thomas and painted by John Buscema, the comic series brought Kull's world to life with vibrant panels and thrilling storylines that expanded upon Howard's original tales. Marvel's Kull captured the essence of the literary character, showcasing his strength, cunning, and indomitable spirit.

Kull the Destroyer: The 1973-1978 Black and White Magazine Series

In 1973, Black and White Publishing took on the Kull mantle with its Kull the Destroyer magazine series. Billed as the "World's First Illustrated Conan," the series featured striking black-and-white artwork by legendary artists such as Frank Frazetta, Ken Kelly, and Jeff Jones. Kull the Destroyer

retained the dark fantasy elements of Howard's later stories, portraying Kull as a stoic and uncompromising warrior facing the horrors lurking in the shadows of Atlantis.

Kull the Conqueror: The 1997 Sword and Sandal Film

In 1997, Kevin Sorbo, known for his role as Hercules in the popular television series, took on the mantle of Kull in a sword-and-sandal film adaptation. Directed by John Nicolella, *Kull the Conqueror* featured a cast that included Tia Carrere, Thomas Ian Griffith, and Harvey Keitel. The film, while not a direct adaptation of any specific Kull story, preserved the character's essence and showcased his epic battles and perilous adventures.

Kull the Destroyer: The 1997 Direct-to-Video Film

Following the release of *Kull the Conqueror*, Brian Taylor's *Kull the Destroyer* was released as a direct-to-video sequel in the same year. With Brad Pitt as Kull, the film embraced the darker tone of Howard's *Kull the Destroyer* stories. It delved into Kull's struggles with the approaching doom of Atlantis and his determination to protect his people against the forces of darkness.

Critical and Commercial Reception

The Kull literary adaptations by Marvel Comics and Black and White Publishing were critically acclaimed for their faithful renditions of Howard's stories and their stunning artwork. The Kull films, however, received mixed reviews. *Kull the Conqueror* faced criticism for its uneven pacing and departure from the source material, while *Kull the Destroyer* was praised for its darker tone and Pitt's performance as Kull.

Legacy and Impact

Kull of Atlantis remains a beloved character in fantasy literature, inspiring numerous comic book, film, and video game adaptations. His indomitable spirit, fierce determination, and iconic status as a barbarian hero continue to enthrall readers and viewers alike. Kull's influence can be seen in the characters of Conan, Red Sonja, and other sword-and-sorcery heroes.

Kull of Atlantis, whether in the pages of pulp magazines, the panels of comic books, or on the silver screen, embodies the essence of the barbarian hero archetype. His stories of adventure, courage, and the struggle against darkness have captivated generations of readers and viewers. The literary and cinematic adaptations of Kull the Conqueror and Kull the Destroyer have solidified his legacy as a timeless fantasy legend.



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